

The Ultimate Time Management Guide for Teachers

By Adam Waxler

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About the Author



Adam Waxler

Adam landed his first teaching job at Springs Middle School in East Hampton, New York. At Springs, Adam was basically given free reign to run the middle school social studies department as he wished. He worked quickly to revamp their outdated program, moving away from the textbook, teacher driven social studies curriculum to a more student-centered constructivist curriculum.

After creating curriculum maps for both 7th and 8th grade social studies, Adam set his sights on other aspects of school life. He became the 8th grade advisor responsible for organizing and running both the 8th grade trip and the 8th grade graduation ceremony, as well as the advisor for the 8th grade video editing team.

However, Adam's biggest break in teaching came through the professional development courses offered by Jean Anastasio and Dave Perry at APL Associates. He credits these workshops for literally changing his career.

By combining the teaching strategies taught in these workshops with his own constructivist methodology, Adam was able to increase standardized test scores, get 100% classroom participation, and eliminate classroom management problems.

Of course, when Springs started their teacher mentor program, Adam jumped at the chance to help new teachers learn to become *Master Teachers*.

After a few of years of mentoring, Adam decided to create an ebook on teaching strategies. Now Adam uses his ebook, *eTeach: A Teacher Resource for Learning the Strategies of Master Teachers*, as an integral part of his new teacher training, including workshops on how to implement the strategies put forth in his ebook.

Adam loves to spend time with his lovely wife Tanya and wonderful son, Levi. You can usually find them at the beach.

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Chapter 1: Warming Up to the Concept of Time

“Now go on and enjoy yourself, dance to your heart’s content and win the Prince’s heart. But remember, you have to be back before the clock strikes twelve at midnight.”

We all are familiar with the words of the Fairy God Mother in the evergreen fairy tale ‘Cinderella’. It’s these words that probably made us aware (for the first time in our lives) of the value of time. We all sympathized with Cinderella when all her splendid gown and other finery turned to rags at the stroke of midnight. Our first acquaintance with the villainous *Time!*

But that’s enough! This book was not written to eulogize time. There is no need of the romance of Cinderella. Do you know why? Because we don’t have the time for it.

I have written many articles as a middle school social studies teacher describing the biggest enemy in teaching as *time* itself.

Think about it... We don’t have secretaries, though we should. And, most of us don’t have assistants, though we should.

Think about just some of things a teacher does in any given day that occupies our time:

- Creating lesson plans
- Making copies

- Meeting to collaborate with other teachers
- Staff meetings
- Parent meetings
- Extra curricula's, such as school trips, coaching, student council, yearbooks, and school plays (just to name a few)
- State testing review
- In class time for collecting homework, taking attendance, announcements, assigning new homework, and let's not forget...time to actually teach.

Of course, I could go on and on, but as a teacher I know you understand what I am talking about here: Time is the enemy!

The purpose of this ebook is to help teachers fight that enemy with effective time management skills. Too many teachers are losing sleep, getting heart conditions, creating anxiety, ulcers, and other health conditions due to the stress created from a profession that simply doesn't have enough hours in a day.

However, this ebook does *not* just focus on the hours during the teaching day. In order to have effective time management skills, the *entire* day needs to be taken into consideration.

In this ebook, we are going to try and understand time and the many meanings that time has.

So what does time mean to you?

When was the last time that you realized the value of time?

Personally, I find something very humbling about the concept of time. Just imagine, man with all his power is just like a helpless babe before time. Time stands tall and strong before man and man remains vulnerable and weak before it. Man, the big strong man who tamed rivers and seas, who reached out to the skies and beyond, who harnessed wind and water and dug up the bowels of the earth is but a worm before *time*.

The best man can do to win the battle against time is die is hair and use some anti-wrinkle cream on his face. ☺

So now we come to our subject: *time management*.

Remember, time cannot be “controlled”, it can only be “managed”.

And that is precisely what we are going to do. We are going to learn the art of *time management*.

Every person has only twenty four hours in a day and no force on earth can alter that. So in order to maximize your teaching potential, what you have to do is to be able to manage your time in the most effective way possible.

That is what *Time Management* is all about. It's about managing your time effectively *and* efficiently. It is critical that you win the battle against time, especially as a teacher, because the ones who will benefit the most are your students. The better you are able to manage your time, the more productive your class will be, and the more your students will get out of those classes.

Simply put, as a teacher you must win the time-management battle because your students deserve it!

Chapter 2: Where Does All the Time Go?

It is quite surprising when you sit and think about where all the time in one day goes. Twenty four hours is really a lot of time, but on most days it scarcely seems enough. However, this is because of certain misconceptions about time. Let us proceed to carefully examine where all that time goes and find out if twenty-four hours really is twenty-four hours. For that I have listed out certain points which will help you to get a realistic view about how much time you really have in a day.

Point 1

We do not really get twenty four hours in a day. Maybe it's because we always talk about "twenty four hours in a day" that we get the feeling that we actually have twenty four hours to finish our daily business. Unfortunately, the sad fact is that we do not.

Assuming that you hit the sack at least by twelve at night and taking for granted the fact that you need at least seven hours of sleep; let me fix your waking time at seven in the morning.

That means that you have already lost seven hours, which we can deduct from twenty four, giving us only fourteen waking hours. So let us get that straight, we have only 14 hours in a day. Now if you think that all those fourteen hours can be used for productive work, you are wrong again. For we come to our next point.

Point 2

The fourteen waking hours cannot be used completely for productive work. There are many things that a human being should do in order to continue to live like a human being and some of these things do take up a lot of time. Now the following list that I have drawn up is sure to vary from person to person, but I have taken the times for each action on what I felt to be reasonable times as far as any normal human being is concerned.

- Taking a shower.

Most of us take a shower at least once in a day and the time I think we can put down for that is ten minutes. For those of you cleaner ones who shower twice a day put that as twenty minutes.

- Answering the call of nature

Oh yes, we are all very cultured people who have the best of manners and upbringing. We dress ourselves properly and conduct ourselves with the utmost poise. But there are several times in a day when we have to go back to nature and summing up all those things we do in the bathroom I think a good half hour should be enough.

- Getting ready and tidying ourselves.

When we move about in society we definitely have to look our best and adding up all the minutes that we spend in front of that mirror, we get another ten minutes. For some people of course, this figure comes up to half an hour. But I think ten minutes is good enough.

- Eating

We need to eat to live and though I accept the fact that people have different eating habits and times, I think that, and I'm sure doctors will agree with me, a person needs three meals a day and should take at least ten minutes to ingest a meal and not just gobble it down. So that makes it 30 minutes for food.

- Time to relax.

Please do not raise an argument now. I promise to deal with this bit later on. But right now I would like to put down one hour as the time to relax, and this includes the time that you get to yourself for prayer or meditation or just to stare out of your window or perhaps the few extra minutes that you spend in your bed after waking up, waiting for the last traces of sleep to go away.

- Time with family and friends.

Please, we are human beings, aren't we? We certainly cannot get along with our business of life without chatting a few minutes every now and then with our friends and the family too. So with your permission, I would like to deduct another hour from your waking time.

So now what do we have left?

We started off with 14 hours of waking time. We then proceeded to add up all the time that we accounted for in the above mentioned points; let us see how much time we have left for productive work provided we still want to exist as human beings.

The activities mentioned above totaled a good three hours and twenty minutes. That is 3 hours and 20 minutes. I put it down in both numerals and words so that you can get a real taste of the figure.

Now if we proceed to subtract this figure from our 14 hours of waking time, what do we get? We are left with just ten hours forty minutes. In figures that is 10 hours 40 minutes.

That is a fact. That is all that we get. So from now on don't you think that it would be more realistic to say that we have just ten hours and forty minutes to accomplish a day's work and not twenty four hours? For if we continue to believe that we have twenty four hours, then we are in effect deceiving ourselves.

But wait...there is more to this story than meets the eye. I hate to disillusion you, but these crucial hours that we have painstakingly added up are not really put to constructive use. There are certain things called *time killers* which you have to look out for.

Time Killers are what we are going to deal with in our next chapter.

