

Making time for great teaching

How better government policy can help

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Overview

Great teaching transforms students' lives. But preparing for great teaching takes time. And teachers are telling us they are too stretched to do everything we ask of them.

Pressures have been mounting on teachers' jobs for decades. Teachers are now expected to collect large volumes of learning data, diagnose student needs, target their teaching, track student progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of their own practices. Increasingly, teachers are also expected to develop student competencies such as creativity and resilience, support students' mental health, and tackle social issues such as bullying. And there are now larger numbers of students with complex needs in mainstream schools. While these changes are for the better, they have significant implications for teachers' workloads.

A Grattan Institute survey of 5,442 Australian teachers and school leaders, conducted for this report, sounds the alarm about the impact of these changes on teachers' time. More than 90 per cent of teachers say they don't have enough time to prepare effectively for classroom teaching – the core part of their job. And they report feeling overwhelmed by everything they are expected to achieve. Worryingly, many school leaders feel powerless to support them.

When teachers aren't supported to do their jobs well, teaching quality suffers, and students lose out.

Bold strategies are needed to tackle these problems. We recommend governments adopt three reform directions.

First, let teachers teach. Better match teachers' work to their teaching expertise. Find better ways to use the wider schools workforce, including support and specialist staff, to help teachers focus on effective teaching.

Second, help teachers to work smarter, by reducing unnecessary tasks, not only in administration but also in core teaching work. Reduce the need for teachers to 're-invent the wheel' in curriculum and lesson planning, to ease their workload and boost teaching quality.

Third, rethink the way teachers' work is organised in schools through industrial agreements. This includes the balance between class sizes, face-to-face teaching hours, and preparation time, so that schools have the flexibility to invest in more time for great teaching.

Big improvements are possible. Our survey identifies specific examples of cost-effective reforms that combined could save teachers more than five hours a week. Governments should not rush into expensive, one-size-fits-all 'solutions', such as reductions in face-to-face teaching hours, before exploring these options and others first.

Governments should systematically address these challenges. They should start by investing \$60 million on pilot studies that test new ways to make more time for great teaching. This investment would be a tiny fraction (less than 0.1 per cent) of Australian governments' \$65 billion annual recurrent expenditure on schools – a small price to pay to improve the way schools operate. And governments should provide much more training and guidance to school leaders on the practical steps they can take now to give teachers the time to do their job better.

Recommendations

Reform directions

1. Governments should commit to ensuring all teachers have the time needed for great teaching. To make this happen, governments should adopt three reform directions:
 - **First, let teachers teach, by better matching teachers' work to teachers' expertise:** Improve the integration of specialist and support staff in schools to help teachers focus on high-quality classroom instruction, and to ensure that non-teaching staff can perform duties that don't require teaching expertise.
 - **Second, help teachers to work smarter, by reducing unnecessary tasks:** Examine administrative activities, but also core teaching activities. Reduce the need for teachers to 're-invent the wheel' in curriculum and lesson planning.
 - **Third, rethink the ways teachers' work is organised in schools:** Ensure industrial agreements give school leaders the flexibility to strike a sensible balance between class sizes and teachers' face-to-face teaching time, and to smooth out workloads over the school year by scheduling more time for teachers to work together on preparation activities in term breaks.

Implementation strategies

2. Australian governments should agree to invest \$60 million over five years in a systematic program of research to investigate and pilot concrete options in the three reform directions identified in Recommendation 1.
3. Governments should avoid making further expensive one-size-fits-all reductions in face-to-face teaching time for all teachers until they have explored more cost-effective options to make more time for effective teaching.
4. Government, independent, and Catholic school systems should provide more training and guidance to school leaders to make local decisions that give their teachers more time for effective teaching.

See our accompanying report, *Making time for great teaching: A guide for principals*, for the practical steps school leaders can take now to give their teachers more time.

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1 Effective teaching takes time

Effective teaching improves student learning. But preparing for effective teaching takes time – and our expectations of what teachers and schools should achieve have grown. This makes teachers' jobs harder than ever.

1.1 Effective teaching is complex and takes time

Effective teaching has the biggest impact on student learning outside of influences in the home.¹ A student with a highly effective teacher can achieve in half a year what a student with a poor teacher can achieve in a full year.²

But effective teaching is complex. It requires high levels of knowledge and skill, and substantial time for preparation.³

Effective teaching requires careful planning of what will be taught and how, not only for the whole class but also for the students who may be far behind or in front of their peers. Teachers also need to have a sophisticated grasp of how to design, deliver, and interpret student assessments, give feedback, and adapt their instruction to what their students are ready to learn next.⁴ And they need to be constantly evaluating their practice, so students can learn more next time around.

Developing and sustaining effective classroom teaching day in, day out, does not 'just happen'. Yet teachers' preparation time is often squeezed. More attention on how teachers' time is spent is essential

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1. Aaronson et al (2007); Hanushek (1999); Hanushek et al (2005); Leigh and Ryan (2011); and Rockoff (2004).
 2. Leigh (2010).
 3. Kennedy (2016).
 4. Black and Wiliam (1998); Black and Wiliam (2010); Hattie (2009); and Griffin (2014).

if schools are to make the most of the limited time they have with students.

1.2 We expect more from teachers than before

Teaching has always been a demanding job, with many competing calls on teachers' time.

In Australia today, teachers generally teach classes for about 20-to-22 hours a week, with most primary teachers generally expected to teach a couple of hours more than secondary teachers. On top of that, they must fit in classroom preparation, marking, professional learning, and a range of 'other duties' such as yard duty, meetings, supervision of extra-curricular activities, support for student well-being or behaviour management, communication with parents, and much more. In theory, all these activities should be completed within a 38-hour working week (see Figure 1.1), but many teachers report working much longer. On average, teachers work about 44 hours a week during term-time. By comparison, nurses work an average of 39 hours, and professionals 40 hours.⁵ Australian teachers' working hours are high by international standards too.⁶

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5. Grattan analysis of 2016 Census data, full-time equivalent staff only, age group 40-49. 'Professionals' includes staff who perform analytical, conceptual, creative tasks and apply knowledge in a broad range of fields, for example business, engineering, science, law, and social sciences: ABS (2017). In other surveys commissioned by teacher unions, NSW teachers reported working 55 hours a week, and Victorian teachers 53 hours a week: McGrath-Champ et al (2018) and Weldon and Ingvarson (2016). In another survey conducted as part of the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative, teachers reported working 57 hours a week: AITSL (2021a, SA, NT, and NSW teachers only).
 6. International data show Australian secondary teachers work an average of 45 hours a week, compared to the international average of 40 hours: OECD (2018a) and Thomson and Hillman (2019).

The job is even harder today than before. Over the past few decades, our expectations about what schools and teachers should deliver have increased, while the student population in schools has become more diverse. These shifts are largely positive for society, but they increase the demands on teachers' time.

Without careful reconsideration of what we are expecting teachers to do in the time available, we risk pulling teachers in so many different directions that they find it hard to teach effectively.

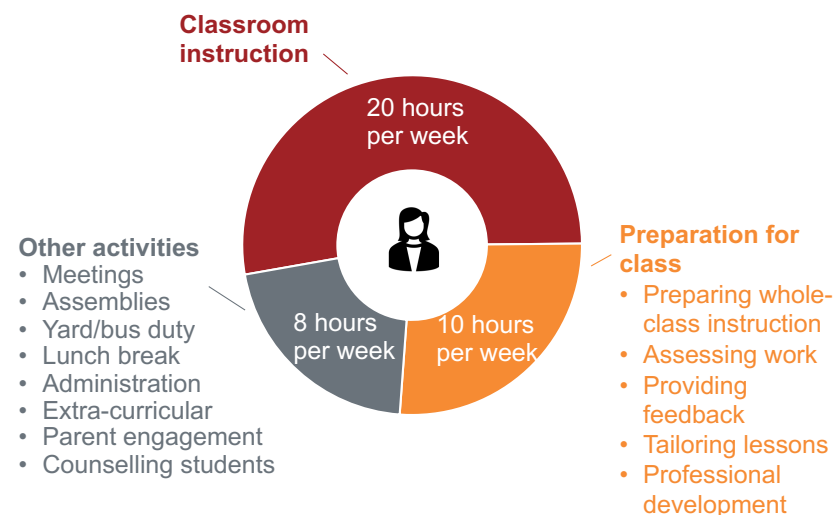
1.2.1 Expectations about what counts as 'effective teaching' have changed

Expectations about what constitutes effective teaching have increased over time. Governments have also raised the bar for the knowledge and skills teachers are expected to demonstrate.⁷

One big shift has been to the idea that teachers should carefully 'differentiate' their teaching to help each student improve their learning, regardless of their starting point or the learning difficulties they may face. This requires teachers to have a sound understanding of where each student is 'at' in their learning, set reasonable but ambitious learning goals, and identify 'where to next' to meet the learning needs of each student.⁸

Some experts go even further, arguing that teachers should 'personalise' teaching and learning for each individual student.⁹

Figure 1.1: Example government guidelines for a secondary teacher's 38-hour week (Victoria only)



Notes: This figure is based on Victorian Government guidelines for a secondary teacher. The stated 10 hours for preparation (called 'related teaching work') includes work completed both inside and outside of school hours. Direct comparisons with other states and territories are difficult because of differences in definitions.

Source: Victorian Government policy and guidelines on the allocation of teacher work: Victorian Department of Education and Training (2020a).

7. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, adopted in 2011, set out standards that all teachers are expected to meet at different stages of their career: AITSL (2011).

8. For example, see the Northern Territory's Framework for Inclusion, the Tasmanian Learners First Pedagogical Framework, and the Victorian Pedagogical Model: Northern Territory Department of Education (2019), Tasmanian Department of Education (2020), and Victorian Department of Education and Training (2020b).

9. See Masters (2013).

This change in expectations has significant implications. Rather than focusing on delivering the curriculum content for a given year level (for example, Year 8 mathematics) or ‘teaching to the middle’ range of student abilities in a class, teachers are expected to support each individual student. Because the variation in students’ current attainment levels is often large, this can require teachers to teach across five or more curriculum grade levels in a single classroom.¹⁰

Teachers are also expected to collect and use evidence of learning based on a variety of formative and summative student assessments.¹¹ Used well, assessment data allow teachers to monitor each student’s learning, identify learning barriers, target their teaching, and evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching practice.¹² But if teachers do not have the time or skills to collect, interpret, and respond to student assessments, teachers can feel like they are ‘drowning’ in data and therefore are too overwhelmed to teach well.¹³

As the example in Box 1 shows, meeting these new expectations can require much more time than is realistically available. Our expectations need to be reasonable, giving teachers the time they need to prepare and deliver high-quality whole-class instruction, as well as additional small-group and individual instruction for those students who require more attention in particular areas.¹⁴ It is not reasonable to expect teachers to personalise their teaching for every individual student, given the way teachers’ work is organised. Even with a smaller class size, it is not an achievable goal.

10. Goss et al (2015).

11. Cumming et al (2019).

12. Black and Wiliam (1998); Black and Wiliam (2010); Hattie (2009); and Griffin (2014).

13. Roderick (2012); and Van der Kleij et al (2017).

14. Haan (2021).

1.2.2 We expect schools to deliver much more than just academic learning

In Australia, students are expected to complete school equipped not just with strong competencies in core academic domains such as maths, English, history, and science, but also with general capabilities in critical thinking and creativity, communication and interpersonal skills, as well as broader values and attributes such as ‘resilience’.¹⁵

In addition, teachers and schools are often asked to deliver outcomes on broad social issues.¹⁶ Recent examples include issues such as childhood obesity, swimming safety, mental health challenges, cyber bullying, financial literacy, and consent in personal relationships.¹⁷ When teachers are given responsibility for these sorts of programs, they have less time to focus on high-quality teaching in the core academic learning areas. And these new programs add up for students too, who don’t spend any longer in school but are now expected to learn more.

These shifts represent an impressive level of ambition for Australian schooling. But whether such a broad set of goals can be achieved by schools and teachers, within current levels of time and resourcing, requires much more consideration.

15. See the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration: Education Council (2019).

16. Dinham (2013); Labaree (2008); NSW Teachers Federation (2021); and Rickards et al (2021).

17. For example, see Victorian guidelines on consent: Victorian Department of Education and Training (2021).

Box 1: The time pressures on teachers

A **secondary** student might expect their English teacher to spend at least 15 minutes a week focused on their learning needs, including marking their work, preparing individual feedback, and planning how to support their learning. But from their teacher’s perspective, finding this time for each student is very difficult.

Consider the example of a Victorian teacher who has 110 students – five classes of 22 students each. Dedicating 15 minutes to each student for individual marking, feedback, and targeted lesson-planning would require **28 hours a week** (see Figure 1.2). Fitting this time into a standard work week is extremely hard – if not impossible.

In practice, government guidelines assume teachers spend about 10 hours a week across all teaching preparation activities.^a If the teacher in our example spent half this time (5 hours) on marking, preparing feedback, and planning to support individual students, this would allow for less than **3 minutes per student per week**.

