

4

Managing the Workload

The Late Bell

Dear Student Teacher:



By now, you've figured out and understand who the key players are in this next stage of your quest to become a teacher. No doubt it is challenging in the beginning, as you try to remember the names, roles, and personality traits of all of these new people. But it's not enough to learn titles, office or classroom locations, and personal quirks. There are many, many more balls you need to keep in the air to maintain this juggling act. For example, what do you do with all of the papers that continue to collect on your desk? Whom do you talk to about filling out paperwork for licensure? How can you manage the internship along with a part-time job?

Year after year, student teachers tell us that no one ever prepared them for the number of new responsibilities—essentially, a three-ring circus of new duties—which must all be handled concurrently and (seemingly) effortlessly. In all honesty, it can be a bit overwhelming. This chapter serves as a warning—a “heads up” about the new mountain of work you'll be expected to handle. And we'll do our best to help you tame the three-ring circus known as student teaching.

Sincerely,

Your Workload Warriors

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- identify strategies for dealing with the stress that is a natural part of nearly any job, but particularly challenging during student teaching;
- acknowledge that successful student teaching is dependent on careful management of responsibilities in the classroom, at the university, and in your home;
- categorize and effectively handle the complexities of classroom demands during the internship, including instruction, classroom management, and communication;
- develop a plan to fulfill your university requirements, such as maintaining contact with university faculty, keeping up with assignments, and finishing your program; and
- develop a plan for taking care of yourself during the internship and staying connected with family and friends.

STUDENT TEACHING IS A JUGGLING ACT

The student teaching internship is a tremendous undertaking. In order for it (and you) to be successful, you have to manage some very important responsibilities. Let's compare the experience to a juggling act, with the following instructions:

1. You must manage multiple things (keep track of several balls) while only being able to do one thing (toss one ball) at a time.
2. You must keep more items in the air than you can hold in your hands. (Two hands means at least 3 balls.)
3. You can't let any of the balls hit the ground. (This is the critical part.)

To relate this to student teaching, imagine your juggling act with these three balls—*classroom*, *university*, and *home*. You've got to be in control—as much as possible—of all three responsibilities at all times. However, you can focus on only one of them at a time. In other words, you can't let issues from one area overflow into another area, such as arriving habitually late to school because of child care issues, or opting out of writing lesson plans in order to put final touches on your teaching portfolio. Additionally, when there's a problem with any of the balls, it prevents you from successfully managing the remaining balls. In the internship, if you are having trouble with outside issues, this may affect your experience in many ways—you may be late or physically absent, unable to focus, and/or feeling rushed or stressed.

We know it's humanly impossible to fully compartmentalize all of your responsibilities, but we do want you to work toward maintaining your focus as much as possible—without letting any of your responsibilities fall by the wayside. Table 4.1 lists several of those responsibilities.

Once you review the table, you can see that we clearly outlined your responsibilities here in Chapter 4 so that there are no surprises down the road. After seeing such a transparent display of the balls you have to juggle, we hope that you find it easier to wrap your mind around the real responsibilities ahead. Don't despair. You can do this. Students do it every semester, every year—and not only do they survive, they succeed. In the sections that follow,



we provide you with an overview of the stress brought on by this juggling act, and guidelines for keeping each of the individual balls in the air so that you can decrease your stress and increase the likelihood of your survival and success.

Table 4.1 Your Responsibilities During the Internship

<i>Classroom Responsibilities</i>	<i>University Responsibilities</i>	<i>Home Responsibilities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Writing lesson plans and preparing materials ✓ Providing quality instruction ✓ Learning and using technology ✓ Managing the classroom ✓ Assessing and evaluating student progress ✓ Providing prompt feedback for students ✓ Participating in parent–teacher conferences and individualized education program (IEP) meetings ✓ Writing weekly newsletters or updating your class webpage ✓ Attending team and faculty meetings and workshops ✓ Completing paperwork required by your school or district ✓ Participating in school events after school and on weekends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Keeping up with two calendars—one for the university and one for your school placement ✓ Reflecting on your teaching through journals, blogs, and/or discussion boards ✓ Preparing for and attending scheduled seminars, workshops, and/or other meetings ✓ Completing required readings and submitting assignments on time ✓ Meeting with your supervisor to discuss your performance or ask questions ✓ Studying for and taking specialty area exams (if required) ✓ Submitting paperwork required for graduation and/or licensure ✓ Completing a portfolio or other culminating documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Maintaining part-time jobs ✓ Coping with limited funds ✓ Dealing with personal health/medical issues ✓ Getting enough rest ✓ Organizing child care or care for your parents or other family members ✓ Managing transportation issues ✓ Maintaining relationships with friends and significant others ✓ Dealing with unexpected events ✓ Desiring to have a life

STRESS: IT'S HERE, EMBRACE IT

What is stress? **Stress** is your body's way of responding to different kinds of demands or influences. Stress affects both the body and the mind, and at extreme levels, it causes people to become tired, sick, and unable to focus. Sound familiar? Student teaching is such a new, big, and important task that a level of stress naturally comes with the job.

