



**THINKING
DIFFERENTLY
ABOUT**

TIME

PART 1: GRADES 1-9

THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT TIME

Introduction

Using time to enable success in teaching and learning is a critical part of every school's, district's and state's journey to success. It seems that there is never enough time in schools, and leaders struggle to make the most of what they have. How best to use this precious resource is a critical question.

While time in isolation from other factors cannot ensure success in teaching and learning, it is an essential element in any strategy for school improvement. Understanding how global leaders allocate and use this resource in schools can help inform our own allocation and use of time and our efforts to use the time we have most effectively. This brief looks at that question, focusing primarily on Grades 1-9.

We organized this brief around a set of time-related topics:

- ? Thinking differently about **available time**. How much total time is available to schools? How do leading systems provide adequate time for teaching and learning?
- ? Thinking differently about **school schedules**. How do schools organize time within the school day? How do schools structure schedules to enable success?
- ? Thinking differently about **developing student agency for work and life**. How do schools use time to support students in developing the competencies and habits that enable success in life and work?
- ? Thinking differently about **personalization**. How do leading systems build in flexibility and design time to enable personalization?
- ? Thinking differently about **teaching time**. How do systems balance time for teaching and non-teaching? How do systems use time productively to enable professional growth?
- ? Thinking differently about **teaching conditions**. How do systems create conditions that minimize teacher workloads and enable teacher success?



In each area, we:

Surface **thought-provoking observations** about ways these systems approach time differently.

Offer **interesting examples** of what global leaders do differently and how states and districts are implementing similar strategies.

Ask **probing questions** about the potential for using time differently and what the policy implications might be.

Using time is the second topic in our *Thinking Differently About* series focused on learning about the policies and practices of systems with strong student outcomes. This brief lets us explore the ways global leaders use time and identifies how states and districts in the United States use similar strategies. This brief focuses primarily on Grades 1-9. How time is used in upper secondary will be the subject of a subsequent brief.

Our *Thinking Differently About* series encourages outside-of-the-box thinking about each issue. Our goal is to offer examples and raise questions to initiate powerful conversations, and to set the stage for educators across the United States to explore further, share lessons learned, and to inform improvements in our schools. Please approach the brief in that spirit and consider what is different, what might be useful in your context, what that would mean for policy and for school design, and what more there is to learn.



This brief is Part 1 of a two-part series on time. Part 1 covers Grades 1-9, and the second brief will cover upper secondary (Grades 10-12). Time is a powerful condition of successful teaching and learning. We acknowledge that what is done with that time is equally important, but is not the subject of this brief.



Let's think differently! Together.



THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT

Available Time

We can learn many things by looking at how other systems use time in school. By looking at how much time schools have available and how they are using it for students and teachers we can often see things differently here at home. In these sections, we look closely at six main aspects of time focused on Grades 1-9. Our goal is to highlight a set of thought-provoking observations about time in systems with strong performance and to encourage deep conversations and more in-depth explorations of your own. A [resource list](#) is included at the end of this brief.

A key starting spot for looking at time for learning begins with a simple question: “How much time is available?”

Thought-provoking observations and interesting examples:

Fewer schools with more grades in each school creates fewer transitions for students.

In the United States, the full continuum of Grades K-12 defines common schooling. While there are many variations, we most often organize schools into three levels: elementary, middle, and high schools. Some leading systems have three levels similar to the U.S. structure, but others more commonly have only two levels which minimizes school transitions and gives students and teachers longer to get to know one another and work together. Regardless of the type of structure, many systems are organized with the “breakpoint” of common schooling occurring after Grade 9, followed by a variety of options for upper secondary Grades 10-12.

Examples

- In Estonia, students attend a basic school for Grades 1-9 and then transition to upper secondary general or vocational schools for Grades 10-12. Estonia, Finland, and Denmark have similar structures.
- In New York City’s [Community District 10](#), about half of middle school students are served in K-8 schools, rather than stand-alone middle schools. These students only have one transition from 8th to 9th grade when students begin high school.



- Singapore has primary schools with Grades 1-6 and secondary schools for Grades 7-10 or 11, depending on the programs students chose. Leading systems with a similar structure include Ireland, Hong Kong, Australia, United Kingdom, Netherlands, British Columbia, and Quebec.
- Japan has elementary schools with Grades 1-6, junior high schools with Grades 7-9, and general academic and vocational high schools with Grades 10-12.

Some Terms:

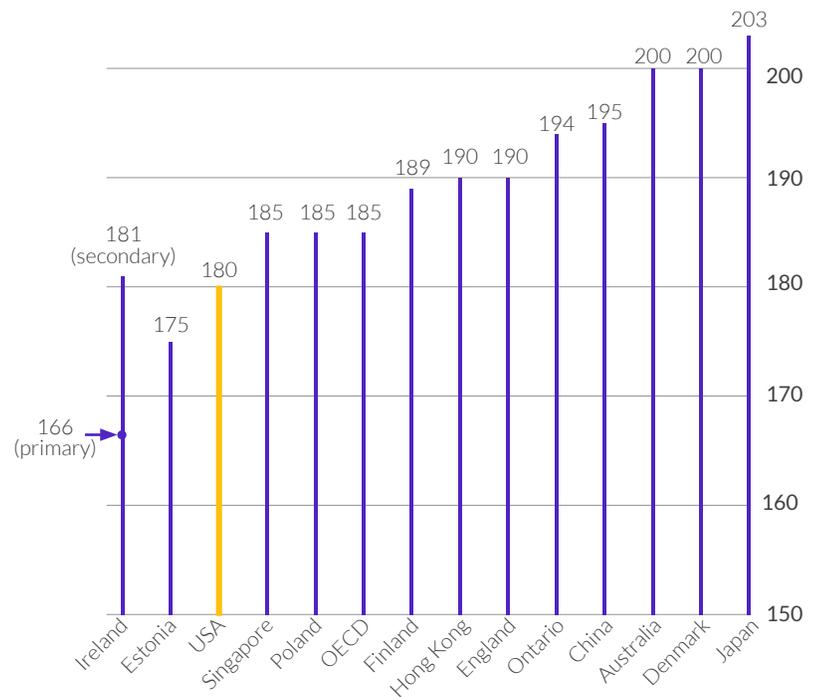
- Primary schools are generally for Grades 1-6.
- Basic schools are generally for Grades 1-9.
- Lower secondary schools are generally for Grades 7-9.
- Upper secondary schools are generally for Grades 10-12.
- Secondary schools are generally for Grades 7-11 or 12, depending on the system.



More calendar days means more time for teaching and learning.

School calendars are fundamental in allocating time for students to learn and teachers to teach. Most systems set a required or minimum number of days, with a few requiring an annual number of instructional hours instead and letting schools translate that requirement to calendar days. Across leading systems, school days vary dramatically, ranging from an average of 166 days to over 200. While some leading systems are on the low end of days, many have 190 or more days. The [U.S. average](#) is slightly lower at 180, with some variation among states. It is worth noting that some of the systems with the most calendar days have reduced days over time with no decline in performance, suggesting that there are limits to how much time is needed.

