

Tuesday, October 31, 2006

## Top Tips

How to do More in Less Time: Why do More when Doing Less gets Better Results?

Each day you are faced with "loud, noisy, squeaking-wheel, endless" urgent tasks, and you have a few "quiet, uncomplaining, whispering" priorities that you set aside. You labor and struggle to quell the hoards of urgent demands, and your priorities become second-hand orphans, begging for another bowl of kindness and attention.

The secret of doing more in less time is attending to the priorities, and devising ways to delegate, eliminate or delay those clamoring, urgent tasks. Prioritized To-Do Lists Don't Work. Guess what? Making "To Do" lists and renumbering the tasks each day does not work. This approach wastes time. And this less than useful strategy only adds more urgent tasks to your list.

The only way that Prioritized To-Do Lists work is if you can block off a period of time during your workday and ensure that no interference will break you away from working on your top priority task.

Teachers find none of this discretionary time in their schedule, and other folks (on up the "school district chain-on-command") find such time even more scarce, possibly such time is extinct for them. Sidebar Corporate Chief Executive Officers (CEO's), the kind that receive millions per year (even hundreds of millions per year) in cash, bonuses, stock options and prizes) are lucky if they can carve out 90 minutes per work day for this kind of luxury time.

If corporate CEO's can't get this focused time, why would you believe that a teacher could have it? This kind of time is a "myth." A Strategy that Really Works. Planning and Project Management are Strategies that really work, but only if you identify what has to be done.

There are two kinds of tasks that you are looking for: Repeating tasks: Call these tasks as "Management, Monitoring and Maintenance Tasks"

One time jobs that won't repeat: Call these "Projects" Here is the secret for repeating tasks: automate them as much as possible.

Here is the secret for projects: Break them down into 15 minute steps. Other Secrets of Doing More in Less Time Act on as much of the trivia that crosses your palms.

Open your mail in the mail room, and trash most, reply now, and have a system for where to put the rest when you return to your classroom

Keep Inter Department Mail Envelopes in your mailbox

If you have one or more recipients for Inter department Mail, print a page or two of mailing labels, so you don't have to address the envelopes

Keep your planning in one place

Whether paper based or electronic, whether a Three-Ring Binder with your own photocopied pages, or an expensive, leather, preprinted forms...pick one method and use that method exclusively

Link to our free eBook (with lesson planning forms in the Appendices)

Link to a printable planner form...

Have a place for everything and keep everything in its place.

If you finish with something, put it back where it belong

If you collect papers, place them immediately in the correct sorting folder

Have students sort papers, Scantron's; quiz forms, tests, etc...by assignment, in alphabetical order within your sorting folders

When entering grades into electronic form (spreadsheet, gradebook program), get someone to recite the grades to you. (This gets the grades entered in one quarter the time it takes to do the task by yourself)

Take frequent breaks. You will accomplish more if you change your mental pace at least every 45 minutes to an hour.

Then, return to your tasks refreshed. And Remember the 80/ 20 Rule As you streamline your schedule, automate recurring tasks, and complete priority projects, remember that even priority tasks can be eliminated.

Find those tasks that provide the highest payoff for the amount of work that they require. These are the tasks that require only 20% of the effort to produce 80% of the results that you want.

Then, find ways to rid yourself of the tasks that take 80% of your effort, but yield only 20% of the results that you want.

The final skill for you to develop in your quest to do less and achieve more, "Learn how to say, No!"

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Top Tips at 07:00