

**BEST PRACTICES TO ACCELERATE
STUDENT LEARNING SERIES**

**PRIORITIZING
INSTRUCTIONAL
TIME TOOLKIT**



**NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR
PUBLIC
CHARTER
SCHOOLS**



PRIORITIZING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME TOOLKIT

Overview

The Prioritizing Instructional Time Toolkit provides school leaders with tools to gain insights from teachers to:

- Reflect and assess how teachers' time is spent during the school week
- Discuss potential strategies to maximize planning and teaching time

This toolkit consists of four main components. Use this manual to guide you through how to use the toolkit, including what steps you should take to engage with your teachers.

The **first** document is an email template for you, the school leader, to use to COMMUNICATE with your teachers. It contains a context-setting paragraph that discusses the current issues teachers are facing nationally around how their time is spent and its consequences. The template also includes space for you to share with your teachers about district and school priorities or considerations, allowing for greater transparency between school leadership and staff. The document concludes with a link to a Google Form survey to share with your teachers to gather their input on how their time is spent.

The **second component** is a worksheet for teachers to fill out to TRACK how they spend their time during the week. The worksheet lists a series of activities that we understand from research and practice to commonly cut into instructional and planning time, and it asks teachers to fill out how much of their day is spent on each task. The table also includes a space for teachers to calculate weekly totals. The noninstructional tasks are:

1. Disciplining students
2. Grading and feedback
3. Noncurricular activities (sports, clubs, and after-school events)
4. Administrative tasks
5. Professional development
6. School committee work
7. Nonteaching student interaction (supervision, mentoring, counseling, career guidance, hall/lunch/dismissal duty)
8. guidance, hall/lunch/dismissal duty)

The **third** component of this toolkit package is the Google Form survey that helps teachers ASSESS how their time is spent.





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The form asks teachers to tell school leaders what their total calculated time was for each activity. The Google Form allows teachers to select for the total time in one-hour increments from less than one hour to six or more hours. Teachers may round the total time from their worksheets in order to choose one of the responses.

Additionally, for each activity, the form asks teachers: “Does time devoted to this activity interfere with your teaching or preparation time?” Teachers may select Yes, No, or Partially.

The form also includes open-ended questions that enable teachers to offer more details on what other responsibilities may interfere with their teaching or preparation time and what their ideal workday would look like.

The form concludes with demographics-related questions.

When you click on the link, you will be prompted to make a copy for yourself. Feel free to make any changes you deem necessary for your school and community. Once it’s copied, click on the Send button on the top right of the survey. You will then have the option to copy a hyperlink. Paste that link into the email template to share with your teachers.

The fourth and final component of the toolkit is a PDF that guides you through REFLECTING on the data you gather from the surveys. The document includes a series of discussion questions to help you analyze the data your teachers provide and brainstorm how your school might adopt promising strategies to offload tasks from teachers.



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Context-Setting Email Template

Dear {Staff Name},

At {SCHOOL NAME}, we understand the important role that teachers play in student learning. Nationally, teachers have been reporting that they feel overworked and are burned out.

One factor contributing to those feelings of overwork is the amount of time spent on activities not directly related to instruction. At the national level, less than half of teachers' workdays are spent teaching their students, and most teachers say they would like to spend more time on activities directly related to teaching, such as planning and instruction, and less time on other tasks.

In response to this national reality, we want to collaboratively take some concrete steps at {SCHOOL NAME} to understand how your time is spent. Not only will this allow us to better support you, but it will also help our students in the long run.

Let's start by tracking how much of your time is spent on noninstructional tasks. Please make a copy of this worksheet {HYPERLINK THE WORKSHEET} and spend a week noting how many hours you spend on these tasks. After you have completed the worksheet, please fill out this Google Form {HYPERLINK YOUR NEW COPIED LINK} survey by {DEADLINE FOR SCHOOL LEADER TO DETERMINE} to help us understand how you use your time and how you would ideally like to use your time. We predict it should take you less than an hour [Note to school leaders: Consider allocating part of professional development time for this activity].

Best,
{Your Name}



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Tracking Worksheet

Strategy									
Disciplining students									
Grading and feedback									
Noncurricular activities									
Administrative tasks									
Professional development									
School committee work									
Nonteaching student interaction									

Assess:

[Google Worksheet](#)



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Reflect

Now that you have your teachers' responses to how they spend their time throughout the week, take some time to reflect on this data.

Here are a few guiding questions to consider:
(Use the space to write or type your notes in directly)

- A. How much time is spent on average not directly related to instruction?
 - 1. Does this differ by grade level or content area?
- B. How do teachers' ideal days differ from their reality?
 - 1. Does this differ by grade level or content area?
- C. Reflecting on each task at a time, where might there be opportunities for other personnel to take on these duties?

Here are some examples of promising practices that schools have implemented in response to the pandemic to better support their teachers. Schools have:

- A. Shifted noninstructional tasks to administrators and staff
- B. Hired social workers and paraprofessionals
- C. Shored up support by engaging parents and volunteers
- D. Implemented Grow Your Own initiatives to strengthen the pipeline of teachers and paraprofessionals from the community
- E. Expanded mental health access to staff
- F. Explored making changes to the school day and/or school week and provided dedicated days for professional development and administrative tasks

You can find in-depth accounts of these strategies in the [“Prioritizing Instructional Time to Support Teacher Retention and Student Learning”](#) brief.