



Early Edition

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From the Editor's Desk: Procrastination



...Dealing with Leftovers

Nobody likes leftovers however they are infamous for their well enriched flavours. At the end of a meal, we can choose to save what is left over or to discard. We will then revisit the leftovers in the container to speculate on whether to use it or not and eventually we forget about them until they take up a life of their own. For some of us, it is a regular routine and a daily habit while for others it is a way of putting off making a decision....and so it becomes a never ending cycle.

Procrastination is wonderful in that it buys us time and puts us in a temporary state of euphoria thinking that we are in control of making decisions. As we go through our daily responsibilities, we inevitably put aside some things to do later. Some of these 'leftovers' never get attended to and before we know it, we are behind in many things. We get stressed out, worry about not having enough time and become overloaded with deadlines. As we begin a New Year, it is hard to start new projects when we have so many unfinished ones left over from the previous year. Although it is unrealistic to believe that you can get through every item on your daily to-do list, you can learn how to complete each item and to minimize a build up in the future. Here are some tips that will enable you not only to deal with all your leftovers but to manage them. It looks simple to do but it won't help if you just sit and look at your list:

1. Make a to-do list.
2. Focus on the unfinished tasks that need to be done.
3. Identify those unfinished tasks as follows:

- a. Urgent
- b. Needs work
- c. Almost complete

How to get started on your leftovers:

- Schedule specific time each day to look after the tasks identified as "urgent" or "needs work".
- Organize the work to do in file folders marked under the above categories.
- Have a specific place for these folders at your work station so that you will always know where to find them.
- Stay true to your time dedicated to do these tasks and avoid distractions.
- Gather all the resources and materials together to do each task so that you are not running around looking for things.
- Strive to stay focused on the immediate task at hand.

A practical suggestion would be to schedule working on these leftovers towards the end of the day since there are many early morning responsibilities that need to be looked after at a school. The key is to find the time that works best for you and to stay with that. It will not always be possible to complete an unfinished item in one day so when you have done what you can, refer to your to-do list to plot out your strategies for the next day. Take a few moments to see if any of your items have moved from a 1 to a 2 or from a 2 to a 3. If so, praise yourself for your progress and set to work to modify your to-do list for the following day. This is a very workable strategy but in order for it to work, you need to be disciplined in following it consistently. If you miss a day, then it becomes harder to pick up the pieces and start again. Learning to set aside a slice of time each day to complete unfinished tasks makes it quite manageable and less daunting. You will be able to cross off what has been finished and have more opportunities to envision and plan for new ideas!

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress".

Fredrick Douglass

Policies and Procedures



Policies and procedures are needed to help us be systematic and accountable in the way that we operate our centres and schools. It is a necessary requirement for any organization to have a system of acknowledging and implementing best practices so that the integrity of what we do is sustainable. Developing and writing policies and procedures take much time and effort but it is time well spent as it identifies and outlines what needs to be understood and done. We sometimes feel that it is time wasted but if they are done properly, they can be used as valuable templates to upgrade or model other subsequent policies that may be required. With accessibility to internet resources, there are multiple sites to help you get started on producing these documents. Winning Kids Inc. (www.winningkidsinc.ca), which is one of ACSI's sponsors, is a service and training organization that has many policy templates ready for you to use. They are very knowledgeable about Ontario regulations and provide a number of relevant webinars for your professional development. Keeping current and up to date on policies is something that is necessary and mandatory as they are there to help you operate your centre and school in a safe and professional manner. These define your reputation as a director or supervisor.

Professional Development

Ryerson University: AQ Kindergarten
www.ryerson.ca/ce/aq email: jblay@ryerson.ca

George Brown College: B.A.A. ECE Leadership
www.georgebrown.ca email: ece@georgebrown.ca



The Power of Self Evaluation

Self evaluation has been considered one of the most challenging exercises to do because it requires you to be totally objective about yourself. This doesn't happen easily, however in order for us to help our team improve themselves, we need to find ways to evaluate how well we are doing as their leader. Self assessment enables us to identify our own strengths and weaknesses in order to establish goals that will maximize our personal leadership qualities and abilities. As we work on our own self performance review, we need to follow the suggestions below:

- Be objective: measure yourself according to tangible results and not intentions;
- Be specific: provide examples of tasks and projects completed successfully;
- Allow yourself time to do it well: do not expect to write it in one hour or even in one day;
- Be realistic: state facts without an overflow of descriptive words;
- Highlight achievements: focus on your achievements accomplished during the latter half of the year;
- Use appropriate language: avoid slang and colloquialisms;
- Use first person and proofread: indicate that you are doing a self review and check for grammatical errors;
- Include present and future goals: ensure that they are specific and measurable; and
- Summarize briefly: provide a relevant conclusion about your performance.

