

Preserving the Learning Environment: Leadership for Time

Preserving the Learning Environment: Leadership for Time

Lawrence Leonard

ABSTRACT: Concerns about effective use of school instructional time have been evident for many years. The more stringent demands of the newer accountability mechanisms have obligated educators to renew efforts to optimize the teaching and learning process. This study addressed the nature and extent of classroom instructional time erosion by external intrusion. More than 200 principals and assistant principals in 149 schools and 12 Louisiana school districts participated in a self-administered survey. The results indicate that encroachment upon instructional time remains problematic in many schools and that the leadership to adequately address the circumstance may be lacking.

The expectations of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2001) and consequent directives from state education agencies have created an intensifying demand for schools to better utilize instructional time. Educators at all levels of the public education enterprise are being held increasingly accountable for student performance, especially on high-stakes, standardized examinations. Yet, ironically, this circumstance may be serving to further increase pressure on allocated time as schools and teachers are obligated to address the additional state and district guidelines. Nonetheless, the circumstance has reinvigorated the decades-old debate about instructional time usage and whether variations in 'time-on-task' significantly impact student learning.

Generally speaking, there is wide consensus that academic time expenditures are extremely important, but there is also the recognition that other mitigating factors are important – such as the quality of instructional strategies and the nature of student learning engagement (Metzker, 2003; Aronson, Zimmerman & Carlos, 1999; Carroll, 1963). Even so, there are persistent indicators that many schools are failing to take appropriate steps to consistently protect the teaching and learning environment from external interferences. Notwithstanding the attention given to this matter in the research literature and in exigent formalized policies, there is cogent evidence that classroom instructional time in many schools remains routinely assailable and, consequently, is subject to continual erosion. Recent empirical studies – including one addressed in depth here and undertaken from the perspectives of more than 200 site-based administrators in a dozen north Louisiana school systems – as well as a number of other anecdotal indicators, signify that the problem continues to defy resolution.

Instructional Time Use

Published concerns about the erosion of class instructional time in publicly-funded school systems is not a recent phenomenon. More than 80 years ago, noted American psychologist and educational innovator Sidney Pressey bemoaned what he perceived to be the wasteful consumption of instructional time at his daughter's elementary school. Half a century later, David Gilman replicated Pressey's school visitation by accompanying his own daughter to school (Gilman, 1973). Like Pressey, Gilman found that the school day was characterized by organizational inefficiencies and administrator and teacher mismanagement. Ten years later, the seminal report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE, 1983) criticized the deteriorating condition of American public education. *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* appealed to educators at all levels to make more effective use of the school day by expending more time on the actual teaching and learning process. Other studies of the period supported the supposition of instructional time wastage (i.e., Boyer, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Gilman & Knoll, 1984). A decade afterward, in its treatise entitled *Prisoners of Time*, the National Education and Commission on Time and Learning (NECTL, 1994) charged that inadequate attention was being given to how school time was expended and that the "misuse of time" was having deleterious effects on student opportunities to learn; it called for a "transformation in attitudes" about academic time use (p.9-10). The Commission concluded that "reclaiming the academic day" by implementing better policies and practices would almost double the amount of core curriculum instructional time (p. 32).

In an attempt to establish the extent of instructional time wastage, a number of research reports calculated that large portions of the school day were expended on such organizational and managerial events and activities as between-class transitions, lunch periods, and non-curricular transactions such as student clubs and athletic assemblies. In each case, it was determined that more than half of a typical school day was consumed by non-instructional matters (Boyer, 1983; Rossmiller, 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Gilman & Knoll, 1984; Walberg, Niemiec, & Frederick, 1994; NECTL, 1994; Good & Brophy, 1997). Furthermore, several studies determined that actual student engagement in learning tasks was further diminished as teachers addressed school administrative and classroom management matters (Meehan, Cowley, Schumacher, Hauser, & Croom, 2003; Metzker, 2003; Aronson, Zimmerman, & Carlos, 1999). In fact, Metzker concluded that as much as 23% of in-class time was spent on non-instructional activities.