Average Number of Instructional Days per Year



Sources: OECD Education at a Glance 2023, Singapore Ministry of Education [Calendar](#), China Ministry of Education [Compulsory Education Curriculum Plan \(2022 Ver.\)](#)

Japan's schools were open on Saturdays until 2002 when the practice was outlawed. In 2013, however, schools were given the option of opening for a half day on Saturdays, with the rationale that it was preferable for students to attend a 6th day of public school than enroll in private tutoring afterschool. Most schools do not operate on Saturdays, although more opened for a 6th day as a strategy to provide additional support for learning loss from the pandemic. Korea also had school on Saturdays until 2012, when a law was passed to limit school to Monday through Friday.



School days are broadly distributed across the calendar year.

Calendars can be different not just in the number of days, but how those days are distributed. Some systems distribute days more evenly across the year, with shorter summer breaks and more or longer holidays at different points in the year. Calendar breaks tend to align with the structure of the school year. In these systems, the school year is often broken up into quarters or trimesters which can be a useful way to structure learning in smaller increments. Shorter, more frequent breaks may result in less learning loss over long summers, particularly for less advantaged students.

Examples

- The state of Washington created the [balanced calendar initiative](#) following the COVID pandemic, which offers districts the option of an adjusted school calendar to spread breaks out more evenly throughout the school year.
- In Hong Kong, students start school at the beginning of September and attend through mid-July. They have a one-week fall break, a two-week break in late December, a week off for Chinese New Year in late January or early February, a two-week spring break, and a six-week summer break. The school year follows these breaks with a fall, winter, and spring trimester.
- In Singapore, the school year [starts](#) in late January and continues through late-November. Students have a two-week spring break in March, a four-week summer break in June, a one-week fall break in September, and a six-week winter break in late November and December. Students have four terms.
- The El Paso, TX school district [shortened](#) its summer break to eight weeks and added two intercessions during the school year, one in October and one in March.
- In Ireland, students [start](#) school in early September and attend school through early July. They have a one-week break in late October, a two-week break at Christmas, a one-week break in February, a two-week break for Easter, and a six or seven-week summer break.

Length of the school day varies to fit student age and developmental level.

In addition to having more or less calendar days, the length of the school day is a key aspect of looking at available time. Some systems extend the school day in graduated increments, varying time requirements across primary and lower elementary grade bands.

Examples

- Denmark's [guidelines](#) for its K-9 school recommend a school day from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. for the youngest students, from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for the next age group, and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. for the oldest students.
- In Estonia, the [school day](#) is about four hours for students in Grades 1-3, five hours for those in Grades 4-6 and six hours for those in Grades 7-9.
- In Korea, students in 3rd and 4th grade have about an [hour a day](#) more of school than students in 1st and 2nd grade. Students in 5th and 6th grade have an hour a day more of school than 3rd and 4th graders.
- In the United States, most states set [minimum](#) annual instructional hours for schools. Some vary by level of school. Idaho, for example, requires 450 hours for kindergarten; 810 hours for Grades 1-3; 900 hours for Grades 4-8; and 979 hours for Grades 9-12.



Systems vary in the number of years students have to learn before they enter Grade 10.

There are a number of different ways systems vary the years for learning. The age students start school varies, as does the age of students in Grade 1, with older students having more time to mature. There are also differences at the other end of the student journey, as systems build in options for transition time prior to students entering upper secondary grades.

Examples

- [Denmark](#) has a compulsory Preschool year for 6-year olds and students start 1st Grade at age 7. This means students finish upper secondary school at age 19, although school is only compulsory until age 16. Denmark also has an optional year for students in its Grade K-9 basic school who want or need an extra year before moving on to general or vocational secondary school.
- [England](#) requires students to start school at age 5. Students currently have an optional [transition](#) year before they enter technical upper secondary programs. The United Kingdom plans to expand the transition year to all students who need more time to prepare before starting the new Advanced Basic Standard program.
- Washington, DC offers [universal Pre-K](#) for 4-year olds and close to 80 percent of students enroll, resulting in an additional year in school for most students.
- In [Korea](#), more than 90 percent of 4- and 5-year olds are enrolled in Preschool, which means that for most students schooling starts at age 4 even though school is not compulsory until age 6.

Extending learning beyond the school day is a broadly used strategy.

Many systems provide opportunities to extend learning beyond the regular school day, but the scope and level of access and participation varies, as does whether these opportunities are organized primarily by the schools or in partnership with other public or even private organizations.



As part of an effort to discourage students from enrolling in private academic tutoring after school, China has expanded after school programming at all schools, offering academic enrichment, sports, and a wide range of arts and other interest-based programs.

Examples

- In Oakland, CA the expanded learning programming, which is part of its district-wide [community school program](#), has twenty lead agencies that partner with the district to support programs after school, an extensive sports program, and summer programming. At some schools, more than [90 percent](#) of students participate in the afterschool programs.
- Finland municipalities have long offered arts and sports activities for students after school, with national curricula for arts and music. The government recently [required](#) all municipalities to do this in partnership with schools so that all students have the opportunity to pursue at least one activity after school free of charge. Currently, over 90 percent of municipalities offer these activities. In [Helsinki](#), for example, the city offers highly subsidized extended day programs for 1st and 2nd graders who have a short school day. All students in Grade 3 and up are offered free afterschool activities in a partnership between the city and the schools.
- In Estonia, each municipality is required to operate a [hobby school](#), which offers highly subsidized art, science, enrichment, sports, and/or recreational activities for youth. There are national curricula for some of these activities. Some of the hobby schools are run in partnership with schools and some are operated separately in the community. Many schools offer additional afterschool clubs and activities, often aligned with themes and specializations of the schools. Over [90 percent](#) of students participate in these activities. Estonia also has a strong tradition of sponsoring students in academic [Olympiads](#).
- New York State added \$100 million in [funding](#) for afterschool programs in 2024 and streamlined different funding streams into a single new fund called Learning and Enrichment Afterschool Program Supports (LEAPS). It also funded a feasibility study for universal free afterschool programming across the state.

THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT

School Schedules

While the amount of time available to schools is an important place to start, *how* schools create schedules to organize the use of this time is an important next question and can be a key foundation for success.

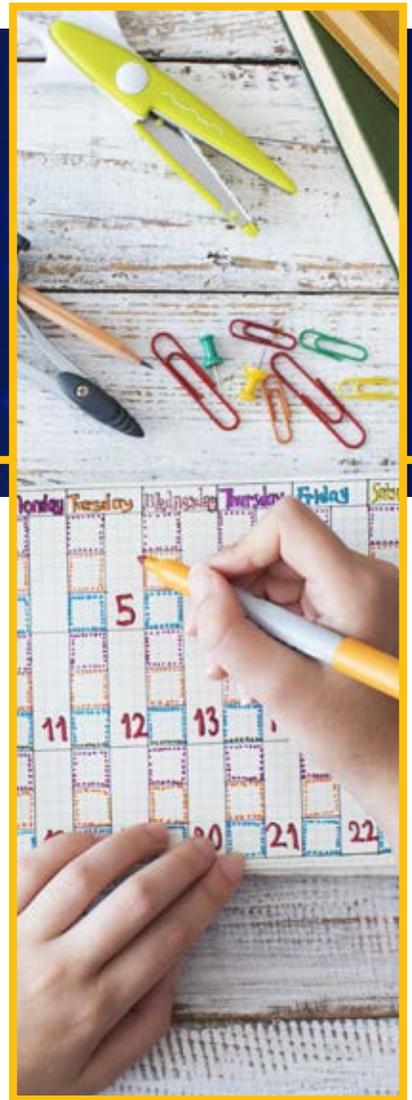
Thought-provoking observations and interesting examples:

Shorter class periods are common.

