



Happy Staff = Happy School

Surviving Report Writing

Working in schools can be stressful!

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

Key points

Report writing time is a predictable time of stress!

Exercise is often the first thing that we stop doing when stressed by report deadlines - DON'T!

If you aren't well organised and prepared, learn from it. Write notes to prevent this happening again.

Talk straight

Re-read difficult reports the following day

Nothing in the world is good or bad but thinking makes it so

Shakespeare

Writing reports is stressful – fact! It is an additional task to do as well as your usual day-to-day responsibilities as a teacher. It also comes at the end of term when we are most vulnerable. However the stress is to be expected – don't be surprised. It happens at this time every year! It is important to monitor your self-talk and keep the stress in proportion.

At our most vulnerable times it is particularly important to **maintain the activities that reduce stress**. Often the first thing that we stop doing when we add the extra demands of writing reports, is our exercise routine. Taking a break to get some fresh air, raise the pulse and take our mind to other places is vital and makes us more effective. 30 minutes getting exercise is NOT wasted time. Don't stop walking the dog, going to the gym, walking etc. They are vital!

Obviously the preventative strategies of being organised and prepared are best and help to reduce stress. If you aren't happy with your current level of preparation, at least learn from it. Take 30 minutes NOW to plan and record what you need to do in the future to **prevent this happening next time**. Write it down in your diary for the first day of next term.

Deal with the current challenge. Break the task down into achievable chunks. Tackle the difficult parts first and work your way through it.

Reports on some students are particularly difficult to write. Parents should be given accurate information on their child, however we need to be careful how we phrase comments. A useful term to keep in mind is Covey's "**Talk straight**". Getting the balance right in your wording is important. If we 'soften' our wording too much, for fear that we might upset parents or the student, we risk not getting our message across – particularly when there is a problem. Beware of too much 'sugar coating'.

However, if we are too blunt in our message we can damage the relationship and be seen as harsh. This will just add to our stress later as parents or students will question our intent. Hitting the 'sweet spot' in the middle is important. It is a good idea to **re-read the reports that we are particularly concerned about**, after a good night's sleep.

If you are going to miss a deadline, talk to your Principal, confront reality, apologise and accept responsibility. Avoid blaming others and making excuses. Make a commitment that is realistic and assure them that you won't make the same mistake again.

The aim of communication is to **clearly convey a message from one person to the other**. Will your words achieve that?

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