Chapter 7

MAKING TIME

TOOLS

Where are we?

Professional development in this school includes time during teachers' contract day for teachers to work together in teams whose members share common goals (school, grade level, department, team, etc.) for student learning.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Professional development in this school occurs after school hours.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

Professional development in this school occurs in the summer.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

The leadership team (including principal and teacher leaders) in this school ensures that time available for collaborative professional learning is used in a way that impacts teaching and learning.

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE NOT SURE DISAGREE STRONGLY DISAGREE

The number one barrier educators cite regarding implementation of collaborative professional learning is time. There is no doubt that most schools have not yet adjusted their schedules to accommodate teacher collaborative learning; however, more and more are doing so. The schools that are making time usually do so in one of three ways. One way is to use available time; another way is to buy time; a third way is to create time. With each of these options, advises Joan Richardson, director of publications for the National Staff Development Council, it is necessary to be creative, to be willing to make trade-offs, be clear about the connection between teacher learning and student learning, and to be willing to experiment with multiple approaches (2002). Perhaps the biggest challenge is the perception of who owns time within the school day and who has control over what occurs during that time.

The National Staff Development Council advocates that 25% of an educator's work time is invested in professional learning and about 10% of a school district's budget. While those numbers seem astronomical, they are not, especially if the form of professional learning is the type of daily collaboration recommended in this tool kit. Most people view professional development as learning that occurs outside of the regular work of schools when guest speakers or external consultants come into the school or district, on days when students are not present, or in the summer or after school hours. In these cases, the costs that include substitutes, consultant fees, and travel, can be very high. To imagine spending even more, up to 10% of a district's budget, on this form of professional development is inconceivable. However, if the form of professional learning involves collaborative teams meeting together during the work day and the cost is the portion of teachers' salaries devoted to that form of learning, the resources they might want, and the portion of the principal's time devoted to supporting the team, these costs are not so unreasonable.

The same is true for the recommendation regarding time. If professional development is exclusively viewed as occurring when students are not present in school, after school hours, or in the summer, it is unlikely that the recommendation of 25% of educators' work time would ever be reached. However, if we consider the daily interactions that teachers have with colleagues in collaborative professional learning teams during planning times and designated team time, then it is more likely that the recommended level of time would be possible. In fact, opportunities for learning occur virtually every minute. Experiences or incidents of the work day can be transformed into learning when teachers engage in reflective collaborative practice, sharing their experiences with others, analyzing the results of their actions, planning with their colleagues, and making their practice transparent to themselves and others.

In districts and schools where teachers work in a supportive culture, they meet in collaborative teams for the purpose of professional learning about teaching and student learning because they experience first-hand the benefits. In districts and schools where relationships are

Figure 7.1

Weighted criteria matrix

Criteria	Weight	Notes

less collegial and a culture of isolation and competition exists, teachers may be unwilling to work collaboratively during their planning time and might participate reluctantly if additional time is provided. Past experience with professional development, the school's culture, trust, and relationships influence teachers' willingness to work actively to make time for professional learning.

This chapter explores a variety of ways to arrange time for teacher collaboration. It also raises some challenges about the basic assumptions held about time. How willing a school staff is to find time for collaboration is an indication of their commitment to collaborative professional learning.

Form a task force

To address the issue of making time for collaborative professional learning, schools might form a task force to study the possibilities and generate recommendations for others to review. Because some options for time will affect students and parents, these task forces might include parents and student representatives, as appropriate. School task force members will also want to examine district and state policy regarding the length of the school day, district, and state policy about time for professional development, and use of current professional development time.

When the principal charters the task force, it is helpful for him or her to clarify the level of authority and expectations. Will the task force make a single recommendation to the principal? Is the task force expected to bring multiple recommendations for the staff to consider? Will the task force make the decision after sharing its recommendations, gathering input, and revising based on the input?

Explore current beliefs about time

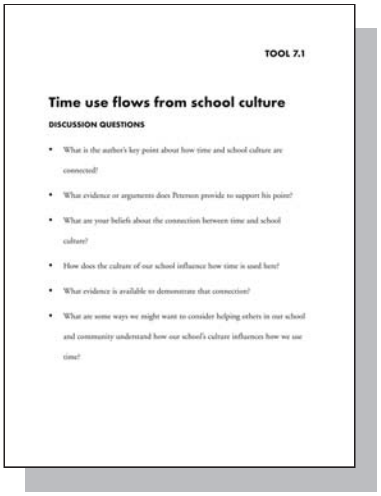
A beginning point for the discussion about making time is to consider how personal beliefs and culture influence beliefs about time. One way to explore these issues is to read Kent Peterson's article, "Time use flows from school culture." The task force or the whole staff can surface their assumptions about use of time within their school. The article and discussion protocol are included in Tool 7.1.

Analyze current time use

Tool 7.2 includes a protocol to use to examine how time is currently used. One of the easiest ways to make time for collaborative professional learning is to use existing time differently. Once current time usage is explored, the task force can form recommendations about how to use current time differently for collaborative professional learning. For example, remodeling faculty meetings is one way to make time for professional collaboration. In some schools, one day is designated for meetings — on that weekday, once a month principals hold faculty meetings, and in all the other weeks that month teachers meet in their collaborative teams. Another version of this model is to save faculty meeting time and use the banked time in a longer block, either bi-weekly or monthly.

Establish criteria

Making decisions about adjusting the schedule is a significant one and it may have a broad impact. Establishing criteria for the decision is helpful. Some school staff agree to adjust their schedule if it means instructional time for students is not reduced. Others agree to a change in their schedule if they retain a minimum amount of individual planning time. Others want time during the school day or teachers' contract day. Whatever the criteria, it is essential to identify them early. Sometimes not every criterion can be met so prioritizing criteria is important as well. The task force may decide to create a weighted criteria matrix to aid in their decision making, such as the one in Figure 7.1.

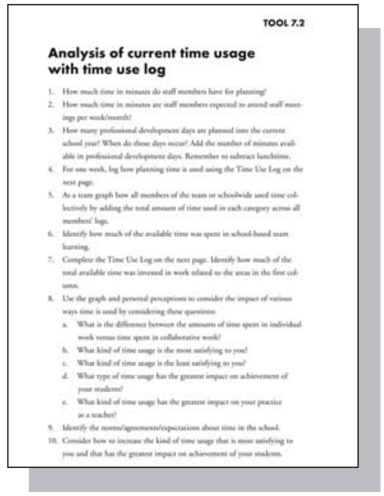

TOOL 7.1

Time use flows from school culture

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the author's key point about how time and school culture are connected?
- What evidence or arguments does Peterson provide to support his point?
- What are your beliefs about the connection between time and school culture?
- How does the culture of our school influence how time is used here?
- What evidence is available to demonstrate that connection?
- What are some ways we might want to consider helping others in our school and community understand how our school's culture influences how we use time?

Tool 7.1


TOOL 7.2

Analysis of current time usage with time use log

1. How much time in minutes do staff members have for planning?
2. How much time in minutes are staff members expected to attend staff meetings per week/month?
3. How many professional development days are planned into the current school year? When do those days occur? Add the number of minutes available in professional development days. Remember to subtract lunchtime.
4. For one week, log how planning time is used using the Time Use Log on the next page.
5. As a team graph how all members of the team or schoolwide used time collectively by adding the total amount of time used in each category across all members' logs.
6. Identify how much of the available time was spent in school-based team learning.
7. Complete the Time Use Log on the next page. Identify how much of the total available time was invested in work related to the areas in the first column.
8. Use the graph and personal perceptions to consider the impact of various ways time is used by considering these questions:
   a. What is the difference between the amounts of time spent in individual work versus time spent in collaborative work?
   b. What kind of time usage is the most satisfying to you?
   c. What kind of time usage is the least satisfying to you?
   d. What type of time usage has the greatest impact on achievement of your students?
   e. What kind of time usage has the greatest impact on your practice as a teacher?
9. Identify the norms/agreements/expectations about time in the school.
10. Consider how to increase the kind of time usage that is most satisfying to you and that has the greatest impact on achievement of your students.

Tool 7.2


AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2005

Tools For Schools

Think outside the clock

Create time for professional learning

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

Tool 7.3

Study other schools' and districts' solutions

One way to determine how to make time for additional collaboration is to study what other schools and districts have done. Three resources are included to assist school task forces to study possibilities for time. Not all ideas suggested in the three resources are feasible in every school or without some adaptation, however the ideas have been tested and are currently in use in schools. The resources are intended to offer ideas and possibilities to help schools get started.


Working Toward EXCELLENCE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ALABAMA BEST PRACTICES CENTER

SPRING 2001

Time Enough For Teaching And Learning

FINDING TIME

Tool 7.4

Tool 7.3 is an issue of *Tools for Schools,* a newsletter of the National Staff Development Council, that includes articles on how schools and districts around the country have made time for professional development.

Tool 7.4 is another resource, *Working Toward Excellence,* Spring 2001, a newsletter of the Alabama Best Practices Center. This newsletter includes articles about how schools across Alabama have created time for professional learning.

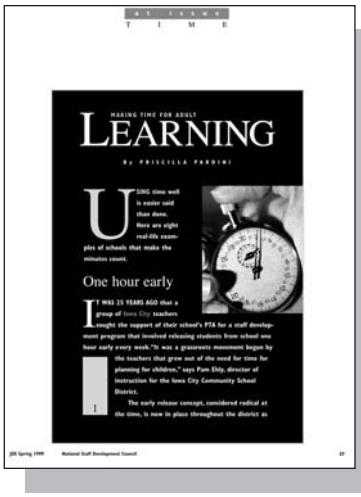
A third resource, Tool 7.5, an article from the *Journal of Staff Development* shows how schools and districts built time into the daily schedule for teacher learning. Tool 7.6 is a matrix to help readers summarize how various schools and districts create time for professional learning, how much time they created, and whether each strategy meets the criteria established by the task force.

Form recommendations

After studying possibilities, the task force forms recommendations for the school. These recommendations can include short-term changes, long-term changes, or both. For example, some schools begin with using existing time differently for a year before moving to a schedule change that permits more frequent time for professional learning. Once the recommendations are developed, each is reviewed by the principal, central office staff, teacher union leaders, parent group leaders, community leaders, and other key leaders to ensure that the recommendations fall within regulations, contracts, etc. It is essential that final recommendations presented to the staff and community for consideration meet most of the criteria the task force established and comply with regulatory criteria, or are permissible through variances. Tool 7.7 can help a task force include the most essential information in its recommendations to make time for professional development.

Present recommendations for input

Once the recommendations have been reviewed, they are presented to the school community at large. The task force members take an active role in explain-


T I M E

MAKING TIME FOR ADULT

LEARNING

By PRISCILLA PARDINI

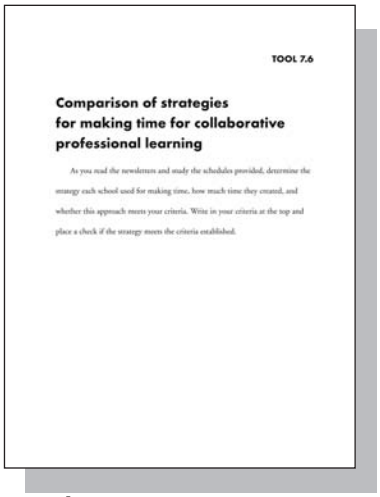
USING time well is easier said than done. Here are eight real-life examples of schools that make the minutes count.

One hour early

IT WAS 25 YEARS AGO that a group of Iowa City teachers sought the support of their school's PTA for a staff development program that involved releasing students from school one hour early every week. "It was a grassroots movement begun by the teachers that grew out of the need for time for planning for children," says Pam Ehly, director of instruction for the Iowa City Community School District.

