

MAKING TIME TO DO REFORM

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Ask anybody directly involved in school reform about its most essential ingredient, and the answer is likely to be "time." Research concurs and it seems that the collaborative time for teachers to undertake and then sustain school improvement may be more important than equipment or facilities or even staff development. (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Louis, 1992; Rosenholtz, 1989) In fact, three separate lines of inquiry now support the conclusion that for any school to become or remain a *good* one, regular, sustained interaction time for its teachers is indispensable. This article samples this inquiry, takes a longer look at how schools are finding or creating the time needed, and ends with some generalizations and guidelines on teacher collaborative time.

We've long known that for school change to succeed, teachers collectively must be involved in its implementation. (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin, 1991) But their involvement requires time -- and unless the "extra energy requirements" thus demanded are met by providing the time, the change is not likely to succeed. Time, according to Fullan and Miles (1992) has emerged as *the* key issue in every analysis of school change appearing in the last decade.

The literature on teacher worklives concludes that even when change efforts are not under way, collaborative time for teachers is a necessity. Successful schools are distinguishable from those that are not by the frequency and extent to which teaching practice is discussed, teachers collaboratively design teaching materials, and to which they in effect teach and critique one another. (Little, 1982) This sort of interaction appears necessary to continuing growth and improvement in the individual as well as to sustaining a good school. (Wildman & Niles, 1987) In collegial schools, teacher quality is higher, their commitment stronger, and their rewards greater. (Rosenholtz, 1989)

Yet a third body of research also points to the importance of collaborative time for teachers by suggesting that even in good schools where things are going fine, change as well as stability must be evident. As John Goodlad put it (1983), schools must be "self-renewing systems." (Tye & Tye, 1984) Or, in more recent terms, they must be "learning organizations" marked by deliberate effort to identify helpful

knowledge and spread its use within the organization. (Senge, 1990; Louis & Simsek, 1991) The reason as Susan Rosenholtz forthrightly put it, is that either schools are growing or they are stuck. (1989) For our purposes what is important about such an insistence is that remaining 'un-stuck' requires sustained collaborative reflection on school practice, conditions, events. Thus time is the essential element in the self-renewal process. None of this is to say that collaboration time is sufficient -- that it can *assure* success -- since how the time is used is crucial. But making or finding collaborative time surely appears necessary. (Prager, 1992)

Making the Time

Some places have simply bitten the bullet and added meeting days to the school year and teachers to the school staff. At UCLA's University Elementary School, for instance, 20 pupil-free teacher workdays are now being built into the annual calendar. A staffing pattern assigning six teachers to four classes also permits freeing teachers on a rotating basis. (Watson et al., 1992) But not all schools can hope for such arrangements and in today's economy most will probably have to try to find or make the time for school improvement on a low-cost basis.

Are there ways to provide this collaboration time without substantially increasing school costs? A number of school people quite ready to tackle genuine restructuring report this to be the most stubborn barrier. Often there are teachers willing to contribute *some* of their own time -- but quite *reasonably* unwilling to personally shoulder the full cost of what, after all, is a system responsibility -- and what research confirms must be a continuing one. Teachers are understandably reluctant to assume the full costs of the new requirements -- and besides, even were they willing to do so, their efforts would probably prove insufficient to the task. Ten minutes before the kids arrive, and conversational snatches during the day, are only enough for news flashes and crisis-meeting -- not for analyzing and planning and creating, which require sustained, deliberate, uninterrupted discussion.

I have encountered a number of plans for freeing up teacher collaboration time, and have heard others proposed. I supplemented my own list by checking with several programs specializing in school innovation, thinking they might be aware of new arrangements -- the National Education Association's National Center for Innovation, Washington's Schools for the 21st Century program, Minnesota's Center for School Change, and New York City's Office of Alternative Schools and Programs. I also asked participants at the 10th International Conference on Magnet Schools for means they had devised for providing ongoing collaboration time for teachers -- magnet schools being a genre where the need for collaboration might be most apparent. Here are some of the ways in which the necessary time is being found and

created:

1. In Ft. Myers, Florida, a new teacher contract set the workday for teachers at an hour longer than that for students -- leaving time after school each day for teachers to meet.

