

TIME ON TASK

Stake and local school districts usually determine the classroom time available to teachers and students. However, regardless of the quantity of time allocated to classroom instruction, it is the classroom teacher and school administrator who determine the effectiveness of the time allotted.

According to a survey conducted by the American Association of School Administrators, teachers identify student discipline as the single greatest factor that decreases time on task in the classroom. Generally, teachers with well-managed classrooms, have fewer disciplinary problems. These classrooms typically have teachers who have established rules and procedures are in the classroom when the students arrive, and begin class promptly. They reduce the “wear and tear” on themselves and students by establishing procedures for make-up work, they arrange their room to accommodate their teaching philosophy and style, and they develop routines that increase overall efficiency. The benefits of establishing these classroom procedures and routines become apparent as the total time on task approaches the allocated time.

When teachers begin class immediately, students view them as better prepared, more organized and systematic in instruction, and better able to explain the material. Students also see these teachers as better classroom managers, friendlier, less punitive, more consistent and predictable, and as one who values student learning.

Routines like beginning class immediately, reviewing recently taught material, orally reciting new material, having students take notes, and ending the class by reviewing important definitions, formulas, algorithms, and the daily objective keep students engaged and on task. Quality time on task is not a “silver bullet” that can cure all the problems facing education. However, it can play an important role in increasing student achievement.