The early release concept, considered radical at the time, is now in place throughout the district as

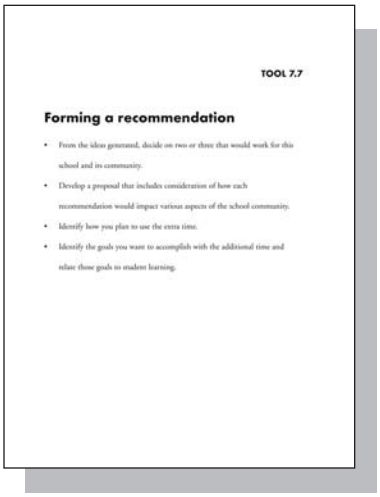
Tool 7.5


TOOL 7.6

Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning

As you read the newsletters and study the schedules provided, determine the strategy each school used for making time, how much time they created, and whether this approach meets your criteria. Write in your criteria at the top and place a check if the strategy meets the criteria established.

Tool 7.6


TOOL 7.7

Forming a recommendation

- From the ideas generated, decide on two or three that would work for this school and its community.
- Develop a proposal that includes consideration of how each recommendation would impact various aspects of the school community.
- Identify how you plan to use the extra time.
- Identify the goals you want to accomplish with the additional time and relate those goals to student learning.

Tool 7.7

ing the recommendations. Task force members receive feedback from staff and community members regarding each recommendation. This feedback is captured and taken back to the task force for consideration in the refinement process.

Revise recommendations

The task force considers all the input received and makes revisions to the recommendations. At this time, some recommendations may be deleted, combined, significantly revised, or moderately revised to reflect the input received. The final recommendation(s) are prepared for presentation to the entire school community. The task force may want to archive all recommendations to revisit other options later. Depending on how the task force was chartered, it may make a single recommendation to another body for approval, make the decision, or present multiple recommendations for approval by one or more persons.

Determine action

Using the appropriate process within the school or district for making decisions such as this one, the final recommendation(s) is (are) considered and accepted or rejected. Depending on the outcome, the task force creates a plan of action to implement the decision.

Finding time is only part of the story. Once time is made available for teacher collaborative learning, it is necessary to help teachers make the best use of this time. In some school districts across the country where time was made available, school boards have rescinded the time because it was not being used to improve teaching and learning and no evidence was available about its value. Chapters 6, 8, and 9 are designed to help teachers determine the best use of their time for collaborative professional learning.

TOOL 7.1

Time use flows from school culture

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is the author's key point about how time and school culture are connected?
- What evidence or arguments does Peterson provide to support his point?
- What are your beliefs about the connection between time and school culture?
- How does the culture of our school influence how time is used here?
- What evidence is available to demonstrate that connection?
- What are some ways we might want to consider helping others in our school and community understand how our school's culture influences how we use time?

TIME USE FLOWS FROM SCHOOL

CULTURE

By KENT D. PETERSON

WHEN educators think about professional development in schools they always worry about time. Where will it come from? How much time will there be? Will we have "enough" time? Will we use our time well?

River of values and traditions can nurture or poison staff development hours

Often, time for adult learning is viewed as a structural or administrative issue: How will we get time? When will it be? How much will we have? Who pays for it?

It's true that time is a measurable, definable resource that teachers, principals, and staff developers think about and use in

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TIME

concrete, systematic ways. But time is also much more. As Schein (1992) points out: "Time imposes a social order, and how things are handled in time conveys status and intention.

The pacing of events, the rhythms of life, the sequence in which things are done, and the duration of events all become subject to symbolic interpretation" (pp. 114-115).

How educators think about time, and how they use it, is woven into the cultures of their schools. School leaders must learn how to read a school's culture, and how to focus staff development on the cultural issues that affect how people use their time. Thus they can spend their time building a culture that uses time well.

CULTURES THAT NURTURE, CULTURES THAT WOUND

Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that builds up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools (Deal and Peterson, 1998).

Educators have recently developed a much deeper understanding of school culture, and a deeper appreciation for its importance in effective schools (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). Culture plays a major role in school restructuring (Newmann and Associates, 1996) and school improvement efforts (Fullan, 1998). Culture influences the actions and the spirit of school life. It shapes a school's motivation, commitment, effort, and focus.

In some schools, the culture inspires educators to learn and grow, to take risks, and to work collegially. Teachers feel supported when they want to assume leadership roles, reflect on practice and do other work to improve their teaching. These nurturing school cultures are more likely to invest in professional development, to spend time learning new skills and knowledge, and to enthusiastically engage in their own learning.

Other schools, however, are mired in beliefs about time that inhibit adult learning and student achievement. Staff members see staff development, or any effort to improve teaching, as a "waste of time," to be avoided if possible.

Negative attitudes and beliefs can spring from many sources: Perhaps staff development activities were poorly conceived in the past and didn't address teacher needs. Or the school has struggled academically for a long time and staff members have given up, telling each other that "nobody could teach these kids." Someone who feels their students can't learn would see no point investing time in improving teaching practice.

Some schools develop "toxic" cultures, which actively discourage efforts to improve teaching or student achievement. In these schools the spirit and focus is fractured and often hostile, the value of serving students is replaced by the goal of serving self, a sense of helplessness and despair predominates, and professional growth is not a prized activity (Deal and Peterson, 1998). Staff members resist

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CULTURE ZONE:

GANADO PRIMARY SCHOOL GANADO, ARIZONA

Ganado Primary School is a prime example of a school that uses time to build a culture that uses time well. At Ganado, students succeed despite few economic resources, and social problems that teachers in a toxic school culture would probably call insurmountable: About half the families in the school district, which serves a Navajo community, have no running water in their homes, and a third of them have no electricity.

The principal and teachers carefully recruit and hire people willing to spend time on continuous adult learning. New staff members understand from the outset that in this school culture, they'll be expected to spend time on adult learning.

Some examples of how staff members at Ganado spend their time:

- On many Tuesdays, the principal meets with teachers from one of the school's four major "units." They talk about curriculum, discuss what teachers are doing in their classrooms, perhaps share a planned activity.
- Ganado has developed an extensive professional development library, because external resources are all but nonexistent locally, and teachers regularly watch training videos, read professional literature and talk with colleagues about improving teaching. The school makes sure teachers get the time they need for these activities. The principal or a substitute may cover a teacher's class, freeing up that teacher for meetings with colleagues, for example.
- Four times a year the school hosts a "Once Upon a Time Breakfast." Students, parents, and staff members bring their favorite books to school and share them over food.
- Every year, the school conducts an "early childhood academy" for classroom aides, a full week of training on important concepts and techniques.

For more information, contact principal
Sigmund Boloz
Ganado Primary School
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Ganado,AZ 86505
Phone: (520) 755-1020
Fax: (520) 755-1085

at issue
TIME

What to listen for

These statements indicate positive and negative views of time. Which of these do you hear at your school?

NEGATIVE:	POSITIVE:
"Staff development takes time that I don't have."	"We use a lot of time for our own learning, but it's important."
"We're doing too much already."	"We can do a couple more sessions on this technique this semester."
"I don't want to waste my time in that session! It won't help me at all."	"Let's try this out. I think it might help me a lot in the classroom."
"I need to get this week's plans done. I don't have time to think about next year."	"If we fit this workshop in, it will help us for next year."
"This didn't work when they tried it in 19__, and it won't work today."	"It didn't work the last time they tried it, but times have changed and we can learn from their mistakes."
"You're wasting your time. It won't help these kids learn."	"This is important to the school's improvement efforts. Let's put our time into it."
"I'm already changing my curriculum/instruction/assessment/etc. I don't want one more thing to do."	"This work will support the new curriculum/instruction/assessment I want to try."

reform, publicly ridiculing those who want to try new things. A toxic culture can destroy motivation, dampen commitment, depress effort, and change the focus of the school. It can decrease learning, frustrate growth, stymie risk taking, and foster radical individualism rather than collegiality.

SHAPING SCHOOL CULTURE

To shape a more nurturing culture, a school's principal, staff developers, and teacher leaders need to examine their school with an eye for time issues. Suggested steps include:

Read the school's culture. Leaders need to first understand the deeper norms, values, and beliefs of the school. Compile a history: Information sources could include present and former staff members, other district personnel, yearbooks, newspaper clippings, parents, and community leaders. Seek out the informal networks that touch the school. Look at how the school's values have developed over time. Examine the symbols and stories that permeate the culture. Listen to how people talk about time they spend in the school. Look for rituals of time use.

Assess views of time. Does the school's culture include ideas about time that support adult learning? For example, do teachers want to spend time conferring with colleagues and improving their teaching? Do they feel that time spent on staff development is worthwhile? What common conceptions about time do staff members share? Are there specific attitudes about time that need to be changed before teaching can improve?

Reinforce the positive. Through symbolic actions and model behaviors, leaders need to support positive and energizing views of the time spent learning and growing. Some examples:

- Look for teachers or activities in the school that make good use of time and single them out for public praise.
- Make a point of being a model by using time to do important work: If the principal makes regular time for conversations with teachers about curriculum, for example, that sends a powerful message that curriculum development is important.
- Provide positive examples. Make contact with other schools that succeed academically despite similar challenges, so teachers can see for themselves that it can be done.
- Select staff members who share positive values of time, who will be assets to a nurturing school culture.

At the same time, the school must address any negative, pessimistic views of time in the culture. Be candid and forthright: Toxic cultures are so unpleasant that

FOR FURTHER READING

- *The leadership paradox: Balancing logic and artistry in schools* by Terrence Deal and Kent Peterson. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994.
- "Student learning grows in professional cultures," by Joan Richardson. *Tools for Schools,* August/September, 1998. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.

at issue
TIME

Beliefs about time

Norms, values, and beliefs about time differ across schools. Some important concepts to consider when examing your school's culture:

- **Amount of time:** How much time is a lot of time? In some schools, two days of inservice is considered too much, while in other schools this is seen as a bare minimum for learning new ideas.
- **Time as investment:** Is professional learning viewed as a waste of time or an important investment in students?
- **Rate or speed of change over time** (Schein, 1992): How fast should new ideas and techniques be incorporated into the school? Should the school focus on one reform approach during the next three or four years, or should the school try to adopt two or more approaches at once?
- **Time on/time off:** When can staff members relax, disengage, or rest? In some school cultures, professional development sessions are time for a respite or breather, a time to doze – perhaps not physically, but psychologically. In other schools, staff development time is a period of heightened attention, energy, and focus.
- **Sequence of events over time** (Schein, 1992): What should be done first, second, or never? In some schools, everything but professional learning occurs first. Workshops, faculty study groups, discussions of practice, etc., take last place to other activities.
- **Ownership of time:** Whose time is this? In some schools, the culture decrees that time is the sole property of individual teachers. In other schools, time is understood as shared for the good of the whole organization.

no one wants to admit being in one. This reluctance can stall serious discussion of how negative values can be turned around.

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TOOL 7.2

Analysis of current time usage with time use log

1. How much time in minutes do staff members have for planning?
2. How much time in minutes are staff members expected to attend staff meetings per week/month?
3. How many professional development days are planned into the current school year? When do those days occur? Add the number of minutes available in professional development days. Remember to subtract lunchtime.
4. For one week, log how planning time is used using the Time Use Log on the next page.
5. As a team, graph how all members of the team or schoolwide used time collectively by adding the total amount of time used in each category across all members' logs.
6. Identify how much of the available time was spent in school-based team learning.
7. Complete the Time Use Log on the next page. Identify how much of the total available time was invested in work related to the areas in the first column.
8. Use the graph and personal perceptions to consider the impact of various ways time is used by considering these questions:
    a. What is the difference between the amounts of time spent in individual work versus time spent in collaborative work?
    b. What kind of time usage is the most satisfying to you?
    c. What kind of time usage is the least satisfying to you?
    d. What type of time usage has the greatest impact on achievement of your students?
    e. What kind of time usage has the greatest impact on your practice as a teacher?
9. Identify the norms/agreements/expectations about time in the school.
10. Consider how to increase the kind of time usage that is most satisfying to you and that has the greatest impact on achievement of your students.

