

Time Management: Stresses and Strategies

The major purpose of this resource is to consider some of the major forces of educational change and their impact on the leadership and management of schools and to consider some of the time management strategies that might help reduce the increased pressures that educational leaders and their colleagues are facing at this time. Let us briefly consider some of these forces of educational change.

Forces of Educational Change

First, there has been a major increase in the importance of education not only in the industrialized world but also in many developing nations. An offshoot of this increased emphasis on education has been the effects of globalization and the use of international comparisons by governments around the world.

Adding to the above forces has been the ubiquitous influence of a wide array of information technologies stemming from the increased accessibility to the Internet and the myriad of personal and professional communication tools connected to it.

Finally, the above factors have come together to generate a significant rise in means to increase accountability and the high stakes educational testing that has emerged from it.

Canada has been in the midst of the increased expectations and reforms that have stemmed from the above change forces on education. One of the most significant factors that has influenced educational leadership and management at the school level is the increase in parental expectations and the pressure for increased standards and school effectiveness that have come with it. In line with increased parental expectations has been the rise in the incidence and influence of governing boards that often include parents, students and community representatives.

Along with these changes has come increased momentum towards school-based governance and the devolution of responsibilities to the school or centre level that at one time was the responsibility of school board personnel.

Finally, increased political action in the education domain has resulted in a variety of different legislative initiatives and educational reforms that have dramatically increased the pace of educational change.

Time Management: Stresses and Strategies

Given the above educational change forces, it is not surprising that school and centre administrators report that they often face the following time management challenges.

Typical Time Management Challenges in School/Centre Settings

In discussions with a large number of in-school administrators, the following time management challenges were identified as being relatively common.

Situational Challenges

The following time management challenges emerged from situational factors that are difficult to control and manage:

1. Dealing with unanticipated crises
2. Dealing with the influx of e-mails
3. Unexpected drop ins and telephone calls
4. Attending unnecessary or poorly planned meetings
5. Finding the time to get out of the office and see what is going on in the school or centre

Planning Challenges

The following challenges were related to planning and time management:

1. Difficulty blocking time to handle major administrative tasks
2. Difficulty keeping the focus on achieving high priority goals and objectives
3. Finding it increasingly difficult to delegate effectively
4. Being able to say no clearly but diplomatically
5. Finding time for a laugh and some fun

Next Steps: Based on a review of the above challenges and collegial discussions about dealing with them, it became clear that being able to handle these challenges and maintaining a balanced lifestyle requires examining the question of time management from a relatively broad perspective. The [Time Management Self-Evaluation Questionnaire](#) attempts to do so by viewing time management from the following four perspectives:

- **Personal practices** that influence how we manage our personal, family and relationship time to try and ensure a balanced lifestyle.

Time Management: Stresses and Strategies

- **Professional practices** that influence how we manage our time and energy in work settings.
- **Organizational practices** that influence the organizational effectiveness and efficiency of a school or centre.
- **Information Technology Practices** that facilitate communicating, leading and managing in an efficient and productive manner.

Given the emphasis placed on building leadership capacity throughout this website, it is important to note how these four aspects of time management interact and impact on each other. The personal and professional aspects of time management can positively or negatively impact organizational efficiency. Just as importantly, organizational efficiency and information technology practices can impact the personal and professional aspects of time management. Most importantly, the degree of organizational efficiency will depend to a great extent on the leadership capacity of both the leaders and their colleagues within specific school or centre settings.

With the above ideas in mind, it may be helpful to complete the [Time Management Practices Self-Evaluation Questionnaire](#), which will provide you an opportunity to consider your strengths and identify areas that you might wish to improve related to time management and the factors that impact it.

You may wish to skip completing the questionnaire and reflecting on the results at this time; however, taking the time to consider and reflect on the items included in the questionnaire can help identify areas for potential capacity building at a number of different levels. In upcoming weeks, a number of time management strategies will be presented for consideration and potential use.