Most of the stress associated with student teaching is *environmental stress*—including frustrations from everyday life, such as pressure from work or family, and/or *stress from overwork and/or fatigue*—including struggles with managing your time or balancing work and relaxation.

Everyone gets stressed, and everyone experiences stress differently. In fact, it is our ability to channel stress that determines whether, and to what extent, we are affected by it (Joseph, 2000). During periods of stress, chemicals are released into your bloodstream that can give you more energy and strength. A little stress is good, in that the extra boost of energy allows you to perform at your best for short-term events. However, extreme stress drains you of energy and negatively affects your performance.

As stated previously, student teaching in particular is by no means exempt from stress. In fact, teachers have been stressed for decades. In the 1970s, the notion of teacher stress was just beginning to emerge; however, by 1980, a growing body of researchers were exploring the issue, and in the 1990s, teacher stress was recognized on an international level, prompting the rise of workshops and widespread public awareness regarding the issue (Kyriacou, 2011).

In the sections that follow, we examine three types of demands (your “juggling balls”) that cause stress during the student teaching experience. We also provide you with several useful strategies for dealing with those demands and the stress that they cause.



BALL #1: CLASSROOM DEMANDS

The list of classroom demands in the previous section probably looks a bit daunting, but we believe you can handle it, if you plan ahead. To help meet your classroom demands, we recommend the following three basic strategies: getting and staying organized, managing time wisely, and dealing with deadlines.

Classroom Strategy 1: Get Organized and Stay Organized

Organization may or may not be your strength. Regardless, it is a critical strategy for managing the huge responsibility of teaching, which becomes exponentially more difficult when the tools you need are scattered and in disarray. Below are ideas for keeping track of materials, kids, and time—both for those of you who know nothing about organizing for effective teaching and for those of you who need a refresher.



1. *Give your stuff a home.* You probably recognize this old adage used by moms: “A place for everything, and everything in its place.” Well, they knew what they were talking about. Not only does this strategy keep a house neat and orderly, but it can also make your teaching job easier because you always know where to find what you need. And for many teachers, finding their stuff is half the battle. One way to keep up with the many items you’re responsible for is to make use of your personal workspace in the classroom. Some CTs may not realize the importance of providing a personal space for you. It is okay to ask for one. You may have to be creative due to the room arrangement or availability of supplies. There may even be surplus items that can be used temporarily, so ask around. This space may be a small teacher’s desk or table, or a corner of the room set up just for you. Regardless of how this area is set up, you should work hard to begin organizing your area—while at the same time keeping your CT’s items organized in the way that has already been established. However, if your CT isn’t a role model for good organizational skills, do not follow suit. You still have to keep things in order. Maybe you can serve as the role model for the CT in this instance.
2. *Clean your desk.* As the saying goes, “a clean desk is a sign of genius”—or perhaps a sign of a respectful guest. When you were a teenager (after your mom finally gave up on the “everything in its place” rule), you could close the door to your messy room and no one would be the wiser. This is not the case with student teaching. Your chaos is often in the middle of the room for all to see—your CT, the students, their parents, and the principal. So, keep it neat. This is, of course, easier said than done. It can be so tempting to just drop everything on your workspace with the honest intention of

putting it away later. Resist the urge, and put it away now. If you wait until later, you have so many loose and unrelated items that the job becomes more intimidating—and you are even less likely to clean it until critical mass is reached. We know that many of you really believe you have a “system,” but if your system looks like a tornado swept through your area, there’s a problem. Our suggestion is to straighten your workspace every afternoon. This gets much easier over time, especially if you’re putting most items where they belong throughout the day. This also helps you feel calmer when you return the next morning, because instead of cleaning and finding items, you can get started with tasks that are better uses of your precious time.

3. *Be your own secretary.* Getting organized isn’t easy, but it can be less difficult if you have the right tools. For starters, you’re going to need a three-ring binder to keep up with critical documents, such as meeting agendas, memos from the principal, and handouts from workshops you attend. You may also wish to include information specific to your class or the internship, such as the class roster, the school handbook or conduct code, and contact information for your CT and supervisor. Use dividers and label them so you can further organize your paperwork and easily find what you need. (Note: Lesson plans should be kept in a separate notebook that is accessible to your CT and supervisor at all times.) And if you’ve gone digital with your documents, you need to collect and combine them in meaningful ways, and create meaningful folders on your computer as well. Dropbox (<https://www.dropbox.com/>) is a wonderful way to keep up with your documents no matter where you are. You can also download free and inexpensive apps for scanning documents using smartphones and tablets (try Genius Scan and CamScanner for starters). If you keep your documents on your own device, you’ll definitely eliminate a lot of clutter! And you’ll always know where they are.
4. *Save time with class rosters.* One of the best organizational strategies for keeping up with what’s going on in your classroom is the basic class roster. We use rosters to keep up with everyday information as well as student academic progress. This is a basic grid with all students’ names in order on the far left column, and additional columns for keeping up with critical information, such as attendance, who paid for the field trip, who completed the Unit 12 History Test, and so on. Print several copies of the roster (with names only) and keep them on hand (or filed away) for easy access. Or better yet—save them electronically and become even more successful at keeping up with the information!
5. *Track your time.* Part of staying organized is learning to have an awareness of time. This includes making realistic estimates of how much time different tasks take, as well as the recognition of time as it is actually passing. While a school day might have seemed torturously long when you were a student, you may notice that as a teacher, time passes in the blink of an eye. This makes it easy to get behind, both during teaching and planning periods. The obvious recommendation is to watch the clock—but this doesn’t always work. Another suggestion is to use a timer, which may help you focus and stay on task—and prevent you from arriving late for lunch and dismissal every day.