Time use log

Use the log to identify how non-instructional time is spent on various tasks and indicate if that time is spent alone or in collaboration with one or more colleagues.

A = alone **C = collaboration with one or more colleagues**

	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		
AREAS	**# min.**	**A/C**	**# min.**	**A/C**	**# min.**	**A/C**	**# min.**	**A/C**	**# min.**	**A/C**	**Total min.**
Management/clerical (attendance, non-academic reports, business transaction, copying, getting supplies, etc.)											
Assessment (analyzing student work, grading student work, designing assessments, etc.)											
School-focused work (committee work, etc.)											
District-focused work (committee work, etc.)											
Non-school related (personal phone calls, errands, etc.)											
Other											
Other											
Other											
Total daily time											
Total alone											
Total collaborative											

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A bi-monthly publication supporting student and staff learning through school improvement

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2002

NATIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
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INSIDE

Think outside the clock

Create time for professional learning

BY JOAN RICHARDSON

Teachers at Addison Elementary School in Marietta, Ga., work in a school district that provides substantial opportunities for staff development. But Addison teachers wanted more: They wanted to work together in study groups every week, an activity not covered by the district staff development plan. Because they were saddled with the traditional school schedule, the study groups would have to meet after school unless teachers had another plan.

Principal Carolyn Jurick and the Addison staff approached the school's PTA about supporting cultural arts activities that would involve students but not teachers for one hour every other week. That worked fine for awhile but parents soon tired of the substantial commitment required in that effort and Jurick moved on to Plan B.

In Plan B, Jurick hired subs to cover classrooms for an entire day every other week. The subs worked all day but rotated from classroom to classroom. A study group of six to eight teachers could meet for one hour while subs covered their classrooms.

"At first, teachers thought that was a godsend. But that wore thin after awhile. Even though they were out of their classrooms, they still had to plan for the subs, and they still had to worry about covering lunch," Jurick said.

On to Plan C. In Plan C, Jurick and her staff concocted a plan to have students begin school 10 minutes earlier than other elementary schools and end 10 minutes later — in exchange for releasing students from school at 1:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Teachers would continue to work until at least 3 p.m. and use that time to meet in their study groups.

Four years later, this plan is still working.

"It costs us nothing, and we love it. But we couldn't have done this if we hadn't been able to show that the other ways wouldn't work," Jurick said.

The Addison staff's experience in trying to find time for professional learning offers several significant lessons about the conundrum facing virtually all schools that struggle with this issue:

- Teachers must be flexible and even creative in how they think about their schedules.
- Teachers must be willing to make trade-offs

Continued on Page 2

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Think outside the clock

Continued from Page One

in order to gain what they really want.

- Teachers must be clear about the connection between their own learning and improvements in student learning.
- Teachers must come prepared with Plan B in case Plan A doesn't work.

Although educators are increasingly realizing the value of having teachers work together every day and every week, schools are still burdened with outdated ideas about teachers' and principals' work day and work year. And shaking up that status quo impacts not only teachers but families that have come to expect schools to operate at certain times and in certain ways.

NSDC is clear in its beliefs about this: 25% of an educator's work time should be devoted to professional learning and collaboration with colleagues. But a survey of members in 2000 revealed that no districts had yet reached that level of commitment. Excluding daily planning time, 81% of the respondents to that survey said less than 5% of a teacher's work week was devoted to professional learning.

Even preparation time for teachers is limited, according to Stanford University professor Linda Darling-Hammond. She estimates that most U.S. elementary teachers have three or fewer hours for preparation each week (only 8.3 minutes for every hour in the classroom) and that secondary teachers generally have five prep periods per week (13 minutes per hour of classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond, *JSD* Spring 1999, p. 33).

Acknowledging the difficulty of the task, NSDC Executive Director Dennis Sparks recommends that schools begin by identifying three to four hours a week — or about 10% of a teacher's work time — for learning and working with peers on improving instruction. "Then schools can begin to experiment with ways to extend that time over the next two or three years to 25% of teachers' work time," he said.

James Madison University professor Michael Rettig, who consults with numerous school districts on scheduling issues, said no district has ever invited him in specifically to find more time for staff development. Typically, districts contact him because they want to find larger blocks of instructional time. If that creates opportunities for staff development, it's a great side benefit, but not the primary focus, he said.

But Rettig said the challenge of finding more time for professional learning is the same as finding larger blocks of instructional time. "The problem is that they're not willing to trade away something in order to get that," Rettig said.

In elementary schools, for example, he said finding common planning time for all teachers in a grade-level is relatively simple. "I can easily create a schedule that would achieve that. But it would mean that teachers might have to lose their individual planning periods on certain days. That's a trade-off that many teachers don't want to make," he said.

When schools do find a schedule they believe will work for them, Rettig urges them to pilot the new plan for a year and, if possible to pilot several different ideas in the same district before committing.

"Once the time is there, teachers need guidance and preparation for how to use it. If it just becomes time for them to sit by themselves and grade papers, then an opportunity for learning has been lost," says Mikii Bendotti, executive director of the Arizona Teacher Advancement Program.

Mikii Bendotti, who has worked with several Arizona schools to find more professional learning time, cautions that freeing teachers to work together is insufficient. "Once the time is there, teachers need guidance and preparation for how to use it. If it just becomes time for them to sit by themselves and grade papers, then an opportunity for learning has been lost," said Bendotti, executive director of the Arizona Teacher Advancement Program, which is funded by the Milken Foundation.

Teachers need preparation in how to run a meeting, how to set norms for those meetings, how to lead decision making and more. In other words, teachers need staff development in order to prepare for staff development. "That's especially the case when teachers have only experienced a sit-and-get model of staff development," she said.

Bendotti has also learned that it's better to make sacrifices to carve out larger chunks of time that occur less frequently than to have short but more frequent meetings. For example, arranging to have teachers meet for 30 minutes every day is probably less effective than meeting for 45 minutes three times a week.

Like many districts, the Hoover City Schools in suburban Birmingham, Ala., is still searching for the answer to its time puzzle. "We're still struggling to find that perfect model, that perfect solution. But it's not there. You have to think creatively. How do you develop your teachers and safeguard the instructional time for your children? That's the rub," said Deborah Camp, curriculum instruction technology specialist for has been part of discussions where teachers and administrators have been grappling with this issue.

"Here's my dream: Have all teachers work on a 12-month calendar, compensate teachers for that time, and build staff development days right into their work year. If we lengthened the school day for teachers and increased the number of days that teachers work, your time issue would disappear. Doing it any other way, it's always going to be a struggle," Camp said.

Tools For Schools August/September 2002

How To Find Time

*Schools and districts that have carved out more time for professional learning have typically relied on one of the following strategies. Most of these strategies were initially identified in "The time dilemma in school restructuring," by Gary Watts and Shari Castle, **Phi Delta Kappan** 75 (1), December 1993.*

Bank time

- Lengthen the regular school day. "Save" the extra minutes to create larger blocks of time when teachers can plan or learn together.
- Create regularly scheduled early dismissal/late start days.

Buy time

- Hire more teachers, clerks, and support staff to create smaller classes and/or expand or add planning or learning times for teachers.
- Hire substitute teachers to fill-in for regular classroom teachers to enable those teachers to plan or learn together.
- Add an extra teaching position in the school for a rotating substitute teacher who would regularly fill in for teachers in order to free them for planning or learning time.
- Create a substitute bank of "staff development substitute teachers" which regular classroom teachers can tap in order to participate in various forms of professional learning.

Common time

- Use common planning time to enable teachers working with the same students, the same grade level, or the same subject to share information, collaborate on projects, or learn more about their shared interest.
- Organize "specials" into blocks of time to create common time for teachers with similar interests.
- Link planning periods to other non-instructional times, such as lunch periods, giving teachers the option to use their personal time for shared learning time.

Free teachers from instructional time

- Enlist administrators to teach classes.
- Authorize teaching assistants and/or college interns to teach classes at regular intervals, always under the direction of a teacher.
- Team teachers so one teaches while the other plans or learns independently.
- Plan day-long, off-site field experiences for students in order to create a large block of time when teachers can learn.

Add professional days to the school year

- Create multi-day summer learning institutes for teachers in order to ensure that they receive the necessary depth in areas of strategic importance for the district.
- Create a mid-year break for students and use those days for teacher learning.

Use existing time more effectively

- Provide professional learning time during staff meetings. (For ideas on better ways to use staff meetings, see the Oct./Nov. 1999 *Tools for Schools*.)
- Spread time from multi-school planning days across the calendar to provide more frequent, shorter school-based learning opportunities.

HOW MUCH TIME DO TEACHERS NEED?

In a survey of 178 principals in urban high schools undertaking major change efforts, lack of time, energy, and money were identified as the key implementation problems. On average, teachers devoted 70 days of time to implementing a project, while "the more successful schools used 50 days a year of external assistance for training, coaching, and capacity building."

Source: "Using time well: Schedules in Essential schools," by Kathleen Cushman, *Horace 12* (2), Nov. 1995. www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/15.

Tools For Schools August/September 2002

Schools That Have Found Time

To those who say it can't be done, the answer is "it has already been done."These are just a few examples of schools and districts that have found ways to provide regular time within the workday for professional learning.

Ridge Meadows Elementary School, Ellisville, Mo.

Early-release days to focus on improving writing

One day each month, the Rockwood School District releases students in elementary, middle, and high schools in the same quadrants of the district. That allows the entire staff of a school to have an afternoon to work together on a topic of its choosing.

Three times a year, the Ridge Meadows staff uses these early dismissal days to score student writing. All students in grades 1-5 write in response to the same non-fiction prompt. Grade-level teachers design a rubric to score the prompt. Tables are set up in the school gym by grade-level and teachers work together to score the writing samples. When the scoring is ended, teachers then reflect upon what they've learned and how they will change their instruction to improve student writing.

Brandon High School, Ortonville, Mich.

Late starts provide consistent learning time for teachers

Every Wednesday morning at Brandon High School is devoted to professional development and teacher collaboration. Teachers begin work at 7:30 a.m. but students don't begin classes until 11 a.m. The high school has a traditional six-period day.

A steering committee composed of staff who volunteer for the assignment design the learning for each Wednesday. That time could be devoted to learning more about technology, interpreting student test data, designing the state-mandated career pathways for students, or doing leadership development activities. Departmental staff frequently use this time to learn more about changes in curriculum or assessments.

Although students are allowed to arrive late, many clubs meet during this time and students have access to computer labs and the school library.

Ball High School, Galveston, Texas

Run staff development sessions inside prep periods

An alternating 90-minute block schedule provides teachers with a 90-minute conference or prep period each day. Twice a month, Galveston Ball runs two 45-minute staff development sessions inside each of those conference periods.

The staff development offered during this time is mandatory and interdisciplinary and taught eight times in order to reach the entire staff of 170 teachers.

The school has used this time to teach staff how to write benchmark testing and how to electronically access data on the same testing. Recently, for example, the school did a lengthy workshop of a new writing method. Follow-up meetings occurred during these conference periods after teachers had implemented the new method with students and could talk about the challenges they faced when doing that. Curriculum specialists from the district also have used this time to meet with language arts and math teachers to explore issues.