Class period length in the United States varies dramatically depending on choice of bell schedules. While variation is also seen globally, a surprising number of successful systems break their day into short lesson times. Lessons times of 40–45 minutes of are quite common across Grades 1–9 and are incorporated into policy.

Examples

- Korea's national [curriculum](#) framework includes required numbers of instructional hours in each subject, which are defined as 40 minutes for elementary grades and 45 minutes for middle school grades.
- In Finland, class periods are specified as 45 minutes in the national basic school core curriculum.
- In China, the national [curriculum](#) organizes lesson periods that are 40 minutes for elementary and 45 minutes in secondary school.
- Lesson periods vary in Hong Kong but some [schools](#) have lessons as short as 35 minutes.



Periods at Lai Chak Middle School in Hong Kong are **35 minutes**, with 20-minute breaks after every two periods. Some **classes** are taught in single periods and some are taught in 70-minute double periods.



School schedules are organized by week rather than by day.

In many systems, the school schedule is organized by week, or even by multiple weeks, rather than using the school day as the primary organizer. This approach is more familiar in elementary schools in the United States, but is not common in other grades. Classes often meet on different days of the week and at different times of day, sometimes for different period lengths. Using weekly cycles as the foundation allows scheduling to meet the varied time requirements for different subjects that are specified in many systems.

Examples

- The Estonian **curriculum** specifies the number of weekly lessons for each subject; this has led to most schools organizing school on a weekly schedule, as the numbers vary by subject and by level. For example, in one week a Grade 7 class might have four math, three Estonian language and literature, two physical education, two art, seven science, three social studies, two technology, and six foreign language lessons.
- Singapore's Ministry of Education makes recommendations as to hours of learning for different subjects by grade spans; many secondary schools create 2-week schedule cycles to accommodate these subject requirements and the other learning priorities at the school. Schedules vary by day and lesson period lengths also vary. Time of day for subjects varies throughout the week.



At the **Fuchon Secondary School** in Singapore, there are odd and even weeks, with varied schedules for each day of the 2-week cycle. Lesson periods vary from 30 minutes to 90 minutes, with art and design/technology classes meeting for 90 minutes. For one grade, for example, math meets in the odd week for three 1-hour periods and one 30-minute half hour period in the morning; for the even week, it meets for two 1-hour periods in the morning, and then one 1-hour and one 30-minute period in the afternoon.

Breaks are an essential part of the school day.

Many systems use breaks in the school day as an essential complement to time in classes. Breaks are frequent, often attached to class period times, and are built into policies as a requirement. Breaks are used between classes to allow students and staff to rejuvenate and be better prepared for the next class. It is sometimes referred to as a “brain break”.

Examples

- Finland requires 10 to 15-minute breaks for every 45-minute lesson; teachers who combine lessons must double the break time in between the longer lesson period.
- China has [10-minute breaks](#) after every 40 minutes of lessons.
- Irish schools have 10-minute breaks between lessons.
- Singapore schools have a [morning break](#) and a recess for students in elementary school. The morning break is often a snack time.
- Arizona requires [two recesses](#) daily for students in Grades K-5. California requires at least [30 minutes](#) of recess in one or more periods of time each day.
- Most provinces in Canada require two recesses. Quebec requires [two recesses](#) of at least 20 minutes each for elementary students. Ontario also requires [two recesses](#) each day.

One school leader in Tallinn Gymnasium in Estonia explains that they put the youngest students on the top floor so that they can run around that floor without disturbing other students during breaks when it is too cold to go outside. She said “we know which students we need to keep an eye on but mostly we let them do what they want during breaks.”



THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT

Developing Student Agency for Work & Life

Schools aim to not only help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed, but also the personal competencies and habits of learning and wellbeing that enable success in work and life. Here we look at how schools teach students this broader range of competencies and habits.

Thought-provoking observations and interesting examples:

Time for developing core skills varies across subjects.

In the United States, time in different subjects in elementary school can vary, but time in subjects in middle and high schools are generally more uniform. At secondary levels, the basic formula is usually one subject, one period. Occasionally, secondary schools will assign a double period to a subject such as language arts, but for the most part the one period/one subject formula holds true. In contrast, some leading systems vary time for different subjects across grades to reflect differentiated priorities for student learning.

Examples:

- The Korean national [curriculum](#) specifies annual instructional hours in each subject by grade span. For Grades 3-4, physical education and science are both required for 204 hours, whereas social studies, art and music, and math are required for 272 hours. Students study Korean for 408 hours and English for 136 hours.
- Hong Kong [allocates](#) percentages of time in each subject at the elementary and junior secondary grades (7-9). For example, at the junior secondary level, it allocates 17-21 percent of time to Chinese, 17-21 percent to



English, 12-15 percent to math and 10-15 percent to science. At the [elementary level](#), these percentages are 25-30 percent; 17-21 percent; 12-15 percent and science is part of a general studies area that also includes humanities and technology that is allocated 10-15 percent.

- In Estonia, mandatory numbers of weekly lessons are set for each subject by stage rather than by grade. It is up to schools to decide how to distribute the lessons among grades in each stage:

Subject Area	Stage I Grades 1–3	Stage II Grades 4–6	Stage III Grades 7–9
Language & Literature	19	15	12
Physical Education	8	8	6
Art Subjects	10.5	7	6
Natural Sciences	3	7	20
Mathematics	10	13	13
Social Studies	2	6	10
Technology	4.5	5	5
Foreign Languages	3	12	18
Total	60	73	60

Subject variation in different systems



- Students in Estonia learn three languages: Estonian, English, and an additional language. This means they spend a significant percent of their curriculum time on languages and reading/writing, often more than double the percent of time students in the United States spend on English/languages. They also spend significantly more time in science and technology classes than in math classes starting in 7th grade.
- The Korean curriculum allocates twice as much time to science and technology as it does to math starting in 7th grade.
- In Hong Kong, the largest percent of time across both elementary and secondary school is for Chinese and English languages.



Scheduling by cohort supports students in developing community skills.

Some systems keep students in cohorts across multiple grades, which allows students to build lasting bonds with classmates. In some systems, teachers stay with cohorts of students for multiple years which can support more productive relationships between students and teachers.

Examples

- In Estonia, students generally stay with the same class [teacher](#) for all of their subjects from Grade 1-3 or 4; after that student cohorts are taught by different teachers but often stay together for all of their classes through Grade 9.
- In Finland, students also commonly stay with the same cohort and teacher in early elementary school. In some schools this is from Grades 1-3; in other schools it extends to Grade 4 or even Grade 6.
- Arlington Height School District 25 in Illinois employs two-year [multiage classrooms](#) and teacher looping in its elementary schools.
- In China, students commonly stay with the same teacher in early grades; in upper elementary and middle grades often stay together as a [cohort](#) in the same classroom and teachers come to their classroom to teach them. Class teachers follow students over the three middle grade years.

