



## *Giving 110%: A Portrait of a Michigan Teacher's Work Week*

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### **Overview**

Two common portraits of teachers pervade popular notions of their working lives. One portrays teachers as heroes who spend endless hours after school helping struggling students, grading papers and leading a variety of extracurricular programs. Some of us were fortunate enough to have our lives touched by these individuals who sacrifice their personal lives for their profession and approach their work with a missionary zeal. A competing view, however, holds that teachers leave school when their students depart and do the absolute minimum required by their employment contracts. In this view, teachers are just workers with little interest in their students once the final bell rings each day. Although both types of teachers do exist, most teachers fall somewhere between these two extremes. The data show that, on average, teachers put in a significant number of hours on school activities outside of their workday, but that individual and organizational contexts establish some limits. This report begins to examine the time teachers spend in a typical week working on educational tasks both within and beyond their regular school day.

On average, Michigan teachers report spending more than the typical 40 hours a week working. Indeed, the average full-time Michigan teacher works about five extra hours, giving 110% to his or her students. Overall, teachers spend a significant amount of time

each week outside of the normal school day both working with students and working on school-related activities without students present. These additional hours argue that defining a teacher's performance exclusively in terms of classroom instruction may be ignoring other important responsibilities that teachers are often willing to take on, such as tutoring and facilitating extracurricular activities.

While most teachers put in hours well beyond the required minimum, there appear to be contextual factors impacting both the number of hours teachers spend working and the types of activities on which they spend that time. For example, teachers in urban schools work fewer hours each week than those in rural areas, and new teachers have longer work weeks than their more experienced peers. These differences may reflect different incentives available to teachers in each context, as well as varying constraints faced by different schools. Organizational structures that shape teachers' work may also contribute to these differences. By changing the incentives and constraints facing teachers, and the organizational conditions of the schools in which they teach, policymakers can reduce or remove obstacles that may currently be discouraging some teachers from giving 110% to their students.



### Scope of this Report

Using data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) for the 1999-2000 school year, this report examines the typical work week of Michigan teachers. We look at how much time Michigan's teachers spend outside of their instructional workday on two types of activities – hours spent working on school activities with students and hours spent on school activities without students. Activities such as tutoring, coaching, field trips, and assisting students with extracurricular activities before or after school, or on the weekend, are considered hours spent with students. Time spent outside of school hours planning lessons, meeting with parents, attending meetings and grading student work are examples of time spent without students. We also include information about the amount of scheduled planning time that teachers receive during the school day. In addition to activities in the typical week, teachers also spend time outside of the regular school day engaging in continuing certification and education. Virtually all teachers must engage in some professional development activities outside of the school day as a condition of their continuing employment. This time is not included in our figures and would represent additional time spent on professional activities outside of the school day.

Specifically, this brief examines the total amount of time that Michigan teachers report they spend working each week, the amount of time they are required to spend at school each week (this includes time spent teaching students, time they

are required to spend on the premises before and after school, and any scheduled planning time during the day), hours they spend outside of the school day on school activities involving students, and hours spent outside of the school day on school activities not involving students. Because teachers may spend less time working outside the school day if they have more preparation time scheduled in the school day, this brief also examines scheduled planning time within the school day. The responses of over 1,000 full-time traditional and charter public school teachers in Michigan are included in this analysis.<sup>1</sup>

### A Teacher's Work Week

Our analysis of the data indicates that, on average, full-time public school teachers in Michigan spend more than 45 hours on school activities in a typical week (Table 1). In addition to the required school day, teachers spend over nine hours each week on school activities not involving students, such as preparation and grading. This is in addition to the scheduled planning time embedded in the school day. The average teacher also spends more than three hours each week on activities involving students. As mentioned above, this table and all the tables that follow do not include time spent on professional development activities; this time would be in addition to the 45.1 hour average work week.

