

Time, time, time

Time is the perennial issue for teachers:

- Not enough planning time
- Not enough time to collaborate with others
- Not enough time to learn new technology skills

What are some ways that you can make the best use of your professional time? Here are some general tips for saving time:

- **Invest time up front to learn something new that will save you time in the long run.** Almost every effective time-saver requires you to take time up front to set it up. So, the corollary to this suggestion is PRIORITIZE. If you have 20 things to do, which of those things will save you time down the road? Make sure you do at least one of those per day. Then focus on the things that you HAVE to do. How can implementing UDL help save teachers time over the long-term?
- **Share the materials you create.** Divide the workload among team or department members.
- **Use technology to create all of your instructional materials.** This saves you filing and editing time. If your materials are electronic, you never have to file them in a drawer and find them again. If you want to change something for next time, making changes is quick and easy. It also enables you to divide up the workload among people in your building or out.
- **Make use of your paraeducators and volunteers.** If you have class time with a paraeducator or volunteer supporting you, make sure you make use of them. Are you teaching the entire lesson yourself? Chances are, there is no opportunity for differentiation if all eyes are on you the entire period. A little planning in which you make the goals and objectives clear to your paraeducator will arm him/her with the ability to be an effective facilitator of small group work. While you are teaching to the whole group, is there some prep that a support person could be doing? Do the new flexible materials you are creating allow more opportunities for re-teaching or repetition with a paraeducator or volunteer? A little planning up front will allow you to make the most of everyone's time.
- **Spend time on the objective and purpose of your lesson before spending time creating the lesson or dealing with logistics.** Many times when I plan with teachers, they start with the activity – and commonly, they start with how they did it last time. Consider your objective first. Did the activity work well to accomplish the objective last time? Is your group of students significantly different this time? Will the activity still work? I've seen teachers spend a lot of time planning the logistics of an activity and then refuse to differentiate for students because it would take too much time to change what's already been planned. When the lesson fails for several students, the teacher ends up using planning periods and lunch time to catch the students up.
- **Create UDL routines that work over and over again.** Did you just spend a long time devising a way to break your class into groups for a particular activity? Take a big-picture approach. Come

up with a routine for breaking into group work (or using the computers, or turning in homework, or keeping track of individual learning goals....) that will work over and over again. When your students are familiar with routines, you'll save planning time and class work time. It might be worth it to spend half a class period establishing an effective routine.

Did you notice something about all of these suggestions? It takes time to make time. Planning for effective routines and effective collaboration with co-teachers and paraeducators takes time; but it will save you time in the long run as well. It will also likely increase your success with students and your job satisfaction!

If you don't invest time in your planning, you will always be living from paycheck to paycheck (or planning period to planning period).

Let's consider some things we've all seen people do that actively WASTE time.

- **Spending collaborative planning time on logistics rather than big ideas.** I once witnessed a “co-teaching planning period” in which the classroom teacher spent the entire period arranging a seating chart. To make things worse, the special ed co-teacher suggested that the struggling students would be better off in heterogeneous groups, and the classroom teacher rejected the idea and insisted the seating chart she had created would stand as is. Why spend an entire planning period talking about something that is non-negotiable? A discussion about how the special ed students are best supported by their peers would have been a better use of time together. The classroom teacher could have made a seating chart more quickly on her own.
- **Disorganized classroom – disorganized My Documents folder.** If you can't find things when you need them, then you'll waste planning time and classroom time getting your hands on materials. How can you combat this problem?
 - Use 10 minutes each day to organize your piles.
 - Don't make copies of things you don't have time to file – leave them on your computer and print one when you need it.
 - If you don't already know how to organize your digital files into folders, take some time to learn how to do that.
- **Resenting time mandated for staff meetings, collaborative meetings, data chats – rather than putting those times to good use.** I have attended many “collaborative” meetings in which the participants sit around and wait to be told what to do. Or, they spend the meeting time complaining about how they wish they were back in their classrooms instead of wasting time at this meeting. Chances are, there is a purpose for the meeting. If you don't accomplish it during the meeting, you'll have to do it later. If your colleagues are not stepping up to the plate, do so yourself. Make suggestions rather than talking about why things are hopeless. Offer to get the ball rolling rather than waiting for someone else to take the lead. Make use of the time for the intended purpose, even if others are not. Set time limits for yourself, then go back to your individual planning needs.
- **Doing all the work for the students instead of providing them with tools to do for themselves.** This one is subtle. Think about how you present a lesson that requires lots of different pieces.

Are you doing all the work? Once I saw a teacher spend an entire class period getting students caught up on their assignments. She had a large stack of papers to return to students. Her co-teacher spent 20 minutes walking around the room returning them. She had printed for each student a list of all the assignments for the quarter and their grades (and I imagine this took her quite a bit of planning time). She spent 15 minutes explaining to the students what her notes meant on that list. The students were instructed to highlight missing assignments for themselves. It took 10 minutes to get the highlighters handed out to those who didn't have them (while students complained about what color they got). Then she circulated around the room pointing out to individual students what needed to get done and where that assignment could be found in some part of the room so that they could get started on it. By the time the students were working on something productive, there were only 15 minutes left in the period. Students who were all caught up with their assignments spent the period chatting with their friends. Many others spent the period waiting for the teacher to come and tell them what to do next.

What could this teacher have done to save time and accomplish her goal of making sure students were aware of any missing assignments? How could technology have been used more effectively to save time? What routines have you created in your classroom that make efficient use of class time or planning time?

This article talks about how we need to steal time from what's not important and put it where it IS important. Example – vocabulary instruction. What other examples of instructional time wasting can you think of? <http://www.gcte.net/Publications/Scribbles/President/June2006.htm>

This article gives practical tips for saving time during the school and instructional day: <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/classroom-management/new-teacher/48351.html?page=1&detoured=1>