

The New Work of Teaching: A Case Study of the Worklife of Calgary Public Teachers

AN ATA RESEARCH UPDATE: FEBRUARY 2012



© Copyright 2012

Unauthorized use or duplication without prior approval is strictly prohibited.

ISBN 978-1-927074-05-3

The Alberta Teachers' Association

11010 142 Street NW, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1

Telephone 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208

www.teachers.ab.ca

Table of Contents

Preface	3
Foreword	5
Introduction	6
Overview	6
Study Findings	6
Type of Work Carried Out by Participants	7
Portion of the Week During Which Work-Related Activities Took Place	8
How Participants Spent Their Work Week	9
Multitasking	10
Focus Group	11
Literature Review	11
Teacher Workload Studies	12
Components of Work-Related Stress	12
Overwork and Work Intensification	12
Multitasking	13
The Relationship Between Worker Autonomy and Job-Related Stress	14
How Discretionary Time Can Become Nondiscretionary	16
Implications and Recommendations	16
Negotiating Assignable Time	17
Cultural Barriers to Attaining a Work–Life Balance	17
The Role of the Principal	18
Implications for Teacher Overwork and Work–Life Balance	18
Further Research	18
The Link Between Teacher Workload and Informed Transformation	19
References	20
Appendix A: Time-Diary Codes	21
Appendix B: Summary of Canadian Teacher Workload Studies	22

Preface

The places where Alberta students learn are the very same places where teachers work. Though hardly an earth-shattering observation, this simple truth is frequently forgotten by education policymakers. The result is that efforts at school improvement often overlook teachers' conditions of professional practice, focusing instead on the next big idea or innovation.

Alberta teachers enthusiastically embrace initiatives to improve schools and education. At the same time, they realize that such initiatives and programs will not succeed unless their workload remains sufficiently manageable that they can continue to provide optimal instruction and support to students. As the province's strong economy continues to drive growth and fuel high expectations for schools, teachers and students are up to the challenge.

Alberta's strong and vibrant public education system will continue to hinge on optimal conditions of practice for teachers. What do we actually know about teachers' work in Alberta schools today? What are the factors limiting and enabling their work? How do learning technologies affect teachers' work? What societal and personal factors influence teachers' ability to maximize student learning? How can research findings help the public to understand the nature of teachers' work?

Initiated by Calgary Public Teachers ATA Local No 38 and undertaken in collaboration with the provincial Association, the study reported in this publication helps to answer some of these questions. During the last school year, reductions in government funding led the Calgary Board of Education to eliminate 200 teaching positions, a situation that significantly increased the workload of the remaining teachers. The implementation of new initiatives and decreased support for teachers and students at the school level further exacerbated teachers' concerns. Like their colleagues across the province, Calgary Public teachers are experiencing increasing difficulty in providing a high level of professional service while, at the same time, maintaining a balance between their work and family lives.

Barbara Ivens, chair of the local's economic policy committee, initiated this study in which 20 representative teachers kept a detailed log of their activities over a one-week period. This "log book" project eventually grew into a comprehensive research project that included a detailed literature review, a follow-up focus group and the production of a final report, which is published here. Thank you to J-C Couture, the Association's associate coordinator of research, for providing technical support; to Laura Servage, a PhD candidate at the University of Alberta, for analyzing the data; and to Harlan James, an administrative officer with the Association, for helping to prepare the report for publication. Thanks, also, to Linda Duxbury, a professor at the Sprott School of Business at Carleton University and one of the leading experts on organizational well-being, for reviewing the study and contributing a foreword.

A final and very special note of thanks to the 20 teachers from Calgary Public Teachers Local 38 who participated in this study. Without your tireless efforts to document a week in the life of your world, this project would not have been possible.

Gordon R Thomas
Executive Secretary

Foreword

I read with fascination the report on the workload of teachers in the Calgary Board of Education. Although this pilot study was understandably limited—20 teachers completed diaries, and 11 of those participated in the focus group—the findings are consistent with what we have seen in our own research on work–life conflict, role overload and stress.

Our own research program is national in scope and involves large, multi-sector samples (over 37,000 employees participated in our 1991 National Work–Life Balance study, while just under 33,000 participated in the follow-up done in 2001) of employees working in a wide variety of jobs. We too have identified work intensification and role overload as major problems for Canadian employees. Indeed, the amount of time people are spending in paid work (especially in unpaid overtime work at home) has increased dramatically over time. We have also observed a strong link between technology and work. More specifically, our research confirms the idea that technology is as much a “curse” as a “blessing” because increased efficiencies are often offset by pressures on employees to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In other words, employees are increasingly expected to complete work during family time.

I was also interested to read this study’s comprehensive Canadian literature review, which consistently shows that, on average, teachers work between 50 and 55 hours per week. By comparison, our data shows that approximately one in three Canadian employees (most of them managers and professionals) spend this much time on work per week. The rest of those in our 2001 sample spent less time on work per week than the teachers in this sample. When they are unremitting (a focus of our research), such workloads are associated with negative employee (ie, poorer physical and mental health, increased job stress) and organizational (ie, lower commitment, lower job satisfaction, increased absenteeism) outcomes. These negative impacts, combined with the fact that such overwork appears to be a universal problem affecting teachers not only in Canada but elsewhere, should encourage key stakeholders at all levels (ie, teachers, unions, school boards, governments) to work together to find ways to reduce workloads. Failure to address this issue is likely to negatively affect the recruitment of younger people into the profession and the retention of more experienced teachers.

This report suggests a number of possible solutions that, again, correspond to what our research has identified. These solutions include increasing teachers’ professional autonomy and sense of control over their work and enhancing the school culture by building collegiality between the principal and the teacher—elements that already contribute to Alberta’s strong public education system. Such solutions will, however, likely require transformational changes to how teachers carry out their work and how school boards manage their employees.

In short, I found this report informative, and I hope you do as well. I look forward to working with you over the next year as we explore together how teachers’ conditions of professional practice and personal demands influence their ability to balance their work and family lives.



*Linda Duxbury, Professor
Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, Ottawa*

Introduction

In the spring of 2011, Calgary Public Teachers Local 38 invited 20 teachers to partake in a pilot study that involved documenting in detail how they spent their time during a one-week period. The local decided to embark on such a study at this time for two reasons. First, it had already undertaken a comprehensive study of teaching and learning conditions in Calgary Public schools in 2010 (Calgary Public Local 2010) that revealed that teachers were becoming increasingly concerned about their conditions of practice and the learning environments of their students. Second, the local felt that it needed a clearer understanding of the nature of teachers' work so that it could contribute meaningfully to the public discussion about the conditions of professional practice that will be required if the informed transformation of the K to 12 sector is to become a reality.

This pilot work–time study, which is reported here, focussed on three major issues:

- Work intensification—a perception, on the part of teachers, that they are working harder and putting in longer hours.
- The impact of technology on teachers' work.
- The impact of class composition—the increased complexity and diversity of student needs—on the workload of teachers.

This pilot study was modelled on a study that Sharon Vogrinetz undertook more than 10 years ago (Vogrinetz 1999). Findings from the current study were compared not only with those of the Vogrinetz study but also with those of other Canadian studies on teacher workloads conducted over the past decade.

This pilot study comes at a critical juncture as bargaining units of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) prepare for a new round of negotiations with school districts across the province. Calgary Public Teachers Local 38 hopes that this pilot study will serve as the foundation for additional research that it may undertake itself or in partnership with other bargaining units.

Overview

The 20 Calgary-area teachers who participated in this study kept 24-hour diaries for a period of one week. During this time, they recorded, in 10-minute blocks, work activities that they undertook not only during school hours but also before and after school and on the weekend.¹

Once the participants had completed their diaries, the information was entered into a database and transferred to a spreadsheet for analysis. Because the sample was small and demographic data was not linked to the individual diary entries, only descriptive statistics are provided. The study revealed that participants work an average of 55 hours per week. Of these 55 hours, approximately 80 per cent are dedicated to such core instructional activities as teaching, planning, assessing and reporting.

Following the preliminary data analysis, participants were invited to take part in a focus group to look at two aspects of their experience in more depth. The first was *multitasking*, the performance of two or more activities at the same time. Although multitasking is often considered a valuable strategy for getting more done in less time, research suggests that such an approach may in fact be a “false economy” (Dean and Webb 2011; Hallowell 2005). The second issue examined was *autonomy*, the amount of discretion that participants feel they have with respect to how they use their noninstructional time. Research has shown that workers who have high levels of responsibility but little autonomy tend to experience high levels of stress.

