

April 9, 2012

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LABOR EDUCATION  
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# BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

*An Analysis of a Chicago  
Public School Teacher's  
Actual Workday*



ILLINOIS  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



Labor Education Program – April 9, 2012

## **Beyond the Classroom:**

### **An Analysis of a Chicago Public School Teacher's Actual Workday**

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The School of Labor and Employment Relations is dedicated to excellence in scholarly research, teaching, extension, and service - advancing theory, policy, and practice in all aspects of employment relations.

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## Executive Summary

The Labor Education Program of the School of Labor and Employment Relations at the University of Illinois conducted surveys of 983 Chicago Public School (CPS) teachers during winter 2011-2012. In light of the recent debate over the length of the school day, this study offers a profile of a teacher's standard school day workload and the time he/she devotes to the job.

Results from this survey revealed that claims that teachers are working "too short a day" are unwarranted at best and intellectually dishonest at worst. The following are some key findings:

- Teachers on average work 58 hours per week during the school year.
- The work of a teacher happens before, during, and after the school bell rings.
- Teachers on average work a 10 hour and 48 minute standard school day.
- Teachers are at school an average of almost nine hours per day even though elementary students attend school for 5 hours and 45 minutes and high school students for 6 hours and 45 minutes.
- A typical teacher spends almost 2 hours more working at home in the evening.
- Teachers carve out another 3 hours and 45 minutes to do school-related work each weekend.
- A teacher's role goes beyond merely instructing in the classroom. Teachers spend just over 3 hours each day performing non-teaching related activities.
- Teachers also spend an average of 12 days during summer break doing at least one school-related activity.
- Teachers average 30 hours of professional development training while the school year is not in session.

From the analysis, several recommendations are made:

1. Teachers should be the primary voice in determining how school time is used.
2. They should be released from other non-instructional time-consuming duties, while increasing the time spent on actual instruction.
3. Activities such as correcting bad behavior, dedicating time to standardized testing, and sorting data should be reduced in favor of actual instruction to increase student learning.
4. The school day should be organized so that teachers are not forced to multitask while responding to a child's emotional needs.
5. An examination of the impacts of a nearly 60-hour workweek on teacher stress, creativity, job satisfaction, and turnover should be done.
6. Any expansion of the official school day must be accompanied by an appropriate pay increase for teachers.

## Introduction

Considerable public discussion has arisen in Chicago over the official length of the school day worked by Chicago Public School teachers. Newspaper stories, editorials, and op-eds have asserted diverse claims about the impact of the school day on student learning.<sup>1</sup> Despite the loud, well-intentioned, and interested voices laying claim to the truth about the Chicago public school day, there is little agreement on many benchmark questions. For instance, is the Chicago school day actually the lowest in the nation among central cities or even below the mean for schools in the Chicago metropolitan area?

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and his newly appointed school system CEO, Jean-Claude Brizard, have been very vocal advocates of the need for lengthening the school day. On August 23, 2011 the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) announced plans to extend the school day by 90 minutes beginning with the 2012-13 school year.<sup>2</sup> The subject was so central

to the mayor's agenda that it was controversially addressed through a 2011 amendment to the state's education labor relations law. Prior to the change, the Illinois Education Labor Relations Act (IELRA) had required that the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) bargain with its teachers' union (Chicago Teachers Union or CTU) before making any changes to the length of the school day. But as amended the state's ELRA now grants the school board the authority to unilaterally establish a longer school day.<sup>3</sup> While CTU was a supporter of the ominous bill that passed, it opposed the provision on the length of the school day.

Contested perspectives aside, how many hours public school children in Chicago are in class has been treated by practitioners as an important factor in assessing the value of a student's educational experience. But the public discourse on the school day is laden with acrimony, accusation, political framing, unfortunate mischaracterizations, and a conspicuous absence of relevant data.

What is known is that the official school day in Chicago is 5 hours and 45 minutes for elementary students and 6 hours and 45 minutes for high school students. But even that fact fails to establish any common ground. School officials cite the time period as proof of

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<sup>1</sup> . For a small sampling of printed pieces see the following: "Emanuel Expands Push for Longer School Day," *Chicago News Cooperative*, September 7, 2011; "The Gift of Classroom Time," *Chicago Tribune*, January 26, 2012; "Don't Go Overboard on Longer School Day," *Chicago Suntimes*, October 31, 2011; "CPS' School Day Not That Much Shorter Than Those in Some Suburban Districts," *Chicago Tribune*, September 13, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> . "CPS Launches Plan for a Longer School Day and Year for 2012/2013," CPS Press Release August 23, 2011 viewed on March 7, 2012 at

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[http://cps.edu/News/Press\\_releases/Pages/08\\_23\\_2011\\_PR1.aspx](http://cps.edu/News/Press_releases/Pages/08_23_2011_PR1.aspx).

<sup>3</sup> . Senate Bill 7, Public Act 097-0008, Signed into law June 13, 2011.

an inadequate education that handicaps the children of Chicago.<sup>4</sup> However, the union responds by pointing out that teachers work well beyond the official school day.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, there is little if any persuasive evidence that a longer school day or year is actually correlated with higher student performance outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

Notwithstanding the open questions surrounding the effectiveness of a longer school day, it is the objective of this report to provide for the first time an accounting of the actual time CPS teachers spend conducting school-related activities. By gathering data on how teachers are daily allocating their time on school-related work, while they are both in and away from school, this study offers a profile of a teacher's standard school day workload.