2. At the Mohegan Elementary School in the Bronx, teachers piloting a new curriculum were scheduled for the same daily lunch period and a common preparation period immediately thereafter. This gave them a shared hour and a half daily.

3. Also at Mohegan, where a new Cultural Literacy curriculum is being developed, the principal offered participating teachers the arrangement of dismissing classes 45 minutes early each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday if the teachers involved would agree to extend the time by contributing 45 minutes of their own.

4. In Kentucky, the State Board of Education sought legislative permission to convert five of the required instructional days into staff development time. ("States," 1992)

5. The Texas Commissioner of Education sought authority from the Legislature to waive up to 15 instructional days in order to make them available for staff development. (Gursky, 1991)

6. Some years ago, a Rhode Island superintendent lengthened the school day by 20 minutes for four days of each week in order to dismiss students at noon on the fifth. He made Wednesdays teacher meeting days and he persuaded local churches to hold their religious education, programs on Wednesday afternoons, and scouts and other youth activities to meet then. A small group of faculty remained with and supervised (on a rotating basis) the youngsters of working parents unable to make other arrangements.

7. Central Park East Secondary School in Manhattan, a 450-student combined junior-senior high school, is composed of three divisions, and each division has two houses -- or two sets of students and teachers who work together. On one morning of every week, the two lower division students of one house are engaged in community service. The teachers of those students use the morning to meet together until noon when the students return to school.

8. The organizational structure of Central Park East also lends itself to a different sort of grouping of teachers for meetings. Community service time can be scheduled by houses (a house being a single group of students) or it can reflect curriculum and assemble the division teachers from two houses who deal with a common content area. Previous years at the high school have scheduled meetings on

a curricular (team) basis, now they do so on a house (student) basis.

9. In Merritt Island, Florida, the Gardendale Elementary Magnet School has adopted a year-round calendar, with three-week inter-sessions between quarters. The inter-sessions permit concentrated, two- or three-day meetings for teacher planning, for which participants receive compensatory time.

10. Long Island, New York, school districts commonly set aside 3-5 days per year for staff development purposes. School isn't held and teachers attend day-long meetings. In the interests of permitting regular collaborative sessions for teachers, some districts are re-scheduling this time. When divided up, five staff development days permit 13 two-hour sessions, or one every two weeks throughout the school year.

11. The principal at Cottage Lane Elementary School in Blauvelt, NY, personally does two assemblies on alternate Fridays, talking with half the school's pupils at each session. The sessions are designed with the help of the school's special staff (librarian, consultant, etc.) The teachers arrive earlier than the students and on assembly days go directly into their meetings. The school's aides and administrators meet each class, take attendance, escort the group to the assembly, remain to monitor them, and then escort them back. This gives teachers a regular hour-long session every-other week.

12. In schools and districts of substantial size, increasing class size by just one or two students has yielded a surplus sufficient to finance teams of substitutes who cover classes on a regular basis permitting teacher teams to meet regularly.

13. The Teacher Development Center in Rockford, Illinois, employed a team of five roving substitutes for three days each week. The team worked by relieving the same group of teachers for half a day each week for a year -- on Tuesday mornings one group, on Tuesday afternoons another, on Wednesday mornings another, etc. Altogether, this gave a total of thirty teachers almost three hours of collaboration time each week to work on problems they identified -- and since the substitutes each met regularly with the same class each week, student achievement did not suffer. (Indeed, it increased.)