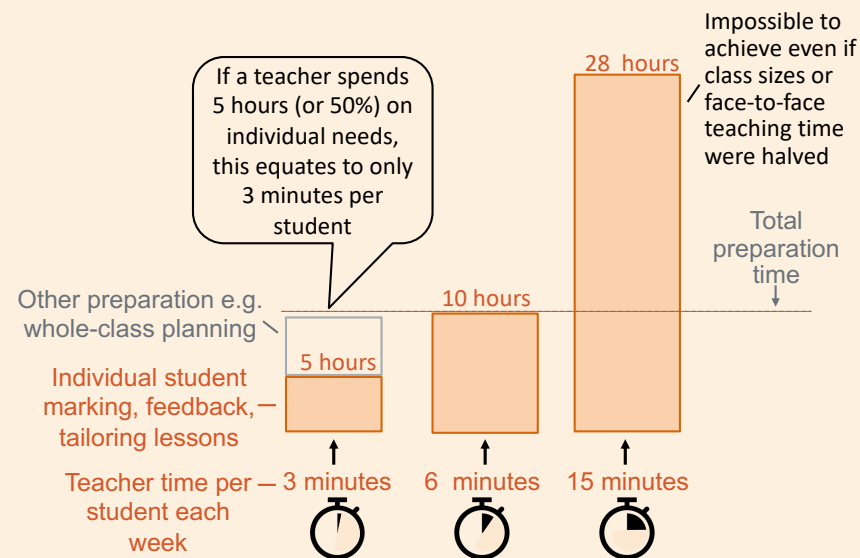
Most **primary** classroom teachers are responsible for a single class, and so have fewer students than secondary teachers. But primary teachers face tight time pressures too. They tend to teach a much broader range of subjects, such as English, maths, sciences, and humanities, play an active role in younger students’ development, and are typically allocated less preparation time than secondary teachers.

a. This example is based on the Victorian Government’s policy and guidelines: Victorian Department of Education and Training (2020a).

b. This is based on the Victorian Government’s policy and guidelines that a primary school teacher has 7.5 hours of preparation time each week: Victorian Department of Education and Training (ibid). Our calculation also assumes that a primary school teacher delivers four learning areas of the Australian Curriculum (English, maths, science, and humanities and social sciences), with support from specialist teachers for other learning areas, and takes a class of 22 students.

If a Victorian primary teacher spent half of their standard preparation time on marking, preparing feedback, and planning for individual students, this would allow for only **2.5 minutes per student per subject each week**.^b

Figure 1.2: Our secondary teacher has little time to meet individual student needs within ‘official’ time allocations



Source: Grattan analysis based on Victorian Government policy and guidelines on the allocation of teacher work: Victorian Department of Education and Training (2020a).

1.2.3 The student population has become more complex

The characteristics of the Australian student population have also changed. Since the 1980s, a growing proportion of students have stayed at school longer.¹⁸ The number of students staying through to Year 12 has increased from 75% in 2005 to 83% in 2020.¹⁹ This equates to roughly two more students in every Year 12 classroom who would have previously left school early. In addition, teachers report having to support more students with mental health problems, complex behavioural challenges, or disability.²⁰

These changes are underpinned by an important effort to extend the benefits of schooling in mainstream settings to more students who were previously excluded. But they have also increased the complexity of student learning, engagement, and behavioural and physical needs in the classroom.²¹ Frequent engagement with families may also be required to support these students, adding to demands on teachers' time. Unless these challenges are well recognised, and teachers are supported with the time and skills needed to meet them, these developments risk being a hollow achievement.

1.3 How to read this report

Chapter 2 details the results of a Grattan Institute survey of 5,442 teachers and school leaders across Australia, which highlight the impact on teachers' time of the increased expectations placed on schools. We recommend governments adopt three reform directions,

discussed in turn in Chapter 3, 4, and 5. Chapter 6 outlines what governments should do to achieve reform.

Our accompanying report, *Making time for great teaching: A guide for principals*, identifies practical steps school leaders can take now to give their teachers more time for great teaching.²²

18. Grattan analysis of ABS (2021a).

19. Grattan analysis of ABS (ibid, Apparent Retention Rate, 2005–2020).

20. For example, from 2009 to 2018 there was a 40 per cent increase in the number of students with a disability attending regular classes in mainstream schools: AIHW (2020, Table ENGT3, which includes analysis of ABS data from the Survey of Disability, Ageing, and Carers).

21. For discussion of these issues see NSW Teachers Federation (2021) and Productivity Commission (2020).

22. Hunter et al (2022a).

2 Teachers don't have enough time to prepare effectively for class

This chapter presents the findings of a new Grattan Institute survey of 5,442 teachers and school leaders across Australia. The survey results sound the alarm on the current situation in schools. A large majority of teachers report that they don't have enough time to prepare for effective teaching.

As well as having too little preparation time, teachers point to deeper problems: they feel they are asked to take on too great a workload; they receive too little support for struggling students; and administrative requirements are too onerous.

Worryingly, our survey also shows that many school leaders feel powerless to make a difference.

2.1 Grattan's 2021 survey of teachers and school leaders

In 2021 we surveyed 5,000 teachers and 442 school leaders across Australia.²³ We asked teachers a range of questions about how well prepared they are for effective teaching, the obstacles that prevent them from getting to their core work, and possible reforms that could make it easier for them to be better prepared.

Our survey sample is broadly representative across states and territories, primary and secondary schools, government and non-government sectors, and advantaged and disadvantaged schools (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Our teacher survey is widespread

	Teacher respondents (number)	Teacher respondents (per cent of sample)	Actual teacher population (per cent of population)
Primary	2,259	45%	52%
Secondary	2,741	55%	48%
NSW	1,342	27%	30%
VIC	1,547	31%	27%
QLD	793	16%	21%
WA	406	8%	10%
SA	555	11%	7%
TAS	158	3%	2%
NT	24	<1%	1%
ACT	174	3%	2%
Government	3,366	68%	64%
Catholic	841	17%	19%
Independent	747	15%	17%
Advantaged	1,666	33%	34%
Disadvantaged	1,379	28%	33%

Sources: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time; ACARA (2020a, National Report on Schooling in Australia, staff numbers dataset).

23. Details on the survey questions and responses are provided in the Supplement to this report: see Hunter et al (2022b).

2.2 Our survey sounds the alarm: teachers don't have enough time to prepare for effective teaching

We asked teachers how often they feel like they do not have enough time to prepare for effective teaching. 'Preparation' was defined to include planning for classroom instruction, analysing student work, preparing student feedback, devising ways to support struggling learners, and improving their own teaching practice.²⁴

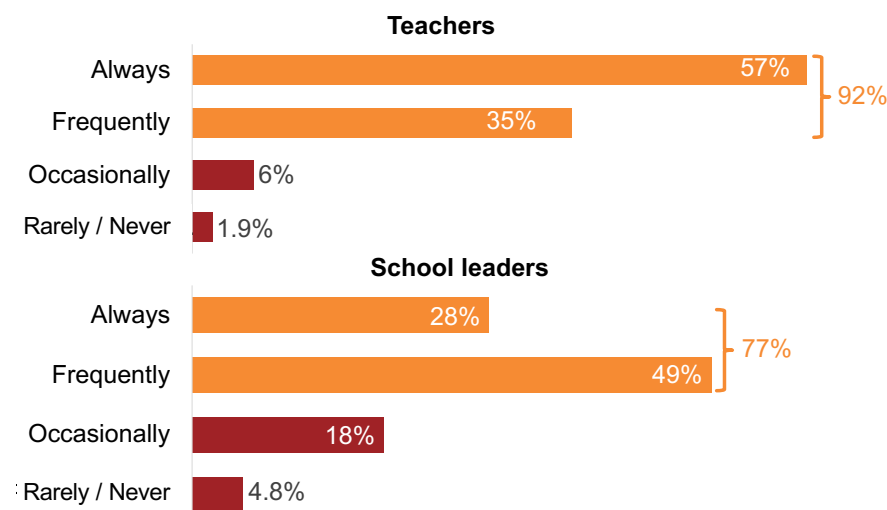
The vast majority of teachers (92 per cent) said they 'always' or 'frequently' do not have enough time to prepare for effective teaching (see Figure 2.1). Our survey results show this problem is widespread: the finding holds across all states and territories, primary and secondary schools, government and non-government schools, and advantaged and disadvantaged schools.

And it is not just novice teachers who feel this way, but also teachers with more than 10 years' experience (see Figure 2.2).

Most school leaders had a similar view: about 77 per cent said teachers in their school 'always' or 'frequently' don't have enough time to prepare for effective teaching.

These survey findings are troubling. If teachers are not well prepared, student learning suffers.

Figure 2.1: Teachers say they don't have time to prepare well
Proportion of teachers and school leaders indicating how often teachers do not have enough time to prepare for effective teaching



Notes: Survey question: 'How often do you feel like you / teachers at your school do not have enough time to prepare for effective teaching?' In our survey we define core activities to prepare for effective teaching as involving: planning for classroom instruction; preparing, marking, and analysing student assessments; preparing student feedback and adapting teaching; preparing to support struggling learners; building professional knowledge and skills; and collaborating effectively with colleagues and experts. Sample size: 5,000 teachers, 442 school leaders. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

24. Our definition is based on Black and Wiliam (1998); Timperley et al (2007); Desimone (2009); Hattie (2009); Black and Wiliam (2010); Griffin (2014); Kennedy (2016); Kraft et al (2018); and Newman et al (2021). For a summary of the evidence see the Education Endowment Foundation (2021a) on feedback, the Collin and Smith (2021) on professional development, and the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2020) for their *What works best 2020 update*.

2.2.1 Teachers say they don't have enough time for high-quality lesson planning either

Lesson planning involves organising curriculum content and identifying the learning activities and teaching strategies that a teacher will use in each lesson. Through their planning, teachers make decisions about what they want their students to learn, how they intend students to learn it, and how they will know when students have succeeded in learning it. Without a strong plan, teaching risks becoming a poorly connected series of instructional activities that fail to build student knowledge or skills over time.²⁵

A large majority (86 per cent) of teachers said they 'always' or 'frequently' feel like they do not have sufficient time for high-quality lesson planning (see Figure 2.3). Again, these results hold across primary and secondary schools, states and territories, school sectors, levels of advantage, and for teachers at all stages of their careers.

Our survey findings build on other Australian studies that suggest teachers do not have sufficient time for many aspects of effective teaching.²⁶

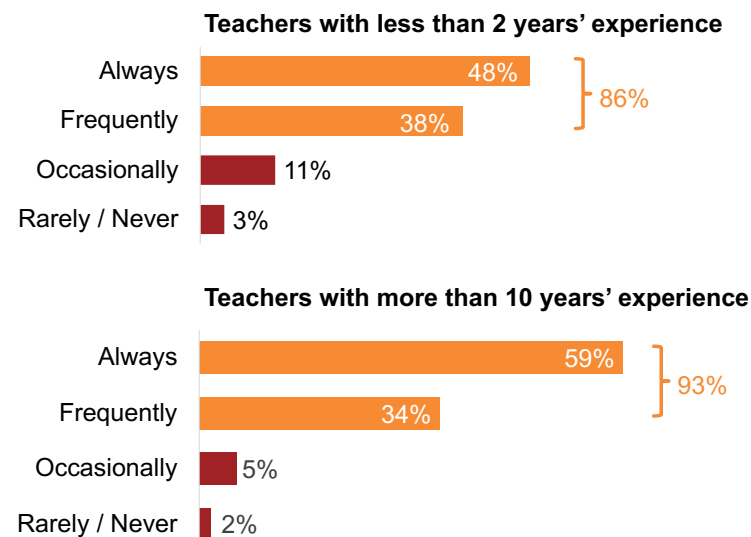
2.2.2 Teachers are struggling to complete core aspects of their role, but it is not for a lack of effort

Our survey suggests teachers are struggling to complete core aspects of their roles, but it is not for a lack of effort or dedication. When we asked teachers to select their top three choices for how they would use an additional hour of time, the most common responses were to spend it on more planning and preparation activities (see Figure 2.4).

25. Partelow and Shapiro (2018); Steiner (2017); Steiner et al (2018); and G. Whitehurst (2009).

26. See school staff workload surveys in Queensland, Victoria, and Tasmania, with a total of more than 28,000 respondents: Rothman et al (2018); Rothman et al (2017); and Weldon and Ingvarson (2016).

