

Time and Responsibility: Examining the Volunteer Workload of School-based Personnel in One Distance Education Program



Michael Barbour, Wayne State University
Dennis Mulcahy, Memorial University

Newfoundland and Labrador

- the island is 43,359 square miles, while Labrador covers 112,826
- population was 505,469 in 2006 Census
 - 551,795 in 1996 / 568,350 in 1986
- 294 schools in 2005-06
 - 343 in 2000-01 / 472 in 1995-96
- 76,763 students in 2005-06
 - 110,456 in 1995-96 / 142,332 in 1985-86
- average school size is 220 pupils
 - 45% > 200 and 25% > 100



Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation

The CDLI was founded in December 2000 by the Department of Education



Synchronous – Online

- 30% to 80%, depending on subject area
- taught via a virtual classroom (e.g., *lluminate Live*)



Asynchronous – Offline

- remainder of their time
- taught via a course management system (e.g., *WebCT/Desire2Learn*)
- usually consists of independent work from posted homework or assignments or from their textbooks

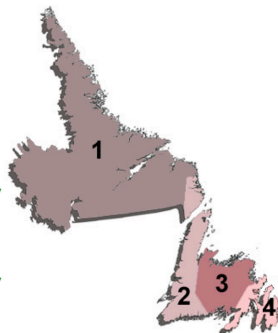


Mediating Team

- Technical - to provide initial maintenance and troubleshooting for the CDLI computers (all major problems are handled by a district-level technician or by the CDLI)
- Coach – to provide support (although not academic support) in gaining the independent learning and self-motivation skills that may be needed to succeed in the online environment
- Administrative – to proctor tests and exams, monitor student attendance and behavior, and provide supervision
- school administrator, technology teacher, secretary, custodian, and/or a student enrolled in the CDLI (i.e., e-tutor)

Methodology

- Web-based survey
 - based on survey used in Barbour & Mulcahy (2004)
- Weekly Logs
 - volunteers from survey
- Interviews
 - volunteers from survey
 - yet to be scheduled



Sample

	Schools	M-Teachers	Schools Participating	M-Teachers Participating	M-Teachers Completed	M-Teachers Opted-Out	M-Teachers Not Responsive
District 1	10	34	-	-	-	-	-
District 2	32	83	20	46	17	7	22
District 3	33	102	33	102	19	27	56
District 4	21	62	20	58	16	9	33
District 5	2	3	2	3	0	1	2
Private Schools	2	5	2	5	1	0	4
Totals	100	289	77	214	53	44	117

Sample

- 77% of the schools representing 74% of the m-teachers
- Response rate – 24.8%
- Opted out – 20.6%
- Unresponsive – 56.7%
- Administrative – 60%
- Technical – 21.7%
- Coach – 18.3%



Often

- Monitoring the progress of distance learning students, including accepting e-mail notification from the e-teacher which express concern regarding the failure of a student to submit assignments, exams, etc. on time.
- Following-up with such students to ensure future compliance.
- Accepting grades and reports from the e-teacher and ensure that these get entered in the students term/end of year report cards.

Sometimes

- Supervising distance learning students while they engage in online activities.
- Providing limited assistance to students who encounter difficulty in using asynchronous communication tools (chat, discussion threads, e-mail, etc., web browser, and learning management system).
- Meeting, as requested, with the e-teacher, web-based initiatives facilitator, high school programme specialist.
- Including online students on the teacher's class list and as such follow-up on absences from class as would be the case with other students in that class whom the m-teacher instructs directly.



Task	M-Teachers	Time
Supervising tests/exams/class	82.7%	58 min
Tracking down missing assignments/homework	44.2%	31 min
Recording attendance or other administrative data	44.2%	17 min
Providing content-based tutoring	42.3%	40 min
Providing technology-based tutoring	50.0%	23 min
Providing technical trouble shooting	73.1%	37 min
Supervising science labs	15.1%	60 min
Preparing and submitting tests/exams	18.9%	20 min

Average 2.34/week per m-teacher

CDLI utilizes 5X14 timetable

- 10 hours per 14 days



Average m-teacher spends 65% or 2/3 course slot on their duties

How often do you access the any of your student's course management systems?

- Never – 60%
- Couple of times a month – 15%
- Once a month – 12%

What do you access in the student's course management systems?

- To check test dates and assignment deadlines
- To check student marks

How often are you in communication with e-teachers of your students?

- Couple of times a month – 38%
- Once a month – 19%
- Couple of times a week – 19%



Weekly Logs

- 6 teachers
- 4 weeks



Task	M-Teachers	Average Time
Supervising tests/exams/class	5 teachers 16/16 weeks	80 min
Tracking down missing assignments/homework	2 teachers 3/16 weeks	2 min
Recording attendance or other administrative data	3 teachers 5/16 weeks	3 min
Providing content-based tutoring	3 teachers 4/16 weeks	15 min
Providing technology-based tutoring		
Providing technical trouble shooting	5 teachers 13/16 weeks	29 min
Supervising science labs		
Preparing and submitting tests/exams	6 teachers 16/16 weeks	19 min



Task	Survey Time	Log Time	2004 Study
Supervising tests/exams/class	58 min	80 min	58 min
Tracking down missing assignments/homework	31 min	2 min	28 min
Recording attendance or other administrative data	17 min	3 min	27 min
Providing content-based tutoring	40 min	15 min	12 min
Providing technology-based tutoring	23 min	-	30 min
Providing technical trouble shooting	37 min	29 min	81 min
Supervising science labs	60 min	-	-
Preparing and submitting tests/exams	20 min	19 min	-

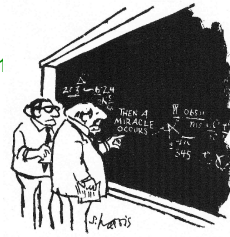
Discussion & Initial Conclusions

- m-teacher duties occupy significant amounts of teacher time
 - one teaching unit / 175 students (Shortall & Greene-Fraize, 2007)
- Logs recorded less overall time than surveys
- level of involvement hasn't decreased
 - actually increased by ~50 minutes between 2004 & 2009 surveys



Future Research

- survey
 - possible addition of District 1
- 12 m-teachers have volunteered to be interviewed
 - May & June 2009



"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Michael K. Barbour

Assistant Professor
Wayne State University, USA
mkbarbour@gmail.com
<http://www.michaelbarbour.com>