A Study of the Challenges of Intensification of Saskatchewan Teachers’ Professional Time

DECEMBER 2013
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Introduction

The Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation initiated this research into teachers’ time and workloads, in part as a response to resolutions passed at the Federation’s Annual Meetings of Council in 2010 and 2012. The resolutions asked the Federation to provide its members with a better understanding of the complexities and challenges associated with teacher time in Saskatchewan. In the fall of 2012, the Federation contracted the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit of the faculty of education at the University of Regina to complete the study. SIDRU named Dr. Jodie Burnett to lead the investigation and to gather and analyze the data. Drs. Carol Schick and James McNinch of SIDRU were then responsible for writing the final report.

Intent of the Report

This study of teachers’ time in Saskatchewan stems from and reflects, at least in part, the changing political context for public education in the province. The scope of teachers’ time and how it is understood and interpreted by administrators of school divisions and in provincial educational policy has resulted in a growingly rigid identification of time as it relates to curriculum development and instructional time for children. The complexity of teachers’ time has not been fully appreciated. To date, teacher time has been viewed through a narrow lens resulting in a limited understanding of the political, social and professional environments within which teachers work. Furthermore, educational trends at the local, national and international levels have put increasing pressure upon teachers.

In recognition of these trends, and based upon personal experiences of increasing pressure, resolutions passed by the Federation’s councillors were aimed specifically at the particular time-related challenges faced by teachers according to the geographical contexts of their schools. Additionally, certain consideration was given to the role of special education teachers, whose time and workloads are generally under-researched and deserving of increased attention. The passage of these resolutions demonstrates teachers’ concerns for their professional time and for future challenges to their work life and professionalism.

The intent of this study was to engage Saskatchewan teachers in a discussion of the complexities of teachers’ time. Teachers from across Saskatchewan participated in an online survey from which feedback was collected from a sample of 950 educators. In addition, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted to provide perspectives from the lived experience of teachers and their perceptions of their professional time. The following statement from the research survey is suggestive of many teachers’ reactions to changes taking place amid their professional experiences:

… teachers’ time is better spent providing services rather than measuring the services that we are providing. Ironically, these same services are now reduced by the very act of spending time measuring them. To me, education is helping the whole child develop in all aspects and supporting them academically and emotionally, and providing needed services. It goes beyond raising reading or math scores. (Svy)
The sample is representative of a cross-section of the membership of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation. Characteristics of the entire sample of teachers surveyed are described in detail in Appendix A. It includes more than 730 classroom teachers working in prekindergarten, elementary, middle years, high school and multiple grade levels. It also includes school-based administrators, consultants, co-ordinators, English as an Additional Language teachers, counsellors and 122 special education teachers. Reflecting the makeup of the teaching profession in Saskatchewan, 71 per cent of the respondents are female and 29 per cent are male. Half of the respondents identify themselves as living and working in urban centres, and the other half identify rural and/or northern locations as their home and workplace.

The limitations of this study are primarily associated with the survey component of the inquiry. Like all survey data, the responses provided by participants are limited by the questions developed by the researchers. Additionally, because all Federation members were not required but only invited and encouraged to complete the survey, the sample obtained may differ in some way from Federation members who elected not to complete the survey. Like all survey results in which responses are voluntary, the data reported here may not be representative of every member of the Federation.

It is important to start by noting that teachers reported general satisfaction in the work they do, but when provided an opportunity to clarify and expand their answers, responses were substantive. In addition, when teachers were offered the opportunity to provide open-ended responses, they responded with passion about many issues beyond the scope of the questions asked. This reflects the desire teachers have to be heard and to be able to explicitly explain their reality.
Teachers in Saskatchewan are experiencing transformational influences on their professional time. These changes have been identified both in the recent literature highlighting the increasing demands being placed on teachers, as well as the changing educational policies in Saskatchewan.

In October 2012, the provincial government announced major goals and significant changes for the PreK-12 sector in its Saskatchewan Plan for Growth. With great ambition the present government foresees future economic and workforce growth, and success premised on an improved and more efficient educational system. The plan describes a vision for the province to 2020 and beyond. The government aims to:

• Ensure Saskatchewan leads the country in Grade 12 graduation rates by 2020.
• Reduce the Grade 12 graduation disparity between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students in the K-12 system by 50 per cent by 2020.
• Develop a standardized assessment model.
• Align improved curriculum, assessment, instructional methods and supports to meet future needs of all students.

While no one would argue that these are not worthy goals, such a mammoth undertaking has justifiably raised many concerns. Specifically in this research context, how will these initiatives and many others be accomplished and what will be the implications for Saskatchewan teachers?

Nearly 1,000 teachers participated in an online survey and open-ended questionnaire in this study. Furthermore, 10 teachers participated in extensive interviews. The data provides concrete insights into the complexities of teachers’ time and the increasing demands being experienced by teachers. The survey also asked specific questions about teachers’ experiences in northern, rural, urban and special education classrooms.

**Emerging Themes**

Three broad themes have emerged:

1. **Teachers’ Commitment to and Concern for Education**
   This theme includes the aspirations teachers have, their idealism and their concern for students and those aspects of their work in which they experience satisfaction, autonomy and agency.

2. **Barriers to Teacher and Student Success**
   This theme includes the primary consequences of work intensification. Teachers are experiencing increased demands of rapid and extensive changes, increased expectations for accountability, and decreased supports provided to and for students.

3. **Compromises to Teacher Commitment to Education**
   This theme includes the indirect consequences of work intensification. Teachers face a perceived lack of appreciation of and support for their professionalism, and increased pressures on their personal lives and on their health and well-being.
In the context of teaching, work intensification refers to the ways in which teachers are subjected to increasing external pressures, such as demands from policy-makers or broader societal expectations. The result is an increase in the number of tasks or duties for which a teacher is responsible, without the accompaniment of additional resources or time. As the work of teachers is increasingly reduced to executing the decisions made by others, intensification thus carries an implicit threat of de-professionalization.

Teachers' commitment to and concern for education

From the surveys and interviews, a portrait emerges of rural, urban, northern and special education teachers who love what they do and take great satisfaction in working hard to ensure student success. However, they also feel that their efforts, often above and beyond the call of duty, are simply presumed and taken for granted.

Participants acknowledge high professional satisfaction directly related to connecting with students and working to ensure the success of their students. Such professionalism is also defined by opportunities for collegial collaboration and building relationships with students and their families. Given their desire to make a difference with their passion for teaching, teachers need to feel appreciated by their colleagues, students and the communities in which they live and work.

Results for the overall sample indicate a very high level of participation in employer and teacher-directed professional development at least once per year. However, a large minority of respondents (particularly northern teachers) identify lack of time or opportunity as a barrier to regular participation in professional development activities.

Barriers to teacher and student success

The second theme describes barriers to success, often the direct result of work intensification. As teachers navigate the ever-changing educational policy and curriculum landscape, lack of supports for their work and for students create substantial barriers to success. These barriers arise as teachers adapt to new educational initiatives and policies, but with increasingly limited professional and paraprofessional personnel available to support students and teachers. Teachers compensate for such disparities by working on their own time to research and plan learning strategies and solutions to meet students’ needs.

Within this second theme participants identify many factors that affect their time including insufficient preparation and classroom planning time. Teachers report that over the past five years, their time has been strained by heavier workloads and increased accountability through more formal reporting and documentation. Three quarters of the participants report an increase in time spent on work-related activities and attribute this increase primarily to changes in educational initiatives developed by school divisions and government.

Teachers report that the majority of their work time is spent on instruction and preparation for instruction. But only half of the respondents are satisfied with the amount of time spent on these activities. Furthermore, a large majority of educators are dissatisfied with the time available to meet and collaborate with colleagues.

Other challenges for all teachers, regardless of location, include the socio-economic status of their students and the need for greater support for students and their schools, and the additional time required to do so. This includes the time necessary to research alternative teaching approaches for high-risk and vulnerable students who experience difficulties. Even with this increased responsibility and expectation about what they will provide for students, a majority of respondents indicate that their professional autonomy to make pedagogical decisions has decreased in the past five years.

Compromises to teacher commitment to education

The third broad theme to emerge reflects the indirect consequences of the intensification of teacher time. The research indicates clearly that increased expectations encroach upon the personal time and relationships of the respondents.
Teachers report that the increased demands of teaching negatively impact personal relationships, as they feel pressure to spend more time with family and friends than they are currently able. Half of the respondents do not feel in control of their personal time and report that they were not satisfied with their work-life balance.

Stress is reported by a majority of the respondents, although half of those surveyed added that stress is an unavoidable part of their job. Compromises to their own sense of professionalism, exacerbated by the stress of balancing home and family responsibilities, result in teachers feeling that they are not able to meet all the demands placed on their time.