The problem of non-productive use of class instructional time has not been limited to American schools. For instance, a study commissioned by a provincial government in eastern Canada determined that 28% of instructional time was lost to various forms of unplanned interruptions (Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat, 1995). Another Canadian study found there were regular and extensive encroachments upon time allocated for instructional purposes (Leonard, 1999). In Great Britain, Varley and Busher (1989) developed categories of intrusions they found in British schools. The continuum ranged from those being totally unavoidable (e.g., student illness, building structural damage), to unavoidable and outside the teacher's control (e.g., maintenance work, medical appointments), avoidable interruptions (e.g., unscheduled parental visits; student messages), and planned interruptions (visiting presenters, parent helpers). Varley and Busher determined that there were fewer interruptions in schools which had adopted and enforced policies prohibiting them. A similar conclusion was reached by Stringfield and Teddlie (1991) in the U.S. in that better performing schools were found to be headed by principals who enforced policies that protected teachers' and students' classroom time. It is the nature and impact of unplanned intrusions into classroom operations which this report is primarily concerned.

External Interruptions

There is considerable empirical research and anecdotal evidence that the erosion of class instructional time has been and remains to be a concern for many teachers and administrators. Commonly identified sources of external classroom interruptions include unscheduled visitations by other teachers, students, and parents; public address system announcements; telephone calls, outside noises, student call-outs, and fire drills (France, 2005; Leonard, 1999/ 2001; Stringfield & Teddlie, 1991). Hong (2001) charged that "classroom teachers are less and less in control of their students' time" (p. 712) and that "too many intrusions" impedes teaching and learning (p. 714). In his role as an educational consultant and student teacher supervisor, Elovitz (2002) expressed amazement at how often he has witnessed instruction interrupted by public address announcements, student pull-outs, and classroom visitors. He provided the following example:

Early last year, I watched as a student teacher's middle school science class was interrupted six times during a single lesson. Three of the interruptions were public address announcements; another was caused by a music teacher who summoned two students and stood there as they packed up, marched to the front of the room, and out the door. The next interruption was from a staff member who just had to tell the cooperating teacher something from the doorway. The final interruption was the return of the young musicians. How are the teachers and students to remain focused with all of these distractions (pp. 57-58)?

More recently, in a study of classroom interruptions at a Tennessee elementary school, France (2005) found that a majority of the teachers and students were disturbed by regular intrusions and that learning was interrupted. France also determined that most participating teachers felt interruptions caused students to become off-task and that greater effort was needed to decrease their frequency.

The extent and nature of external intrusions was evidenced in an earlier empirical study involving a dozen schools in three Saskatchewan, Canada school districts. Leonard (1999) determined that outside interruptions occurred, on average, every 25 minutes, that is, 12 times per day, or more than 2 thousand times per academic year and that a majority of teachers considered the circumstance to be a serious problem. A subsequent study undertaken by Leonard (2003) in Louisiana schools found that many teachers there were also frustrated by significant amounts of instructional time lost to external interference. One high school teacher expressed his concerns this way:

The momentum is lost! Modification of lessons becomes necessary – often resulting in a less effective lesson. Students often interpret any interruption as a signal class is over (p. 22).

The issue of classroom interruptions is evident in Internet discussion forums or weblogs, more commonly known as

blogs. One blog hosted by ProTeacher Community includes a number of recent postings by teachers expressing concern and frustration with circumstances at their schools. One teacher wrote:

My classes are interrupted continuously throughout the day by the office calling my room via the intercom, by other students sent as messengers, by other teachers, etc. And most of the time it is something that could wait until the end of class time or until the end of the day. I understand that announcements need to be made from time to time and other types of business needs to be taken care of, but for goodness sakes, LET ME TEACH!! There have been times when a single class has been interrupted up to ten times (*ProTeacher Community*, 2006).

A contributor to another online blog reported on action research he had personally conducted and determined that his English class was interrupted approximately 1,600 times during the 2005-2006 school year (Mike, *ruminatingdude.blog*, 2006). The study reported here provides additional evidence from educators, this time school-based administrators, that schools are continuing to grapple with the enduring problem of instructional time erosion perpetrated by outside intrusions.

Method

The essential focus of this research was the nature and extent of externally imposed classroom interruptions in North Louisiana schools from the perspectives of school-based administrators. Using insights gained in earlier research conducted in the United States (Leonard, 2003) and Canada (Leonard, 2001, 1999) and dealing with teacher perceptions of classroom interruptions, the researcher developed a survey questionnaire to be self-administered by principals and assistant principals in a dozen public school districts. Following receipt of permission to proceed from the 12 district superintendents, questionnaire packets were distributed to school site administrators at all public schools in the designated region. The packets contained a cover letter outlining the purpose of the study, a postage-paid return envelope, and the survey instrument with completion instructions.