Teachers can use their regular conference period to meet with colleagues, although entire departments do not share the same conference period.

Madison Park School, Phoenix, Ariz.

Permanent subs on staff relieve teachers for collaborative time

Two fulltime substitute teachers provide released time for teachers for professional development during the workday. Teachers sign up for one of the substitute teachers in order to do professional learning on their own, to work with another teacher, or to work with one of the building's master teachers. (Master teachers have only half-day classroom responsibilities and devote the remainder of their time to on-site professional development.) Teachers are allowed to use such released time two to three times each month.

In addition, teachers in this grade 3-8 school agreed to exchange two prep periods a week in order to gain a block of time for collaboration with their grade-level colleagues.

Tools For Schools August/September 2002

Schools That Have Found Time

International High School, Long Island, N.Y.

Organize teachers into interdisciplinary teams

The school's 29 teachers and 450 students are organized into six interdisciplinary teams. Teachers have 70 minutes of daily planning time and a half day each week for staff-planned professional development. This amounts to nearly nine hours of shared time each week. The team also has the discretion to decide how to use 500 hours of professional learning time each year.

Team members observe and coach each other; share best practices; develop, evaluate, and revise curricula; and jointly devise interventions for students who need extra support.

Each staff member also leads a small advisory group that meets weekly to discuss issues related to students' personal, academic, and social growth.

Spring Woods High School, Houston, Texas

Create staff rally days

Texas' football traditions inspired Spring Woods High School to find a way to adapt the well-identified pep rally schedule for professional time for teachers.

Between 15 and 20 times a year, Spring Woods uses the same bell schedule that governs a pep rally day and creates a "staff rally" day when students are dismissed 30 minutes early to allow teachers time to meet together until their normal work day ends. The faculty of 125 is broken into about a dozen interdisciplinary groups. A member of the Schoolwide Leadership Cadre guides each group and plans how the time will be used. For example, twice a year the cadre selects books that the staff will read and discuss during these meetings.

Spring Woods operates on a four-period block schedule in which teachers teach three periods a day and have one instruction-free conference or prep period. Once a month, that conference period becomes a staff development period. Teachers are required to use half of those conference periods to attend a mandatory discussion or workshop that may focus on topics ranging from a new reading initiative to improving their understanding of the state's standardized testing program.

Addison Elementary School, Marietta, Ga.

Weekly meeting time for study groups

Students begin school 10 minutes earlier and end 10 minutes later than other elementary schools in the Cobb County School District. But, on Wednesday afternoons, students leave schools at 1:30 p.m. and teachers assemble in their study groups. Teachers are required to work until 3 p.m., but most of them meet in study groups until about 4 p.m. each Wednesday.

Using district-allocated staff development dollars, teachers are still able to hire subs to enable them to attend meetings and visit other schools for observations. They also participate in district-sponsored staff development activities.

Tools For Schools August/September 2002

Districts That Have Found Time

Montgomery County, Md.

Knowledgeable substitutes in the classroom

Each of the 193 schools in Montgomery County, Md. has a fulltime staff development teacher whose role is to provide instructional support for teachers in that building. In the elementary schools, this teacher may be involved in team teaching, presenting model lessons, relieving teachers so they can observe other teachers teach, or helping teachers locate needed resource materials. In the secondary schools, the staff development teacher may work with entire departments as a resource teacher or relieve the department chairs to do related work.

In addition, each Montgomery County school has an allocation for a staff development substitute teacher. This teacher, who earns a higher rate of pay than a traditional substitute, is only available to relieve teachers for professional growth. The staff development teacher schedules this substitute teacher's time based on requests from classroom teachers. For example, a teacher might request relief by the staff development substitute in order to spend an afternoon on an action research project or to observe another classroom. Teachers who call in sick or take personal days are replaced by substitutes drawn from the districtwide substitute pool.

Iowa City, Iowa

Early-release days for all schools

For 25 years, students at all Iowa City public schools have been released from school an hour early every Thursday in order to provide time for professional development. Elementary school students end their day at 2 p.m. and secondary students at 2:20 p.m. Teachers work until 4 p.m.

Half of those Thursday are designated for building-level staff development; the other half for districtwide staff development. The school and district improvement plans guide most of the professional learning. For example, grade-level teachers might meet on the building-level days to work on common issues. On the district days, teachers from across all schools might meet by subjects or grade-levels or the district may provide its own workshop on a topic (such as using data to design instruction) that would be valuable for all teachers.

In addition, Iowa City uses outside grant money to buy substitute teacher time to enable groups of teachers to work together or attend conferences.

Jefferson County, Ky.

Learning time for principals

Teachers aren't the only school employees who need time for professional learning. In Jefferson County, Ky., middle school principals meet for three days each summer with teacher leaders from their schools to focus on standards for key academic areas. Together, they examine data on student learning and develop school improvement plans. During the school year, the principals have monthly staff development days of their own. For half of those days, the principals focus on specific learning within a content area, such as learning more about writing standards. During the other half of those days, the principals break into special interest cohorts, such as integrating technology into instruction, developing leadership skills, or learning more about "knowledge work."

HOW MUCH TIME DO TEACHERS NEED?

The staff of the Effective Schools Network reports that it takes 10 to 20 teacher days to develop and implement improvement plans.

Source: "Using time well: Schedules in Essential schools," by Kathleen Cushman, *Horace 12* (2), Nov. 1995. www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/15.

To learn a "moderately difficult teaching strategy could require that teachers receive 20 to 30 hours of instruction in its theory, 15 to 20 classroom demonstrations, and 10 to 15 coaching sessions before mastering the technique and incorporating it into routine classroom practice."

Source: *Time for reform*, by Susanna Purnell and Paul Hill (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992).

Tools For Schools August/September 2002

Time for professional learning

Resources to help you learn more about it

"Finding Time for Collaboration"
Mary Anne Raywid, *Educational Leadership, 51*(1), September 1993.

Offers 10 strategies schools are using to create time. Order from ASCD, (800) 933-2723.

"Making Time for Teacher Professional Development"
Ismat Abdal-Haqq, ERIC Clearinghouse, October 1996.

Answers seven frequently asked questions regarding creating time for professional development. Order Digest # 95-4 from ERIC, (202) 293-2450 or order online at www.ericsp.org/pages/digests/making_time_teacher_pro_dev_95-4.html. Price: $4.

Prisoners of Time
National Commission on Time and Learning. Washington, DC: Author, 1994.

Key national report on time in schools. Order from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Supt. of Documents, Mail Stop, SSOP, Washington DC, 20402-9328; (202) 783-3238; Stock No. 065-000-00640-5. Price: $5.50.

"Scheduling Time to Maximize Staff Development Opportunities"
Brenda Tanner, Robert Canady, and Michael Rettig, *Journal of Staff Development, 16*(4), Fall 1995.

Provides examples of how high schools can structure time to improve instruction and professional learning. Available online at www.nsdc.org/library/jsd/tanner164.html.

"Smart Use of Time and Money"
Joan Richardson, *Journal of Staff Development, 18*(1), Winter 1997.

Explores the issue of resources for professional learning. Available online at www.nsdc.org/library/jsd/richardson181.html.

Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming Professional Development for Student Success
National Foundation for Innovation in Education (now the NEA Foundation for Innovation in Education). Washington, DC: Author, 1996.

Addresses rationale for teacher development work and the relationship between teacher learning and student learning. Order from NFIE Publications, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT, 06516. Price: $15.

"The Time Dilemma in School Restructuring"
Gary D. Watts and Shari Castle, *Phi Delta Kappan, 75*(1), December 1993.

Identifies five primary ways that innovative schools "found" time for professional learning. Order from PDK, (812) 339-1156.

Time for Reform
Susanna Purnell and Paul Hill. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1992.

Identifies six strategies schools use to provide time for reform. Order online at www.rand.org/education/pubs/reform.prior.html. Price: $7.

"Time: Squeeze, Carve, Apply, Target, Use, Arrange, for Adult Learning"
Journal of Staff Development, 20(2), Spring 1999.

The entire issue of the Spring 1999 *JSD* is devoted to exploring varous issues related to use of time in schools. Order from NSDC Business Office, (800) 727-7288 or through NSDC Online Bookstore, www.nsdc.org/bookstore.htm.

NSDC Online Library

See www.nsdc.org/library/time.html for an extensive listing of articles, reports, and other web sites with information about time for professional learning.

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Working Toward
EXCELLENCE
A NEWSLETTER OF
THE ALABAMA
BEST PRACTICES CENTER

SPRING 2001 VOLUME 1 ~ NUMBER 3

Time Enough For Teaching And Learning

The stories in this issue of *Working Toward Excellence* explore two critical needs that all schools share:

- Time enough for teachers to work effectively with students; and
- Time enough for teachers to work together "student-free" as they plan instruction, improve curriculum, and sharpen their own teaching.

Because *WTE* focuses on promising educational practices, most of the news here is good. Readers will find encouraging examples of schools and districts where resourceful educators are "making time." Some have strong financial support; others scramble to make ends meet. But they have this in common: they are creative thinkers who put the needs of their students and teachers first. *They find the time.*

But they are not the norm. In the majority of Alabama schools, and in many schools across the nation, students, parents, teachers, administrators and staff continue to be "captives of the clock and calendar." We begin with two brief tales.

The 50-minute dash

In an Alabama middle school not far from Birmingham, a class of seventh grade language arts students are deep into *Maniac McGee*, the 1991 Newbery Award-winning story about a very excitable orphan boy who confronts racism in a small town.

Author Jerry Spinelli has described his seriocomic folk story as "the history of a kid." Picking up on that theme, the teacher in this well-run classroom has asked her students to write short essays recollecting something important in their own brief personal histories.

Glancing at the sweeping hands of the large clock mounted over the wipeboard, the teacher — let's call her Ms. Tempus — begins the class by having students read from their essays. After a few students volunteer to read aloud she cuts her eyes to the clock again. Other students are waving their hands, also anxious to share their personal stories. But Ms. Tempus must move on. Time's a-wasting.

Next, Ms. Tempus divides her students into four groups. "Read chapters 16 through 18," she instructs, "and look for questions that you can bring back to our literary discussion." She passes out each student's "writer's notebook" as the kids bunch up in small groups on the carpeted floor. Some set up beach chairs; others grab soft pillows and plop down.

Ms. Tempus moves from group to group, modeling the "text analysis" process. "Why is the word '*is*' in italics?" "How is Maniac feeling?" "Have you ever been in a group of people where you know you are not wanted?" After 15 minutes, perhaps two-thirds of the students have completed the "read-aloud." But once again, it's time to pick up the pace.

The class gathers to discuss the unfolding story. Ms. Tempus allots 10 minutes for an exchange of ideas — barely enough time to rev up the mental engines of her adolescent audience. She checks the classroom clock and grimaces. The 50-minute instructional period is almost over.

"For the next seven minutes," she says, "pretend that you are Maniac writing in your diary or on scratch paper to get your feelings out. I want to see what you've written before you leave class today. That's your ticket out of here."

The students jump to the writing task. A few pencil-draggers receive the teacher's personal attention. The first student to finish reads her entry aloud, as others scribble rapidly. The bell rings. Few students have completed the task. Ms. Tempus shouts over the scraping desk and exit chatter: "The first thing we'll do tomorrow is finish your writing and read these entries. So be ready!" As the kids file out, another group is already queuing up at the door. Ms. Tempus rushes about the room, trying to reorganize. A few ticks later, the 50-minute dash begins again.

AT ANOTHER MIDDLE SCHOOL, a few dozen miles away in a neighboring school district, teachers gather for a 30-minute, twice-weekly group planning period. During this time, the team

Continued on page 6.

