

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 344

UD 034 329

AUTHOR Meyer, Gwen  
TITLE On Point...On Time and How To Get More of It. Brief Discussions of Critical Issues in Urban Education.  
INSTITUTION Education Development Center, Newton, MA. National Inst. for Urban School Improvement.  
SPONS AGENCY Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 2001-04-00  
NOTE 12p.  
CONTRACT H086C70005  
AVAILABLE FROM National Institute for Urban School Improvement, Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02458. Tel: 617-969-7100, ext. 2105; Fax: 617-969-3440; e-mail: niusi@edc.org. For full text: <http://www.edc.org/urban>.  
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Block Scheduling; Elementary Secondary Education; Flexible Scheduling; Planning; Time Blocks; \*Time Management; Urban Schools

## ABSTRACT

This booklet examines issues related to time in education. After describing the increasing number of roles teachers play in their schools and their lack of time to do everything, the booklet explains that in order to achieve improved student outcomes, teachers need time to do their work. Teaching requires time for professional development, leadership activities, peer collaboration, parent partnerships, and school improvement. The use of time in schools indicates what is important to the school community and is usually reflected in the school's schedule. Scheduling reveals how much time is allocated to each subject and how much flexibility exists for differences in students, teaching, and content. Teachers need daily time for planning, collaborating, communicating with families, professional development, and school improvement. Two consecutive periods per day or several longer periods per week are preferable to one short period at a time. To prevent complications in scheduling as the year progresses, disciplined planning and scheduling at the beginning of the school year is necessary. Schools can create time by using block scheduling, restructuring or rescheduling time, changing staffing patterns, and adding time to the school day or year. (SM)

ED 455 344

Brief discussions  
of critical issues in  
Urban Education

# On Point...

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
Office of Educational Research and Improvement  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

## On Time and How to Get More of It



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
URBAN SCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND  
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS  
BEEN GRANTED BY

B. Johnson

Education Development  
Center  
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

D034329

ERIC  
Full Text Provided by ERIC

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

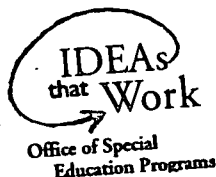
1



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
URBAN SCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT

# INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Good for Kids, Families & Communities



*The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, funds the National Institute for Urban School Improvement to facilitate the unification of current general and special education reform efforts as these are implemented in the nation's urban school districts. The National Institute's creation reflects OSEP's long-standing commitment to improving educational outcomes for all children, specifically those with disabilities, in communities challenged and enriched by the urban experience.*



# Time and How to Get More of It

## Time! Time! We Don't Have Time!

Today's schools are striving to meet the challenges of systemic reform and school improvement. It is a big and complicated job. Achieving real, lasting change requires that everyone in schools stops, thinks, and works together to make the kinds of changes that need to occur.

In the midst of such demands, however, teachers find themselves with more to do in the same amount of time, or even in less time, than they have had in the past. Educators must use curriculum and teaching strategies that address the challenges presented by multiple languages and cultures, poverty and health issues, homelessness, problem behaviors, and disabilities or other differences that make learning difficult for a large number of students. They must also participate in a variety of planning, evaluating, learning, and other activities that require them to spend time outside of the classroom. Collaborating with colleagues to plan curriculum and team teaching, engaging in

professional development to maintain current skills and acquire new ones, working to create partnerships with families for decision making about their children's education, and participating in practice-based inquiry and reflective practice are just a few of the activities that have become part of the job of teaching. Teachers also play a greater role in decision making in their schools and districts through membership on building leadership teams, site councils, and other leadership activities. In short, a typical teacher today needs time to:

- Become familiar with existing curriculum and contribute to the creation of new and innovative curriculum
- Plan, prepare, and teach lessons to implement the curriculum for students with diverse learning needs
- Collaborate with other teachers to integrate curriculum content
- Master and use effective instructional techniques that directly involve students in their learning
- Grade papers and assess student progress
- Engage in ongoing professional development opportunities
- Participate in school leadership and cooperative decision making
- Learn and use new technology to improve teaching and productivity for students and for themselves
- Participate in state- and district-level professional activities
- Give individual attention to students
- Reflect with other teachers about their learning and teaching practices
- Get to know parents well enough to form productive partnerships and establish effective communication

It's a long list. And most teachers say that they simply do not have the time it takes to do everything they know they need to do to feel satisfied with their efforts.