Chapter 3: Time Killers

Till now, we have been harping about how valuable time is and how time lost is time lost forever and so on. Now we come to a strange concept that is *Time Killers*.

The very word sounds like sacrilege doesn't it?

How can one talk about killing such a valuable resource. Unfortunately, that's the way the story goes. There are a lot of time killers in this world, both in and out of school, and what you have to do is *identify* these time killers, look out for them, and stay wary of them. Only then can you put your available time to the maximum possible use.

The time killers that I have listed below are more or less general. They are things that most of us encounter. But apart from these, each one of us may have unique time killers that are particular to our style of living and way of work. Be smart and identify these killers. When I talk about killers, do not get the impression of masked men lurking in shadows brandishing guns and knives. The killers that I am referring to are quite ordinary every day things that we see and use in our lives but often do not realize how much of our time they take away.

Seven terrible Time Killers

- Telephone calls

- Chatter boxes
- Traffic jams
- Finding parking spaces
- Meetings
- Bad machinery
- E-mail

The list could go on, but before we keep adding to the list, I would like to elaborate on certain items listed above.

How to handle *Time Killers*.

- *Telephone calls.*

The funny thing about telephone calls is that these instruments are indeed great *time savers*. In fact, the amount of time that people get to save thanks to telephones is stupendous. The problem arises when telephones are not used properly. Most people do not understand, and even if they do, they forget that telephones are not to be used for lengthy conversations. For one thing, another person may be trying to reach you and there is nothing as exasperating as trying to reach a person over the telephone and being confronted with a busy tone, or worse, not answering the call-waiting. So the first thing about a telephone conversation is that it should be brief.

Now, as for cell phones, there is a lot to be said and done. What should be done is turn off your cell phone when you are having a conversation or a discussion with more than one person. As soon as you get a call, you may ask the people you were talking with to excuse yourself, but you leave them waiting while you chuckle and giggle over your phone. Often we tend to give more importance to the caller than to the person we were having the discussion with. Again, the same rule applies here. Be brief. A cell phone should be used to get an important message across to a person who you were not able to reach on the land line.

- *Chatter Boxes.*

Haven't we all met them?

I know you are going through names in your head right now, aren't you?

I know I am.

Especially that one custodian that simply can't stop talking. At the end of every single day, he comes to my room and is simply determined to waste both of our time. Nice guy, don't get me wrong, but the ultimate time killer. You know the type, the ones who simply love the sound of their own voices and once they open their mouths, there is no stopping them. You know the teachers at the faculty meeting (that is already a major time killer) that always seem to have just one more question or one more comment, that make you just want to reach your hands across the room and...well, you know. They waste not

only your time but their time as well. Steer clear of such people. Believe me, it is much easier to avoid such people than to tell them to shut up and if you get a telephone call from such a person, use a caller ID or voicemail.

- *Traffic jams and finding parking spaces.*

Any one who has lived in the city for at least a day will know what I am talking about. There is no getting past a traffic jam at rush hour. And will someone tell me why is it called “rush hour” when that is the time when the traffic is the slowest.

The only thing you can do is anticipate the traffic jam and leave your home a half hour or one hour early. However, that does not really keep the time killer at bay. It just helps you to avoid being late. In this respect you have two options. Either you could find something constructive to do while you wait for the traffic to move along or the traffic light to change. Or, a better option would be to take subway and walk the rest of the way. You can get along a lot faster on your feet and it is a lot better for your health as well.

By doing so, you can also get rid of the headache of finding a parking space.

- *Meetings*

Not surprisingly, lengthy meetings and discussions can prove to be awful time killers particularly if the meeting does not have a clear agenda and if there are people who love to talk among the group. It has been found that most middle and senior level managers spend nearly 70% of their work time talking. And, in most organizations, parleying has been made into a fine art. Teachers in particular are known to love to hear themselves speak. How often are you at a mandatory meeting, biting your nails, waiting to get the heck out of there, while teacher after teacher continue to ask question after question. And, I ‘m not even sure they are even interested in the answer!

- *Bad Machinery*

How many of us have wanted to scream and bang the daylights out of a computer that does not give us the information we need? Even worse, the copy machine. How often have you spent your entire prep period with your head inside a copy machine trying to “un-jam” the machine. I sit on several interview committees each year and I always want to ask just one question, “Do you know how to repair a copy machine?” If the candidate says “yes” then they’re hired. Of course I am just kidding about the interview, but the truth is a computer that takes a long time to start up, a photocopier that gives shamefully faint photocopies, even a leaky faucet or a stubborn drawer or door knob can waste a lot of time and send us up the wall. If you have such equipment or machinery, get it changed at the earliest possible date. It is worth the amount of time and energy that you waste on it every day.

- *E-mail*

Wow! It is simply amazing how much time is spent on reading and writing emails. Not only that, most of us have at least two email accounts, one at home and one at school. It

is very important that you keep your inbox organized. Create folders and use them, this will save you lots of time. Also, don't forget to delete the garbage. That's right 90% of what comes to our inbox is just that, garbage. Spam has gotten completely out of control, but it is not just that. Many of your colleagues send you information that you just don't need, but you have to spend time reading it to find out that you don't need it. And please, enough with the emailing of chain letters and jokes!

Apart from the list above, each person may have their own particular time killers. For instance, a car that refuses to start in the morning, difficult hair that insists on looking like Medusa's head on a bad snake day (I buzz mine during the school year—it just easier), an elevator that takes forever to reach your floor. Use your common sense and try to find alternate methods, or at least try to put the time to good use by reading the morning paper.

You will get a better idea of how to get over *time killers* once we handle the section called the *time savers*.

Chapter 4: Organization is the Key to Time Management

Tips on Classroom Organization.

Now this is a fact that I think would not raise any arguments: *If you are better organized, you have a better chance of managing your time effectively.*

So what is this art of getting organized?

There have been more than enough books written about the art of getting organized and I do not want to give my modest contribution to this much hyped about topic.

Instead of working on somebody else's definition, let me ask you, "How organized do you want to be?"

When we talk about getting organized people generally get an impression of a spick and span classroom with not a paper out of place. However, my experience has taught me that a neat classroom does not necessarily mean a very organized classroom. If you throw away every single piece of paper that comes to your room, certainly it will be neat, but not necessarily organized. I believe that "organizing" is a relative term. It is all a matter of convenience.

- In an organized classroom there will be a place for every thing and everything will be in its place. At the same time, you should be able to lay your hands on the object you need the moment you need it and in this respect a little bit of clutter is ok.

- Also, it is not enough that you know where every thing is, somebody else should know it too. In case you are not able to come in personally and get something, somebody else should be able to do the job for you. It is here that labels and tags can prove to be vital. Every single file should have a name tag and every thing should be filed properly. It is not enough that you name things according to your convenience. The names should be intelligible to others as well.

Often we tend to use codes like ARCS, CRBER, WHOSH which might make sense to us but may sound like gibberish to every one else.

Now that's enough about classroom organization.

Let's now move on to getting yourself organized.

Tips on self-organization

The best way to get organized is to find out the loopholes where we usually end up in a mess and see whether we can get around them.

For most teachers the following are often pitfalls:

- Forgetting appointments (staff meetings, parent meetings, student meetings, CSE meetings etc.)
- Forgetting deadlines (report cards, progress reports etc.)
- Being unable to meet deadlines (report cards, progress reports etc.)
- Being late for meetings and appointments (staff meetings, parent meetings, student meetings, CSE meetings etc.)
- Forgetting names (students, faculty, parents, community members)
- Forgetting telephone numbers
- Misplacing important items (planbook, gradebook, tests, quizzes, copies etc.)

I have used the following seven tips in my life and they have proved to be quite effective. Maybe you too could try them out and see whether they work for you.

Seven Tips to Become a More Organized Person

1. Accept the fact that we cannot rely too much on our memories.

The human mind is exposed to a hurricane of information every day. As a result the mind does a very nice filtering process, and very little of what we see and hear is retained in our minds. So instead of depending on our very selective memory why not depend on a piece of paper.

2. Carry a tiny scribbling pad and a pen with you all the time.

The moment you make an appointment or are asked to attend a meeting, jot it down in the scribbling pad. Do not bother about others laughing at you. You will have the last laugh in the end.