FINDING TIME

Homewood Middle's Daily Schedule Creates Time to Improve Teaching

A four-block schedule gives teachers the opportunity to teach differently — and the time it takes to learn how to do that.

CINDY CASON DESPISES school bells. In fact, she says they drive her crazy.

A strange aversion, you might think, for one whose profession places her in the principal's office of Homewood Middle School, a school of 740 students serving a predominantly upper middle class suburb of Birmingham. But Dr. Cason insists that teaching and learning can be most effective when you take away the bells and muffle the ticking clocks.

At Homewood Middle, a four-block schedule allows teams of teachers to work with three classes for ninety minutes each day — a generous portion of instructional time that requires new teaching strategies. The fourth daily block is "student free" and provides teachers with time to develop new techniques, learn about technology integration, look at student work, and meet with parents. The block schedule gives HMS teachers the opportunity to teach differently — and the time it takes to learn how to do that.

"Our middle school has made a huge effort to really protect instructional time," says seventh grade social studies teacher Amelia Gamble. "And part of that protecting instructional time has given us the benefit of having common planning time — time off with all of the other same-grade teachers."

Each grade level is composed of several four-teacher teams who are responsible for teaching core groups of students. Math and language arts teachers work with the same core group on a daily basis, while science and social studies teachers alternate, teaching 9-week courses to two different core groups. Schedules are arranged so that all same-grade teachers have a common planning block each day.

Extensive research and planning led HMS administrators to begin the four-block schedule with sixth grade teachers five years ago. One grade at a time eased into the new schedule from a traditional seven-period day. This year, eighth grade teachers made the leap.

More time for student learning

Five years ago, the Homewood school system began its effort to provide all teachers with more embedded professional development time while protecting (and in some cases, increasing) instructional time for students. Homewood assistant superintendent Dr. Betty Winches points to the middle school's progress as evidence that the investment of time and money have paid off.

"The relationship between time on task and test scores bowled us over," says Winches. "We knew there was a relationship there, and expected to see some gains in language and math, but we did not expect them to be so rapid and pronounced.

"These were the same teachers, the same kids, and the same buildings," notes Winches, who was a member of the HMS staff when the changes began. "We just extended time and provided staff development to create a more project-based atmosphere, and we saw phenomenal gains. Some classes jumped six to ten percentile points in one year."

A side effect of the block schedule has been a dramatic decrease in discipline referrals, since students are spending less time in the hallways and more time on task in classrooms.

Escaping the clock

In a traditional 50-minute class, Cason says, teachers and students live by the clock. "They're getting information, they're looking at homework from the night before, you're letting them practice for about ten minutes, and you're sending them out the door."

Educators at Homewood Middle supported the shift to block scheduling "because we know that kids need time to problem solve. Now they have the opportunity to get down in the middle of the floor, and solve the problems on their own with the teacher there."

If a creative project takes longer than expected, teachers can manipulate the schedule to provide even more time. "It's more of a flexible block schedule than it is a true block schedule because teacher teams can move their kids and change their schedule during the day. The only thing I tell them they have to do is get to lunch on time, and PE," Cason explains.

Working Toward Excellence is a quarterly publication of the Alabama *Best Practices Center.* The Best Practices Center, located in Montgomery, works to identify and promote promising education practices, with an emphasis on staff development for teachers and administrators. It collaborates with existing organizations such as the State Department of Education, higher education, local school systems and schools, the regional inservice centers and others. It is facilitated by the A+ Education Foundation, with the generous support of the BellSouth Foundation and the State of Alabama. For more information, call (334) 279-1886.

John Norton, *Editor*
Braden Phillips-Welborn, *Senior Writer*

The longer periods brought about changes in teaching as well. "You just can't do the traditional method of teaching in a ninety-minute block, especially with thirteen year olds," Cason notes. Teachers have gravitated toward constructivist methods that engage kids in learning through hands-on activities, problem solving, and cooperative learning.

Cason expected math teachers to have the most difficulty in adapting to the block — but she was wrong. She relates the experience of a veteran math teacher with nearly 30 years of experience. "She says that this is the best thing that's ever happened to her classroom…She sees them working and she knows where it is that they're having a problem, so she can address it with them."

What teachers say

Eighth grade math teacher Stephanie Fuhrman is halfway through her first year of the block schedule. "It is so much more work because there is no way to have direct instruction for ninety minutes — so I am having to create, research, and find applications that I would not have had time for last year — finding innovative ways to engage them."

Yet Fuhrman enjoys the hard-won evolution of her teaching practice and sees the impact on her students. "I give them real world problems. They have to work together and contribute to the group. I've never had time to do that before, and that's been just great!"

Amelia Gamble has taught at Homewood Middle for six years. "When we went to the block schedule, there was a huge need for a change in how we'd been doing things. When I had to teach in fifty minutes, I felt like I had to hand out information. But now, I want students to struggle a little bit. What's the problem here? What's our essential learning? And let them kind of struggle along, learning through the process."

Gamble's social studies students do more writing and reading — and more thinking — in the classroom now. "It used to be that we didn't have time to say, "Let's look at this section together,' or "let's pull out the main points together.' That's something they had to do at home. And when they took their textbooks home, they were scanning over those quiz words and that was it."

Gamble also says that struggling readers gain from the extra attention they receive in longer classes. "I have some low readers, and that big block of time is really beneficial for them. If they didn't get it on their own, there's that opportunity to sit down and work with that kid. And they can't hide. They can't just sit at their desk and "get by' for ninety-five minutes."

More time for teacher learning

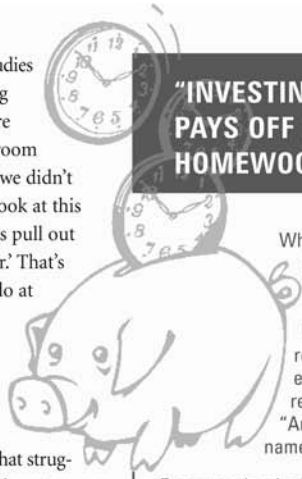
What's a surefire recipe for disaster? Tell teachers that the whole school is going to the block schedule next year, and then ignore the need for professional development to support the change.

Luckily, Homewood didn't have to learn the hard way. An intense year of planning and staff development preceded the sixth grade teachers' initiation — and then-assistant principal Winches made sure that teachers "bought in" to the block idea before committing them to it.

Homewood Middle teachers continue to sharpen their teaching skills during the daily 90-minute planning block. Half of this time can be used for individual planning, reflection, and research. The other half is spent with colleagues, and a schoolwide schedule determines the professional development focus for each day.

On *Mondays,* teachers meet

Continued on page 4.



"INVESTING IN TEACHER TIME PAYS OFF IN PERFORMANCE," SAYS HOMEWOOD SUPERINTENDENT

When Homewood City Schools first sought to create more time for teacher learning during the day, they weren't sure how to describe their efforts. "Then the National Staff Development Council released a publication that mentioned embedded professional development," recalls superintendent Dr. Jodi Newton. "And we said, "Look at that — we have a name for it now!'"

Every teacher in the Homewood system has at least thirty minutes of personal planning time per day, along with at least two additional 40-minute planning periods per week. Most have more. (See the stories on pages 2 and 4 for information about middle and elementary schools. High school teachers have two planning periods during each seven-period day.)

To provide extra time for embedded staff development without reducing students' instructional time or inflating class sizes, Homewood's leaders made a substantial investment in additional teacher units. Newton and assistant superintendent Dr. Betty Winches say the investment pays off in performance.

Teachers participate in ongoing, sustained professional development that is research-based and collaborative in nature. Newton says the extra time comes with higher expectations and a structured, systemwide approach to professional development. The presence of an assistant principal for instruction at every school helps to ensure that embedded time is being used wisely.

In recent years, Homewood faculties have focused attention on annual themes related to the system's needs: differentiated instruction, instructional technology, and assessment. Several of the schools are Alabama Reading Initiative Literacy Demonstration Sites, as well.

Each year, the system earmarks about $200,000 for professional development. Administrators place top priority on opportunities that will train teachers to train others in the system. "It's much more rewarding to send that second grade teacher to that conference about instructional strategies, because I know that we now have the mechanism for her to share with others," says Winches.

Newton and Winches believe that the additional time for reflection, study, and collaboration has helped teachers view themselves as professionals who have expertise to share. "Our schools need teacher leaders," Newton says. "I see our teachers, principals, and Dr. Winches growing in instructional leadership all the time, and it's very rewarding when you see the growth in knowledge. Our teachers are sharing ideas with principals, and the principals are sharing them with us…It is a circular thing."

HOMEWOOD MIDDLE'S SCHEDULE…
Continued from page 3.

with others who teach their subject area at the same grade level. "You know that on Monday, you're going to have to sit down with the other people teaching seventh grade social studies and they're going to say, "What are you doing in your room?'," explains Amelia Gamble. "You know that somebody's going to hold you accountable. They're keeping up with your pacing, and your scope, and all of that."

During *Monday* sessions, teachers often compare project ideas, assignments, grading rubrics, and instructional plans as "critical friends." "We usually look at what the next two weeks hold," says Gamble. "We talk about ideas…. "How are you going to teach that, how are you going to assess that, what do you mean by that? Is this fluff stuff, or is there content here?'"

The Monday discussions sometimes help teachers to reflect on the effectiveness of what they've already done, Gamble adds. "We'll say to each other, "What did the work look like?' There's a lot of that back-end fixing." This process is particularly helpful to new teachers, she says, who are soon offering ideas of their own. "It's effective. It increases my sense of purpose, when you really have another professional just helping you along."

Don't give up scarce hours to "one-shot workshops."

Cason refers to *Tuesday* as "Leadership Day," mostly because the teachers are meeting with school leaders during half of their planning periods on that day. Tuesday often includes state- or federally-mandated training facilitated by Cason. That's also a time for faculty members to share information from conferences they've attended individually.

On *Wednesdays,* technology coordinator Pam White leads sessions on instructional technology. *Thursdays* are, as Gamble puts it, "team time." That's when teams sharing a core group of students come together to do interdisciplinary planning and to discuss individual students' progress and behavior.

Thursday discussions often resemble case work. "We start pulling records, and we look at student work," Cason says. "We ask, "What is it that's going right in this class that could help in this other class?'"

Fridays are reserved for parent conferences. Homewood teachers have found that setting aside this time each week makes it easier for them to connect with parents of students who are having difficulties.

Gamble and Fuhrman believe that the new schedule, including the additional embedded professional development time, both motivates and supports them. "Because of the atmosphere, I feel that I should be on the ball, all the time," says Fuhrman. "If you love the kids, and you want the best for them, then you're not comfortable just getting by."

Funding the block schedule

Thanks to a strong base of local financial support, Cason can operate on a schedule of four substantial blocks while still complying with Alabama class size laws. More than a third of her 55 teacher units are funded by local revenues, supplementing the state monies that many Alabama systems depend upon.

"It is an expensive model," she says. "And people say all the time, you can't throw money at education to make it better. But this is a prime example of it. It takes more staff, and that takes money."

Amelia Gamble says that teacher buy-in is an important part of making an innovative schedule work. "I do think that there are some ways to do it without the extra teacher units," she says. " (But) you've got to have a faculty who believe that it's the most beneficial way to teach kids. Once the focus is on the best way to teach kids, and when you see that it's working, then you're much more likely to put in that extra time."

Winches and Homewood Superintendent Jodi Newton say that it might be more difficult to provide embedded professional development time without extra teacher units, either from local or federal funds. They do point out, however, that being focused can help principals to make the best possible use of the time that they do have.