## Time Matters!

In almost every analysis of school change over the last decade, *having enough time* emerged as a key issue. To achieve improved student outcomes, teachers need time to do their work. To achieve successful schools, teachers need to frequently

discuss practice, collaboratively design materials, and inform and critique one another's efforts. Even in schools where time for collaboration and planning is a priority, carving extra minutes and hours out of an already full day or week requires innovative scheduling and creative use of resources. Teachers already spend many hours outside of the school day, including evenings and weekends, to do their work.

## Teaching Requires Different Kinds of Time

We need to rethink what teaching includes. *Teaching* used to mean the time an adult stood in front of a group of students. Now we are discovering that teaching also means ongoing professional development, collaborative work with colleagues, teacher leadership activities, development of parent partnerships and work on other aspects of the overall improvement of the school. These activities are part of a new definition of teaching. Such redefinition means that the work taking place outside the classroom is not extra duty or release time activity, but a critical component of teaching that contributes significantly to student achievement. In some countries, teachers spend as little as 50 or 60 percent of the school day working directly with students. They use the rest of their day for other activities that enrich and enhance the time they do have with students.

Changes in the use of time are not easily made nor do they happen quickly. Every school and district has some unique needs and differences in priorities, and schools organize and schedule activities differently. Of course, available resources may also vary from school to school, district to district. Changes that require additional funds and/or staff may be more difficult to achieve in some schools. There are also significant differences between the structure and scheduling of time in secondary and elementary schools. All of these variations make it impossible to find simple solutions that will work everywhere.

## Some Principles for Allocating Time

The use of time in schools reflects what is important to the school community and is usually reflected in a school's schedule. Scheduling reveals, for example, how much time is allocated to each subject and how much flexibility exists for differences in students, teaching, and content. Changing a schedule will not automatically improve instruction, but wise allocation and productive use of time increases the chance

more student learning will occur. In many schools, there is actually more time for collaboration and planning than people realize, but inefficient scheduling and poor use of the time that is available minimizes the opportunities it provides. The following broad ideas about how to use time in today's schools might help school personnel rethink how time gets used and how that use reflects their school's priorities:

- Teachers should have time *each day* for use in planning, collaboration, communication with families, professional development, and other activities that relate to their teaching or to school improvement efforts.
- Two consecutive periods in a school day, or several longer periods throughout the week, are better than one short period at a time.
- The district and school should formalize collective staff time. Time for teacher work should be provided by the system and be built into the structure, the plan, and the schedule in such a way that it is ongoing and predictable.
- To prevent a schedule that is plagued by *add-ons* as the year goes along, disciplined planning and scheduling at the beginning of the school year should itemize what time will be used for; how much is needed, and when it will be used. A sharp staff focus, a match between time and activities, and refraining from adding on more than was planned originally should keep the schedule manageable.

## How do Schools *MAKE* Time?

A common strategy for making time, particularly in middle and high schools, is block scheduling. This strategy involves arranging time in longer blocks that combine subjects or topics that were previously taught in smaller units of time. This results in both fewer classes and more opportunities for teachers to design teaching that integrates several areas of content. Block scheduling accommodates such time-consuming activities as lab experiments, provides more time for practice or field-based learning, and permits exploration of innovative instructional practices and strategies that demand more time. Teachers in schools with block schedules work with fewer students each day, and prepare for fewer classes, so there are fewer minutes spent transitioning from class to class – time that can be reallocated to learning.

Another benefit of block scheduling is the creation of common planning time. With fewer classes to teach, and longer preparation periods each day, it is easier to align common planning periods for teachers to work together. If special education or other support teachers are included in the schedule, they can help to design curriculum and



incorporate planning for students with special needs into the lesson plans.

A final important consideration is that block scheduling accommodates differences in the amounts of time individual students require to learn and master skills. Because lessons are longer, students who learn quickly and work at a more rapid pace can enjoy opportunities for enrichment activities, while students who need more time can take it without the stigma attached to make-up classes or pull-out services.

