

WORK-LIFE HABITS FOR TEACHERS

WORK

LIFE



www.thecompleteteacher.com



Work-life habits for teachers

It's often easy to identify professionals based on their attire. Doctors have their white coats; nurses have their scrubs. Teachers, on the other hand, are marked not by a uniform but by the many hats that we wear. As these figurative hats represent real pressures that pile up on top of teachers' weary heads, it becomes increasingly difficult to shrug them off at the end of the school day and go back to being just a "person." This makes it very difficult to achieve a work-life balance.

Fortunately, some teachers are finding effective ways to master the juggling act that is teaching and restore a sense of balance to their work and personal lives. Here are some habits of teachers who have finally solved the equation between school and home.

Delegate tasks

There's a reason university teacher preparation programs don't include classes like Attendance 101 and Seminar in Paper Passing: almost anyone can do them. Teachers with work-life balance recognise the potential of the 20-30 little workers in the classroom and give them partial ownership of the classroom with varied classroom jobs. Freed from the minutiae of the typical classroom, these teachers can use those degrees as they were intended: for teaching.

Upgrade your grading

All teachers recognise the importance of providing timely feedback on students' assignments. What many can't seem to figure out, however, is how to give each assignment the attention it merits without spending the entire evening marking papers. Teachers in the know use time-saving methods that do everything from grading to checking for plagiarism to recording audio feedback. You may want to check out some apps and tips on how to stop taking grading home.

Don't give yourself homework

There is so much more to "teaching" than the actual teaching, and many teachers' responsibilities cannot be completed while students are in the classroom. While the default solution is to bring all that extra work home, more and more teachers need to be aware that they can set boundaries on the time they spend on work and still be effective educators. Deciding to take work home no longer is a great way to find work-life balance.

Call in sick

Teachers who achieve a work-life balance know they can serve their students best when they are well-rested and healthy. While most teachers view planning for a sub that may or may not have subject-matter expertise and grading the resulting “busy work” as more gruelling than reporting for work, teachers need to perfect their sub plans and have a full arsenal of emergency plans ready to go at a moment’s notice.

Stock your teacher toolbox

With so many resources at your fingertips, teachers with a work-life balance must review and vet a stockpile of plans and resources to simplify your lesson planning.

Streamline your routine

With so much to accomplish in so little planning time, teachers who want a healthy work-life balance should schedule their days down to the minute. Identify the best times to enter the teachers’ lounge without being pulled into a lengthy session and when to dash to the copy room to avoid waiting in line. Making these tweaks might take about an extra ten minutes to the beginning or end of the school day, but it pays dividends in what teachers can accomplish during regular teaching hours.

Don’t go alone

Although it may seem isolated to spend the entire day in a classroom with no one but students, time-effective teachers realise that no teacher is an island. Teachers need to cultivate a support system of teacher friends who are always ready with a kind word or a lesson plan to share.

Value extracurricular relationships

Teacher friends are great, but when a group of teachers gets together outside of school, the conversation tends to focus on teaching. While it can be fun sometimes to commiserate with colleagues over drinks and appetisers, teachers with work-life balance take time to cultivate friendships with people who have different world experiences and life outlooks because they haven’t set foot in a school since their graduation day.

Commit not to over-commit.

The needs of a school far outnumber the people available to take them on. In a profession with the cornerstone of compassion, teachers feel compelled to take on every committee, club sponsorship, or coaching position that comes their way. The happiest teachers, however, avoid the devastating effects of over-commitment and give

their best to their students by saying no to responsibilities that do not match their interests or availability.

Achieving the work-life balance may be an equation, but there is no one formula for arriving at its solution. Instead, achieving a balance between school and home is a personal experience that has as many approaches as there are teachers.

If you want to experience better equilibrium in your teaching career, pick and choose the adjustments that work best for you and add more as you acclimate your newly-defined, streamlined role in the classroom.

Source: Melisa Ferguson, 2022