Study Findings

All findings are presented as an aggregate of the work weeks of the 20 teachers involved in the study. In filling out their diaries, participants often entered two or more codes in one 10-minute time

1. The codes and classification system that participants used to record their activities are given in Appendix A. Direct comparisons with the Vogrinetz (1999) study are not possible because the kind of demographic data that Vogrinetz used to break the sample into sub-groups was not available in the current study.

block. Some participants expressed concern that the coding scheme was ambiguous, failing, for example, to distinguish between *instruction* and *supervision* and between *assessment* and *reporting*. These concerns, along with the small sample size, mean that data should not be generalized to larger groups of teachers.

Type of Work Carried Out by Participants

Figure 1 shows the average amount of time participants spent on each of the 18 coded activities (see Appendix A) during the 168 hours (7 days × 24 hours/day) for which they kept diaries.

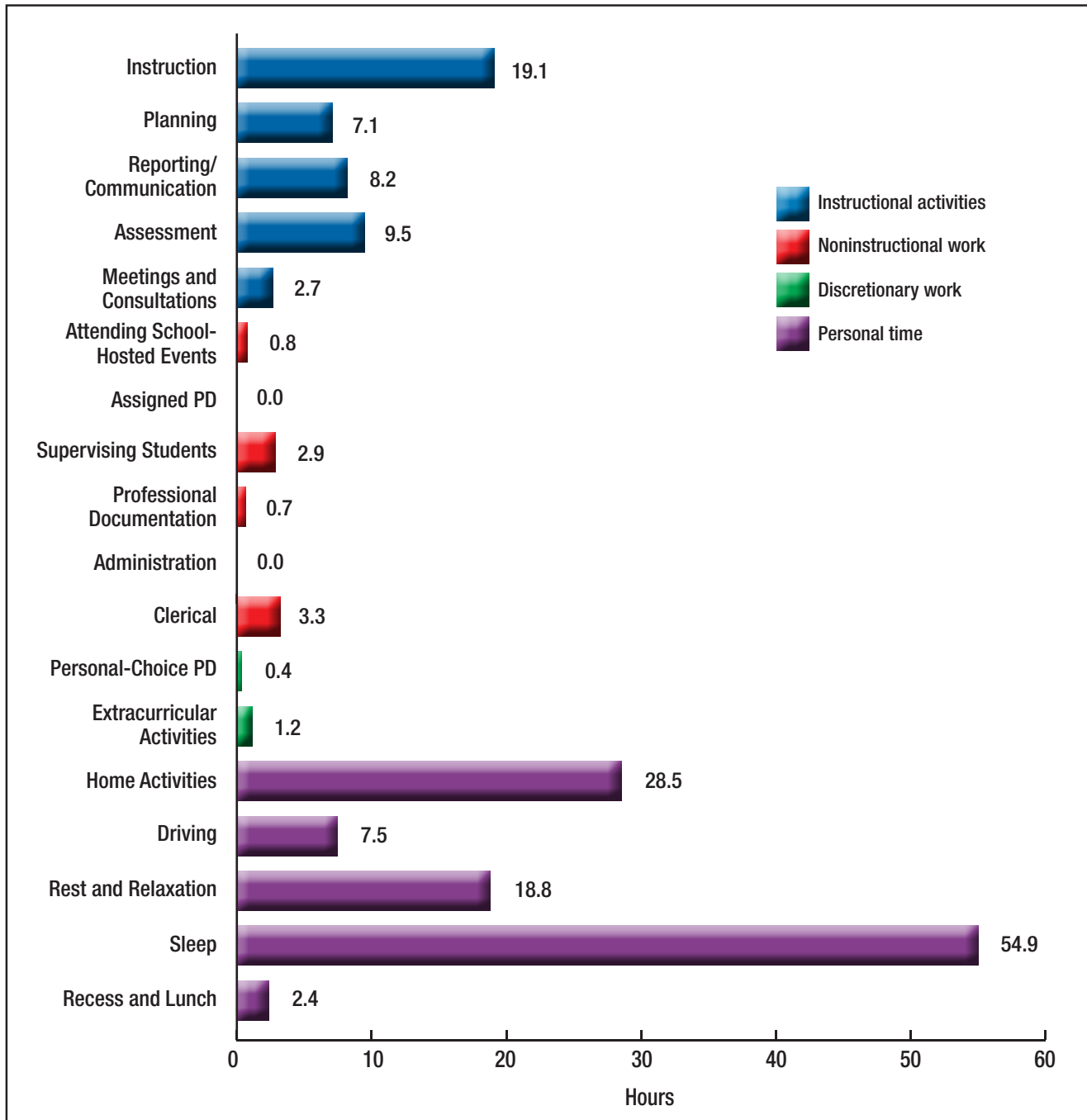


Figure 1: Average Amount of Time Spent on Each Coded Activity During the Week

To better understand what teachers do during an average work week, the researchers collapsed the 18 coded categories into four overarching categories, as follows:

1. *Instructional activities*: Consists of those activities that relate most directly to the core work of teaching: instruction (I), planning (P), reporting/communication (RC) and assessment (A).
2. *Noninstructional work*: Consists of required activities that, to a greater or lesser extent, support the core activities identified as instructional. Noninstructional work includes meetings and consultations (M), attending school-hosted events (AE), assigned professional development (PD1), supervising students (S), professional documentation (PDoc), administration (AD) and clerical work (C).
3. *Discretionary work*: Consists of activities that participants volunteered to undertake such as personal-choice professional development (PD2) and extracurricular activities (EX).
4. *Personal time*: Consists of non-work-related activities such as home activities (H), driving (D), rest and relaxation (RR), sleeping (ZZ) and time taken during recesses and lunch hours (RL).

The average amount of time that participants spent on activities in each of these four broad categories during the week is shown in Table 1.

In calculating the average work week of teachers, researchers added up the average amount of time

that participants spent carrying out activities in the first three categories (instructional activities, noninstructional work and discretionary work). The result was an average work week of 55.7 hours. The standard deviation for each category is fairly high, an indication that the amount of time that participants reported spending on the various activities ranged fairly widely. The amount of time spent on instruction (I) for example, ranged from a high of 45 hours to a low of 18 hours.

Portion of the Week During Which Work-Related Activities Took Place

In addition to spending 35.5 hours per week on work-related activities during regular school hours, teachers spend a considerable amount of time in the evenings and on the weekend carrying out such work-related (but noninstructional) activities as assessment (A), reporting/communication (RC) and planning (P). For the purposes of the analysis, the 168-hour week was divided into three portions:

1. *Instructional day* (40 hours): Monday to Friday, from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.
2. *Off hours on weekdays* (66 hours): from 6:00 AM Monday to 4:00 PM Friday, excluding the instructional day.
3. *Weekend* (62 hours): from 4:00 PM Friday to 6:00 AM Monday.

Type of Activity	Mean Hours	Standard Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
Instructional activities	43.80	7.25	58.92	30.75
Noninstructional work	10.37	3.80	16.17	4.50
Discretionary work	1.55	3.12	14.17	0.00
Personal time	112.21	6.49	127.58	103.33
TOTAL	167.93			

The above data summarizes the hours logged by 20 teachers over a seven-day period. The maximum and minimum hours vary considerably for a number of reasons: one participant was ill and did not work on one of the days included in the study, one participant took a day off as a personal leave and at least two participants put in extra hours to complete report cards.

Table 1: Average Amount of Time That Participants Spent on Activities in Each Category During the Week

Figure 2 shows how much of the 55.7 hours of work-related activity that teachers carried out during the week occurred during each of these portions.

As Table 2 shows, participants spent an average of 8.2 hours on work-related activities (instructional activities, noninstructional work, discretionary work) on the weekend. Most of the time worked on the weekend was devoted to assessment (A) and reporting and communication (RC). Although some planning (P) took place on the weekend, participants apparently do most of their planning either during the workday or on weekday evenings.

