



Committee Urged To Support Prep Time For Teachers

A bill that would make preparation time a mandatory subject of collective bargaining is necessary for teachers to be the most effective they can be in the classroom, two educators testified at a Senate hearing Tuesday (August 28, 2007).



Guy Costello

WEAC Vice President Guy Costello, a South Milwaukee teacher, and Bob Peterson, a Milwaukee 5th-grade teacher, spoke in favor of [SENATE BILL 243](#), a 2007-08 WEAC Legislative Agenda item. The measure gives teachers an opportunity to negotiate for preparation time that is built into the scheduled workday by making it a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

The lead Senate author is Senator Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton) and the lead Assembly sponsor is Representative Terry Musser (R-Black River Falls).

UPDATE: On September 11, 2007, the Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs voted in favor of Senate Bill 243 on a 3-2 party-line vote, with all of the Democrats voting in favor.

[Watch the testimony on Senate Bill 243](#)
(starting 4:51:14 min.)

“As any of you who have educators in your family know, we do spend hours on school work at home and on weekends, but it is still not enough to prepare the lessons and materials needed in the academically diverse and challenging classroom of today,” Costello told the Senate Committee on Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs. “To be effective and give children our best we also need time to meet with colleagues to discuss the best way to meet our students’ needs and to make plans for team teaching, especially with our special needs students.”

“I get to work well before students arrive and leave well after, but while they are there – about seven hours – I barely have a break and it’s not a healthy or sane way to run an educational institution,” said Peterson, who has been a teacher for 27 years.



Bob Peterson, a 5th grade teacher at La Escuela Fratney in Milwaukee, testifies Tuesday (August 28, 2007), in favor of a bill to make teacher preparation time a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

“Besides a daily lunch break of 30 to 45 minutes – which is reduced if I have recess or lunch room duty or if it is raining outside and the kids stay in my classroom – I only get one 50-minute period of planning on each Tuesday if the art teacher is not sick or at an in-service,” he continued. “That 50 minutes is not only an insult to me as a professional, but more importantly means that tasks and planning that should take place during the school day don’t get done. It hurts our children, it hurts our school, and it hurts our state.”

WEAC submitted a memo to the Senate committee, urging its support of the bill. “Research shows that teacher planning makes a significant difference in student learning,” the memo stated. “When teachers meet to share instructional strategies that work in their classrooms and together design standards-based unit plans and assessments, this time is an effective use of taxpayer dollars, making a difference for children.

“Despite the value of teacher preparation time, it is becoming more difficult for teachers to find time during the school day to prepare lesson plans and perform other duties important to effective teaching,” the memo continued. “This is especially true for elementary school teachers who are generally limited to preparation time during art, music and physical education. With school districts forced to lay off employees under the pressure of revenue caps, teacher time is stretched tight as teachers serve in multiple capacities to meet the educational needs of children.”

According to the WEAC memo, 60% to 70% of teacher contracts in the state currently address preparation time in some manner. This means:

- Many districts recognize the importance of preparation time, thus reinforcing the idea that it should be a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

- 60% to 70% of districts have staff that are vulnerable to losing preparation time as long as it remains a permissive subject of bargaining.

Making teacher preparation time a mandatory subject of collective bargaining will give teachers an opportunity to be part of the decision-making concerning a key strategy to boost student achievement and enrich the learning experience, WEAC's memo read.

"The bottom line is that we teachers should have the right to bargain this important issue with our local school authorities," Peterson stressed.

[July 2007 OnWEAC coverage](#)

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