3. It is a good idea to write down “orders” in your book.

Each time you tell somebody to do something, write it down in your book along with the date and the time. For example, I am in charge of running our 8th grade class trip. In order for this trip to run successfully I need to delegate certain duties to various teachers and parents. It is simply way too much information for me to keep in my head. Therefore, I make sure to write down each person I delegate to, the duty delegated, and the date. Best of all, if they see me actually write down the information, then they are much more likely to carry out their duties in a timely manner. Also, make sure when somebody like your principal asks *you* to do something that you also write everything down in your little book. Do not be afraid of being thought of as a person with a very poor memory. It won't be long before people start thinking of you as a highly organized person.

4. If you have an electronic pocket organizer or palm pilot, be sure to use it.

Each time someone gives you his or her telephone number, immediately enter it into your pocket organizer, along with the person's name of course.

5. Prepare a to-do list everyday.

I cannot over-emphasize the importance of to-do lists in getting yourself organized. Actually, I find writing my to-do list the night before, rather than the morning of, helps me get a good night sleep. It is probably the most sensible thing that a busy person should do. In fact, I have devoted the entire next chapter to just that: *To-Do Lists*.

6. Plan what you have to do well in advance.

It is a good idea to have daily, weekly, and monthly plans. No, this is not about expanding your career and things like that. I am not referring to a strategy plan that involves taking over the superintendent's position (though I know many of us would like to). Those things are beyond the scope of this book. I was referring to having plans about the daily, weekly, and monthly activities of your teaching and yourself as well.

7. Have a fixed timetable.

It may seem kind of mechanical, but have a fixed time for everything and stick to that time table. Believe me, it really helps. Let's say I have made my to-do list with a certain number of things for a particular week. Simply put the days of the week next to each one. I even number them.

By accomplishing the above suggestions you are now moving towards becoming a more organized person.

Unfortunately, there are still miles to go before mastering the art of time management.

Chapter 5: To-Do Lists

I had mentioned earlier the importance of 'to-do' lists and this chapter is dedicated completely to highlighting the advantages of a 'to-do' list.

The 6 Advantages of Maintaining a To-Do List

1. A to-do list helps us know the different things that have to be done so that we do not miss anything.
2. A to-do list is more dependable than our memory.
3. Once we have a written list of the things that we have to do, we can prioritize and decide which jobs should be done first.
4. Sometimes one or more jobs may require that we go to another office or section. A to-do list helps us to avoid repetition of labor. For example, if we have to deliver a document to the main office and collect a document from another office which is on the same hallway as the first office, both these tasks can be done together. It saves us the time, energy and effort of going to the same place twice. But, only if we have a to-do list can we know in advance that there are two jobs at the same place.

When our school built a new addition, my classroom was the farthest away from the main office. While that may be nice for many reasons, it literally forces me to get all my tasks by the main office done in one trip.

5. A to-do list enables us to cross out the tasks which we have finished doing and towards the end of the day, when we see the list of things that we have crossed out, it certainly will give us a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. It also has the effect of shocking us if nothing has been done or crossed out.
6. If anything remains on today's list, it can be carried over to tomorrow's list. Of course, it will be placed at the top of the new to-do list

Now, when we talk about preparing a to-do list, there two important points that should not be overlooked:

1. The to-do list should be realistic.
2. It is not enough that only *daily* to-do lists be prepared.

We say that the list should be realistic because it should include only things that can be accomplished in a day. There is no sense in preparing a list that includes items that can only be done over a week. Therefore, it becomes relevant to prepare another 'to-do' list for a week, a month, and even a year.

It is best to pin up weekly and monthly lists instead of carrying them around. Of course, a very crucial point that you should bear in mind, ***a weekly list is not something to be done on the last day of the week and a monthly list is not something to be done at the end of the month.*** If you want to have effective time management skills you will not put off a month-long task until the 30th of the month.

Therefore, your *daily* to-do lists should include items that require you to do little bit of your monthly tasks.

****Important Note****

In many ways your curriculum map is like your "year-long curriculum to-do list". Curriculum mapping is an extremely important time management device and is essential to becoming a productive teacher. Chapter 3 of my ebook, ***eTeach: A Teacher Resource for the Learning the Strategies of Master Teachers***, explains the importance of curriculum mapping and shows you how to design your own curriculum map. It even has links to my own curriculum maps. For more on that log onto: <http://www.teaching-teacher.com>

Chapter 6: Prioritizing Helps in Meeting Deadlines

It is not just once or twice in the course of our work that we have to meet deadlines. However, it seems as if it is only when we approach the deadline that everything goes haywire. The things we do daily are thrown completely off gear and meeting the deadline becomes a big headache.

This is no more evident than at the end of the quarter when grades are due for report cards or even in the middle of the quarter for progress reports.

Is there any way out of this? Of course there is. For one thing, we can be well organized so when the submission of a students' grades are due, we are already prepared.

Easy enough?

Well, unfortunately, in the real world, those dates that grades are due can really sneak up on you, especially if you are still actually grading assignments. The only way out seems to be working extra hours. That is not altogether harmful. It never hurts to work a few extra hours once in a while.

However, you can make your life much easier by staying on top of your grading. Do not let yourself fall behind, grade your tests, essays etc. as soon as you can (your students deserve that anyway), and make sure you record them right away. Don't put this off!

Also, a computer grading system will save you countless hours. And, if you are really lucky your whole school will be on the same system, and your work will be greatly reduced. For more on various computer grading systems, make sure to read Chapter 7 of

eTeach: A Teacher Resource for the Learning the Strategies of Master Teachers (<http://www.teaching-teacher.com>).

Another alternative though is to prioritize. See whether you can arrange your work in such away that you get to do the more important tasks first. If there is some daily work that doesn't call for too much urgency, keep it aside. Concentrate on the more important tasks first.

Similarly, while you are working there may be a thousand and one distractions at your school.

You will have to decide which is more important, attending to those distractions or focusing on your work. This also goes for when doing your school work at home. As we all know, there are just as many, if not more, distractions at home. In fact, I have found it near impossible to get anything done at home right after school, there are simply too many distractions. And, those distractions are often things I enjoy the most, like playing with my son. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion, that when I come home from school I will not do any school work. Therefore, I must make sure I finish my work at school *before* I go home. This is all part of using time efficiently.

You might also have to remind yourself to stay put at your workstation and not linger around either mentally or physically.

Also, it is not necessary that you do all the jobs yourself. If you have aides, teaching assistants, or student teachers, it is about time that you started trusting them with some of the jobs. The word over here is “delegate.”

Delegating can be difficult for some, especially those of us who feel that “if we want it done right we must do it ourselves.” Delegation, however, can be a teacher's best time saver.

The three advantages of delegating are:

1. Delegating gives us more time to concentrate on more important issues.
2. Delegating is a very good method of giving practical training in the real-life situations.
3. It is a good method of fostering decision making among subordinates.

Unfortunately, not all tasks can be delegated. There are certain criteria to be taken into consideration before delegating a task:

1. If the task is repetitive, by all means delegate.
2. If the decision can be reversed quickly and easily, it is safe to delegate. For example, if it is rearranging the furniture in your classroom or deciding on the Christmas celebrations for the class party, then it is quite safe to delegate.

3. Check and see if the impact is not too much on others just in case their decision is wrong.
4. Check and see if there is too much money or physical resources involved in the decision.
5. Check if delegating is within your school's policies. For example, is there a specific person that you can delegate to make your copies for you? If so, take advantage of that!

Don't forget... You should also delegate duties to your students. Things like, sharpening pencils, taking things off the bulletin board, and getting your mail from the office, should all be delegated to students. (Plus, kids love doing that stuff!)

In this way, if you prioritize you can decide which jobs should be done first, who should do it, and what should be done when. Before you know it, meeting deadlines will stop being such a headache.

Chapter 7: Accomplishing More in Less Time

We have all experienced those days which were full to the brim and at the same time we have experienced days when a few time consuming tasks have taken up all our time. Why is it that on some days we can do so much while on other days we seem to do practically nothing though we were busy the whole day?