The survey consisted of 13 questions of various response formats. Six of the questions addressed demographic information, 4 questions featured scaled responses, 2 were open-ended questions, one was of the dichotomous 'yes' or 'no' response format and another of checklist selection format. Each copy of the instrument was coded for identification purposes and a reminder letter was mailed to those invited participants who had not returned the survey within a period of two weeks. The principal of each of the 251 schools in the dozen districts was mailed a survey questionnaire packet; additionally, assistant principal surveys were sent to those 155 schools having at least one designated assistant principal.

Results

The combined completed administrator survey return rate was 214 of 406 (52.7%) with respondents being spread over 149 of the 251 (59.4%) invited schools. A plurality of participating schools (49%) was at the primary/elementary level, 14% were of junior high/middle school configuration, 13% were junior high-senior high combination while another 13% were high schools; the remaining 12% were all-grade (PK-12) configurations*. Student enrollment frequencies ranged from 300 to 600 (49%) to more than 1200 (4%) with slightly more than one-half (51%) of the total being situated in rural communities, 29% in urban neighborhoods, and 20% in suburban communities. Administrator experience ranged from less than 3 years (26%) to 3 to 10 years (49%) to more than 20 years (6%). Overall, principal gender was evenly split while two-thirds of assistant principals were female. Table 1 summarizes participant demographic data.

Table 1: Summary characteristics of participating schools, communities, and administrators as reported by respondents (N=214).*

School Type	Primary/ Jr. High	Middle/	High School High Sch	Junior/	All-Grade
(%)	48.8	14.0	12.6	13.1	11.7
Community Type	Rural	Urban	Suburban		
(%)	50.9	29.0	20.1		

Enrollment Size (%)	<300	300-600	601-900	> 901-1200
Administrator Experience (%)	< 3 yrs.	3-10 yrs.	11-20 yrs.	>20 yrs.
	18.3	49.3	23.0	9.6
	26.2	48.6	19.2	6.1

* Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Notwithstanding what may be considered to be overall moderate trepidation with instructional time erosion, there was, nonetheless, a comparatively strong indication that the administrators deemed externally-imposed classroom interruptions to be a pervasive factor within their schools. For participant clarification purposes, the survey instrument provided such examples of externally originating interruptions as being “the school intercom, other teachers or students, visitors, noise, etc.” The questionnaire also contained a more extensive checklist of potential “major sources of external interruptions.” Only 22% of the school administrator respondents indicated that they were ‘not at all’ concerned about instruction time wastage in their schools. The remaining 78 percent reported varying degrees of concern ranging from ‘somewhat’ (68.9%) to ‘considerable’ (8.1%) to ‘major’ (1.0%).

As Table 2 demonstrates, less than 2% of the study’s 214 participants reported that classes did not experience daily external interruptions. Slightly more than half (52.4%) estimated that their classroom’s were interrupted from the outside once or twice daily. Another one-third (32.7%) calculated the frequency of daily interruptions to range from 3 to 4 times, while 8.2% and 4.3% made estimates that in the vicinity of 5 to 6 and 7 to 8 times, respectively. However, and as will be discussed further later, when considered by school type and size, there was considerable variation in the participants reported perceptions.

Table 2: Estimated daily external interruptions by school type and size (N=214).

Est. daily interruptions	% Reporting by School Type*					% Reprting by School Size*				
	P/E	MS/JH	JH/HS	HS	K-12	<300	300-600	601-900	>900	Schools Combined*
Not at all	2.1	0.0	7.1	0.0	0.0	5.1	2.0	0.0	0.0	1.8
1-2	48.5	53.1	55.2	59.0	58.3	53.8	52.0	47.2	66.7	52.4
3-4	33.7	34.4	31.0	27.3	33.3	28.2	30.6	43.4	22.2	32.7
5-6	11.9	9.4	0.0	4.5	4.2	8.0	10.2	3.8	1.1	8.2
7-8	4.0	3.1	3.4	9.1	4.2	5.1	4.1	5.7	0.0	4.3
Other	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.5

* Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

In addition to externally imposed interruption frequencies, there was also considerable variation in the identified sources of those learning environment intrusions, both in terms of school type and school size. Named by 64.5% of the respondents, the ‘intercom’ was the most commonly identified ‘major source’ of instructional intrusion. At 37.0% and 32.5%, respectively, ‘other students’ and ‘other teachers/aids’ were the second and third most frequently cited origins of interruptions, overall. Other major sources in decreasing order of rank were ‘noise’ (15%), ‘telephones’ (14.5%), ‘parent/visitors’ (14.0%), ‘administrators’ (14.0%), and ‘other sources’ (8.5%). However, as with the estimated interruption frequencies, and as Table 3 demonstrates, there was also considerable variation in interruption sources by school type and size.

Table 3: Identified sources of external interruptions by school type and size (N=200)*.

Sources of interruptions	% Reporting by School Type*					% Reporting by School Size*				
	P/E	MS/JH	JH/HS	HS	K-12	<300	300-600	601-900	>900	Combined*
Intercom system	60.2	53.1	69.2	82.6	60.9	54.1	65.6	60.4	82.4	64.5
Other Students	30.6	26.7	57.7	30.4	65.2	51.4	32.3	49.1	23.5	37.0
Teachers/aides	37.8	30.0	19.2	21.7	26.1	29.7	25.8	47.2	23.5	32.5
Noise	15.3	13.3	19.2	13.0	13.0	16.2	16.1	13.2	11.8	15.0
Telephones	32.7	20.0	15.4	13.0	8.7	18.9	7.5	26.4	5.9	14.5
Parents/visitors	22.4	3.3	15.4	0.0	4.3	18.9	12.9	15.1	5.9	14.0
Administrators	9.2	16.7	23.1	17.4	8.7	10.8	12.9	20.8	11.8	14.0
Other Sources	8.2	13.3	3.8	8.7	8.7	2.7	12.9	3.8	5.8	8.5

* Fourteen of the 214 participants chose not to indicate sources of external interruptions (214-14 = 200).

For instance, high school administrators (82.6%) and those located in the largest schools (82.4%) were considerably more likely to name the 'intercom' as a major source of instructional intrusion while those in middle/junior high schools (53.1%) and the smallest schools (54.1%) were less likely to do so. 'Other students' were considered to be more problematic in K-12 schools (65.2%) and smaller schools (<300, 51.4%) than they were in middle/junior high schools (26.7%) and high schools (30.4%). Almost half (47.2%) of mid-sized (300 to 600 students) school administrators and 37.8% of 'primary/elementary' respondents identified 'other teachers/aides' as sources of interruptions. 'Telephones' (32.4%) and 'parent/visitors' (22.4%) were considered to be the greatest distraction in primary/elementary schools while 'administrators' was reported by almost one-fourth (23.1%) and 'noise' by almost one-fifth (19.2%) of junior high/high school respondents. Other sources (8.5%, overall) of externally imposed interruptions included students being called out of class for such things as pull-out programs, athletics, and club meetings, as well as student receipts of messages from parents and the arrival of itinerant teachers.

Principal and assistant principal responses to two open-ended questions provided pointed insights into policies and procedures that many of the schools have taken to reduce the number of external interruptions as well as to the extent that the various measures had succeeded. The most commonly cited action was in the form of planned reductions in the number of times that the school intercom system was to be used. Many administrators reported that announcements had been limited to specific times of the day, most notably in the early morning and late afternoon. This rural middle school principal explained the process at her school:

Announcements are placed on the absentee report and sent early in the morning...All announcements that are a must are done together in the morning and evening.

Numerous respondents also noted that school secretaries had been encouraged not to transfer incoming phone calls to classrooms unless it was warranted by a special circumstance or emergency. Several reported the use of e-mails to communicate with teachers on a regular basis and, thereby, reducing the number of calls via the intercom and classroom phones.

Other efforts to reduce outside interference included limiting the number of students permitted to leave class and encouraging teachers to "visit" each other during breaks or common planning periods. Furthermore, many respondents wrote of measures taken to reduce unscheduled classroom visitations by parents and other outside visitors. This primary/elementary principal saw it all as a part of an overall attempt to bring enhanced orderliness to her school:

Since I arrived in January 2004 structure and routines have been established school wide. Teachers are expected to be prepared each day and visitors can no longer just go to classrooms. Our environment is orderly.

