

A WORD FROM MSEA'S LEGAL TEAM

In today's schools, there are many demands on a teacher's time—not all of them related to instruction. Do piles of paperwork and meetings unrelated to your students or your content area sound familiar? Many ESP and other school staff are constantly pulled from their classrooms or offices to serve as substitutes or to attend meetings.

Your negotiated agreement is your lifeline. Your contracts are negotiated to protect you and your ability to effectively help your students, and that's why every teacher and ESP agreement in Maryland defines the workday.

My workload is overwhelming. What do I do?

First, consult your association rep or UniServ director and your local association's negotiated agreement with the board of education, which defines and limits your work year and workday.

Every contract provides for individual planning time. You can protect your time by asserting your rights, including a grievance when necessary. Planning time is reserved explicitly for professional use during your workday and no administrators or colleagues should be allowed to interrupt.

If a teacher is required to work outside of the negotiated work hours, it should be limited to preparing for instruction, not filling out paperwork. ESPs should never be asked to work outside of the negotiated work hours unless compensation is being provided.

In Anne Arundel County, teachers have successfully curtailed workload and limited the amount of work performed beyond the workday by using the grievance process. With the help of their UniServ Directors, members were able to prove that: 1) the school system didn't provide the time negotiated for completion of student grades; 2) negotiated planning time was used for non-planning requests and instructional preparation, normally done during planning time, had to be performed outside of the workday; and 3) the administration required the completion of paperwork unrelated to instruction, which could only be done beyond the negotiated workday. In each instance, educators cited their negotiated agreement and received compensation for work performed outside of the agreed upon workday.

Make sure you know your contract and what protections and powers you have. And know that your contract is there to ensure you're able to do the work you care about most: helping your students succeed.



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