Teachers express frustration at the lack of appreciation for the work they do, including the provision of hundreds of hours of support for extracurricular activities coupled with a lack of appropriate recognition and compensation for volunteering their personal time in doing so.

In addition, a diminished sense of appreciation from senior school division administration, the Ministry of Education, the media and the public at large contributes to a growing malaise and cynicism. Many respondents report feeling disconnected from school division administration and the Ministry of Education, excluded from decision-making and devalued as professionals.

**Geographical Differences**

Data analysis from the geographical sample that represents urban, rural and northern teachers demonstrates relatively few differences. Northern teachers identify approximately 10 per cent less professional development participation than their urban and rural counterparts. These teachers do not report a change in their professional autonomy over the past five years, whereas urban and rural respondents note a decrease.

Northern respondents are less satisfied with time spent on various teaching duties as well as administrative effort than other teachers. Northern teachers are also more likely than urban or rural teachers to identify difficult relations involving student behaviours, collegial relationships and unsupportive administration contributing to decreased job satisfaction.

On average, northern respondents are younger and have fewer years of teaching experience than urban or rural respondents. Northern and rural teachers report less access to community supports, fewer staff and colleagues to share the extracurricular load, and less anonymity in the community, an experience that results in increased demands for and expectations on their personal time.
Special Education Teachers

This survey aimed to better understand the experiences of designated special education teachers in comparison to colleagues who integrate special education students into their classrooms. Special education teachers report spending more time meeting with parents, support staff and consultants than their non-special education counterparts. They also report a greater increase in workload in the past five years than non-special education respondents. However, similar to the overall sample, special education teachers cite changes in educational initiatives as the main contributor to increases in workload.

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<td>Non-Special Education</td>
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Special education respondents also report feeling more appreciated by students and less appreciated by their colleagues than non-special education teachers. Supportive school administrators, meaningful connections with parents and families, job variety and seeing student success all contribute to job satisfaction for special education teachers. Frustration is attributed to a lack of time to complete all their work.

Conclusion

Regardless of location of classroom or school context, this study concludes that the intensification of teacher time and work compromises teachers’ feeling of self-efficacy and diminishes their professional identity. This in turn is reflected in increased demands on personal time, unrealistic expectations, a lack of time to complete work and a disconnect with decisions made by school division administrators and officials of the Ministry of Education.

Feeling excluded from the consultative process regarding educational decisions is coupled with a perception of a lack of understanding and support from the public in general. This contributes to a portrait of a teacher, regardless of location or role in Saskatchewan today, who is beleaguered and undervalued.

This intensification of teacher work without a commensurate acknowledgement of their efforts as professionals has implications for the well-being of teachers and, instrumentally, to the well-being of the students with whom they work. To maintain their own integrity, teachers have to see that the glass is half full in order to believe that the work they do is important, is appreciated and is making a difference for a better world – one student, one classroom, one school and one community at a time.

This study warns that if the glass is half empty for teachers in this province, then cynicism and alienation may have a number of consequences. It could further politicize teachers and make them more militant and more resistant to imposed change, or it could drive them from the profession in which they were initially drawn by high aspirations and a strong sense of responsibility.

Educators in Saskatchewan are justifiably proud of the high degree of professionalism and skill they bring to their job. It goes without saying that no one is well served when these are diminished. The increasing intensification of teacher time revealed in this study is not a positive direction for teachers or for the children and youth of this province.

The conclusion of this study makes a number of recommendations for further research and actions both within the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation and beyond. The most critical recommendation calls on the Federation to approach school divisions and the provincial government to re-invigorate respectful relationships with its educational partners – surveys and consultations are not enough. Committed and engaged problem solving is required to understand and find answers to the consequences of school work intensification experienced by students and teachers. However, further research is also warranted if an enhanced understanding of the multiple demands impacting teachers’ time is to be more fully appreciated. It is also recommended that the Federation support teachers in accessing opportunities that provide a forum in which to share experiences, and more importantly, generate solutions to these challenging issues.
Although some similarities persist, invariably, much has changed since the mid-1990s in terms of the nature of teachers’ work, expectations, curriculum and governmental initiatives.

In 2012, the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation funded a study of the work life and health of teachers in Regina and Saskatoon, which has deepened provincial understanding of how the positive and negative aspects of teachers’ work affect their general health and well-being. Teachers in urban Saskatchewan most frequently cite overwhelming workloads, large class sizes, and constant changes in duties and responsibilities as work-related sources of stress and dissatisfaction. But during peak times of the year, such as reporting periods, teachers in Saskatchewan resoundingly state that they do “not have enough time to negotiate the sheer volume of their professional responsibilities.”

Current Situation

The results of this SIDRU study on behalf of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation corroborate and elaborate on the findings of earlier times that report increased stress and demanding workloads. Teachers have spoken openly about the contradictions and sense of compromise that make them uncomfortable in the face of changes to public education. At the same time, however, participants overall have expressed a deep sense of satisfaction in the teaching profession. While their commitment to public education and the public good is deeply held, the ethical principles and professional ideals that characterize the role they wish to perform as teachers is increasingly at risk in the current conditions.
The text that follows consists of quotations from interview (Intv) portions of the research and from citations inserted into the survey (Svy) portion of the research. Unlike the data gathered through one-on-one interviews, survey remarks rose voluntarily from the teachers and were not directly prompted by the research questions. The force of teachers’ unsolicited remarks indicates the strength of their feelings about the barriers and challenges they are facing.

This theme of teachers caring deeply about their profession while feeling compromised by increased demands is repeated throughout the study.

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*I love my job. I struggle to find a balance between my personal life and my professional life. Sometimes there just isn’t enough time to do the job I want to do and be the person I want to be.* (Svy)

*I love teaching and wish that there was a more welcoming climate for the good work that teachers are already doing.* (Svy)

*I have devoted my life to teaching in a rural school because I believe wholeheartedly in the quality of education that is provided in a small school. Teachers who chose this path should not be penalized for this choice…. Thank you for finally asking for feedback from teachers in small schools!* (Svy)

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Job satisfaction is defined by teachers in various ways including opportunities for collegial collaboration and building relationships with students and their families. Throughout the research, respondents declare their passion for teaching and their interest in making a difference.

### Emerging Themes

Three broad themes emerged from this research: a strong sense of teachers’ commitment to and concern for education, barriers to teacher and student success, and compromises to teachers’ commitment to education. The themes are largely reflective of the present situation experienced by teachers in Saskatchewan, which is characterized by the phenomenon of work intensification. In the context of teaching, work intensification refers to how teachers are subjected to increasing external pressures, such as demands from policy-makers or broader societal expectations. The result is an increase in the number of tasks or duties for which a teacher is responsible, without the accompaniment of additional resources or time. As the work of teachers is increasingly reduced to executing the decisions made by others, intensification thus carries an implicit threat of de-professionalization.
Teachers’ descriptions of themselves as professionals who are dedicated to public education may sound like something that one might expect teachers to say. These are neither idle nor abstract words, however. Teachers cannot speak of professionalism without immediately talking about their concerns for and commitment to the education of children and young people in the province. From the surveys and interviews, a portrait emerges of rural, urban, northern and special education teachers who are passionate about what they do and take great satisfaction in working hard to ensure student success. Teachers spend a significant amount of their personal time problem-solving and preparing themselves to respond adequately to students who struggle. Throughout the study, teachers express a genuine concern for their students’ well-being inside and outside of the school environment.

To me, education is helping the whole child develop in all aspects, and supporting them academically, emotionally and providing needed services. It goes beyond raising reading or math scores. (Svy)

Teachers take great satisfaction from seeing students grow and progress. Their commitment to education is seen in these moments.

But the children, it’s why people teach. That’s the part that remains good. There is really nothing better than teaching a lesson and seeing the light bulb go on. Yes, knowing you made an impact, knowing that you are influencing their learning. Knowing that you are changing the way they look at the world. That is also why there are a lot of those extra hours – because that is important. So you spend a lot of time trying to come up with ways to make those moments happen. But when it happens, all of a sudden all that extra grief doesn’t matter anymore. (Intv)

Just seeing kids progress … watching somebody that struggled with something be it reading or math. Being able to say please and thank you without swearing at someone … Just watching growth in kids. Watching them do things that they struggled with. And you know, when they beam and they see their own improvement and they are just so excited. (Intv)

Teachers are concerned for their students who might not always be getting the required supports at home. Teachers are sensitive to the fact that student support must be provided in a respectful and discreet way. Many schools and teachers meet this challenge by providing snacks and meals for students, giving of their own time and often spending their own money to ensure that student needs are met.

I go home but I can’t just walk away from those kids. I go home and I worry about them and I think about maybe I could try this tomorrow. I wonder if this would work for them. Teachers don’t get to turn their brains off. (Intv)
Professional Development

How frequently do you engage in employer-directed professional development?

