

# We Can't Give Teachers Time for Learning, or Can We?

By [Learning Forward](#) on April 24, 2013 7:00 AM

Educators are overwhelmed with the number of changes they are expected to implement in their schools. The number one resource they request to assist them in implementing these improvements is time -- time for deeper learning, planning, collaboration, and problem solving. I rarely meet a person who is opposed to providing educators the time they need for continuous improvement. They agree time should be part of the regular work schedule so the practice of continuous improvement doesn't require burning the midnight oil or catching up over the weekends. And yet finding time is still a challenge.

Let me rebuff the two most-cited reasons schools are not able to give educators the time they so desperately need and want.

1. **Our community won't support it.** Parents will be more willing to find answers to their own child care challenges for time set aside for professional learning when they have evidence of how the time is being used for teachers and how their own children are benefitting. They will also appreciate when schools are empathetic to family situations and help them find alternatives. Parents are interested in knowing how time is being used and will be more accommodating when they are informed that the schedule has changed because, for example, teachers need a refresher in how to teach certain literacy or math standards. Parents will be supportive when they are told why teachers need time to collaborate, how examining student data helps teachers pinpoint where students need help, and how this analysis is used to determine what teachers need to learn to help students be more successful. Your community will support time for learning when you can draw the link between teacher knowledge and skills and student success.
2. **Our schedule won't allow it.** There are countless schools that have created schedules that provide all educators with regularly scheduled time for collaborative learning and problem solving. Some school systems are moving toward a four-day work week so that teachers have even more time to develop high-quality lessons and common assessments, turn their attention to deep study, conduct parent conferences, and assume additional leadership responsibilities. In other schools, schedules allow every teacher to be assigned to at least one learning team with several other teachers in the same grade or subject who share responsibility for the success of a group of students. These teachers are provided a minimum of three to four hours a week for their professional learning and collaboration.

There are many organizations that offer assistance to school systems and schools seeking to revise their schedules. **The National Center on Time and Learning** offers many case studies of schools that have altered their schedules to extend time for both students and teachers. And now Learning Forward has released a new guide that any school or system leader can use to explore how they use time and create a schedule that will provide the time necessary for effective professional learning. In addition to tools and a process for understanding time use and how to change it, the workbook includes several sample schedules from a range of schools and school systems. Download **Establishing Time for Professional Learning** to learn more. This resource is a product of the **Transforming Professional Learning initiative**.

When system and school leaders develop the vision and will necessary to change the schedule, nothing can stop them.

What other barriers prevent you from arranging your schedules to ensure teachers develop the knowledge and skills they need to ensure the success of all students? Share them with me and I will address them in future columns.

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