

TIPS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

These time management tips have been prepared with contributions from Benjamin Pisani (TLN), Jennifer Rundle (Courtenay Gardens Primary School), Lori Pereira and Michael Victory (TLN).

Teaching is complex and many demands are made on your time each and every day. Sometimes it feels like you will not be able to fit everything into the available time. However, you can and will succeed in mastering the diverse responsibilities of teaching. In this article we provide you with some tips to support you in your first years of teaching.

The emphasis of the article is on controlling time. When you allow time to control you, you never have enough of it. On the other hand, when you control your available time, you can allocate your time to complete tasks and duties. If you control your time, then it will help you to prioritise tasks and respond to each of your responsibilities in a timely manner. With effective time management skills, you can provide a better education for your students and get more enjoyment from your personal and professional life.

We have divided the article into teaching time and personal time.

Teaching Time

1. Class lists

Class lists are incredibly important. At the beginning of the year make multiple copies and keep them in handy places; in your classroom, your workspace and at home. Think about how often you use the lists; for excursions, incursions, field trips, money for fundraising and many other activities, and you will understand the importance of keeping multiple copies of these lists at hand.

More importantly you can use class lists for recording assessment outcomes, and when they are readily available, they are great for jotting down notes about progress on a task while students are working e.g recording reading and progression levels, completion of work and projects.

There are now many ways to record these things electronically which can also save time. When developed electronically, notes and lists are accessible remotely, can be centrally managed and cut down on physical storage.

2. Collect necessary work only

It is critical that instead of collecting everything for assessment, we design assessment tasks that elicit the information we most need to inform our teaching. Goss contends 'We must focus on what matters most, not what is easiest to measure' (2015, p8). This requires planning, which itself is a time issue, but planning time will save you time later. You will experience a sense of accomplishment from timely feedback rather than feeling overwhelmed with piles of student work to review.

So, commit the time to planning what you need students to write or do; plan the work that you will collect and avoid time spent checking work that is not necessary to measure student progress and achievement.

3. Prioritise

This might seem obvious, but in the classroom context it has a particular application. Once again it is about planning. What is the essential work that you need students to undertake and what is the work that is good to do, but may not be essential? This is about making judgements about what tasks you can leave off your teaching plan if you need to spend more time reinforcing what you have decided are essential concepts.

Student needs are different. With one class you may need to spend more time reinforcing classroom routines and rituals, or perhaps you need to focus on social and emotional learning. You will need to make wise judgments about how to spend your time and how you will work with students to achieve these goals. When you understand the priorities for your group(s) of students you will be better able to plan and structure your teaching sessions and increase your flexibility as a teacher.

It is about spending time planning rather than wasting more of your time reacting when things become complex in the classroom or school. Priorities help you maintain your focus on the important aspects of your work.

4. Collaborate with colleagues to develop programs and worked examples

The HITS documentation provides the evidence that worked examples and modelling make a significant difference to learning (DET, 2017). It will be valuable for your students if you have models and worked examples available to help them understand the success criteria that you have established. This should not be an individual task. Look to your more experienced colleagues for examples. Offer to swap and exchange resources and programs. If you are in a small school or are the only teacher for a subject – reach out to close network schools. If this is not possible re-connect with some of your university colleagues. ([In edition 5 there was an article by Brett Speed regarding networking](#)).

Once you have gathered samples – look after them for future years – once again invest time now in filing them, to save time in the future.

Personal Time

1. Timetables

Schools run to timetables. Create your own timetable, based on your teaching and administrative requirements. Create blocks of time on your timetable, including before school, after school, recess and lunch breaks, and of course teaching time. This sets you up to be organised for the week and allows you to see the spaces you have to complete activities.

Publish your timetable in many spaces; around your work areas, at home, in your teaching diary, keep a copy on your computer desktop. In secondary schools, make it available to students, so they know when you are available for one to one conferencing. In many schools, timetables are managed electronically, but the key message remains that when you publish your timetable in many spaces you have access to your timetable at all times, and you will know where you are supposed to be and what you should be doing. This seems obvious, but at really busy times, it is helpful to have this plan at your fingertips.

Ben, who is a secondary music teacher has provided an example of the timetable he created for himself.

	Times	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Before School	8.00 to 9.00	Staff Briefing (8.30)	VCAL Student Management Duties		Staff Briefing (8.30)	
Period 1	9.00 to 9.45	VCAL Yr. 11 Personal Development		Yr. 12 Music Perf	Yr. 11 Music Perf	Yr. 11 & 12 Music Styles
Period 2	9.45 to 10.30					
Recess	10.30 to 10.45				VCAL Student Management Duties	Yard Duty
Period 3	10.45 to 11.30	Yr 12 Music Perf				
Period 4	11.30 to 12.15					
Lunch	12.15 to 1.00		Percussion Ensemble	VET Sound Production 1 st & 2 nd Year		
Period 5	1.00 to 1.45	Yr. 11 Music Perf	Yr. 11 & 12 Music Styles		VCAL Yr. 11 Personal Development	
Period 6	1.45 to 2.30					
Period 7	2.30 to 3.15	Yr. 11 & 12 Music Styles	Yr. 11 Music Perf			Yr. 12 Music Perf
After School	3.15 to 5.00	Yard Duty & Staff Meeting	Soul/Funk Band		PLT Meeting	College Production Band
Ben Time	5.00 to 6.00					

2. Personal professional time

Note on Ben's timetable how he has allocated 'Ben time' from 5.00pm – 6.00pm each day. This is Ben's explanation for creating that personal professional time.

