

TIME TO TEACH
TIME TO LEARN

T I M E T O T E A C H



T I M E T O L E A R N

Changing the Pace of School

Chip Wood

Northeast Foundation for Children, Inc.
71 Montague City Road, Greenfield, MA 01301
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wood, Chip

Time to teach, time to learn : changing the pace of school / by Chip Wood

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

1. Teachers—Time management. 2. Students—Time management.

I. Title.

LB2838.8.W66 1999

371.102—dc21

99-22171

CIP

ISBN 1-892989-01-8 (pbk.)

Editing by Allen Woods

Cover and interior design by Woodward Design

Photographs by Peter Wrenn, Cherry Wyman, William Elwell, Sarah Holbrook

Cover photo: David Muir/Masterfile

Printed in the United States of America

04 03 02 01 00 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

To the schoolchildren of the twenty-first century
Especially Isaiah Robert Heaton

*The children know us
before we know
the children know us
preoccupied, as we are,
with knowing what the children need—
knee-deep in knowledge,
afraid of what we think
they do not know;
unsure of what we do.*

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Preface

TIME TO TEACH, TIME TO LEARN is about improving education by refocusing time on relationships—relationships among teachers and parents and students and great ideas. In these pages I draw attention to the absolutely inappropriate pace of teaching and learning which daily decreases the quality of education and the very quality of life for millions of children and adults who “spend” years of their lives in the place we call school. Although this book does not contain all the answers concerning the enormous time pressures we are facing, it does offer many practical suggestions that will change the use of time at the school and classroom level. I wrote this book because I believe time can be our friend, rather than our nemesis.

However, as long as we see time in school as currency, our friend is likely to stay hidden. We will continue to “spend” it (wisely, of course), “save” it, “account” for it, be “economical” with it, and deal in intellectual “capital.” As you read, you will note that I have mostly chosen to avoid these money words. I believe that this is more than an issue of semantics. The pace of school is constructed on an industrial model of speed and efficiency, and our language both reflects and reinforces this model. Test results measure production and comparative scores carry as much weight and anxiety as the Dow Jones Average. Such an industrial model of school will not work in the information age; instead, better communication skills and meaningful relationships hold the key to academic and civil excellence.

There are three sections in this book: Foundations, Observations, and Transformations. They respectively mark the importance of theory and research, direct experience, and practical application. In the

Observation chapters, I have documented how students and teachers experience the time of a single school day. The actual teachers, students and schools depicted are a composite of countless observations in numerous settings, but they are not imaginary. Names used in these chapters are fictional.

I hope that you will not just read this book, but that it will draw you into conversation and dialogue and deeper relationships with others who care as much as you do about children, teaching, and learning.

Robert (Chip) Wood
Greenfield, Massachusetts
July 1999