- 4% – Once every 2 or 3 years
- 1% – Once every 5 years
- 1% – Never
- 16% – Once per year
- 79% – More than once per year

How frequently do you engage in teacher-directed professional development?

- 15% – Once every 2 or 3 years
- 3% – Once every 5 years
- 2% – Never
- 31% – Once per year
- 48% – More than once per year

What is the most significant factor limiting your participation in professional development?

- 15% – Professional responsibilities
- 19% – Lack of employer support
- 2% – Lack of interest
- 6% – Availability of professional development opportunities
- 4% – Too few options
- 6% – Personal availability
- 8% – N/A
- 41% – Lack of time

Summary

- 95% of respondents participated in employer-directed professional development at least once per year.
- 80% of respondents participated in teacher-directed professional development at least once per year.
- 40% of respondents cited lack of time as a primary limitation to participation in professional development.
Recent Changes in Workload and Autonomy

In the past five years, the time spent on work-related activities has:

- **17%** – Stayed the same
- **6%** – Decreased
- **77%** – Increased

In the past five years, professional autonomy has:

- **23%** – Stayed the same
- **9%** – Increased slightly
- **4%** – Increased significantly
- **30%** – Decreased significantly
- **33%** – Decreased slightly

Why was there a change in workload?

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<th>Changes in resource levels</th>
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Summary

- 77% of respondents indicated that the time spent on work-related activities increased in the past five years.
- Respondents most commonly cited educational initiatives as a reason for changes in workload.
- 63% of respondents reported feeling their professional autonomy had decreased in the past five years.
Job satisfaction and experience of autonomy and agency

The majority of those surveyed indicate they are “very satisfied” or “moderately satisfied” with their jobs. Interview participants overwhelmingly acknowledge a high level of job satisfaction most directly related to connecting with students and working to ensure their success. Teachers also take pleasure in building professional relationships with students and families, and mentoring and collaborating with other teachers. Job dissatisfaction is most often attributed to lack of time to complete their work.

In contrast to their overall professional commitment, 64 per cent of respondents indicate that their professional autonomy has decreased in the past five years. Teachers report the majority of their work time is spent on instruction and preparation, with little time available to meet and collaborate with colleagues. For teachers, the sense of professional autonomy includes being able to choose professional development opportunities that align more appropriately with their needs and interests rather than only the interests or priorities of the school division or the Ministry of Education.

I would love the opportunity to pursue my own professional development. Pursuing what interests me because then I’m going to buy into that. And I’m going to work hard to succeed at it because I think it’s a good idea. I don’t have someone saying I think this is a great idea and now you have to do it. (Intv)

For teachers, professional autonomy translates into having more flexibility and decision-making authority over what and how they teach. While all participants recognize the need to be accountable to curriculum goals and objectives, teachers appreciate being trusted to use their own judgment.

[I wish someone would] say, “What do you think about this? Do you think this would benefit the students? Do you think it would be advantageous? Tell us what you think. What would work for you and your students?” Unfortunately, ... people who have never even met our students are making these decisions. (Intv)

Personal autonomy to me means that I have the freedom to make my decisions and the responsibility to carry them through. I would say with most of it I do. And that is because of my teaching situation [as a special education teacher]. If I were in a regular classroom I don’t think I would have this autonomy. (Intv)

Teachers acknowledge that the amount of autonomy they experience is directly related to the support they receive from their local school administrators and the school division. Teachers who experience respect and trust on the part of school administrators and colleagues cite that they also experience more professional autonomy.

Our school division is very supportive. They haven’t said, “You need to teach these outcomes at this time and do it this way.” No, there’s none of that. They trust our judgment. They trust us. (Intv)

On the lack of professionalism and autonomy, another teacher remarks:

We have less and less say in what we teach and how we do it. I feel that professional autonomy would also include being consulted when decisions are made. (Intv)
Impact of rapid and complex changes

Education reform has been well-documented as a global trend, but so too has the concomitant increase in stress levels experienced by teachers in Canada and abroad. A 2010 study by the Manitoba Teachers’ Society compiled a useful literature review of international teacher workload studies, all of which confirm the general trend described here: intensification of work, increased hours and greater stress. Charlie Naylor reviewed international studies on rising teacher workloads, and noted similar developments in the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada. Among the most common causes of stress were “[i]mposed and centralized system accountability, a lack of professional autonomy, relentlessly imposed change, constant media criticism of public education systems, reduced resources and moderate pay.” One study conducted in the United States linked increased pressure on teachers’ time with broader societal trends to respond to demands for global competitiveness. This has generally entailed placing higher expectations on productivity without commensurate funding or increases in compensation for teachers.

Reforms in education are part of the broader efforts of many countries to refashion and restructure their public institutions, often in response to the idea that subjection to the market creates tangible returns on efficiency. Indeed, developments discussed in regard to education cannot be divorced from wider ideological debates surrounding the delivery of public services. Many teachers choose the teaching profession out of a desire to help children learn, but as market pressures impinge upon educational policy, the idealistic impulse of teachers becomes debased and job satisfaction diminishes. Furthermore, centralized attempts to control the teaching process for the supposed economic benefit of the country, state or province has similar deleterious effects on the teaching profession.

Interview participants in this study identified that they feel a lack of acknowledgement and a disconnect from senior administration within their school divisions as well as from the Ministry of Education. Senior administration and the Ministry make decisions that directly affect the work of teachers, yet with little opportunity for inclusion of and input from teachers. It is no surprise that teachers feel undervalued and dismissed if they are not meaningfully consulted. Participants expressed frustration, noting that they spend a significant amount of time, energy and money learning and acquiring the qualifications, skills and experience necessary to become educators. Yet they are not consulted for their knowledge and expertise on education matters. Most significantly, participants perceive that, ultimately, decisions are being made by individuals who have little or no classroom experience and, therefore, are far removed from recognizing what is in the best interests of students and teachers in a classroom setting. The logic of how decisions get made is not always clear to educators, as expressed in the following remarks:

*I think it is more like crisis management. So the squeakiest wheel, the most urgent needs, the loudest parent, the most difficult child – those are the things that get the attention. I think we are like firefighters, and we go from one fire to the next fire. We don’t always have time to manage, to reflect and decide what we do. It is already decided. (Intv)*

*I have been teaching for many years and don’t personally agree with some of the changes that have happened with the new government and new school divisions. (Svy)*
Frequent, seemingly ad hoc change makes learning, adapting and managing new policies challenging and frustrating. As a result of the frequently changing environment in which teachers work, teachers are often forced to take a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to what they do.

In the past five to seven years, the teaching profession has changed considerably. The myriad of initiatives at the provincial and division level are endless. In a small school, there are only so many people to do all of those expected jobs. As well, at the classroom level, the new curricula continue to roll out and teachers are expected to do professional development, vary assessment and report all outcomes. Yet at the same time, as a seasoned teacher, I understand the far-reaching effects of extracurricular activities in a school. Who has the time for these activities? The world of education has changed – for the better? (Svy)

Recent developments in the educational sector invariably result in significant challenges for teachers’ time in Saskatchewan. Educational initiatives, such as Assessment for Learning and the Continuous Improvement and Accountability Framework, have meant that teachers spend an increasing proportion of their time fulfilling their obligations with respect to new practices relating to assessment and accountability. Furthermore, Section 20.7(1)(a) of The Education Regulations, 1986 was recently altered in order to

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**Personal Time and Relationships**

Do you feel in control of your personal time?

- 47% – Yes
- 53% – No

Has your job caused one or more of your relationships to suffer?

- 61% – Yes
- 39% – No

Do you feel pressure to spend more time with family and/or friends?

- 69% – Yes
- 31% – No

I am satisfied with my ability to maintain a balance between my work and my personal life:

- 42% – Yes
- 58% – No

**Summary**

- Respondents generally reported that their job caused relationships to suffer (61%), they were not in control of their personal time (52%) and felt more pressure to spend time with family/friends (69%).
- Most participants (58%) were not satisfied with their work/life balance.
- The average number of hours spent in total on work-related activities during summer holidays: 47.8 (of which 8.6 were spent on professional development).
An increased attention to hours and minutes in the classroom – and top-down initiatives to ensure such attention – requires simultaneous changes in the culture of public education. This increased focus on and scrutiny of teacher time also affects the relationship of citizens to public education, as well as labour relations within schools and school divisions. Such changes are neither neutral nor benign, but adhere to specific constructs of time and the day-by-day and minute-by-minute understandings of how time is felt and experienced.