Figure 2.2: Even experienced teachers say they don't have enough time
Proportion of teachers indicating how often they do not have enough time to prepare for effective teaching, by years of experience in teaching

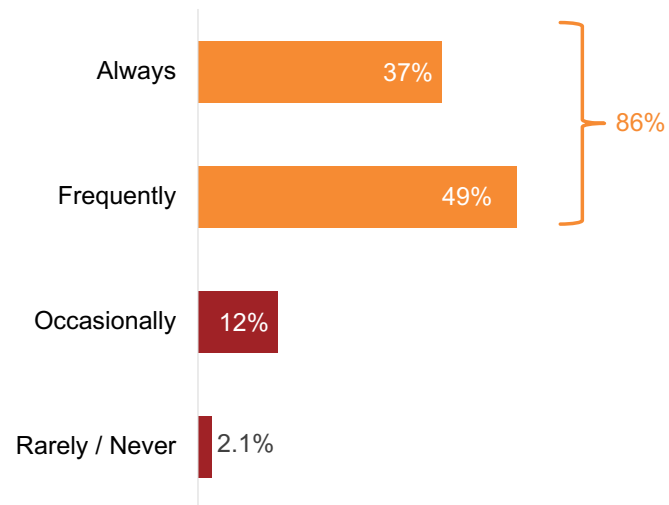


Notes: Survey question: 'How often do you feel like you do not have enough time to prepare for effective teaching?' Sample size: 2,881 teachers. Chart omits teachers with 2-to-10 years' experience.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

Figure 2.3: Most teachers say they do not get enough time for high-quality lesson planning

Proportion of teachers indicating how often they feel like they do not have sufficient time to prepare for high-quality lesson planning

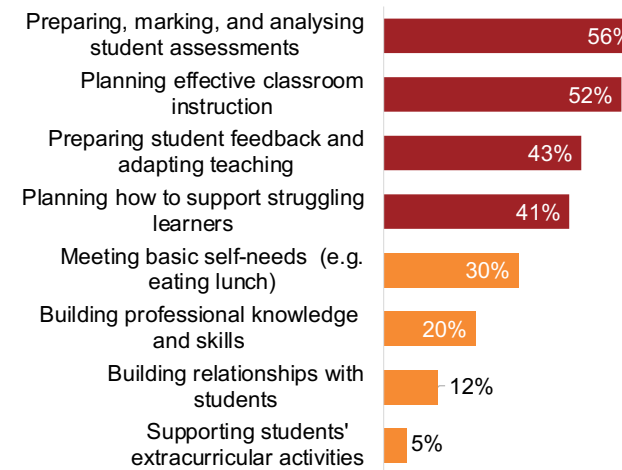


Notes: Survey question: 'How often do you feel like you do not have sufficient time for high-quality lesson planning?' Sample size: 4,968 teachers. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

Figure 2.4: Most teachers say they would use any extra time on better preparing for class

Proportion of teachers indicating how they would use an extra hour of time (activity selected as one of top three choices)



Notes: Survey question: 'Imagine that changes have been made to your schedule such that you now have one extra hour of time. Where would you be most likely to spend your additional time? Please select your top three.' Sample size: 4,430 teachers.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

2.2.3 Teachers say numerous barriers limit the time they have to prepare for class

We asked teachers about potential barriers to having enough preparation time, and the extent to which they were an issue at their school.²⁷ They identified a wide range of significant barriers (see Figure 2.5).

The most common concern, identified by 86 per cent of teachers, was that the workload required for ‘effective teaching’ is too high. In their ‘free text’ comments, teachers described current expectations for effective teaching as ‘not realistic’ and ‘entirely unreasonable and unmanageable’.

Many teachers indicated they felt out of their depth. One said:

‘[There is] not enough planning time to allow for how responsive we need to be to students’ needs.’

Another said:

‘Expecting teachers to address and differentiate for a range of student abilities is overwhelming.’

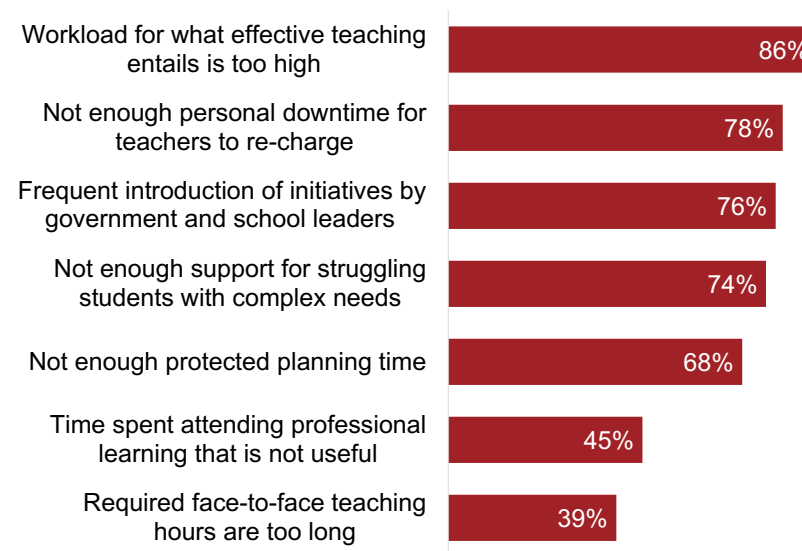
A common theme is that teachers feel overwhelmed and exhausted by the demands, with a large majority (78 per cent) reporting there was insufficient downtime to re-charge.

Other responses highlighted the complex range of issues teachers face in the classroom that act as a barrier to being well-prepared for class. Many teachers feel they receive too little support to help struggling students, especially at disadvantaged schools. One teacher said:

‘[There are] not enough ready-made resources to support students with complex learning needs. Along with this, [there is] a lack of professional development available to support teachers in learning to teach and support students with disabilities and complex needs.’

Figure 2.5: Teachers say numerous barriers limit their time to prepare for effective teaching

Proportion of teachers rating each item as an issue or major issue at their school



Notes: Survey question: ‘Each of the statements below describes a barrier that may limit or reduce teachers’ time to prepare for effective teaching. Please indicate the extent to which you feel each is an issue at your school.’ Teachers rated each issue from 1 to 5, with 1 being ‘Not an issue at my school’ and 5 being ‘A major issue at my school’. This Figure shows the percentage of teachers who rated the item either 4 or 5. Sample size: 4,813-to-4,901 teachers (sample size varies because not all respondents completed the question).

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers’ time.

Most teachers (76 per cent) rated the frequent introduction of new initiatives, from either government or school leaders, as a significant issue. One teacher said:

‘With the constant new “initiatives”, and department / partnership / region / school priorities, nothing ever drops off or is replaced by the new foci, it’s just added on top of what we already do.’

Teachers also said heavy requirements relating to administration, reporting, parent communication, and student welfare needs limited their preparation time. For example, one teacher said:

‘Administration time takes up most of planning time. Such as communication to parents, newsletters, displays, notes, permission slips, phone calls, and talking to students about wellbeing issues.’

Almost half (45 per cent) of teachers indicated that time spent attending low-value professional learning at their school was a barrier to finding the time to prepare for effective teaching.

About two-thirds of teachers said there was too little protected planning time. This was particularly a concern for teachers at disadvantaged schools.²⁸ Teachers said their allocated planning time gets ‘eaten into’ by other tasks. Having too little planning time is especially hard for middle leaders who also have responsibilities for coordinating curriculum – often for hundreds of students – on top of their face-to-face teaching time. One middle-leader teacher said:

‘As a middle leader and experienced teacher, I spend very little time on preparing lessons that enable me to teach how I would like. All

27. Teachers rated each item on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being ‘Not an issue at my school’ and 5 being ‘A major issue at my school’.

28. Teachers working at schools with mostly disadvantaged students were more likely to indicate insufficient protected planning time is an issue (74 per cent, compared to 65 per cent of teachers working at schools with mostly advantaged students).

of my time is taken up in meetings, dealing with student and parent issues, and also solving staff crises.’

About 40 per cent of teachers also felt that their required face-to-face teaching hours were too long. However, this was least likely to be rated as a major issue among the potential barriers we tested (see Figure 2.5). About 60 per cent of teachers *did not* consider the number of face-to-face teaching hours to be a major barrier to having enough time to prepare effectively for class.²⁹

2.2.4 Teachers and school leaders would like to see more money allocated to planning time and a range of staff supports

We also asked teachers and school leaders their views about how additional spending might help ease these pressures. We asked survey respondents to choose their top three priorities from a list of options that could either simplify their work or increase their protected planning time (see Figure 2.6).

Teachers were asked to select from a list of options that were designed to be broadly cost-equivalent.

The most frequent option selected was additional protected planning time for teachers.³⁰ The wide range of other priorities selected – ranging from additional support and administrative staff to literacy, numeracy, and other behaviour and mental health specialists – suggests it is important that schools have the flexibility to respond with solutions targeted to their specific contexts.³¹

29. It is possible that some teachers are reluctant to reduce face-to-face teaching hours due to a perceived concern that they would then be under more pressure to cover the existing curriculum in less class time.

30. For this question, the cost of providing additional ‘protected planning time’ was based on reducing weekly face-to-face teaching time by the equivalent number of hours.

31. There were some notable differences between school leader and teacher responses, as shown in Figure 2.6. For example, teachers were more likely

2.3 School leaders say they have few real options to reduce the constraints on teachers' time

Most school leaders agreed with teachers on the big issues affecting teacher time.³² For example, more than half of school leaders considered that the workload required for 'effective teaching' was too high, pointing to a range of issues such as unrealistic expectations for using student data, differentiating teaching, and catering to the emotional needs of students. One school leader said:

'The role has become more complex due to increased diversity [of students] and greater expectation of personalised attention and outcome for all students.'

Another said:

'Expectations of what can reasonably be done in a 40-hour week are too high.'

Some school leaders also expressed frustration at the way governments expected schools to achieve outcomes beyond teaching and learning. One school leader said:

'The trouble with education is that all government departments want to use education to improve the community. Schools just can't do everything.'

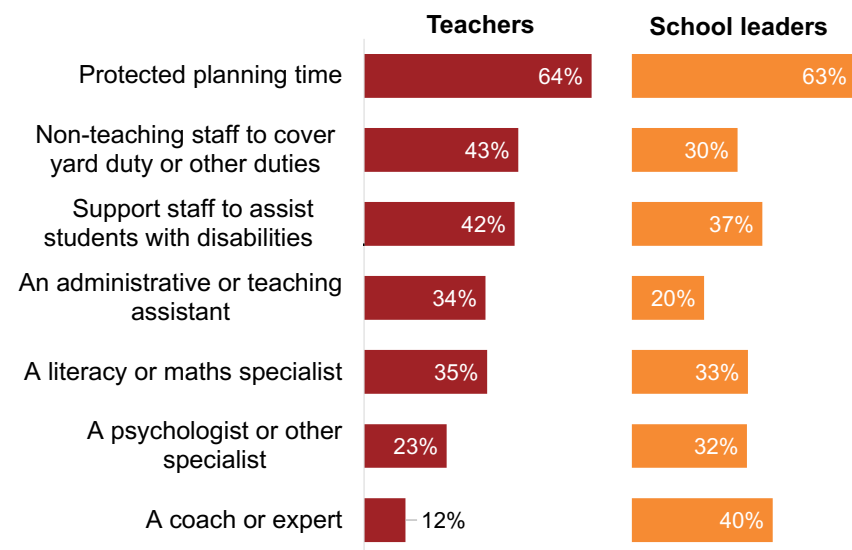
More than half of school leaders said teachers had insufficient support for struggling students, and that the frequent introduction of new government initiatives at their school was a significant issue for teacher time.

to value support staff to cover 'other duties', and teaching assistants and administrative staff, while school leaders were more likely to select psychologists as well as a coach or expert to work with teachers. Primary and secondary educators had broadly similar top 3 preferences, although secondary teachers were more in favour of non-teaching staff to cover 'other duties', and primary school teachers and leaders were more likely to nominate a literacy or maths specialist to work with struggling students.

32. See Supplement Question L10, page 33: Hunter et al (2022b).

Figure 2.6: Educators say they would like to see more money allocated to protected planning time and various other initiatives

Proportion of educators who selected an option as one of 3 top priorities



Notes: Survey question: 'Suppose your school has been awarded additional funding which can be allocated to one of the items in the table below. The goal of the funding is to help increase the amount of time teachers have available to prepare for effective teaching. Please select your top three choices.' Sample size: 4,661 teachers, 373 school leaders.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

2.3.1 School leaders feel constrained to do much about these challenges

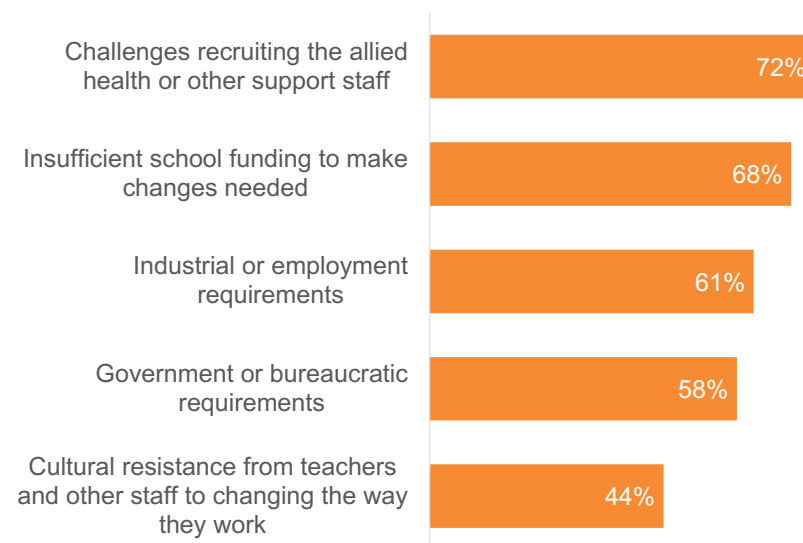
Worryingly, most school leaders felt constrained to do much to improve the situation for teachers in their school.

