



## Why You Shouldn't Stay Late After School

There are those rare teachers, perhaps one or two at every school site, who pride themselves with how late they stay after school.

It gives them a kick, a buzz from feeling that they're going above and beyond for their students. They like the planning and prep work of the job – a hobby like any other – and the resultant reputation their long hours give them among their colleagues.

It's a choice they make, and it's right for them. They go about their work unhurried and unstressed, with no particular urge to get away from it.

For others, though, toiling away after school isn't a choice. At least, it doesn't feel like one. It's something they believe they must do just to keep their head above water, despite how stressed and unhappy it makes them feel.

But the truth is, for most teachers, staying late is a mistake.

Here's why:

**You're not your sharp-minded self.**

After a long day of teaching, a long day on your feet talking, making decisions, and managing your classroom, your mind won't be nearly as sharp and clear as it was when you arrived in the morning. You'll have a harder time concentrating and a harder time visualizing what needs to be accomplished. Thus, everything you do will take more time.

### **It's a primary cause of teacher stress.**

It's natural to want to exhale after shooing your students out the door. It's another day in the books, another day giving it your all. It's only normal to want to straighten things up, organize your room a bit, and then get away – to go read a book, exercise, or get home to your family. Denying this need day after day will tear you up inside and cause **a great amount of stress.**

### **There are too many distractions.**

Parents show up at your door, colleagues need to talk about this and that, former students stop in to say hello . . . The truth is, planning and preparing after school can be an exercise in fits and starts. Add to it the fact that when your mind needs a break, you'll look for every excuse and every reason not to buckle down to work. It becomes a daily, unhappy battle of willpower.

### **You'll burn out.**

To be the best teacher you can be for your students, to have patience, calmness, and likability, to have spot-on classroom management and a passion for teaching, you *must* get away from it. You must afford yourself a

daily mental and physical escape hatch. Otherwise, you'll burnout. You'll be uptight, short-fused, dissatisfied, and not very good for anyone — friends, family, or students.

### **The Alternative**

Teaching is unlike most professions in that you have to be 'on' every day.

If you're feeling stressed, overworked, and unhealthy, if you can't get away from your classroom and take care of yourself and your home and family obligations, then you're not going to be very effective.

The ability to prepare efficiently is an important key to effective teaching and classroom management. It also affects how much you enjoy your job and how successful you are balancing your home life.

There are many strategies you can employ to become more efficient, and we'll cover them in future articles, but one in particular can alleviate the problems above in one fell swoop.

So what is this miracle strategy?

It is simply to wake up earlier. Do the bulk of your planning and prep work **before** school when your mind is focused and you have fewer distractions.

Now, I realize that for some teachers getting to work earlier isn't so easy. You may have other responsibilities to take care of. But if you can carve out an extra fifteen minutes, just fifteen minutes, you'll save yourself a half hour in the afternoon.

That's right. You'll get double the work done before school.

Use the afternoon to organize, **visit with parents** and fellow teachers, and close up shop in a relaxed, unhurried pace. Save the heavy lifting for the AM – when it won't feel like heavy lifting.

Go home and take care of the ones you love – or go rock climbing or walking or surfing or snowshoeing or knitting or whatever soothes your soul.

Get away from teaching.

Leave school at school.

And you'll catapult out of bed every morning, refreshed and excited about what you have in store for your students.