

# Know Your Rights!

## What is the Preparation Time Advisory Committee?

The union contract establishes at each site a Preparation Time Advisory Committee (PTAC). The PTAC should consist of the Elementary Specialist teacher, the site association representative, the principal, and any other school personnel deemed appropriate by the committee. The PTAC assists with the operation of the prep time program at each site (decisions regarding emphasis selection, scheduling, problem solving, etc.). The committee members should work together to address any site prep time issues that may occur. This may include, but is not limited to, scheduling issues, block flow, transition considerations, and extra time for impacted classes if the schedule allows. If your site does not have a PTAC established, meet with your AR, and work with the principal, to establish one. The decision of the PTAC is what should be carried out at your site, unless their decision goes against contract language.

## Elementary Specialist Teachers are NOT visiting teachers

Elementary Specialist teachers have historically been called upon when a class needed emergency coverage, whether due to a shortage of visiting teachers, or other emergency situations. Contract language negotiated by the SDEA Bargaining Team in 2015 prohibits this practice. Elementary Specialist teachers can only be asked to engage in emergency class coverage during their own prep time, like all other SDEA unit members. Unit members can be asked to cover classes, without pay, for one hour in an academic year. After the one hour, any time the Elementary Specialist teacher is asked to cover a class in the same academic year during their own prep time, the prep time teacher will be compensated by the school site at their hourly rate. If you are asked to provide emergency coverage, remind the administrator that you are supposed to be paid after the first hour.

## Elementary Specialist Teachers only teach in their emphasis subject

Elementary Specialist teachers cannot be asked to teach in any other subject area, other than the one selected by the school site for the preparation time focus. They must also be appropriately credentialed to teach in that subject emphasis area (science credential to teach in a science prep position). For example, teaching small groups in RTI or ELD when the school site's emphasis is science, would be a violation of the contract. It does not matter if the Elementary Specialist teacher possesses the appropriate credential or certificate, the Elementary Specialist teacher cannot be asked to teach anything outside of the site's prep time emphasis area.

## Elementary Specialist Teachers are NOT the Teacher of Record

Prep time teachers provide an even and fair number of prep time minutes to the classroom teachers at the school site, according to the contractual guidelines, in the **enrichment** emphasis selected by the site. Prep time teachers are not assigned a roster and are, therefore, not responsible for report card grades in their area of emphasis. Elementary Specialist teachers cannot be asked to provide grades in substitution for anything that is under the responsibility of the teacher of record (regular classroom teacher). Elementary Specialist teachers can, however, provide teachers of record with work samples from their students for inclusion in determining a grade, if that is appropriate. Since the preparation time program varies so vastly across the district, there is no specific curriculum for each emphasis. In addition, with the wide variety of subject emphasis areas across the district, including both academically-based subjects and non-academically based subjects, preparation time teachers should not be expected to stand in for regular classroom teachers in teaching the curriculum. Some schools have mistakenly voted to

# Elementary Specialist Teachers

change their emphasis simply for the incorrect assumption that the new emphasis would assist or replace the job of the classroom teacher (“take some of the load off”). Even when the school’s emphasis is an academically-based subject that is included on the report card (e.g., science, math, or ELA), the subject matter taught by the Elementary Specialist teacher should **enhance** or **enrich** the students’ experience in that area. The preparation time teacher should not be teaching the district-adopted curriculum that is meant to be taught to the students by the classroom teacher.

### **Preparation emphasis changes must follow a protocol**

Any change in emphasis at the school site must be decided through the Site Governance Team. Proposals for changes must be presented through this process, and the current Elementary Specialist teacher must be allowed an opportunity to participate and present their views. Any emphasis changes that occur must be turned in to the district-level Preparation Time Committee by February 1<sup>st</sup>, in the year prior to the change taking effect.

### **Elementary Specialist Teachers must be provided a suitable work place**

It is the site PTAC’s job to make the Elementary Specialist teacher’s work and teaching space a priority. The classroom and/or work area should be large enough to comfortably conduct the lessons and store any necessary equipment.

### **Classroom Teacher Preparation Time can be longer than the contract specifies**

Though the contract specifies that 45 minutes will be provided to TK – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers, and 55 minutes to 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers, this is at a **MINIMUM**. It is always acceptable, and even preferred, to have longer preparation times. If the Elementary Specialist teacher’s schedule includes blocks for the minimum of 45 and 55 minutes, yet they still have extra time, work with the site’s PTAC to extend the time for all teachers in an equitable or fair manner. It is also acceptable for upper grade teachers to get additional prep time as part of the Elementary Upper Grade Support Plan, as well as classes that carry a larger work load along with them (i.e., combination classes, oversized classes, or a high number of students with IEPs). Of course, this additional time should not impact the ability of the Elementary Specialist teacher to provide at least the minimum number of minutes for each teacher and a plan for short or holiday weeks. Each site is unique, and what the PTAC decides at one site, might differ from what the decisions of a PTAC at another site. Regardless, these decisions should come from the PTAC and must be approved by that PTAC. The Elementary Specialist teacher and/or PTAC should be able to work the schedule to include these times without greatly impacting their own need for transition and set up. Decisions should not be at the detriment of the Elementary Specialist teacher, but in cooperation with the PTAC with the mutual goal of providing a meaningful enrichment program while also providing teacher preparation support.

### **How do Elementary Specialist Teachers schedule their time?**

It is normal for the prep time teacher to have some gaps of time in their schedule due to differing recesses and lunch, but they should be providing the maximum prep time possible, in an equitable manner. The prep time schedule should include a method or agreement on how to offer prep time during holiday or short weeks. There is no one way, and many schools have been creative in creating makeup blocks, alternative schedules, a math formula, or combination of a few methods. The PTAC can work together to create a plan. In addition, the Elementary Specialist teacher’s schedule should work for both them AND the classroom teachers. If the Elementary Specialist teacher has multiple grade levels on the same day and this causes them a hardship for providing meaningful lessons, then this concern should be addressed through the site PTAC. Elementary Specialist teachers should develop a schedule, in conjunction with the site PTAC, with consideration of transitions, timing, etc.

*Source: Collective Negotiations Contract, July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2017 (Sections 8.6, 8.9, 8.15)*

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