For example, Winches notes, "When extra time isn't there, you can decide on the pressing issue for your system or school. If it's reading, and you can't afford to be part of the Alabama Reading Initiative, can you afford to bring in a speaker or trainer from the initiative? You can start by trying to build the culture around one issue."

Winches and Newton also suggest that schools avoid giving up scarce professional development hours to "one-shot wonders." Instead, they recommend staff development programs that include a formal or informal "follow-through" component. Newton gives thumbs up to ARI and other programs with a strong emphasis on continuing staff development, because they allow teacher learning to permeate the school environment.

"That's what moves our culture along," Winches says. "When it becomes normal to have expertise." ❖

FIND MORE

For more information about the Homewood school system's creative approaches to scheduling and embedded professional development time, contact Dr. Betty Winches at (205) 870-4203.

Time Enough for Teaching...
Continued from page 1.

of teachers is expected to coordinate lessons, discuss individual student progress, deal with a constant stream of school "administrivia," and — if they can find a few moments — share ideas about effective teaching strategies.

One teacher passes around photocopies of a journal article describing how a group of teachers in another school are using a process called "Looking at Student Work." The process calls for teachers to bring to the table a lesson plan and examples of student work based on the lesson. Teachers then discuss the work together, acting as "critical friends" as they reflect on the lesson's effectiveness and how it might be improved.

"We've been talking about doing something very similar to this!" the teacher says excitedly as she reviews the article with her colleagues. "This could lead us into some really good discussions about how well we're linking our curriculum to state standards and what strategies might work for our kids."

"It could," another teacher agrees. "But how much could we do in a few minutes once or twice a week? We'd just be going through the motions." Several other teachers nod. Out of a speaker in the corner of the room, they hear a "tap-tap-tap" coming from the public address system. The principal is calling one of their group to the office. As the summoned teacher gathers her papers, a bell rings. Chairs bang together as the meeting ends, like so many others, with a long list of "To Do's" carried forward to another day.

Prisoners of time

In 1994, the National Commission on Time and Learning offered this blunt assessment of school reform efforts already underway in Alabama and many other states: "We cannot get there from here with the amount of time now available and the way we now use it. Limited time will frustrate our aspirations. Misuse of time will undermine our best efforts."

Looking back today on their groundbreaking report, *Prisoners of Time*, we might easily conclude that the commissioners were soothsayers. They warned that if rigorous state standards were introduced without changing "our current time-bound system," they could cause "great mischief." Holding all students to the same high standards, they wrote, "means that some students will need more time."

Higher standards would also require more of teachers — more time to work with students and more time to develop their professional skills. "Adding school reform to the list of things schools must accomplish, without recognizing that time in the current calendar is a limited resource, trivializes the effort," the commissioners concluded. "It sends a powerful message to teachers: don't take this reform business too seriously. Squeeze it in on your own time."

Nearly a decade later, many school watchers would agree that the issue of time is still missing from the school reform agenda. And many educators would add that the Commission's warning of "great mischief" could indeed come true.

Squeezing time

News stories from across the United States tell us that the pressure to meet state standards is squeezing the life out of some schools. In many schools, a decade after the National Commission began its research, time is still the constant. Most schools still operate in 50-minute capsules, six hours a day, 175 days a year. As the pressure increases to meet state standards in a small core of subjects, there is less time for arts, music, and foreign language. Less time for engaging lessons that allow students to explore new concepts and ideas. Less time for students who need more time to learn. (See p. 11.)

But a scan of the news and education literature also offers some hope. A decade ago, the National Commission had to search the entire nation to find the reforming urban elementary school in Kansas City where school is in session almost 11 months a year, with students attending school for 205 days, and teachers on duty for 226. In this school, student sessions ran for ten weeks, followed by a week of teacher training and planning. "You don't get well-developed professionals with two inservice days a year," the principal said.

Today, schools like this one — though still rare — are easier to find. And — on a less ambitious scale — other schools are breaking the shackles of time. In almost every case, these schools are using public dollars or dollars raised by caring communities to implement their time-making strategies. As any school leader will tell you, time is money.

Here are some of the strategies schools are using to capture time. (For details, read the stories in this issue, explore our web resources on page 12, or go to our website for an extended list of helpful articles.)

Time for students

Students spend large amounts of time waiting, being "managed," or working at non-academic activities. Various studies suggest that students spend as little as 25 percent of their time actively engaged in studying academic subjects and rarely more than 50 percent. Schools could:

- Change staffing patterns to allocate more positions to classroom teaching, rather than to other kinds of supplementary staffing roles;
- Redesign schedules to create longer blocks of class time, so that students spend more time with fewer teachers each day;
- Organize schools and grades into teams that allow teachers to serve a

common group of students and to make decisions about time allocation within those teams.
- Use "looping" to keep students together with the same teachers for more than one year, saving many weeks of "getting acquainted" time at the beginning of the year.
- Eliminate the bell system, PA announcements, and class changes. (See page 2.)
- Establish an "academic day", in contrast to a "school day." At least 5.5 hours of core academic instruction daily will double the time in some schools. Lengthen the school day to accommodate clubs, sports and other extra-curricular activities.
- Team with community organizations to offer before- and after-school programs. High schools can use "early-" and "late-bird" classes. (See page 10.)
- Schools with year-round schedules can use the breaks between sessions to offer enrichment and "catch-up" programs for students, and professional development time for teachers.
- Use new technologies. Well-used, they can "buy" time through self-guided instruction and reductions in record keeping.

Time for teachers

A RAND study (*Time for Reform*, 1992) found that new teaching strategies can require as much as 50 hours of instruction, practice and coaching before teachers become comfortable with them. It also found that more successful schools in urban areas "used 50 days a year of external assistance for training, coaching, and capacity building." Other studies show that the best professional development time is "embedded" in the school day. Schools could:
- Arrange regular common planning time for teachers working with the same children or teaching the same grade or subject.
- Add or reassign professional staff to create more electives, allowing more flexible scheduling and common release time. (See p. 4.)
- Provide for the widespread and systematic use of a cadre of well-prepared, full-time, substitute teachers.
- Extend the contract year to pay teachers for professional development or use a longer day for the same purpose.
- Employ a grant writer to help secure funds for summer and/or Saturday programs where teachers receive stipends to focus on priority professional development needs.
- Use currently scheduled meetings more effectively. Some schools have eliminated most traditional faculty meetings by relying more on team leaders and department chairs and used the extra time for schoolwide planning and professional development.
- Use technology and ideas like "study tubs" (see p. 8) to create opportunities for teachers to use "time as available." Make videotapes of model lessons for colleagues to share. Create on-line professional communities where teachers can discuss ideas and issues through listserv e-mail.

Finally, researchers who have spent time "thinking about time" urge school leaders to have community discussions before making major structural changes. Parents, community leaders, and even school boards, must be convinced that more time with students — and more time for teachers to work together — will increase the likelihood of success for all.

Ultimately, time is a leadership issue. Districts and schools must decide how to use the time productively. Spending more time on "what we have always done" will truly be a waste of time. *Carpe diem.* ❖

CREATING MORE TIME: IT'S A THREE-PART PROCESS IN DECATUR

How can you carve time out of the school day for more individualized student instruction? In Decatur, finding time is a Three-Part Process that emerged three years ago as administrators and teachers discussed ways to improve students' reading and writing skills.

"We knew that students needed more opportunities to meet with teachers and aides in smaller groups, but we wanted the children who weren't involved in that process to be actively engaged. No one could be neglected," says Jeanne Payne, supervisor of curriculum and staff development.

How does the Three-Part Process work? At Decatur elementary schools, students in a classroom are divided into three different groups for thirty minutes or more each day. One group goes to the literacy lab to write and publish books or stories and learn keyboarding skills. Another group heads to the library to work with the media specialist, select books or conduct research. The third group remains in the classroom to work with the teacher.

Benjamin Davis Elementary principal Pam Asmann is an enthusiastic supporter of this plan. "Our teachers are so excited about having uninterrupted time with small groups of students. This is sacred time. I don't interrupt it."

Asmann describes a scene that helps explain teachers' enthusiasm. "I saw one of our kindergarten teachers walking down the hall with four of her students. The rest of her class was either in the literacy lab or the library. The teacher and students were looking at the word walls to identify words that the students could recognize. When one of the students found a word that they knew, they wrote it down in their journal. You could sense their excitement and enthusiasm."

Such a "field trip" would not be possible with a class of 18 kindergartners. "The Three-Part Process gives students some independence and helps build up their confidence. During this half-hour time, every student is getting individual attention," says Asmann.

The Three-Part Process is also flexible. At Benjamin Davis, some teachers decide to keep students in the same group for a week at a time. Others choose to rotate it every day. Asmann said this flexibility enables teachers, the media specialist and literacy lab aide to integrate and personalize instruction.

The results? Asmann reports that the school's STAR test scores continue to climb every year from August to May, and library circulation "has gone through the roof."

"I know that time is an issue for everyone in education," she says. "Finding time for everything we have to do *and* to meet the needs of every child is very difficult. But, if you can look outside the box, you can often find an answer. We think we've found an answer here, and it is working!"

Schools Find Teacher Study Groups Are Powerful – And Inexpensive

In the Talladega City Schools, enthusiastic educators are staying after school to talk about teaching — without pay.

IMAGINE YOU TEACH in Talladega City Schools. You've requested to leave school a half-hour early to go to a study group with other teachers in your system, and you've been told that someone will supervise your students while you're gone. You look at your watch. Someone steps through the classroom door. It's the…*superintendent?*

Last fall, Supt. Larry Thacker, principals, and central office staff began watching over final classes several Wednesdays each month so that interested faculty members could join voluntary book study groups at nearby schools. The groups convene at 2:45, when most Talladega schools send pupils home, but bus schedules dictate that a few schools end instruction at 3:15.

"When we showed up to watch teachers' classes so that they could go, the principals realized that we were very sincere about how important we felt this was," recalls curriculum coordinator Vicki Dick.

The off-campus study groups offer teachers the opportunity to read and discuss the latest research on teaching, and to observe administrators modeling the techniques with students from the system. Involvement is not required, and teachers do not receive stipends — yet a growing number of educators are staying late on Wednesdays to participate.

Teachers also meet several times a month in their own schools to talk about a book they've selected. Past reads include *Strategies That Work, Other People's Children, I Read It But I Didn't Get It, Dream Keepers,* and *Mosaic of Thought.* A designated teacher leads the discussion. Teachers from other schools may join in if the scheduled book sparks their interest. Although schools often focus on different texts, Dick finds many similar issues as she monitors teachers' discussions weekly via e-mail and adjusts systemwide meetings to address common threads.

The systemwide discussions began first, but they soon spurred questions among teachers about instructional issues back in their own schools. "That's exactly what we wanted," Dick said. And that's when the in-school study groups began. One side benefit: the in-school talks are helping teachers grow as instructional leaders, because most principals have chosen to cheer from the sidelines rather than taking control of the group.

Low-cost staff development

Talladega City Schools serve 3100 students, over 60% of whom are eligible for free and reduced price meals. Talladega cannot afford to pay teachers for their Wednesday afternoon time, but Dick is optimistic about the future of the program. "The number of books they've read, the number of teachers involved… it's phenomenal," she says.

The system does provide books for the study groups. Copies are owned by the central office, but teachers are encouraged to highlight and write in them. At the end of the study group, two copies are placed in the school's home library and the rest are circulated to other schools.

Teachers and administrators are finding other ways to build on excitement generated in the after-school meetings. At Graham Elementary, reading specialist Becky McKay has created "study tubs" that contain excerpts from teachers' professional readings, overheads describing the readings, and student reading materials that would work well with the strategies described. The tubs are available for checkout, and other schools are picking up on the idea.