A few respondents explained that school administrators and faculty had recognized the need for greater control over activities that impeded learning or encroached on instructional time. One middle school assistant principal reported

that faculty at his school had been asked to document “the different types of interruptions” in order to make them aware of “the time we were wasting.” The desire to reduce multiple sources of instructional time erosion was reflected in a number of comments, including this one made by a K-12 school administrator:

Parents have been contacted – and are monitored to keep the halls clear in the afternoons and teachers are to turn them away without a pass. Staff members are to turn in announcements first thing or they will not be announced until just prior to the last bell. Also, messages are taken and placed in teacher or bus driver boxes rather than delivering messages via the intercom. Key personnel have radios to deliver messages, etc. if needed.

The second of the two constructed-response survey questions asked the school administrators to assess the degree of success that had been achieved as a result of attempts to reduce the number of externally imposed classroom interruptions in their schools. Many reported that the problem – if not eliminated – had been significantly diminished. They used phrases and terms such as “great improvement,” “very successful,” “considerable,” and “they are working.” This primary/elementary principal reported “tremendous success.”

Custodians, paraprofessionals, and teachers have responded positively to the changes. Classes are monitored in order to improve the instructional program. The most resistance came from parents who were allowed to come and go as they wished. Now that is no longer the case.

Many others, however, were somewhat less enthusiastic, or cautioned that time was needed to determine the extent to which the new measures would result in improved circumstances. Examples of terminologies used are “moderately successful,” “somewhat successful,” “still under evaluation,” and “It’s a start!” Others noted that there had been initial improvements but old patterns of behavior had begun to resurface. As this K-12 assistant principal put it, the new expectations tend to be “effective for a brief time; but then return to the same level as before unless constantly monitored and enforced by the administration.” These sentiments seemed to be reflected in those expressed by another administrator in that initially things were “very good,” but “as time progressed we moved closer to where we started.”

There were others, though, who seemed to be even less confident about the eventual outcome of newly adopted measures to reduce classroom interruptions. This K-12 principal who had indicated a “major” concern with the amount of instructional time wastage at his school noted that things now seemed to be “OK” but added “there will always be interruptions!” Other comments about a lack of change ranged from there remained “room for improvement” to “we still have intercom interruptions” to “almost none,” while another tersely exclaimed: “Not at all!” One secondary school assistant principal who had reported “considerable” concern about instructional time erosion conveyed exasperation as he wrote:

The nature of our high school reminds me of a ‘frog in a blender’; it’s a whirlwind! I am at a loss to Quell the Rising Tide of Bedlam!

Discussion and Conclusions

This study involving more than 200 site-based administrators in 12 Louisiana school districts – as well as the literature review and anecdotal material presented earlier – demonstrates that instructional time wastage that is directly attributable to encroachments from outside the classroom continues to be matter of concern. It also signifies that the problem may be more pronounced in certain schools than in others. For instance, primary/elementary administrators (15.3%) and high school administrators (13.6%) reported the highest frequencies of estimated daily interruptions (i.e., 5 to 6 and 7 to 8). This was at approximately four times the highest frequency rates of administrators in combined junior high/high schools (3.4%). In terms of school enrollment, only 9.5% of administrators in mid-sized schools (i.e., 601 to 900 students) reported estimated interruption rates at the highest frequencies. This compared favorably to smaller schools (<300 students, 13.1%; 300 to 600 students, 14.3%). Probably the most noteworthy consideration, however, is apparent when these estimated daily interruptions are tabulated on a weekly and yearly basis.

*In those schools where administrator perceived daily external interruptions were in the 3-to-4 range, the total number of weekly intrusions would range from 15 to 20 and yearly interruptions would range from 540 to 720**. In the schools where administrator considered daily external interruptions to be in the 5-to-6 range, the total number of weekly intrusions would range from 25 to 30 and yearly interruptions would range from 900 to 1,080. Furthermore, in the schools where administrator perceived daily external interruptions were in the 7-to-8 range, the total number of weekly intrusions would range from 35 to 40 and yearly interruptions would range from 1,260 to 1,440. Notwithstanding these rather alarming numbers, they, nonetheless, may be mitigated by the extent to which*

respondents are being forthright in their estimations. In any case, they compare somewhat favorably with teacher estimations made in earlier investigations (see Leonard, 1999, 2001)***.