In order to provide an answer to this question, I would like to give you a small illustration. You have been to the beach, haven't you? There you might have seen kids building sand castles with sand. You can only build a sand castle with sand of course, but I hope you have seen those kids at work. What they do is that they dig up sand with their shovels and fill up their pails with sand. Then they turn over the pails and presto they have the base of the castle which can then be shaped.

No, we are not concerned with building castles in the sand. We are concerned about those pails which the kids use to build their castles. If you have such a pail with you, you can understand what I am talking about. Try putting a few small rocks into the pail. When I say rocks I mean rocks probably the size of medium sized cabbages. The most you can put into the pail would be three or four and even these would stick out into the air.

The pail is full isn't it? It is full of rocks. However, does that mean that it is really full?

Now get some pebbles probably the size of ping-pong balls and see whether there is room for a couple of them in the pail. Definitely four or five of the pebbles can slip in to the spaces between the rocks.

Is the pail full now? Yes it is full of rocks and pebbles.

Now if you will oblige me, see if you can get some glass marbles or beads. Slide them into the pail. You don't have to try too hard; they will find their own paths.

If you think that the pail is full now, think again. Just wait till you get some sand and pour it into the pail. You will be amazed at the speed with which it trickles in. And, we are not done yet. You are not going to believe this but the pail will actually accommodate something more. Try pouring a glass of water into it and you will find the water disappearing into the depths of the pail. If you want, you can keep pouring water till the pail brims over.

The purpose of this experiment was to show you that what you thought to be full could in fact accommodate much more, but of a different kind of course.

This is exactly what happens to most of us on most of our days. We take on big tasks. That's well and good, but we get so occupied with these Herculean tasks, which may take more than a day to get over with anyway, that we tend to forget those smaller tasks which may be just as important. This is where we can understand the importance of prioritizing. The big things are important, but the small things may be just as important.

While you are trying to handle those rocks, do not forget those pebbles, marbles, and grains of sand and drops of water.

Some people have asked me to give specific examples for these materials. So I would like to take a minute to compare. I believe that things like saying "good morning" and greeting others generally are very important. They help establish the foundation of a strong working relationship with your fellow teachers...and it is contagious. These things I would compare to the water. Just because you have had a busy day, it doesn't mean that you have to be a grouch.

Telephone calls (particularly with parents) would be the sand in our pail. They keep coming all the time and if you do not answer your telephone calls then you can be setting up a bad parent-teacher relationship. Remember, you may only have a particular child once, but you may have that child's parents several more times.

Responding to emails can be compared to the marbles, though sometimes they actually seem more like boulders. Emails can be a major distraction, especially if you are reading emails that have links to various things on the internet. Learn to delete and move on!

Meetings such as parent-teacher conferences and staff meetings are the pebbles, and major projects and things like grading, report cards, lesson planning, graduate work etc. are the rocks.

Unfortunately, there needs to be time for everything and everything needs to have it's time.

With that said, I would like to tell you to please discard the myth of perfection. This is another tough one to swallow for those of us who are perfectionists. The fact is, “perfection” simply does not exist in this world. Nothing, and I mean nothing, is perfect. So, it is not really important that everything has to be shipshape. As long as it is presentable you don’t have to lose sweat about a project that you have done. However, that does not mean that your work should be shabby. Simply, make your work as presentable as possible within the time frame allotted.

And, in order to accomplish more with less time, we need to take a look at those *time savers* and that takes us to our next chapter.

Chapter 8: Time Savers

Everything in this world has something to balance its’ existence. If there is white, there is black; if there is darkness there is light, if there are time *wasters*, there are time *savers*. So now let us focus our attention towards those time savers because they are our best friends when we talk about Time Management.

Again, as in the case of time wasters, I am just listing a few general examples over here. These are by no means the only time savers in the world.

The Top Time Savers

- Telephones
- Computers
- Email
- Fax Machines
- Bulletin or Notice Boards
- Photo Copiers
- Efficient Filing Systems
- Good Secretaries and Junior Staff

Let’s take a quick look at all these.

- **Telephones**

Surprise! Surprise! I had included telephones under the list of time wasters, but telephones are in fact one of the best time savers that man has invented. Just imagine the amount of time you get to save by just making a telephone call!

Many schools have phones in different wings of the building. Use them! My school happens to be very long (instead of building up, they just keep adding additions out.) Instead of running up to the office for a quick question, I use the phone across the hall. Don't have a phone? Then do what I do when the phone across the hall is in use...use your cell phone.

Telephones are certainly one of the best time savers in this world. Of course, it all depends on how you use the telephone.

- **Computers**

I don't think that enough can be said about the time saving role of the computer. But then I don't think that I have to say much. I suppose every one will agree that computers are indeed time-saving machines. Yet still many don't take full advantage of the computer. If you are still using an actual grade book to record your grades, and if you are still doing the math to calculate the grades yourself, then you are not taking full advantage of the computer. Again, for more on computer grading read Chapter 7 of my ebook, *eTeach: A Teacher Resource for Learning the Strategies of Master Teachers*. (<http://www.teaching-teacher.com>)

- **Email**

Email is another one that can be labeled as both a *time killer* and a *time saver*. Just like the phone, you need to use email to your advantage. First of all, make sure to organize your address book. Set up categories for different groups of people you email frequently, and label them accordingly. For example, I am the 8th grade advisor at our school in charge of the class trip, the class video, and graduation. I often times need to get a message to the entire 8th grade staff, but the 8th grade staff only. By setting up my address book properly I can send my message to all those who need it with one click of the mouse. Just as important is the fact that others who do not need the email will not receive it...everyone must do their part to stop wasting the time of others.

- **Fax machines/scanners**

Like telephones, fax machines save a lot of time by enabling us to send important documents across continents within a few seconds. In some cases it may even be easier to fax something from your classroom or home, rather than walking it up to the office. Likewise, scanners can also be used to save time. For example, many schools require that homework be handed in at certain location everyday. It would be infinitely easier to scan the homework to a network folder.

- **Bulletin or Notice Boards**

Bulletin boards are a very time effective way of reaching out to a large number of people. Instead of conducting one of those long meetings in which every one gets a chance to go on and on (again, we all know how teachers love to hear themselves speak), it's best to convey messages with the help of notice boards and bulletins which can be displayed at a place accessible to all. Teacher's lounges work great for this.

Of course, then comes the question of how to make sure that the message is read by all those concerned. Simple, include space on the notice where the concerned people can put down their initials as proof that they have read the message.

- **Photocopiers**

Often we tend to underestimate the importance of photocopiers at school. Those machines just sit there and take copies of what is fed into them all day long. It does seem like a job which does not require any brains. This is why we do not give these machines any credit. However, once these machines fail, we understand their worth. Of course, we can make multiple prints using a printer, but cost wise and time wise a photocopier is much better. If your school is networked properly, often times you can send copies straight from your computer to the copy machine at the other end of the school.

- **Efficient Filing Systems**

This had already been dealt with under classroom organization, but I just want to add that a good system of filing definitely saves a lot of time. Being able to find an important document or file should not be a matter of luck. There should be a proper place to keep the files...something which people call a cabinet☺. And, the files should be kept in a proper order with easy to read and intelligible name tags and labels. Label your units, subjects, grades etc. Also, in the files, the documents should not be filed in a haphazard order but should have an order that makes it easy to locate a paper.

The same thing applies to the files you have on your computer, you should name the files properly and not use abbreviations that could stand for anything. People tend to try and save time by using abbreviations which sound quite ridiculous once they forget what it really stands for. I can not stress this enough...Organize your computer, think of it as a filing cabinet.

3-ring binders also work great. I have an extremely easy system for keeping all my lesson plans organized. After I give the lesson, I simply place the lesson (for that subject) in a plastic sleeve and place it in a three-ring binder. I include any master copies of any handouts as well as a master copy of any answer sheets all in that plastic sleeve. If there are any comments/suggestions I need to make about that lesson, I simply place a sticky note on that sleeve for the next year. Think about this for a second...Doing this seriously takes very little time, but you have saved yourself a tremendous amount of time for the following year. Just think how nice it is to easily go to what you did last year, have all the handouts you need to photocopy, all the answer sheets, and be able to re-read any comments/suggestions based on when you taught the lesson the year before. This is nothing short of GOLD!!!

