
The Workload and Worklife of Prince Edward Island Teachers

**Commissioned by the PEI Teachers' Federation
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Quick Facts:

- Study commissioned by PEITF and facilitated by the UPEI Centre for Education Research (CER) began in December 2009 and concluded in March 2010
- Study included a survey of 655 of the 1579 teachers who are members of the PEITF
- A sample teachers' group completed daily work logs totaling 57 working days
- 59 teachers participated in focus-group discussion across the Island
- Six teachers volunteered to provide detailed narratives of their experiences spanning a 30-day period

Some Key Findings:

- Teachers were found to work about 48 hours each week during the paid academic year, which is similar to a 2002 PEI teacher workload study.
- Teachers today are spending less time (2.3 hours less) on instruction of their students than in 2002.
- Teachers are spending more time than in the past on activities that support teaching and learning (i.e., modifying curriculum, preparing for instruction, and administrative tasks).
- Teachers are seeing the importance of quality instructional time being diminished by the competition for students' time to be involved in social or family activity.
- Teachers are concerned about the perceptions the public and some school officials have regarding teachers' professional dedication to the mission of educating PEI's children.
- Teachers are stressed by the constant call for innovation and change.

Further Details of the Study:

The study found that teaching has indeed shifted to include new demands on the way time is distributed throughout teachers' professional days, forcing new ways of working in schools and increasing stress on their worklife. For example, it was discovered that teaching today involves a complex set of ever-changing tasks, which seem to be reducing the amount of time dedicated to instruction. Attending to administrative tasks, responding to rapid technological changes, and addressing the needs of a growingly diverse population of learners all add to the myriad of tasks teachers need to manage and which teachers report are adding to a stressful workplace. The study recommends that through continued and increased collaborative efforts by government, school boards, teachers, and parents, the ever-changing and complex role of teachers will be less stressful resulting in a more productive learning environment for children.

Teachers reported serious concern regarding the support they receive from various educational stakeholders as they pursue the important mission of educating PEI's children. Societal changes in family structures and priorities, combined with seemingly uncoordinated agendas of school officials, has produced a sense of diminished support and confusion of roles for teachers. Teachers also expressed reduced opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and to work in a coordinated fashion with school officials focused on essential innovations to enhance student learning.

Arising from the findings, the report makes 11 recommendations for the stakeholders of children's education.

Recommendations

1. School boards/districts, and principals, need to identify the number and kind of administrative tasks that are required of teachers to determine the effectiveness, redundancy, and priority of such tasks, as well as those most essential to the enhancement of student learning.
2. Teachers and school district officials need to engage in a process to determine which administrative tasks are essential and then develop a practice of prioritizing these tasks.
3. All stakeholders need to recognize that some administrative tasks are seen to be too time-consuming and that some tasks, such as the use of the SAS system, could be seen as a valuable source of communication and assessment, and not simply an extra "administrative task."
4. Further examination is needed to consider how the reduction in teaching time is affecting student learning.
5. Teachers and administrators must come to an understanding of how and who administrative assistants are to assist. A redefinition of the role, or at least an explicit acknowledgment of the role, is needed.
6. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), school districts, and the PEITF need to communicate to parents, sports agencies, and other youth-oriented services that instructional time is sacred time, and events such as tournaments, festivals, and competitions need to be scheduled outside of school time and that students have a responsibility to complete assignments.
7. At all levels of the education system, the parent/teacher relationship needs to be valued and nourished. Collaboratively, school districts, school administrators, school councils, Home and School Federation

groups, and family literacy groups must work to make explicit their common goals. To facilitate this collaboration, these groups need to develop local effective systems of communication between teachers and parents to support and enhance parental involvement, student learning, and teacher efficacy.

8. Public relations work needs to continue to be done by all levels and organizations within the education system to demonstrate and celebrate the good work that is done by teachers, administrators, and support staff for children.
9. Teachers need to work collaboratively with their school administrators and central office personnel to align resources and supports to the mission of teaching and learning.
10. The DEECD, school districts, and the PEITF should collectively examine the instructional day, week, and year so as to embed professional collaborative time for teachers.
11. The DEECD, school districts and the PEITF should work collaboratively to move from a practice of adopting programs that are intended to provide “fixes” to adopting long-term processes that promise to enhance the capacities of teachers to meet the challenges of teaching and learning in this decade.

Researchers anticipate the study will encourage discussion among the key educational stakeholders about the role and work of the teachers particularly in light of the province’s interest in adopting the “21st Century Skills” philosophy presented at last spring’s Summit on Education.