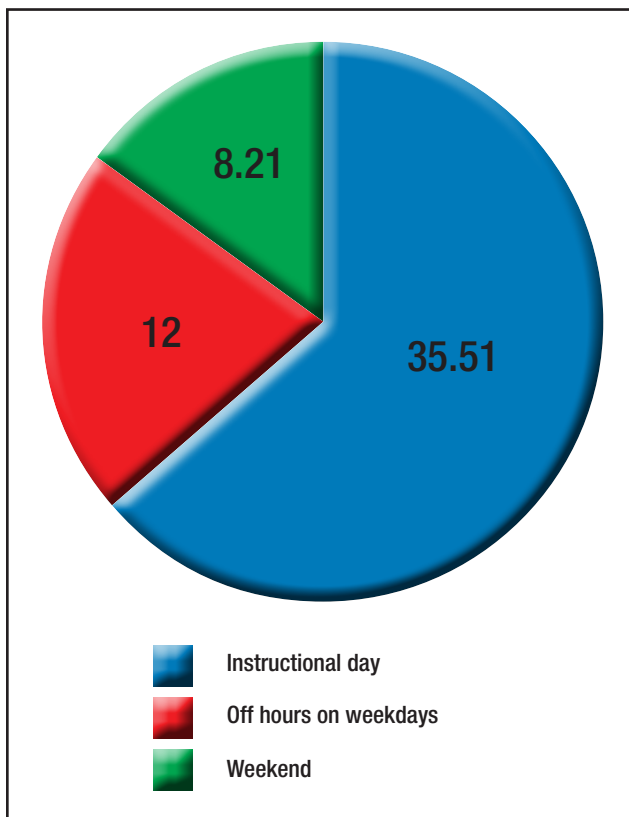


Figure 2: Hours Worked During Each Portion of the Week

How Participants Spent Their Work Week

For the purpose of the study, a teacher’s work week was defined as 40 hours. This 40-hour period consisted of the five instructional days (the eight-hour period from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, including recess time and lunch breaks) covered by the study. Participants were asked to specify the activities, both work related and personal, that they carried out during these 40 hours. According to the data, many participants worked through their breaks. Figure 3 shows the average number of hours participants devoted throughout the instructional day to activities in each of the four broad categories delineated earlier.

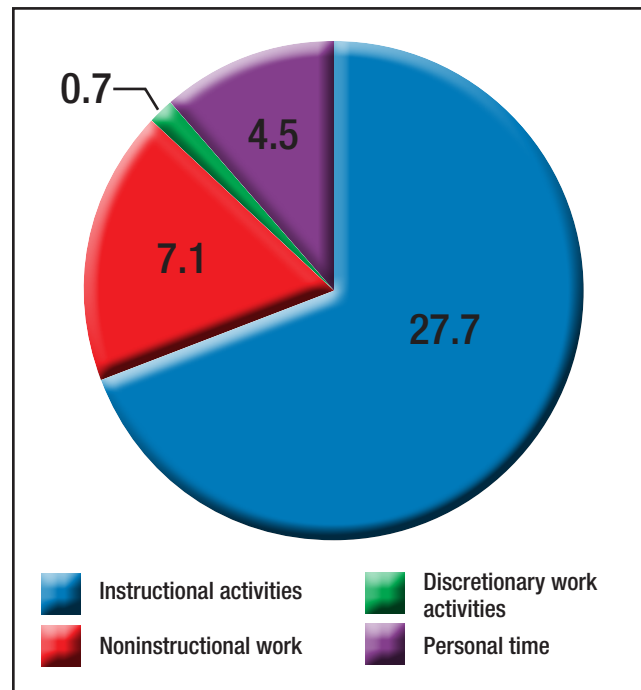


Figure 3: Average Amount of Time Participants Spent on Each Category of Activity During the 40-Hour Work Week

Type of Activity	Mean	Standard Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
Instructional	7.51	3.84	13.58	0.00
Noninstructional work	0.65	1.29	4.05	0.00
Discretionary work	0.04	0.19	0.83	0.00
Personal time	53.77	4.23	60.83	45.50
TOTAL	61.98			

Table 2: Type and Amount of Activity that Participants Carried Out on the Weekend

Figure 4 breaks the 40-hour workweek down even further by showing the number of hours participants devoted to each of the coded activities. On average, participants spent about 22 of their 40 onsite hours on the core tasks of instruction (I) and planning (P). Assessment (A) and reporting/communication (RC) occupied an additional 5.8 hours, although, in some cases, participants performed these activities at the same time as other activities. For example, a participant might have carried out planning (P) while supervising students (S) or eating lunch (RL). On average, participants spent only 2.3 hours during the week on recess and lunch (RL), an indication that a significant portion of break time was spent on work-related activities.

Multitasking

Although the time diaries were structured with the expectation that teachers would enter only one code per 10-minute block, all participants entered more than one code for at least some of the blocks. The entry of more than one code per block suggests that participants were multitasking as a strategy for managing their time. If participants were indeed multitasking, then this study likely

- underestimates the number of hours spent on supervising and instructing because participants were likely performing such other tasks as assessment and planning during these same hours;

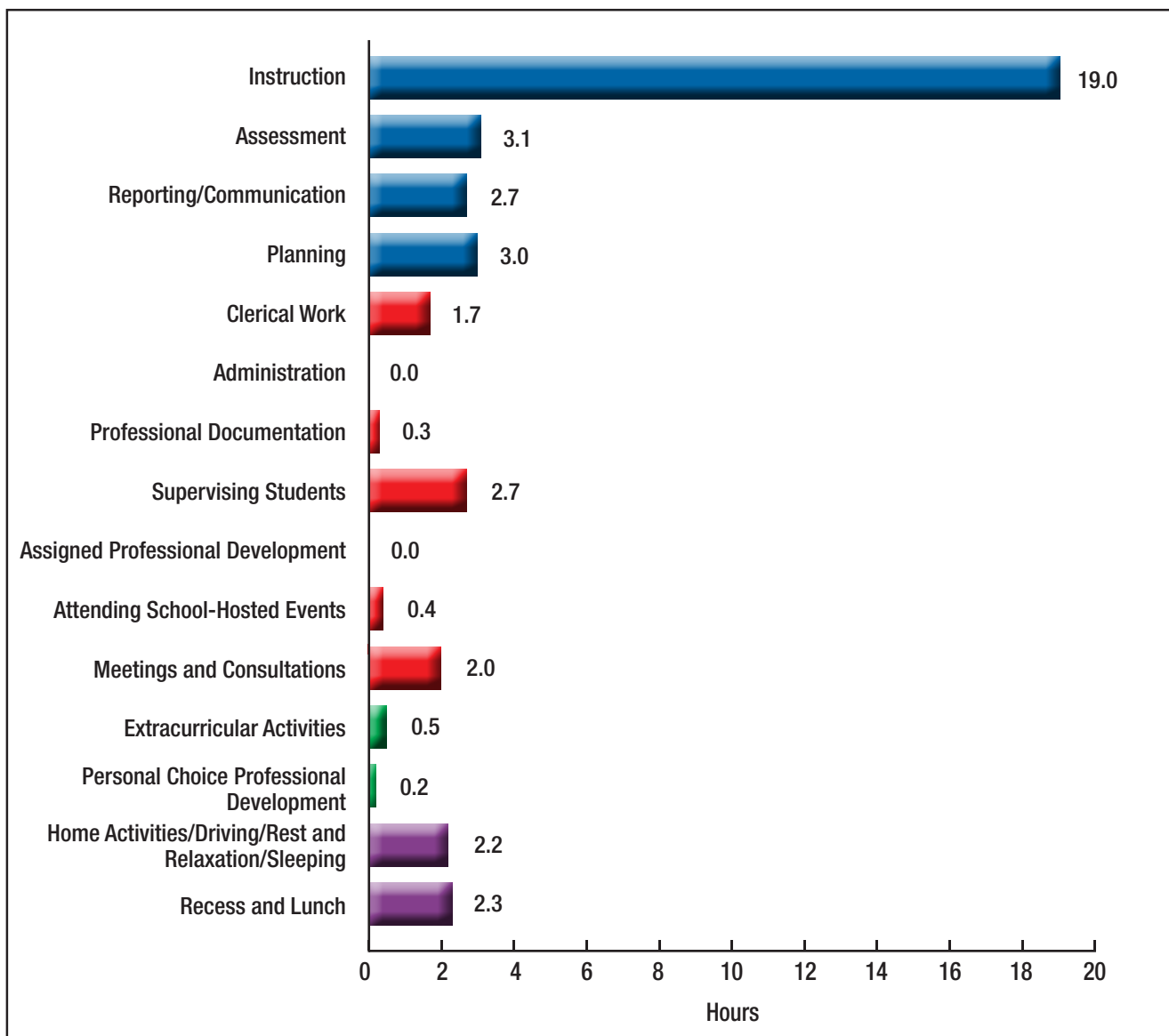


Figure 4: Average Amount of Time Spent on Coded Activities During the 40-Hour Work Week

- underestimates the overall amount of time that participants worked because they likely multitasked during off-school hours by, for example, marking student work while watching television or holding work-related conversations while driving; and
- overestimates the amount of non-work time (RL) during the school day because participants were likely working during at least a portion of their break time.