“Pupils need encouragement and individual support as well as experiences of being heard and valued in the school community. They also need to feel that the community cares about their learning and well-being. Equally important are experiences of participation and opportunities for working together with others to advance the functioning and welfare of the community”.

-*Finnish national basic school curriculum, p. 15*



Time for well-being is an essential part of the student experience.

Some countries create time and opportunity for students to focus on their physical and mental health and overall well-being.

Examples

- In Finland, the basic school curriculum provides extensive guidance about supporting students' well-being and supports for student welfare as well as requirements for breaks, rest, and outdoor time. In addition, all students are provided with free lunch each day and on-site medical care.

- Kentucky is developing full service [community schools](#) in districts across the state. The initiative, which started in 2023, focuses on building social, mental health, and health supports for students, among other services.
- Singapore schools have a Civic and Character Education [curriculum](#) for all grades, which focuses on discussion and experiences to build growth mindset, values, and caring communities at schools. Since 2021, Singapore has required schools to build [peer support programs](#) in schools.
- Ontario's 2020 [math curriculum](#) has a strand for social emotional learning competencies alongside content areas, specifically focused on combating math anxiety.
- Students in Denmark basic schools are [required](#) to have 45 minutes of physical exercise every day. The policy was instituted in 2014 with the [goal](#) of supporting health and motivation and learning in all subjects.
- Los Alamitos Unified School District in California adopted a new [homework policy](#) in 2022, which does not allow homework on weekends and other school breaks, and also sets guidelines limiting the amount of time students should be expected to spend on homework each day. The goal is to better balance “academic rigor and student wellness.”



Poland recently [banned](#) homework, with a focus on not “overloading” students and being sure they had adequate time for play and rest.

Time in broader learning experiences helps students develop contemporary skills.

In most U.S. schools, time in scheduled classes is the heart of the learning experience for students. Many schools expand opportunities by organizing special projects, often linked to specific classes, and offering extracurricular school activities like sports, music, and arts programs. In some systems, both in the United States and abroad, these expanded learning experiences are incorporated more seamlessly into the larger curriculum and are a required part of the curriculum. Activities that take students out of classrooms and even out of school are also an essential part of the learning experience for all students.

Examples

- [Intersessions](#) (sometimes called J or January terms) that offer short courses are a practice at many U.S. colleges but are also emerging in K-12 schools. The Weston Middle School in Massachusetts, for example, sets aside a week for J-term, which is a week when all students can choose a class based on interest to pursue in depth. Teachers design and offer these classes. Classes include topics such as: storytelling,

THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT

Personalization

Personalized learning is a major topic of discussion in the United States, but it's proven extremely difficult to do at scale, in a sustained fashion. Organizing time and opportunities for personalization is an essential ingredient in the larger plan for success. Leading systems build in the flexibility and resources to personalize learning effectively for students.

Thought-provoking observations and interesting examples:

Learning is organized around multigrade stages to allow more flexibility.

Some systems organize learning around stages rather than grades. There are two variations in how systems do this, with some defining outcomes only by multigrade stage and others defining grade-by-grade outcomes but grouping them into stages. Organizing across a span gives teachers more time and flexibility to pace learning in ways that work better for their students.

Examples

- Korea organizes its [curriculum](#) by stages: Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, and Grades 7-9. Its curriculum explains that this gives schools the flexibility to organize learning “by grade or grade cluster” and says, “grade clusters are employed to provide flexibility in organizing and implementing the curriculum through interconnection and collaboration between grade levels.” (Korea National Framework for Elementary and Secondary Curriculum, [p. 18](#))
- Estonia’s basic school [curriculum](#) has three key stages, with learning outcomes set for each stage. The stages are Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6, and Grades 7-9.
- England organizes its curriculum into key [stages](#): Years 1-2, Years 3-6, and Years 7-9. Within each stage there are programs for each year. There are national assessments at the end of key stages. This means teachers do not spend time preparing for external assessments each year. All other assessments are organized at the school level.
- New South Wales in Australia has five [stages](#) for its school curriculum, with Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6, Grades 7-8, and Grades 9-10.



Systems set aside unassigned time for flexible use.

Some systems build unassigned time into schedules so schools have significant opportunities to use time with flexibility for a variety of purposes. Rather than assigning all student and teacher time for the year, these systems build time into their schedules that can be used to extend or deepen learning and provide support as needed.

Examples

- In Hong Kong, up to 25 percent of time in primary school and ten percent in lower secondary is set aside for [flexible use](#). Suggested uses include additional reading time; expanded time on civics education; remedial or advancement activities; and more time on any subject that needs attention or broadening of learning experiences through community services, outside of class learning, or enrichment.
- In Ireland, primary schools have [flexible time](#) built into their curriculum. They can use this time to extend learning time in any of the five core subject areas, have students participate in whole school activities or local or regional events, plan projects in the community, pilot a new pedagogical approach that requires more time or focusing on learning associated with cross disciplinary competencies.
- Korean schools are required to organize a [free semester](#) in middle school. This is a semester with no exams or required coursework; students are allowed to pursue independent studies or engage in projects designed to allow them to explore interests and goals.
- In Singapore, time is set aside for independent digital learning. Students spend two full days a month on independent, [self-directed learning](#) starting in 7th grade. Schools can decide if students do this at home or in school.
- The school district in New Berlin, WI has a [flex period](#) for all students in Grades 7-12 to use for extra help or questions for teachers and for collaborating with other students on projects, homework, and clubs.

Students at Penguilinna School in Tallinn, Estonia have one day a week of independent learning starting at Grade 4. They work primarily from home, although students who need extra help can access teachers on Zoom or come into school to work with teachers individually on that day. Teachers assign projects for students to work on individually and in groups.





Teachers have time to work with students outside of class.

Teachers in some systems have time to work with students outside of regular class time. In addition to enhancing learning, these kinds of opportunities let teachers and students connect more deeply and establish personal relationships that create a foundation of trust for learning.

Examples

- In Singapore, all secondary teachers are assigned to lead a co-curricular activity with students, which take place during the school day. This gives teachers opportunities to interact with students in different settings and also to meet students they do not teach. Singapore teachers also lead Applied Learning projects, which are required school-organized projects that connect academic learning and applied skills. Many schools focus applied learning on environmental activities such as organizing recycling projects at the school or in the community.
- In Estonia, schools typically require teachers to offer office hours to give students time for questions or to discuss issues with their teachers. Subject teachers in most schools teach a “human studies” curriculum, which focuses on social skills, health education, daily life, and social education.

Systems incorporate support time for many students.

Helping students who struggle is a key element in planning student schedules and how time is used for learning. Some leading systems serve students who have a wide variety of needs, developing targeted systems of support for all students—and not just for those most at-risk.

