



Happy Staff = Happy School

# Starting the Year Well

## Working in schools can be stressful!

These articles are intended to help the great people who work in schools reduce stress and increase their satisfaction.

## Put in place...

Clear expectations and classroom routines

Classroom material storage and access

Systems and routines - students arriving, homework, distributing materials, visitors at the door

Files and record keeping systems and routines

Diary or calendar of known events and meetings

The key is not spending time but investing it

Stephen R Covey

The start of a new school year should set the tone for the rest of the year. Most people start the year with renewed energy, focus and vigour. They have enjoyed a well-earned break and are ready for another challenging year. Whilst it is important to *'hit the ground running'*, we need to guard against *'going too hard, too fast and burning ourselves out'*. This can be a fine line.

Establishing systems and good habits are essential at this time of the year. Our intentions are good and hopefully our reserves are replenished. However having good intentions aren't enough. It is our actions that count.

Whilst organisation is one of the keys to time management, many teachers find it very challenging. It seems to be part of our personality type. I am not convinced it is an *'either or situation'*. I believe it is a continuum. Some of us are buried in piles of "stuff" and are way too disorganised. Some others are super organised and go overboard spending too much time 'organising'. Great time managers are BOTH organised AND effective. They use their time well without getting carried away and becoming obsessive.

Now is the time to be putting in place systems or routines that are going to help us throughout the year. Spend some time this week thinking about routines that have worked for you in the past and areas of your work where establishing procedures correctly from the beginning of the year will be beneficial. Wherever possible assign tasks to students. If a student can do the job just as well as you can, then let her or him do it. Most students love having responsibilities. Areas to focus on are listed in the left column. Decide NOW which areas need to be addressed.

Effective teachers spend time in the first few weeks of the year establishing and teaching classroom routines and procedures. This is important in developing a well-managed, organised classroom. Time invested at the beginning of the year will prove beneficial. The main aim of setting up these routines is to minimize the number of interruptions to your teaching. It is important to be consistent. Don't give up after a few days. The time spent teaching, monitoring and reinforcing routines and procedures will pay tremendous dividends.

### To reduce stress...

- ★ At the end of each day prepare tomorrow's TO DO list
- ★ Keep a note pad beside your bed to write down the things that wake you
- ★ Continue (*or start*) exercising - it's important and should be a priority!
- ★ Don't over commit - watch for holiday induced exuberance
- ★ Don't be too tough on yourself - it's a marathon, not a sprint - but time spent now getting organised will help!

*PS Establishing these routines in the school office and with support staff are just as important as for teachers with their students.*

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