Focus Group

Following an initial analysis of the data, the researchers organized a focus group to explore two issues in more detail. Eleven of the 20 teachers who kept diaries participated in this focus group. The first issue of interest was multitasking, and participants were asked to respond to the following two questions:

1. Describe in detail a couple of instances in your teaching practice in which you often or always multitask.
2. What, in your view, are the pros and cons of multitasking?

The second issue explored in the focus group was discretionary activity—the extent to which participants believe they have autonomy with respect to how they use their time. In theory, noninstructional hours are “discretionary.” Yet many studies on teacher workload suggest that teachers feel that they have little control over their noninstructional responsibilities, a situation that can generate high levels of stress.² Other studies on work-related stress have shown that having a weak sense of control over one’s scope of practice contributes to stress and burnout.³ To probe the issue of discretionary time in more detail, participants were asked to respond to the following additional questions:

3. On a scale of one to five (one being low and five being high), how much discretionary time do you have in your job?

4. What factors determine how much discretionary time you have?

Each participant was given a chance to reflect on and respond to these questions in writing. Participants then discussed the questions as a group and a recorder took notes. The participants’ hand-written responses and the session notes were collected and analyzed.

Literature Review

Teacher Workload Studies

The results of this pilot study in Calgary Public Teachers Local 38 are consistent with the findings of other recent studies on the workload of teachers. Studies from across Canada consistently show that teachers work an average of 50 to 55 hours per week. When asked to estimate how much time they spend on work-related activities, teachers tend to underestimate their hours of work. Although reported work time tends to vary depending on a teacher’s sex, years of experience, geographical location and specific assignment, these correlations are relatively weak, suggesting that overwork is a universal problem affecting teachers not only in Canada but in such other countries as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Sweden and the United States. The workload studies reviewed in conjunction with the Calgary Public study all draw similar conclusions:

- Teachers work 10 to 20 hours per week outside of regular school hours. These long hours create stress and exhaustion, which, in turn, lead to high rates of absenteeism and burnout (Naylor and White 2010).
- The work of teachers is highly complex and involves a wide range of tasks. As a result, teachers often multitask during the work day, a situation that sometimes prevents them from focusing on such higher-order activities as planning, engaging

-
2. Seventy-two per cent of respondents to the ATA’s 2011 Member Opinion Survey agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “My teaching workload causes stress.”
 3. Chung-Yan (2010) found that jobs requiring ongoing problem solving, innovation and the application of complex skills can be sources of satisfaction and result in strong organizational commitment provided that the workers have sufficient latitude to exercise these skills. Naylor and White (2010) found that teachers in British Columbia experienced relatively little stress with respect to such matters as classroom organization, instruction and curriculum strategies—aspects of their work over which they have significant autonomy—but considerably more stress with respect to their work environment, over which they have less control.

in professional development and reflecting on their practice, activities that would almost certainly improve their effectiveness as teachers over the long term.

- Students have a wide range of learning needs, and teachers lack the supports and resources necessary to support an increasingly diverse student population.
- The current emphasis on high-stakes testing and accountability increases the amount of time that teachers spend on paperwork, administration, and formal student assessment and reporting (Day and Gu 2010).

Components of Work-Related Stress

Teachers are experiencing conditions of professional practice that, according to a growing body of research, create job-related stress and lower productivity (Hallowell 2005; Johnson et al 2005). In a comparative review of 26 occupations, Johnson et al (2005) found that teachers score lower than average on measures of physical health, psychological well-being and job satisfaction, an indication that teaching is one of the most stressful professions.⁴ However, most of the literature on work-related stress does not focus on one occupational group. Some researchers (LaMontagne et al 2010; Higgins et al 2004) have also explored the link between workplace stress and poor mental and physical health.

Overwork and Work Intensification

Like workers in many other professions, teachers are suffering the effects of *work intensification* (Naylor and White 2010), a term that describes an employment situation in which work has increased in volume and/or in complexity, leaving workers feeling constantly anxious and insecure. Insecurity can result not only from the threat of job loss but also

from constant change that makes workers uncertain of their roles, of what is expected of them and of the status of their relationships in the workplace.⁵ Work intensification often makes workers feel that they cannot live up to the expectations placed on them or cannot manage all the responsibilities assigned to them.

In recent years, the ATA has undertaken research on a number of topics of concern to educators, including the role of technology in schools, supports for students with special needs, the experiences of beginning teachers and the changing role of administrators. All of this research suggests that teachers and administrators are increasingly struggling to find the time and the mental energy to address all the demands made of them.

One of the participants in the current study described the effects of work intensification as follows: “Discretionary activities may exist, but there is so little time to actually do them. Between extracurricular activities, teaching, planning and marking, there is little time for anything else.” Teachers in the focus group reported that their jobs often left them feeling “overwhelmed” and “exhausted.” Some even remarked that they felt guilty because they were unable to do any one facet of their work to the best of their ability. They were particularly troubled when the competing demands left them feeling that they had short-changed their students.

Many organizations still accept work intensification as a necessity or as something to be embraced. However, Hallowell (2005) observes that, far from increasing productivity, requiring employees to take on more responsibilities may actually diminish productivity by depleting employees’ health, energy and creativity:

Organizations make the mistake of forcing their employees to do more and more with less and less by eliminating support staff. Such companies end up losing money in the long run, for the

4. Johnson et al (2005) evaluated a range of occupations across public and private sectors in the United Kingdom using a well-validated measure of job-related stress. In the study (which involved more than 25,000 workers), teachers ranked second, only behind ambulance drivers, in terms of work-related stress.

5. Burchell et al (2002) observe that downsizing and re-engineering often cause additional problems. “Stress and insecurity generated by these initiatives,” they state, “have damaged the psychological contract between employers and employees and made it increasingly difficult for managers to retain the goodwill and cooperation of their workforce.” “Initiative fatigue,” an experience that many teachers can relate to, is one example of how the “psychological contract” between workers and employers can be breached. For a more in-depth discussion, see Hudson (2002).

more time a manager has to spend being his own administrative assistant and the less he is able to delegate, the less effective he will be in doing the important work of moving the organization forward.

Like other workers, teachers are increasingly being asked to do “more and more with less and less.” Many schools are understaffed, particularly with respect to clerical support and educational assistants. Like the workers Hallowell describes, teachers are having to take on more and more administrative tasks, many of them associated with new communications technologies that increase the frequency with which teachers are expected to report and interact with parents. As a result, teachers are distracted from their core work, which is to engage and teach students.⁶

“Things get done, but not always with the care and attention that they need or deserve.”

Multitasking

Time diaries impose somewhat artificial boundaries around activities, including those undertaken by teachers.⁷ The fact that participants entered multiple codes to track their activities during some 10-minute blocks suggests that they were using multitasking as a strategy to manage at least some aspects of their work. During the focus group established to explore this issue in more depth, participants took a keen interest in exploring how they multitask and how doing so affects their teaching practice. Most participants focused on how they multitask in the classroom. Participants noted, for example, that they answer e-mails, plan lessons and assess individual students during times when students are engaged in

independent work. Participants also noted that they use lunch hours and the time before and after class to phone parents, complete paperwork and discuss issues with colleagues.

Participants observed that they were most likely to multitask before and after school, during lunch hour and in the intervals between classes. Here is one teacher’s account of how her morning begins:

Morning homeroom: During a five-minute period ... I am collecting forms, taking attendance, listening to a kid’s story about what he did last night, helping a kid open his locker, turning on my laptop, changing the calendar. ... No morning in the classroom starts quietly or calmly! Being able to juggle all those demands before students leave for their first class is not an option—it’s a must!

According to the research, multitasking can take many forms, depending on the type and intensity of the tasks involved. The extent to which multitasking is effective depends on the cognitive requirements of the tasks being managed.⁸ Most researchers agree that multitasking increases distractibility—and, hence, the likelihood of mistakes and oversights—and that constantly switching between tasks lowers productivity. Modern communications technologies, which increase expectations for rapid responses and turn-around times, have exacerbated the problem. In the realm of education, for example, online reporting tools have led to the expectation that teachers will assess and report children’s progress to parents more frequently.⁹

Focus group participants identified a number of negative consequences associated with multitasking. For example, they reported that when multitasking they “don’t do as good a job,” “they are unable to give any one student their full attention,” they become “impatient” and “distracted,” and they

6. For detailed analyses of how intensification applies to teachers’ work, see Hargreaves (1994) and Ballet, Kelchtermans and Loughran (2006).

