



TEACHER WORKLOAD JUGGLING THE DEMANDS OF THE JOB

A teacher's work doesn't start and end with school bell. ETFO members spend many hours every week on non-classroom duties such as preparing lessons for classes, marking, working with individual students, supervising students, attending meetings, completing paperwork and contacting parents. New areas of emphasis associated with school improvement plans, on-going professional learning, adopting new technologies, IEPs, EQAO, preparing, recording and analyzing assessment data are also amongst the list of teachers' responsibilities. Many of these tasks can't be done during the instructional day.

How does one juggle the demands of the job and remain healthy and happy at the same time?

If teachers do not look for ways to balance work life and personal wellness, we will continue to witness increasing levels of teacher burnout, stress and illness. As well, we will witness teachers leaving the profession due to job dissatisfaction and other factors.

How and when to say NO!

1. **Extracurricular Activities are Voluntary.**

Most ETFO collective agreements contain language that reinforces the voluntary aspect of extracurricular activities. Teachers should make decisions about taking on extracurricular activities based upon their individual situations. No one should feel pressured to take on this responsibility. Teachers cannot be disciplined or penalized in any way for making this decision. Familiarize yourself with your local collective agreement in order to better understand the legal obligations of your job.

2. **Professional Development/Professional Learning Opportunities**

Teacher professional development/learning must be self-directed. Attendance at board sponsored professional development activities after hours (evenings, weekends, summer holidays) is voluntary. Teachers cannot be mandated to attend professional development/learning sessions outside of the instructional day.

3. **Participation on Ministry/Board/ School Committee and/or Councils.**

Think carefully about taking on additional commitments if you are struggling with an overwhelming workload. While participating on a Ministry/Board/School Committee may be a good professional experience, the required time commitment may detract from other important personal and professional responsibilities. Remember to keep your responsibilities to your students as the main focus.

4. **Communication with Parents.**

Teachers are expected to communicate with parents throughout the year regarding student progress. This is especially important in situations where a child is struggling to meet expectations. This can be a time consuming activity. To maintain a healthy balance, try to establish communication routines that can be carried out during the workdays. It is not wise to be contacting parents from your home in the



evening. Look at other ways of communicating that don't take time out of your evening or weekend like using student agendas, communication books/logs, apps, etc. Make communication a part of your daily teaching activities.

5. Planning and Assessment.

Planning and assessment are essential components of a teacher's performance. To meet the provincial standards, teachers are required to have detailed, comprehensive plans and varied assessment methods. This task can be overwhelming at times. It is important for teachers to organize in a manner that does not require hours of work each day to keep up with the demands of planning and assessment. Look for ways to be more efficient – develop templates, rubrics and assessment tools that are quick and easy to use. Link your assessment to your planning and plan time during the day for dealing with this important requirement. Resources for planning and assessment that align with the Ontario curriculum are readily available on-line. It is not always necessary to re-create! Work in partners or teams to tackle the task of planning. Share ideas and resources with others in an effort to increase your effectiveness and efficiency. Plan to plan – set aside a chunk of time each week to plan ahead. Don't leave this task for the last minute, as that will cause undue stress.

6. Set Realistic and Reasonable Goals.

Last but certainly not least is the need for teachers to be realistic about what can be accomplished over the course of a school day/month/year. Make it one of your goals to make communication, planning and assessment part of every day; don't save it all for the evening and weekends. As caring professionals, teachers strive to do more and more to ensure student success. From providing one on one assistance to a student struggling in math to acting as coach/mentor/choir director and more, there is only so much time to give. To maintain a healthy and happy personal and professional life, it is important to look for ways to balance health, wellness and professionalism. Your main responsibility is teaching. That must be the focus for your day. Try to keep all these responsibilities within the school day and leave other time for you, your family, and your health.

If you have any questions or concerns about your professional obligations, contact Professional Relations Staff at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836 at the provincial office.

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