Individual Item Prompts

Time

2.1a: Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.

The challenge to this item is in the size of the classes teachers must prep for and manage throughout the course of the school year. The higher the number of students in a period, the more time that is needed to prepare, develop, and maintain the daily routine.

Time challenges may have nothing to do with class size, but everything to do with the number of different courses that teachers must prepare. For example, in middle school, the social studies teacher teaches four sections of seventh grade social studies covering the topics of Africa, Asia, and Australia. Here the teacher must prep once for their entire day of teaching. The 7th grade language arts teacher, however, may find themselves teaching two regular language arts periods, a period designed for sheltered English second language learners, and a period of AIG language arts. Their schedule requires three different preparations and obviously a lot more preparation time. High school teachers are often teaching multiple courses. Elementary teachers must plan instruction for language arts, math, science, and social studies curriculum daily.

Class size can be particularly challenging for new and lateral entry teachers who have not yet mastered lesson planning and standardized their daily routine.

Table Group Activity

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2.1a: Reflections

Are there other teachers in the school teaching the same subject I am?

* What sorts of professional relationships have I built with them that can promote sharing of resources, lesson plans, and teaching strategies?
* Are there ways that teachers who teach the same subjects can share planning?

In your teacher observations, are teachers effectively utilizing the time they have to prepare for their classes? What about the new teachers?

* Do they know how to plan effectively?
* Do they know the curriculum?
* Are they unknowingly creating more work for themselves in their planning by the kinds of homework they will need to grade or assessments they are building?
* Is the quality of planning across multiple preps the same?
* What sorts of training and instructional leadership can you provide your staff to remedy any of these identified issues?
* Who in the teacher faculty can you empower to provide expertise in lesson planning, lead PLCs, and engage in discussion about effective time management?

How many of your faculty are engaged in multiple planning preparations?

* When considering those preparations, how related are the topics they are planning?
* Can the courses be arranged to protect new teachers from multiple preps?
* Is there a way to reschedule the classes to have less preps for more teachers?
* What sorts of PLCs have you developed to link teachers in similar preparation constraints together to share practice?
* If multiple planning preparations cannot be avoided, how well are you protecting those teachers' planning times?

Are the kinds of activities I plan for my students creating unnecessary amounts of work for me which limit my time for planning?

* What am I grading and why?

* What can be done during class to reduce my after class workload?
* What maintenance activities do I have set up with my class to keep the room in functional order?
* How do I keep records and are they orderly? How can they be made more efficient?
* Am I keeping lesson plans in a way that I can reference them in future years to lower the amount of prep time I need and improve the quality of my lessons?

How do larger class sizes affect discipline?

* What steps do I have in place with my students?
* What steps do I have in place with my colleagues/team?
* What steps do I have in place with the administration?
* Am I consistent?
* How can my room be arranged to better suit larger class sizes?
* Are there ways to staff instruction that could lower class size?

2.1b: Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.

Collaborative environments contribute greatly to the management of time in a school. That being said, developing collaborative PLCs can be very challenging. Faculty need time to develop trust and confidence among one another. This is especially important for faculty new to the school. Groups need assigned leadership to encourage equity of voice and topic. Teacher groups need regular guidance and support from their administration to provide a clear vision of desired goals and objectives.

The administration may be providing ample amounts of time towards PLCs, but the staff may not know how to properly utilize that time to engage in high quality, meaningful PLCs. Additionally, if relationships are broken between colleagues, PLCs are largely ineffective. Getting together as a group does not equate to productive PLC planning. The staff must be taught how to engage in effective PLC activity. The administration must help to facilitate and encourage the development of these groups.

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2.1b: Reflections

Has your school/district standardized what is expected in a PLC in terms of process, goals, and expectations?

* If so, are you sure everyone in your staff is following that protocol? How do you know?
* If not, can you work with your staff to develop methods to establish PLC goals and objectives? What would the training look like?

Are supporting faculty involved in the collaborative process?

* Are my mentor, subject coach, lead teacher, resource teacher, EC teacher, Elective teachers included in collaborative meetings?
* Are all parties attending?
* Do all parties have equal voice in the process?

Is the administration involved in the collaborative process?

* How often?
* What does it include?
* How could they be more involved?

Do I really understand how to collaborate?