"There are some remarkable conversations going on," Dick says. "Teachers talk about how learning about strategies and research has helped them reach students they've never been able to reach before." ❖

FIND MORE

(Study groups) Vicki Dick at vldick@aol.com;
(study tubs) Becky McKay at rbmckay49@aol.com.

Finding Time to Develop a Professional Learning Community

At West Blocton Elementary, high morale produces extra time for teacher learning, even when funds are in short supply.

"PEER PRESSURE IS such a strong thing — it's just as strong for teachers as it is for our kids," West Blocton Elementary School principal Carol Belcher says. She should know — she's seen positive peer pressure in action.

Almost all of West Blocton's 35 faculty members regularly dedicate their after-school time to a voluntary book study group that puts them in touch with the latest research on how kids learn. At each meeting, two of the teachers lead a lively discussion of the book the group is reading.

"Usually, you see people standing around talking about the latest novel. Around here, they're talking about professional literature. 'Did you read this? Have you tried that?' It amazes me, this change in attitude," Belcher says.

Belcher believes that high morale produces extra time for teacher learning, and vice versa.

"When we went to the Alabama Reading Initiative, we found that camaraderie, teambuilding, and working together to talk about common issues are very important and necessary."

Belcher says teachers' excitement encourages them to volunteer their personal time "to be part of a good discussion and to learn from each other." Last summer, over half of the teachers attended some or all of the ARI's intensive training — for the second time. Belcher said they insisted on going, even though she could offer them no compensation.

Careful stewardship buys time for teachers

"I am so fortunate to have such a self-motivated faculty," Belcher reflects, "but I don't like for them to have to do that every time." So she plans the schedule carefully, invests in substitutes when she can, pays close attention to teachers' requests and needs, and is always on the prowl for supplementary funds.

Belcher tries to schedule an hour of common planning time for grade-level teachers each day. When that won't work, she finds other ways to provide time for them to work together. "I feel like it's important enough that I either hire subs or call upon parent volunteers. Many of our certified substitutes are parents," she says, "and several of them are willing to give time once or twice a month."

Teachers also have time to work together across grade levels at the end of the year, when they work on curriculum mapping issues and talk with teachers in adjacent grades about their outgoing students' mastery of Alabama's academic standards.

Belcher uses some of West Blocton's Title I money to hire substitutes for teacher observation days. Each year, every teacher at the school may spend two days observing in effective teachers' classrooms, and most take advantage of the opportunity. "In some cases, I may suggest visiting a certain classroom, if a teacher is struggling with something," Belcher says.

"Make that custard, please!"

Belcher does what she can to meet teachers' individual needs, because that helps to keep morale high. "I tell them to give me a wish list, and if it's something directly related to instruction, I'll try to find that money, some way, some how." And they take her up on that offer, submitting requests for professional books and conferences. That's when Carol Belcher's fundraising energies kick into high gear.

She made an unforgettable promise last fall. "Parents came to me and told me, 'The kids want to have a penny drive for the school. If they raise $500 in pennies, will you take a pie in the face?' I told them I would. By the time of our fall festival, they'd raised $1600 in pennies."

In all, this school of 300 kids raised $17,000 at the festival. Belcher says the success typifies the supportiveness of West Blocton, a small timber and mining community in Bibb County. Though many families have modest means, parents and community members pitch in to meet school needs.

That grassroots support helps to ensure teachers have some time each month to plan and work together. It also goes toward professional literature for teachers who volunteer their time for additional collaborative learning. Belcher says that if she received more substantial per-pupil funding, she would invest it in her teachers' needs. ❖

FIND MORE

Contact Carol Belcher at (205) 938-9005.

A High School Block Schedule Focused on Everyone's Needs

Auburn High School's four-block schedule creates more time for student and teacher learning.

When Auburn High School offered an early bird shift to teachers many years ago, Cathy Long jumped at the chance to work a 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. schedule. "I'm a morning person," she admits. "No doubt about it." While being able to work during her peak time was an advantage, the greatest advantage of the shift was being able to give more learning time to students who needed it by adding an optional extra period to the day.

Dr. Long, a 25-year employee of the Auburn City Schools, now serves as principal at Auburn High. Five years ago, she played a critical role in the move from a traditional schedule to a four-block schedule that focuses on students' and teachers' learning needs. It was not a quick sell.

"We involved the entire community," she recalls. "Teachers, parents, students, even PTA members from our feeder schools. We looked at every possibility, trying to figure out what would work best."

The end product defies easy description, but Long calls it a "four-block, partially semesterized schedule." Chorus, band, Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate courses, and some core courses are taught year-round on alternating days. These are courses that require ongoing practice or are connected to intensive tests scheduled in late spring. Most core courses and electives are taught for one semester, with a 90-minute class period each day.

"My registrar and I create the master schedule together," Long says. "It's not easy. It doesn't *need* to be the most convenient and easy thing, as long as it's working for kids."

The most problematic aspect of the schedule is that teachers with alternating day classes may have a larger student load each week, which can make final exam- and paper-grading time more stressful. Over the course of the year, however, these teachers will still see the same total number of different students as other teachers.

All teachers have a free period that, when combined with the breaks preceding and following it, amounts to 96 minutes. They also have a lunch period. For teachers, the extended planning period is the greatest advantage of the block schedule. "It's the overwhelming reason I wouldn't want to go back to the regular schedule," Long says.

For the most part, Long leaves the planning period under individual teachers' control. They can use it to meet with parents, work on block-length lesson plans, grade papers, do research or readings, or work with other teachers. "I occasionally schedule professional development activities during that time, but I give them advance notice," Long says.

"Teachers have to think about how we're reaching these kids. In a 90-minute class, you can't just sit and lecture them — you have to engage them. There are plenty of ways to do that, but it takes time to plan."

When Auburn High first began operating on the block, all teachers were paid during the summer to work on planning for the shift. "We asked everyone to sit down and look at their curriculum in vertical planning teams, and if they needed outside help we got it for them," Long recalls. This period of intensive curriculum mapping proved to be critical to making the block work. As an outgrowth of this process, all of Auburn's K-12 schools work more closely with one another to make sure they are addressing academic standards in a sensible and systematic way.

Long believes that communities without Auburn's levels of local funding can still do innovative things with scheduling. A school could offer teachers three shifts in order to make more learning time available: 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.. A six-period day could be extended to an eight-period day for students who needed to make up courses they had failed, or for those who just wanted to take more classes.

"When you tell kids they can take eight courses a year, it's going to cost you more money," Long explains. "If you tell them they can take six courses a year on a six-period schedule, and if you offer early and late bird classes for those who really want extra courses, then it will cost you less. At most schools, less than a third of the student body will take you up on it." ❖

FIND MORE

Contact Cathy Long at (334) 887-2110.

Dreaming of Time

BY ANNE JOLLY

"My successful school is a place where teachers can concentrate on their teaching practice."

PERPLEXED, I WATCH Jacques saunter down the hall — his lazy, apathetic slouch broadcasting his disinterest in school. He performs brilliantly on lab work and problem-solving activities. Yet he steadfastly refuses to do assignments or make an effort on tests.

A contrast in types, Genise passes him on her way to class. She'll listen intently, try to understand, and try to do well. She methodically turns in every assignment, but the basic science concepts just aren't getting through. She's "faking" it.

Alarm bells clang noisily in my brain. So many kids with so many different abilities and individual needs — and the school day is structured so that I teach them as if they are assembly line, cookie-cutter copies of each other. They whirl by me in groups of 32, one period after another, all day long.

I briefly close my eyes to suppress a surge of anger at a school arrangement that doesn't give me time to do my job. Doesn't give me time to reflect, analyze my students' needs, and design my teaching practices for them. Doesn't give me time to meet regularly with other teachers and have the focused, ongoing conversations we need to craft instructional strategies that will enable these kids to reach substantially higher performance levels. Don't these kids deserve that from us?

Of course, I do have that one 50-minute "planning" period. Today I'll get a monthly attendance report ready for the office, list my students' lost textbooks on the proper form, write a recommendation for Chris to attend Space Camp, and return four phone calls to parents. I'll try to grab the bid catalogue and fill out order forms for classroom supplies.

The last bell rings and soon lockers slam noisily. As I wave goodbye to the last of my students, I allow myself to pretend that I'm waving a magic wand — one that will change schools into places that really support high-quality teaching.

I mentally flick a page in my brain and recall a program I watched on PBS. Teachers in Germany, Japan, and China spend 15 to 20 hours a week working with colleagues, developing lessons, and studying their students and their own teaching. These teachers say they could not succeed if forced to work under the conditions American teachers face.

Another mental page flip. Research conclusively shows that teachers are the most important influence on what students know and can do. Student achievement improves when teachers collaborate and change their teaching styles — when teachers have time to focus on preparing to do to their job well.

My successful school

My successful school is a place where teachers can concentrate on their teaching practice. How would we make this model work? What if we paid teachers for 11 months instead of nine months and let them have an additional 8 weeks during the year to meet together, reflect, study, plan and prepare for instruction? What if we hired more teachers to free up time for collaboration and preparation? What if every person in the school, including administrators, shouldered teaching responsibilities?

Why not free teachers from lunchroom duty, hall duty, before-and-after school duty, and homeroom duty? Turn faculty meetings into team planning times. Use subs or volunteers to relieve teachers of clerical responsibilities. What if PE and electives were blocked and teachers had longer time blocks for collaborating? Any of those would be a start.

I wave distractedly to Mrs. Williams as she shoulders a bag stuffed with English essays and heads for her car. This will be her last year. She's hanging it up at the age of 42. She's a great teacher. She loves her kids. But she's too tired to continue — tired of not being able to do the job she needs to do for her students. Would Mrs. Williams stay on at the school I designed, encouraged by time for peer collaboration and "on the job" learning?

I give a quiet chuckle. I haven't designed anything new. This school model has been around for awhile. Some schools in Alabama are trying to make my dream come true. But not many — not nearly enough. ❖

Anne Jolly was Alabama's 1994 state teacher of the year.

Spring 2001

ONTHEWEB *Resources About Finding Time*

Find links to all these resources and many more at: www.aplusala.org

Prisoners of Time, Report of the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (April 1994).

A truly seminal study of the issues of time and learning, the seven-year old Prisoners of Time report remains, for many schools, up-to-date in its conclusion that "Time is learning's warden." (Complete report on-line with downloadable text file.)

Available on the Web at: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/

Prisoners of Time: Research, National Education Commission on Time and Learning (September 1994).

In some ways, this research supplement to the Prisoners of Time report may be more useful to school leaders. It provides detailed information about the research upon which the report is based and includes sound recommendations for breaking the chains of "the clock and calendar" and reinventing schools "around learning, not time."

Available on the Web at: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime/PoTResearch/

"The Power of Innovative Scheduling," Educational Leadership, November 1995.

Alternative schedules may or may not add hours to the school day, but they can vastly improve the quality of the time students spend at school, says scheduling expert Robert Lynn Canady in this much-discussed and cited article.

Available on the Web at:
http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/9511/canady.html

"Finding Time To Learn," *Educational Leadership*, November 1995.

Researcher John O'Neil describes how a number of high schools seeking better instruction and improved student outcomes are exploring alternatives to the traditional schedule. Another article from an important issue of Educational Leadership, "Productive Use of Time and Space."

Available on the Web at:
http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/edlead/9511/oneil.html

"It's About Time." Special issue of *School Administrator* (March 1999). American Association of School Administrators.

Includes articles on the effects of block scheduling and "12 findings about block use;" a three-semester high school schedule; a four-day school week; and a story about how some secondary schools are modifying their start times based on new research on adolescent sleep needs.

