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## Instructional time and classroom management

### BRIEF 4

#### School calendars

#### **Quality education depends in part on having sufficient time for teaching and learning.**

Schools need an adequate number of days and hours for instruction and well-trained teachers to deliver quality lessons, so that student engagement and learning is maximised. Factors that impact instructional time include: school schedules, teacher issues, classroom management and time-on-task, pre-service and in-service training and support, and the establishment of a school-wide disciplinary system.

#### **Issues and Discussion**

Supply and demand of instructional time: Schools should dedicate an adequate amount of time to teaching and learning—between 850 to 1,000 instructional hours spread across 180 to 220 days per school year at the primary level, and usually more for the secondary level.(1) In some contexts, the actual instructional time supplied does not keep pace with the demand from parents and communities due to delays in starting instruction, unplanned school closures, difficulties caused by poor school infrastructure, teacher and student absences, limited classroom management skills, excessive time given to testing and examinations, school strikes, and teacher retention issues.(1)(2)(3)(4)

Scheduling and attendance: The supply of instruction time can be improved by adhering to planned school start and end dates and other scheduling, and by ensuring accessibility to the school for both teachers and students to arrive on time.(1)(2)(4) School leaders can increase instructional time by observing teachers during instruction, developing and consistently enforcing teacher and student attendance policies, having regularly scheduled visits from inspectors, and improving school commitment through an incentives system.(1)(4)(7) The provision of in-service training, mentorship opportunities, and monitoring teacher satisfaction can also help to reduce teacher absenteeism and improve teacher motivation.

Classroom management and time-on-task: Classroom management skills are evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies used by teachers to construct an environment that supports and facilitates student learning, while enhancing the quality of instructional time and student time-on-task.(2)(8) Classroom management competencies associated with positive teaching and learning outcomes include: 1) maximising structure through teacher-directed activities and minimising [physical classroom distractions](#), 2) posting, teaching, monitoring, and reinforcing expectations, and providing supervision and feedback, 3) directly engaging students and giving them opportunities to respond, and 4) using strategies that reinforce positive behaviours and redirect problem behaviours.(3)(4)(5)(8)

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Pre-service training for improved instructional time: Instructional time and quality of delivery can be improved when teachers receive pre-service training that is inquiry- and research-based and focused on content-area knowledge, pedagogical skills, and delivering content to students in diverse and meaningful ways.(2)(6) Loss of instructional time can be caused by low self-efficacy to teach and use classroom management skills so it is important that competencies for effective classroom management be taught during pre-service training.(3) Successful pre-service training equips teachers to be effective in their use of instructional time, behaviour management skills, strategies to promote appropriate behaviours, and maximising classroom structure.(3) These skills are evidenced when there is a flow to teacher instruction, when multiple sources of student's learning are tapped into (including [visual, auditory, and kinesthetic](#)), and when students are provided opportunities to contemplate, encode, and respond during lessons.(5)

In-service training and support for improved instructional time: Teacher skills and competencies that improve use of instructional time and classroom management should be reinforced through in-service training and a supportive school environment.(6) Teachers need a sense of collegial support as well as autonomy, flexibility, and ability to be creative when delivering lessons according to student needs.(6) Teachers are also more effective in using instructional time when they are committed to improving their competencies through continuing professional development opportunities.(1)(2)(4)(6)

School-wide disciplinary systems for improving classroom management: Loss of instructional time and issues with teacher retention can be caused by student discipline issues and lack of parent or school management support in disciplining problem behaviours.(1)(4)(8) Parent support and student behaviours improve when school-wide disciplinary systems are co-developed with school councils, student groups, families, and community members.(5)(7) Effective disciplinary systems prevent, monitor, and address problem behaviours which are clearly articulated in a [student and parent handbook](#).(5)(7) Disciplinary codes often outline rules for classroom attendance, permissible clothing, disciplinary options for students with and without exceptionalities, and the restrictions on weapons and drugs.(5)(7) Disciplinary systems should outline student's responsibilities for engaging in appropriate behaviours and a process for students and parents to address disciplinary actions taken by schools.(7)(8) Effective disciplinary systems enlist strategies to promote student behaviour development, growth, and dignity rather than resorting to punitive forms of punishment.(5)(7)(8)

## **Inclusiveness and Equity**

Students in low-income communities: Teacher burnout and turnover occurs most often in low-performing public schools located in low-income and high minority-represented communities.(4) Teacher training programs can improve instructional time in low-income communities by directly addressing the special challenges of teaching in these schools and giving teachers practical and effective strategies.(4)

Teachers living with HIV: The stigmatization, discrimination, absenteeism, and early retirement of teachers living with HIV impact instructional time loss in many countries with a high prevalence of the disease.(1) It is important that health and education sectors work together to ensure that school-based prevention and treatment efforts are provided along with adopted school policies to cultivate a school culture of acceptance and non-discriminatory attitudes, to plan for workplace safety, to develop strategies for reducing time lost due to teachers' poor health, and to provide counselling and education for teachers and students.(1)

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## Policy Examples

- Australia [[PDF](#)]
- Ireland [[PDF](#)]
- South Africa [[PDF](#)]
- Swaziland [[PDF](#)]
- Tanzania [[PDF](#)]

## References and sources

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