Just as there has been recognition for many years that instructional time wastage is regularly occurring in many schools, so too have there been recommendations on how to ameliorate the problem. Suggested remedies include: exemplifying effective classroom management strategies (Metzker, 2003; Murphy, 1992; Lasley & Walker, 1986), to adopting more flexible time schedules and instructional practices (NECTL, 1994; Walberg et al. 1994; Huyvaert, Pasch, Starko, & Martin, 1993), to limiting the variety of activities and events provided (NECTL, 1994; Rossmiller, 1986) to limiting external classroom interruptions (Hong, 2001; Leonard, 1999; Lasley & Walker, 1986) to adopting and enforcing policies designed to protect instructional time (Murphy, 1992; Partin, 1987; Leonard, 2001; Stringer & Teddlie, 1991). Recommendations to deliberately guard against instructional time erosion directly relates to the primary thrust of the research reported here and, for that purpose, many jurisdictions have developed and adopted policies intended to reduce classroom intrusions (see Appendix A for policy examples). In most cases, the articulated school board policy recognizes the sanctity of the teaching and learning environment and places the onus squarely on the principal to ensure that it is enforced and outcomes monitored. It is to the matter of administrator leadership in curbing instructional time erosion that the discussion now moves.

The data presented clearly indicate that a number of school-based administrators have recognized that the teaching and learning process is subject to intrusion from outside sources and, that they have overseen the implementation of procedures to lessen their occurrence. They report varying degrees of success in that regard. Perhaps most alarming, however, are the data collected during this study that signify that many administrators do not perceive that the problem even exists. Only 21% of the 214 respondents indicated that they considered instructional time wastage to be a "considerable" or "major problem" and less than 10% considered externally imposed classroom interruptions in a similar manner. Furthermore, approximately two-thirds of all respondents consider time wastage (64%) and instructional intrusions (68.9%) to be only "somewhat" of a problem. While there are undoubtedly cases where instructional time wastage has indeed been limited by conscientious planning and effort, there have been repeated evidences provided over the years – and in the more recent research literature and anecdotal testimonies – that they may be the exception rather than the norm.

There is no doubt that there are school-based administrators who clearly recognize the subtle, but insidious, manner in which valuable instructional time can be squandered over the span of the school day. As this research has reflected, there are many who have taken appropriate actions and remain committed to protecting the sanctity of the teaching and learning process. It is just as obvious that others have not, and it is not an implausible inference to consider that their schools may not be taking full advantage of allocated instructional time. Of course, and as has been already noted, maintaining conditions that maximize instructional time availability does not necessarily mean that it will be utilized effectively; that circumstance falls within the realms of teacher professionalism, student ability and motivation, and instructional resources. What can be reasonably assumed, however, is that failure to sustain an educational environment where unencumbered instructional time is considered inviolate may well result in less than effective and efficient teaching and learning. This is particularly a concern with respect to the wide variations in student learning abilities and styles that are evident in most classrooms today. Making less than optimal use of allotted instructional time is likely to make meeting the demands of the heightened federal and state performance and accountability directives even more of a challenge. It may well be time for the kind of leadership that provides strong leadership for time.

Notes:

* Total exceeds 100% due to rounding.

** All yearly calculations based on a typical 180-day academic calendar.

***It is worthy of note that the earlier studies focused on the perceptions of classroom teachers and recorded classroom observations. It might be suggested that teachers situated in classrooms and actual recorded observations may provide more robust data than that of school-level administrators.

References

- Aronson, J., Zimmerman, J., & Carlos, L. (1999). Making time count. Policy brief. Available: www.WestEd.org/policy.
- Boyer, E. L. (1983). *High school: A report on secondary education in America*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Carroll, J. (1963). A model for school learning. *Teachers College Record*, 64, 723-733.
- Elovitz, L. (2002). Let's cut out all those classroom interruptions. *Principal*, 81(5), 57-58.

