



**Q & A**  
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**Q:** What is an assignable time or instructional time clause and what are the implications of these things for my school?

**A:** An instructional time clause or assignable time clause limits teachers' time in the class or limits time spent in performing assignable duties. These limits allow teachers to put more time and effort into their other professional duties: lesson preparation; student assessment; researching classroom resources; meeting with parents, colleagues and service providers; and preparing class materials and learning

assessments/rubrics. Beyond these professional duties, many teachers still like to volunteer their skills and valuable time to build relationships with students through extracurricular activities such as athletics and fine arts, during lunchtime or after school.

Many boards are currently adding more instructional days to their calendars, arguing that the additional time is required to cover days lost to weather-related school closures. Other boards argue that more assignable time results in higher diploma and achievement test results. These explanations overlook the fact that it is quality rather than the quantity of time that results in better student learning. To alleviate this problem, boards could choose to stay closer to the 950-hour minimum for Grades 1 through 9, and 1000-hour minimum for Grades 10, 11 and 12. This extra time would give teachers more time to identify and meet each student's needs.

Studies done by ATA locals (Calgary Public and Rocky View) show that teachers are spending between 52 and 55 hours in the areas of instructional time, assignable time and other professional duties. Much of this time is spent on initiatives created by government or local school boards. Many of these initiatives, such as Inclusive Education Planning Tools (IEPTs), consume valuable teacher time that could be spent on planning quality lessons or assessing student learning. This situation does not produce the best conditions for professional practice. Government and school boards need to give teachers the autonomy to act in the best interests of students based on their professional judgment. Eliminating make-work initiatives would allow teachers to focus on what is most important—students.

Many administrators inquire about what duties count as assignable time. Assigned time includes instruction and any other tasks teachers perform at the direction of administrators and/or boards such as supervision, PD and staff meetings. The arbitration process has also identified the following activities as assignable time:

- The 15 minutes before and after school
- The time between warning bell and commencement of class (AM and PM start in junior and senior high schools)
- Class time changes
- Nutrition breaks in junior high