We asked school leaders about the barriers they faced in taking steps at their school to increase teachers' time to prepare for effective teaching (see Figure 2.7). Almost three quarters of school leaders nominated challenges in recruiting allied health or other support staff to ease the burden on teachers, and about 68 per cent said they had insufficient school funding to make the changes they wanted.

More than half of school leaders also pointed to industrial issues and government or bureaucratic requirements as factors impeding their ability to make positive change. Almost half (44 per cent) identified cultural resistance from teachers and other staff to changing the way they work.³³

Figure 2.7: School leaders say several barriers limit their ability to increase time for teachers

Proportion of school leaders rating each as an issue or major issue at their school



Notes: Survey question: 'Each of the statements below describes a barrier that may limit your ability to make decisions that increase teachers' time to prepare for effective teaching. Please indicate the extent to which you feel each is an issue at your school.' School leaders rated each issue from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'Not an issue at my school' and 5 being 'A major issue at my school'. This Figure shows the percentage of school leaders who rated the item either 4 or 5. Sample size: 407-to-408 school leaders (sample size varies because not all school leaders completed the question).

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

33. More secondary school leaders (52 per cent) than primary school leaders (33 per cent) said this was an issue.

3 First reform direction: Let teachers teach

Many of the issues raised in Chapter 2 are not new, and are unlikely to be addressed by ad hoc or piecemeal responses. To give teachers more time, governments need to rethink the policy settings that govern schools. We recommend governments adopt three reform directions, discussed in turn in Chapter 3, 4, and 5.

This chapter discusses the first reform direction, showing that the use of specialist and support staff in schools has great potential to reduce pressures on teacher time (see Figure 3.1). Governments have not systematically learned the best way to integrate and deploy this varied workforce. This needs to change.

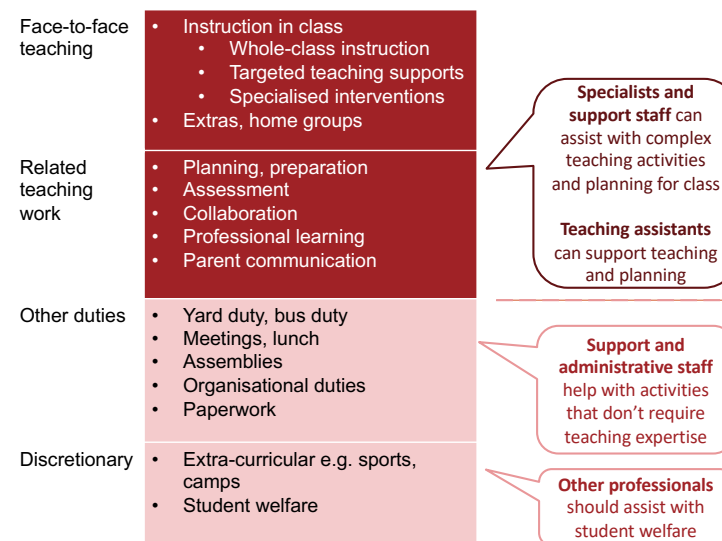
Our survey tested one cost-effective option – transferring responsibility for extra-curricular activities from teachers to non-teaching staff – and found many teachers say it could save them an average of two hours a week. More exploration of other similar reforms could also have large payoffs.

3.1 The wider workforce can reduce the pressures on teacher time

Specialist and support staff can help teachers deliver effective teaching to students who are struggling in class, or who have complex learning needs or disabilities (see Box 2). This help can come from speech therapists, literacy and numeracy experts, disability experts, teaching assistants, or English as additional language (EAL) staff, to name a few.

Support staff can also help by taking on less-complex tasks that teachers traditionally do, such as yard duty, chasing permission slips, or coordinating activities with parents.

Figure 3.1: Teachers’ work could be supported by a team of specialists, support staff, and other professionals



Note: This list of teachers’ tasks is generally based on Victorian Government guidelines.

Source: Grattan analysis of Victorian Government guidelines: Victorian Department of Education and Training (2020a).

Our survey shows that teachers consider that having a variety of additional non-teaching staff in school would ease pressures on their time (see Figure 2.6).³⁴

But before simply ‘adding more’ specialist and support staff to schools, we need to know more about whether *existing* staff are being integrated effectively, and how new staff could best be deployed to support great teaching.

3.2 Careful deployment is key

Expanding the wider workforce in schools is an appealing way to make more time for great teaching, but the fact is that Australia already has a much wider workforce in schools than ever before. The ratio of teaching staff to students increased by 22 per cent in primary schools and 2 per cent in secondary schools between 1990 and 2019. Over that same period the ratio of specialist support staff to students increased by 110 per cent, and the ratio of administrative staff and teaching assistants to students increased by 145 per cent (see Figure 3.2).³⁵

The problem is that governments have not sought to monitor and evaluate whether the expanded workforce in schools is being used effectively. Governments need to systematically examine what tasks teachers and other school staff are best placed to do, and how a varied workforce can best work together to support high-quality teaching and learning.

Having *more* staff isn’t always better. For example, big investments in teaching assistants in the UK in the early 2000s did not boost student

34. Of course, recruiting such staff is not always simple to do. A large majority of school leaders (72 per cent) in our survey pointed to challenges in recruiting the allied health and other support staff they need to better support teacher time in their school (see Figure 2.7).

35. Grattan analysis of ABS (2021a).

Box 2: How specialist and support staff can help teachers

Specialist and support staff can help schools deliver ‘tiered support’, where students with the highest and most complex needs receive the most intensive teaching support.^a

Under this model, teachers are responsible for delivering high-quality universal classroom instruction (Tier 1) as well as intensive teaching for higher-need students in small groups or one-on-one (Tiers 2 and 3) – but they are not expected to do it all by themselves. Specialist and support staff can help teachers especially with Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, which can require highly specialised skills, or be particularly time-intensive for a teacher to do alone.

Specialist and support staff may work directly with students. Specialist staff may also help teachers develop skills that meet highly specific student learning needs in the classroom.

a. National Center on Response to Intervention (2010); D. Fuchs and L. Fuchs (2017); and Haan (2021).

learning.³⁶ In fact, a systematic evaluation showed that an increase in teaching assistants in the UK had a *negative* impact on students from poorer backgrounds.³⁷ The UK government is continuing to evaluate the impact, and is finding that teaching assistants can get good results as well as reduce teacher workload under certain conditions.³⁸ Studies

36. For a summary of the evidence see the Education Endowment Foundation’s guidance booklet and teaching assistant evidence summary: Sharples et al (2018) and Education Endowment Foundation (n.d.).

37. Blatchford et al (2012).

38. See the Education Endowment Foundation’s guidance booklet: Sharples et al (2018). Other international studies also show that teaching assistants can deliver positive results, including Hemelt et al (2021).

continue in the UK to test the best training approaches that help teachers, school leaders, and support staff to work together most effectively.³⁹

Australia should learn from the UK's experience and adopt a similar process of evaluation to improve the use of the wider workforce in Australian schools.

3.2.1 Our survey points to a promising example

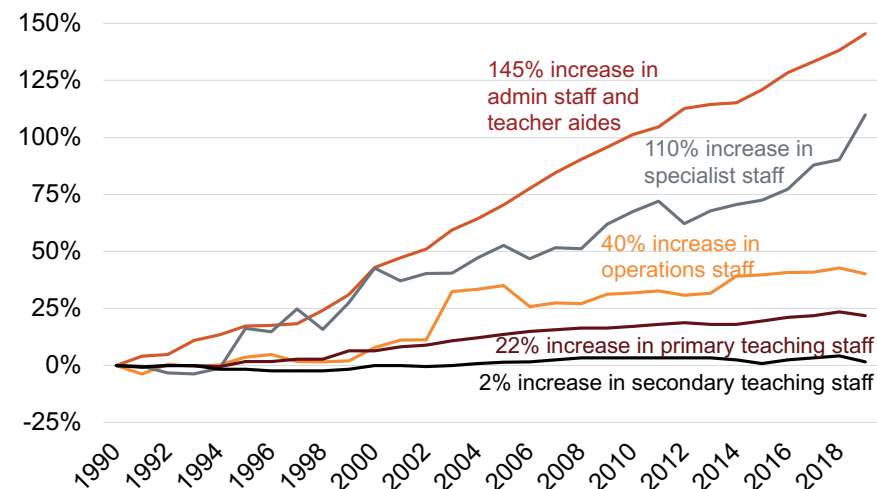
Our survey tested one example of the time-savings for teachers that can be made by using the wider workforce more effectively. Other reforms might provide additional large payoffs for teachers.

Our survey tested whether support staff could be better used to take on extra-curricular tasks that do not require teacher training, for example supervising sports, debating, or yard duty. We asked teachers whether they would agree to having non-teaching staff take on their extra-curricular activities to free up more time for effective teaching. A large majority of teachers (68 per cent) said yes (see Figure 3.3).

Teachers who agreed to having non-teaching staff take on their extra-curricular activities estimated they could save an average of two hours per week as a result of this change.⁴⁰ This is a large amount of time for teachers who are already very stretched.

Figure 3.2: Schools have a wider workforce than ever

Change in staff-to-student ratio, 1990 to 2019



Notes: Change in Australian teaching-to-student ratios for all school levels across all states and territories. 'Administrative staff' includes teachers aides and assistants. 'Specialist staff' are employees who support students or teaching staff, and include school counsellors and speech pathologists. 'Operations staff' are employees involved in the maintenance of buildings and grounds. 'Teaching staff' are employees who spend most of their time with students and includes teachers, deputy principals, and principals.

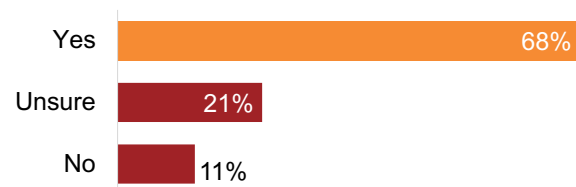
Source: Grattan analysis of ABS (2021a, Schools Australia, 2020 data (including previous years), Cat. no 4221.0).

39. For example, a 2021 UK trial found some forms of training had no positive impacts on teaching quality: see Dimova et al (2021).

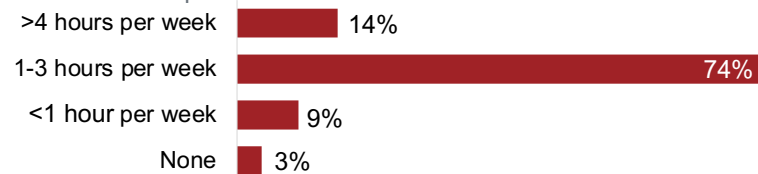
40. There were no significant differences on this survey question between primary and secondary teachers or between school sectors.

Figure 3.3: Many teachers would agree to other staff covering extra-curricular activities for an average of two hours a week

Proportion of teachers who would agree to non-teaching staff covering their extra-curriculars



Of teachers who agreed to non-teaching staff covering their extra-curriculars, the number of hours per week other staff could cover



Notes: Survey question 1: 'Would you agree to non-teaching staff covering your extra-curricular activities to give you extra time to prepare for effective teaching?' Sample size: 4,421 teachers. Survey question 2: 'Of teachers who answered 'yes', 'about how many hours per week would you want other staff to cover your extra-curricular activities?' Sample size: 2,982 teachers.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

4 Second reform direction: Help teachers to work smarter

It is important to reduce unnecessary administration in teachers' jobs, but more attention should also be given to helping teachers work smarter in the *core* aspects of teaching work. This chapter shows that much can be done to make lesson and curriculum planning in schools more efficient. Governments should make this a key reform focus.

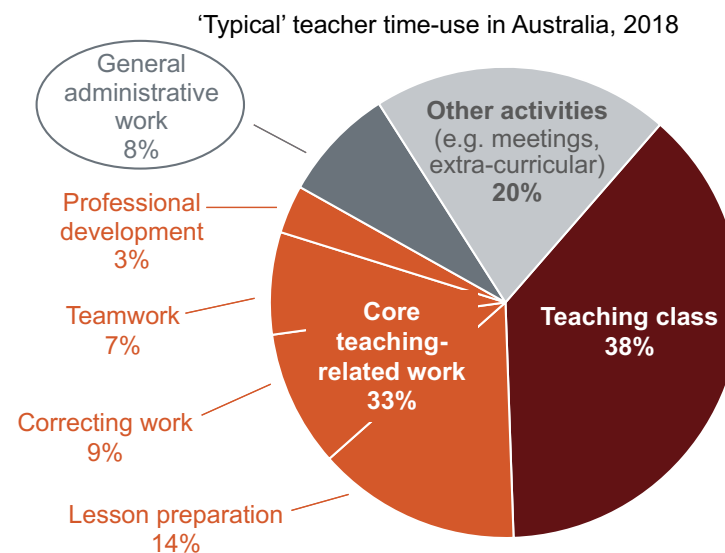
4.1 Help teachers to work smarter in core teaching-related work

Governments have devoted a lot of attention to reducing onerous administration and paperwork in teachers' jobs. It is a big issue; many teachers are concerned about unnecessary administration and bureaucracy, clunky data systems, and inefficient meetings (see Box 3). And both teachers and school leaders point to the frequent introduction of new initiatives by governments as a significant issue for teacher time (see Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.7).