- ✓ Keep a timer nearby, and set it for the amount of time you think you’ll need to complete a task. When it rings, stop and reflect briefly on the following questions:
- ✓ Did I use my time the way I intended?
- ✓ Did I allot enough time (or too much time) to get this job done?
- ✓ How can I make better use of my minutes in the future?

Remember, there are no rollover minutes in teaching. You can’t use today’s leftover minutes (what leftover minutes?) tomorrow, so use your minutes wisely while you have them.

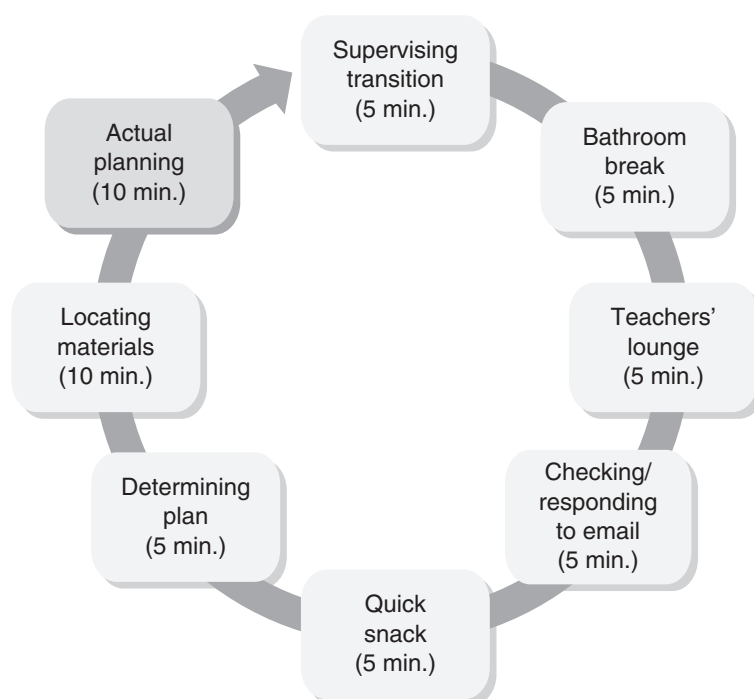
Classroom Strategy 2: Manage Your Time

In the previous section, we touched briefly on the necessary tool of time management, but it bears mentioning again. You must manage your time well, or it will be wasted. Having said that, we have four words for you: Plan during planning time. You really don't want to spend all of your nights and weekends creating materials, grading papers, and writing lesson plans, so try to protect this sacred few minutes dedicated to planning. Of course, there are team meetings on some days and other days when unexpected events arise, but for the most part, you should plan during your planning time. Resist the urge to hang out in the teachers' lounge—at least for more than 5 minutes or so—and get back to your classroom to deal with all the projects that need grading.

Most student teachers only get one block of planning time per day, and this is usually somewhere between 40 minutes and 1 hour. So, let's assume you have 50 minutes of allocated time. How easily will that time slip through your fingers? Very easily, if you're not focused. Figure 4.1 illustrates how quickly 50 minutes of planning time is wasted without time management.



Figure 4.1 Fifty Minutes of Planning Time Wasted



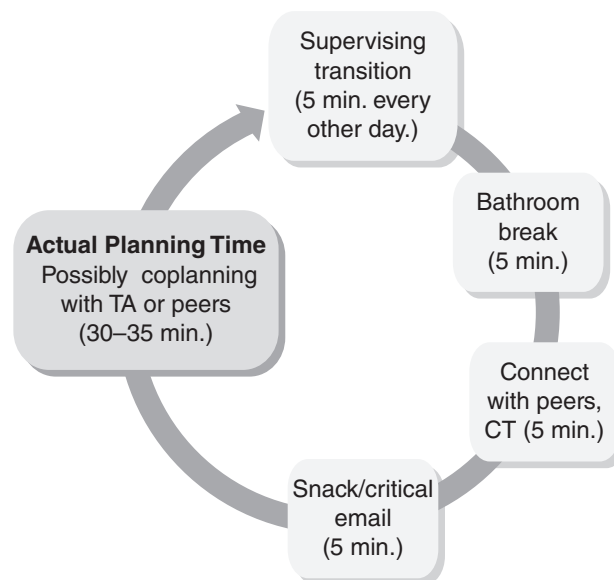
And now, here are a few tips to *maximize* your planning time:

1. *Multitask.* Pack a non-messy snack and drink that you can enjoy while checking your email or working.
2. *Plan to Plan.* So much of planning time is lost on trying to determine what to do and locating the right materials. To save time, create a planning folder that you keep on your desk at all times. Use an actual folder on an actual desk, or you can do it electronically on your computer desktop. Use sticky notes (also available electronically!) to remind yourself what you need to do, and toss them into your planning folder throughout the day and week.

3. *Prioritize.* As far as planning for instruction is concerned, you can prioritize by urgency or complexity—whichever makes the most sense for you on any particular day. However, for email, respond only to messages that are critical during planning time. Return the others after school or when you are at home.
4. *Chunk.* When jobs seem too large, break them up into manageable pieces and tackle them one task at a time. You'll feel a sense of accomplishment as you tick items off your to-do list, even if they're small items.
5. *Collaborate.* Find someone else—either another student teacher or someone on your grade level or team—who is teaching the same unit. Work together and share ideas. If a lesson or activity emerges that both of you like, then one of you should prepare all (or most) of the materials for both of your classes. Be sure to share the load. If you didn't take on the first unit, volunteer to round up the materials for the next one. Bring your own good ideas to the table so it doesn't appear that you are always taking, never giving.
6. *Delegate.* Set up and rotate student jobs so that all of the daily work doesn't fall on you. Let students pass out work and materials, file nonconfidential items, and help with maintaining some of your classroom areas. Have a kid who's a tech whiz? Let her update your class webpage (with your direction and approval, of course). Designate the responsibility for some of your jobs to your instructional assistant (IA)—if you have one. We know this may sound strange or wrong, but this is how IAs work in the real world—the IA assists you. Your instructional assistant can transport students, supervise transitions, make copies, distribute work, prepare instructional materials, and help with bulletin boards and displays. Also, a growing number of IAs are able to carry out valid instructional duties, especially when training is provided. However, be certain that you are not using your IA as your own personal assistant. Your IA needs to see that you are pulling your own weight and not dumping all of the “grunt work” on him or her.

Following the six strategies above can really save time and make your important planning period feel less hectic. So, what does that new and improved planning period look? Figure 4.2 is an example of an improved time management scenario. Additional tips for maximizing your planning period are also provided.

Figure 4.2 Fifty Minutes of Planning Time Well Spent



MORE TIPS FOR STAYING ON TOP OF PLANNING

- ✓ *Find an organizational mode that works for you.* Observe other teachers who seem to have it together, then develop your own style. Note: Chaos is a state, not a style.
- ✓ *Find good templates and stick with them.* Templates save time and help ensure consistency and completion in your documents. Thousands of templates (e.g., for lesson plans) can be found online and downloaded for free.
- ✓ *Prepare your lessons a week ahead of time for feedback.* Your CT might be able to give you a little insight about what will or won't work—and you'll have enough time to make changes if necessary.
- ✓ *Prepare your classroom in the afternoon before you leave.* Never trust that there will be time in the morning, because it is likely that something will come up—an emergency faculty meeting, a flat tire—and you'll end up prepping your room while simultaneously fielding questions from students who arrived early for school.
- ✓ *Think about long-term plans.* Keep a folder to collect materials for upcoming units and activities. When the time comes to write the plans, you'll already have an idea of what you're doing. For those of you who are tech savvy—Don't forget about Pinterest (www.pinterest.com)! It's a great way to keep track of all of the awesome teaching ideas you've found online.

Classroom Strategy 3: Deal With Deadlines

As we said before, student teachers comment every semester about the amount of paperwork they are responsible for during the internship. Here are a few ideas for taming the paperwork beast:

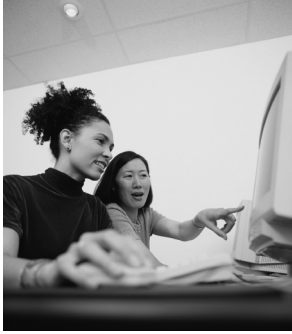
1. *Carry a calendar to all meetings, and keep it by your side as you check your email.* When you hear, read, or are told about a new responsibility, add it to your calendar immediately. Don't assume that you will remember to jot it down later. Chances are, later your mind will be on something completely unrelated, and you won't remember it again until later becomes too late.
2. With any type of assignment, make certain that you are clear on what is expected, when it is due, and how and to whom it should be submitted. Often, school administrators (and even teachers) forget that student teachers are still learning about how schools truly function (even though you have the advantage of having read our advice on school culture). Consequently, instructions aren't always provided clearly. It's quite likely that you transitioned so well into your teacher role that others in the school assume you know what they're talking about, but if there's something you don't know, ask. However, don't expect everything to be explained to you. It's not uncommon for others in the school to expect you to find some things out on your own. Just think how much more powerful and lasting the learning is when you discover it for yourself.
3. *Use your technology to set reminders.* Take advantage of what you can do with your cell phone, email alerts, and electronic calendars. You can program even the most basic cell phone to remember family members' birthdays and significant anniversaries. So, it is just as easy to set a cell phone reminder, such as "March 30, Benchmark data due—Mr. Sanders—5 p.m." Cell phones and other gadgets with even more sophisticated capabilities are widely available and very affordable, so there's no reason to miss a deadline.



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4. *Use your filing system to keep your critical paperwork organized.* Did you forget already? If so, go back and reread the section above on organization.

BALL #2: UNIVERSITY DEMANDS



This is the part of the juggling act that student teachers dislike the most. In fact, for many, it's the first ball to get dropped. The problem is that once the internship begins and student teachers are in their classroom environment, they feel they have "arrived" and are finally doing what they were put on this earth to do. "Now," they think, "If I could only get rid of those pesky university requirements, everything would be great." Not true. Your university or licensure program is still responsible for you and your learning during this training period. They have to ensure that they have told you everything, prepared you for everything, and given you the very best instruction they could possibly provide; in most cases, that involvement lasts right until the very end with program completion and/or graduation. And you do receive a grade for this period in your teaching program, so you want to make sure that you keep up with your requirements. Our recommended strategies for your university responsibilities fall under three different categories: researching the internship, communicating with university faculty, and collaborating to get jobs done.

University Strategy 1: Research the Internship

What exactly does your university or licensure program require of you? Are there on-campus sessions to attend? Is there a portfolio or other culminating project? Do you have official forms to complete? Below are tips for staying at the top of your game during the internship.

1. *Talk to recent graduates of your program.* Based on our past experiences within student teaching programs and our communication with faculty at other universities, we know that assignments and requirements usually don't change drastically from semester to semester. Thus, it's a good idea to communicate with someone who has recently completed the program regarding what you can expect. This person can give you hints about how to get the work done in the most efficient way and advise you on certain pitfalls to avoid.
2. *Go to class.* Talking to a recent program completer can be helpful, but it can also provide a wealth of misinformation, so beware. In order to get the full picture, you should also attend all scheduled meetings and seminars so you can be crystal clear on what your requirements are for the semester. Most instructors have a website or Blackboard page where information is housed and announcements are posted. Take advantage of this resource.
3. *Be an early bird.* In the beginning of the semester when your load is light, you should spend time reading over your requirements and starting to chip away at all of your obligations. Student teachers who don't do their research or don't get the ball rolling early often find themselves overwhelmed—when it is so much easier to get started when the load is lighter. Completing as much work as possible in advance allows you to experience a more balanced internship—with fewer periods of panic and fewer all-nighters.

THINGS YOU CAN TACKLE IN ADVANCE

- ✓ Studying for and/or taking Praxis II or other specialty exams (if they are required for your program area)
- ✓ Writing papers and completing projects, especially those not directly related to your classroom instruction
- ✓ Collecting and organizing items to use in your final portfolio or other culminating projects
- ✓ Filing paperwork for graduation
- ✓ Updating your résumé
- ✓ Organizing paperwork needed to apply for licensure

Simply getting one or two of these items out of the way can generate a more comfortable and manageable pace for completing the other tasks involved with student teaching.

University Strategy 2: Communicate With University Faculty

You are still connected to the university or licensure program, so please don't abandon your supervisor for 15 weeks (or however long your internship lasts), and then return for graduation. Here are a couple of tips to avoid seeing your face on the back of a milk carton:

1. *No disappearing acts.* You should be in regular communication with someone from the university, whether it is your supervisor, a student teaching seminar leader, or your academic advisor. Someone needs to know where you are and how you're doing, so be sure to share any information, such as sickness or family emergencies, that cause you to be absent or otherwise difficult to reach. In some instances, the university supervisor may be in the school quite frequently, and may pop in just to say hi between observations. However, with larger programs and limited faculty resources, supervisors are often stretched thin and unable to visit you outside of the required observations. Don't panic. Just confirm that your supervisor provides you with a reliable and preferred method of contact—whether it's phone, email, or text—and use it wisely, tactfully, and professionally.
2. *Check in periodically.* Of course, if you have concerns contact your supervisor right away. But it's also okay to simply check in to share brief information about how you're doing and what you're teaching, and to offer suggestions of good times to visit to see you in action. If nothing else, the supervisor knows you are alive and well and still teaching in his absence. Since many parts of an internship are interconnected, a good rule of thumb is to copy your seminar leader (or whomever you report to in addition to your supervisor) on all emails so that this person is always aware of your status. If you are experiencing challenges or need help, communicate your concerns early on, before they mushroom into problems that are larger than life or too difficult to fix within the remaining weeks of your internship.