Be proud of what you have done, who you are and what you can do to be better !

Being An Active Listener



Teaching + Listening = Learning Together

You can have the best professional skills and qualifications to be an educator but if you cannot listen and respond to your students, then you cannot teach effectively. When there is no active communication, there is no active learning. Not everyone has good listening skills, however there are ways one can learn how to be a good listener. The following tips on how to be an active listener are taken from "Listen & Learn!" (1999, November), Facilitator *CHIPS* issue 5:

1. Be attentive:

- use your face, voice and body to show that you are truly interested in what the other person is saying.

2. Listen with an accepting attitude

3. Ask some questions to demonstrate that you are sincerely interested.

4. Use reflections and restatements

frequently to try to communicate to the person what you think they are saying; also test for understanding.

5. Use encouraging words to show you are listening:

- "I see"
- "Right"
- "Yes, I understand"

6. Use nonverbal actions to show you are listening:

- Relaxed posture
- Head nodding
- Facial expression
- Relaxed body expression
- Eye contact

7. Use encouraging words that will invite them to continue on:

- "Please tell me more"
- "Sounds like you have some ideas to share"
- "I'm interested in what you have to say"
- "Let's talk about it".

Things To Avoid While Being An Active Listener:

1. Do not interrupt.
2. Do not interrogate. Limit the number of questions you ask so that you are not "drilling" them.
3. Do not try to think of your response in your own head while you are listening.
4. Do not change the subject.
5. Avoid phrases such as:
 - "Are you sure?"
 - "You shouldn't feel that way."
 - "It's not that bad"
 - "You're making something out of nothing"
 - "That's a dumb question."
6. Do not be judgmental which will allow children, parents or colleagues to be defensive and not collaborative.

Although we may all feel that we are good listeners, when we get caught up in what we are doing we often forget to be actively listening to the other person! When others notice that you stop and truly listen to what they are saying, you will become a good model to others and will encourage them to develop these skills themselves. Thus the cycle of learning becomes self-perpetuating for everyone.

The Joys of Storytelling

With our growing dependency on electronics and technology, the art of storytelling is quickly becoming obsolete. For the development of literacy in the early years, it is so important for young children to hear and experience storytelling face to face! Neil Griffiths, creator of Storysacks, reflects on the importance on sharing stories with children so that it becomes a memorable time. The following is an excerpt taken from his article "The joys of sharing stories with children".

What Makes a Good Storyteller?

The potential to tell stories well is in all of us. Some have a natural ability, others can be taught the techniques and strategies of telling stories well. A pre-requisite, however, is that all effective storytellers must be passionate about stories themselves and to believe in the importance and value of exposing children to them.

What Makes a Good Story?

When choosing a story it is important to remember that not all stories were written to be read aloud. A good test is to actually read the story aloud first. From this, you will be quickly able to assess its 'read aloud' qualities. When choosing stories to read aloud, look for those that have:

- An inviting cover with simple, clear, bright vivid illustrations
- Attractive characters, believable or otherwise, that are few in number but well developed
- An interesting beginning that moves straight into the main plot
- A simple storyline
- Plenty of action that is filled with suspense or events that surprise
- Humour
- Simple dialogue and repeated phrases
- A great ending that both satisfies and surprises.

When and where should stories be told?

Story time needs to be relaxed, unhurried and undisturbed. Choose a time when the children are at their most alert and when the storyteller's energy level is high. Comfort during a story is highly important; having cushions or small seats add to the child's comfort and attention. To all educators, our challenge today is to realize that one of the most precious gifts that we can give our children is to find time to share a story together.

"Storytelling is the most powerful way to put ideas into the world today."

Robert McAfee Brown