The role that time plays in the work of teachers is central to understanding and

designing the architecture of the school day. Plans for school reforms that depend on adding time to the school day or that change the way that teachers use their time are fraught with complications. Scholarly work done by Joseph Cambone, for example, notes that "While administrators often conceive of time as a commodity that can be managed to render tasks complete, teachers' work is highly context-dependent and individualized (5)."<sup>7</sup>

Writing on the relative nature of time, Andy Hargraves astutely revealed that "From their [administrators'] distant standpoints, they see the classroom not in its densely packed complexity, in its pressing immediacy, as the teacher does. Rather, they see it from the point of view of the single change they are supporting and promoting ... a change that will tend to stand out from all the other events and pressures of classroom life (304)."<sup>8</sup>

Hargraves has also explored how the education profession has changed and become "increasingly intensified, with teachers expected to respond to greater pressures and to comply with multiplying innovations under conditions that are at best stable and at worst deteriorating (88)." Within this framework,

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<sup>4</sup> . "CPS to Lengthen High School Days by 36 Minutes Next Year," *Chicago Tribune*, December 23, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> . "Showing the Public We Already Work an Extended Day," October 2011 *Chicago Union Teacher*.

<sup>6</sup> . For example, "Research from the 1990s shows only a small correlation between improved learning and more time in school, and suggests that 'time-on-task' (the time a student spends actually engaged in lessons) is far more important" (See articles in "Time Out," issue of *Catalyst In Depth*, 21, 2, Winter 2010); and Erika A. Patall, Harris Cooper and Ashley Batts, "Extending the School Day or School Year: A Systematic Review of Research (1985–2009)," in *Review of Educational Research*, 80 (September 2010): 401-436.

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<sup>7</sup> . Joseph Cambone, "Time for Teachers in School Restructuring," *Teachers College Record* 96, 3 (Spring 1995): 1-17.

<sup>8</sup> . Andy Hargraves, "Teachers, Work and the Politics of Time and Space," *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 3 (1990): 304.

according to Hargraves, the call for increased professionalism “is a rhetorical ruse; a strategy for getting teachers to collaborate willingly in their own exploitation as more and more effort is extracted from them (88).”<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, in investigating teachers’ affective states (i.e., feelings and emotions), education scholars have found correlations between the role that workload and time expenditures play in attrition rates, performance, and job satisfaction.<sup>10</sup>

What the works referenced here attest to is that claims against a teacher’s construction and experience of work time are deeply contested. It is essential that any intentional changes to the assigned work time of teachers be predicated on the actual lived experiences of the people closest to where learning happens - the teachers.

The following report includes a methodological explanation of the study

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<sup>9</sup> . Andy Hargraves, “Time and Teachers’ Work: An Analysis of the Intensification Thesis,” *Teachers College Record* 94, 1 (Fall 1992): 87-108.

<sup>10</sup> . B. S. Billingsley and L. Cross, “Predictors of Commitment, Job Satisfaction, and Intent to Stay in Teaching: A Comparison of General and Special Education Teachers,” *The Journal of Special Education*, 25, 4 (1992): 453-471; For a recent study focused on new teachers see Nathan Jones and Peter Youngs’, “Attitudes and Affect: Daily Emotions and Their Association with the Commitment and Burnout of Beginning Teachers,” *Teachers College Record*, 114, 2 (February 2012): 1-36.

along with a brief summary of the survey respondents’ demographics. Survey findings are then presented in three sections. The first examines teacher workload and time allocation *at work* during a standard school day. The second focuses on similar workload and time allocations during a standard school day *after* the teacher leaves the school. The report also includes data on time spent on professional development. A concluding section summarizes key findings and offers recommendations.

### Methodology

Despite the body of published research debating the effectiveness of the length of the school day on student outcomes, there is a surprising paucity of studies on teacher workloads and allocation of time based on self-reporting by teachers.<sup>11</sup> In an effort to collect data from classroom teachers, in the spring

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<sup>11</sup> . An international comparative study found that teachers in the United States average more instructional hours a year (955) than in any other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development country (see Carol F. Stoel and Tin-Swe Thant, *Teachers’ Professional Lives: A View from Nine Industrialized Countries*, Milken Family Foundation Report, March 18, 2002: 1-32; Jodie I. Roth, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, Miriam R. Linver, and Sandra I. Hofferth, “What Happens During the School Day? Time Diaries from a National Sample of Elementary School Teachers,” *Teachers College Record* 105, 3 (April 2003): 317–343; and a 1991 study done in England by R. J. Campbell, “Workloads, Achievement and Stress: Two Follow-Up Studies of Teacher Time”

of 2011 a research team at the University of Illinois, School of Labor and Employment Relations (LER) approached the Chicago Teachers Union requesting their assistance in conducting a workload-time survey of CPS teachers. With CTU's cooperation, beginning in mid-December 2011 and continuing until early February 2012, a random sample of 11,627 CPS teachers was sent an invitation from the University of Illinois to complete a 47-item online teacher activity and time survey.<sup>12</sup>

The survey was divided into the following three sections and sets of directions: (1) Respondents were asked to consider all of their teaching and non-teaching activities (i.e., instruction, behavioral management, sorting data, assessing students' work, giving curriculum subject assessments, planning teaching lessons, communicating with parents, meeting with administrators and/or other teachers, creatively planning with colleagues, speaking to a student about a personal or family-related problem) during the "formal contracted school day" (i.e., while at school) and assign a unit of time (minutes, hours, or days) to each activity; (2) Respondents were also asked to consider all of their teaching and non-teaching activities "outside of the formal contractual school day" (i.e., activities done someplace other than

school) and assign a unit of time (minutes, hours, or days) to each activity; and finally (3) respondents were asked to answer a series of demographic questions about their age, gender, and ethnicity along with the age of students taught, grade or subject taught, the name of the school he/she was teaching in, and the years teaching in the CPS system.

The survey was solely designed by the LER research team. Surveys were anonymous and all data was collected, processed, and analyzed by LER faculty and staff. Prior to the design of the survey, university personnel conducted a focus group consisting of ten CPS teachers (evenly divided between elementary and high school levels) in order to capture key elements of an average teacher's day. Follow up interviews with teachers were also done and some first-person comments are included in the report.