While the average teacher works about 45 hours per week, some teachers work more than this while others work less. In an effort to uncover

**Table 1. Average hours worked per week in various activities for all Michigan full-time public school teachers.**

|                                 |      |
|---------------------------------|------|
| Total hours worked <sup>2</sup> | 45.1 |
| Required working hours          | 36.2 |
| Scheduled planning time         | 4.00 |

<sup>1</sup> This analysis includes all full-time public school teachers, excluding long-term substitute teachers. Excluding long-term substitute teachers does not change the analysis substantively. Tables including long-term substitute teachers are available from the researchers upon request. Part-time teachers were excluded because they are likely to work fewer hours than regular full-time teachers.

<sup>2</sup> Total hours worked was calculated by adding the hours in the school day to the time the teacher spends working before school, after, school and on the weekends in the various activities. The rows in this table are not mutually exclusive, as many schools require teachers to work longer hours than the school day. Thus, there is overlap in the required working hours and hours spent outside the school day.

patterns in effort level (as measured by hours worked), we analyzed the data across several school characteristics, such as school level, urbanicity, percent minority students, percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and school type, as well as across individual teacher characteristics, such as years of teaching experience and gender.<sup>1</sup>

## School Characteristics

### School Level

The patterns observed in the time commitments of elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers are not surprising (Table 2). Secondary school teachers work longer hours each week than elementary or middle school teachers. This difference is due to the shorter required work week in elementary schools and the longer hours that secondary school teachers spend outside of the school day in student activities. The shorter required hours in elementary schools may be due to differences in the organization of instruction in elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Elementary school teachers typically teach in self-contained classrooms, while middle and secondary school teachers tend to teach separate courses to different groups of students. This departmentalized organization of instruction in middle and secondary schools may facilitate increased planning time, while planning time in elementary schools is harder to arrange. Indeed, elementary school teachers report less sched-

uled planning time than teachers in middle or high schools.

Despite this difference in scheduled planning time, there is no significant difference in the amount of time teachers spend working outside school hours on activities such as preparation and planning. As a result, middle and secondary school teachers report spending more total time on planning and other activities not involving students than elementary school teachers (13.7 and 13.8 hours per week compared to 12.9, respectively). This difference may be due to the fact that teachers in departmentalized instruction face different grading and preparation demands than those in self-contained classrooms. Thus, middle and secondary schools may provide teachers with more planning time during the school day because they recognize the nature of the demands that teaching in these conditions places on teachers.

Secondary school teachers appear to work longer hours than their middle and elementary school colleagues because they spend a great deal of time outside of the school day on student activities. Teachers at all levels have similar required working hours and spend about the same amount of time outside the school day on activities such as preparation and grading, yet secondary school teachers spend more time outside the school day on student activities. Further, middle school teachers spend more time than elementary school teachers on student activities outside the

**Table 2. Average hours worked per week in various activities for teachers, by school level**

| School Level                         | Elementary | Middle | Secondary |
|--------------------------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| Totals hours worked                  | 43.8*      | 44.6*  | 47.4*     |
| Required working hours               | 35.8*      | 36.3*  | 36.8*     |
| Scheduled planning time              | 3.4*       | 4.8*   | 4.5*      |
| Outside hours not involving students | 9.5        | 8.9    | 9.3       |
| Outside hours with students          | 1.7*       | 3.2*   | 5.8*      |

\* School level has a statistically significant effect on this variable at the .10 level.

<sup>3</sup>We also analyzed the data by school size. However, no statistically significant differences were found. This data is available by request from the authors.

**Table 3. Average hours worked per week in various activities for teachers, by urbanicity.**

| Teachers in:   | Urban Areas | Suburban Areas | Rural Areas |
|--|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Totals hours worked  | 43.6*       | 45.3*          | 46.2*       |
| Required working hours   | 35.8        | 36.3           | 36.5        |
| Scheduled planning time  | 3.8         | 4.0            | 4.0         |
| Outside hours not involving students   | 8.5*        | 9.7*           | 9.6*        |
| Outside hours with students  | 2.1*        | 3.5*           | 4.4*        |
| * Urbanicity has a statistically significant effect on this variable at the .10 level. |             |                |             |

school day. This is not surprising given the increased presence of extracurricular activities as students move into higher grades.