But many governments have devoted less attention to reducing unnecessary tasks in teachers' *core* work. In particular, teachers could be supported to work more efficiently on planning, marking and assessment, and professional learning. Governments could also encourage schools to make teachers' work less complex by reducing the variation in the number of subjects or year levels assigned to teachers. Teaching several subjects increases a teacher's workload because they must master a wider range of content.⁴¹

41. For example, where possible secondary teachers could teach fewer subjects, or fewer year levels (so they are more likely to reteach subjects). Primary teachers could be able to call on more specialist teachers for subjects such as science or maths. Some research shows that specialisation can make teachers more effective, improving student attainment. For a summary of the evidence on this topic, see Sims (2019).

Figure 4.1: Core teaching-related work takes up a big chunk of a teacher's working week – much more than administration



Notes: Based on teacher reported survey data. Covers lower secondary teachers in Australia. General administrative work includes communication, paperwork, and other clerical duties. Other activities includes counselling students (including student supervision, mentoring, virtual counselling, career guidance, and behaviour guidance); participation in school management; communication and co-operation with parents or guardians; engaging in extracurricular activities; and other work tasks. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Grattan analysis of OECD (2018b, Table I.2.27.).

OECD survey data suggest Australian teachers spend 33 per cent of their time each week on ‘core’ teaching activities such as correcting student work, preparing for lessons, team work and professional development – four times as much as the amount of time (8 per cent) they spend on general administrative activities (see Figure 4.1). In this chapter we focus in on one big area for reform in teachers’ core work – working smarter on lesson and curriculum planning.

4.2 Reduce unnecessary tasks in curriculum planning

Curriculum planning – deciding what content to teach and how to teach it – is time intensive. It involves schools mapping out the sequence for teaching key concepts and skills across year levels and subject areas, along with developing detailed unit and lesson plans that set out what will be taught in each lesson and how it will be assessed.⁴² It needs to be done well – it matters a lot to teaching quality.⁴³

Our survey shows that many teachers find it difficult to do effective and efficient curriculum planning (see Figure 4.2). More than half (53 per cent) of teachers reported that teachers at their school spend a great deal of time ‘re-inventing the wheel’ when preparing lessons. More than 40 per cent said teachers at their school do not have access to common, detailed lesson plans, unit plans, and assessments. Almost 40 per cent said that their school has not established a detailed whole-school curriculum across subjects and year levels. These findings warrant further investigation. They are especially concerning given some governments have already invested in curriculum and teaching resources, yet teachers say they still don’t have what they need.

42. In Australia, the national curriculum sets out high-level achievement standards, but a lot of the detailed work is done at the school level to implement it, with approaches that vary by state and territory.

43. Koedel et al (2017); Partelow and Shapiro (2018); Steiner (2017); Steiner et al (2018); and G. Whitehurst (2009).

Box 3: There is still a long way to go to reduce teachers’ administrative burdens

Teachers consistently report that reducing unnecessary administration would significantly ease their workloads, as seen in numerous large studies.^a Government and school-level bureaucracy contribute to these imposts on teacher time, and both need to be addressed.

Of course, not all administration activities are unnecessary. It is important to distinguish between essential administrative tasks that could, ideally, be made less cumbersome, and those that serve little purpose and should be removed.

State and territory governments can learn from reforms in other jurisdictions. For example, in 2018 the NSW Education Minister established a working group focused on reducing the administrative burden in schools, with steps to reduce unnecessary reporting activities and improve IT systems.^b In 2021 the Minister announced a ‘Quality Time Action Plan’ to build on these initiatives as well as improve curriculum resources, and make assessment, reporting, and data collection more efficient.^c Another example is the AITSL (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership) toolkit to help school leaders trim unnecessary administration.^d

- a. See Australian studies by McGrath-Champ et al (2018); NSW Teachers Federation (2021); Rothman et al (2018); Rothman et al (2017); and Weldon and Ingvarson (2016).
- b. For terms of reference for this working group, see New South Wales Department of Education (2018).
- c. For the Quality Action Plan, see New South Wales Department of Education (2021).
- d. For the toolkit, see AITSL (2020).

In addition, almost half of teachers think collaborative preparation time – where teachers work together to develop and share lesson plans – is unhelpful. Teachers pointed to several reasons for this in their comments, including poor leadership of the meetings; discussions focusing on issues other than curriculum planning, such as administration or challenging student behaviour; teachers preferring to work individually; insufficient time for quality collaboration; and timetabling clashes that prevented teachers from meeting together.

The trends in teacher responses on the barriers to curriculum planning were largely consistent across primary and secondary teachers, all school sectors, and all levels of school advantage.⁴⁴ School leaders had similar concerns as teachers about inefficiencies in lesson planning, although to a slightly lesser degree.⁴⁵

4.2.1 Our survey shows high-quality curriculum materials could save teachers' time

Our survey suggests a key way to improve curriculum planning is to reduce the amount of time teachers spend 're-inventing the wheel' – individually searching for and creating their own curriculum unit and lesson plans, assessments, and classroom resources.

High-quality, well-sequenced curriculum materials and assessments could save teachers a lot of time. These resources would enable teachers to spend more time developing their understanding of the curriculum content and the best ways to teach it, as well as how to support students who are struggling or who have complex learning needs.⁴⁶

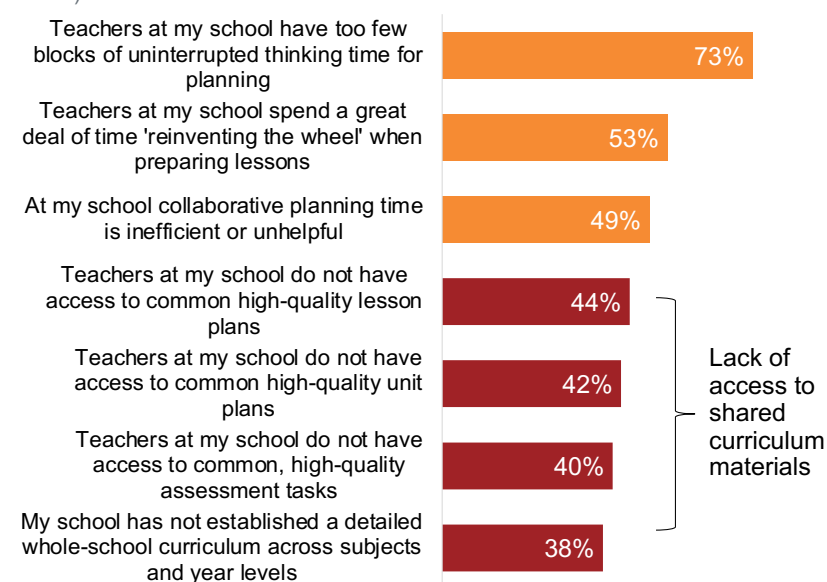
44. There were some small differences between primary and secondary, see Supplement, Question T15: Hunter et al (2022b, p. 16).

45. See Supplement, Question L12: Hunter et al (ibid, pp. 34–36).

46. Teachers commonly report not having the time to reflect on and evaluate their teaching, monitor and assess student progress, and provide feedback to students: Weldon and Ingvarson (2016).

Figure 4.2: Teachers point to big problems in lesson planning

Proportion of teachers who rated each barrier either 4 or 5 (where 5 is a major issue)



Notes: Survey question: 'Each of the statements below describes a barrier that may limit or reduce teachers' time available for lesson planning. Please indicate the extent to which you feel each is an issue for teachers' time at your school.' Teachers were asked to rate each issue from 1 to 5, with 1 being 'Not an issue at my school' and 5 being 'A major issue at my school'. Sample size: 4,686-4,975 teachers.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

This change could also improve the quality and reliability of curriculum materials used in some schools, if it means teachers are no longer scouring the internet for resources, or developing their own complex assessment tasks that have not been quality assured or tested.⁴⁷

Our survey shows that teachers are strongly in favour of more support in this area, and that it could save teachers a significant amount of time. A large majority of teachers (88 per cent) indicated that having access to common units, plans, and assessments could save them time. These teachers estimated it would save them about three hours per week on average (see Figure 4.3).

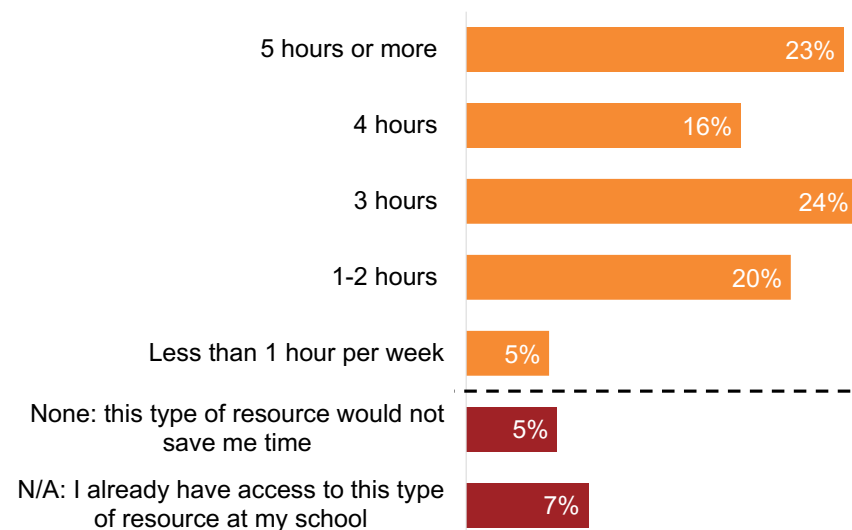
Only 7 per cent of teachers said that they already had access to high-quality common units, plans, and assessments at their school.⁴⁸ This suggests the payoff from reform in this area could be very large.

It is not only new teachers who say they would benefit from having access to high-quality common resources, but experienced teachers too. More than 60 per cent of teachers with more than 10 years' experience say they would save three or more hours a week if they had access to high-quality common units, plans, and assessments (see Figure 4.4).

4.3 Governments should examine the best models for school-wide curriculum planning

Governments should systematically examine different approaches to school-wide curriculum, unit, and lesson planning to identify the best ways to help teachers access and use high-quality common resources without the need to 'reinvent the wheel'. Ideally, all schools

Figure 4.3: Most teachers say they would save many hours each week if they had access to high-quality common resources
Proportion of responses indicating expected time savings



Notes: Survey question: 'If you had access to high-quality common units, plans, and assessments, about how many hours per week of preparation time do you think you could save?' Sample size: 4,594 teachers.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

47. Partelow and Shapiro (2018); Steiner (2017); Steiner et al (2018); and G. Whitehurst (2009).

48. There are some small differences between states and territories on this answer, see Supplement, Question T16: Hunter et al (2022b, p. 18).

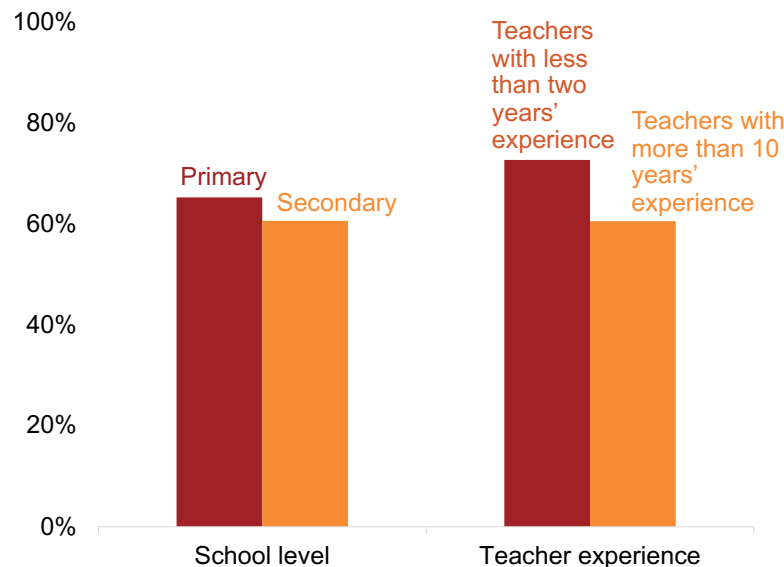
and teachers should have easy access to a range of quality-assured plans which they can adopt and tailor as needed for their context.

Australia should examine the impact of local efforts as well as the steps the UK government has taken to support more effective curriculum planning.⁴⁹ For example, in 2014 the UK government set up a working group to examine how schools plan lessons. The working group found that teachers were often each preparing lessons from scratch and trawling the internet to find the ‘perfect’ lesson resource. The working group recommended that all teachers have access to fully developed curriculum plans, so they could then spend less time focusing on what to teach and more time on how to teach it well.⁵⁰

Since then, the UK government has established a Curriculum Fund, including \$4.4 million for a pilot program on ways to improve teacher access to school-wide curriculum plans and resources. The pilot funded several ‘lead’ schools to develop and share high-quality curriculum resources with other schools in their networks. Results so far have been positive. More than half of teachers in the pilot said that access to the new shared curriculum resources had reduced their workload and 40 per cent said their workload had not changed. Generally teachers said that they spent less time searching for lesson resources and had more time to plan for how to deliver lessons and support struggling students. A minority of teachers (7%) reported increased workload as they needed additional time to understand and adapt new lesson materials for their students.⁵¹ As the example in Box 4 shows, models like this can work in Australian schools.