* Is there a prescribed method to collaborative meetings?
* Are my team/colleague meetings efficient?
* What are typical meeting topics and are they the best use of that collaborative time?
* Who am I meeting with and why?
* Who do I want to meet with and what am I doing to make that occur?
* If collaboration is not working well, what can I do to improve it?
* Is the work load balanced, or am I doing too much? too little?
* Is there equity of voice in the group? Is there equity in the topics being discussed?

How often are teachers meeting in a collaborative setting?

* What sorts of groups are being created?
* What is discussed? How? Why?
* Is there an established agenda and sequence of events?
* Has someone been empowered to lead the PLC?
* Is the work load balanced among the participants? Is there equity among the group?
* Is there equity in topic discussion?
* How long does it take? Can any of it be done electronically?

Is my immediate administrator included in the collaboration?

* How can my administrator be included in the collaborative process consistently?
* Is there a way to keep my administrator informed if he/she cannot be present for a meeting?

Are teammates and colleagues working well together or is there dissension in the group?

* What could be working against the PLC?
* What can encourage PLC growth and participation?
* Does the administration acknowledge effective practice?

Am I collaborating?

* Do I make time to meet with colleagues, or do I avoid it?
* If I avoid it, why and how can it be changed to make me more participatory?

2.1c: Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions

Teachers can take some steps to minimize interruptions that may occur within their classroom. Are classroom procedures and policies in place that help to address instructional interruptions? Seemingly incidental activities like pencil sharpening, throwing trash away, and collecting materials can cause large and frequent interruptions in instructional delivery. A careful review of teachers' procedures for normal classroom management may lead to improvements to instructional continuity.

School wide policies and procedures can also cause interruptions. Student tardy policies, hallway procedures, front office communication, and classroom observations can all impact instructional continuity. Students can also be pulled from some classes to receive remediation, attend field trips, or participate in activities which can disrupt other classes. On the school level, policies and procedures should be examined to be certain that they limit interruptions. Teachers should work collaboratively to communicate conflicts in scheduling and determine the most appropriate times to provide students with additional support.

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2.1c: Reflections

How are classroom policies and procedures impacting instructional continuity?
* What policies and procedures are contributing to more interruptions of instruction? How can they be changed? * Is there collaborative time where teachers can share best practices on effective classroom management strategies? * What systems are in place to support beginning teachers in designing effective classroom management plans?
How are school-level policies and procedures impacting instructional continuity in classrooms?
What systems are working towards limiting classroom interruptions and what systems are contributing to classroom interruptions?
Are there scheduling conflicts in students' class schedules that cause a disruption of instruction?
* Are students being pulled from some classes to attend others for remediation or additional support? * How are sports and extra-curricular activities impacting instruction? * What communication or systems between teachers have been developed to address these conflicts?

2.1d: The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.

When every meeting has been attended; every parent has been called, students have been tended to; EC services have been met; and grade and subject level meetings have been had; how much time each week do teachers have to address their own work? Is there time each day protected to assure every teacher has an opportunity to get to address their own work?

What is an appropriate amount of non-instructional time for teachers? Is that amount different between administrator and teacher perception? Would a discussion to define what is an appropriate amount of non-instructional time between teachers and administrators help to set expectations and goals?

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2.1d: Reflections

How often is that protected time violated?

* Is it protected at all? If it is protected, are the staff aware of it when it happens?
* What things are interfering the protected time and how do teachers perceive/value that which is taking them away from their work?
* Is there a way to guarantee a portion of time every other day, or every day to the teachers? Is there a way to increase the amount of time protected from the previous year?
* Can you think of ways to rotate the unforeseen responsibilities to equally distribute the burden across the entire faculty?

In my collaborative settings, is our use of time effective?

* Do we waste time revisiting topics from previous meetings because we did not adequately record them?
* Do we honor a leadership role in collaborative meetings to make them more efficient?

Am I aware of the decision processes behind choices the administration makes that affect my time?

* Am I in communication with the administration about my time needs, violations of my needed time, and acknowledgment of the administration to protect my time?

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* Am I in communication with the administration about my time needs, violations of my needed time, and acknowledgment of the administration to protect my time?

What activities and teacher obligations are occurring before and after school which affect time?

Is it an issue about the quantity of time or the quality of time? While time may be available, if it is not used efficiently and effectively to improve instruction, educators may believe what is available is not enough.

* What time is available currently?
* How am I using the time made available to me?
* What activities am I engaged in during planning time which detract from that time's original intent?
* If I was given more time, how would I use it?