Teachers’ time is often over-simplified by policymakers and administrators who tend to reduce the complexities of teachers’ time into discrete categorizations. There is increasing pressure from government and school divisions to define and categorize teachers’ time simply according to function or task, such as instructional, contact, allocated or non-instructional time. Teachers’ time, however, is complex and typically not amenable to such reductionist taxonomies, which ultimately oversimplify and distort understandings of teachers’ time. Moreover, such categorizations seem narrowly focused on students’ time, rather than being inclusive of teachers’ time.

In their interviews, teachers identify classroom planning and preparation as the most significant demand on their time. While many say that they do receive preparation time during the school week, most argue that the allotted time is not nearly enough to complete their work.

As a result, most suggest that classroom planning and preparation requires a significant amount of their personal time including evenings, weekends, holidays and the summer break. Participants feel these commitments leave teachers with a lack of balance between their professional and their personal lives.

Meeting the special needs of children also increases the demand on teachers’ time. Planning for students on an individual basis requires a significant amount of extra administrative work and requires intensive planning with consultants, students and parents. This increases demand on teachers’ time, including their personal time.

Participants experience a lack of support for themselves and their students. This shortcoming can be seen in teachers’ continuous efforts to navigate the ever-changing educational policy and curriculum landscape and the limited professional and para-professional personnel available to support students and teachers, especially in northern and rural school settings.
Appreciation/Stress/Support

Do you feel appreciated for your time by students?
- 15% – Highly appreciated
- 38% – Moderately appreciated
- 27% – Slightly appreciated
- 8% – Slightly unappreciated
- 8% – Moderately unappreciated
- 4% – Highly unappreciated

Do you feel appreciated for your time by the government?
- 1% – Highly appreciated
- 2% – Moderately appreciated
- 9% – Slightly appreciated
- 12% – Slightly unappreciated
- 19% – Moderately unappreciated
- 59% – Highly unappreciated

Do you feel appreciated for your time by colleagues?
- 26% – Highly appreciated
- 45% – Moderately appreciated
- 21% – Slightly appreciated
- 5% – Slightly unappreciated
- 3% – Moderately unappreciated
- 1% – Highly unappreciated

Do you feel appreciated for your time by school boards?
- 3% – Highly appreciated
- 18% – Moderately appreciated
- 27% – Slightly appreciated
- 18% – Slightly unappreciated
- 20% – Moderately unappreciated
- 15% – Highly unappreciated

Do you feel appreciated for your time by the public?
- 2% – Highly appreciated
- 12% – Moderately appreciated
- 25% – Slightly appreciated
- 17% – Slightly unappreciated
- 21% – Moderately unappreciated
- 23% – Highly unappreciated

Do you feel appreciated for your time by the media?
- 1% – Highly appreciated
- 3% – Moderately appreciated
- 13% – Slightly appreciated
- 21% – Slightly unappreciated
- 28% – Moderately unappreciated
- 35% – Highly unappreciated

Teacher Time
Summary
- Respondents generally felt appreciated, except by government and media.
- Stress was reported by a large majority of respondents and considered unavoidable.
Support for students is compromised

Interview participants recognize that demands can be overwhelming for teachers who are providing special education services while also trying to teach and manage the needs of their own classrooms. The amount of time dedicated to supporting special education in the classroom has the potential to affect other students as well. Teachers report that they have less time to dedicate to students who have less intensive needs.

I think you have to put in extra time because [instruction] is based on individual children. So I think that you have to create a curriculum for every child that you work with, which greatly reduces time that you have to give as a whole. It’s really tough to work in a class where you have a curriculum coming from the province saying these are the things you need to get through. (Intv)

Taking on more tasks also means that more meetings and communication are often required, as well as more demonstrations of teacher accountability.

When I ask for services for kids, and I do, it’s not that I like paperwork, I don’t. When I ask for something it is because I need it. Not because it’s a frill. It is my professional opinion that this child needs more than I can provide them. (Intv)

When teachers fill the gaps in services as support staff positions are reduced or eliminated, the decline in adequate supports affects both students and teachers. Operating with fewer educational assistant positions means that intensive supports cannot be provided to students. It also compromises teachers’ time by adding to the pressure of their existing responsibilities. Managing their classrooms as effectively as possible becomes an even greater priority. The additional expectations also reduce the time educators are able to spend on participating in extracurricular activities.

We have one school psychologist for the entire division so we are lucky if we see her once a year. (Intv)

We do a lot of … professional reading and strategizing on our own time just trying to figure out what to do with these kids when they are in our classroom. There is one student in particular that is very, very explosive and requires a lot of physical intervention [and] needs to be physically removed from the classroom. And there is kicking and scratching and biting on the way out. Afterwards there is report writing about the incident and recording everything, every detail. What I said. What this child did to react. What I did, what she did, what I did, what she did. You have to fax it away and email to 15 different people. You can’t do that while you are teaching kids. (Intv)

Respondents comment on the limited professional supports available to students. While there may be some access to speech pathologists, psychologists, social workers and other professionals, this access is limited in rural or northern communities and even in some urban school divisions. Experienced consultants and other support staff may be unable to follow through on the requests teachers make on behalf of their students because of the overwhelming demands on their time.

One issue … that causes a great deal of stress is having increasing numbers of students in our classrooms with various learning and behavioural difficulties that I am not trained to deal with (OCD, ADD/ADHD, FAS, mentally disabled, oppositional defiance, Down’s Syndrome, chemical addictions, severely modified programming, etc.) … These students take the majority of my time, even though they are in the minority, while the other students are neglected, which leads to classroom management issues. (Svy)
If students do not receive specialized support, teachers will often act on their own to provide solutions. They attempt to fill these gaps by conducting extra research to augment their own knowledge, find strategies and solutions for students in need, and even purchase required supplies and supports at their own expense.

On the weekend I'm thinking this would be a great app to try with this child. But then there's not enough time. Things happen. Kids need to be tested. Somebody is throwing something at their teacher and needs individualized potty breaks. So lots of the time that you are planning what to do with a child, you don't get done and you end up being a crisis manager. (Intv)

Excessive changes and increased accountability put significant pressure on teachers. Invariably, however, the increased demands on teachers' time and failure to respect their sense of professionalism can also affect student learning.

Paperwork has increased due to increased accountability. Paperwork is considered a priority and interferes with my capacity to work with children. If I were to attempt to do the required paperwork within my workday, I would have approximately only 30 to 50 per cent contact time with students. (Svy)

The government that sets out ... the regulations [and] the curriculum goals is forgetting it's a people job too. You can't teach a child if they ... are having an emotional breakdown, or they are having an anxiety attack because there is some other kid in the class that's freaking them out. Or puberty just hit. That's the reality of it, right. So you have to have some wiggle room to allow for the fact that it's people. It's little people. (Intv)

There can be times that you walk in and there has been a new directive from a superintendent and we better drop everything and change what we've been doing. (Intv)

Evidence from this study and elsewhere suggests that increased time devoted to instruction and standardized assessment initiatives are not drivers of improved learning outcomes.13

It is imperative to impress upon the Ministry and government that teachers' time is better spent providing services, rather than measuring the services that we are providing as these are now reduced by the very act of spending time measuring them. (Svy)
Work Time

Average work hours per week spent.

Amount of time spent on each activity is reasonable.

Average percentage breakdown of time per week (note that percentages may sum up to more than 100).
**Summary**

- Most respondents indicated that the majority of their time was spent on instruction and preparation for instruction.
- Approximately half of respondents were satisfied with time spent on preparation and grading.
- More respondents were satisfied than dissatisfied with efforts related to workload, time spent on extracurricular activities and the overall quality of work life, but a substantial minority were not satisfied.
- A large majority of respondents were dissatisfied with time available for collaboration with colleagues.
Health, well-being and personal life are more difficult

Linda Duxbury and Christopher Higgins have been assessing work-life issues in Canada for the past 20 years, undertaking three large-scale surveys of Canadian employees during that time on themes that have much to say about the intensification of labour. Their 2012 national survey focused on work-life conflict and confirmed many of the trends witnessed in teacher studies in the past decade. The survey sample was composed primarily of well-educated “knowledge workers,” a category inclusive of teachers. Over the past 10 to 20 years, work demands for Canadians have increased substantially, creating work-life conflicts relating to child care, elder care, personal relationships, and mental and physical health. More than half of the sample regularly worked more than 45 hours per week and completed work at home outside of regular hours on evenings and weekends. Alongside increasing work demands, employees’ mental health and general satisfaction with life has steadily declined.  

Similarly, in this SIDRU study of teacher time, respondents report that professional expectations encroach upon personal time and relationships. On-the-job demands of teaching negatively affect relationships, with 61 per cent reporting that time spent on their work causes personal relationships to suffer. The majority of respondents feel pressure to spend more time with family and friends. Additionally, 52 per cent do not feel in control of their personal time, and overall, 58 per cent report that they are not satisfied with their work-life balance. Stress is reported by a majority of the respondents who say that juggling home and family responsibilities is an unavoidable part of their job.

