



Instructional Time Research

What is the relationship between instructional time and student achievement?

Several comprehensive studies and reports which investigated the relationship between *student achievement* and *instructional time* show that there is no strong relationship between these variables (Long, 2014; Baker et al., 2004; Patall et al., 2010; Van Damme, 2014, Noonan, 2007; Hattie, 2015a). The main conclusion drawn in the research is that more attention should be given to improving *instructional quality*, such as teaching practice and curriculum, rather than *instructional quantity*.

What actually works?

Research has shown that *teachers* have the strongest impact on student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Some particular practices that have been deemed important include strong teacher-student relationships, giving substantive feedback/formative assessment, quality of teaching, maintaining challenging and appropriate expectations, amongst others (ibid.)

A key promising practice that has been implemented in many Canadian jurisdictions is *professional learning communities (PLCs)*. PLCs work best when they are ongoing, embedded in the school day, with structure, intention, and support (Pirtle & Tobia, 2014). Furthermore, research has highlighted the importance of setting goals and implementing data-driven processes to inform practice (Vescio et al., 2008; Hattie, 2015b). This form of collaborative inquiry allows teachers to share their knowledge and expertise, which can help raise the overall teaching quality within schools (Hattie, 2015b). Collaborative professional learning is not only beneficial to students, but has also been shown to be associated with increased teacher efficacy and job satisfaction (OECD, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). This approach to whole school improvement is very promising.

Challenges

It is important to note that students in the NWT, along with Nunavut, experience the highest number of instructional hours in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2015). Our instructional hours are well above the Canadian average, yet our educational outcomes remain poor (e.g. graduation and attendance rates). Preparation time for teachers to carry out non-instructional teacher duties during the school day is also not guaranteed in the NWT, unlike other Canadian jurisdictions. In addition to these challenges, we have learned from our recent Teacher Workload Study that many of our teachers are working long hours and experience work-life balance concerns.



Pilot Project

Given these challenges, we recognize the need to create system level changes to better support schools in offering structured opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Likewise, we recognize the importance for teachers to have time devoted within the school day to carry out tasks such as planning, assessing, and reporting. To this end, we are offering schools the opportunity to opt into a pilot project, whereby the number of instructional hours for students will be reduced, to be used instead for teacher time (e.g. collaborative planning, instructional preparation, etc.).

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