7. In their review of the literature on multitasking, Kenyon and Wing (2010, 43) note that multitasking, although difficult to track in the research design, “presents a more complete and accurate picture of time use and the experience of time.”

8. Not all researchers agree on what the term *multitasking* actually means. Brante (2009), for example, questions whether conversing with a colleague or thinking about work while performing other work or a personal activity constitutes “true” multitasking. Appelbaum, Marchionni and Fernandez (2008) explore the question of whether multitasking should be thought of as the simultaneous performance of two or more activities or whether it is more accurately defined as switching between tasks. This distinction has important implications for the quality of the attention and creativity that a person can bring to the tasks at hand. Research suggests that multitasking is most effective for tasks that require relatively little cognitive engagement. For more analysis of multitasking as it pertains to teachers, see Ballet and Kelchtermans (2008).

9. In a recent study, the ATA (2011b) found that communications technologies have increased expectations on the part of administrators, school authorities, parents and students with respect to the volume and pacing of reporting. See also Day and Gu (2010).

experience “exhaustion.” Participants also observed that, although multitasking can relieve immediate stress by enabling them to accomplish the most pressing tasks, the constant mental effort required to organize small fragments of time and to justify to themselves how they are using their time generates a different type of stress. One teacher described such stress as an ongoing process of “negotiating with herself,” particularly as it pertains to taking time away from work to engage in leisure activities or to take care of herself.

Asked to identify the benefits of multitasking, focus group participants agreed that it helped them to be more efficient and to get more work done. However, they were not always satisfied with the outcomes of their efforts, and often felt guilty and frustrated that they had compromised their professional standards and their moral obligations to their students. As one teacher put it, “I can be quite impatient with students when they ‘interrupt’ me when, really, my other tasks are interrupting the right of students to learn and be taught.” This teacher went on to question whether her efforts to keep students on task served her own interests or those of her students: “I spend a lot of time getting students to become independent learners because I feel I have to be an ‘absentee’ teacher to get everything done.” Other participants agreed that they often relied on their ability to keep students on task to free up time to enable them to complete other tasks during the school day.

“I could spend all my time on assessment and never help a student learn to read.”

Participants observed that some forms of multitasking are not only unavoidable but indicative of good classroom management and effective use of class time. For example, participants noted that they often hand out materials while instructing students on how to use them or work directly with one student while monitoring others. Brante (2009) notes that, although teachers often engage in passive work (such as monitoring students) or mechanical tasks (such

as washing dishes at home), their cognitive energy during these times may be focused on more complex activities such as talking to students or colleagues, solving problems or planning lessons.

Although these forms of multitasking make teachers more flexible, they also blur the boundaries between work and home. Participants observed that worrying about students, solving problems and planning lessons “in their head” sometimes leave them feeling unable to give their undivided attention to relationships, activities and concerns outside of work.¹⁰ One participant ruefully asked whether lying in bed in the middle of the night thinking about work could be considered a form of multitasking.

“I think it is important to declare that sometimes there should be no multitasking.”

To sum up, focus group participants agreed that some forms of multitasking are more beneficial than others, an observation that is consistent with the literature on multitasking. Most researchers concede that multitasking can improve a teacher’s efficiency and that it constitutes an integral part of effective classroom management and differentiated instruction. However, multitasking may be detrimental to learning, reflection and lesson planning—all of which require concentration and creativity.

The Relationship Between Worker Autonomy and Job-Related Stress

During the focus group, participants were asked to rate, on a scale of one to five (one being low and five being high), how much discretionary time they have in their job. Most participants rated the amount of discretionary time they have as a “two.” One participant had this to say about discretionary time: “There is little choice/autonomy; the pressure is tremendous.” Another stated, “I think the pressure to ‘do’ and fall in line with the administration’s expectations is huge. Most teachers just do it.” Overall, participants in the focus group felt that they had very little control over their noninstructional hours.

10. Dyck-Hacault and Alarie (2010) describe this kind of mental activity as the “invisible work” of teaching. See also Zapf (2002).

“The day is so full of ‘must-dos’ that I have difficulty finding any time for discretionary activities.”

Teachers who feel that they have little control over their conditions of professional practice are likely to experience more stress.¹¹ Research shows that the more complex and intensive the work, the more beneficial it is for workers to have autonomy over how they fulfill their responsibilities. Workers who have a lot of responsibility but little control over their working conditions are likely to experience work-related stress. Studies of teacher workload and work intensification suggest that teachers are facing the toxic combination of an increase in responsibilities and a reduction in the supports and resources they need to meet those responsibilities. Some focus group participants, for example, noted that they are being required to spend more time assessing students, an activity that is difficult to incorporate into an already-packed workday. Teachers in Calgary Public have recently been asked to start using the Ends Assessment and Reporting Framework but have not been allocated more time to master the tool and complete the reports.

In discussing the lack of discretion that they have with respect to their working hours, participants focused on two aspects of their work: professional development and extracurricular activities. With respect to professional development, most participants observed that it was more or less mandated by their jurisdiction. One teacher, who ranked her professional autonomy as “very low,” observed that “professional development is school directed and mandatory, even if you have done it year after year, or know the programs already. They take attendance.” Another put it this way: “All Professional Learning Community work is mandatory. The topic is given to us, and any literature is chosen. Administration organizes professional

development days for us. Professional development time for which a substitute teacher is required should be considered directed professional development.”

With respect to extracurricular activities, participants focused on what might be called the “politics of staff meetings.” Participants noted that teachers often feel pressured by their school cultures to “volunteer” to undertake certain activities that, technically speaking, are discretionary. Teachers who do not volunteer risk “losing face” or being perceived as unwilling to do their part for the team. Participants observed that peer pressure to take on extra work is all too often a reality. “Some administrators make clear to staff that everyone needs to ‘share the load’ of discretionary activities: ‘If you don’t, then we’ll be looking at that.’” Another wrote, “I can choose which committees to be on but will be ‘signed up’ by administration if I am perceived as not doing my share.” Finally, perceived parental and community expectations may compel staff to take on fundraising and other noninstructional activities.

“Put up your hand if you are not willing to pitch in and help with the Christmas food bank drive.”

Pressure to undertake extracurricular activities also occurs outside staff meetings. One participant noted that she felt “pressure” because “teachers who do a lot get acknowledged.” Another participant observed that colleagues who undertake discretionary activities are “highlighted and bragged about at staff meetings and in newsletters and you feel ... pressure if your name or class is not mentioned.”¹²

Focus group participants also pointed out that some teachers engage in subtle or overt strategies to avoid onerous commitments. Being the first to sign up, for example, is a way of ensuring that one can pick less strenuous or more desirable activities. As one participant said, “Some [activities] may involve

-
11. See Chung-Yan (2010), Green (2004), LaMontagne et al (2010), and Naylor and White (2010). Teachers are not the only “knowledge workers” who experience stress as a result of having little autonomy over how they perform their work. Although managers and other professionals generally receive more pay and benefits than teachers, have greater flexibility in how they do their work and enjoy higher status and more job security, they tend to experience more stress overall because they generally work longer hours, take more work home, have fewer holidays and have access to fewer family-friendly work policies.
12. Anderson, Coffey and Byerly (2002) and Kossek, Lewis and Hammer (2009) observe that employees who have unsupportive supervisors or who feel pressured to live up to organizational norms may be reluctant to use benefits intended to reduce stress and improve their work–life balance.

a two-hour commitment, while some may involve 50 hours over the year.” Another participant wrote, “I have choice/autonomy as long as the list that gets passed around [during a staff meeting] gets to me before someone else ‘chooses’ my ‘choice.’ Then a ‘choice’ will be made for me.”