Respondents report overall that, as educators, the stress of balancing home and family responsibilities and meeting all the demands of their work life is an enormous challenge. Unfortunately, the feeling that they are not able to meet all these demands as they would like both compromises and diminishes the sense of their own professionalism as teachers. The following comments reflect teachers’ attempts to balance work and home life.

- I take hours of work home every night. It becomes very difficult because you layer in your personal life on top of it. By the time I’ve put my five children to bed it’s 9 or 10 o’clock before I can start and then you’re wasted. (Intv)

- If any additional responsibilities are added to my job, I might have to consider changing careers. I would have to make a choice: do my job well or have a family. (Svy)

- My life revolves around my school life. Balance is a struggle, particularly when more is being forced onto teachers’ plates every year by division administration. (Intv)

- It is a very solitary profession as often one can feel like they are on an island as far as the day-to-day responsibilities and expectations. (Svy)

The intensification of teachers’ work, described in the previous section, has implications for the well-being of teachers and the well-being of the students they work with. To maintain their own integrity, teachers have to believe that the glass is half full. To continue in their profession, teachers need to believe that the work they do is important, appreciated and is making the world a better place, one student, one classroom, one school and one community at a time.
Declining appreciation and support

The survey results reveal that, in general, respondents feel appreciated by their students, colleagues and direct administrators. On the other hand, many respondents feel excluded from decision-making and report a significant disconnect from school division administration and the Ministry of Education. They also feel that their efforts, often above and beyond the call of duty, are simply presumed and taken for granted by senior school division administration, the Ministry of Education, the media and the public at large.

I’m afraid when I meet new people to say I’m a teacher because I don’t want to hear what they have to say about it. And I find that to be very disappointing. I’ve spent my whole life wanting to be a teacher but now that I am a teacher I don’t want to tell people. Not that I’m embarrassed to be a teacher, I just can’t take much more negativity about it. (Intv)

This lack of understanding and support gives teachers in Saskatchewan cause to feel undervalued, undercompensated and devalued as professionals. Participants identify a lack of acknowledgement regarding the multiple roles that teachers fulfil. The perceived duties associated with a teacher’s job description are sometimes vastly different than the reality of the classroom on a daily basis. Respondents note that only their colleagues acknowledge these roles or understand what is required to satisfy them. As demands become more intense, today’s teachers are required to fulfil roles that extend beyond classroom teaching, performing duties that are not formally part of their mandated job descriptions.

Interview participants identify that there is generally a lack of recognition and acknowledgement for their extra time commitment. They note that the time they contribute to community activities and extracurricular events is not necessarily a part of the professional mandate of a teacher.

What I value the most, I think, is when people know that [extracurricular work] is voluntary…. I find that the majority of children and parents and the community in general just think that it is just part of our job. (Intv)

Teacher participants are often frustrated at the lack of appreciation for the hundreds of hours of support they provide for extracurricular activities and the lack of awareness that they are expected to volunteer their personal time to do so.

I feel there is a strong misunderstanding from government about the expectations and their understanding of what we do every day. I am not in it for the money but some appreciation or gratitude would be nice every once in a while. (Svy)

This lack of acknowledgment makes teachers feel undervalued and affects their ability to remain positive and stay motivated, especially when they face negativity from parents regarding their classroom teaching and management practices. Participants in this study believe that if teachers felt more supported by the public, it is likely that their own sense of efficacy and job satisfaction would increase.

Most teachers are passionate about teaching. We are not in it for the money, but the expectations, overload and lack of family and personal time is not enticing our young people. (Svy)

The amount of work and stress associated with teaching is underappreciated by the media, which strongly influences the public’s view. (Intv)
Regardless of the context in which they work, teachers identify extracurricular demands as taking up a significant amount of their personal time. Extracurricular commitments such as after school sports, clubs and other activities not only require additional supervision and instruction, but also travel time away from their families. When teachers are involved in after-school extracurricular activities, they must then prioritize classroom planning and preparation. This too often results in teachers taking work home with them to prepare to cover their absences.

Teachers in rural and northern schools report contributing their personal time to provide supervision and support to children. One teacher talked about going in to work early so that parents have a safe place to leave their children before regular school hours. As a consequence of actions like these and others, teachers and school staff often become the constant in the lives of students, regardless of the socio-economic background. This form of support requires a significant amount of teacher time to provide students with the attention and guidance they need.

... [Some kids] are definitely well provided for but it is that human contact they are missing. Even class time because they want to tell you their stories ... they need constant approval. You have to be ... a full-time cheerleader ... giving those kids the attention they need. That is just as important to their development. (Intv)

I also work with some very well-to-do kids. Their families bring a different kind of challenge. The parents are well educated and want more. There is more expectation for accountability. And so more meetings, more talk. More, because you know they are going to be asking for evidence. You make sure there is evidence. We do that for all of our students but some are ... more expectant of that. (Intv)
It is difficult to see teachers portrayed in the media or by the government or public in a negative light. I feel that I’m part of a noble profession and see myself as being very good at what I do … With the many and constant changes in education, many older teachers are choosing to retire early because it’s just not worth all the stress. Parent support and accountability seems to decrease while demands on educators continually increase. (Svy)

Results for the overall sample indicate that teachers are concerned that the increasingly managerial approach to their time will erode the professional nature of teaching. This approach can be frustrating for the teaching profession, as it marginalizes the dimensions of teachers’ professional time which are not necessarily categorized as instruction or assessment, yet are integral to the goals of education and student learning.

I feel that the demands of the job are extremely high, and that the profession will lose a lot of high-quality teachers in the future, particularly ones with families. The teachers that put in the time and effort and love are the ones you should want to keep. In conversations with other teachers, the demands and the cons of the profession are beginning to outweigh the pros and their love for the teaching profession. (Svy)

This final section on the phenomenon known as work intensification offers an analysis that suggests that the undervaluing of teachers and the increased stress on their profession are not peculiar to Saskatchewan. The matters discussed above concerning the challenges to teacher professionalism, the effects of increased stress on personal lives and the general demoralization of the profession are a part of wider changes taking place in the workforce over the past several decades. Although the application is experienced broadly, the effects of work intensification among educators are all too real in this geographic location.

Over 30 years ago, Magali Larson introduced the concept of work intensification into the lexicon of teacher workload literature. In an analysis of post-war educated labour, Larson identified the intensification of work as a widespread phenomenon in which the volume and complexity of work escalated. Notable education scholars, Michael Apple and Andy Hargreaves, expanded on Larson’s concept of work intensification for its application to education. The implications of Larson’s concept of work intensification would soon begin to penetrate the consciousness of teachers and educational administrators. In reframing the concept of work intensification to be more applicable to education, Apple chronicled attempts by bureaucrats, policy-makers and industries to gain control of classroom operations and its “outputs” – also known as “graduating students.”

In the context of teaching, work intensification refers to the ways in which teachers are subjected to increasing external pressures, such as demands from policy-makers or broader societal expectations. The result is an increase in the number of tasks or duties for which a teacher is responsible, without the accompaniment of additional resources or time. As the work of teachers is increasingly reduced to executing the decisions made by others, intensification carries an implicit threat of de-professionalization. Intensification does not necessarily re- or de-skill teachers, but it acts to destroy self-direction and leisure at work – it reorients workers toward the most critical tasks, drowning out the seemingly inconsequential, such as showing care and attention, taking pleasure in learning and offering respect for others. The upshot of intensification is a marked reduction in the quality of education delivered to students and diminished opportunities for teachers and students to exercise their own creativity, imagination and problem solving.

In recent years, there has been renewed attention by educational researchers to investigate the
Job Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction

Rate your job satisfaction.

What aspects of your job contribute to job satisfaction?

Small class size
Supportive administration
Extracurricular involvement
Job freedom and flexibility
Professional autonomy
Supportive parents or families
Job security
Benefits
Holidays
Validation
Job variety
Professional learning opportunities
Collegial interactions
Passion for teaching
Being a role model
Connecting with students
Making a difference
Student success

What aspects of your job contribute to job dissatisfaction?