A draft of the survey was then designed and submitted to a small sample of teachers as a pilot study. After assessing the results of the pilot study, school researchers made the necessary modifications and approved the final survey instrument for distribution.

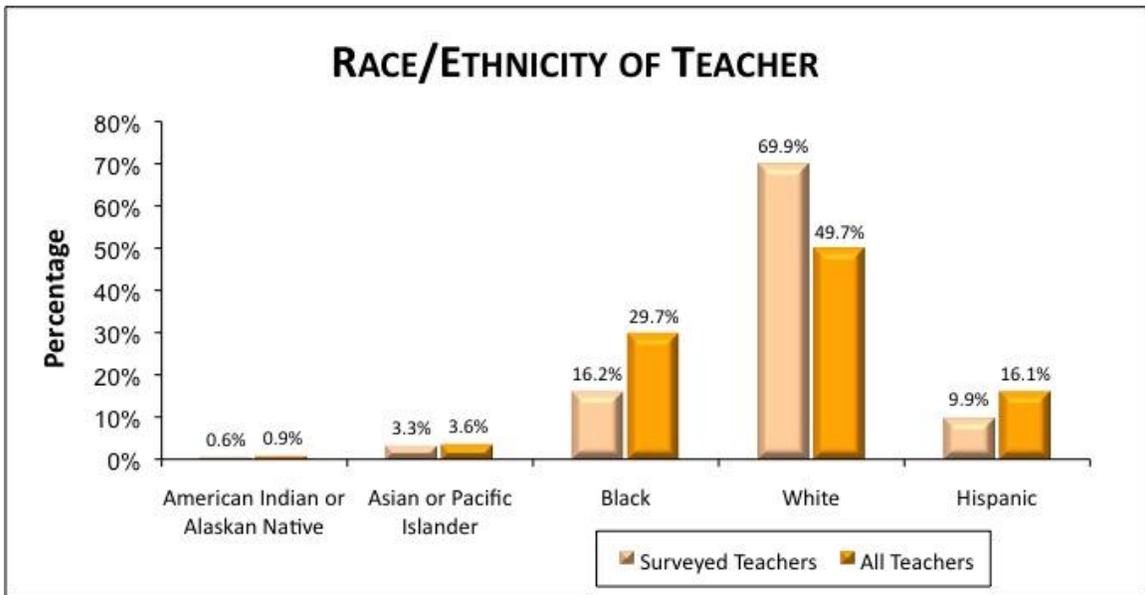
### **Survey Demographics**

There were 983 respondents who completed the survey, generating an 8.5% response rate with a 3.2 percent margin of error and a 95 percent confidence level.

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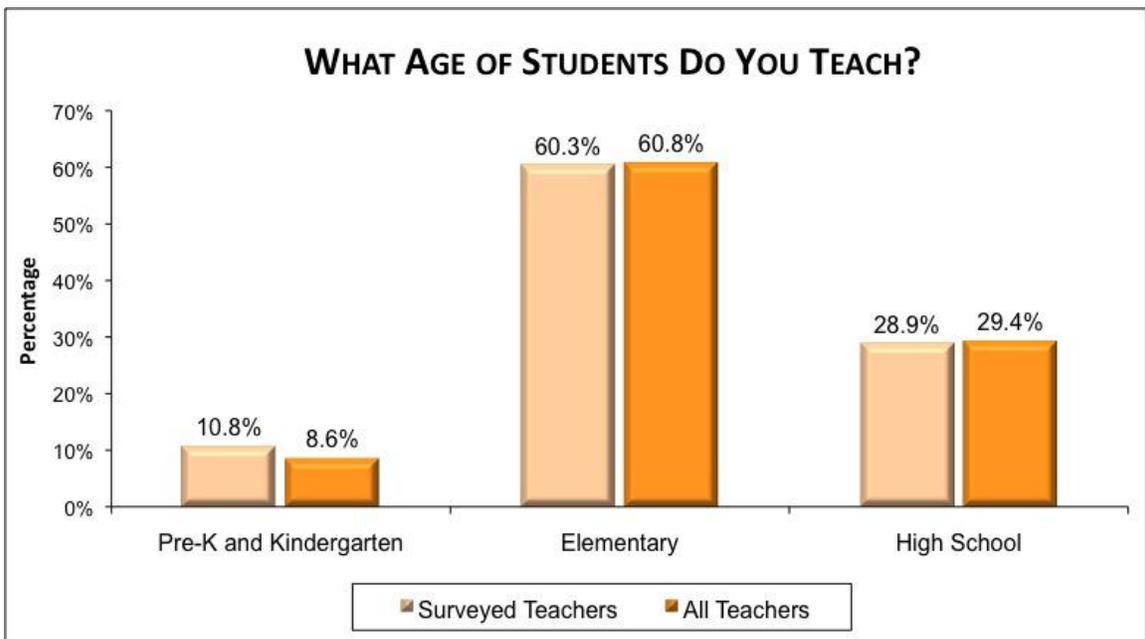
<sup>12</sup> . The sample was drawn from a union membership list of 24,000 teachers who had provided the union with email addresses. The list also included the name of the teacher's school.

