

Final Report

By Sid Womack

Recipient of a Professional Development Grant in October 2012

Presentation of A Paper at the 8th Critical Questions in Education Conference in
Springfield, Missouri of the Academy for Educational Studies, October 15-16,
2012

Report Filed February 7, 2013

B. Re-statement of Problems Researched:

What kinds of practices in public school education in Arkansas have been rated as “time wasters” by teachers and administrators alike? An available sample of 485 educators among 15 randomly drawn, stratified school districts were polled.

C. Review of the professional enhancement opportunity , creative work, or research procedure. This is not the first time I have researched this problem. In 1990, I polled nearly a thousand Arkansas educators, asking them about how many hours per week they worked, what they did while they were working for their school districts, and what kinds of monetary gifts they made to their classrooms. Those findings were reported in several Arkansas newspapers and in the American School Board Journal. I even received a personal note by mail from then Governor Bill Clinton, thanking me for the research

I attempted to replicate the study in 2002. Due to low numbers of educators responding, I assumed that the data from the approximately 100 educators may not have adequately described the economic and labor conditions for educators at that time. When I replicated the study in 2011/12, the data obtained them indicated that what had been measured in 2002 were more reasonable than I had given credit for. In 2002, I made only a statewide presentation or two and let the publicity go after that.

This professional development opportunity turned out during the conference proceedings in Springfield to be more auspicious than I had predicted. The Academy for Educational Studies is now a national organization. The presentation turned out to be of national rather than regional stature. AES now has a national journal as well. I may submit articles to that journal in the near future.

A manuscript of the 2012 study is included at the end of this paper.

D. Summary of findings, outcomes, or experiences had. The findings on lesson planning are of practical importance to the teaching profession, particularly in Arkansas. On the average, educators in the public schools of Arkansas labor 60 hours per week at their jobs. Campus-level administrators put in 65 hours per week. Educators continue to donate unselfishly of their salaries to bolster the

efforts of the schools at which they work. Of particular interest from this presentation is the time drain on all educators from (1) excessive requirements for demonstrating accountability (2) faculty meetings, sometimes seemingly for the sake of meeting, and (3) time spent in IEP and similar meetings about individual students, as required by Federal law.

E. Conclusions and recommendations. The utilization of these findings after one definitive study is difficult to accomplish immediately. There will have to be other conversations and probably other studies done to focus attention upon how our bureaucracy has worked itself into this paperwork mess before change will occur. The imminent publication of our book with Rowman and Littlefield may help capture some national attention. Educators do not seem to have a problem with the concept of accountability; the problem is with reporting the same data over and over again, and to different agencies or groups, that makes certain practices true time wasters.

Appendix

Full Text of Presentation

This was summarized by Power Point for the actual presentation instead of in this form which is from our book.

What are the biggest time wasters that educators of all types put up with?

Educators go well beyond the surface expectations of their contracts and give liberally of their time and money in order to enhance their students' learning. We asked secondary teachers about some time factors that absorbed their time, yet gave them little in return.

Table 5.1

This item is specific to secondary teachers only. Which of these seems to take the most time yet yields the least benefit?

	Answer	Count	Percent	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%
1.	Faculty meetings seemingly for the sake of meeting	56	27.72%					
2.	Accountability/testing	107	52.97%					
3.	IDEA/504	18	8.91%					
4.	Club meetings/required participation in extra-curriculars such as sponsoring honorary societies, etc	21	10.40%					
	Total	202	100%					

We hadn't asked our sample this item in the two previous survey cycles in 1990 and 2002. "Meeting for the sake of meeting" seems to be on the rise locally and about 28 percent of our sample of secondary teachers identified it as a time waster. Seeing what secondary teachers think of it, these data may be something that superintendents need to visit with principals about. Occasionally principals seem to think that they need to take on the role of college professors, lecturing at length about topics that were already mastered studied in teachers' undergraduate programs. Secondary teachers who are already putting in 60 hours per week are asking for relief from duties like this that keep them away from the jobs they really need to be doing—preparing for and communicating the curriculum to students. Meetings called by administrators should have an agenda and be to the point. Administrators should never call faculty meetings just so, like the Texas rancher, they can look over their herd. Lee Iococca was right: "Lead, follow, or get out of the way."