If it hasn't been stated, do you think announcing specific protected times during the week for each teacher would be helpful in demonstrating your interest in supporting the faculty?

* What does the follow-through look like?
* How will it be implemented?

2.1e: Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.

Routine administrative paperwork can sometimes contribute to reduced planning time and stress on the faculty. Consider how much of the paperwork is under direct control of the school. Items like Individual Growth Plans, Newsletters, Progress Reports, work samples for alternative assessment packets, and the frequency of these activities should be examined. What sorts of time commitments are needed for filling out paperwork for benchmarks and end of grade tests? How much notice is given for paperwork before it is due?

Another challenge to paperwork may be linked to the experience of the staff. Are new staff members aware of the materials and deadlines on paperwork? Have they been properly trained on how to complete the materials? Are there resources in place to assist staff in the completion of materials? As materials become due, is time blocked out and protected to allow staff to complete the materials?

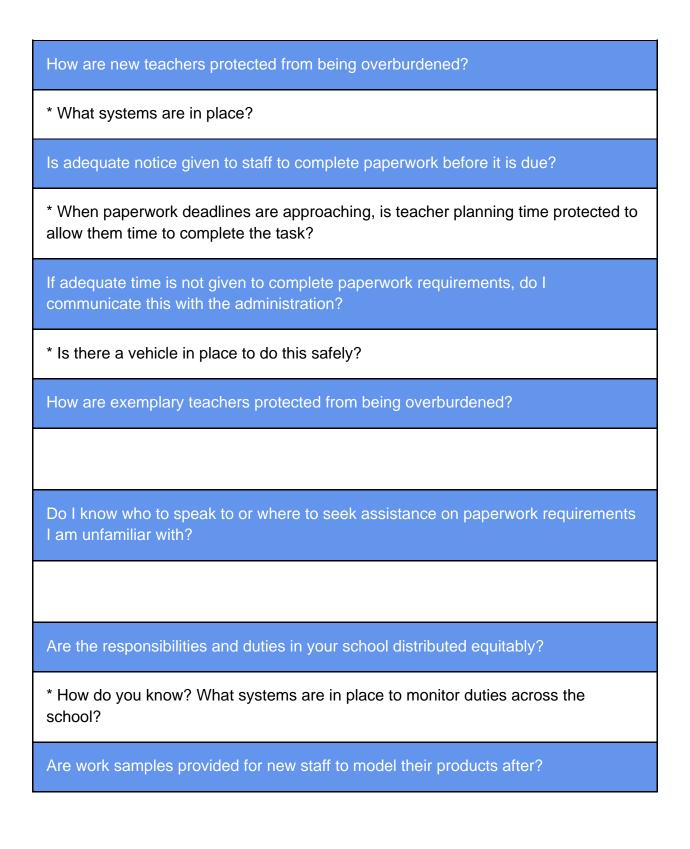| Table Group Activity |
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2.1e: Reflections

How are new teachers protected from being overburdened?
* What systems are in place?
Is adequate notice given to staff to complete paperwork before it is due?
* When paperwork deadlines are approaching, is teacher planning time protected to allow them time to complete the task?
If adequate time is not given to complete paperwork requirements, do I communicate this with the administration?
* Is there a vehicle in place to do this safely?
How are exemplary teachers protected from being overburdened?
Do I know who to speak to or where to seek assistance on paperwork requirements I am unfamiliar with?
Are the responsibilities and duties in your school distributed equitably?
* How do you know? What systems are in place to monitor duties across the school?
Are work samples provided for new staff to model their products after?

* Are new staff trained in paperwork procedures?
If not, can we initiate procedures to ensure new staff are trained?

Am I managing my time effectively to meet paperwork deadlines when given ample time to complete them?

In what ways do teachers have a say in what duties and responsibilities they take on?

* What duties are non-negotiable?
* What duties are negotiable?

2.1f: Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.

Determining how much time is sufficient to meet the needs of all students can be difficult to gauge. Class sizes, student prior knowledge, differences in student ability and learning styles, lesson planning, teacher content knowledge, curriculum pacing guides, and testing schedules are just some of the factors which affect the amount of time a teacher must spend to address the needs of all students.

Part of the solution to ensuring teachers have sufficient instructional time is to work towards minimizing the amount of time teachers lose to unplanned meetings and obligations. If teachers have ample time to prepare for their instructional time, they have a better chance of meeting the needs of all their students.