FIGURE 1: COMPARISON OF RACE/ETHNICITY BY SAMPLE AND POPULATION



SOURCE: AUTHOR'S ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS TIME AND ACTIVITY STUDY (2012)

FIGURE 2: COMPARISON OF GRADE LEVEL TAUGHT BY SAMPLE AND POPULATION



SOURCE: AUTHOR'S ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS TIME AND ACTIVITY STUDY (2012)

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Teachers on average work a 10 hour and 48 minute school day

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TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF SURVEYED TEACHERS

Demographic Information	Sample (n= 983)
Average Years Taught in CPS	11.7 years
Average Age	42.4 years
Male	22.6%
Female	77.4%

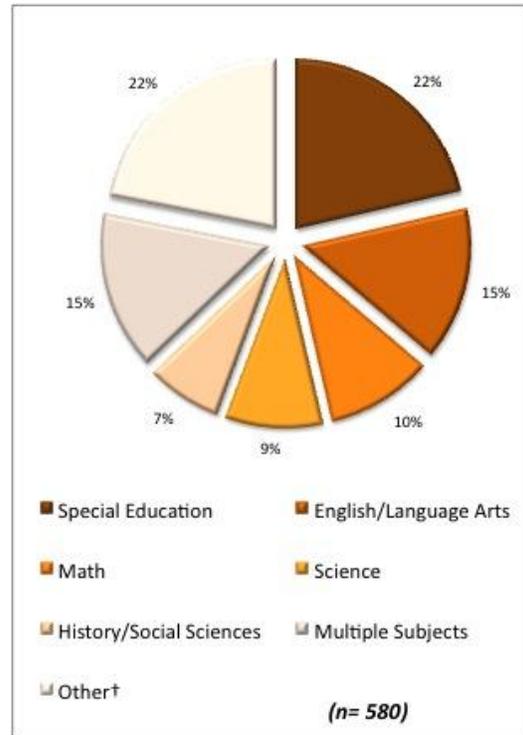
The average age of teachers was roughly 43 years old with a mean of nearly 12 years of teaching experience. Slightly more than three-quarters of the respondents were female and roughly 70 percent were white (See Table 1). As a proportion of the respondents “black” and “Hispanic” teachers were slightly underrepresented compared to their representation in the city schools (See Figure 1). The majority of survey respondents taught in elementary schools but the proportion of survey teachers aggregated by grade level taught was identical to the actual population breakdown of CPS teachers (see Figure 2).

Finally, respondents were drawn from 461 non-charter public schools (78.4 percent) spread across every section of the city.

Nearly three out of every five respondents identified the subject that they teach including Special Education (21.4 percent), English/Language Arts (14.8 percent), Math (10.2 percent), Science (9.3 percent), and History/Social Sciences (7.2 percent). Another 15.2

percent reported teaching in multiple subject areas (See Figure 3).<sup>13</sup>

FIGURE 3: SUBJECT TAUGHT BY SURVEYED TEACHERS



†Other includes gym, health, arts, performing arts, foreign language, library, etc.

### Survey Findings

On the basis of the time teachers reported allocating to school-related activities, the length of the school day discussion appears to ignore the reality that teachers are already working a very long day. According to survey responses, teachers on average work a 10 hour and 48 minute standard school day (Monday-Friday). Teachers spend an average of 8 hours and 53 minutes at

<sup>13</sup>. Overall responses did not differ in statistically significant ways when controlling for subject area.

school performing school functions and another 1 hour and 55 minutes continuing to work away from the school.<sup>14</sup> Note that this figure does not include time spent on weekends. Teachers reported investing on average another 3 hours and 45 minutes conducting school work on the weekends, excluding time spent on extracurricular activities. Thus, cumulatively, the total hours worked during an average teacher's standard work-week is 58 hours.

Teachers not only labor well beyond the contractual school day, but they invest the time out of an unreserved belief that it's necessary to do their jobs. A high school teacher acknowledges the following:

*Teaching kids for six hours is clearly the most important part of the day, but we couldn't do that without working additional time.*

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**Teachers on average are actually at school 8 hours and 53 minutes per day**

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#### *Work at School*

Chicago students may or may not be spending an inadequate amount of time attending school but survey responses indicate that their teachers are showing up early and staying late. As previously

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<sup>14</sup> . Average time "performing school functions" was computed by adding the averages of time teachers spent on individual activities.

noted, elementary students are required to be at school for 5 hours and 45 minutes and high school teachers for 6 hours and 45 minutes. However, according to respondents the average school arrival time for a CPS teacher was 7:36 am and the departure time was 4:15 pm.<sup>15</sup> Despite spurious claims of a "short" work day teachers are investing on average almost an hour more than the old fashion, eight-hour workday while at school.

Time spent at school, however, is a blunt measure of educational quality. Unfortunately, discussion in Chicago about what actually happens during the school day has been mostly muted. So how are teachers spending their time? In the case of survey respondents, on a standard school day teachers are scheduled to teach an average of 4 hours and 43 minutes (see Table 2). But teachers also reported spending 160 minutes a week administering "tests and quizzes." When computed on a five-day school week basis, respondents averaged 22 minutes of the standard school day "giving curriculum subject assessments." Testing students, giving homework, assigning projects and other creative work also creates the obligation to measure student performance. Once again using a five-day school week basis,

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<sup>15</sup> . The average length of time based on arriving and departing from school was 8:38. This is fifteen minutes less than the average total time computed by adding up the averages of all the time teachers report spending on individual activities. The small difference is likely attributable to the variance among teachers in the time used on the mix of activities.

teachers invest an average of 32 minutes per day “assessing students’ work.”<sup>16</sup>

Too often teachers are working without support. As a result, much of the work imposed on a teacher draws from the time designed for reading, writing, and math. Conducting a kindergarten class is a particularly challenging act of educational acumen, managerial efficiency, creative intuitive decision-making, and indefatigable spunk. As the following kindergarten teacher attests to, the classroom is not just where teachers teach:

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<sup>16</sup>. In announcing its intentions to add 90 minutes to the school day CPS outlined the following priorities: “spend more time on core academic subjects including math, science and social studies; provide opportunities for students to work on literacy skills in all subject areas; broaden enrichment opportunities including physical education, art, music, and library time; give students an adequate mid-day lunch and recess period so that they can recharge; provide students with interventions and supports to help improve skills in math, science and core subjects; and [provide] additional time for teachers to collaborate in groups to develop strong learning environments for their schools” (“CPS Launches Plan for a Longer School Day and Year for 2012/2013,” CPS Press Release August 23, 2011 viewed on March 7, 2012 at [http://cps.edu/News/Press\\_releases/Pages/08\\_23\\_2011\\_PR1.aspx](http://cps.edu/News/Press_releases/Pages/08_23_2011_PR1.aspx)). The Chicago Teachers Union added a more elaborate recommendation for reforming the school curriculum in its own report, *The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve: Research-based Proposals to Strengthen Elementary and Secondary Education In The Chicago Public Schools* (February 2012).