Lack of passion for teaching
Unrealistic expectations
Extracurricular involvement
Lack of personal time
Lack of time to complete work
Class size
Difficult parents or families
Lack of professional autonomy
Job inflexibility
Lack of recognition
Excessive workload
Repetitiveness of work
Inadequate opportunity for professional learning
Inadequate benefits
Job security
Difficult collegial relations
Unsupportive administration staff
Poor work relations
Feeling impotent
Student behaviours
Student failure

Summary

- 76% of respondents were satisfied with their jobs.
- The most commonly endorsed contributors to job satisfaction were student-centred: connecting with students, student success, making a difference, passion for teaching.
- The most commonly endorsed contributors to job dissatisfaction were related to workload and time shortages: excessive workload, lack of time to complete work, lack of personal time.
- Student behaviours and failure were also cited as common contributors to job dissatisfaction.
phenomenon of work intensification. Teachers, along with many Canadian employees in other sectors, have experienced work intensification, which invariably creates greater stress and diminished job satisfaction. For many people outside the teaching profession, a teacher’s time consists primarily in the hours of the school day, when in direct contact with the students. However, there are many hours outside the regular school day during which teachers are engaged in “invisible work” – marking, planning, attending meetings, extracurricular involvement – and there is substantial evidence that the time devoted to such work is on the rise. Without additional resources and supports to accompany teachers’ escalating workload, the educational partners must carefully consider the possibility of widespread burnout or mass exodus from the profession.

Throughout this study, the evidence of work intensification is reported by Saskatchewan teachers in their experiences of increased accountability, rapid and complex changes, lack of supports, and the disconnect between educators and decision-makers. Teachers are interested in supporting changes that will improve the lives of their students, but the intensity and speed of the changes, as well as lack of follow-through, is frustrating and unproductive. Teachers’ ethical considerations and their commitment to students are still at the forefront of what they do even though they report that their sense of agency and professionalism is continually undermined. Lack of consultation about the nature of their work and uninformed decisions made elsewhere are demoralizing for teachers. Furthermore, teachers’ health, well-being and personal life become more difficult when the demands of their jobs become untenable. Lack of appreciation and support, as well as increased scrutiny and criticism, are also on the rise. Educators in this study are concerned for their profession. They do their work out of passion and commitment. Unfortunately, the public good and the benefits of a first-class education system are at risk of being compromised in the processes reported throughout this study.

These final teacher voices sum up the effects of work intensification that are readily apparent in teacher experiences in Saskatchewan over the last several years.

I am never surprised when young teachers leave the profession. There are easier ways to make more money with less stress … I am sad when I think of how my job has changed. I believe in progress and change but I don’t know if all the changes being made are for the good. (Svy)

I’m just proud to be a Saskatchewan teacher and I wish people would quit trying to interfere with that. In spite of [all that has happened], that won’t stop Saskatchewan teachers from doing what we do best, and that’s making a difference for the children of this province. (Intv)
Conclusions and Future Considerations

Through its history, beginning in the 19th century in the territory now known as Saskatchewan, public education has been premised upon a social contract and a sense of public trust. As in other jurisdictions the general public accords the teaching profession “independence and responsibility for the conduct of its affairs in return for the profession’s commitment to high professional standards of conduct and competence.”

This public trust is being eroded as a result of increasingly direct government intervention in school governance, curricula, teaching and assessment. It may be that other social and political influences, both in Canada and abroad, are seeking to replace the framework of public trust with something else.

A new paradigm of how the teaching profession relates to the general public may be on the horizon. Such a new paradigm – that ties educational inputs to economic outputs – seems integral to the provincial government’s Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond (2012). Thus, it is critically important to consider and interrogate the consequences of such changes, not only for the teaching profession, but for Saskatchewan students and the Saskatchewan public.

As the research findings of this study demonstrate, these changes raise questions and issues that Saskatchewan teachers live with and embody every day. This study contributes to the growing body of literature relating to the intensification of teachers’ time and workload, and its implication for work-life balance and student success. The research findings indicate clearly that teachers’ perceptions of their duties and responsibilities have been increasing in both complexity and volume over the recent past.

Recent studies on teachers’ work life, including this one, have noted increases in workload and stress, decreases in job satisfaction and a greater propensity to leave the profession. Excessive working hours can negatively affect teachers’ involvement in extra-curricular activities and participation in their professional organization, but more importantly intensification can have an impact on their health, well-being and the quality of education offered to students.

This particular SIDRU research concludes with recommendations in three related areas: questions for further study, increased support for Federation members and engagement with educational partners.

It is clear through this SIDRU research that teachers are willing and excited about having an opportunity to share their experiences and to “have their voices heard.” Many teachers express relief and appreciation for simply being asked to express their views. They were eager to provide examples, share their stories and describe their circumstances. “Thank you for listening,” one teacher simply stated.

Further Study

Although the findings of the many studies conducted on teacher time are consistent, their shortcoming lies in the absence of statistical information supported by direct observation. Most studies, like this one, employ methods such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews and diary-keeping to assess how teachers spend their time, relying on self-reporting. A research study involving direct observation would be costly in terms of both human and financial resources, but would certainly contribute improved reliability, credibility and veracity to the existing literature.
Perceived shortcomings of the data and lack of statistical information should not be read as a fault or flaw of this study per se. Rather, these statements acknowledge that credible research cannot report in an ad hoc way or use inconsistent methods in data gathering. Indeed, to be credible, a research study must ask a very specific set of questions by a clearly defined method in precisely limited circumstances. What has been highlighted by the wealth of data gathered in this study is that there are many more areas that can and should be investigated by further research questions to understand the experiences of teachers’ working lives.

What stands out from this research is that further questions are required about the long-term effects on a well-educated and dedicated profession if the workers continue to be treated with diminishing respect as partners in education. How is the image of the modern teacher manipulated for particular ends that have more to do with interests outside education and less to do with what goes on in classrooms? What is the overall effect to education at large when the good intentions and high aspirations that teachers bring to their profession are peripheral to the larger education agenda?

It is clear to the researchers and authors of this report that further research is warranted if an enhanced understanding of the multiple demands impacting teachers’ time is to be more fully appreciated. For example, a more empirical study of the intensification of teacher time and work would be helpful in understanding the need for, and perhaps the erosion of, the time teachers have to reflect deeply in and on their actions in their teaching practice. A lack of time for reflection before, during and after teaching is particularly relevant in an information age driven by new technologies which have accelerated access to instant information, but have not necessarily helped teachers to develop and sustain their curricular and pedagogical work with students. Teachers make hundreds of decisions a day about instructional strategies and learner needs, about content, assessment and planning, and communication with students, colleagues and parents. The classroom is a space in which many things are occurring simultaneously, multi-dimensionally and often unpredictably. Such an environment requires quick thinking in action, but as importantly, it requires thoughtful reflection and further planning and adapting. This is the invisible work of teachers that needs further study.

The data reveal that teachers have much more to say about their working experiences, about their multi-tasking, and about how they make hundreds of day-to-day decisions in light of rapid changes and increased demands. There is little known about how teachers negotiate the multiple agendas and highly public and politicized conditions in which their work is situated. Other studies might consider the often contradictory public perceptions of the teaching profession. Publicly held perceptions of teachers vary widely, the view ranging from the most to the least trusted profession and often presenting significant misperceptions of teachers’ lack of accountability.

Related research on the status of teachers in the eye of the general public and the government may be revealing. Many educators believe that educational reform will never be successful “if we continue to demean and dishearten the human resource called the teacher on whom so much depends … if we fail to cherish – and challenge – the human heart that is the source of good teaching.” The voices of teachers invite further investigation into the relationship of public education to the development of an engaged citizenry and civic leadership and of the teaching profession’s contribution to the social contract.

Support for Federation Members

Engaging teachers in opportunities that provide a forum in which to share experiences and, more importantly, generate solutions to challenging issues is a key recommendation of this report. As highlighted throughout this study, teachers feel a significant disconnect between the policies produced by government for teachers as opposed to with teachers. It is imperative to explore how these gaps in trust and communication can be bridged and how teachers can be empowered and supported in their efforts to effectively work with children and youth in Saskatchewan schools.
As a start, the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation may wish to consider the creation of teacher focus groups across the province that would work to build on the insights gained from this study. The groups could be focused around key findings and help to extrapolate a more in-depth understanding of the issues raised. Through this process, teachers would have an opportunity not only to further expose and dissect issues such as demands on and intensification of time and job satisfaction, but they would also have an opportunity to explore options for improvements. This option would facilitate collegial support among teachers – another desire expressed in the findings of this study. Many teachers in this research process commented that their own experiences of teaching were somehow unique. Such comments imply a sense of isolation. However, the data confirms that they are not alone, and in fact, their experiences are in common with their colleagues across the province who participated in this study.

The Federation has the ability to increase morale and decrease isolation, giving members a means to play an active role in pursuing change. To this end, well-organized structures already exist to enhance this capacity. The Federation provides online communities, with discussion forums, that allow members to converse on various topics, and a blog, ThisIsTheClassroom.ca, which is intended to assist teachers in educating the public on issues relating to publicly funded education. A facilitated online focus group on topics raised in this study might help build on teachers’ desire to collaborate and support one another across schools and jurisdictions. More significantly, related professional development activities, already strongly supported by the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit as well as the unique action research activities supported by the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for Research Into Teaching, might find common ground in the themes raised in this study.