- France, R. (2005). Teacher perceptions of lost time due to classroom interruptions in an Upper East Tennessee K-8 school. Unpublished thesis, Tusculum College, TN.
- Gilman, D. (1973, Winter). One problem: Inefficiency is a big waste of time. *Junior and Middle School Bulletin*, 5.
- Gilman, D., & Knoll, S. (1984). Increasing instructional time. What are the priorities and how do they affect the alternatives? *NASSP Bulletin*, 68(470), 41-44.
- Good, T., & Brophy, J. (1997). *Looking in classrooms*. New York: Longman.
- Goodlad, J.I. (1984). *A place called school: Prospects for the future*. New York: MacGraw-Hill Book Co.
- Hong, L. (2001). Too many intrusions on instructional time. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(9), 712-714.
- Huyvaert, S., Pasch, M., Starko, A., & Martin, S. (1993). Time and learning: Some professional reflections. Department of Teacher Education, Eastern Michigan University. ED 368 691.
- Lasley, T., & Walker, R. (1986). Time-on-task: How teachers can use class time more effectively. *NASSP Bulletin*, 70(490), 59-64.
- Leonard, L. (1999). Towards maximizing instructional time: The nature and extent of externally imposed classroom interruptions. *Journal of School Leadership*, 9(5), 454-474.
- Leonard, L. (2001). From Indignation to indifference: Teacher concerns about externally-imposed classroom interruptions. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 95(2), 103-109.
- Leonard, L. (2003). Optimizing by minimizing: Interruptions and the erosion of teaching time. *Journal of Educational Enquiry*, 4(2), 15-29.
- Meehan, M. Cowley, K., Schumacher, D., Hauser, B., & Croom, N. (2003). Classroom environment, instructional resources, and teaching differences in high-performing Kentucky schools with achievement gaps. Frankfort, KY.: Kentucky State Department of Education. ED 478 672.
- Metzker, B. (2003). Time and learning. ERIC Digest. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, OR. ED474260.
- Murphy, J. (1992). Instructional leadership: Focus on time to learn. *NASSAP Bulletin*, 76(542), 19-26.
- NCEE. National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- NCLB. (2001). *No Child Left Behind Act*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congress.
- NECTL, National Education Commission on Time and Learning. (1994). Prisoners of time. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Partin, R. (1987). Minimizing classroom interruptions. *The Clearing House*, 61(1), 29-31.
- ProTeacher Community*. (2006). Classroom interruptions, weblog. 05-29-2006. Retrieved July 27, 2006, from <http://www.ProTeacher.net/discussions>.
- Rossmiller, R. (1983). Time-on-task: A look at what erodes time for instruction. *NASSP Bulletin*, 67(465), 45-49.
- Ruminatingdude. (2006). Have you had a day like this? weblog, 5-10-2006. Retrieved July 27, 2006, from <http://ruminatingdude.blogspot.com/2006/05>.
- Walberg, H., Niemiec, R., & Frederick, W. (1994). Productive curriculum time. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 69(3), 86-100.
- Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat. (1995). Classroom perspectives. Report of the Classroom Perspectives Committee, Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat. St. John's, NL, Canada: Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador.

Stringfield, S., & Teddlie, C. (1991). Schools as affectors of teacher effects. In H. Waxman & H. Walberg, (Eds.), *Effective Teaching: Current Research*, (pp. 161-179) Berkeley, CA: McCutchan Publishing.

Varley, H., & Busher, H. (1989). Just a minute: Managing interruptions in the junior high school classroom. *Educational Studies*, 15(1), 53-66.

Appendix A: Two examples of school district adopted policies addressing classroom interruptions.

Ventura, CA Unified School District Education Code 33212

The Governing board recognizes that class time should be dedicated to student learning. The board believes that classroom interruptions which are not related to the educational program should be kept at an absolute minimum.

The principal or designee shall keep announcements made through the intercom or public address systems to a minimum and limit announcements to specific times during the day. Announcements that apply to teachers shall be distributed in writing.

School maintenance operations involving noise or classroom disruption shall be performed before or after school hours whenever possible.

School visitors and observers shall make appointments in advance.

Durham, N.C. Public Schools Policy # 3055 (excerpts)

Principals shall enact guidelines that will ensure protection of instructional time and keep interruptions to an absolute minimum. At a minimum, the guidelines should include the following terms:

3055.1 School personnel should use the public address system sparingly.

3055.2 School and central office personnel, parents/guardians, and visitors should, when possible, schedule conferences/appointments with teachers when they will not interfere with instructional time.

3055.4. Parents/guardians should, when possible, make prior arrangements with the school principal for early dismissal of their children.

3055.5. Salespeople shall not be permitted to interrupt teachers during the school day, and must have prior permission from the principal before meeting with school personnel or others at any time on school property.