14. Kapaa Elementary School, on Kauai, Hawaii, has opened six schools-within-schools to help accommodate its 1500 students. The school is large enough to have a "supplemental staff" of art, music, physical education, computer, speech-drama and gifted-talented specialists, whose role is to meet with various classes (rather than offering scheduled classes of their own). The principal has asked the supplemental staff to collaborate on a regular basis in planning a half-day program which they will use, as a team, in each of the six schools-within-schools

successively. After they have rotated one collectively designed program through all six schools-within-schools, they will design another program. Eventually, this will free each school-within-a-school team for a half-day's collaboration each two and a half weeks throughout the school year.

15. At the Urban Academy in Manhattan, students are involved in volunteer community service activities each Wednesday afternoon. With the help of the program's community service service coordinator, each student has a semester-long assignment for providing some service function in the community -- e.g., helping in a legislative office, a teenage treatment facility, an animal rescue group. After the students have departed at 12:15 on Wednesdays, Academy teachers have the full afternoon for meeting. Faculty meetings occur regularly during this time and each features one or more issues for deliberation.

16. Brooklyn College Academy -- an alternative high school -- daily schedules classes over a time span extending from 7:30 to 3:30. The Academy finds that even though the early morning "0" period is limited to special classes, clubs, and tutoring, state time minima can be met in four and one-half days. Thus, faculty meet every Monday, 12:45-2:30 one week and 12:45-3:10 the next.

17. The superintendent of New York City's alternative high schools has found the secret to finding collaboration time during the school day to lie in "creative interpretation" of state requirements for instruction. He discovered that the time requirements can be met in four classes per week, rather than five. He has thus blocked "specials" (physical education, art, music, industrial arts) so that on Friday a particular group of youngsters may take, for example, two periods of physical education, followed by one each of music and industrial arts -- thus freeing other teachers for regular and extended collaborative sessions.

In addition to the 17 arrangements listed, there are others that look like strong possibilities. Several in particular seem to have substantial potential. One with currently untapped possibilities is service learning. It is currently being used as a means of making teacher collaboration time in some places (see #15 above), but it has even broader potential for doing so. For instance, although service learning programs are usually confined to high schools they can also be used at middle and even at elementary school levels. (One such program, in Lakewood, Colorado, has thrived for years. See Jenner & Elliott, 1987.) In light of the increasing popularity of service learning, and the benefits it has been shown to yield those who provide the services, it may be desirable to explore the tutoring, coaching, and micro-teaching possibilities in having older students help younger ones on a regularly scheduled basis. Arrangements permitting this sort of service could free

teachers for collaborative time together while a skeleton force oversees the volunteers.

A second sort of already existing arrangement that might be used to yield collaboration time is suggested by an interesting program that existed at Washington Middle School in Detroit. Every Friday was hobby day at Washington, when every adult in the school taught classes on his or her hobby(ies). Youngsters signed up for two-hour classes, offered over a period of six Fridays. These classes had students learning such things as photography or puppetry or barbershop style singing or gourmet cooking, depending upon the interests of the adults working in the school. It was good for the program, since it introduced novelty and variation to an age group where those qualities appear particularly important. It was also a good response to the demand for "exploratories" for the young adolescent age group. And it was a good way to have youngsters interact with adults in a somewhat different sort of way, while learning how adults spend their leisure. The arrangement in effect enlarged the teaching staff for one day a week. Thus, through careful scheduling of the hobby groups, such a program could also prove a good way to rotate the time permitting different groups of teachers to spend a couple of hours working together during each Friday.

This suggests yet another way that might be explored for finding teacher collaboration time. It is evidently prevalent practice in Asian schools, where resources are allocated quite differently than the way we do so. There, class sizes are much larger than ours, though within schools the total number ratios of teachers to students is quite similar to ours. The large classes permit teachers to teach fewer classes, freeing time for conferring with colleagues (and students, as well as for accomplishing other things). American teachers respond negatively to increasing class size. Asian teachers, on the other hand, are negative about the toll exacted by the small classes: from 30 to 40% of their hours in school are spent otherwise than in classes. They ask how American teachers can ever be expected to do a good job, given their circumstances. (Stigler & Stevenson, 1991)

To suggest one final avenue with potential for yielding collaboration time for teachers, the partnerships so extensively pursued today could offer such possibilities. A university partner in particular has such potential -- least demandingly perhaps through providing films, and TV lessons and demonstrations, all with interactive teaching arrangements. Where university partners handle instruction and design follow-up activities, aides and para-professionals may well be able to handle monitoring, thus freeing teachers.