Examples

- Singapore schools focus on early identification of learning issues and all primary schools have math and literacy [support groups](#) for students in Grades 1, 2, and 3 identified as needing support. Schools also offer a differentiated [curriculum](#) for upper elementary students starting in 4th grade in math, science, and languages that gives students who need it more time to focus on fundamentals and ensures students are ready for secondary school.
- Finnish schools have a very broad definition of learning needs. There are three tiers of learning support. The first tier requires no testing and is done at the request of class teachers. There are two more tiers of support that require an assessment by school-based counselors and have increased levels of support. Just under [30 percent](#) of students are served by this system at any one time. A higher percent are estimated to have been provided with support at some point during their years in school, which means learning support is so broadly offered it is not generally stigmatized.
- The National Ministry of Education in Poland has developed a Kahn Academy-style system of [tech-enabled lessons](#) that supports students of all ages in learning required subjects. The system is highly aligned with their curriculum and is designed to support teachers, families, and students in addressing specific learning needs.

Advanced students are given opportunities for learning that fit their needs.

Advanced students are supported differently across leading systems. Some differentiate instruction within the classroom or allow advanced students to work independently, while others organize different kinds of learning environments for them and consider giftedness a form of special needs. Several of the leading systems have organized a range of programming for these students.

Examples

- In Singapore, there are accelerated education [programs](#) for primary school students starting in 4th grade which offer an enriched curriculum; in some, students are supported in pursuing individual research projects. Starting at Grade 7, there are two types of [programs](#) for these students. Out of school programs are offered in partnership with higher education, research centers, and industry and are aimed at projects to make a “positive difference” in the community. There are seven programs, including Innovation, Moot Parliament, and Science Research. All students are assigned a mentor. In addition, there are subject-based [programs](#) in school that offer an “enhanced curriculum” in languages, arts, music, and humanities (economics, geography and history).
- School District U-46 in Elgin, IL offers the AIM [Program](#) for elementary students, which offers weekly enrichment lessons led by trained educators to early grade students “designed to disperse educational enrichment throughout our diverse district.”
- Hong Kong’s subject curriculum has optional “[extensions](#)” in each lesson that teachers can use to differentiate instruction or build on the core content and provide deeper learning for full classes or groups of students who are ready for it. Hong Kong also has a gifted education program, with some enrichment opportunities open to all students and some by application for those who have shown that they are advanced in specific subjects.
- Estonia considers [gifted students](#) to have special learning needs and designs individualized curriculum for them. This includes additional instruction and participation in university-sponsored academies for students that are supported by the government. Students are served by Estonia’s regional Pathfinder [centers](#) which have specialists that organize support for learners with special needs when they exceed what the school alone can provide.
- Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia provide a continuum of [advanced academic programs](#) for students from elementary to high school, including subject-specific specialized instruction taught by advanced academic resource teachers in elementary school and special programs for middle school students. The district has specialized programs for advanced students with learning disabilities and second language learners and refugee populations.



THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT

Teaching Time

As school systems strive to balance teaching shortages and calls for increased professionalism for teachers, the question of how to allocate teacher time is a central issue. We look at not only how much time teachers spend on teaching and non-teaching tasks, but also at the level of control they have over their own time.

Thought-provoking observations and interesting examples:

Extended calendars give teachers time to prepare for success.

Most systems have teachers work extra days before and after the student school year or when students are not in class, but this number varies dramatically across different systems. Data is not always available on the numbers of days teachers work, as numbers are not always detailed in union agreements or policy. Some systems expect teachers to work during student holiday breaks, sometimes at the discretion of the school. These extra days can be used in a variety of ways, such as for teacher meetings and planning, for professional learning, and, in some instances, for working with students who need extra help.

Examples

- In Singapore, teachers have six weeks of [protected](#) holiday time. The other six weeks of school holidays can be considered work days at the discretion of schools, which sometimes use those days for training, meetings, or other activities.
- Winston Salem, Forsyth County, and Cumberland County Schools in North Carolina have [21 work days](#) beyond instructional days for students— the highest in the United States which varies across districts from only three to 21. This means that eight percent of total teacher work days in these North Carolina schools are without students.
- In Ireland, teachers are [required](#) to work 195 days per year. This is 15 days more than is required for primary students and 29 days more than is required for post-primary students.

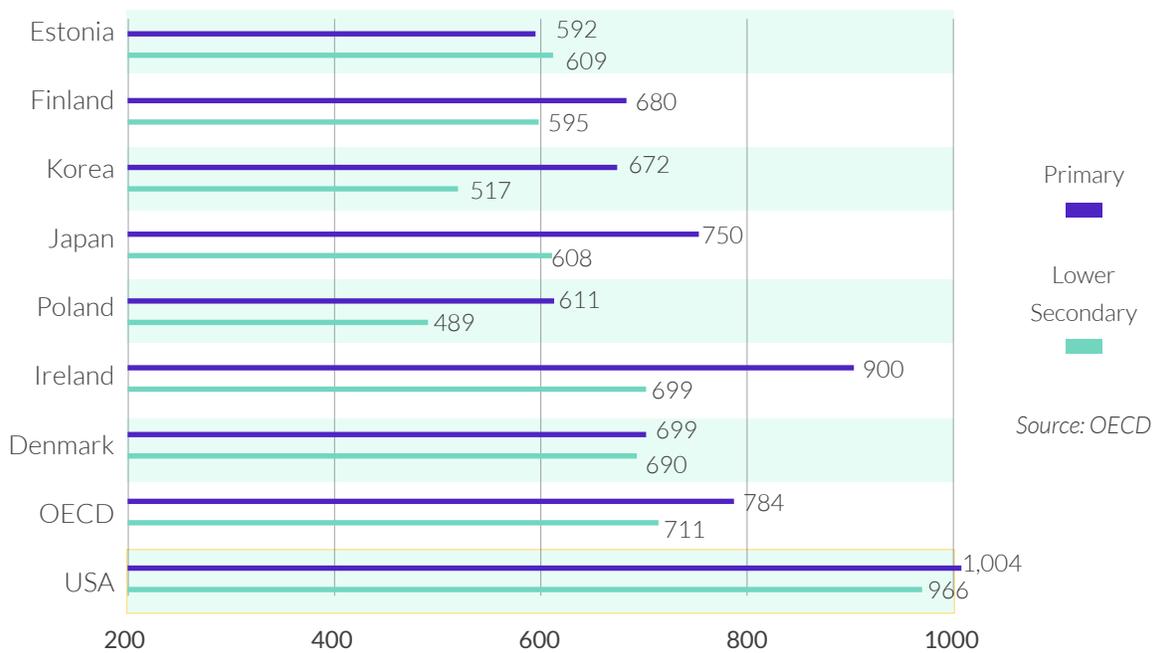


- In Estonia, teachers work about 193 [days](#) each year, which is about 20 days longer than students attend school. Teacher breaks include 56 summer vacation days and 13 public [holidays](#). Additional work days are sometimes added at the discretion of individual schools.

Teachers spend limited time teaching classes.

Teachers in most leading systems spend less overall time teaching classes than their peers in the United States. This is usually looked at in terms of total annual hours, which is often divided up over different numbers of student days to get daily averages. Still, the United States is firmly at the top end of teaching hours when compared to leading systems, with about 1,000 hours of teaching time at both the primary and lower secondary school levels.