*Imagine having 26 to 30 kindergarten children in your living room, or your own children’s friends little ones in your house. And you’re trying to entertain them – I’m not talking about educating them – just entertain them, making sure they’re safe, making sure they’re emotionally secure, making sure you’re providing the nurturing environment that you know they need. Imagine having 26 children in your living room. Now imagine all that but you’re teaching them, and doing it alone, without an aide.*

*And when you’re differentiating instruction, it’s exceedingly helpful for the aide to provide additional support for those children who need it. And, we do not have a bathroom in our classroom. When a child needs to go to the bathroom, we have to stop our class session and I have to take all of the children, because I do not have an aide to take that child, and the children cannot be left unattended. And aides are needed to assist in the lunchroom, particularly in the first portion of the school year. The children need help opening milk, getting trays, and those kinds of things.*

Additionally, 46 minutes of each school day is spent on “behavioral management” and 17 minutes a day speaking to students about their “emotional and social issues outside of the class-

TABLE 2: STANDARD WORK DAY AT SCHOOL AS REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS

Time per day at school:	Mean	
	Time	Share of Day
<b>Teaching Related Activities</b>		
Scheduled to teach	4 hr 43 min	-
Actually instructing	4 hr 01 min	45.4%
Assessing students' work during contractual hours	32 min	6.0%
Giving curriculum subject assessments (tests, quizzes, etc.)	22 min	4.1%
Planning teaching lessons	26 min	4.9%
Providing extra help to students	18 min	3.4%
<b>Non-Teaching Related Activities</b>		
On behavioral management	46 min	8.7%
Speaking to a student about a personal or family-related problem	17 min	3.2%
Communicating with parents	13 min	2.4%
Sorting data	42 min	7.9%
Setting up or taking down classroom	37 min	7.0%
In meetings with administrators and/or other teachers	20 min	3.8%
• <i>Creatively planning with colleagues</i>	09 min	1.6%
Other assigned non-teaching duties (hall duty, bus duty, cafeteria, detention, etc.)	08 min	1.5%
<b>Lunch</b>		
Free time at lunch*	12 min	2.3%
<b>Total Reported Hours at School†</b>	<b>8 hr 53 min</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Working On Teaching-Related Activities</i>	<i>5 hr 38 min</i>	<i>63.8%</i>
<i>Working On Non-Teaching Related Activities</i>	<i>3 hr 03 min</i>	<i>34.5%</i>

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On average 46 minutes of every school day is spent on behavioral management

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Instructional time is 45.4% of the time allocated during the standard school day

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\*The average amount of time set aside for scheduled lunch is 29 minutes but 17 of those are devoted to the activities listed above.

†Minutes may not add up perfectly due to rounding.

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TABLE 3: STANDARD WORK DAY BY GRADE LEVEL TAUGHT

Time per day at school:	High School	Middle School	Elementary	Kindergarten & Pre-K
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
<b>Teaching Related Activities</b>				
Scheduled to teach	4 hr 02 min	4 hr 40 min	5 hr 03 min	5 hr 08 min
Actually instructing	3 hr 23 min	3 hr 53 min	4 hr 20 min	4 hr 30 min
Assessing students' work	45 min	37 min	31 min	29 min
Giving curriculum subject assessments (tests, quizzes, etc.)	20 min	22 min	23 min	21 min
Planning teaching lessons	35 min	22 min	23 min	25 min
Providing extra help to students	20 min	18 min	16 min	11 min
<b>Non-Teaching Related Activities</b>				
On behavioral management	39 min	47 min	51 min	52 min
Speaking to a student about a personal or family-related problem	18 min	17 min	16 min	13 min
Communicating with parents	12 min	11 min	15 min	13 min
Sorting data	1 hr 01 min	36 min	33 min	31 min
Setting up or taking down classroom	24 min	32 min	44 min	52 min
In meetings with administrators and/or other teachers	23 min	18 min	19 min	17 min
Other assigned non-teaching duties (hall duty, bus duty, cafeteria, detention, etc.)	07 min	10 min	09 min	07 min
<b>Lunch</b>				
Free time at lunch	16 min	10 min	11 min	09 min
<b>Total Reported Hours at School†</b>	<b>8 hr 42 min</b>	<b>8 hr 33 min</b>	<b>9 hr 10 min</b>	<b>9 hr 03 min</b>
<i>Working On Teaching-Related Activities</i>	<i>5 hr 23 min</i>	<i>5 hr 32 min</i>	<i>5 hr 53 min</i>	<i>5 hr 56 min</i>
<i>Working On Non-Teaching Related Activities</i>	<i>3 hr 03 min</i>	<i>2 hr 21 min</i>	<i>3 hr 06 min</i>	<i>2 hr 58 min</i>

†Minutes may not add up perfectly due to rounding.

room.”<sup>17</sup> Making time to personally connect and to care for the students also expands the teachers’ role. As explained by one high school teacher the role cries out for attention:

*One of the most stressful things about my job is that I’m more than a teacher. Students come up to tell me about serious things in their lives. About a friend whose boyfriend beat her up. About bullying. About sexual abuse. About being stalked. About being homeless – we’ve fifty homeless kids in our school. As their teacher, you’re the only adult outside the immediate family that the child deals with. You are the normal for them. You are their teacher, counselor, and therapist; you are so much more than a teacher. Teaching is a very nurturing job. The school is understaffed, there aren’t enough social workers to handle all the problems the kids have.*

While not all empathetic and corrective action is actually happening during class, managing student behavior and emotions partly explains why teachers report an average actual instructional time of 4 hours and 1 minute or 45.4 percent of the time allocated during a standard school day.