A high-quality curriculum should be coherent and well-aligned at the whole-school level. This requires teachers to come to a shared

Figure 4.4: Even experienced teachers say they would save three or more hours if they had access to high-quality common resources
Proportion of teachers indicating they would save three or more hours if they had access to high-quality common units, plans, and assessments



Notes: Survey question: ‘If you had access to high-quality common units, plans, and assessments, about how many hours per week of preparation time do you think you could save?’ Sample size: 4,594 teachers (split by primary and secondary); 2,816 teachers (split by years of experience).

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers’ time.

49. For example the lessons learned from the Queensland Government’s investments in Curriculum into the Classroom resources should be examined.

50. Independent Teacher Workload Review Group (2016).

51. CooperGibson Research (2021).

understanding of what good curriculum, unit, and lesson plans look like and how they should be delivered across all classes in a school. Teachers require collaborative planning time to work together to achieve this shared understanding. In our survey, almost half of respondents raised concerns that current collaborative planning time at their school is inefficient or unhelpful (see Figure 2.5). Understanding and addressing these concerns from teachers will be essential to ensure all schools in Australia have access to – and use – high-quality curriculum materials.

Box 4: How Docklands Primary School develops high-quality, shared curriculum resources and lesson plans

Docklands Primary is a new school in central Melbourne. Its top priority in its first year has been to establish effective literacy instruction. A key step has been the development of a high-quality curriculum scope and sequence, common assessment schedule, and lesson plans for the daily literacy block.

The school has invested up-front in the development of rigorous, shared lesson plans that are highly sequenced from Prep to Year 6, led by a literacy expert at the school. This approach ensures all students have similar learning opportunities, regardless of the class they are in. It will also save teachers considerable time in future years.

As the principal explained to Grattan Institute, Docklands Primary's approach means individual teachers avoid spending 'hours and hours' searching for resources on Google, as many teachers elsewhere currently do. Instead, their time can be spent asking questions like:

How are we going to teach this concept? How are we going to check that students have mastered it? And then, what are we going to do if they haven't?

As a new school, Docklands Primary is still developing its approach to teaching and learning. It is committed to evaluating the results of its approach over time and making further refinements, including finding ways to scale up its approach as the school grows.

5 Third reform direction: Rethink the way teachers' work is organised

Policy decisions and industrial agreements shape the fundamental ways teachers' work is organised in schools, for example by setting the number of face-to-face teaching hours required each week, the number of students in each class, and expectations about the work teachers do during term breaks.

One relatively straightforward way to make more time for teachers to prepare for great teaching would be for governments to reduce maximum face-to-face teaching hours for all teachers, as set out in industrial agreements. But on its own, this would be an expensive, one-size-fits all response, and would probably constrain government spending on other reforms that may be more effective in supporting teachers' work and student learning.

Governments should avoid making this change before first exploring more cost-effective options, including the reforms discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. In addition, this chapter proposes two further options that involve empowering school leaders to rethink the ways their teachers' work is organised.

First, governments should ensure there is flexibility for school leaders to increase average class sizes a little to create more preparation time for teachers. Second, governments should empower school leaders to schedule more structured preparation and planning activities in non-term time, to reduce teachers' workloads during the school term.

5.1 Governments should avoid locking in universal reductions in teachers' face-to-face teaching hours

One way to ease pressure on teachers would be to reduce the total number of hours they teach face-to-face.

Many schools already use some of their discretionary school budget to 'buy' additional preparation time for teachers. For example, some primary schools employ additional specialist teachers (such as science teachers) to take classes once or twice a week. This reduces the face-to-face teaching load of generalist classroom teachers, which can create more preparation time above the minimum required by industrial agreements.

Similarly, some secondary schools use some of their discretionary budget to employ more teachers than are strictly needed. This gives them the option of reducing the number of classes allocated to some or all teachers, to increase their preparation time.

Some unions have called on governments to reduce teachers' face-to-face teaching hours, through sector-wide industrial agreements, to increase teacher preparation time.⁵² But governments should not rush into this reform without first exploring cost-effective ways to make time for great teaching.

Decreasing all teachers' maximum face-to-face teaching hours would be very expensive – we estimate it would cost up to \$2.3 billion a year to reduce all government school teachers' hours by two each week across Australia.⁵³

52. For example, teacher unions in Victoria and NSW have called for a reduction in teachers' face-to-face teaching time by at least two hours a week, to increase the preparation time available: NSW Teachers Federation (2021) and Power (2021).

53. Our \$2.3 billion estimate assumes face-to-face teaching hours are covered by permanent teaching staff, at an hourly rate based on average teacher salaries. It assumes a reduction in face-to-face teaching hours from 20.4 to 18.4 per week per secondary teacher and 21.6 to 19.6 per primary teacher. This is an upper-bound estimate, given some teachers may already be operating on less than these face-to-face teaching hours. Sources: Grattan analysis of weekly pay from ABS (2019, Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours (Cat. no 6306.0));

It would be expensive because with each teacher teaching fewer hours, governments would need more teachers than before to cover the existing amount of classroom instruction. In some subjects and geographic areas that already have teacher shortages, finding additional new teachers to fill these roles could be particularly challenging.⁵⁴

Locking in blanket reductions in face-to-face teaching time would make it harder for governments to afford reforms that could also support teachers and students, such as investing in more disability support staff. It would also make it more difficult for governments to fund increases in individual teacher salaries, to make teaching a more competitive career option.⁵⁵

A one-size-fits all reduction in teaching time would also not account for differences in the needs of schools – disadvantaged schools would be treated in the same way as advantaged schools, despite needing more resources.

Finally, it would be hard to justify extra money for industrial changes that reduce face-to-face teaching hours when there are significant opportunities to make more time for great teaching by better matching teachers' work to their expertise (as discussed in Chapter 3) and by reducing the burden of unnecessary tasks and the need for teachers to reinvent the wheel in curriculum planning (as discussed in Chapter 4). Simply buying extra preparation hours for teachers would not fix existing problems in schools that are both frustrating for teachers and waste their time.

staffing numbers from ACARA (2020a) and ABS (2020, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed (February 2020) (Cat. no 6291.0.55.001, EQ08)); and teachers' and school heads' teaching and working hours from OECD (2021).

54. AITSL (2021b).

55. See discussion in the Grattan Institute report *Attracting high achievers to teaching*: Goss and Sonnemann (2019).

Instead of blanket industrial changes, governments should work with teachers' unions to ensure school leaders have enough flexibility under policy settings and industrial agreements to organise teachers' work in other cost-effective ways that open up more preparation time for great teaching. In particular, it should be easier for school leaders to:

- make small increases in average class sizes to 'buy' more preparation time for teachers, where this makes sense in each school's context; and
- better smooth teachers' workloads between peak periods during term time and quieter periods during non-term time.

5.2 Small increases in class sizes could help schools 'buy' more preparation time for teachers

The best evidence shows that small changes in class sizes have minimal impact on most students' learning (see Box 5). But small increases in class sizes can save schools a significant amount of money, which can be used to lighten the face-to-face teaching load and free up more preparation time for teachers (see Box 7).⁵⁶

The right balance between class size and each teacher's face-to-face teaching load and preparation time is likely to depend on the context of each school, including the learning and support needs of its students and the level of expertise and experience of its teachers. For this reason, school leaders will generally be best placed to strike the right balance, within sensible limits.

56. If teachers instead teach larger, but fewer, classes, this can free up resources to pay for more preparation time for teachers, while ensuring students continue to receive the same amount of instruction time as before. In general, larger schools may have more options to increase class sizes. It may also be easier to do so in some subjects than others.

Box 5: Small changes in class sizes don't affect student learning

Several rigorous studies find no or only small benefits of reducing class sizes for student learning.^a Where studies do find benefits, the classes need to be very small – ideally less than 20 students.^b Unless a change to class size is large enough to allow a teacher to change their approach to teaching, there appears to be little impact on student learning.^c

However, some evidence shows small class sizes can make a difference for educationally disadvantaged students.^d This suggests that class size policies should be targeted to different types of school environments, rather than system-wide averages.

Some teachers worry that disruptive student behaviour will be a bigger challenge if classes are larger. But rather than attempting to address behaviour challenges through smaller class sizes, it may be more effective to directly provide targeted supports to the specific students who are struggling to engage in the classroom.^e

A better option than keeping class sizes small is to create opportunities for teachers and other staff to work intensively with small groups of students on specific learning challenges. There is robust evidence that small-group instruction can be a highly effective supplement to classroom instruction.^f

a. Chingos (2012); Jepsen and Rivkin (2009).

b. For a summary of the evidence see Education Endowment Foundation (2021b).

c. Ibid.

d. Blatchford et al (2002); Nye et al (2004); G. J. Whitehurst and Chingos (2011); and Zyngier (2014). Some studies find no change: Hoxby (2000) and Jepsen and Rivkin (2009).

e. For a summary of the evidence see Education Endowment Foundation (2021c).

f. See Education Endowment Foundation (2021d).

5.2.1 Most teachers would prefer slightly larger classes in exchange for more preparation time

Teachers are rarely asked to consider the trade-offs between class sizes and preparation time. Our 2021 survey did just this. The results suggest most teachers would prefer to teach slightly larger classes if the money saved was re-invested in additional teacher preparation time.

We asked teachers to choose between two hypothetical schools. For primary teachers, the first school had smaller classes (23 students) and no additional time to prepare for class. The second school had larger classes (26 students) and an additional two hours of preparation time each week. A large majority of primary teachers (79 per cent) said they would prefer to teach in the school with larger classes and an additional two hours of preparation time each week (see Figure 5.1).

We asked secondary teachers and school leaders similar questions. They were even more likely to prefer to work in the hypothetical school with slightly larger classes and additional preparation time – about 85 per cent of secondary teachers and 91 per cent of school leaders chose this option.

These findings hold across all three sectors – government, independent, and Catholic – across all states, for teachers with all levels of experience, and there were no notable differences for schools with more disadvantaged students.

We also tested teachers' and school leaders' preferences when class sizes were even larger, asking respondents to choose between one hypothetical school with classes of 27 students and no additional preparation time and a second hypothetical school with classes of 30 students and two hours of additional preparation time a week. Most respondents – albeit a smaller majority – continued to prefer

the second school (see Figure 5.2). Box 6 provides examples of the reasoning respondents provided to explain their choice.

Given average Australian class sizes are around 22 students in secondary and 23-to-24 students in primary schools, these findings are compelling.⁵⁷

Of course change would not necessarily be easy, and some school leaders pointed to barriers to implementing larger class sizes to free up teacher preparation time in their school. These included getting all teachers and parents on board with slightly larger class sizes, the need to change class size limits in existing industrial agreements, the physical size of their classrooms, and whether they could find good-quality teachers to cover for reduced teaching hours.

It is important to also recognise that in some cases a shift to slightly larger class sizes may increase the amount of preparation work each teacher must do for the extra individual students, for example marking. But in most cases teachers are still likely to have more preparation time than before. Many teachers in our survey commented that any extra time spent on preparing for the additional students in the class is likely to be less than the extra two hours of preparation time (see Box 6).

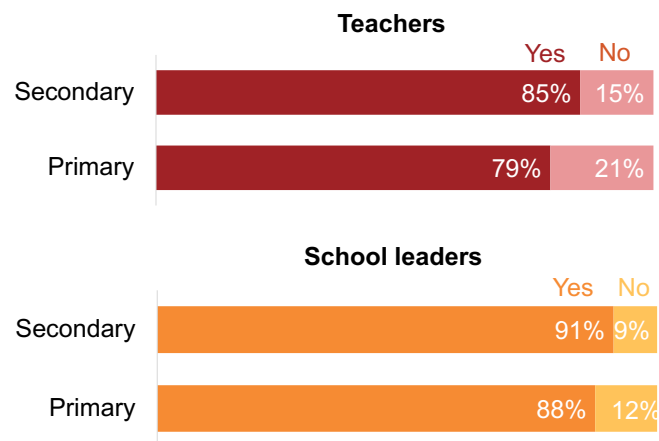
School leaders should be supported to make these changes now, where they can, while governments address the barriers through reforms over time.⁵⁸

57. These average class size estimates are from OECD (2021). They should be interpreted carefully, as small schools tend to have smaller class sizes due to lower enrolments. The significant number of small schools in Australia is likely to reduce overall average class size.

58. For example, 61 per cent of school leaders in our survey said that industrial or employment requirements often limit their ability to make changes that would increase time for teachers (see Figure 2.7).