Average Annual Teaching Hours



Denmark will reduce annual teaching hours by 190 hours (about ½ hour per day) as part of an effort to allow students more time for non-school activities.



Teachers have significant time for planning and control of how it is used.

Teachers are asked to do many things in the classroom and beyond, and all too often they are not given the time it takes to meet these demands. We often compare teaching and non-teaching time, then highlight the use of non-teaching time for professional learning. But teacher planning time is also a key aspect to enabling teacher success. Some systems give teachers significant amounts of time for preparation and planning, and teachers often control how it is used. In some instances they even decide where to work: they can work from home or at school when they are not in classes or other scheduled activities. Teachers also use this time to work collaboratively, and they do not consider prep time fully individual.

Examples

- Teachers in Estonia have a 35-hour work [week](#) and teach about 21 hours each [week](#). They generally eat lunch with their students and often have two to three hours of additional assignments or scheduled school-wide professional learning time and meetings. But with more than ten hours of unassigned time, teachers plan, grade, and work with other teachers, engage in self-directed learning, or give extra help to students. In most schools, teachers do not have to stay at school during unassigned hours.
- In Maryland, teachers on a new state educator career ladder will have 60 percent of their [time allocated](#) to teaching and 40 percent allocated to collaboration with their peers, planning, and teacher-led and organized professional learning. The goal is to provide additional time for teachers to improve teaching and learning across the school.
- In Singapore, teachers have significant flexible time for planning and assessing student work. In addition to teaching—which is estimated at about 18 hours each [week](#)—they generally have three to four hours of structured professional learning and other school activities. Close to half of their hours are allocated for planning, grading, and other individualized work and learning. This is true for beginning teachers as well as more experienced teachers.
- Pomona Unified School District in California has created [half days on Fridays](#) for students to free three hours for teacher collaboration and professional time. Half of that time is protected for teacher-directed collaborative work and planning. Students are also released early on Wednesdays to provide additional professional learning time as well.



Time for professional learning is embedded in the fabric of teacher life.

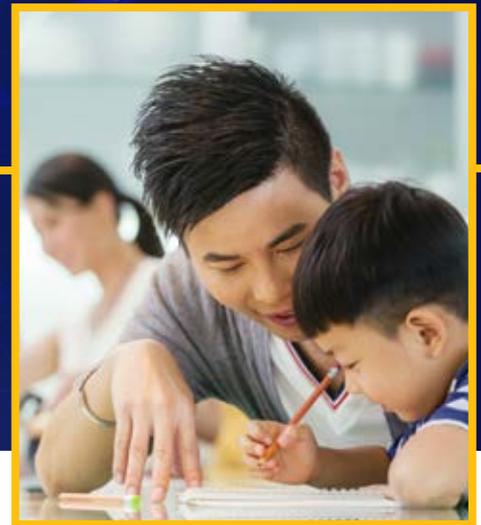
Leading systems incorporate significant time for professional learning into the school day and beyond. There are a wide variety of options for professional learning available to teachers, and they are empowered to lead their own learning as individuals and as groups. There is often an interesting combination of formal and informal time for teachers to learn, with part of the professional learning experience being informal rather than formal and driven by a strong professional culture.



Examples:

- In Singapore, teachers meet in [grade and subject groups](#) at their schools for professional learning and practice-based research led by master teachers at their schools. They typically meet bi-weekly or monthly. New teachers have a reduced teaching load (about 80 percent of that of a regular teacher) so that they have time for mentoring by master teachers and time to observe more experienced teachers teaching. Teachers also have work attachments to learn about changing workplaces, do rotations in the Ministry of Education to work on special projects, and leadership training for those with potential to move into specialist or leadership roles. Teachers formally have 100 hours each year for professional learning.
- In Estonia, [professional learning](#) is not structured by specific allotment of days for learning, as it is the responsibility of schools to organize learning. Schools often work in partnership with universities to develop curricula for teachers on training topics or to take part in university sponsored pilot projects and initiatives. Some schools build weekly or bi-weekly teacher learning sessions into their calendar or assign groups of teachers to take on school development projects such as creating new project-based or interdisciplinary curricula.
- Aurora Hill Middle School in Colorado [reorganized](#) its schedule to shift electives to a single day each week and enable core academic teachers to use that day for professional learning.
- Shanghai teachers spend [significant time](#) in professional learning. They are required to take 360 hours of formal professional development every five years in order to renew their teaching license. In addition, teachers have extensive job-embedded opportunities for learning. They often meet in regularly scheduled groups based on subject and levels to discuss best practices, share advice or develop common lessons. It is common to observe experienced teachers teaching or ask peers to observe and critique their teaching. All beginning teachers have mentors.
- McComb, MS has [reorganized](#) its school schedules and teacher roles to allow teachers more time for planning, collaborating, and mentoring during the school day to improve teaching and learning across their schools.

Career ladders in Singapore and Shanghai with lead and master teachers roles were designed to provide an on-the-job training structure in schools in these systems when they had far too few credentialed teachers for their fast-growing school systems. Today, these structures continue to provide a way to organize professional learning.



THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT

Teaching Conditions

Optimizing conditions for teachers is a key strategy for enabling teaching success. Providing teachers with extra time beyond the classroom for preparation and professional learning is a costly strategy. Another approach to supporting teachers involves creating efficiencies and lowering demands on their time—a very sustainable approach that can lighten their load.

Thought-provoking observations and interesting examples:

High quality curriculum and teaching materials give teachers a leg up on planning time.

Ministries often provide teachers with instructional resources aligned to the content and teaching guidance in the national curriculum. Materials include texts, model lessons, and tools. These are increasingly provided in digital formats.

Examples

- In Hong Kong, teachers are able to focus their time on adapting the high quality materials the Ministry of Education provides rather than identifying or developing their own material. Teachers are provided with units of study for each subject with explanatory notes providing guidance and suggestions on organizing teaching. The Ministry also has a digital platform with learning tools and lessons aligned to the curriculum.
- New York City has [adopted](#) a single curriculum for early childhood education programs and three approved options for Grades K-5, in an effort to ensure consistency across schools and alignment with the district's approach to reading instructions.
- Singapore provides [syllabi](#) for each subject area with chapters about how to approach pedagogy and assessment. The Ministry recommends aligned instructional materials and develops digital resources for teachers.
- Tennessee [reviews](#) and recommends texts and curriculum materials for schools and teachers.



- In Ireland, the government provides a curriculum framework for each subject or course, with details about student expectations and course organization. For the junior cycle of secondary school (Grades 7-10), for example, the geography [syllabus](#) details how geography can contribute to the development of key skills, the strands of the course, how it connects to what was learned in primary school, what will be learned in senior secondary school, learning outcomes, and guidance for classroom-based assessment.

Effective use of technology makes teaching more efficient.

Using technology to facilitate learning is a feature of many leading systems. It is a way to enhance and accelerate learning and also to mirror shifts in how professionals work and learn. These systems have been thoughtful in their use of technology to ensure that it enhances or streamlines the work of teachers and does not merely add more to their plates.