**Engaging the Educational Partners**

The authors of this report believe that the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation has played and must continue to play a critical role in reaching out and maintaining a dialogue with the many educational partners in Saskatchewan, particularly the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents and the Ministry of Education. Unique in the history of education in Canada, public education in Saskatchewan has been built on a respectful and co-operative approach to problem solving among these educational partners that remains part of our distinct identity as a province. On behalf of the teachers and students of this province, it is incumbent upon the Federation to continue to call for a healthy climate of respect and open communication with educational partners. Such open communication shows respect for the professional status of teachers and concern for the well-being and achievement of the children they teach.

Respondents highlighted the need for further engagement with school boards and their administrators, and the Ministry of Education. To this end, it is recommended that this study be sent to the educational partners in this province with an invitation to engage in a discussion of the issues raised and to explore options for future communication between teachers, school divisions and government. This level of engagement is envisaged not only in meaningful policy development and implementation, but also in improving the levels of trust, communication and inclusion strongly desired by Saskatchewan teachers. Specifically, it is recommended that the Federation review opportunities, such as provincial and local bargaining, for its members and educational partners to be engaged in solving problems created by the intensification of teachers’ time and its implications for teacher autonomy, teacher professionalism and student learning.

This study has provided a forum in which to begin sharing, exploring and demonstrating teachers’ daily challenges and successes. Although much was revealed, it is clear that teachers are seeking to be heard and to be acknowledged as they work towards providing supportive and effective teaching and learning environments for all their students. It is the hope of the researchers involved in this study that participation in this inquiry may act as a catalyst for additional dialogue and sharing in the future. The Federation cannot do this alone. It must call on the
goodwill and reciprocal respect of the other educational partners in this province. The history of public education demands no less than a respectful and reciprocal engagement beyond surveys and mere consultations. Stakeholders need to work together to envisage the future and ensure the well-being and success of every Saskatchewan child.

1 Ronald R. Martin, Rod Dolmage and Donald Sharpe, Seeking Wellness: Descriptive Findings from the Survey of the Work Life and Health of Teachers in Regina and Saskatoon (Regina: University of Regina, 2012), 3-5.
2 Ibid., 4.
4 Martin, Dolmage and Sharpe, Seeking Wellness, 19.
5 Manitoba Teachers’ Society, Teacher’s Workload: MTS Taskforce on Teacher Workload Final Report (Winnipeg: Manitoba Teachers’ Society, 2010), 6-7.
6 Charlie Naylor, Teacher Workload and Stress: An International Perspective on Human Costs and Systemic Failure (Vancouver: British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, 2001), 8.
11 Martin, Dolmage and Sharpe, Seeking Wellness, 27.
14 Duxbury and Higgins, “Revisiting Work-Life.”
19 Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, Teacher Professionalism: A Public Trust (Saskatoon: Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2011), 1.
20 Day and Gu, The New Lives of Teachers, 10.
21 Naylor and White, Worklife of BC Teachers, Executive Summary, v.
22 Ibid., ii.
Overall, there were relatively few differences reported in the experiences of urban, rural and northern respondents. For the analysis of responses by geographic work location, respondents who reported working in multiple geographic locations were excluded. Highlights from the observed similarities and differences are included below.

1. Characteristics Summary
   • On average, northern respondents were younger with fewer years of teaching experience than urban or rural respondents.

2. Professional Development Summary
   • Northern respondents reported participating in less frequent professional development than urban or rural respondents. Urban and rural respondents cited lack of time as a frequent limitation to professional development, whereas northern respondents cited lack of employer supports as the primary barrier.

3. Workload Summary
   • Respondents were consistent in their reports of why workloads increased in the past five years, with the exception that northern respondents reported fluctuations in resource levels as affecting workload more often than urban or rural respondents. The average breakdown of work hours across activities was approximately equal across regions.
   • Northern respondents reported spending more time working away from regular school hours than urban or rural respondents.
   • Northern respondents generally perceived no change in professional autonomy in the past five years, whereas urban and rural respondents reported a decrease in autonomy.

4. Satisfaction With Time and Work Summary
   • Respondents were relatively consistent across regions in their perceptions of the reasonableness of time spent on particular activities. However, northern respondents were less satisfied than urban or rural respondents in the amount of time spent on assigned supervision duty, class preparation, and preparing, writing and reporting with parents.
   • Urban respondents were most satisfied with administrative efforts to manage workloads. Northern respondents were least satisfied with administrative effort.
   • Relative to urban and northern respondents, rural respondents reported lower levels of satisfaction with time spent on extracurricular activities and time to plan and collaborate with colleagues.
   • Rural respondents reported more dissatisfaction with work-life balance and related issues than urban or northern respondents.

5. Appreciation Summary
   • Respondents from all regions reported moderate levels of appreciation, except by government and media. Of all regions, northern respondents reporting feeling least supported or appreciated by colleagues.

6. Stress Summary
   • Reported stress levels were consistent across regions. When asked if "your workload causes you stress," responses ranged primarily from "strongly agree" and "moderately agree" to "slightly agree."
7. **Job Satisfaction Summary**

- Across all geographic locations, approximately 75 per cent of respondents indicated some level of overall job satisfaction (slight, moderate or strong). Respondents were quite consistent across regions in their reporting of factors that contributed to job satisfaction.

- Northern teachers reported a slightly higher focus on external benefits of the job (job security, benefits, holidays) than did urban or rural respondents.

- Northern respondents reported that difficult relations (student behaviours, collegial relations and unsupportive administration) were more significant contributors to job dissatisfaction than did urban or rural teachers.

- Urban and rural respondents were more likely to report dissatisfaction with workload than were northern respondents.
Appendix B
Special Education Teachers Response

For this portion of the inquiry, the experiences of teachers whose assignment is exclusively in special education (N = 68) are compared to teachers who do not have direct special education responsibilities outside of the accommodation of student needs in their classrooms (N = 828). Respondents who reported teaching a combination of special education and other assignments are excluded from this analysis.

A. Work Time

Average work hours per week spent.

Average percentage breakdown of time per week (note that percentages may sum up to more than 100).
Do you feel that your time at work is well spent?

**Special Education Only**

- 90% – Yes
- 10% – No

**Non-Special Education Only**

- 85% – Yes
- 15% – No

Percentage amount of time spent on each activity is reasonable.
In the past five years, the time spent on work-related activities has:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Increased</th>
<th>Decreased</th>
<th>Stayed the Same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Only</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Special Education</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Why was there a change in workload (%)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of “Yes” Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changes in work flow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in educational initiatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in resource levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Only</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Special Education</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Only</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Special Education</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Only</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Special Education</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of “Yes” Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Special Education Only</th>
<th>Non-Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are school administrators working to make workload reasonable?</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is time spent on extracurricular activities reasonable?</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you satisfied with the amount of time to collaborate and plan with colleagues?</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you satisfied with your overall quality of work life?</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work Time Summary

- Special education teachers reported spending more time with parents and in role-related meetings, whereas non-special education teachers reported spending relatively more time on administration, assessment and evaluation.
- Special education teachers were more likely than non-special education teachers to report an increase in workload over the past five years. Changes in work flow and educational initiatives were cited as larger contributors to increases in workload for special education than non-special education teachers.
- Special education teachers were more satisfied with time spent on extracurricular activities and overall quality of work life than were non-special education teachers. However, overall levels of satisfaction were modest.

B. Personal Time and Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of “Yes” Responses</th>
<th>Special Education Only</th>
<th>Non-Special Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel in control of personal time?</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has your job caused one or more relationships to suffer?</td>
<td>65.0%</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel pressure to spend more time with family/friends?</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>68.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you satisfied with your ability to balance work and personal life?</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>42.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal Time and Relationships Summary

- Special education and non-special education teachers reported similar pressure to spend time with family and friends.
- Special education teachers were more likely than non-special education teachers to feel in control of their personal time and to be satisfied with work-life balance. However, special education teachers also reported that their job has caused relationships to suffer.
C. Appreciation/Stress/Support

Do you feel that you have adequate support in your job?

Do you feel appreciated for your time by students?
Do you feel appreciated for your time by colleagues?

Does your workload causes you stress?

Appreciation/Stress/Support Summary

- Special education teachers reported feeling more appreciated by students and less appreciated by colleagues than non-special education teachers.
- Similar levels of stress were reported for all respondents. When asked if “your workload causes you stress,” responses ranged primarily from “strongly agree” and “moderately agree” to “slightly agree.”
D. Job Satisfaction

Rate your job satisfaction.