- **Good Secretaries and Junior Staff**

Good secretaries are always an asset a school. If your secretary is dependable then more than half the battle is won. On the other hand, if your secretary is a flake, then heaven help you! The advantage of having good secretaries is that you can delegate a lot of things to them.

I am fortunate to have an excellent secretarial staff at Springs School. I have often said that Suzanne Janis is the glue that holds the school together. If our *administration* is out of the building for the day no one even notices, but when *Suzanne* is not in the building...LOOK OUT!!

I told you earlier that it is not always necessary that you do everything by yourself. You should be able to delegate a lot of things, but first of course you have to be sure that the people you are delegating to are good enough.

Once you are able to share your work load with someone, you will have at least one hand free, and I am sure you will be able to put that hand to some good use.

Chapter 9: Your Time: A Self-Analysis

We have talked about time wasters and time killers, we have talked about getting organized, and we have talked about prioritizing. One vital point that we have yet to talk about is how much time each one of us takes for our various activities.

We are truthful people aren't we? We wouldn't dream of lying and telling falsehoods. But often in our daily life, when it comes to matters of time in particular, we do tell a lot of lies. How many times have we made statements like...?

"I'll be with you in a minute"

"I need only a moment to get dressed"

"Just give me two minutes, all I have to do is take a shower and get dressed."

"I'm on my way; I'll be there I a couple of minutes."

Do these words sound familiar? We all say them and we never do what we promise. That is not because we are habitual liars who get our kicks by lying though our teeth. It's simply because we do not realize the actual time that we take for the activities that we do.

For instance, how long do you need to take a shower? I do not mean the exact time down to the microsecond. I just want a general idea. Maybe it's 5 minutes, maybe 10. Whatever it is you should understand that different people need and take different times to take a shower. The word itself is miss-leading.

When you say "I need a shower," what exactly are you talking about? If you mean to just step under the shower with your clothes off, turn on the shower, soak yourself thoroughly and dry yourself after turning off the shower then you are right. But if you are talking about shampooing and conditioning your hair, using soap and body shampoo on your

body, then it is a different story. This is going to take you nearly half an hour and is not a 'shower' but an elaborate bath.

Therefore, you need to be well aware of what you are talking about and mention the time accordingly.

Just like the shower, you should have a good estimate of the time that you need for all sorts of various activities.

Let's see whether you know how much time you need for the following actions.

10 Actions Done by Every Teacher

1. How much time do you take to prepare a lesson?
2. How much time do you take to complete your planbook?
3. How much time do you need to grade papers?
4. How much time do you take for report cards/progress reports?
5. How much time do you need at the copy machine?
6. How much time do you take reading/writing email?
7. How much time do you need for coffee breaks?
8. How much time do you need to read/clean-out your school mailbox?
9. How much time do you take talking with parents?
10. How much time do you need for extra curricula's (school play, student council, class trips, yearbook etc.)?

No, I cannot give you the correct answers. There are no correct answers as such. It varies from person to person. I like my coffee cold, in fact, I drink one large cup all day long. The first sip is hot, the last sip is cold. But that is by no way the right way to drink coffee and I cannot tell you that the correct time for a coffee break is 5 minutes or 5 seconds.

That was not the purpose of this exercise anyway. What we were trying to do is to find out whether you have a more or less good idea about how long you take for each of the above mentioned actions. If you do, then you are quite time conscious. If you do not, then you had better start working on it with a stop watch right away.

Once you understand how long you take for the various activities that comprise your work, you will be in a better position to understand how long you will need to accomplish tasks and naturally you will be able to manage your time better.

However, one question not mentioned above may be the most important question of all:

How long do you spend talking to people?

This question clinches it all; because in most cases, that is where all the time goes. I don't mean that you should behave like a hermit and stay away from people. But ask yourself if you really talk too much.

Work on trying to bring down the time you spend talking because that is where all our time goes. We have absolutely no idea how much time is lost by mere parleying.

Such a reflective self-analysis is certainly a positive step towards effective time management.

Chapter 10: Saying “No”

The idea might sound strange but being able to say “no” is fundamental to any scheme of *Time Management*.

Yes, you have the master plan for time management, you have everything worked out, you have a time table which you stick to religiously, and you have a ‘to do’ list as well. But just when things are beginning to work out fine, a colleague or friend comes your way and asks you to help them out by doing certain jobs which are really their jobs.

The person smiles very sweetly at you and showers sugar coated words on you, and before you even know what hit you, you have said yes and agreed to do the work for the person. Now what is the relevance of your well thought out timetable? Where is your scheme for time management? Your work is waiting in the pantry while you are sweating over somebody else's work. And, it's all because of the simple fact that you could not say “no” to the person. How many times have you had a similar experience?

This also goes for extra curricular activities. Coaching, chaperoning, school trips, organizing graduation, advising the yearbook committee, directing the school play etc. are all very noble, yet also very time consuming. Many teachers love and cherish doing these extra curricular activities (sometimes more than teaching itself), others however are pressured into them, particularly non-tenured teachers by the administration. You can easily find yourself spending more time on any one of the extras mentioned above than you do on actually teaching. Yes of course, in most cases, these extra curricular activities are also a way to earn extra money, but you need to put a value on your time. Some of them could literally come out to just pennies/hour.

I'm not saying that you should not be civil. If you find a colleague in distress and have the time to spare, by all means help the person. Who knows, tomorrow you might be in that person's position and you may need somebody's help.

Make sure you do not let yourself be taken for a ride. If you are going to help a person at the expense of your work and schedule, then you are going to end up in hot water. It is human nature to shirk work and if word gets around that you are a very helpful guy (read that as s-u-c-k-e-r) then before you know it, requests for help will be coming from all sides.

Unless you want to take up from where Mother Theresa left off, you had better put your foot down and say "sorry, but I just don't have the time." Behave like a diplomat. I remember reading somewhere that a diplomat is a person who can tell you to go to hell in such a nice manner that you will actually start looking forward to the trip. I also came across the definition that a diplomat is a person who can say the nastiest things in the nicest way.

So that is just what you have to do. Wear the mask of the diplomat and the next time someone approaches you with sugar coated requests to help them out, smile back at them. Give them a sugary sickly sweet smile. So much that anyone in their normal senses would want to throw up at the sight of your smile.

You could then even try telling them how much you love them. Extol at length what you think of the person and your relationship with him or her. Tell them that what you are going to say is going to be a life long sorrow for you. It is something that will plunge you into the depths of despair and all that. Then put it painfully across, "no, I'm terribly sorry but N-O."

When the person leaves your presence with a crest fallen face, wait till he or she is out of hearing range and then you can start the happy dance. Or, if you want, you could try the hoola hoola.

Ok, ok...I am being a little melodramatic here, but I needed to make the point that you need to figure out how to say "NO!"

If it makes you feel better, it may be easier to have a handful of general (yet true) excuses (reasons) why you cannot do something. For example, "I can not run the student council this year because I need to focus on my classes for graduate school."

Let's face the facts, in today's world of teaching, your very existence may depend on your ability to say "no."

Chapter 11: Procrastination: The Final Enemy

Now let's get something straight, I have been preaching about Time Management for quite sometime, but before I began this discourse, I need to ask you, "what kind of person you are?"

No, I'm not bothered about your physique or your eating habits. Nor am I bothered about your interest in water beetles and rock formations. I just want to know if you are a procrastinator, because if you are, then there is no point in talking about time management.

So, are you a procrastinator?

Indeed this is a very silly question because we all are. Procrastination is as fundamental to human beings as is eating.

Let me explain what the connection is between procrastination and time management. Procrastination is simply the habit of putting off for tomorrow what you can do today. Does that ring a bell now?

The fact is that nine out of ten of us have this habit. We tend to postpone jobs and tasks. Procrastination is the villain, the unsuspecting sneak that upsets every plan connected with time management.

The interesting thing about procrastination is that we tend to put off only those tasks that seem unappealing to us. If the task is boring, or monotonous, or involves too much hard work, then it stands a very good chance of getting postponed. It is not because of the lack of time that we do not do the task. On the contrary, we might have plenty of time to do it

but we tend to postpone it and justify ourselves by saying that we do not have the time for it.