In addition to such standing or ongoing arrangements, schools have devised a

number of occasional or one-time events freeing teachers to meet -- and there have been excellent programs yielding collaborative time for some for an extended period, or for all, for a briefer one. To cite a few such examples, several years ago parents at Honaunau Elementary School in Captain Cook, Hawaii, organized a workshop day shortly before Christmas that is still being talked about. Among other things, it gave youngsters an opportunity to make a variety of presents under the tutelage of local artists and craftspeople, while their teachers had a half-day session.

In Albuquerque, a 14-month program sponsored jointly by the school district and the University of New Mexico annually makes available abundant collaborative opportunities to 24 experienced teachers, as part of a teacher renewal program. The program combines classes at the University with a full day each week throughout one school year when the group of 24 participants leave their respective schools to meet for discussion. A special substitute teacher position was added to cover each teacher. The program is implemented at no extra cost to the district, since the teachers become full-time Graduate Fellows at the University, receiving a modest stipend and full tuition coverage. By the end of the year, most have earned a Masters degree, and the district has more than covered its share of the expenses occasioned by the program with the salaries saved. (Keyes, n.d.)

Well short of such extensive arrangements, it is not uncommon for grants providing start-up costs for new programs to cover collaboration time -- often under the guise of staff training or development time. But as desirable as such programs and arrangements may be in serving a variety of purposes, they cannot yield the reliable, continuing time for teacher collaboration that research suggests to be necessary to sustaining good teacher and good school functioning. Parent and other volunteers can't reasonably be expected to keep coming back, and programs that yield collaboration for some but not all -- or for a group assembling people from various schools -- or only for a program initiation period -- cannot meet the purposes that the evidence suggests need meeting. The need for a school's faculty to reflect together on their practice, and for schools to *remain* collaborative, self-renewing entities, do not end once teachers are trained and programs established. That is why the 17 numbered examples cited above have omitted such short-term efforts.

The Lessons Emerging

Other investigators have identified four general approaches being used to find collegial interaction time: freeing up existing time; restructuring or re-scheduling it; using it better; or purchasing it. (Watts & Castle, 1992) The arrangements

described here, plus the possibilities mentioned, reflect several specific strategies for pursuing the time needed for teacher collaboration. In the first place, they suggest several different levels at which the search for time can be conducted: Schools with sufficient control over their own programs may be able to find collaboration time through individual teacher scheduling and staff redeployment (as suggested, for example in items 2, 7, 8, 12). Other answers to the time question may be solutions that districts must adopt or authorize (e.g., numbers 9, 10, 12). Still others can be initiated at the state level (as in 4 and 5.). This not only suggests permissions and authorizations that may need to be obtained; it also suggests that at each of these three levels the search can be initiated and needed time found.

Another thing the list suggests is the general strategies that seem to be employed in the search for collaboration time. Some seek to add the hours needed by supplementing the school's presently existing time (3 and 9), others seek to re-allocate existing time (2, 7, 10). The use of some form of 'banking' is a frequent strategy either to meet instructional minima (by saving time in some fashion, or adding it to free the hours needed for collaborative sessions -- as, e.g., in 6), or to demonstrate teacher productivity increases offsetting the costs of substitutes to cover the time released for teacher collaboration (e.g., 13). Auxiliary or special subject teachers are sometimes used to free up time for teacher collaboration (e.g., 14 and 17), as are non-teaching staff (e.g., 12).