Classroom instruction is its own unit of time, but it is associated with the time needed to prepare a course. Once a subject has been taught for a while the time allotted can be routinized. But if

the teachers’ course assignments are routinely changed, like the experience chronicled below, then time is further intensified.

*I’ve taught six different courses over the past nine years. The schedule changes every two or three years. Right now I’m teaching three different classes each day, which is typical at my school. If I’ve taught a class recently, then there’s less prep time. I might create a new homework, assign a new film to watch in class, find current events’ articles that tie in, or create a new project. If I’m teaching a new class, that adds at least another three or four hours a week to my workload.*

Actual instructional time does vary by grade level taught. High school teachers report an average of 3 hours and 23 minutes of classroom teaching a day, approximately one hour less (4 hours and 20 minutes) than their elementary school counterparts (see comparison Table 3). The difference is that high school teachers are provided with additional preparation time. It is important to note that at all grade levels, teachers supplement their scheduled classroom teaching by “providing extra help to students” outside of classroom time (an average 18 minutes per day).

An important adjunct to the survey data on the use of non-instructional time are the demands that mandated standardized testing has placed on a teacher’s daily obligations. According to respondents, the average amount of additional time consumed monthly by

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<sup>17</sup>. Special Education teachers reported spending the highest average quantity of daily time on behavioral management issues, 59 minutes.

prepping and administering mandated standardized tests is 20 hours (32 minutes a day). While high stakes test prepping and administering have become ubiquitous, and according to many teachers now part of the regular curriculum, the items were not included in the standard day time calculations. If, however, they had been, the time allotted for all testing would have doubled to approximately one hour a day, further reducing the average instructional time to about 3 hours.

Accompanying a teacher's classroom instruction are demands placed on him or her to conduct supportive or ancillary activities. For instance, an average of 42 minutes of the school day is committed to "sorting data" (i.e., inputting attendance and grades and writing reports) and 26 minutes to "planning teaching lessons." But among high school respondents the data-handling task expands to an average of one hour a day, or roughly one-third the time those teachers have to instruct. Another 8 minutes are used up daily on "other assigned non-teaching duties" (i.e., hall duty, bus duty, cafeteria, detention).

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**On average 42 minutes of  
the school day is committed  
to "sorting data"**

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Preparing reports can be an undervalued and largely invisible consumer of time. As revealed by the following high school Special Education teacher, constructing written records such as

Individual Education Plans (IEP) is a substantial and unrecognized endeavor:

*Once a year I have to write the IEP for each student. This takes at least a minimum of 6 hours. Sometimes they take as long as 12 hours. None of this is in the contract. This is expected work and our job evaluations with the principal include our completing this work. There are 500 students with IEPs at my high school. Multiply that by 6 hours and that is a lot of work that is not on the books.*

Teachers also report attending weekly "meetings with administrators and/or other teachers." Converting the average weekly meeting time (99 minutes) to a daily basis consumes another 20 minutes of each teacher's school day. High school teachers met for the most daily minutes (23) and kindergarten for the fewest (17). Also, teachers have to find time to communicate with parents about student behavior and performance. Survey respondents reported using an average of 13 minutes a day (65 minutes weekly) to make phone calls or send emails to parents.

While at school, teachers appear to be working in and out of the classroom and at all scheduled and unscheduled times. Teachers indicated that 58.3 percent (17 minutes) of their scheduled lunch period was used to complete work assignments (i.e., instruction, behavioral management, sorting data, etc.) leaving an average of only 12 "free" minutes to eat. One teacher finds eating lunch an exhausting juggling act:

*During my lunch period rarely do I just eat lunch -- I'm usually doing two or three things while I'm eating. I never feel like I'm done, I never feel like I'm caught up. We work very hard. Sometimes after school when I'm trying to enter grades I can hardly keep my eyes open.*<sup>18</sup>

In addition, nearly 3 in 10 teachers share a classroom and each day they have to spend time (37 minutes) "setting up or taking down [their] classroom." The daily time allotted for classroom setup is not without opportunity costs. Time set aside for classroom setup (7.0 percent) is nearly twice as long it is for meeting with administrators and/or teachers (3.8 percent).

In describing how time accumulates, a high school History teacher who enters the classroom at 7:15 am, provides below a list of job tasks that were performed when the students went home and teachers were "off-the-clock:"

*My classes end at 2:43 pm each day. Then I usually work until 5:00 pm. Sometimes I'm there until 8:00 pm if I'm preparing new lessons. I collect all the materials and papers from that day's classes. I put up on the chalkboard the agenda for the next day, and a new quote of the day. I make copies for the next day's class. I grade papers that were turned in that day. I catch up on my longer*

*assignment grading. I prefer grading at school rather than at home because there are less distractions, and I'm available for meetings with students and teachers.*

Elementary school teachers, like the one noted below, conduct similar unaccounted tasks outside the view of students and administrators:

*I arrive at school at 7:00 a.m. I use the time until classes begin at 7:55 a.m. for class preparation, unless I have duties like watching a group of students in a specific location within our building. When classes end at 1:45 p.m., if the building is comfortable -- because we have no air conditioning and it can get really hot -- I stay and work until 4:30 p.m. I'm preparing for the next day, cleaning tables, grading papers, working on lesson plans, doing data analysis regarding pupil's assessments. I'm working with an after-school program for students who need additional support, and that meets twice a week for one and a half hours. After school, I also talk to my parents in a holding area where parents pick up their children, or for those parents who don't pick their children up, I email them or do telephone conferences. I probably spend three hours a week talking to parents.*

The long day at school, however, does not generate an opportunity for shared learning and innovation. Respondents indicated that only 9 minutes per day is invested in "creatively planning with colleagues." By comparison this means

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<sup>18</sup> . Lunch periods for the majority of elementary school teachers occur at the end of the contractual school day.

that the Chicago Public Schools are organized so that teachers spend an average of 210 weekly minutes “sorting data” and only 45 minutes a week collaborating with colleagues. Another way to appreciate this time allocation is to recognize that teachers spend 367 percent more time per week on data handling or “paperwork” than they do on thinking creatively with one another.

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Teachers spend 367% more time on data handling or “paperwork” than on thinking creatively with one another

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A high school teacher explains that the current fixation with documentation is consuming energy and time badly out of proportion to educational objectives:

*The principal wants us to document everything we do and submit the paperwork. When we talk to parents on the phone, we have to document it. When I meet with colleagues about a class, we have to write up minutes. Of course there is always paperwork; that’s part of being a teacher. But this is more than we’ve ever had to do before. Lesson plans have to be much more detailed than in the past. Course outlines for each semester have to be very, very detailed. All this additional paperwork takes two or three hours per week to fill out. It’s not helping students achieve academically, and it’s not helping the discipline problems in the school. Nearly all the faculty in*

*my school feels worn out and burnt out, and they don’t feel all the documentation we’re doing is accomplishing much of anything.*

Sorting all of the studied measures into different clusters revealed that during the contractual school day respondents invested an average of 5 hours and 38 minutes (63.8 percent of total day) “working on teaching-related activities” and 3 hours and 3 minutes (34.5 percent of total day) “working on non-teaching related activities.”

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Teachers spend an average of 3 hours and 3 minutes each day working on non-teaching related activities

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#### *Work Outside of School*

A CPS teacher’s workday does not end with the ringing of the late afternoon bell. Teachers report that after they leave the school they spend, each day (i.e., Monday-Friday), nearly an additional two hours working on school-related tasks.

The bulk of the time is consumed by “planning teaching lessons” (40 minutes or 34.8 percent of the non-school day time) and “assessing students’ work” (37 minutes or 32.2 percent of the non-school day time). But even outside of the formal school day respondents continue helping students (16 minutes) and communicating with parents (9

TABLE 4: STANDARD WORKDAY OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL AS REPORTED BY RESPONDENTS

Time per day away from school:	Mean Time	Share of Night
Assessing students' work	37 min	32.2%
Planning teaching lessons	40 min	34.8%
Reading professional education/teacher magazines, journals or other sources of educational information	14 min	12.2%
Communicating with parents	09 min	7.8%
Providing extra help to students	16 min	13.9%
<b>Total Hours Worked Away From School<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>1 hr 55 min</b>	<b>100%</b>

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After teachers leave school they spend two additional hours working on school-related tasks

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minutes) (see Table 4).<sup>19</sup> Not included in the average referenced above are the 499 (53 percent of the sample) respondents who indicated that they participate in “extracurricular activities.” For them the workday gets a bit longer. These teachers acknowledge spending an average of 30.3 extra minutes per day on activities like coaching, club advising, and directing plays. Also excluded from the computation of regular worked hours, are the 244 minutes each month that teachers average “preparing for Report Card Pickup days.”

A teacher’s workday away from school is not totally determined by the need to complete required tasks. Teachers invest time in an array of professional

development activities. The following is one elementary teacher’s effort to advance her craft skills:

*I’m in a doctoral education program so I’m also studying. ... I did National Board Certification before I got in this doctoral program. It’s a very grueling process, a very intensive program. That required a lot of additional effort, as well. You examine your practice. It requires a lot of reflection. You take six tests and prepare four portfolios. You have to video yourself working with your students. You submit all this, and a group of peers reviews it and determines whether your work is deemed worthy of being nationally board certified.*

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<sup>19</sup>. Special Education teachers invest twice as much time daily (21 minutes) on after school communication with parents.

According to survey responses, teachers spend an average of 14 minutes per day “reading professional education/teacher magazines, journals, or other sources of

educational information.” In addition, respondents average annually a little more than 45 hours outside of the formal school day training, taking classes, or prepping for a variety of certifications.

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### Each weekend teachers carve out 3 hours and 45 minutes to do school-related work on average

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Additionally, as has been previously mentioned, the time teachers commit to their job extends substantially into the weekend. Respondents indicated that they carve out of their weekends another 3 hours and 45 minutes to do “school-related work.” Note that this time excludes extracurricular activities and is not included in the standard (i.e., 5-day) workweek time assessment.