Take for example a visit to the dentist. How many of us go for monthly checkups to the dentist? How about every six months? The answer would be almost none. As for myself, the reason is pretty simple. Since childhood, dentists have been associated with physical discomfort.

However, it's not just the physical pain that we associate with a dentist's clinic. There is also a lot of stress involved. It certainly is an uncomfortable experience to spread oneself in a completely vulnerable position on the dentist's chair with ones mouth open. The dentist, at such moments seems to have a sneer on his face as he approaches you in his spotless, white attire and contemplates on which of his shiny pointed instruments displayed before you he should use first to prod and poke.

As a result, a visit to the dentist, as far as I am concerned, is something that sends a shiver down my spine. It's because of this that I keep avoiding visits to the dentist's clinic. Even if I start having a toothache I would rather depend on forces like voodoo and witch craft than go to my dentist.

That's something that I, and I think a lot of others as well, tend to procrastinate. Let's see if we can think of some things that are likely to get procrastinated in our professional lives. I know that for most people, cleaning up clutter is an unpleasant task. Over time, a lot of clutter gets collected in our classrooms, especially our teacher's desks. Shortly after school begins for the year, there will be piles of papers on our desks, or perhaps under our desks so that no body sees it.

Some people even have a difficulty in clearing their mailboxes, both paper mailboxes and email mailboxes alike, until a warning message pops up on their computer screen.

These are some of the jobs that we put off for tomorrow, a tomorrow that never comes.

Now, there are some problems that arise out of procrastination that are detrimental to Time Management.

The 5 Bad Effects of Procrastination

1. A feeling that a job has been left undone is bad for our morale
2. Unfinished jobs leave a lot of clutter around which affects our efficiency.
3. Putting things off means accumulating jobs and an urgency could crop up on the same day.
4. When procrastination comes to the notice of other people, you may be branded as lazy or have a lack of interest in the job.

5. The job becomes more unpleasant the more you postpone it.

The only thing that you need to get straight is that you have to do the job any way so why not do it right now. Do not wait for that day “when-you-will-have-more-time”, it will never come. The chances are that you will be busier tomorrow than you are today. Most of those jobs that we procrastinate are “the-sooner-done-the-better” kind. And, the sigh of relief that escapes from our lungs once the job is done and over is worth it.

All it takes is some will power, make up your mind to do a task and then do it while your mind stays made up, and believe me, the human mind does not stay made up for too long.

Of course, there is a chance that you might be confronted with a strange feeling, you might start finding your job to be monotonous and boring and that is what we are going to deal with in our next chapter.

Chapter 12: How To Stay Motivated

Just look around you, it’s a beautiful world out there. Life is wonderful provided you have the time and can afford to sit back and enjoy the simple pleasures of life. This is a feeling that hits us every now and then. Then, when we realize that we have to be confined within the four walls of our classroom doing so much work, we end up depressed.

Every job loses its charm after some time if nothing out of the way is done to make the job interesting. To make things worse, there are too many distractions around us. We end up thinking that this is not the job that we wanted to be doing. Then, when we realize that we will be doing this same job probably till the end of our lives, we want to scream.

It is a human tendency to get bored with something after some time. When we get a new job, for the first couple of weeks, or even months, we are like the peasant boy who walked into a new palace. Every thing is new and interesting and our interest is completely captured. We try to learn things as quickly as possible and are eager to impress and prove to the world that we are perfect for the job. However, after some time passes (for everyone the amount is different) we get used to everything and slowly everything begins to lose it’s charm. We get bored and start looking for greener pastures.

It is at this stage that procrastination starts raising its villainous head. If the tasks that we are doing are repetitive and monotonous, the picture becomes bleaker. On the other hand, if the task requires that we remain on our toes all day long, then the future is sealed. It is in such situations that we need to keep ourselves motivated.

Speaking from the Organizational Behavior point of view let us take a look at what motivation is all about. The human brain as I mentioned earlier is a virtual store house of

energy. There is nothing that we cannot do once we put our mind to it. Yeah, sure, all that has been proved time and again. Unfortunately, the same brain is also easily distracted.

In fact, our imagination is probably the one thing that can travel faster than light. Therefore, it is no easy task to keep the brain occupied in the same task for an extended period of time. If the job is monotonous then the task becomes more difficult to want to do it.

Motivation can be thought of as the process of channeling the surplus energy of the brain towards a definite goal or purpose.

So how long can the human mind focus on the same thing?

Studies have shown that the maximum attention span of an average human being is just 45 minutes. **45 minutes?** So much for those meetings and discussions that lasted for three or four hours! No wonder nothing much comes out of such meetings. In all likelihood most of the audience conked out after the first 45 minutes and after that focused their attention on staying awake.

Now, of course, as teachers we know this oh too well. In fact, we are lucky if our students' attention span is even 10 minutes. We also know that in order to teach effectively we need to keep that fact in the forefront of our minds, and our teaching style. That's why using effective teaching strategies, motivational activities, and mini-lessons are so important. (For more on effective teaching strategies make sure to read *eTeach: A Teacher Resource for Learning the Strategies of Master Teachers* (<http://www.teaching-teacher.com>)).

If you have a good principal or superintendent, then the task of keeping you motivated should rest with them. Though we all know that only amounts to about 5% of the administrators out there. But even if you are fortunate enough to have a 5% administrator, you still have the responsibility to keep yourself motivated, and believe me, self-motivation is the best motivation because it comes from within. It's that same intrinsic motivation we try to tap into our students.

So here are a few tips on how to ward boredom away and keep you motivated.

12 Tips to Stay Motivated and Keep Procrastination Away

1. Never keep doing the same task for too long. If you can't change the material you use to teach your content, then you should consider looping. Looping is simply following your class to the next grade when they graduate. For example, I teach both 7th and 8th grade, but only one grade each year. If I teach 7th grade one year, I follow those students to 8th grade the following year. Then the next year I go back to teaching 7th grade. There are a whole lot of benefits to looping, but for the purpose of this report, one big benefit is that it keeps the content you teach fresh.

2. Try to take breaks more often. Get up and walk or do some stretching exercises. This is a great strategy that I use on my students during class that helps them stay motivated, and is one you should also use on yourself. Breaks are very important.
3. Try to alternate between two boring tasks. This will reduce the boredom in both tasks by 50%
4. If you have someone else with you who is doing the same job, try exchanging jobs with the person.
5. Talk about your job to a sympathetic listener who can give you encouragement.
6. Reward yourself once you have done a job well.
7. If you have an uninteresting job left to do, write it down and pin it somewhere in your work station so that you can see it and get constantly reminded about it till you do it.
8. Try to make your work environment more attractive by pinning up some motivating words or some pleasant wall posters, preferably something that can make you smile. Those ‘Dennis the Menace’ posters are really wonderful for this. The same inspirational quotes that work for students also work for adults. Just make sure to rotate them so they don’t get stale.
9. If you are allowed to, try playing some music while you work. Again, this works great for students and adults.
10. Write down a list of not-so-interesting tasks that you have done and pin it up. It just tells you that if you have done it before, then you can surely do it again.
11. If possible, keep a small potted plant near your work station; watching it grow is a wonderful source of inspiration. However, make sure to take care to look after it properly. If you are going to watch it wilt and die, then it is going to have the opposite effect.
12. Take time to relax, just sit back and close your eyes and hum a favorite tune for a minute or two. But do not fall asleep!

Most of the points mentioned above are self explanatory but I would like to elaborate on one point and that is *rewarding yourself*.

This is one tactic that I have found to work wonders with me. If you have finished doing a job, you have every right and reason to reward yourself. All the more if the task was a boring one or one that involved a deadline.

The reward does not have to be any thing great. It can be something like treating yourself to a good dinner in a favorite restaurant or it could be a simple chocolate bar if you have a sweet tooth.

For most of you weight watchers though, it would be best if you could buy yourself something material that does not just go down your throat. If it is something that can be displayed in your work station, then it's all the better.

