

Tuesday, September 30, 2008

## **Professional Self-Development**

### The Twelve Worst Planning Practices

Planning is the most important "non-outcome, non-output, non-urgent, non-teaching" task that you can perform. Planning delivers visible but difficult to connect and document paybacks.

So, planning is often deferred, put off or relegated to miscellaneous moments instead of to "prime-time, crucial, high impact thinking and high impact productivity" times. Major Planning Mistakes Here are twelve major planning mistakes that teachers make: 1.) Completing Urgent tasks before Completing Important tasks

Urgent tasks must be completed, just be sure that you find time to squeeze in the important tasks each day, preferably before starting on the urgent tasks

#### 2.) Saying "Yes" too Soon, and too Often

This includes the "sins" of being eager to please, eager to help, eager to accept someone else's work or someone else's responsibility. Delegate instead of taking on more work

#### 3.) Accepting Global, Idealistic Goals instead of Specific, Doable Goals

Reaching for the stars is great, but be sure to keep your feet on the concrete ground (pun intended). Pursuing ideals is the mark of a Master Teacher, but be sure to focus on the coordinates of doable, measurable specific tasks that prove your progress

#### 4.) Mistaking a Schedule, Activity List, Lesson Plans and Curriculum for Goals

Schedules, Activity Lists, Lesson Plans and Curriculum Frameworks are tools, but these tools cannot substitute for goals. Goals must be S.M.A.R.T.; i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Frame Oriented. Anything less is a pretend goal that is unlikely to deliver positive, desired results

#### 5.) Targeting Activities that others claim to "Work" without testing, and without developing a Contingency Plan

Activity lists, target-focused tactics and secret strategies do not constitute a plan. In fact, these prized finds can become distractions and contribute to "Information Overload." Test everything that others share with you. Prove to yourself, for yourself; that each activity, tactic and strategy works at this moment, with your specific students. Don't generalize beyond what you have been able to prove, now

#### 6.) Jumping into Programs, Innovations or Changes too Quickly

Think, Plan, Test; then implement. Avoid "Do first, regret afterwards." Remember that if you select one path, you prevent yourself from taking every other path. Be sure to have escape routes in mind at every turn

#### 7.) Lack of a Tracking Process

Know where you are going and when you are supposed to arrive at specific milestones. And, know early that you are going in the wrong direction. Make corrections early, not "after the fact"

#### 8.) Killing Great Ideas because they Require too Much Work

"Wrong work," not hard work is the enemy of efficiency and success. Rid yourself of non-productive tasks and zero in on high-payoff tasks. Avoid choosing the "easy jobs" instead of choosing "difficult but effective" tasks. Work on the right tasks will deliver more satisfaction and success

#### 9.) Focusing on Short-Term Solutions when Long-Term Investments are Required

This is the mistake of grabbing for easy answers, picking only the "low-hanging fruit." Many teacher goals require the investment of a lot of time and effort, challenging logistics, and repeated trial and error. When the goals are right, the additional work is worth the effort

#### 10.) Working Manually when Technology would Streamline and Automate Tasks

Spend the "up front" time installing and learning the technology that will speed up and automate your work. Avoiding the use of technology because the "learning curve is steep only leads to a sharp slippery slope at the back end of a project." (You will find yourself slipping, sliding and struggling when you should be coasting to success.)

#### 11.) Focusing your "One Size fits All" Solution towards the "Average" Student

Plan for variability in student learning, plan for multiple reteaching sessions, plan to communicate to students using multiple learning styles (Multiple Intelligences). Assuming that you are "skillful enough to teach every student with one-trial learning" is not only a planning error, but an error in professional judgment. Allow time for all the reteaching and all the practice that real learning requires

#### 12.) Planning for What Happened Before instead of What Might Happen

Positive planning is proactive and successful planners always assume that anything (or everything) can change (maybe instantly). Plans that leave you "blind sided" were created with a "blind eye" to reality. Expect to adjust your plans, and you will be ready for that eventuality. You are going to have to adjust, so build proactive strategies into your plans from the start.

Perhaps your planning process is clean and sparkling, and you can't find any of these major mistakes in your professional life.

If so, either open your eyes, or show other teachers how you can "walk on water" because just about every teacher is burdened and stressed with extra, useless work and out-of-focus directives. And, even if you don't commit these "planning sins," refrain from casting stones on your colleagues because you didn't arrive at your Master Teacher status without your share of mistakes. The benefit of knowing these 12 Worst Planning Practices is that you could learn to choose to practice each one&hellip;only once.

Posted by Classroom Toolkit Newsletter in Professional Self- Development at 02:00