

Hidden Time Sucks ✨ You Can Avoid ✨

There's never enough time in the teaching day. Ask any educator out there what ONE thing they wish for the most, and it's always more time. Even above a higher salary, smaller class size, or better resources. While we can't add more hours in the day, we CAN find ways to gain time back by reducing the hidden time sucks that plague us all. Here are a dozen very common time traps:

01 PLAYING THE "WHO REMEMBERS" GAME

Asking the class who remembers what you talked about yesterday before today's content (in any subject) can be a massive time-waster. Too often, they're not quite on track, then more time is wasted calling on more kids or having them "phone a friend." It takes just seconds to remind kids of yesterday's learning, so just tell them in 1-2 sentences and move on. Remember how limited kids' attention span is and save yourself precious minutes!

02 INEFFICIENT TRANSITIONS

Think about how you can streamline transitions. For example, if you want your kids to be ready for the next subject right away after returning from lunch, specials, or recess, make preparing their materials for what's next part of the transition TO lunch, specials, or recess. Adding a fraction of time to a current transition vs creating a whole new one is one key to drastically cutting down on time wasted upon return.



03 GRADING EVERYTHING

Not only does this become a massive time suck, but it sends the message to students that grades are the end all, be all. Get kids to care more about learning by showing them that feedback and growth is what counts--not the grade. This also gives you extremely valuable feedback on your teaching so you can adjust more quickly, thereby saving you a huge headache trying to reteach everything!

04 ASSESSING ENTIRE PIECES OF WRITING

Assess in small bites along the way during the writing process. Did you spend a lot of time teaching transitions this week? Then just focus on that. This will tell you much more about whether or not your teaching has landed than getting bogged down by the entire thing when it's too late to redirect your teaching. It's much more timely feedback for kids, too! And...not everything needs to be a full-on formal assessment. Formative assessment is more valuable than anything!

05 SILOED READING AND WRITING

When reading and writing are taught as completely separate subjects, it costs valuable time. Aligning--or even better--combining the two is a HUGE time-saver. You can save even more time by bringing your literacy skills into your content subjects. This saves a ton of time AND it leads to deeper learning!

DISORGANIZATION

06

- ◆ The amount of papers, files, and tasks that teachers have to keep up with every day can be staggering. That's why having a clear and easy organization system is so important. Whatever you decide, USE it. When we let things pile up (even in a Google Drive) without taking a few minutes to file it in the right place each day, we quickly begin to feel overwhelmed. This also ties back to not grading everything. Check work and provide feedback quickly so you can get it right back to students. The more grading you have to do, the bigger the pile you end up with for days or weeks on end.

NOT BEING READY

07

Taking just a few minutes at the end of the day to be ready for tomorrow will save you time in the morning. It also avoids scrambling--there's always one copy short, a book you need, manipulatives you thought you had enough of, or too many unsharpened pencils that'll only create constant disruption tomorrow. All of these things are common time setbacks that can be completely avoided by being prepared before you go home for the day.

LACK OF BOUNDARIES

08

◆ Related to being prepared for tomorrow is not setting boundaries for your prep times. There's nothing wrong with letting your team (and your admin) know that when your door is closed, it means you're protecting your prep time and to please email you or come back later. Giving others a heads-up about this prevents it from seeming anti-social. But if you don't close your door, you WILL be interrupted. It's very difficult to get much done if people are in and out of your room. Set aside even one time a week for this, and you'll get SO much more done!

09 TOO-LONG SMALL GROUP LESSONS

Small group time is meant to be super targeted. There's no need to teach 100 different things. Kids have a VERY short attention span. Spend that limited time really hitting hard what they need most. Trim it down, or consider splitting it up into smaller sessions. This will also help you get to more kids!

10 RETEACHING

Know where your kids are BEFORE beginning a unit. Do an anticipatory set, a pretest, a good old KWL (just the KW is all that's needed), gather a writing sample, conduct a 4 corners routine, or have students do some concept sorting. Even a simple class discussion, especially if kids use whiteboards to jot their responses so you can see them, will do it. Knowing where they are tells you where to begin. You might have to back up, or you might even be able to skip ahead. Either way, you'll be much more within students' zone of proximal development, so your initial teaching will always land better.

11 CARING ABOUT CUTE

Teachers love their slides. To be sure, they can make day-to-day teaching easier. But spending time on inserting bitmojis, cute images, and changing formatting, fonts, and colors is an unnecessary time suck. Even modifying templates you've purchased takes a lot of time. What matters is getting your message across, not aesthetics. If it doesn't enhance learning, it's not worth it.

12 NOT BATCHING TASKS

Batching is a fabulous productivity hack. For example, if you know you need to find books for read alouds for the week, look for all of them at once. Know you need to search TPT for social studies, math, and a graphic organizer for writing? Have a list in mind, and do it all in one sitting. Set aside a specific time for emails, too, rather than going back to it multiple times per day.



LOOKING FOR *more?*

I share all kinds of things about making the most of your time when it comes to literacy instruction. As an educator in the field every day for almost 25 years, I know how frustrating it can be to try to get it all done in the short few hours we have each day. If you're looking for more ways to **STREAMLINE, SIMPLIFY, and STRENGTHEN** your literacy instruction, here's how I can support you:

- [Access the full course](#), where I dig deep into 20 actionable ways to save tons of time both in your literacy block AND across the day!
- Join my Facebook Group ([Facebook.com/groups/literacy_lessons](https://www.facebook.com/groups/literacy_lessons)).
- Send me an email: michelle@coachfromthecouch.com
- Reach out for a [1:1 coaching call](#)