Chapter 13: Plan for Success

Before you are going to do anything, there is nothing as sensible as a plan. A plan as we know it is something thought about and chalked out in advance before the real action takes place. Pretty good definition, huh? I made it up myself.

But then, the word “plan” does not need much of a definition. It has been used so much that it has become quite worn-out. So, we all know what it means, but how many of us really resort to planning before we start a course of action for the day, or even the year...actually, especially the year.

No, I'm not referring to a mental picture that we cart out in our minds that is in one word VAGUE. I mean a real plan in black and white, that is, put down on a piece of paper. Please do not underestimate the importance of a written down plan. Once we write down something it clears up a lot of hazy areas and opens aspects that we probably overlooked.

The most important part of all is that with a plan, and only with a plan, can we get a rough estimate at least of how much time the course of action would take. Plans should always be time bound and there we get the relation between time management and planning. In fact, planning is as fundamental to time management as organizing and prioritizing. This is why creating a curriculum map may be one of the most important things you do as a teacher. A curriculum map is nothing ore than a curriculum “plan” for your entire year. (For more information on curriculum mapping read Chapter 3 in *eTeach: A Teacher Resource for Learning the Strategies of Master Teachers* (<http://www.teaching-teacher.com>))

The advantages of planning are given below.

The 8 Advantages of Planning

1. Planning helps us to have a *better idea* about the course of action that we take.
2. Planning *better defines* the course of action that we take.
3. Planning gives a rough estimate of the time required for a project.
4. Planning gives us a fairly good idea about the expenses involved in the project. This is why it is important to plan early so you can put appropriate materials into your budget.
5. Planning helps us to get prepared for emergencies that may arise (or unexpected interruptions...we all know how we unexpectedly lose teaching days for little or no reason, and planning helps us quickly adjust.)
6. A well thought about plan gives us a clear idea about what is to be every day, every week, and every month.
7. Planning helps avoid duplication of labor. We barely have enough time to do something once 😊.
8. If a plan is followed every one will have a clear idea about his or her role (the teacher, student, colleagues, parents etc.)

A point that I would like to add while we are talking about planning is that we should have both short term plans as well as long term plans. At the same time we should also try to draft out contingency plans to deal with if a crisis if it arises. Successful teachers are good at anticipating the unexpected.

I thought it would be useful for you to have a brief overview of the different steps involved in planning.

The Six Steps in Planning

1. Set objectives. Whether for the whole year, or for an individual lesson, setting your objectives is the most important step.
2. Assess you present situation.
3. Survey your alternatives.
4. Decide on the course of action.
5. Provide for control.
6. Implement the plan.

Whatever the plan...always make it TIME BOUND.

However, as the project moves along, the plan should also be *flexible* in the sense that it should incorporate any changes that might prove necessary once the project is put into action. Planning should never increase stress, only reduce it. If you are not flexible, you are doomed!

In this way you can plan for a week or a month, depending on your requirement.

While you are drafting your plan, remember, your plan should be realistic as well. In order to finish the task at the earliest possible date, there is no sense in creating a schedule which would have you break your back in order to meet the deadline.

In a nutshell: It's all about planning!

Chapter 14: Workaholics Beware

There is nobody as good as a person who is always time conscious. That person is a man of his word, he is dependable and every employer's dream come true. It is a pleasure doing business with such a person and so on. However, there could be a problem.

Sometimes the pre-occupation with time can make a person a workaholic. Now, this is no joke, in fact, it is a phenomenon that is very much on the rise.

Are you a workaholic?

Well, why don't you find out?

There are a series of questions given below, if you have the time, why don't you go through them and find out if you are a workaholic or not.

All you have to do is answer yes or no to the following questions.

1. Do you find yourself constantly preoccupied with your work?
2. Do your family and friends complain that they hardly get to see you?
3. Do you take your work with you when you go home?
4. Do you find it increasingly difficult to get time to relax and have fun?
5. Do you find it difficult to have food at the correct times?

So what are your answers like? If your answer to all the questions was "yes", then you might as well join the club of "Alcoholics Anonymous". If three of your answers were affirmative, then you might send in your membership request. If you gave only two "yes" answers you are still not safe. None of your answers should be "yes"!

I have some bad news for you. Becoming a workaholic is not all that good. I suppose you have seen *The Shining* with Jack Nicholson...“All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.”

Man is not a one-dimensional piece of glass. He has a lot of facets and sides, interests and drives which must all be developed. He is more like a diamond that must shine and sparkle when viewed from different angles.

Unfortunately, for many, it is almost as if work itself becomes the only thing that motivates a person.

Now, I want to make one point very clear. Workaholism is very different from meeting deadlines. We all get deadlines and times when work just piles up at school. However, that should be a passing phase, such as when grades are due; then of course all teachers are just flying around.

That is not workaholism. In such a situation everyone just joins the team and works as hard as possible to get things done in the best possible way within the limited time. Though every one may groan and swear, it is something that is over within a few days or in a week at the most. That is not an unhealthy thing. In fact, the very thought that there are lot of people working along with us is something that gets the drudgery out of the job.

Workaholism on the other hand is a very different thing. It means that you are going to miss out on a lot of the good things in life. Before you even know what happened to you, you will end up living like a living robot.

Work is important in life. We need to work to earn our daily bread. However, work is not the only important thing in life. Being a person who is very time conscious does not mean that you have to end up being obsessed with your work. In fact, if you are time conscious and are really concerned about getting things done on time, then there is very little chance that you will end up as a workaholic.

Getting things done “on time” means working well *within* the school day. (Ok, maybe just a little beyond the school day.) Working well within the school day gives you enough free time to enjoy your leisure hours. Everybody needs time to unwind and unwinding must certainly be there or else you will end up completely stressed out. It is the lack of unwinding time that leads directly to sleepless nights.

Bottom Line: *Workaholism is counter productive.* That’s because sooner or later you will experience what experts now refer to as “burnout”. I will deal more with “burnout” in the next chapter.

Before I conclude this chapter, however, I just want to raise a point for you to ponder.

Imagine that you have been working a little more than harder the whole day. You have been on your toes doing this and doing that. Towards the end of the day you find out that there is something urgent that you must take care of for the following day.

You have two alternatives before you. One, you can tell the custodial staff that you will be working a few extra hours while you watch the other teachers leave for the day. The very thought that you have to stay back when the others are leaving is going to weigh down on you.

Then, of course, you have to telephone your spouse or friends and tell them that you will be late and may even have to call off the date that you had fixed for the night. That itself is going to make you grumpy, especially if you hear an unenthusiastic grunt from the other side of the line.

After that, with a private sigh of resignation, you have to sit down to finish your work. The problem is, even if at all you finish the task, the work will be far from satisfactory.

Your other alternative is that you take a quick look at the work and estimate how long it will take for you to finish it. Then you forget completely about it and pack your things and clear up your workstation and leave with all the others, bidding a cheerful goodnight to every Tom, Dick, and Harry, and every Jane, Susan, and Mary. You reach home in the best of spirits and have a nice time with the kids or enjoy yourself with your date. You go to sleep early and wake up thoroughly refreshed in the morning. You work out for a little while, take a shower, eat a good breakfast, and try to reach school a little earlier than usual with a song in your heart and a spring to your step.

Now, when you sit down to do the work, not only will the quality of the work be much better, but in all likelihood you will take less time than is really required for it. Well, what do you think, isn't it worth trying out?

Chapter 15: Teacher Burnout

Did you know that 50% of all teachers quit within their first five years of teaching?

There are certainly many things that factor into this statistic, but without a doubt, one of them is *teacher burnout*!

We have all experienced it, the din and bustle of the modern teacher with all the tensions, worries, anxieties, and deadlines. If you are not careful, before you know it, you will be experiencing the scourge of the modern educator that is *Teacher Burnout*.

You will be amazed at the number of teachers who are hard hit by the “burnout syndrome” as some psychologists call it. It has become an almost universal phenomenon among teachers across the globe.

So what are the symptoms of teacher burnout?

If you would like to find out if you are on the verge of a burnout, read the following statements and see if they apply to you.