Figure 5.1: Most teachers and school leaders prefer slightly larger classes in exchange for an extra two hours of preparation time

Prefer larger class of 25/26 students with two extra hours preparation time (rather than class of 22/23 students)

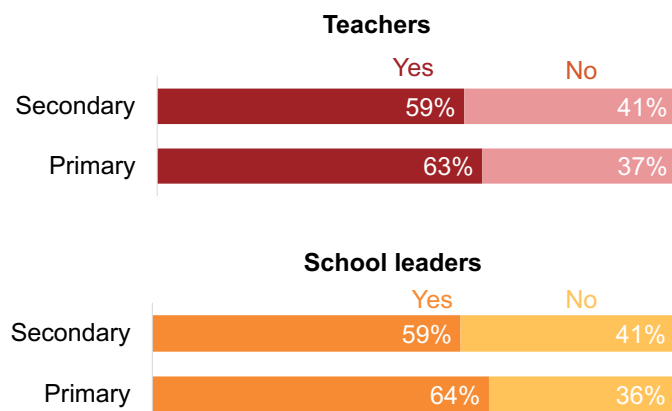


Notes: We asked teachers and school leaders to choose between two schools. One school had smaller classes (22 students for secondary, 23 for primary) and no additional teacher preparation time. The second school had larger classes (25 students for secondary, 26 for primary) with two hours of extra preparation time per week. See Supplement for complete question: Hunter et al (2022b). Sample size: 4,534 teachers and 371 school leaders.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

Figure 5.2: Even larger classes – up to 30 students – are preferred in exchange for two extra hours of preparation time each week

Prefer larger classes of 30 students with 2 hours extra preparation time (rather than class of 27 students)



Notes: We asked teachers and school leaders to choose between two schools. One school had smaller classes (27 students) and no additional teacher preparation time. The second school had larger classes (30 students) with two hours of extra preparation time per week. See Supplement for complete question: Hunter et al (2022b). Sample size: 3,504 teachers and 222 school leaders.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

Box 6: Teachers were mostly positive about small increases in class size in exchange for more preparation time

'It is easier to deliver an accessible lesson for a variety of students in a larger class with more planning time than in a smaller class with less planning time. Planning time is essential to provide differentiated instruction properly in classes.'

'With properly planned activities, we can cater for larger class sizes, with meaningful instructional sequences and approaches.'

'Would have more time to adequately plan meaningful lessons which cater for diverse learners and provide feedback, regardless of more students.'

'Having more planning time means more effective and interesting lessons. Cuts down on behaviour issues. More time to plan effective assessment tasks which suit all learners.'

Box 7: A small increase in class sizes could fund a reduction in face-to-face teaching time

At the most basic level, total spending on teacher salaries is determined by the total number of teachers employed and average teacher salary levels (see Figure 5.3).

The number of teachers employed is determined largely by teachers' mandated face-to-face teaching hours and class sizes.^a

Changing teaching hours and class sizes can have a large impact on total spending on teacher salaries, which accounts for a major proportion of government spending on schools.

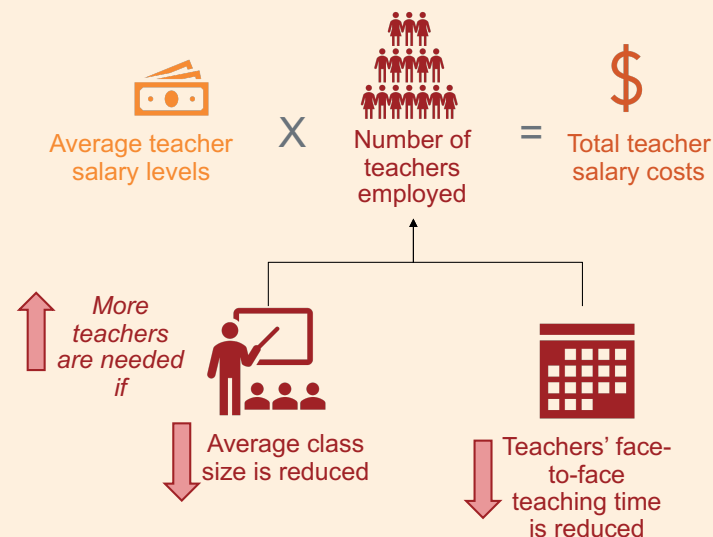
Reducing teachers' face-to-face teaching hours or reducing class sizes, for example, means more teachers are needed to deliver the same amount of instruction to students, thereby increasing spending on teachers overall, even though average teacher salaries don't change.

But the costs of changing one factor (e.g., class sizes) can be offset by changing another factor (e.g., teaching hours), without affecting total spending on teacher salaries.

This means that governments (or schools) could slightly increase average class sizes to fund a slight reduction in teachers' face-to-face teaching time.

a. The number of hours of classroom instruction students receive each week is also relevant. For the simplicity of this analysis, we assume this is fixed.

Figure 5.3: Smaller class sizes and fewer face-to-face teaching hours requires more teachers and pushes up total costs



5.2.2 Some high-performing education systems already run larger classes and give more preparation time to teachers

Singapore, Japan, and South Korea are examples of high-performing education systems where teachers already take larger classes (27-to-33 students) but teach for fewer hours (18 hours each week) than is standard in Australia (see Table 5.1). Teachers in these systems have more time for non-classroom work, including preparation.

Shanghai provides an even sharper example. Teachers in Shanghai take classes of 40-to-42 students for about 10-to-12 hours of face-to-face teaching a week. This frees up even more non-teaching time for teachers. By contrast, Australian teachers have a lot less non-teaching time (see Figure 5.4).⁵⁹

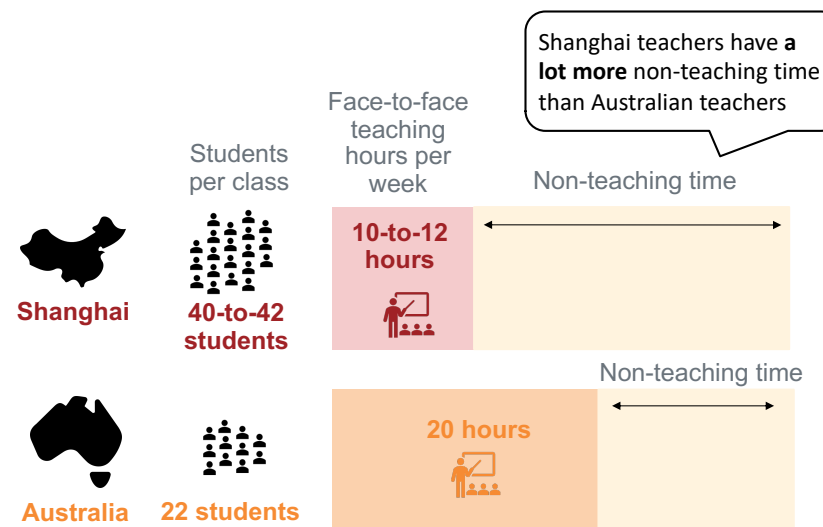
Table 5.1: In some high-performing systems, teachers have larger classes but fewer face-to-face teaching hours than in Australia

	Class size, average	Face-to-face teaching hours per week, average
Singapore	33	18
Japan	32	18
South Korea	26	18
OECD average	22	21
Australia	22	20
Finland	19	21

Sources: **Class size:** OECD (2021, D2.3, Lower Secondary Institutions, 2019 data); Singapore class size is taken from Singapore Ministry of Education (2021, Average, Secondary schools, 2020 data). **Face-to-face teaching hours:** OECD (2018b, Teaching and Learning International Survey Volume I, 2018 data, Average Time Teachers Report Spending Per Week on Teaching (Hours), Annex C, Chapter 2, Table I.2.27, Lower secondary institutions).

59. See Grattan Institute's *Catching-Up* report: Jensen (2012).

Figure 5.4: Teachers in Shanghai have more non-teaching time than teachers in Australia, giving them more time to prepare



Source: Adapted from Jensen (2012) and OECD (2021).

5.3 Smoothing out lumpy workloads over the year could also make more time for effective teaching

Many teachers say their workload is ‘lumpy’ over the year. Some teachers describe feeling intense pressures on their time during the 40 or so weeks of term each year, and considerable downtime in the remaining weeks of the year, which include non-term time (student holidays).⁶⁰

60. There is little data on the number of hours that teachers work in non-term time in Australia. In one 2014 survey of South Australian Catholic school teachers, most teachers reported working five hours in total during their previous school holidays period (either between Term 2 and 3 or between Term 3 and 4), with a smaller proportion (25 per cent) working more than 20 hours: Daly (2015).

The employment conditions relating to teachers' annual leave and requirements to work (either at their school or elsewhere) during the school holiday periods vary significantly across states and territories and sectors. But generally, classroom teachers are not expected to attend school during term breaks except for a small number of designated planning days each year. These planning days are commonly used for whole-school or team-level preparation activities, mandated training, and professional development.

The amount of preparation and planning work that teachers actually do during term breaks appears to vary considerably; some teachers say they do a lot, others say they generally do very little.⁶¹

There are some indications that teachers may be trapped in a vicious cycle, where significant pressures during term time lead to teachers feeling burnt-out by the end of each term, making it harder for them to focus on preparation and planning activities during the term breaks. One teacher in our survey said:

'With all the overtime that teachers do during the term, they want their holidays to recharge.'

School-level reforms that spread teachers' work more evenly across the school year – by shifting some of the preparation and planning tasks currently done during term time to school breaks – could ease the work pressures on teachers during term time and reduce the risk of burnout.

Our survey tested this proposition with school leaders and teachers. We asked whether they believed teachers' term-time workload would be reduced if schools required teachers to spend an additional 2-to-3 days working together at school before the start of each term preparing for effective teaching. Teachers would use these days to, for example, undertake curriculum and lesson planning activities together or engage in high-quality professional learning. These days would be *in addition to*

61. 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time. Teachers' free text comments varied a lot on the extent to which teachers worked in non-term time.

the existing planning days most teachers are already required to attend during non-term time.

A majority of teachers (58 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that such a change would reduce teacher workloads during term time (see Figure 5.5).

This finding holds across primary and secondary teachers as well as beginning teachers and more-experienced teachers, although primary teachers and beginning teachers tended to be more supportive overall.⁶²

A larger majority of school leaders (71 per cent) also agreed or strongly agreed with this proposition.

Survey respondents provided a range of views on the issue. Some respondents pointed to potential challenges (see Box 8).

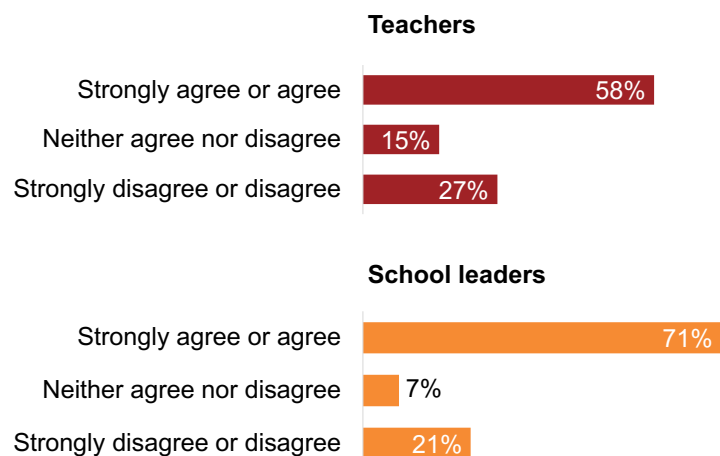
Our survey findings suggest there is an opportunity to smooth out teacher workloads over the year by doing more activities, such as curriculum planning, in term breaks to free up more time during the busy term periods.

Governments should empower school leaders to schedule more preparation and planning during term breaks, to smooth out teachers' lumpy workloads. For example, this could include more comprehensive curriculum and lesson planning so that teachers are more prepared for the whole term, not just the first few weeks.

These reforms may require changes to policy settings or teachers' salary and employment conditions in different jurisdictions, depending on existing agreements and teachers' expectations about attendance at school during non-term periods.

62. Primary teachers are more likely to agree (61 per cent) than secondary teachers (55 per cent), and beginning teachers are more likely to agree (63 per cent) than teachers with more than 10 years' experience (55 per cent).

Figure 5.5: Most teachers and school leaders say workloads would be reduced if teachers did more planning together in non-term time



Notes: Survey question: 'Most teachers already attend planning days at their school before term time. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Teacher workloads during term time would be reduced if schools required teachers to spend an additional 2-to-3 days together at school before the start of each term preparing for teaching (for example to undertake curriculum and lesson planning or high-quality professional learning)?' Sample size: 4,659 teachers, 377 school leaders. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: 2021 Grattan survey on teachers' time.

Box 8: Survey responses to doing more preparation during term breaks were more positive than negative

A majority of teachers (58 per cent) and school leaders (71 per cent) agreed or strongly agreed that doing more preparation in non-term time would help reduce teachers' workloads during term time:

'Specific allocated time before the term begins would assist the quality of teaching/learning and stress on teachers during term.'

'Teams would be prepared and staff would be able to work together on a whole-school approach.'

School leaders also pointed to the ability to do more detailed planning and to improve the quality of preparation:

'Gives teachers a chance to collaborate and plan to an in-depth level, definitely not achievable during term.'

'Having slabs of time is much more efficient than shorter, more frequent times for planning.'

A minority of teachers (27 per cent) and school leaders (21 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal:

'It would highly depend on whether this time was actually used for genuine planning and collaboration.'

Some teachers were also concerned that a lot of planning would still need to be done during term. And some pointed to concerns about losing time needed to re-charge and for family commitments.