University Strategy 3: Collaborate to Get Jobs Done

You are not alone in the internship, and we don't expect that you try to complete every task independently. Instead, we strongly recommend you seek out advice, resources, and

assistance from others around you; of course, this includes university faculty, but we also suggest that you band together with your peers in the program to get jobs done.

For example, if you're studying for Praxis II, work with a few of your peers to set up a study group. Quiz each other, share ideas, even talk about how you are dealing with the stresses related to the test. For assignments, talk with your peers about the criteria to make sure that you are clear on the instructor's expectations. Once you have a first draft of a required paper, trade papers with your study group so your work is edited with a fresh pair of eyes. You can even collaborate on larger projects. For example, we know students who set up gatherings that were part work related, part social—such as a portfolio party (complete with laptops, a scanner, pizza, and *American Idol* on the television) so that no one felt alone in the process. We love this idea in particular because it allows the students to do double duty: work on a very important and potentially overwhelming task while collaborating in a relaxing environment with colleagues.

BALL #3: HOME DEMANDS

Another phrase in the arsenal of every mom is, “You can't take care of anybody else, if you don't first take care of yourself.” While moms usually take care of everybody's needs before their own, they really are onto something with this advice. This is true of most of the moms we know (and plenty of responsible dads), although everyone reveals this truth in different ways. When you finish reading this chapter, call your parents—and/or others who looked out for your needs—and thank them. As a teacher, if you haven't met your own needs (i.e., “taking care of home”), you inevitably will do a disservice to your students.

Managing your responsibilities at home involves

- ✓ making healthy choices;
- ✓ staying connected with family and friends;
- ✓ doing things that make you happy; and
- ✓ saying no to jobs that you can't handle at that moment.

Home Strategy 1: Make Healthy Choices



First among your home demands is *personal health*. Be sure you're getting enough sleep (about 7-1/2 hours per night), eating properly (not too much junk food), taking any prescribed medications, and exercising (about 30 minutes per day). We know that you probably don't have a lot of time, and that gym membership you bought may go completely unused during your internship, so consider walking before school, during your lunch break, or immediately after school. Even if you can fit in only two 15-minute periods or three 10-minute periods of exercise, it all adds up to a healthier you. Some teachers even participate in walking clubs and

Zumba class at their schools. Consider joining them. The conversation and collegiality that emerge help you de-stress and remind you that there is a life outside of your classroom.

Home Strategy 2: Stay Connected

The next home demand to address is *your need to be connected with family and friends*. Trust us—the internship isn't easy, and you can't do it alone. To survive, enlist the help of your personal support team. Whether it's through actual visits, phone calls, emails, Skype, or status updates on Facebook, you need to talk to people who are old enough to vote or rent a car (i.e., someone other than your students). And you need your support team now more than ever, just in different ways. First, make sure they understand the demands of student teaching. They need to know that you won't be as available for social calls as you were in the past, and that even though you (probably) aren't getting paid, this is a real job with real student outcomes at stake—not the fantasy gig with nights, weekends, and summers free that many uninformed people imagine when they think of teaching. So, tell them a little bit about what you're doing—but don't overdo it or they may stop listening or interject with a brand new conversation topic. Don't worry—you don't need your support team to listen to you go on and on about teaching—reserve that for your teacher friends. What you can do, however, is get their help with other tasks, such as walking your dog on Wednesdays because you'll be home late after grade-level meetings, or picking your child up from dance class because you'll be at Open House. Chances are, they'll be happy to help.

Home Strategy 3: Get a Life

The third home demand you must focus on is *your need to have a life*. We say it over and over throughout this book: Student teaching is a huge undertaking. It requires a lot of your time and energy. After you've spent the day teaching, the afternoon planning, and the early evening taking care of some basic personal needs (e.g., exercise, dinner), then what? More planning? Well, yes, if you are behind. But if you follow our advice and plan ahead, you will have a few minutes to focus on you and the things you used to spend lots of time on in a previous life. So pull out your scrapbooking, grab your Guitar Hero, or watch some totally guilt-free TV. You've earned it. Just spend this time doing something you enjoy. Remember: All work and no play may make you a very grouchy teacher.

Home Strategy 4: Just Say No

What about those projects you promised to work on? Remodeling the bathroom? Starting a neighborhood babysitting co-op? This might not be the time for those jobs. You should seriously reconsider most big projects for now, but you do have a couple of options.

You can postpone some projects by prioritizing your list and defining the critical items, then . . .

- ✓ If the task absolutely must be done, figure out a way to break it into manageable chunks, or enlist the help of your support team to complete it.
- ✓ If the task can wait, write down a realistic time to revisit it, and try your best to stick to it.
- ✓ If the task can be completely passed on to someone else—hooray. Cross it off your list.



