

## Dear Friends of the Library,

I assume most library supporters are interested in education, as I am. That is the reason you find education topics so often discussed at this site in our newsletter.

This writing will consider the issue of time spent in the classroom. Much of the information is lifted from an article appearing in the Wall Street Journal, March 20, 2010, by Chester E. Finn Jr., former Assistant Secretary of the Department of Education. There are many citations, some of which I have checked.

It is no surprise that American children spend less time in the classroom than those in other industrialized countries. But how much? French spend 3280 hours while the average U.S. student spends 1460. These figures are the sum of hours for the last four years before graduation. The U. S. student by age 18 spends 9 percent of his or her total living hours in the core subject classroom.

Then, any absence from the classroom results in learning loss. The summer vacation results in a loss of one month's knowledge; 1.3 school years by the end of high school. Dave Marcotte of the University of Maryland studied the effects of unscheduled closings due to, for example, snow. He concluded that two-thirds of the elementary schools that did not meet the *No Child Left Behind* math benchmark would have done so if no unscheduled closings occurred.

More complicated to quantify and correlate with knowledge is the time spent on athletics, recess, assemblies, changing classes, home room, movies, logging assignments, celebrating holidays and events, other pursuits, and classroom disturbances. Disturbances occur at least weekly by U. S. eighth graders in 55 percent of classrooms as reported by principals.

There is a strong positive correlation between time spent in the classroom studying core subjects and international core subject test scores. Perhaps as positive as parental income and test scores.

It seems to me the next education reform to be considered is how to increase time in classroom. Days could be lengthened; summer break could be shortened; Saturdays could be included. All these suggestions would increase classroom utilization. And teacher salaries would have to be changed to reflect hours in the classroom. The objections, I would think, would be minimal.

And one final related fact that boggled my mind. The Kaiser Family Foundation recently reported that American youngsters spend 7.5 hours per day using entertainment media – TV, Internet, cell phones, and video games.

Chew that until next time.

If you wish to read the entirety of the source article, go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type in the following "**Chester E. Finn**" +**WSJ** +**online**

George Cline, President

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