*Urbanicity*

Teachers in rural settings spend more time working than their urban or suburban counterparts (Table 3). Rural teachers spend more time on activities involving students outside of the school day than any other group. Teachers in Michigan’s rural areas also spend more time outside the school day on activities not involving students, such as planning, than their urban counterparts despite the longer scheduled planning time available to teachers in rural areas. Of the three groups of teachers, suburban teachers spend the most time working outside the school day on activities such as planning, grading and meetings.<sup>1</sup>

These differences are noteworthy because they indicate that the school context does influence the nature of a teacher’s work week. Teachers in rural schools appear to have greater responsibilities in terms of student activities than teachers in more urban settings. The small size and limited resources of rural schools and their surrounding communities may mean that teachers are expected to take on additional responsibilities. For example, rural schools may ask teachers to coach sports rather than hiring outside coaches.

In addition, the organizational conditions of urban schools may lead teachers to spend less time preparing lessons and grading papers. This finding is somewhat surprising after considering the evidence shown below that new teachers spend more time on activities that do not involve students. Despite having greater concentrations of inexperienced teachers, urban schools have teachers who spend less time on preparation, grading and parent conferences. This may be a reflection of community expectations or of other factors.

*Minority Enrollment*

There are few statistically significant differences in total hours worked when the data are broken down by the school’s minority enrollment (Table 4). Teachers in each category of schools work about the same number of hours and have approximately the same required work week. However, teachers in schools where 10-40 percent of the students are a racial minority report less scheduled planning time than other teachers. At the same time, teachers in these schools reporting spending more time working on preparation and grading outside of the school day. Also, teachers in schools with greater numbers of minority students spend less time working outside the school day with students. Teachers in high minority schools may spend less time on activities involving students because these schools may offer fewer extracurricular activities.

<sup>4</sup> These patterns are not the result of higher concentrations of less experienced teachers in certain types of school. They continue to hold after we control for teacher experience.

**Table 4. Average hours worked per week in various activities for teachers, by percent of minority student enrollment in the school.**

| Minority Enrollment                  | 0 - 10% | 10.01 - 40% | 40.01 - 70% | > 70% |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Totals hours worked                  | 45.5    | 45.0        | 42.5        | 43.8  |
| Required working hours               | 36.1    | 36.3        | 36.7        | 36.3  |
| Scheduled planning time              | 4.2*    | 3.4*        | 4.3*        | 4.0*  |
| Outside hours not involving students | 9.3*    | 10.3*       | 7.2*        | 7.8*  |
| Outside hours with students          | 4.0*    | 2.4*        | 2.9*        | 2.3*  |

\* Percent of minority students has a statistically significant effect on this variable at the .10 level.

Schools with a high minority enrollment may have fewer discretionary funds available to offer extra-curricular programs to their students and the parents of those students may be less likely to be able to fund extracurricular programs themselves.

*Free/Reduced Lunch Eligibility*

The relationship between teacher work weeks and the percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch is similar to that for minority student enrollment (Table 5). Teachers in schools with a high concentration of poverty work fewer hours per week than teachers in schools with little poverty. This difference is not due to differences in required working hours, since there is little variation in this measure across school environments. The difference appears to be primarily due to teachers

in schools with a greater concentration of poverty spending fewer hours outside of school time on student activities, compared to teachers in schools with little or no poverty. While teachers in high-poverty schools also spend less time on school activities that do not involve students, this difference is not statistically significant. Teachers in high poverty schools may spend less time working outside of school hours because they are less likely to live in the local neighborhood. If teachers must commute farther to teach in these schools, they may be less likely to spend many hours at school after classes are over. As noted above, these schools and their students may be unable to fund the plethora of extracurricular activities available in more affluent schools. There may simply be fewer opportunities for teachers to engage in activities with their students outside of