Another area to investigate is the efficiency of lesson planning and time management during class time. New teachers, for example, are often at risk of mismanaging the instructional time they have because they do not know how long designed activities are going to take children to finish.

Reflect on the ability of teachers to differentiate their lesson plans to accommodate the different learning styles and needs of the children in their classes. Differentiation practices save instructional time by ensuring that the content is comprehended by diverse learners more quickly.

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2.1f: Reflections

How often are teachers pulled for meetings with guidance or SAP?

* Is guidance part of the loop for EC? If so, how do they fit in?
* Is there a system for who attends?
* How much lead time is there between when guidance knows there is a meeting and when teachers are notified? Can that be improved?

What sorts of feedback am I giving to the administration and support staff on impromptu meetings and how my protected time is being used?

* If time is pressing, do I engage in the fierce conversation with an administrator or staff member to postpone a meeting for a better time?
* Do I give constructive feedback to meeting leaders and staff about the efficiency of meetings and activities?
* Do I have alternative ideas or strategies which may improve the protection of teacher planning time?

What is the process for teacher coverage in the school? Are teachers being pulled off of their planning time to cover for other teachers because of a lack of substitutes available?

* How are teachers chosen to do this coverage, and is it equitable?
* Sometimes teachers are sick the day before, but sometimes they give weeks of notice of their absence. Does this time up front give them any preference to acquiring a sub?
* Is class collapsing more challenging to teachers and their time, or subbing?
* How do you collapse classes in trailers? Are certain facilities necessitating a sub? Is this taken into consideration?

How many activities am I engaged in?

* Am I spread too thin to be effective in every area of my school day?
* Am I managing my time in school and outside of school effectively?

How often are there mandatory staff development and faculty meetings and trainings? During the day when instruction could occur?

* Do those meetings relate to everyone's field?
* If not, does everyone need to attend?
* Do all of these meetings have to be mandatory?

How skilled are teachers at differentiating their instructional practices to meet the needs of all learners?

* What training could be in place to share best practices and enhance teacher skill in this area?
* Can the training be differentiated to better meet the different skill levels of teachers to maximize and protect their non-instructional work time?

How often are teachers pulled for EC meetings/SAP/ manifestations?

* What is the system for choosing who goes? Is there a system?
* Are teachers being pulled for kids they teach or outside their roster?
* How much lead time is there between when EC knows there is a meeting necessary and when teachers are notified? Can this be improved? How?
* If a policy of notification and attendance is/can be put in place, what happens if the expectations of the process are not met?
* How prepared for the meeting are the EC teachers? Can information be filled out before the meeting to expedite time?

How effective are the lesson plans of teachers in your school?

* How are lessons organized and are they structured to maximize instructional time?
* What training could be done to help standardize lesson planning practice or improve current lesson planning skills?
* What supports are in place for new teachers to learn effective lesson planning strategies?

2.1g: Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.

Teachers are often expected to take on many responsibilities in the school. In addition to classroom responsibilities, there are hallway duties, before and after school activities, bus area supervision, lunch room monitoring, athletic programs, and clubs to oversee. Teachers can be asked to serve as new teacher mentors, cover colleagues' classes, lead subject and grade level meetings, serve as a team leader, sit on school improvement committees, attend district level meetings, and participate in manifestation meetings. With all these different areas of the school in need of support, it is easy for teachers to be spread thin.

Educators must be particularly careful not to over commit to more responsibilities than they can handle and simultaneously maintain the highest quality of classroom instruction. Very successful educators are increasingly at risk as the success in their classrooms draws attention around the school to be asked to lead other programs and functions. New teachers are at risk as they may not have a solid understanding of time commitments in their new roles, or may not feel comfortable saying 'no'. Leadership must be attentive in the equity of responsibility allocation. Teachers engaged in too many roles and responsibilities around their school are not just at risk for lower quality in their instructional practice. Over-burdened educators run a higher risk of burning out of the profession over time.

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2.1g: Reflections

How are exemplary teachers protected from being overburdened?
Are the responsibilities and duties in your school distributed equitably?
* How do you know? What systems are in place to monitor duties across the school?
How are new teachers protected from being overburdened?
* What systems are in place?
In what ways do teachers have a say in what duties and responsibilities they take on?
* What duties are non-negotiable? * What duties are negotiable?