How Discretionary Time Can Become Nondiscretionary

Participants reported feeling pressure from the following sources to take on noninstructional work, even when doing so was not in their personal or professional best interests:

- *Administrators:* Among the strategies that some administrators use to appropriate teachers’ noninstructional time are these:
 - Intentionally or unintentionally using staff meetings to generate peer pressure. Administrators may, for example, turn volunteering into a “public” event by passing around sign-up lists or asking teachers to raise their hands if they are willing to undertake an activity.
 - Encouraging—or in some cases commanding—teachers to be “team players.”
 - Implying that teachers who fail to take on tasks will face negative consequences.
 - Suggesting that expectations come from central office and that, as administrators, they have no control over what is expected.
- *Colleagues:* Teachers are highly aware of the activity level of their colleagues. Even though individual circumstances differ (for example, many teachers have children), high-performing colleagues set the bar for the others. Such peer pressure can cause resentment. Paradoxically, it can also prompt colleagues to develop a way of distributing noninstructional work equitably.
- *A Sense of Personal Commitment:* Despite feeling overburdened, many teachers value activities that enrich the school’s culture and enhance opportunities for students. As a result, they devote their time to extracurricular activities and consider doing so an extension of their professional duty to care for students and the community.

Participating in mandatory professional development and extracurricular activities can significantly erode the amount of noninstructional time that teachers have available during the school day. Pressuring teachers to take on noninstructional tasks has two negative consequences. First, it creates exactly the kind of situation that researchers have identified as being notorious for inducing stress: that of an employee in a position with a lot of responsibility having little or no autonomy with respect to how he or she carries out the duties associated with that position. Second, it increases the amount of work that teachers must do. As a result, many teachers spend between 10 and 15 hours per week of their personal time on job-related activities. It should come as no surprise to hear teachers comment that their home offers them little respite from the responsibilities and pressures of their work.¹³

Implications and Recommendations

Although this pilot study was small—20 teachers completed diaries and 11 of them participated in the focus group—the findings are consistent with those of larger studies on the workloads and conditions of practice of teachers. (See Appendix B for a summary of recent studies on this topic.) Taken together, these studies suggest that the work of teachers has become more intensive and more complex over time, a situation that, in turn, has increased the incidences of stress leave and teacher burnout. Some studies have also pointed to overwork as a cause of high attrition rates among new teachers.

Few studies have examined teachers’ working conditions in the context of the broader trends affecting labour in general. One reason for this neglect may be that teaching is often mythologized as a “vocation,” a “calling” or a “labour of love” that cannot be compared with other occupations that are more readily recognized as “work.”¹⁴ But teaching *is*

13. According to Association research (ATA 2011a), a factor that frequently motivates teachers to consider other lines of work is a blurring of the distinction between work and home life.

14. “For too long now, the working conditions of teachers have been overlooked because it is assumed that teaching is a calling, a profession where one would work and overcome school-related obstacles regardless of their nature” (Gitlin 2001, cited in Ballet et al 2006).

work, and the findings in this study and other teacher workload studies with respect to multitasking, work intensification and worker autonomy reinforce what the research on workload in other professions is showing:

- Work intensification is a real phenomenon that has real consequences for the health and well-being of workers.
- Juggling excessive projects and initiatives leads to a loss of focus and substandard results.
- Multitasking is a widespread but frequently ineffective mechanism for coping with work intensification.
- Technology speeds up the pace of work, exacerbates intensification and blurs the boundaries between work and home life.

The research on contemporary working conditions—particularly those conditions that produce stress and upset the work–life balance—validates teachers’ subjective experiences of work intensification and overwork.

Negotiating Assignable Time

The issue of teacher overwork is exacerbated by a lack of clarity as to what constitutes “assignable time.” The current collective agreement between the Calgary Board of Education and its teachers offers little help: “The extent of school involvement in extracurricular activities must be determined by the principal and his/her staff.”¹⁵ The agreement fails to distinguish between voluntary and assignable hours and contains no protocols to guide principals and staff in setting reasonable limits on noninstructional work and ensuring that such work is distributed fairly.

The absence of a clear definition of assignable time leads to all manner of confusion: “Clubs are not really voluntary,” one participant commented, “but an expectation. Extracurricular such as choir is not considered a club.” This participant’s school has evidently developed its own—somewhat arbitrary—definition of what constitutes a voluntary as opposed to an assigned activity. The comment also demonstrates how language can be used to manipulate already vague boundaries between

voluntary work and assignable time. “Because a choir is not a club,” so the reasoning goes, “the rules governing participation in this activity are different.”

Cultural Barriers to Attaining a Work–Life Balance

Because assignable time is ill-defined, teachers can never be certain that they are doing enough, even when they experience physical and mental distress. Most participants in the focus group noted that they rely on social cues, norms and expectations to decide whether they are sufficiently involved in noninstructional work. Such uncertainty creates a no-win situation: Taking on more and more work leads to exhaustion, burnout and resentment. At the same time, rejecting work leads to a sense of guilt and the perception that one is being judged negatively by colleagues and the administration. The result is an environment of insecurity in which workers can never feel certain that they are performing well enough.

Interestingly, one focus group participant rated her level of autonomy as “four” on the five-point scale. Asked why she felt that she had so much autonomy, she noted that her administrative team strongly encouraged staff to achieve a work–life balance, a stance that had significantly influenced the school culture. Given such a culture, she felt “very comfortable saying ‘no’” when asked to take on more duties than she could reasonably handle. As a result, she felt that she had “control of her personal contribution to the school community.” She added that in her school noninstructional activities are decided in a way that respects the life circumstances and situations of individual teachers.

Kossek, Lewis and Hammer (2009) would characterize the approach taken in this school as an example of “cultural worklife support,” which they define as follows: “Informal workplace social and relational support (for example, from supervisors and coworkers), together with organizational cultural norms that increase an individual’s perceptions that employees who are jointly involved in work and family roles are fully valued.” The participant in this case felt that her need to maintain a work–life

15. *Agreement Between the Board of Trustees of the Calgary Board of Education and The Alberta Teachers’ Association*. September 1, 2007, to August 31, 2012, p 42. Retrieved October 17, 2011, from http://www.cbe.ab.ca/Careers/pdfs/ATA_07-12.pdf.

balance was respected. Her administrative team not only explicitly encouraged staff to work toward achieving such a balance but intervened “when they felt that people were doing too much or not enough.”

“The sense of team spirit or collegiality or pride that you have in your school, staff and administrators can make you much more willing to extend yourself.”

The Role of the Principal

For better or for worse, a school’s leadership can significantly influence many of the conditions contributing to work intensification. School administrators not only have direct authority over teachers’ noninstructional time during the day but play an important role in setting the norms for what constitutes being a “good team player.” Participants stated that they appreciate administrators who are genuinely sensitive to teachers’ well-being and nonworking lives. They also noted that teachers are less likely to volunteer their time and energy if they have an administrator whom they perceive as “dictatorial or aloof.”

Teachers also appreciated administrators who are willing to “buffer” them from unreasonable demands and expectations. Although aware that many of these expectations originate in central office, they believe that administrators have some latitude in adjusting these expectations to take into account the workloads of their staff. Because teachers have limited control over the expectations and initiatives that determine their work, they rely on administrators to “run interference.”¹⁶

Implications for Teacher Overwork and Work–Life Balance

Reducing the intensification of teachers’ work likely involves a combination of two strategies: (1) negotiating with the school board to revise practices and place limits on assignable time and

(2) changing the school culture. With reference to the first strategy, the terms *assignable time* and *extracurricular activities* need to be more clearly defined and limits need to be negotiated with respect to each. Furthermore, although the collective agreement states that workloads are to be determined by “the principal and his/her staff,” this directive does not appear to be translating into collegial practices at the school level. Indeed, only half the participants in Calgary Public Teachers Local’s 2010 survey agreed that they were meaningful participants in school decision making. Guidelines on how decisions about assignable time are made need to be developed.

With reference to the second strategy, this study, together with other research on work–life balance, suggests that policy, however well considered, can be undermined if a school’s cultural norms do not align with and support the intent of the policy. Ultimately, the administrator in each school will determine whether negotiated limits on assignable time are the starting point for collegial decision making about assignments or a source of antagonism among staff.

Further Research

A more in-depth literature review will clearly show that teachers across Canada routinely work 50 or more hours per week and that long hours and work intensification negatively affect not only teachers but also the quality of student learning. Recent studies (ATA 2010b and ATA 2011b) suggest that the intensification of teachers’ work in Alberta is the result of three factors: (1) a growing bureaucracy that requires teachers to complete more paperwork and report more extensively on student progress, (2) the acquisition—often without proper consideration—of more technology to support student learning and to track student achievement and (3) the increasing diversity of the student population and the complexity of students’ needs.