**Table 5. Average hours worked per week in various activities for teachers, by percent of students in the school eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.**

| Percent Eligible                     | 0 - 10% | 10.01 - 40% | 40.01 - 70% | > 70% |
|--------------------------------------|---------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| Totals hours worked                  | 46.0*   | 45.0*       | 42.3*       | 42.8* |
| Required working hours               | 36.3    | 35.9        | 36.8        | 36.3  |
| Scheduled planning time              | 3.9     | 4.0         | 3.7         | 4.2   |
| Outside hours not involving students | 9.6     | 9.7         | 8.5         | 7.9   |
| Outside hours with students          | 4.3*    | 2.8*        | 3.0*        | 2.3*  |

\* Percent eligible for free or reduced-price lunch has a statistically significant effect on this variable at the .10 level.

**Table 6. Average hours worked per week in various activities for teachers in traditional and charter public schools.**

|   | <b>Traditional Public</b> | <b>Charter Public</b> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Totals hours worked   | 45.0*                     | 47.4*                 |
| Required working hours  | 36.1*                     | 40.3*                 |
| Scheduled planning time   | 4.0                       | 3.9                   |
| Outside hours not involving students  | 9.3                       | 9.7                   |
| Outside hours with students   | 3.3                       | 2.8                   |
| * School sector has a statistically significant effect on this variable at the .10 level. |                           |                       |

school hours. Further, student transportation may pose difficulties in these schools. Opportunities for student activities may be limited because students may be unable to arrange for transportation to before- and after-school activities.

*School Type*

Teachers in charter schools, on average, spend more time working each week than their counterparts in traditional public schools (Table 6). This statistically significant difference appears to be driven by the longer required hours at school, which itself is driven by the longer instructional day for students in charter schools.<sup>1</sup> Although charter school teachers appear to spend slightly more time outside the school day on activities that do not involve students and less time on activities that do involve students, these differ-

ences are not statistically significant. These differences may be a reflection of the higher proportion of elementary students in charter schools compared to traditional public schools. As shown above, elementary school teachers tend to spend slightly more time outside the school day on activities that do not involve students, while secondary teachers tend to be more involved in activities that include student involvement.

**Teacher Characteristics**

*Experience*

As teachers gain experience, they tend to work fewer hours (see Table 7). Less experienced teachers report longer required hours. They also report that they spend more time outside the

**Table 7. Average hours worked per week in various activities for teachers with different experience levels.**

| <b>Experience Level</b>   | <b>&lt; 3 Years</b> | <b>4-10 Years</b> | <b>11-25 Years</b> | <b>&gt; 25 Years</b> |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Totals hours worked   | 47.7*               | 45.3*             | 44.7*              | 44.0*                |
| Required working hours  | 37.4*               | 36.5*             | 35.6*              | 36.1*                |
| Scheduled planning time   | 3.9                 | 3.8               | 4.2                | 4.0                  |
| Outside hours not involving students  | 11.0                | 9.1               | 9.2                | 8.8                  |
| Outside hours with students   | 3.9*                | 3.9*              | 3.0*               | 2.6*                 |
| * Teacher years of experience has a statistically significant effect on this variable at the .10 level. |                     |                   |                    |                      |

<sup>5</sup> Data not shown; available from the authors by request.

school day on activities that do not involve students. As teachers gain experience, they may become able to complete tasks such as planning and grading more efficiently and so complete these jobs in fewer hours than their less experienced colleagues. Less experienced teachers also work more hours outside the school day on activities with students. This may be partially explained by their relative youthfulness – they may simply have more energy to devote to these activities and have fewer outside responsibilities such as children and aging parents than more experienced teachers. However, this difference may also be due to the different demands placed on teachers with different levels of seniority. The school culture may expect less experienced teachers, or those without tenure, to take on more responsibilities for student activities and school committees. Teachers with fewer years of experience may also be taking on more of these activities in an attempt to augment their income. Some districts pay teachers for coaching and other activities involving students and less experienced teachers may take on these responsibilities to supplement their salaries. As teachers gain experience, they move up on the salary schedule and the extra stipend becomes less attractive.