Examples:

- Santa Ana Unified School District in California is exploring the [use of AI](#) to free up teacher time and enhance teaching and learning. They are encouraging teams of teachers (including arts teachers) to “try out” different tools and collaboratively decide which ones are most useful and in what cases. Teachers are using ChatGPT, for example, to more efficiently generate rubrics and in-class activities. The district has also been creating online informational videos for students and parents in multiple languages using an avatar to improve communication with its multilingual community.
- Singapore is using technology to make teaching more efficient and effective in a variety of ways including grading, assessment, and lesson planning. They are [piloting](#) an AI-powered English language assessment to score and give feedback on assignments; using adaptive learning math tool for teachers to use to gather instant information about where the class is in their understanding so that they can adapt the lesson plan; and building out their student learning system [platform](#) that allows teachers to pull from a library of tools and resources to lesson plan.
- Korea is also using technology to help teachers in classrooms. It is [piloting](#) the use of robots to keep young students on task and is using [robots](#) in language classes to converse with students in a second language. Like Singapore, Korea chose initial strategic focus areas to pilot the new technologies, focusing on young students and language classes.
- Estonia also employs technology in a range of ways to make teaching and schools more efficient. They have a portal with a full suite of curriculum materials and tools for teachers to use. They also have shifted fully to [online testing](#), for national exams and also for formative assessment in the classroom with a digital test bank of tasks for teachers. Estonia has accompanied these tools with a [long term strategy](#) to build the technological capacity of teachers.
- The Vicksburg-Warren, MS [Academy of Innovation](#) offers a STEM-focused, project-based learning curriculum for middle school students. The school is using technology to share the core curriculum with students, which frees up teachers to coach students on how to apply technology in project based learning.





Horizontal lines for taking notes.

Limiting the number of students teachers need to know well saves teachers time.

Controlling the number of students that teachers teach is another way to lower the demands on teacher time. Knowing students well as learners and as individuals is important for student success, and working with families to bridge the gap between school and home is essential.

Examples:

- Japanese schools often assign the same teacher to early elementary classes for multiple years. This creates efficiencies for teachers who do not need to spend time orienting students and setting norms for their classrooms. Japan continues this strategy into junior high schools where cohorts of students have the same homeroom and subject teachers for three-year cycles.
- Union Public School in Tulsa, OK offers [multi-age classrooms](#) at its 12 elementary schools as an option for families. These classes are Grades 1-2, and some students can stay an extra year if needed to move onto 3rd grade at grade level. Teachers in these classes know students over two or three years, and have fewer new students each year than those teaching grade-based classes.
- British Columbia schools have [class size limits](#) of 22 in kindergarten, 24 in Grades 1-3, and 30 in Grades 4-7. Grades 8-9 do not have class size limits but there are limits for how many students teachers can have across all of their classes.

Probing questions:

- ? How do other countries think differently about conditions that enable teacher success? Could any of these strategies be helpful in your district or schools? Are there other enabling conditions strategies you might explore to see what is happening around the world?
- ? What are the policy implications of creating similar conditions in the United States? What shifts are possible within current policy environments?
- ? What are the budget implications for U.S. schools to change teaching conditions for teachers in these or other ways?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

How One School Uses Time

Policies and practices meet and become real at the school level, where people draw on their knowledge, culture, and larger goals to create schools that work for students, teachers, families, and communities. In this section, we take an in-depth look at how time is used in one school in one country.

Tartu Forselius School

At a Glance

- Located in Tartu, Estonia.
- Serves 600 students in Grades 1–9.
- Students start Grade 1 at age 7.
- Student class cohorts stay together for nine years.
- Students in Grades 1-3 have the same teachers for three years.
- Younger students have a shorter day than older students.
- Students have weekly schedules, which include some short (45-minute) periods and some long (85-minute) periods. They have different classes each day, varying the time of day for each subject.
- Students in Grades 1-3 have an integrated curriculum. Students in Grades 4-9 have subject-based classes with 1-2 week cross-disciplinary projects every trimester.
- All students have an independent home learning day each month. Teachers organize collaborative planning and learning on those days.
- Teachers teach about 3.5 hours per day. Their remaining hours are spent on assigned activities (such as schedule office hours, contacting parents), weekly professional learning and planning, and collaborative time that they structure.
- Teachers can work at home at times when they have no classes to teach or other assigned activities; no one tracks their hours.



Estonia at a Glance

- 1.2 million citizens
- 158,000 students in Estonian basic and secondary schools
- School population includes 20% Russian-speaking students and 4.5% Ukrainian refugees.
- 562 basic and secondary schools, two research universities, and five professional higher education institutions
- Ranked first in Europe on PISA 2022



School Overview

[Tartu Forselius School](#), a basic school for Grades 1-9, is the first “[AHHAA!](#)” School in Estonia. This model was developed in partnership with the [AHHAA Science Center](#) and the [University of Tartu](#) as part of the Innovative School Network. Key to the model is a focus on project-based learning, interdisciplinary learning, and integration of electives into the curriculum. All subjects in Grades 1-3 are integrated and Grades 4-8 have structured interdisciplinary projects for each trimester with Grade 9 projects under development. Teachers develop projects collaboratively and refine them over time—they do not create new ones each year.

School Schedule

Students attend school for 175 calendar days. While Estonian policy requires learning in 45-minute class periods, the Forselius School has added 85-minute classes in order to fit their integrated projects orientation to instruction, with these longer periods counting as two classes. The school is organized around a weekly schedule with different classes and order of classes each day of the week. Breaks are dispersed throughout the day as a deliberate strategy to allow students time to recharge before the next period. Students work independently from home one day each month so teachers can have a day for professional work.

Calendar Days	175 student calendar days
Terms	3 trimesters
Length of day	Grades 1-3: 4 hours, 40 minutes Grades 4-9: 6 hours, 15 minutes
Length of periods	45- and 85-minute periods
Extended day	For hobby classes before and after school

Grades 1–3 Bell Schedule

	Period	Type	Time	Minutes
Before School	0	Optional Programs	8:15–8:55	45
		Break	8:55–9:00	5
Regular School Day 9:00–13:40 (4 hours, 40 minutes)	1	Class	9:00–10:25	85
		Break or lunch	10:25–10:55	30
	2	Class	10:55–11:40	45
		Break or lunch	11:40–12:15	35
	3	Class	12:15–13:40	85
Extended Day		Break	13:40–13:50	10
	4	Optional Class	13:50–15:15	85
		Break	15:15–15:25	10
	5	Optional Programs	15:25–16:50	85



Grades 4–9 Bell Schedule

	Period	Type	Time	Minutes
Before School	0	Optional Programs	8:15–8:55	45
		Break	8:55–9:00	5
Regular School Day 9:00–15:15 (6 hours, 15 minutes)	1	Class	9:00–10:25	85
		Break or lunch	10:25–10:55	30
	2	Class	10:55–11:40	45
		Break or lunch	11:40–12:15	35
	3	Class	12:15–13:40	85
Extended Day		Break	13:40–13:50	10
	4	Class	13:50–15:15	85
		Break	15:15–15:25	10
	5	Optional Programs	15:25–16:50	85



Source: <https://tfk.tartu.ee/opilane/tundide-ajad/>

The Student Journey

The student cohort system is central to the student experience at Forselius School. Students start Grade 1 at the age of 7, and they are organized into cohorts that remain together for their entire Grade 1-9 journey, a practice that is common in schools across Estonia. Students in each cohort share a common schedule. They are organized by group rather than as individuals. Students keep the same teacher in Grades 1-3, then starting in Grade 4 they move among many different subject area teachers.