Obviously, not every strategy for finding or creating time will work in every school and block scheduling is only one. Nevertheless, many schools have been trying different strategies for providing teachers with the time they need. These strategies cluster into three broad categories: restructuring or rescheduling time; changing staffing patterns; and adding additional time to the school day or year.

## Restructuring or Rescheduling Time

- Teach more minutes four days a week and use the time earned to have early release on one day.
- Trade in staff development days at the beginning or end of the school year and spread the time out throughout the year for planning time.
- Stagger the schedule to accommodate morning/evening students. For example, start school earlier for students who do well in the morning, and have a later start for students who need more sleep. With fewer students in school at the beginning and end of the day, the time can be used for planning time by teachers who are not directly involved with students at that time.
- Give teachers a common lunch period followed by a planning period for shared time daily. Provide a large group activity or smaller educational activities for kids after lunch. Have special electives and classes in the periods after lunch to free core classroom teachers.
- Identify a group of teachers and students to participate in longer class periods where academic subjects are integrated. The periods would start and end at the same time as the regular school day, but might be 2 long periods instead of 3 or 4 shorter ones. Students and teachers might meet in small or large groups, participate in extended lab time and field experiences, and stay together the entire year. This kind of flexibility in the schedule makes it more likely that teachers will be able to regularly schedule in time for planning.
- Lobby with the state to convert instructional days into staff development time.



## Changing Staffing Patterns

- Have all administrators regularly do some teaching.
- Hire more teachers and allow teachers to teach fewer classes per day.
- Bring in regular substitute teachers (the same teachers whenever possible) or specialist teachers once a week to take over the classes and free the regular teachers.
- Use other adults (administrators, volunteers, parents, instructional assistants) in the classroom to conduct an activity while teachers meet.
- Arrange field trips lead by volunteers, regular substitute teachers, or elective teachers that enhance or augment the curriculum to free time for planning.
- Have teachers teach fewer classes per term so they have a free period every day for planning.
- Assign six teachers to four classes to free teachers on a rotating basis.
- Hire P.E., Art and Music specialists to provide 30 free minutes a day for classroom teachers. Or schedule Music and P.E. at the same time for all kids in a grade so that there can be a grade-level meeting of teachers.
- Remove all duties, like recess duty, hall duty, and bus duty from teachers. Hire people to perform these duties. Give teachers duty-free lunch.
- Have a Hobby Period once a week. All adults in the school, including office staff, cafeteria workers, and instructional assistants, teach hobbies to students, freeing up teachers to meet. Parents or other community members could also be involved in a Hobby Period.
- A variation on Hobby Period could be the same use of staff, parents, and community members, but instead they might teach a foreign language, conduct a science experiment, or lead an activity that would in some way extend or apply academics or other content the students are learning.
- Set up a teaming structure within a block schedule. For example, during a day with a 3 hour block of time in the morning and 1 1/2 hour block in the afternoon, a team of four general education teachers, a special education teacher, and a teaching assistant have responsibility for 100 students for English, math, social studies, and science. The use of each block of time is totally within control of the teachers in the block. One week the schedule may be adjusted so those students have a double period of something. Teachers can suspend the typical class schedule all together and have students work in small groups. Teachers may give up some time from their own periods to other teachers who need more time. When students are in elective classes, the teaching team has time to meet.

- Form a partnership with a university or local college that could provide films, TV lessons, and demonstrations using interactive teaching arrangements that enrich the curriculum. If university partners handle instruction and design follow-up activities, paraprofessionals can handle the monitoring.
- Have teachers (Art, Music, and PE.) who do not have classes of their own plan a half-day, integrated program for schools in the district. The program could rotate from school to school. During this time, the teachers in the school are free to meet.
- Have groups of students spend time each week with a business in the community, e.g., a video store, garden center, grocery store, book store, animal clinic, etc. The experience becomes an "apprenticeship" where students learn about the business and acquire skills and knowledge about the world of work.
- Encourage students to do volunteer community service activities one time a week while teachers plan.
- Have older students work with younger ones with minimal supervision so teachers can be free to meet.
- Group two smaller classes together with a different teacher, a substitute, a paraprofessional or volunteer to free the teachers.