I made the decision to stay back at work until 6.00 pm for two reasons. Firstly, I lived some distance from school. If I left school at 5 pm during peak hour it could take me up to 1.5 hours to get home. By staying at school until 6 pm I would reduce the time that I spent sitting in traffic, and would end up arriving home only 15 minutes later than if I left school at 5 pm. Secondly, I wanted to work to try and create a work life balance, and to do this I worked on the idea that I would do as much work at school as I could, and then when I got home I could spend time with my family and doing the other elements of my life that were important. While this didn't always go to plan, generally I was able to balance my time between my work and personal commitments. At times I would put up a 'Do not disturb' sign on my office door during this personal professional time and would work diligently during that time to get tasks done.

3. Separate work and personal time

You need to think about this on a daily, weekly and yearly basis, and you need to consider your own personal commitments e.g. family, relationships, personal interests.

Daily

There are two techniques that teachers use to separate work and personal time on a daily basis. First task is to decide on a time that you are going to finish work. For Ben it was 6.00pm. If that is right for you then commit to not doing work after that time. No phone calls, no emails, no preparation. It is not easy to do this but establish the guidelines for yourself and pressure yourself to do it in the available work time. You may need to leave work at an earlier time (e.g. childcare responsibilities), if that is the case then commit yourself to an amount of time you are willing to do at home and stick to it.

The second technique is to pick a point on your journey to and from work where you switch from work thinking to home thinking. The teacher who shared this technique drove over the Westgate Bridge. At the top of the bridge on the way home she would turn on music and stop thinking about work, and then reverse the process in the morning on the way to work.

Weekly

There is hardly a teacher in Australia who does not commit time on Sunday afternoon or evening to preparation or correction. If this works for you then stay with it; but for most teachers, it interrupts family celebrations or personal relaxation time. If you know you have weekend work to do, plan when you are going to do it, before you leave work on Friday, and limit the time you are going to spend. Limiting the time will pressure you to be efficient and not procrastinate. This time may change from week to week depending on your personal and family commitments.

Yearly

There is a cycle to the school year, ([see the regular article from Belinda Webb on The Teaching Year](#)). There are some weeks and months that are much busier than others e.g. report writing time, parent-teacher interviews. You can plan for these. You know they will be busy times and you may have to alter your daily and weekly planning times. However, plan for this and increase your personal time either side of these busy weeks. The school year is relatively predictable, and once you understand the cycle you will have more control over your time.

4. If there is too much to do – seek support

It is possible that no matter how efficient you are with your time, there may be too much to do. At these times talk with your colleagues, with your mentor and with school leaders. They may be able to show

you new techniques to save time and increase your efficiency, to help you prioritise work and to re-distribute work to support you for a period of time.

At different stages in their career every teacher feels overloaded. It is a common feeling among graduate teachers – you are not alone. Being overloaded is not your fault and seeking support is the professional thing to do.

Summary

As with every professional role, you should be able to fit all of your work as a teacher into the regulated hours. However, the reality is that teachers are committed to getting the best outcomes for their students and will commit extra time out of regulated hours to support students. This article has been about supporting you to manage your time so that you can balance your professional responsibilities with your personal interests and time. Keep talking with experienced colleagues about how they manage their time and look for ways to work together to support each other to achieve a manageable workload.

Key takeaways

Teaching is a complex and demanding profession, but you can manage your responsibilities if you focus on prioritising, collaborating with others and learning new techniques to help you control the available time.

Discussion with your mentor

Try these questions with your mentor

- What activities and tasks currently take up the bulk of your time?
- What routines/structures/systems can I put in place to reduce the time I spend on non-essential activities, and maximise time spent on essential activities?
- Which of my colleagues seem to manage their time well? It would be helpful to create an opportunity to talk to and observe these teachers and their systems/routines.

References

Department of Education and Training 2017, High impact teaching strategies: Excellence in teaching and learning, viewed 31 May 2019,

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/support/highimpactteachstrat.pdf>

Goss, P. & Hunter J., Romanes, D. & Parsonage, H. (2015). Targeted teaching: How better use of data can improve student learning. Melbourne: Grattan Institute, viewed 20 August 2019,

<https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/827-Targeted-Teaching.pdf>

Further Reading

Five time management tips for teachers:

<https://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/classroom-resources/five-time-management-tips-for-teachers/>