Weekly Exploration Program

Once a week this school offers a 45-minute elective program with a wide array of options based on student interests and teacher hobbies. Offerings include topics such as “how to be happy” and “learning by discovery” experiments. Students choose what they want to study and are mixed in multi-age groups that span grade levels.

Students in Grades 1-3:

- spend their first three years with the same class teacher and the same cohort of students;
- have integrated core subjects called “general education” and additional subjects like art and music;
- starting in 2nd grade, have one free choice period each week when they can choose from a variety of mixed-age classes that include sports, crafts, and arts; and
- can extend their day and take hobby classes such as judo, sports, and robotics, as well as get extra support if needed.

Students in Grades 4-9:

- stay together with their same Grade 1-3 cohort, but rotate among many different subject teachers;
- have subject-based curricula with one or two cross-disciplinary projects added during every trimester;
- continue to have the weekly free choice period started in Grade 2; and
- can extend their day and take a variety of hobby classes and academic supports.

Sample Student Schedule: Grade 1

	Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Before School	40 Minutes	Folk Dance	Science Circle		Choir	Art
	5 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
Regular School Day 9:00–13:40 (4 hours 40 minutes)	85 Minutes	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed
	30 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	45 Minutes	Judo	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Rhythm
	35 minutes	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
	85 Minutes	Gen Ed	Movement / Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Music	Science Circle
	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
Extended Day	85 Minutes	Judo/ Sports/ Extra Support	Sports/ Natural Sciences	Judo/ Robotics/ Electronics/ Breakdancing	Lego/ Judo	
	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	85 Minutes	Basketball			Basketball	



Sample Student Schedule: Grade 7

	Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Before School	40 Minutes		Choir		Choir	
	5 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
Regular School Day 9:00–15:15 (6 hours 15 minutes)	85 Minutes	Geography	Biology	Foreign Language	Estonian	Natural Science
	30 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	45 Minutes	Home Room	Human Studies	Music	Foreign Language	Estonian
	35 minutes	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
	85 Minutes	Math	Tech/ Crafts/ Home Ec	Math	Literature	History
	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
Extended Day	85 Minutes	Choir	English	English/ Activity	English/ Elective	P.E.
	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	85 Minutes	Choir			World News	



Teacher Schedules

Teachers have 193 calendar days, 18 more days than students have. They work a 35-hour week, an average of 7 hours per day, and teach about 17 hours a week (or half of their time). Teachers start and end their day at different times that they control individually, and teachers can decide whether to come into school or to work from home when they are not in class. They teach on a weekly schedule, and time in and out of class varies from day-to-day.



“ In our school, you do not have to be here at 8 a.m. and stay until 4 p.m. You do not have to sit here! It’s not that kind of system. It’s quite autonomous in our schools. If you want to show your power as a school leader, then you might say “You have to be here!” But that’s not very common in Estonia. ”

*Interview with Kristi Mumm,
Deputy Head at Forselius School*

For professional learning time, teachers meet before school for 45 minutes per week. In addition, they have one day per month when all students work on assignments from home to free teachers for a full day of professional time. A professional learning culture underpins everything that teachers do at the school, and they often work together on their own during their planning time. Teachers spend about half of their day teaching. They are able to spend the rest of their time on professional learning, collaboration, and planning.

“ I believe that good informal relationships prevent the risk of burnout. It is also the basis for good professional cooperation. Once positive relations have been achieved, it is easier for the head of school to direct and for the teacher to initiate professional cooperation, which would be natural and result from the teachers’ own desire and internal motivation. ”

Interview with a teacher at Forselius School



Sample Teacher Schedule: Grade 1

	Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Before School	40 Minutes	Dance			Dance	
	5 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
Regular School Day 9:00–15:15 (6 hours 15 minutes)	85 Minutes	Gen Ed/ Homeroom	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed
	30 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	45 Minutes	Estonian Grade 4	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed	Gen Ed
	35 minutes	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
	85 Minutes	Gen Ed	Estonian Grade 4	Gen Ed	Estonian Grade 4	Gen Ed
	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	85 Minutes					
Extended Day	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	85 Minutes					



Sample Teacher Schedule: Math Grades 4–8

	Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Before School	40 Minutes					
	5 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
Regular School Day 9:00–15:15 (6 hours 15 minutes)	85 Minutes	Math Grade 6	Math Grade 7	Math Grade 4	Math Grade 4	Math Grade 8
	30 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	45 Minutes	Home Room	Math Grade 6		Math Grade 8	Math Grade 6
	35 minutes	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
	85 Minutes	Math Grade 4	Math Grade 6	Math Grade 6	Math Grade 7	Math Grade 6
	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	85 Minutes		Math Grade 8			
Extended Day	10 Minutes	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
	85 Minutes					



THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT TIME

A Final Note

Discover

Design

Deliver

Discover is the first step in the NCEE approach. **Design** follows, with action steps that might include selecting focus areas from what you have discovered and making traction-ready plans for change. **Deliver** is putting your plans in action, adjusting as needed to ensure success.

This paper is about discovery, an important step in the larger journey of making improvements. It's about:

- taking time to explore ideas without worrying about being in decision mode,
- investigating how successful systems use time,
- making thought-provoking observations about policies and practices you find interesting,
- asking interesting *what if* questions based on your observations,
- seeking examples across systems to see how they use time differently, and
- learning more about the broader policy and schooling context that impacts how time is used.

This learning journey approach offers a very practical way for U.S. policy and practice experts to explore new ideas, reconsider their own systems, and learn from colleagues across the globe and at home.

Let's think
differently!
Together.



COUNTRY AND JURISDICTION

Resource List



System Curricula & Policy Documents

- [British Columbia](#): Curriculum for Grades K-12
- [Ontario](#): Curriculum for Grades K-8
- [China](#): Compulsory Education Plan, 2022
- [Denmark](#): Basic School Curriculum Framework
- [England](#): National Curriculum in England Key Stages 1 & 2 framework document, 2013
- [Estonia](#): Basic school general curriculum, 2023
- [Finland](#): National core curriculum for basic education, 2014
- [Ireland](#): Primary and Special Schools Curriculum [Framework](#); Junior cycle [framework](#) and syllabi
- [Japan](#): Full elementary [curriculum](#) (Japanese); general [provisions](#) (English), 2017
- [Poland](#): National Core curriculum, 2017
- [Singapore](#): Primary school [syllabi](#); Lower secondary school [syllabi](#)
- [South Korea](#): National Framework for Elementary and Secondary Curriculum, 2022

System Descriptions

- [OECD](#), [Education at a Glance](#), 2023
- [Eurydice](#) EU education [system profiles](#)
- [NCEE](#) [top performer profiles](#)



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[Thinking Differently About... Math](#)

Thinking Differently About... Time, Part 2 (coming soon)

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