What aspects of your job contribute to job satisfaction? (Check up to 5)

- Small class size
- Supportive administration
- Extracurricular involvement
- Job freedom and flexibility
- Professional autonomy
- Supportive parents or families
- Job security
- Benefits
- Holidays
- Validation
- Job variety
- Professional learning opportunities
- Collegial interactions
- Passion for teaching
- Being a role model
- Connecting with students
- Making a difference
- Student success

Percentage

Very dissatisfied
Moderately dissatisfied
Slightly dissatisfied
Slightly satisfied
Moderately satisfied
Strongly satisfied

Non-Special Education
Special Education Only
What aspects of your job contribute to job dissatisfaction? (Check up to 5)

When asked for open-ended responses related to job satisfaction, respondents who exclusively taught special education provided these top five responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job satisfaction?</th>
<th>Job dissatisfaction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Student success</td>
<td>1. Excessive workload and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Connecting with students</td>
<td>2. Difficult parents/students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Making a difference</td>
<td>3. Unsupportive administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Job variety</td>
<td>4. Lack of recognition/appreciation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Passion for teaching</td>
<td>5. Lack of time to complete work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage:

```
Lack of passion for teaching
Unrealistic expectations
Extracurricular involvement
Lack of personal time
Lack of time to complete work
Class size
Difficult parents or families
Lack of professional autonomy
Job inflexibility
Lack of recognition
Excessive workload
Repetitiveness of work
Inadequate opportunity for professional learning
Inadequate benefits
Job security
Difficult collegial relations
Unsupportive administration staff
Poor work relations
Feeling impotent
Student behaviours
Student failure
```
Job Satisfaction Summary

• Among the factors that contributed to job satisfaction, special education teachers reported a greater role of supportive administration, parents or families, student success, making a difference and job variety. Non-special education teachers were more likely to cite passion for teaching and connecting with students as factors in job satisfaction.

• Lack of time to complete work, lack of recognition, unsupportive administration and difficult collegial relations were more likely to be cited by special education than non-special education teachers as factors contributing to job dissatisfaction. Student behaviours and student failure were more likely to be cited by non-special education than special education teachers as contributing to job dissatisfaction.
Appendix C

STF Teacher Time Survey Questions

Identification/Demographics

1. How did you first hear about this survey?
   (a) Letter of invitation
   (b) T.mail
   (c) Other (please indicate)

2. Identify the geographical region in which you work. Check all that apply.
   (Rural)
   (Urban)
   (Northern)

3. Identify the geographical region in which you live. Check all that apply.
   (Rural)
   (Urban)
   (Northern)

4. How many teachers are employed in your school?

5. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

6. What is your age?

7. What is your gender?

8. How many dependants do you have living in your home?

9. How many dependants do you have living out of your home?

10. Indicate your percentage of employment as a teacher.

11. Do you desire:
    (a) A higher percentage of employment?
    (b) A lower percentage of employment?
    (c) The same percentage of employment?

12. Are there any factors which currently limit your percentage of employment? Check all that apply.
    (Check all that apply)
    (Personal preference)
    (Health)
    (Other employment)
    (Difficulty coping with workload)
    (Other (please list and describe))

13. What do you teach? Check all that apply.
    (Check all that apply)
    (Prekindergarten)
    (Elementary)
    (Middle years)
    (Secondary levels)

14. What best describes your current assignment? Check all that apply.
    (Check all that apply)
    (Principal)
    (Vice-principal)
    (Classroom teacher)
    (Special education teacher)
    (Consultant or coach)
    (Coordinator)
    (Speech and language pathologist)
    (Educational psychologist)
    (Counsellor)
    (EAL teacher)
    (Other (please list and describe))

15. How many split-grade or multi-grade classes do you teach?
    (Check all that apply)
    (0)
    (1)
    (2)
    (3)
    (4)
    (5)
    (more than 5)

16. Which of the following services does your school provide to the community? Check all that apply.
    (Check all that apply)
    (Health services)
    (Nutrition programs)
    (Justice supports)
    (Child care)
    (Other (please list and describe))
17. In your view, your school serves a socio-economic environment which is considered:
   - Low
   - Middle
   - High
   - Mixed

18. Which of the following elected office(s) within the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation do you hold? Check all that apply.
   - School staff liaison
   - LINC member
   - Local association official
   - Member of a board or committee
   - Councillor
   - N/A
   - Other (please list and describe)

Time-Specific Questions

1. On average, how many hours per week do you spend on activities related to your job?

2. Break down your time according to the percentage spent on the following activities (must sum to 100%):
   - Instruction
   - Preparation for instruction
   - Assessment and evaluation
   - Administrative duties
   - Supervision and/or co-ordination of other staff
   - Supervision of students: recess, bus, before school, after school
   - Professional development
   - Role-related meetings
   - Contact or meetings with parents
   - Extracurricular
   - Noon-hour supervision
   - Fundraising
   - STF-related activities/duties
   - Other (list and describe)

3. How many hours per week, on average, do you spend working during the following time periods?
   - Recess and lunch break
   - Before and after school, including evenings
   - Weekends

4. How many hours do you spend per year on reporting on assessment and evaluation (i.e., not the actual assessment and evaluation)?

5. How many minutes of preparation do you receive per week (or equivalent)?

6. How frequently do you engage in employer-directed professional development?
   - Never
   - Once every 5 years
   - Once every 2-3 years
   - Once per year
   - More than once per year

7. How frequently do you engage in teacher-directed professional development?
   - Never
   - Once every 5 years
   - Once every 2-3 years
   - Once per year
   - More than once per year

8. What is the most significant factor limiting your participation in professional development? Select one.
   - Lack of interest
   - Lack of time
   - Personal availability
   - Availability of professional development offerings
   - Too few options
   - Professional responsibilities
   - Lack of employer supports (financial supports or release time)
   - N/A
   - Other (please list and describe)

9. Has the frequency of your teacher-directed professional development increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past 5 years?
10. In the past 5 years, has the time you spend on work-related activities increased, decreased, or stayed the same?

If you answered “increased” or “decreased,” please indicate why this change has occurred. *Check all that apply.*

- Changes in workload
- Changes in educational initiatives
- Changes in resource levels
- Other (please list and describe)

11. How many hours on a weekly average do you spend on time commitments which are not work-related?

12. During summer holidays, on average, how many total hours do you spend on work-related activities?

Of those hours, how many hours were spent on professional development?

**Teacher Well-Being Questions**

1. Rate your job satisfaction

   Very dissatisfied → Very satisfied

   (a) What aspects of your job contribute to job satisfaction? *Check up to 5.*

   - Student success
   - Making a difference
   - Connecting with students
   - Being a role model
   - Passion for teaching
   - Collegial interactions
   - Professional learning opportunities
   - Job variety
   - Validation
   - Holidays
   - Benefits
   - Job security
   - Supportive parents/families
   - Professional autonomy
   - Job flexibility
   - Extracurricular involvement
   - Supportive administration
   - Small class size
   - Other (please describe)

   (b) What single aspect of your job contributes most to job satisfaction?

   (c) What aspects of your job contribute to dissatisfaction? *Check up to 5.*

   - Student failure
   - Student behaviours
   - Feeling impotent
   - Unsupportive administration
   - Difficult collegial relationships
   - Job insecurity
   - Inadequate benefits
   - Inadequate opportunities for professional learning
   - Repeetitiveness of work
   - Excessive workload
   - Lack of recognition
   - Job inflexibility
   - Lack of professional autonomy
   - Difficult parents/families
   - Class size, lack of time to complete work, lack of personal time
   - Extracurricular involvement
   - Unrealistic or challenging expectations
   - Lack of passion for teaching
   - Other (please describe)

   (d) What single aspect of your job contributes most to dissatisfaction?

2. Please list any descriptors which apply to how you perceive your work time.

3. In the past 5 years, do you feel that your professional autonomy has:

   - Decreased significantly
   - Decreased slightly
   - Remained the same
   - Increased slightly
   - Increased significantly

4. Do you feel in control of your personal time?

   - Yes  ☐  No  ☐

   Description or comments:

5. Has your job caused one or more of your relationships to suffer?

   - Yes  ☐  No  ☐

   If yes, in what ways has this occurred?
6. Do you feel pressure to do more at work, or spend more time on work-related activities?  
   ☐ Yes ☐ No  
   If yes, please indicate the source of that pressure.

7. Do you feel pressure to spend more time with family and/or friends?  
   ☐ Yes ☐ No  
   If yes, please indicate the source of that pressure.

8. Do you feel you have adequate support in your job from:
   (a) Administrators ☐ Yes ☐ No  
       (b) STF ☐ Yes ☐ No  
       (c) Colleagues ☐ Yes ☐ No  
       (d) Family ☐ Yes ☐ No  
       (e) Friends ☐ Yes ☐ No

   Strongly disagree → Strongly agree  
   If you agreed, what could be done to ease this stress?
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