## Adding Time to the School Day or Year

- Shorten the amount of classroom time each day, but add more days to the school year to cover state requirements. Use the extra time saved from each day.
- Extend the school day by starting earlier or finishing later. Have special classes in the early morning periods. Then required hours are completed in four and a half days. This provides a free half-day each week.
- Move to a year-round schedule or extended school year by instituting summer classes. The extra time in school will provide numerous opportunities for time each day and/or chunks of time between terms for longer professional development courses or planning days.
- Add meeting days to the school year. For example, one school built 21 pupil-free workdays into the calendar for the year.
- Combine high school and adult evening school programs to provide continuous classes throughout the day. Adults and adolescents can attend classes together and structure their schedules to meet individual needs and to accommodate a variety of work patterns. With some students attending classes at night, teachers may have more time during the day for collaboration.

# Final thoughts

Creating schedules for planning and collaboration takes time and thoughtfulness. But even the most well-planned schedule with ample amounts of time will not help if the time created is not used effectively and efficiently to improve teaching and learning. Although we know that the end of the day, when teachers are tired, is the worst time to meet, that is the time for which many meetings are scheduled. Meetings without a focus or agenda waste the time of all participants, yet many meetings could be characterized in this way. The challenge then is not only to create the time for planning and collaboration, but also to make the best use of this precious commodity once it has been created.

## References:

- Donahoe, T. (1993). Finding the way: Structure, time and culture in school improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75(4), 298-305.
- Jorgensen, C.M., Fisher, D., Sax, C., and Skaglund, K.L. (1998). Innovative scheduling, new roles for teachers, and heterogeneous grouping. In C. Jorgenson (Ed.), *Restructuring high schools for all students* (pp. 49-70). Baltimore: Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co.
- Maeroff, G.I. (1993). *Team building for school change: Equipping teachers for new roles*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Raywid, M.A. (1993). Finding time for collaboration. *Educational Leadership*, 51(1), 30-34.

## About the Author:

*Gwen Meyer is a National Institute staff member and works as a Senior Research Assistant with Educational and Community Supports at the University of Oregon.*

---

*OnPoints* may be reproduced for broad dissemination and can be accessed in English or Spanish on the National Institute's Web site at: <http://www.edc.org/urban>. This document is also available in alternative formats upon request.



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
URBAN SCHOOL  
IMPROVEMENT**

**Center for Program Improvement**

University of Colorado at Denver  
1380 Lawrence Street, 6th Floor  
Denver, CO 80202  
Tel: (303) 556-3990  
Fax: (303) 556-6142  
TTY or TDD: (800) 659-2656

**Center for Research Synthesis and  
Product Development**

University of Oregon  
1235 University of Oregon  
Eugene, OR 97403-1235  
Tel: (541) 346-2888  
Fax: (541) 346-2471  
TTY: (541) 346-2487

**Center for Marketing,  
Networking, and Utilization**  
Education Development Center, Inc.

55 Chapel Street  
Newton, MA 02458  
Tel: (617) 969-7100, ext. 2105  
Fax: (617) 969-3440  
TTY: (617) 964-5448

E-mail: [niusi@edc.org](mailto:niusi@edc.org)  
<http://www.edc.org/urban>



# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

|   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Title: OnPoint Series: On Time and How to Get More of It  |                                 |
| Author(s): Gwen Meyer   |                                 |
| Corporate Source:<br>The National Institute for Urban School Improvement, grant funded by<br>the Office of Special Education Programs, US Dept. of Ed, Award # H0860970005 98 | Publication Date:<br>April 2001 |

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced on paper and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document. If permission to reproduce a document for reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.

Sign here, → please

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Signature:<br>Bonnie Johnson   | Printed Name/Position/Title:<br>Bonnie Johnson, Project Coordinator |
| Organization/Address:<br>Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02458-1060 | Telephone:<br>(617) 618-2486  |
|  | FAX:<br>(617) 969-3440  |
|  | E-Mail Address:<br>bjohnson@edc.org                                 |
|  | Date:<br>7/25/01  |

### III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

|                        |
|------------------------|
| Publisher/Distributor: |
| Address:               |
| Price:                 |

### IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

|          |
|----------|
| Name:    |
| Address: |

### V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

|   |
|---|
| Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:<br><b>ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education<br/>Box 40, Teachers College<br/>Columbia University<br/>New York, NY 10027</b> |
|---|

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document contributed) to: