

# Prepare now for happy reporting later

Effectiveness

Reporting periods for many school staff are a time of tension and stress, where tempers are tested and a good night's sleep becomes a distant memory. Instead of dreading its approach and using weak coping strategies like counting down the days till the holidays, try planning early (read, super-early – like, now!) to make reporting time much calmer.

Preparing for reporting well in advance is not only an investment in your wellbeing, it also keeps you more focused on the goals you want your students to achieve. Think about why reporting occurs. Do you participate out of compliance? Or do you genuinely wish to communicate with students and their families on learning progress? If you take the time to clarify your intentions with yourself, you'll make smarter decisions and develop clearer pathways and systems to achieve these.

One of the key principles to reducing pressure during the reporting period is working backwards. Some ways you can do this include:

1. Clarify exactly **when** reporting occurs and **what** is to be reported on.
2. Ensure your assessment tasks and criteria align with this.
3. Clearly indicate all reporting and proofreading deadlines on your calendar or term planner.
4. Schedule moderation in to your assessment calendar so snap judgments don't need to be made at the eleventh hour when fatigue can impair professional intuition.
5. Block out the days preceding these deadlines in your personal calendar to ensure you aren't over-committed at the times when your workload may increase (*the bonus is you've bought yourself some 'free' time if you're on top of things when you reach these dates!*).
6. Determine **how** progress is communicated (e.g. comments or just grades?) and develop systems that support the collection of this data i.e. don't create unnecessary extra work or marking for yourself.

**Organise,  
don't  
agonise.**

Nancy Pelosi

So how do you set up those essential systems? Spreadsheets are a wonderful tool if you prefer digital data-keeping, but good old-fashioned analogue markbooks are also popular with many teachers. Often schools utilise an online portal and some of these are so 'smart' that when student results are entered and grade parameters are set, the system calculates and enters the final mark straight into the report.

Whatever the method, the most important thing to remember is to be clear from the start, stay focused on the end result and use a consistent data-gathering strategy to achieve it.

Mark student work promptly and enter the data as soon as assessment and moderation are complete to minimise double-handling. Expect hiccups and build buffers in along the way to prevent them from knocking you sideways. While 100% student attendance during assessment would be a teacher's dream come true, rarely is this even close to reality. Again, working backwards from your reporting deadline and factoring in the possibility of student absences will help avoid this.

Finally, clarify your school's punctuation and style protocols – a little bit of effort goes a long way if these are established early. This helps maintain consistent standards for parents whilst saving valuable time so teachers can concentrate their energies on what's most important – tracking student progress and staying sane!

## Key points

Work backwards

Avoid double-handling data

Spend time doing what matters

Break the workload into bite-size chunks

Report on the critical data

Start with small tasks rather than tackling the big ones up front

Aim to finish a day or two before set deadlines

Moderate early – allow time for borderline decisions

**Steve Francis** MScM, BEd, DipT

[www.SteveFrancis.net.au](http://www.SteveFrancis.net.au)

Steve is an expert in school leadership and work-life satisfaction. Steve was a Principal for 20 years and is the author of four books, 'Time Management For Teachers', 'A Gr8 Life...Live it Now!', 'First Semester Can Make or Break You!' and 'Attitude is Everything'. Steve lives in Brisbane with his wife and family but works with school leaders and staff in schools across Australia and internationally.