Available on the Web at:
http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/1999_03/contents.htm

"Block Scheduling: The Key To Quality Learning Time," *Principal Magazine*, January 2001, National Association of Elementary School Principals.

Research conducted by Robert Lynn Canady and Michael D. Rettig indicates that block schedules can help elementary school principals increase quality learning time and reduce class size. The article includes examples of an effective block schedule and a sidebar, "Six Ways to Improve an Elementary School Schedule." Part of a special issue on "Time and Learning."

Available on the Web at:
http://www.naesp.org/comm/p0101c.htm

"Time," a special issue of the Journal of Staff Development (Spring 1999), National Staff Development Council.

"Squeeze, carve, apply, target, use, and arrange Time for adult learning" reads the headline on this issue of JSD, devoted entirely to issues of time and professional development. The issue includes these articles:

"Target Time Toward Teachers," by Linda Darling-Hammond
http://www.nsdc.org/library/jsd/darling202.html

"Time Use Flows from School Culture," by Kent D. Peterson
http://www.nsdc.org/library/jsd/peterson202.html

"Apply Time with Wisdom," by Thomas R. Guskey
http://www.nsdc.org/library/jsd/guskey202.html

"Making Time for Adult Learning," by Priscilla Pardini
http://www.nsdc.org/library/jsd/pardini202.html

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at issue
TIME

MAKING TIME FOR ADULT
LEARNING

By PRISCILLA PARDINI

USING time well is easier said than done. Here are eight real-life examples of schools that make the minutes count.

One hour early

IT WAS 25 YEARS AGO that a group of Iowa City teachers sought the support of their school's PTA for a staff development program that involved releasing students from school one hour early every week. "It was a grassroots movement begun by the teachers that grew out of the need for time for planning for children," says Pam Ehly, director of instruction for the Iowa City Community School District.

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The early release concept, considered radical at the time, is now in place throughout the district as

at issue
TIME

Deposits and withdrawals

So why wasn't the student at Milwaukee's Rufus King High School doing her homework on a recent Sunday night? "Tomorrow's a banking day," she replied happily. "I'll do it then."

That's "banking" as in "banking time," a Milwaukee Public Schools initiative designed to provide staff development and planning time for teachers and support staff. School officials say the program is an important element of the district's school reform effort. "If we're seriously going to talk about restructuring, we have to have time to talk about it," says Steven Huffman, leadership specialist for Milwaukee Public Schools. "And we need big blocks of time when teachers are fresh."

The district's Banking Time program, negotiated with the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association, is a way of capturing that time. Huffman says the program was pioneered in the early 1990s by 10 or 15 schools. By 1994, a total of 90 schools were participating. All but a handful of the district's 160 schools have opted to take part this year.

The program allows schools to add a few minutes to the school day, "bank" the time, and release students a total of five full days a year. At Rufus King, that means starting school at 7:30 a.m., five minutes earlier, and dismissing classes at 2:40 p.m., five minutes later. Schools participating in the program release students on the same five days, which are spread out over the course of the year. The dates are well publicized as part of the school calendar, and Huffman says officials have heard few complaints from parents.

According to the agreement between the teachers'union and school district, teachers at each participating school have input into how half of the day is spent. At some schools, part of the day is used to write lesson plans or grade papers, Huffman says, but at many schools the entire day is spent on staff development. Typically, teachers use the time to take part in study groups on pedagogical issues, develop curriculum, take classes in technology, develop assessment tools, or familiarize themselves with new textbooks.

Huffman calls the Banking Time program very helpful. "Schools have very limited options when it comes to staff development," he says. "You have after school or on Saturdays, which is an expensive proposition. This gives us some time within the auspices of the normal day."

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well as in a growing number of other school systems nationwide. In Iowa City, students are released one hour early – they leave school between 2 p.m. and 2:20 p.m. – every Thursday. That gives teachers a block of time that runs until 4 p.m. for staff development. Twice a month the agenda focuses on building-level concerns. One school's staff might choose, for example, to hire a consultant to lead a seminar on classroom management. At another school, the discussion might focus on how best to meet the requirements of the federal Individual Disability Education Act. On the other two Thursdays each month, the staff development sessions are organized around districtwide issues. All fourth grade social studies teachers, for instance, might meet to discuss developmentally appropriate strategies for teaching a unit on elections.

Ehly says care is taken to make sure the staff development time is well used. District curriculum coordinators plan citywide inservices, and principals are asked to report back on what is happening at their schools. Ehly says a new individual reading inventory designed to assess pupils' elementary language arts progress was successfully introduced thanks in large part to the availability of time to train teachers on how to administer the instrument.

The early-release program has become "part of our system" and is well accepted by parents, Ehly says, and the program was acceptable to state officials as long as the district met requirements governing the length of the school day.

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at issue
TIME

Meet me on Wednesdays

When staff members at **Wells Junior High School in Wells, Maine,** began looking for time to devote to departmental planning, they had to look no further than their Wednesday faculty meetings.

"We looked hard at how we were spending that time," says Principal Jeff Rodman. Although nominally a junior high school serving students in grades 5-8, Wells is organized around the middle school "team" concept. And while teachers had team planning time built into their schedules, there was no opportunity for all the school's math teachers, for example, to meet as a group.

For the past several years, a revamped meeting schedule has filled that void. Now the entire faculty meets once rather than twice a month to tackle issues of schoolwide concern. Another Wednesday each month provides time for the school's building leadership teams – groups of teachers designated as grade-level leaders – to meet together and with school administrators. The third Wednesday is reserved for departmental meetings. "It's allowed us to work on such things as curriculum, ways to teach in longer blocks of time and portfolio assessment," Rodman says. "It's opened up discussion on what each teacher is covering, and how to streamline the curriculum so as not to step on each others'toes." Meetings are scheduled on the fourth Wednesday of each month as needed – generally either for building leadership team or departmental meetings.

Rodman says reducing the number of schoolwide faculty meetings has been difficult: At Wells, those meetings are largely used as opportunities for shared decision making. "But the advantages of having time for teachers to meet across grades about curriculum outweighs the disadvantages," he says. He speculates that would be the case in many other schools, especially where faculty meetings consist largely of administrative announcements and routine housekeeping tasks that could be handled in other ways.

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"They don't correct papers"

Staff at **New York City's Central Park East Secondary School** have found a way to link two issues considered vital to its program: student community service and staff development. "We want kids to be able to get to know their community and to provide service to agencies that need it" says Anne Purdy, the school's service learning internship coordinator. "We can see the learning that comes from this kind of experience."

Equally valuable is the staff time freed up when the school's eighth, ninth, and tenth graders are out of the school building a half day each week working at nonprofit agencies such as museums, hospitals, and nursing homes. "We also know that one of the things that's absolutely crucial is time for teachers to meet and speak with their colleagues," Purdy says. Teachers use the time for true staff development, often for department meetings to develop curriculum or attend workshops taught by staff members or outside experts. Teachers also work in groups to evaluate student work according to state and New York City standards, or collaborate on strategies designed to meet the needs of individual students.

"They don't correct papers," Purdy says.

Central Park East's method for finding staff development time could be replicated at no cost by virtually any school where students are involved in community service. The major cost of setting up community service programs comes in personnel. At Central Park East that includes Purdy – who finds the student placements, provides ongoing evaluation and troubleshoots – as well as a paraprofessional and an aide.

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at issue
TIME

Fridays for 90 minutes

On almost every Friday during the school year, teachers at **Freemont High School in Sunnyvale, Calif.**, arrive at school to spend the first 90 minutes of their day not with their students, but with each other. From 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m., they talk about school redesign, "the way we can meet the goals we've set for our school," says Assistant Principal Larry Vilaubi. He says Late Start Fridays provide the regular, ongoing time teachers need to focus on such issues as assessment, standards, literacy, and community involvement. Evidence of progress in those areas has helped Freemont qualify for $250,000 in grants from the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative, a project funded with part of the $500 million donated by philanthropist Walter H. Annenberg in 1993 for school reform.

Vilaubi says finding time for staff development at Freemont during the regular school day has become even more critical given two recent, local developments. The first is a reduction in the number of state-allowed preservice days for teachers. "The state wanted teachers spending more time in the classroom with kids instead of with each other," Vilaubi says of the mandated change in the school calendar. The second is a substitute teacher shortage that makes it much more difficult to use grant money to hire subs to fill in for teachers involved in staff development programs. In the past, Vilaubi says, 10 to 15 teachers at a time would be pulled out of their classrooms to work together. "But given the general teacher shortage in California and the mandate to reduce class size, we often can't find 15 subs," he says. Vilaubi described Late Start Fridays as a relatively easy, no-cost way to provide staff development, which he describes as "a high priority" at Freemont. Because the school day is sufficiently long Monday through Friday (7:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.), the school easily meets the state's minimum instructional time requirements. The concept has also met with approval from the staff, students and community, Vilaubi says.

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Innovative mornings

Eight or nine years ago, teachers at **Holt High School in Holt, Mich.** began looking for ways to find the time they needed to launch innovative projects. "They were asking, 'How can we make time available at little or no cost to the district?'" says Superintendent Tom Davis. In the end, teachers recommended combining the before- and after-school preparation time called for in their contracts into one four-hour block of time. Teachers got that time back on Wednesday mornings, when the start of classes was delayed until 11:30 a.m. On each of the other four days of the week, instructional time was added to make up for the late start on Wednesday.

"We thought parents might object" Davis says, "but we held forums on what we'd do with the time and why it was necessary for teachers to collaborate, and there was no resistance at all."

Today, Wednesday mornings at Holt High School generally are divided into three blocks of time, with one set aside for a general faculty meeting. The remaining $2^{1/2}$ hours is devoted to adult learning. "The only rule we've had over the years is that you can't spend the time on business as usual," Davis says. "It's for collaborative teams of teachers to talk about innovative ideas."

Davis credits the staff development program with giving teachers time to develop several of the school's more unique endeavors, including a three-year, sequentially integrated science curriculum that combines chemistry, biology, and physics into one class, and a geometry course taught with the help of computer-aided drawing software.

Other evidence the time is being well spent: $2 million in grants applied for by and awarded to teachers for projects the district cannot afford.

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TOOL 7.6

Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning

As you read the newsletters and study the schedules provided, determine the strategy each school used for making time, how much time they created, and whether this approach meets your criteria. Write in your criteria at the top and place a check if the strategy meets the criteria established.

TOOL 7.6

Comparison of strategies for making time for collaborative professional learning

As you read the newsletters and study the schedules provided, determine the strategy each school used for making time, how much time they created, and whether this approach meets your criteria. Write in your criteria at the top and place a check if the strategy meets the criteria established.

My criterion #1:	My criterion #2:	My criterion #3:	My criterion #4:	My criterion #5:	My criterion #6:

District	Strategy	How much time?	Check if #1 is met	Check if #2 is met	Check if #3 is met	Check if #4 is met	Check if #5 is met	Check if #6 is met

TOOL 7.7

Forming a recommendation

- From the ideas generated, decide on two or three that would work for this school and its community.
- Develop a proposal that includes consideration of how each recommendation would impact various aspects of the school community.
- Identify how you plan to use the extra time.
- Identify the goals you want to accomplish with the additional time and relate those goals to student learning.

	RECOMMENDATION'S EFFECT ON:					
Recommendation	**Other schools**	**Budget**	**Transportation**	**Parents**	**Before- and after-school care programs**	**Other**
1						
2						
3						

THIS IS HOW MY SCHOOL WILL USE THE EXTRA TIME:

Goals to accomplish with the extra time	Relationship of goal to student learning
1	
2	
3	
4	