Although studies documenting teacher overwork date back at least 20 years, they appear to have had little impact on the structure of the school day and the demands placed on teachers. In designing future teacher workload studies, researchers should consider these factors:

16. In a 2010 survey of Calgary Public teachers, 43 per cent of the 1,221 participants disagreed that the jurisdiction values teachers’ input on such major issues as programing and setting AISI priorities (Calgary Public Local 2010).

- The audience for the study and the type of data that will be most persuasive to that audience.
- The extent to which the study can shed new light on the issue of teacher workload rather than repeat what is already well documented in existing Canadian studies.

A larger time-diary study of teachers is unlikely to yield results significantly different from those presented either in this study or in the Canadian teacher workload studies reviewed in this report. However, a larger time-diary study involving Alberta teachers may be useful in helping Calgary Public Teachers Local and/or the provincial Association make the case that teacher overwork is negatively affecting Alberta schools.

The Link Between Teacher Workload and Informed Transformation

Like most of the teacher workload studies reviewed, this pilot study has produced qualitative data. Existing research details the many activities that contribute to the complexity and volume of teachers' work. The research on teachers in particular and on work–life balance in general clearly shows that long hours and stressful working conditions take their toll not only on the productivity but also on the individual health and well-being of employees.

Teacher workload studies rarely examine the link between challenging conditions of professional practice and the larger systemic factors that affect workload, such as the political and bureaucratic forces that determine the length and characteristics of the school day, the ever-expanding body of curricular outcomes and the chronic dearth of supports for students with special needs. Hiring more teachers and providing teachers with embedded planning time would partially alleviate the time pressures on teachers. However, such measures do not address the fact that many of the structures and attitudes evident in today's schools are based on an industrial model

of education. Such structures and attitudes undermine good teaching and learning.

The nature and quantity of teachers' work is unlikely to change in the context of Alberta's current education system. Drawing on international research and the advice of an expert team, in 2010 the Association developed an alternative vision for Alberta schools (ATA 2010a), a vision that included these reforms:

- Stabilize education funding and planning by taking a cyclical, multiple-year approach.
- Embed teacher planning and professional development into the school day.
- Modularize secondary school programming, thereby giving students multiple pathways to vocational and academic postsecondary education.
- Reduce and streamline curricular outcomes and give local communities more opportunity to adapt the curriculum to their needs.
- Reduce the reliance on standardized testing by developing other assessment mechanisms. For example, test only a sample of the student population, introduce student self-assessments and embed teacher-directed assessments into locally established systems of accountability.
- Develop infrastructures to support innovation and knowledge sharing at the local, provincial and international levels.

In the short term, Calgary Public Teachers Local might consider renegotiating teachers' conditions of professional practice. However, as the local's 2010 study demonstrated (Calgary Public Local 2010), no one educational partner can hope to achieve the magnitude of change that Alberta Education contemplates in its vision of informed transformation. Therefore, future negotiations and advocacy efforts must be based on a comprehensive, long-term vision of education, a vision grounded in solid, credible evidence and research. Rather than merely documenting a problem that is already known and understood, future studies on teacher overwork should focus on gathering data that the local could use to develop strategies for meaningful change.

References

- Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). 2010a. *The Courage to Choose: Emerging Trends and Strategic Possibilities for Informed Transformation in Alberta Schools: 2010–2011*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA.
- . 2010b. *Using Technology to Support Real Learning First in Alberta Schools*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA.
- . 2011a. *The Early Years of Practice: Interim Report on a Five-Year Study of Beginning Teachers in Alberta*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA.
- . 2011b. *The Impact of Digital Technologies on Teachers Working in Flexible Learning Environments*. Edmonton, Alta: ATA.
- Anderson, S E, B S Coffey and R T Byerly. 2002. "Formal Organizational Initiatives and Informal Workplace Practices: Links to Work–Family Conflict and Job-Related Outcomes." *Journal of Management* 28, no 6: 787–810.
- Appelbaum, S H, A Marchionni and A Fernandez. 2008. "The Multitasking Paradox: Perceptions, Problems and Strategies." *Management Decision* 46, no 9: 1313–25. doi:10.1108/00251740810911966.
- Ballet, K, G Kelchtermans and J Loughran. 2006. "Beyond Intensification Towards a Scholarship of Practice: Analysing Changes in Teachers' Work Lives." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 12, no 2: 209–29. doi:10.1080/13450600500467415.
- Ballet, K, and G Kelchtermans. 2008. "Workload and Willingness to Change: Disentangling the Experience of Intensification." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 40, no 1: 47–67.
- Brante, G. 2009. "Multitasking and Synchronous Work: Complexities in Teacher Work." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 25, no 3: 430–36.
- Burchell, B, D Ladipo and F Wilkinson, eds. 2002. *Job Insecurity and Work Intensification*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Calgary Public Teachers ATA Local 38. 2010. *Leading Our Future Together: Necessary Conditions for Shared Leadership in Calgary Public Schools*. Calgary, Alta: Calgary Public Teachers ATA Local No 38. Available at <http://local38.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Local38.teachers.ab.ca/Documents/Leading%20Our%20Future%20Together.pdf>.
- Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF). 2005. *Canadian Teachers' Federation National Teachers' Poll*. Ottawa: CTF.
- Chung-Yan, G. 2010. "The Nonlinear Effects of Job Complexity and Autonomy on Job Satisfaction, Turnover and Psychological Well-Being." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 15, no 3: 237–51. doi:10.1037/a0019823.
- Day, C, and Q Gu. 2010. *The New Lives of Teachers*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Dean, D, and C Webb. 2011. "Recovering from Information Overload." *McKinsey Quarterly*, January.
- Dibbon, D. 2004. *It's About Time! A Report on the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students*. St John's, Nfld: Memorial University.
- Dyck-Hacault, G, and R Alarie. 2010. *Teacher Workload: MTS Task Force on Teacher Workload Final Report*. Winnipeg, Man: Manitoba Teachers' Society.
- Green, F. 2004. "Work Intensification, Discretion and the Decline in Wellbeing at Work." *Eastern Economic Journal* 30, no 4: 615–26.
- Hallowell, E. 2005. "Overloaded Circuits: Why Smart People Underperform." *Harvard Business Review* (January): 1–7.
- Hargreaves, A. 1994. *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. London: Continuum.
- Harvey, A S, and J Spinney. 2000. *Life on and off the Job: A Time-Use Study of Nova Scotia Teachers*. Halifax, NS: St Mary's University.
- Higgins, C, L Duxbury and K Johnson. 2004. *Exploring the Link Between Work–Life Conflict and Demands on Canada's Health Care System*. Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada.
- Hudson, M. 2002. "Flexibility and the Reorganisation of Work." In *Job Insecurity and Work Intensification*, ed B Burchell, D Ladipo and F Wilkinson. London and New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, S, C Cooper, S Cartwright, I Donald, P Taylor and C Millet. 2005. "The Experience of Work-Related Stress Across Occupations." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 20, no 2: 178–87.
- Kamanzi, P C, M-C Riopel and C Lessard. 2007. *School Teachers in Canada: Context, Profile and Work. Highlights of a Pan-Canadian Survey*. Montreal, Que: University of Montreal.
- Kenyon, S, and G A Wing. 2010. "What Do We Mean by Multitasking?—Exploring the Need for Methodological Clarification in Time-Use Research." *International Journal of Time-Use Research* 7, no 1: 42–60.
- Kossek, E, S Lewis and L B Hammer. 2009. "Work–Life Initiatives and Organizational Change: Overcoming Mixed Messages to Move from the Margin to the Mainstream." *Human Relations* 63, no 1: 3–19.
- LaMontagne, A, T Keegel, A Louie and A Ostry. 2010. "Job Stress as a Preventable Upstream Determinant of Common Mental Disorders: A Review for Practitioners and Policymakers." *Advances in Mental Health* 9, no 1: 17–35.
- Naylor, C, and M White. 2010. *The Worklife of BC Teachers in 2009*. Vancouver, BC: British Columbia Teachers' Federation.
- Vogrinetz, S. 1999. "Alberta Teachers: A Workload Study." Master's thesis, University of Alberta.
- Zapf, D. 2002. "Emotion Work and Psychological Wellbeing: A Review of the Literature and Some Conceptual Considerations." *Human Resource Management Review* 12, no 2: 237–68.

