TIME MANAGEMENT: A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

by

John Labadie

Department of Art Education--School of Art

University of Cincinnati

Each day teachers are confronted with seemingly endless demands, constraints and interruptions. Finding ways to best utilize time can provide great benefits. One way to accomplish this is through effective time management (Drawbaugh, 1984; Kozoll, 1982).

Where does time management begin? First, specific concepts about time must be addressed. Then, plans can be tailored to individual educator's needs (Feldman, 1968).

Time Consciousness

Time can be discussed as an abstraction, but it is experienced in concrete terms. Time is an inflexible resource. It cannot be stored, recovered, changed, or altered. We have many terms for generalized ideas about time: clock time, personal time, timeout, in time, and out of time.

Ask yourself, "What is my sense of enough time or of too little time?" Then ask, "How carefully do I invest my time?" and "How does the time expended relate to my professional and personal values and goals?" Effective use of time begins with these types of questions (Bliss, 1976).

Time Assessment

Making an assessment of one's time use does not have to be difficult (Schlinger & Roesch, 1989). Take a look at your educational activities. How are they accomplished? What exactly are you doing? How it is being done?

Make a list of daily activities. Estimate the length of time typical activities and involvements take and work out a one-day time log. From there, work out a weekly time log. Record the time actually expended in a work week. How far away from your estimates are the figures in the log? A carefully kept log will often reveal time expended in ways and amounts that are wasteful. An analysis of how time is used can be enlightening. Time logs can provide stimulation to change time use behavior (Flanders, 1970).

External Factors

A teacher's workday is usually highly structured and often quite restrictive in terms of externally-dictated time expenditure. To effectively deal with this, teachers must thoroughly understand and plan to allot the time necessary for their professional duties and responsibilities. Teachers must then find time that can be controlled and skillfully manage that time. Time must be viewed as a resource (Artin, 1979).

A teacher's workday is generally shorter than those of many other professionals, but a teacher's work outside of classtime can nearly equal that spent in the classroom. Descriptions and analyses of responsibilities and duties, together with a review of time expended in accomplishing all daily activities should be considered in terms of practical time usage principles and practices.

Communicating Effectively

For most educators, teaching is comprised of talking, writing, reading and listening. And whenever large amounts of time are expended, it is possible to find ways of saving time. Enhanced communication skills will save time and increase the likelihood of instructional clarity.
Controlling Activity

Planning and scheduling activities is called programming. Programming separates larger planning goals from specific activities that must be scheduled to carry them out. Planning activities that relate directly to program goals enhances effective time management. Time allotment must be clear because ambiguous scheduling can be detrimental to achieving goals.

Collegial Interactions

Delegation is a managerial technique for using other's time and an essential part of instruction. It can enhance time use but does not relieve one of the responsibility associated with delegated tasks. It is not always easy to delegate. But using qualified people to assist in the educational process is a part of quality teaching and involves matching assignments with competent people who can be programmed into classroom activities.

Learning when to say "yes" and "no" can also dramatically affect time management. Saying "yes" to others implies sharing resources. Saying "no" can be done without having to feel selfish. Weigh the value of a reply, because there are consequences with either response (Fensterheim & Baer, 1975).

Wasting Time

Time is most productively used when achieving goals and objectives. Wasting time robs teachers of many opportunities. Time wasters come either from within or are externally imposed.

Internally generated problems can often be changed through a positive attitude. Externally imposed time wasters can be more intractable. Their sources, impact, and the means available to address them must be carefully assessed before rehabilitative action. Regardless, a thorough definition and analysis of a perceived problem must precede any treatment if treatment is to be successful.

Conserving Time

One cannot actually save time. Looking at ways to effectively and efficiently use time is the goal of time management strategies. Finding the most direct path to a goal is an effective way to begin programming. Time-saving ideas and implementations are often a result of creative thinking, planning and scheduling. The possibilities are nearly limitless.

Conclusions

Planning for the use of time savers in teaching activities is one solution for effectively using time. Effective time management is a worthwhile goal. As Love (1981) suggests, "You will know what your purposes are; you will have a priorities list; and you will guide your activities by those things that contribute most to your objectives. You will also know clearly what you want to do" (pp. 273-274). The challenge is to begin today to seize the opportunity to make the best possible investment of your time.

References