Teachers at all grade levels were not alone at expressing discontent at the amount of time being taken with accountability: Educators of all roles cussed and discussed it alike. It is not that educators do not wish to be accountable. It is that they disdain being minutely accountable—micromanaged, in a word. They were educated to be professionals during their undergraduate programs and expect to be treated as professionals. They need some latitude to make moment decisions. It has been said that a day of teaching in a regular education classroom with few or no students with exceptionalities involves making approximately 3,000 decisions. In a classroom with IDEA, 504, Title I, migrant, ESL, and homeless students, it can go to 4,500 decisions per

day. It is a tribute to educators that they are allowed and expected to execute such a volume of decision-making every day.

In consideration of this volume of decisions that need to be made every day, and be made with 100% accuracy, the accountability asked of educators of all types should be on matters that are of major importance, not trivial ones. The more legislation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* variety that is made, the more trivial some of the record-keeping and documentation become. One wonders if our legislators haven't lost the forest for the trees.

Nine percent of our educators mentioned Section 504 and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) proceedings as being major consumers of time. The 2004 re-authorization of IDEA was intended to reduce some of the paperwork and documentation associated with special education. It seems difficult to find a special educator who will tell us that the paperwork reduction has actually occurred during the past 8 years. Yes, we want a Free Appropriate Public Education for every child. But somehow the mechanisms that have been enacted through Federal law have busied us more with paperwork than with FAPEing children. In the early 1980s—as some of us who are getting “long in the tooth” remember—the average IEP was three pages in length (Prickett, 1983). At last word to us, the average Individual Education Plan was 21 pages in length and growing. There needs to be some balance between having enough documentation and drowning ourselves in a sea of paper.

Ten percent of secondary educators identified extracurricular clubs and organizations as being a time-taker or time waster. These clubs might be organizations

such as cheer leaders or glee club, FFA, FHA, band boosters, quarter-back club, and the like. A further question that probably should have been asked is “Is your involvement in these kinds of clubs voluntary or involuntary?” If someone is being a faculty sponsor of the cheerleaders because they want to, they shouldn’t complain about the time involved. If they were assigned the task—like year book is sometimes assigned to English teachers—they may well feel that extracurricular activities are an intrusion.

Appendix B

Acceptance from the Academy of Educational Studies for the Presentation

Date: Tue, 14 Aug 2012 15:15:12 -0500

From: Academy for Educational Studies <AcademyEdStudies@MissouriState.edu>

Subject: Critical Questions in Education conference

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Accept-Language: en-US
Thread-topic: Critical Questions in Education conference

Greetings:

On behalf of the planning committee for the 2011 Critical Questions in Education conference it is my pleasure to inform you that your proposal **has been accepted** for presentation. Judging by the number of proposals we received, the topics proposed, and the varied background of the presenters, it promises to be a most enjoyable and stimulating conference. We look forward to seeing you October 15th and 16th at the University Plaza Hotel in Springfield, Missouri.

We have not determined presentation times yet, but will do so shortly. We anticipate starting the conference early Monday morning (as early as 8:00) and being finished by 3:00 on Tuesday afternoon.

We will be sending you details and registration materials in the near future.

We hope you will stay both days of the conference, and we hope you will book your hotel rooms at the University Plaza Hotel <http://www.upspringfield.com/> We have reserved rooms for both Sunday and Monday (which we are expected by the hotel to fill) at a conference rate of \$98. The hotel assures me that should you want to extend your stay before or after the conference, rooms will be available (at the conference rate, I believe). Please contact the hotel to make your reservations—and make sure you tell them this is for the Critical Questions in Education conference. Make reservations at the following number: 1-417-864-7333.

Please inform all co-presenters of this invitation to present at the conference. If you must decline this invitation for some reason, please let us know as soon as possible; otherwise, we look forward to sharing this conference with you in October.

Sincerely,

Steven P. Jones, Director
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Missouri State University
417-836-5982