It is quite possible that after you've prioritized your list and come to terms with what you can and can't take on right now, someone may come along and try to add another item to your list. What should you do? Most people's gut feeling is to say no, but they say yes anyway, in order to not disappoint someone. Sometimes it's okay to accept the new job—if you can honestly give it the time and attention it needs. But what if you really do need to opt out? When you just can't take on one more task, you need a respectful way to say “No” or “Not right now.” In Appendix A there is a list of 20 ideas for learning to “just say no,” plus a rationale for each response that makes the exchange guilt free.

WHEN THE DEMANDS ARE MORE THAN YOU CAN HANDLE

Sometimes, the internship just doesn't work out. This typically happens when financial challenges, personal or family health issues, or perhaps even the loss of a family member or dear friend is too much to handle during the internship. If this happens to you, you need to take a moment to honestly consider how you are doing and what you can feasibly undertake for the next several weeks. Whether or not you choose to remain in the internship is a personal and respected decision, but you must be honest with yourself; remember that regardless of who tackles the job, there are real students in this equation who deserve 100% from their teacher. Sometimes it is best for all involved for a student teacher to step away and return to the internship when he or she is emotionally capable of handling the demands of teaching.

Occasionally, a student teacher who is struggling with the demands of teaching may be put on an action plan by his or her university supervisor, or even asked to take some time off and revisit the internship after reviewing aspects of teaching in which he or she needs to grow. This does not happen often, but in extreme cases you should know that it is a possibility.

SPECIAL FEATURE SECTION FOR NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

“You Think You Know, But You Have No Idea”

We asked student teachers to share their thoughts on the myriad responsibilities that come with student teaching. Here's what they had to say. Notice that the majority of their comments had little to do with actual teaching, but instead with the ability to juggle all of the many tasks that are part of the student teaching experience as a whole.

Got Stress?

“Stress does not even begin to describe how I feel. Life . . . what's that? Didn't even know that existed. My stressors are: (1) student teaching, (2) money and work, and (3) family. I feel as if there isn't much I could balance, because I don't have the time to. My life revolves around this student teaching experience. I feel as if I could've prepared better, but I had no idea it was going to be like this.”

“My areas of stress are finding the time to pull my materials together to get my taxes done, spend time with my husband and family, and to get enough rest. When I get enough rest, I relate better to the children in the class and really enjoy them. When I'm dragging, I just want to get through the day and I really feel like I'm cheating the students.”

Keeping Up With Family and Friends

“I have a 2-year-old daughter, and it is so hard sometimes when I don't get to do as much with her as I want to because I am sitting at a computer (this is what drives me crazy). However, I am dealing with it, and I am loving my experience.”

"There has been a huge change in the amount of time that we are used to spending together. So, what I've come up with is focusing on my daughter from the time I get home until she goes to bed. After I put her to bed, it's back to hitting the books. The only problem with that is that I have to retrain my brain to think during that time of night. I'm already pretty exhausted when I get home."

"It hit me a few weeks ago that I'm not really even a college student anymore. Even my weekends are taken up with writing lesson plans and pacing back and forth thinking about how I can get my struggling students to achieve these objectives."

"I try to keep Friday night as a fun night and do not do any student teaching stuff. Of course my house always looks a wreck nowadays. My kitchen table is covered with piles of teaching manuals, textbooks, lesson plans, etc."

Maintaining Personal Health

"I think that my two best friends are my daily vitamin and my extra dose of vitamin C. I swear if I miss a day, I can feel the germs creeping in."

"This experience has made me change the way that I eat (sorry, Steak n' Shake). I need more fruits and veggies just to make it through my day."

"Last week I slept. I went to bed every night by—if not before—9:30, and it felt good. . . . I found the kids a lot easier to deal with, and I was able to let almost everything roll off of my back."

Dealing With Disorganization

"I am very organized, but I have one area lately that I need to focus on. During teaching, I've been laying down stuff and then forgetting where I put it. Or, I do put things away and then can't remember where I put it. Help."

"My kitchen table is no longer used for eating, but for storage. I also find myself laying papers down in my classroom and forgetting where I put them. One time a student accidentally took them and luckily returned them the next day. My organizational skills have gone into overdrive with all I have to keep up with."

Words of Encouragement

"Stress is a word that has become entirely too frequent in my vocabulary. However, I have been able to deal with it because I know that this experience will not last forever."

"One real important thing that helped me through the late nights and weekends on the computer was Starbucks. Starbucks is a great place to go relax and work. A hot peppermint latte calms you and gets those lesson plans flowing."

"My advice to all is to stay focused on the bigger goal—remember that this, too, shall pass and that we all have a lot to be grateful for and proud of. All of us know what it took to get to where we are now, and we have come too far to let this exhaustive student teaching process get us down. Keep your heads up, continue to take care of you—you are the priority here because you cannot be an effective teacher, mother, counselor, caregiver, etc., etc., etc., unless you are taking care of you."