#### *Total Hours Worked*

Cumulatively, elementary school teachers reported the longest average workday at 11 hours and 22 minutes, followed by kindergarten and pre-k, high school, and middle school respondents (see Table 5). In a standard week CPS teachers work an average of approximately 54 hours. However, when weekend work is included, the total allocation of time dedicated by teachers to their job rises to almost 58 hours per week.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> . According to Linda Darling-Hammond and Velma Cobb, in 1991, “elementary teachers

When work-time is not restrained by public or private boundaries it can capture a teacher in an endless mental obsession. According to an interviewed high school teacher, the workday never ends:

*When you’re teaching, your day is never complete. You’re always thinking, ‘What do I need to finish today, what did I forget to do, what do I need to do for tomorrow?’ I often wake up in the middle of the night thinking about something I need to do the next day. That’s a real normal thing for teachers. I cannot tell you how often teachers tell me, ‘I woke up at 4:00 a.m. and I couldn’t go back to sleep, because I was still working through school problems.’ I’m thinking about school when I’m doing the dishes, when I’m doing house chores.*

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### Teachers on average dedicate 58 hours a week to their job

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In addition to measuring the working time for respondents while the school year is in session, teachers also exercise their craft when school is not in session. During what is customarily referred to

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worked an average of 45 hours per week and secondary teachers spent an average of 50 hours per week on all duties” (See “The Teaching Profession and Teacher Education in the United States,” in Linda Darling-Hammond, Velma Cobb, editors, *Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in APEC Members: A Comparative Study*, APEC Education Forum, U.S. Department of Education, May 1995: 221-240).

as “summer break,” teachers spend an average of 12 days doing at least one school-related activity. Work performed on these days is typically done in preparation for the upcoming school year. With limited exceptions it is time in which teachers “gift” to their schools as uncompensated labor.

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### Teachers annually average 78 hours of professional training

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Teachers also use their off-season calendar to engage in activities that further develop their professional skills. Survey respondents revealed that they enrolled in approximately 30 hours of “professional development while the school year is not in session.” Added to the skill building done during the school year, teachers annually average 78 hours of professional training. The investment in craft-building exercises produces an annual average of 8 earned “course credits” in higher learning.

TABLE 5: STANDARD WORKING DAY FOR RESPONDENTS

Aggregate mean time spent working per day	Teaching-related activities
Sample	10 hr 48 min
High School	10 hr 36 min
Middle School	10 hr 26 min
Elementary School	11 hr 22 min
Kindergarten & Pre-K	10 hr 48 min

In reality, CPS teachers provide an enormous amount of undercompensated labor. Excluding hours worked performing irregular activities and during the summer recess, teachers who are averaging 10 hour and 48 minute days, or 58 hours per week, are contributing 1,944 productive hours (10 hours 48 minutes x 180 official school days) over a nine and half month period. But working a roughly six-hour and fifteen-minute day over a standard full school year (6.25 hours x 180 school days) would produce 1,125 hours of productive labor. Therefore, CPS teachers are annually working, on a conservative basis, 819 hours above their contractual obligation.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The tasks that teachers perform are extensive and diverse. What teachers do can be delineated into multiple categories and the spaces they work in are both highly public and intimately private. The work of a teacher happens before, during, and after the school bell rings. Teachers work in densely packed classrooms, chaotic hallways, cafeterias, coffee shops, their own and colleagues’ homes, administrators’ offices, and on soccer fields. Work starts early, ends late, crowds out weekends, and fills up the calendar.

But a teacher’s work is not only a collection of technical and emotional tasks; it is also a major commitment of professional and personal time. According to the study detailed above, CPS teachers are not only allocating

different kinds and amounts of time to students, they are working well beyond their contractual obligations. At an average of more than 10 and three-quarter hours of work a day teachers are consuming nearly 90 percent of a full calendar year of labor before the school year officially ends. Simply put, claims that teachers are working “too short a day” are unwarranted at best and intellectually dishonest at worst.

Using the survey responses of nearly 1,000 teachers as a barometer, the following recommendations should be considered before any changes are made to the official length of the school day.

1. Teachers need to be the primary voice in constructing both the length of the school day and the content of how school time is used.
2. If innovation and creative teaching is to be valued, teachers are going to need to be released from other non-instructional, time-consuming duties. Collaboration requires deliberation and under the current conditions teachers are literally not provided the time.
3. Actual teaching time needs to be raised and time spent on managing data should be severely reduced.
4. Any expansion of the official school day must be accompanied by an appropriate pay increase for teachers.
5. Time used correcting bad behavior is likely coming at the expense of already limited instructional time, needed prep time, and opportunities for collegial collaboration. Providing teachers with the resources and support to reduce classroom interruptions would add precious minutes to instructional time without having to expand the school day.
6. Student assessments appear to be crowding out instructional and creative planning time and therefore, scaling back on standardized testing would increase the time dedicated to student learning.
7. If teaching students to think critically is paramount then teachers are currently spending a disproportionate amount of time sorting data. Sufficient preparation time should instead be provided for teachers to improve their classroom performance.
8. The time demands on teachers threaten the opportunities they have to care for the social and emotional needs of students. Along with hiring more social workers, psychologists, and counselors, the school day should be organized so that teachers are not forced to multitask while responding to a child’s emotional needs.
9. An examination should be done of why teachers are compelled to work an additional two hours a day following an 8 plus hour

school day, as well as an additional 3.5 hours on the weekend. Finding ways to reduce the burden and stress of nearly 60-hour workweeks, especially for inexperienced teachers, may contribute to reducing CPS' high teacher turnover rate.

Any lengthening of the school day that ignores what teachers are actually experiencing will likely do nothing more than further complicate the time burden that teachers face in educating children.

Reflecting on the consequences of making school policy without considering the impact on teachers, the following high school teacher offers a genuinely cautionary note:

*"The only thing that keeps me going during this really stressful, demoralizing year is the students. When students come to you with questions, when they ask for letters of recommendation, they keep you motivated. We're here for the kids, ultimately. So many teachers this year have told me that they're thinking of quitting. It's sad. Every day teachers talk to me about the teacher-bashing in the media. People here work so hard. To hear they're retiring early and wanting to leave is really, really awful. Our kids deserve teachers who are happy to come to work every day and who feel supported."*

As dramatic as Chicago's school-day length debate has been it can serve as a stimulus for opening up a genuine dialogue about how to construct an

educationally advanced school system. Teachers' lived experiences speak loudly and authoritatively. If only people will take the time to listen.

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Any lengthening of the school day that ignores what teachers are actually experiencing will likely do nothing more than further complicate the time burden that teachers face

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