Appendix A: Time-Diary Codes

Code	Item	Description
I	Instruction	Teaching regularly assigned classes, in-school coverage of classes, tutorials.
P	Planning	Long-range plans, unit plans, daily planning and lesson preparation, outlines, constructing tests and other diagnostic instruments, reading and research for lesson planning, sub plans, preparing for volunteers.
RC	Reporting/ communication	Completing report cards (entering marks and comments), preparing curriculum newsletters, assembling report cards, writing e-mails or making calls related to reporting, carrying out parent-teacher interviews, preparing for student-led interviews, producing parent newsletters.
A	Assessment	Marking assignments and tests, gathering materials for broad-based assessments, administering and recording assessments.
M	Meetings and consultations	Staff meetings, professional learning community meetings, student learning teams, grade level meetings, department meetings, phone calls to parents and students, other calls.
AE	Attending school-hosted activities	Attending school-hosted activities.
PD1	Assigned PD	Training required by the board or the school, such as first aid, Smart Board training, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System training.
S	Supervising students	Noninstructional but required time.
PDoc	Professional documentation	Referral paperwork, practicum requirements, Teacher Professional Growth Plan, field trips and proposals, accident reports, scheduling, reference letters for students.
AD	Administration	Applies to people with administrative designations, such as AISI learning leaders. All time spent on administrative duties, like those in PDoc, that are not related to one's own students.
C	Clerical work	
PD2	Personal-choice PD	Additional postsecondary education, mentoring/professional conversations.
EX	Extracurricular activities	Coaching and clubs, intramurals.
H	Home activities	Housework, yard care, meals and cleanup, eating, personal care, family care, shopping, volunteer work, community service, religious activities, assisting family or friends, medical or dental appointments. (Includes activities taken on personal days.)
D	Driving	Time spent driving or riding as a passenger (excluding time spent on field trips).
RR	Rest and relaxation	Activity that is solely self-directed, including activities during the school day. Includes time spent on leisure activities, exercise, recreation, hobbies and entertainment.
ZZ	Sleeping	
RL	Recess and lunch	Sitting in the staff room, socializing or eating. Non-work time.

Appendix B: Summary of Canadian Teacher Workload Studies

Several teachers' colleges, federations and unions have studied teacher workloads over the past decade. Highlights of these studies are detailed below.

<p>Vogrinetz, S. 1999. <i>Alberta Teachers: A Workload Study</i>. Edmonton, Alta: Alberta Teachers' Association. Sample: 112 teachers Method: teachers kept diaries of how they spent their time Average number of hours worked per week: 52.9</p>	<p>Highlights</p> <p>The average number of hours per week that teachers spend on work-related activities according to the studies reviewed ranges from 43 to 62.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having children at home reduces hours spent on teaching. • Teachers in small rural schools tend to spend more time on supervision. • Secondary teachers spend more time on marking, but elementary teachers spend more time writing report cards.
<p>Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF). 2005. <i>Canadian Teachers' Federation National Teachers' Poll</i>. Ottawa: CTF. Average number of hours worked per week: 55.6 (up from 51.8 hours in 2001)</p>	<p>Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2005, 83 per cent of Canadian teachers reported that they had a higher workload than they did in 2001. • Fifty-one per cent of teachers stated that their class sizes had grown between 2003 and 2005. Only 1 teacher in 10 reported having smaller class sizes. • Seventy-four per cent of the teachers surveyed reported that the number of students with special needs in their class had increased in the past two years.
<p>Naylor, C, and M White. 2010. <i>The Worklife of BC Teachers in 2009</i>. Vancouver: BC Teachers' Federation. Sample: 563 teachers and teacher specialists Method: questionnaire Average number of hours worked per week: 47.8</p> <p>Respondents spent an average of 6.6 hours per week on prep time, 4.5 hours on marking and 1.5 to 1.8 hours on administrative tasks.</p>	<p>Highlights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average FTE for part-time teachers was .64 or 31.4 hours per week. These teachers spent an additional 7.1 hours on work-related activities. • Ninety-five per cent of respondents reported working before and after school on week days, 88 per cent reported working during recesses and lunch, and 77 per cent reported working on weekends. • The majority of participants indicated that they were spending more time outside the regular school day on work-related activities and more time on administration and reporting. • The most significant source of stress was lack of support for handling disruptive students and special needs students (especially uncoded students). • At least 60 per cent of teachers ranked the following concerns as "quite" or "very" important issues for bargaining: improved support for special education, more time for planning and preparation, reduced class size, and improvements in salary and benefits. • Half of the 68 participants who were on leave indicated that workload was a contributing factor to the leave, and 25 per cent of those on leave reported that they were on a stress-related leave. • Women are more likely than men to cite family obligations as a barrier to undertaking further professional education such as graduate studies. • Ninety-three per cent of teachers working part-time were female. Asked why they were working part-time, 57 per cent cited "personal reasons" and 20 per cent said they did so to "reduce workload."

Dyck-Hacault, G, and R Alarie. 2010. *Teacher Workload: MTS Task Force on Teacher Workload Final Report*. Winnipeg, Man: Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Sample: 828 teachers

Method: telephone surveys and focus groups

Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week: **Highlights**

Because this was a qualitative study, no average is available.

- Only 28 per cent of participants agreed that their workload was manageable.
- Seventy-three per cent stated that stress and overwork were affecting their work performance.
- Participants reported that their work was intensifying in the sense that they had to do more work in the same amount of time.
- The increasing diversity of classrooms is a factor in increasing teachers' workloads.
- The study concludes that all collective agreements should include at least 300 minutes of preparation time per week.
- Teachers are inadequately trained to undertake such technical jobs as maintaining websites and creating digital report cards. The equipment is often inadequate.
- Teaching English as an additional language and students with special needs increases teachers' workloads. Teachers lack the training, resources and supports to address all students' needs.
- Some collective agreements in Canada address class size and composition.
- Half of teachers receive less than 200 minutes of preparation time per week. Teachers in earlier grade levels receive less planning time than secondary teachers. Some Manitoba collective agreements include clauses for instructional time.

Kamanzi, P C, M-C Riopel and C Lessard. 2007. *School Teachers in Canada: Context, Profile and Work. Highlights of a Pan-Canadian Survey*. Montreal, Que: University of Montreal.

Sample: 4,569 teachers, administrators and specialists

Method: questionnaires

Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week: **Highlights**

Because this was a qualitative study, no average is available.

- Forty-two per cent of respondents believed that they could meet the needs of students from linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Between 45 and 60 per cent of respondents believed that they could respond effectively to varied special needs and learning disabilities.
- Forty per cent of teachers reported being satisfied with their workload.
- The major sources of change for teachers were inclusion (ie, special needs students), decreasing staff, information and communications technology and new instructional approaches. An overwhelming 93 per cent of teachers stated that such changes had increased their workloads, while only 25 per cent of teachers believed that such changes were moving schools in a positive direction.

Dibbon, D. 2004. *It's About Time! A Report on the Impact of Workload on Teachers and Students*. St. John's, Nfld: Memorial University.

Sample: 681 teachers

Average Number of Hours Worked Per Week: **Highlights**

52.3

Respondents spent an average of 9.3 hours per week on preparation, 2.9 on assessment and 2.7 on reporting and testing.

- Three major concerns cited by teachers were the excessively complex nature of the curriculum, dealing with the diverse needs of students and having to wait long periods of time to have special needs students assessed and referred.
- When teachers have insufficient planning time, the students who suffer most are those needing specialized instruction and those needing remediation.
- The researchers conclude that supervising students is a "poor use of professional time" and recommend that paraprofessionals be used to a greater extent in handling noncore teaching activities.
- The researchers also suggest that teachers need more preparation time during the school day.

Harvey, A S, and J Spinney. 2000. *Life on and off the Job: A Time–Use Study of Nova Scotia Teachers*. Halifax, NS: St Mary’s University

Sample: 822 Teachers, administrators, specialists

Method: teachers kept diaries of how they spent their time

Average Number of **Highlights**

Hours Worked Per

Week: 52.5

Respondents spent an average of 10.5 hours per week on preparation.

- On average, teachers spend 33 per cent of their time on instruction and tutoring, 20 per cent on preparation (most of which is done outside of school hours), 10 per cent on marking and grading, 4–7 per cent on meetings; 4–7 per cent on paper work and 4–7 per cent on report cards.
- Such other work-related activities as supervision, administration and extracurricular activities account for the remaining time.



This publication is part of an ongoing series of research updates published by the Alberta Teachers' Association. Further background information about the research studies cited in this publication is available from J-C Couture at the Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 142 Street, Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1; phone 780-447-9400 (in Edmonton) or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta); e-mail jc.couture@ata.ab.ca.