



# Making Time for Instructional Leadership

## VOLUME 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## **Volume 1: Executive Summary**

This report describes the ongoing development and implementation of the SAM® process, which has the goal of increasing the capacity of principals to use time in instructionally focused ways while decreasing time on management tasks. We summarize the key findings regarding current implementation, changes over time, lessons learned from the literature, and future developments.

### **Current Implementation**

The study data suggest strong fidelity of implementation of the SAM process in schools. NSIP encourages fidelity around four non-negotiables in the SAM process: 1) commitment to the SAM process, 2) participation in baseline data collection using the Time/Task Analysis and protocol, 3) use of the TimeTrack Calendar and SAM Daily Meeting, and 4) ongoing coaching. Principals and SAMs generally report high levels of engagement with these main components. Consistency of implementation in schools likely flows in part from the consistency with which supports for implementation are provided by NSIP; the majority of schools received SAM training before implementation, and most found Implementation Specialists and Time Change Coaches to be quite helpful. Simultaneously, NSIP allows for some flexibility and adaptation to meet the needs of districts and individual schools, and we saw evidence of adaptation, including how many SAM team members a school utilized and how these team members worked with the principal to change time use.

Although not conclusive, our data also show evidence of the efficacy of the SAM process in changing behaviors or outcomes consistent with its theory of action, including increases in instructional time use. Results from our analysis of survey responses, TimeTrack Calendar data, and Time/Task Analysis data, as well as what we heard in interviews in the case study districts, are consistent with the idea that the SAM process helps principals focus on and find ways to increase the time they engage with the school's instructional program.

This evidence also is consistent with the reasons principals and districts gave for participating in the SAM process. For principals, the main motivations were to improve their capacity as instructional leaders, to spend more time on instruction, and to gain better work/life balance. For districts, the main reasons for adoption were to improve principals' ability to be instructional leaders and to increase student achievement.

Principals and districts found an increase in principal instructional time to be the greatest benefit to the SAM process, followed by improving their time management and work/life balance. Principals also reported that the process increased their focus on teaching and learning. The primary benefits identified by Time Change Coaches were increasing both the time principals spend on instruction and the quality of that time. They also considered shared leadership beneficial to schools.

### **Changes in the SAM Process**

The SAM process has developed over time in several ways that likely have improved its consistency of implementation and efficacy. Coaching has become more formalized and includes

the use of a protocol. The Implementation Specialist position was added in 2010, and the First Responder system was developed as well. In addition, professional development has been expanded and the TimeTrack Calendar has been improved in response to feedback from the field. A new model of the SAM process was developed to allow an existing school staff person to become a SAM, rather than someone hired externally, and SAM teams (rather than only individual SAMs) have emerged. Lastly, there is an emphasis not only on increasing time spent on instruction, but on developing the quality of that time as well.

### **The Literature and the SAM Process**

The literature strongly supports the rationale behind the SAM process. Principals are expected to be instructional leaders, but multiple studies conclude that principals actually spend little time on instruction. Many challenges exist around principals increasing their time on instruction: organizational norms push principals away from instructional leadership; the many demands on principals' time make it hard to focus on instruction; and they may lack skills and knowledge about instruction; and Aside from the SAM process, no large-scale interventions have attempted to focus on specifically changing principal time allocation.

### **Future Developments**

We note three areas for continued development of the SAM process. First, increasing time spent on instructional leadership may be necessary but likely is not sufficient to improve teaching and learning in SAM schools. Principals must increase the quality of instructional time as well. Few schools are making the shift from a focus on increased instructional time to a focus on the quality of that time use. Unfortunately, the research literature in this area is limited, providing few firm conclusions regarding what kinds of instructional activities are most valuable.

Second, related to the prior point, some principals lack knowledge of instruction, teaching, and learning. Asking principals to increase their time on instructional leadership, including teaching and learning, presupposes principals have the knowledge to improve their teachers' skills. Administrative support personnel as SAMs may not be in a strong position to help principals improve this capacity. Increased professional development has begun to address this need.

Lastly, there are possible differences between elementary and high schools' experiences with the SAM process. This distinction could warrant further exploration and development as those differences become better understood.

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- **Arts education:** Expanding arts learning opportunities for children and teens. Summer and expanded learning time: Better understanding the impact of high-quality summer learning programs on disadvantaged children, and how to enrich and expand the school day.
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