1. You experience flashes of memory loss.
2. You sometimes get that ‘BLANK’ feeling when you cannot make heads or tails of what you have to do next.
3. You know that there is a lot of work to be done but you have no idea where to start.
4. You find that you are becoming increasingly irritable and lose your temper quite easily.
5. You feel mentally and physically exhausted at the end of the day but still you are restless in the night and cannot get a good night’s sleep.

6. Even after remaining in bed for 6 to seven hours you wake up feeling weary.
7. Your eyes start having dark circles around them
8. You tend to forget meal times, and even if you remember them you eat at the most insensible times.
9. Instead of eating square meals you find that you are sustaining yourself on caffeine and possibly nicotine, which means you are drinking too much coffee and smoking too many cigarettes.

10. You find yourself working too hard but unable to accomplish all that you want.

Jeepers! If at least five of the above statements are true for you then you are in BIG trouble. You have got to do something about it or you are going to ruin your health.

You will soon start experiencing conditions like insomnia (sleeplessness), loss of appetite, and stress. These things will manifest themselves in diseases like hypertension (high blood pressure), ulcers, and even a mental break down. And, if you are not careful before long you could end up in an asylum.

Tell me, “Is your job worth risking your health?”

Don't let your job rule your life. It's really not worth it.

The underlying principle of this guide is that time management is not about doing your job well...It is about living your life well.

You should have time for everything and that includes work, play, enjoyment, freaking out, and just time to sit and stare; because that is how the most creative ideas are born.

Chapter 16: Tardiness

It goes without saying that tardiness is a no-no in *any* professional establishment.

Even when you are standing in line somewhere and the person in front of you is taking his or her own sweet time, you might find yourself counting to ten so that you do not lose your temper.

Most of us cannot tolerate slowness.

So, if we have so much impatience with others, how much patience will others have with us?

I believe that there are three groups of people in this world. They are:

1. The people who always are on time.
2. The people who make an honest effort, but often fail to be on time.
3. The group of people who drive everyone else nuts because they are always late. YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE!!

Actually, the third group is amazing. The people who really fall into that group are the people who do not make any effort at all to be on time.

I used to find it very difficult to believe that there could actually be people who didn't care two hoots for time. But there are! I don't know about you, but I really believe that people who consciously waste their time, and therefore the time of others as well, are real criminals.

I remember one teacher who showed up late everyday to teach her class. Unfortunately, she taught that particular class in *my* room. There are two major problems:

1. That teacher was modeling terrible behavior.
2. I was not going to leave those kids unattended for 10 minutes...Therefore, she was wasting MY time.

These people should be made to walk the plank! While the rest of us are struggling so hard to make the maximum use of the time that we have, there are people who simply don't care about things like being late or making others wait.

As for the second category, the group of people who do make an honest effort to be on time and do things on time but often fail mainly due to reasons beyond their control...There is a way to break this pattern?

The first thing that must be done is to develop a deep concern for the time of others. Of course we have the liberty to waste our time (I consider even that wrong, but opinions may be different), but we have **no right** to waste the time of others. It is just very, very bad manners to keep a person waiting. It shows inconsideration and selfishness on our part.

Once you instill this thought deep into your mind there is a lesser chance that you will keep another person waiting.

The second thing that must be understand is that if you are late for something that involves more than one person, the severity of the situation is raised several fold. For instance, if you are late for a meeting that involves 12 people and they are ALL waiting for you to arrive before they begin the meeting.

You might be just five minutes late. That seems ok enough because five minutes is not such a big deal. However, it is *not* just five minutes that is wasted. Since there are 12 people who are waiting for you, you are in effect wasting...

12 times 5, which is 60 minutes of productive time!

Now that looks bad doesn't it, wasting one hour of productive work?

These two thoughts are enough for any normal person to make some haste and see that there are no unnecessary delays.

Still, in the course of our daily life, we come across what we call emergencies. Unforeseen events take place, like your car might refuse to start, or some unexpected guests might walk in just when you are leaving. Hey, we are only human and catastrophes are bound to happen. Just see to it that others are not kept waiting because of a slight misfortune that you may have encountered.

If you have a cell phone (everybody has a cell phone nowadays) it would be best to call the other person and inform him that you are late. As long as you can inform the other person, your offence becomes pardonable.

In case you are unable to inform the person then you really must make amends. Do not, and I repeat it, do not take it for granted that the other person will understand. Too many things have been taken for granted in today's world. You have to go out of your way to apologize for being late.

If you are unable to keep a particular meeting, it would be an excellent idea to send the person a sorry note to make up for your mistake. At least that way the person can know that you did make a sincere effort, but things were beyond your control. Such gestures really streamline our relationships with others.

So what do you do if you make good efforts to be on time but still do not, because, well because ...of no reason in particular?

To avoid such cases, the solution is to work your time backwards. Sounds strange, huh? Well, let me explain how it works. You should start to calculate the time you need to reach your destination by starting from the destination itself and then work backwards.

If you work backwards like this, you can get a very accurate idea of how long you will need for something. Then how can you possibly go wrong?

This is the same basic concept that is used to plan your curriculum for the year. Work Backwards.

1. How much time do you have to teach the content.
2. Divide the year's content into teaching units (based on the number of teaching days).
3. Divide units into sub-units and then into daily lesson plans.

For more on curriculum mapping be sure to read *eTeach: A Teacher Resource for Learning the Strategies of Master Teachers*. (<http://www.teaching-teacher.com>)

Some Tips on Making Meetings Less Likely to be Time Wasters.

Meetings have a very bad reputation of being time wasters. How many of us have had to sit through long hours of meetings and had to listen to people who ramble on and on about issues which in fact need probably five or ten minutes to be decided. And teachers are the worst. We must love to hear ourselves speak because it seems that at every faculty meeting someone always has just one more thing to say.

As a result, meetings are seldom looked forward to. Therefore, I thought it might be useful to include some tips on how to make your faculty meetings more time effective. The fact is that meetings are not really all that bad and if meetings are well planned they can prove to be the best way to brief a group of people on matters like policies, progress, and points of action.

Meetings, in which brain storming sessions take place, bring out the best ideas from people on how to solve issues.

So here are 8 time saving tips for meetings:

1. The participants should be aware of the subject matter of the meeting. Instead of just announcing that a meeting is to be held, it would be a good idea to inform the participants as to *why* the meeting is being called and *what* are the matters that to be discussed in the meeting.
2. Try to get the members seated on time, if one or two members are going to be late and everyone else has to wait for them, that is going to upset the pace of the meeting. In fact, meetings should always start on time. Don't punish those who were on time because of those who were tardy.
3. Try to provide all the members with the necessary papers and equipment for the discussion. Instead of passing round one paper for every one to see, try and make copies, the extra cost is worth the time.
4. Interruptions should be avoided as much as possible, but the members must feel free to air their views once a person has finished speaking.
5. Care must be taken to avoid beating around the bush and digressions. The presiding person must not hesitate to point out if a person is digressing too much. The members must also be cautioned to stick to the point as much as possible. In other words, you need someone who is running the meeting.
6. The members must display a high degree of patience expected from professionals.
7. A person must give a summary at the end of the meeting, so that the members leave with the knowledge that something was accomplished and it was not just a meaningless discussion. In other words, meeting should have closure just like your lessons should have closure.
8. Cell phones of course must be switched off and, if at all possibly, secretaries should be told to only "buzz" in on the intercom if it is an emergency. We all know how distracting the P.A. system can be.

Chapter 17: Summing Up

Time management is not such a big deal. It's just because people tend to take time for granted that everything becomes such a big mess.

Hey, we only get one life in this world so shouldn't we try to live it to the fullest. So where is the time to waste?

Time management is essentially a part of, or I should say the result of, *self-management*. If you are well organized and your life has a definite order then the chances are that time management will come naturally for you.

I would like to sum up everything that we have talked about in the following poem.

Take time to work

It is the price of success

Take time to think

It is the source of power

Take time to play

It is the secret of perpetual youth

Take time to read

It is the fountain of wisdom

Take time to be friendly

It is the road to happiness

Take time to love and be loved

It is the nourishment of the soul

Take time to share

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It is too short a life to be selfish
Take time to laugh
It is the music of the heart
Take time to dream
It is hitching your wagon to a star.

--Anonymous