Fundamentally, there appear just two or three broad approaches for tackling the challenge: The time needed for teacher collaboration could be found: (1) by taking time from that now scheduled for other things (instruction or staff development, for instance); or (2) by adding additional time to the school day and/or to the school year; or (3) by altering staff utilization patterns -- so that all administrators regularly do some teaching, for instance, or so that some teachers assume responsibility for more youngsters while other teachers meet.

What's Needed?

Experience to date with obtaining collaborative time also recommends some useful criteria for allocating and scheduling the time found for collaboration among teachers.

First, if we expect teachers to undertake serious collective examination of their programs -- and the design of new programs -- we can't just tack such concerns onto the end of the school day. The psychic exhaustion with which most teachers are left at the end of the day simply precludes such demanding endeavor.

Second, the collaborative time must not only come from the 'primetime'

contained within the school day, but it must represent a sustained slice. A single period (a common prep period, for instance, for the members of a design or sustaining team) will not suffice -- though such a period, when placed immediately before or after a common and shared lunchtime, may be adequate, assuming the result is an uninterrupted block instead of two separate or divided segments.

Third, while some of the time needed can be left for concentrated periods when students are away from schools (summers or inter-sessions), not *all* collaborative opportunities can be left to such periods. To contain collaboration this way would deny the opportunity for reflection on daily events which both teacher growth and ongoing school renewal require. It is also to prevent the making of needed corrective decisions and to defer timely response to new conditions.

Fourth, in finding the time for substantial and continuing teacher collaboration, two opposing concerns must be kept in mind. First, teachers should not be asked to deduct all the time needed from their personal lives (like weekends and holidays), even with compensation. Such an arrangement would seem neither fair nor wise. On the other hand, conscientious teachers are often reluctant to be away from their classrooms for substantial time unless they can feel confident about what's happening there. This suggests the need for an ongoing, carefully planned program for classroom coverage -- as opposed to the more casual arrangements for substitutes that are sometimes more typical.

As these four guidelines for scheduling collaborative time suggest, it appears that either pupil-free school days, or extended pupil-free periods within school days, will be hard to avoid. As this in turn suggests, what ultimately must occur is a change in both public and professional conceptions about teacher productivity. It has long been assumed that teachers' productive time consists of contact time spent with students. Time spent otherwise has been seen as either a bureaucratic necessity (such as faculty meetings) or an individual professional obligation (as in lesson planning) or a job amenity or benefit (e.g., a 'prep' period). What must change is the idea that for a teacher it is only in the classroom with students that 'the rubber meets the road.'

At a Wingspread Conference of more than a decade ago, Ted Sizer suggested that perhaps the single move that could most help schools would be to maintain the present school hours of teachers, reduce the number of student hours by one a day, and use the gained time for teacher discussion and joint planning. While such possibilities may still appear remote, they are not impossible. A recent survey discovered that while the specified workday of Chicago's teachers is exactly that of students, the teacher workday in some nearby suburbs exceeds that of the students by

as much as 95 minutes. (Hinton, 1992) Perhaps the suburban practice will become the pattern -- since the principle that a good school requires more of teachers than student contact and individual planning time has already been established in many contract negotiations.

If collaborative endeavor is necessary to school adequacy, then it is *schools* which must provide it. It is a school responsibility rather than an individual responsibility of teachers. What this suggests is that administrators, policymakers, and public alike must accept a new conception of school time. Despite the clear evidence and abundant good reason we now have to the contrary, teacher assignments -- and formulas for assessing teacher productivity -- have long assumed that contact hours spent with students were the only time a teacher was productively engaged. (Watts & Castle, 1992) If we are going to redefine teachers' responsibilities to include collaborative sessions with colleagues -- and both organizational research and teacher effectiveness research is now suggesting them to be essential to good schools -- then it is necessary to reconstrue teacher time. The time necessary to examine, reflect on, amend, and redesign programs is not *auxiliary* to teaching responsibilities -- nor is it "released time" from them. It is absolutely central to such responsibilities, and essential to making schools succeed!

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