FINAL THOUGHTS

This chapter is full of strategies for managing the numerous demands student teachers often encounter during their internship. We want to reiterate the importance of organization and time management and their crucial role in keeping up with the day-to-day items and tasks involved in the internship. Moreover, we want to remind you that you are not expected to progress through the internship without the help of others. In addition to calling on your “village” to help with certain activities, it is equally important to remain in close contact with your supervisor so that there are no “surprises.” Clear organization of outside factors can help you focus more closely on those factors directly related to teaching and learning. The next chapter addresses the final necessary area of management—dealing with student behavior—which, when handled effectively, can lead to increased benefits for the entire class, including improved time-on-task during instruction.

BULLETIN BOARD

Managing the Workload: The Late Bell

View teaching as a juggling act.

You've got to keep all of your balls in the air—classroom, university, and home. And while it's nearly impossible to separate the three entities, you have to find ways to cope with the demands of each without causing the others to suffer.

View stress as a natural part of teaching.

In small amounts and for short-term events, stress gives you the energy you need to perform at your best. Awareness of your stressors, along with effective coping strategies, can help create a more positive student teaching experience.

Keep up with your classroom demands.

Get and stay organized by labeling items, tidying areas, keeping track of your “stuff,” and using precious planning time wisely. Keep a calendar with you at all times so that you never miss a deadline. Use your technology tools!

Don't neglect your university responsibilities.

Know what's expected of you during the internship. Try to get ahead while your load is light, collaborate with peers when you can, and remain in communication with your university faculty.

Take care of yourself.

Attend to all of your personal health needs, including food, rest, exercise, and medications. Remain connected with family and friends, and continue to do things that you enjoy. Realize that it is okay to say “no” (or “not now”) to some new jobs.

EXTRA CREDIT

Read About It*Stress*

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Think About It

1. Think about the internship so far. Overall, what do you think is the most challenging aspect of teaching? For each aspect you listed, name two steps you can take to make this element of teaching easier or less of a challenge for you.
2. What kinds of outside demands (university, home) compete with your ability to do well in the classroom? Think of a plan for dealing with those demands. Use the chart below to jot down your ideas.



<i>University Demands</i>		<i>Home Demands</i>	
Demand/need	Who can help me, and how?	Demand/need	Who can help me, and how?
<i>University Demands</i>		<i>Home Demands</i>	

- List at least five leisure activities that you want to engage in during your free time—these cannot be related to teaching. For each activity, determine what you need to do (or not do) in order to make it happen.

Try It

- Revisit Figures 4.1 and 4.2 on planning time.* For one week, track how you spend your planning time. Then, after the first 3 days, look at your chart and reevaluate how you spend your time. Are you wasting a lot of time, or is your time well managed? Make changes as needed, and make an effort to stick with those changes. At the end of the week, check how you spend your time again. Are you making progress? Are your minutes used wisely? Are you getting a lot done? Write about your growth in your reflection journal or log.
- Develop your organizational system.* Get started with a three-ring binder, several dividers, and a few three-hole pocket folders. Add whichever materials you need to create a system that works for you—one that allows you to keep up with all of the parent notes, faculty memos, paperwork, deadlines, and general stuff that teachers collect. (Resist the temptation to file your lesson plans here; they actually work best in a separate notebook.) At the end of each school day, when you are clearing your desk, be sure to file away any of these miscellaneous pieces in their appropriate sections. If you find that you are still struggling to locate items, either the particular system you chose isn't working, or you haven't given it a good try. Reevaluate and try again.
- Develop your organizational system electronically.* Sign up for an account with Dropbox or a different online storage site. Download a scanning app. Find an app that keeps up with group work and grading. Explore all of the technological possibilities that keep classroom organization literally in the palm of your hand!

4. *Revisit the chart you created above for tackling home and university demands.* Get the ball rolling by contacting those who can help you with tasks. Be sure to provide them with the necessary information and materials to help you by getting the job done the way you want it done—or be prepared to have it done their way. Either way, it will be done. In your reflection journal or log, write about how it feels to ask and allow others to handle some of your responsibilities. Is this something you're comfortable doing? Why or why not? Determine the level of support that feels right for you, and move forward.
5. *Each day after the students leave, try to focus on tackling an important job related to the internship, other than writing lesson plans and pulling resources together.* For example, you might tweak your résumé, review for your specialty exams, or create an interactive bulletin board for your students. Also, each day when you leave the school, make a point of engaging in at least one activity that is about you and not your students—even if it's only for 15 minutes. For example, you might work in your garden, shoot hoops with a friend, or catch a quick nap—whatever makes you feel temporarily indulgent. Keep a running tally of these activities in your journal or reflection log so that you can remind yourself of all you have accomplished and all you've done to maintain balance and keep your sanity.