*Gender*

Different work patterns emerge when we examine teacher work weeks by gender (Table 8). Because the majority of males teach at the secondary level, we conducted our analysis only at the secondary level.<sup>1</sup> If we aggregated across school

level, the large numbers of elementary school teachers who are female would mask gender differences – we would end up seeing the different work patterns of secondary and elementary school teachers rather than gender differences. While male and female secondary school teachers spend approximately the same amount of total time working each week, they devote that time to different types of activities. Male secondary school teachers spend more hours working outside of school hours on school activities involving students, such as coaching, supervising clubs, transporting students and tutoring. Male secondary school teachers also report more required working hours. This may be because they are required to stay at school to supervise compensated sports and other activities. Female secondary school teachers report spending more time working outside school hours on school-related activities that do not involve students, such as preparation, grading, attending meetings and talking with parents. Activities outside of the school day that involve students are much more likely to be compensated than activities not involving students. Male teachers may be favoring compensated activities while female teachers may not express this preference as strongly.

**Conclusion**

The vast majority of Michigan’s teachers work above and beyond their required work week. Even before we consider time spent on professional development, the average teacher works more than 45 hours per week. This time teachers

| <b>Table 8. Average hours worked per week in various activities for secondary teachers by gender.</b> |             |               |
|---|-------------|---------------|
|   | <b>Male</b> | <b>Female</b> |
| Totals hours worked   | 47.2        | 47.6          |
| Required working hours  | 37.3*       | 36.3*         |
| Scheduled planning time   | 4.6         | 4.4           |
| Outside hours not involving students  | 8.2*        | 10.5*         |
| Outside hours with students   | 6.9         | 4.6           |
| * Teacher gender has a statistically significant effect on this variable at the .10 level.            |             |               |

<sup>6</sup> There are too few male elementary school teachers for a similar elementary level analysis to be appropriate.

spend outside regular school hours is often ignored by critics who deride the “short hours and long vacations” enjoyed by teachers. When discussing compensation policies and changes to the school year, policymakers need to consider the hours that teachers already spend working after the bell signals the end of the school day.

Many factors influence the hours teachers spend working each week. School and organizational factors that are correlated with differences in teacher work weeks may be amenable to policy intervention. For example, the fewer hours worked by teachers in schools with high concentrations of poor and minority students in urban areas may highlight the need for more targeted pay incentives for teachers in those schools and the need for greater funding for extracurricular activities in those environments. Further, the differences attributed to individual teacher variables, such as years of experience and gender, may be influenced by the different expectations and incentives that they face. Relatively inexperienced teachers may be expected to take on responsibility for various school initiatives and student activities, despite the fact that they also need more time for instructional preparation than their more experienced peers.

The amount of time teachers spend working outside school hours on activities such as preparation, grading, attending meetings, and talking with parents is noteworthy. Teachers often put in this time without receiving

financial compensation for their efforts. If policymakers are concerned with the inequalities in the number of hours teachers spend in these activities across levels of poverty, minority enrollment and school community type, then perhaps they could restructure the teacher work week to include more time in the required – and compensated – working hours. For example, schools and districts could reorganize and possibly lengthen the school instructional day to provide teachers with more time for planning and grading within the school day.

Contrary to notions that teachers have an easy work schedule, most Michigan teachers work more than 40 hours per week. The data presented here suggest that the organizational conditions of schools influence the number of hours that teachers work each week and the types of activities on which they spend their time. The expectations, incentives and constraints that define the conditions under which teachers make decisions vary across schools. These differences have implications not only for teacher recruitment and retention in schools, but also for the instructional and extracurricular experiences students have in schools.



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