And where schools use extra days in non-term time to do more *collaborative* curriculum and lesson planning, this change may require big improvements in the way collaborative planning is done to address some of the concerns raised by teachers and school leaders in our survey (see Figure 4.2).

These reforms could help ensure teachers' professional work follows a more sustainable pattern across the course of the year, making it easier for teachers to focus on great teaching during term time, and reducing burn-out across the profession.

6 What governments should do

Governments need to think big about how to create more time for great teaching. They need to avoid ad hoc, piecemeal solutions and start examining systematically more effective ways to organise the teaching and wider schools workforce.

We recommend governments adopt the three reform directions identified in this report. To implement them, governments should invest \$60 million over the next five years on pilot studies to test and evaluate the most promising specific reforms.

Governments should also provide better training and guidance for school leaders on the steps they can take now to create more time for great teaching.

6.1 Systematically explore better ways to organise schools and the school workforce

This report shows Australia needs to fundamentally rethink how teachers' work is organised.

School organisational models have not kept pace with changes in schools over recent decades. We continue to ask teachers to do more, but we've not yet examined how realistic it is to achieve all that within a 38-hour working week. The Grattan survey shows teachers are struggling to find the time to get to a core aspect of their job – preparing effectively for the classroom.

We cannot expect every school leader in each of the 9,542 schools around Australia to solve these challenges on their own.⁶³ As the ultimate custodians of Australia's multiple school education systems, governments must step up.

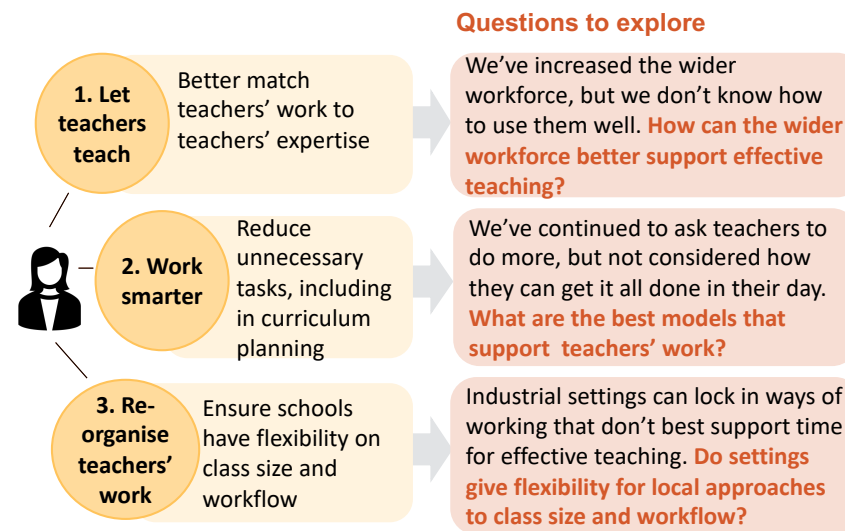
63. ACARA (2020b).

Governments must investigate systematically the best ways to organise and support teachers' work.

Governments should adopt the three reform directions we have identified in this report, and should seek to answer the big questions within each of them through a new program of research (see Figure 6.1).

And education departments should learn from the research investments that develop best-practice 'models of care' in the health sector (see Box 9).

Figure 6.1: The big questions governments should explore to make more time for effective teaching



6.1.1 Explore the most cost-effective ways to free up time for teachers

Our survey shows that cost-effective reforms are possible. We identify examples of reform options within our three reform directions, that a large majority of teachers feel positive about.

For example, these two reforms together could save teachers five hours a week:

- Support staff could cover teachers’ extra-curricular activities for two hours a week (almost 70 per cent of teachers in our survey agree; see Chapter 3).
- Teachers could be given high-quality common resources to free up three hours a week (almost 90 per cent of teachers agree; see Chapter 4).

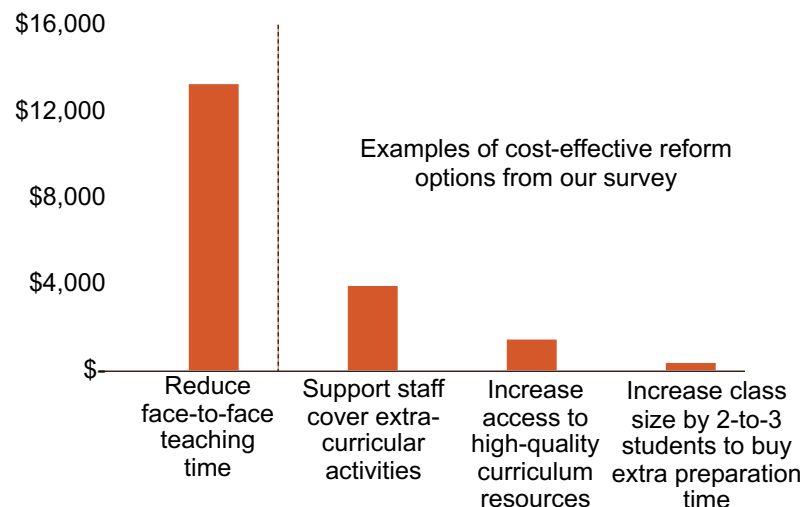
In addition, the following two reforms could provide significant time savings:

- Class sizes could be increased by about three students, where appropriate, to ‘buy’ two hours a week of extra preparation time, at very little or no cost (between 59 per cent and 85 per cent of teachers generally agree, depending on the existing class size; see Chapter 5).
- Increasing opportunities for teachers to work together in an effective and well-structured way in non-term time could create significantly more time to prepare for effective teaching. A majority of teachers in our survey indicated this would reduce their term-time workload.

We recommend governments do not rush into making expensive, one-size-fits-all reductions to face-to-face teaching hours to give teachers

Figure 6.2: Our survey identifies examples of cost-effective reforms that could each free up two hours of teacher time each week

Cost per teacher per annum to free up two hours of teacher time per week, for each reform option



Notes: Costs are indicative only. The cost of reductions in face-to-face teaching hours is based on an average teacher salary for primary and secondary teachers. The cost of support staff to cover extra-curricular activities is based on an average education aide salary. The cost of increased access to curriculum resources includes upfront development costs of new materials and teacher training, and is calculated based on a three-year annual average to account for large upfront costs in the first year. The cost of increasing class size includes provisions for school-leader training and logistics.

Sources: Grattan analysis of weekly pay from ABS (2019, Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours (Cat. no 6306.0)); staffing numbers from ACARA (2020a) and ABS (2020, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed (February 2020) (Cat. no 6291.0.55.001, EQ08)); and teachers’ and school heads’ teaching and working hours from OECD (2021).

more preparation time (as discussed in Chapter 5). Government should explore more cost-effective reforms first (see Figure 6.2).

6.2 Invest \$60 million on pilot studies and trials of the best reforms

To implement the three reform directions, governments should invest \$60 million over five years in pilot studies and trials that evaluate the most promising reform options to improve teacher workloads.

Pilot studies could test new approaches at, say, between 10 and 100 schools, gathering information on feasibility, cost, and design improvements, before governments decide whether to roll out the reform more broadly.⁶⁴ Any successful pilot initiatives should move on to ‘efficacy’ and ‘effectiveness’ trials, which test whether an intervention works under real-world conditions.

Box 10 provides examples of pilot studies that could be conducted within the proposed \$60 million budget, in a variety of states and schools and among a range of student populations. To be most effective, pilot studies must have clear questions to answer, good data collection, careful consideration of sample characteristics, and rigorous analyses of data collected.⁶⁵ The \$60 million budget should cover the costs of piloting new small-scale initiatives, including program and implementation costs, incentives for schools to participate, and rigorous evaluation of the outcomes.⁶⁶

This investment represents only a minuscule fraction (less than 0.1 per cent) of Australian governments’ annual \$65 billion expenditure

64. Institute of Education Sciences (2013); Institute of Education Sciences (2021); and Thabane et al (2010). For a discussion on the value of pilot projects see the Education Endowment Foundation (2017).

65. Institute of Education Sciences (2021).

66. Once the pilots have been defined, there may be additional program-related costs to be considered.

Box 9: How the health sector develops innovative models of patient care

The health system is constantly challenged to revise traditional methods of care to keep pace with various changes – from the discovery of new treatments, changes in patient demographics, changes to hospital budgets, or simply to overcome existing problems in delivery.

Unlike school education, the health sector has pragmatic systems and processes to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate novel ‘models of care’. Governments invest heavily in research to develop tightly defined ‘models of care’ – which define the gold standard for the way health services should be organised and delivered.

This process involves testing different service delivery methods, with close attention paid to what resources and staffing skills are needed. Models of care are developed using best evidence and expert opinion, and span many fields including palliative care, primary care, disability, and chronic conditions.

Models of care are backed up by ‘care paths’, where the different tasks or interventions by the range of professionals involved in the patient’s care (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, social workers, etc.) are defined, optimised, and sequenced.

on recurrent school funding.⁶⁷ It would be a small price to pay to understand how to improve the way schools operate.

6.3 Invest in training for school leaders

Testing new approaches through rigorous pilots will take time. But there are still things school leaders can do now to make more time for great teaching. Governments need to recognise the significant challenges school leaders face and better support them to manage school resources – including teachers' time – strategically, by providing better training and on-site support.

6.3.1 We ask a lot of school leaders

We expect school leaders to do a lot. As well as setting strategic goals, we expect them to understand intimately how their school budgets are spent, how teachers' work is organised, and what specific changes would improve the performance of their students.

Schools are large and complex organisations. The average primary school in Australia has an annual income of more than \$4 million; for the average secondary school, that figure is about \$14 million.⁶⁸ The average primary school has about 30 teaching and non-teaching staff, and the average secondary school about 90.⁶⁹ By contrast, only about 7 per cent of Australian businesses employ more than 20 staff.⁷⁰

67. Productivity Commission (2021).

68. About 80 per cent of schools have an annual turnover of \$2 million or higher, compared to only 7 per cent of Australian businesses. Grattan analysis of ACARA (2020c) and ABS (2021b, Counts of Australian Businesses (8165.0), including Entries and Exits, June 2020, Table 17).

69. At the top end, about 2 per cent of schools have more than 200 staff: Grattan analysis of ACARA (2020c).

70. Grattan analysis of ABS (2021b, Counts of Australian Businesses (8165.0), June 2021, Table 13a).

Box 10: Examples of pilot study questions

Reform 1: Let teachers teach

- What conditions best enable teaching assistants to work with teachers to support high-quality teaching?
- What conditions enable specialists (e.g., literacy experts) to work with teachers and students on complex teaching interventions?
- What training do teachers and psychologists need so they can work together most effectively?
- Can support staff take on more of teachers' 'other duties'?

Reform 2: Work smarter

- Do school-wide approaches that give teachers access to shared high-quality curriculum resources reduce unnecessary work?
- What supports do schools need to adapt shared curriculum resources to their local contexts?

Reform 3: Reorganise teachers' work

- How feasible is it for schools to run larger class sizes to free up more preparation time for teachers? What are the barriers?
- How can teachers be supported to do more collaborative curriculum planning or preparation work during non-term time?

School leaders not only need financial and strategic skills but also change-management skills. To make changes that improve teacher time-use, school leaders must embark on a change process that brings staff, students, and parents along with them.

6.3.2 Despite the challenges they face, there are changes school leaders can make now

In our survey, school leaders pointed to several barriers that prevent them from making positive changes at their school, including recruitment and funding challenges, industrial and employment requirements and bureaucratic requirements (see Figure 2.7).

These are significant issues. But there are still immediate opportunities for school leaders to support a greater focus on effective teaching in each of the three reform directions. Our accompanying report for school leaders, *Making time for great teaching: A guide for principals*, which includes five school case studies, identifies opportunities that do not require immediate government action. Most importantly, school leaders can review their school's priorities, to ensure they are clear and achievable and backed by a plan that allocates resources accordingly.

Our 2014 report, *Making time for great teaching*, also showed that most schools have opportunities to prioritise resources in new ways to free up more time for teachers to focus on effective teaching.⁷¹ Most of the time savings were found by reducing the time teachers spend on ineffective professional development, staff meetings, school assemblies, and supervising extra-curricular activities. Many of the potential time savings identified in our 2014 report remain highly relevant for schools today.

71. Jensen et al (2014).

6.3.3 Give school leaders specialist training on site

Building school leaders' capacity for strategic decision-making is a long-term endeavour, but governments can invest now in specialised training to help school leaders to free up teacher time. Training could include formal sessions and workshops, and specialist teams visiting schools to give leaders advice on teacher time-savings relevant to their school context.

For example, in preparing our 2014 report, Grattan Institute's Education team worked with six schools as case-studies.⁷² After a series of focus groups and interviews with staff, we identified a range of tailored, local options that created up to 80 additional periods a year (two periods a week) of additional time for teachers to focus on high-value activities.

Governments should fund a group of school leaders and organisational specialists with skills in school-level strategic resource management, to provide on-site coaching for schools.

These coaches would help schools identify how they can best organise their school's resources, including staff and time, to achieve their strategic objectives. Schools that could benefit from more support should be provided with a coach who spends several days working at the school to understand its context and provide tailored advice suited to its particular organisational needs.

72. Ibid.

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