Work-Home Balance

Unpaid Leave of Absence

Discounts! Discounts! Discounts!
President’s Message

BY: Curtis Dison

Our contract has a clause at the beginning of Article 14 Workday that says, and I’m paraphrasing here, the provisions of the article have been written with the intention of striking a balance between completing the essential duties of the District and having adequate time for personal, family, and social activities. (14.2.1) Wouldn’t it be great if it were that easy? Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could just intend to get that balance and it would be done?

But, we have an, apparently, unique profession, as teachers and educators. We are expected to work longer and harder than our scheduled hours. It is simply understood that teachers will spend hours after students have gone home grading, making bulletin boards, and planning lessons. Maybe worse, it has even become expected that teachers will spend their own money on supplies for the classroom! We all know that time is money and money, time. The community at large seems to think that our time is somehow less valuable than almost any other employee I can think of; if there’s another job with similar expectations, I’m sure I don’t know.

This month, we get Winter Break that includes holidays such as Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Festivus, Omisoka, Boxing Day, and New Year’s Day. That three weeks is a great time to get some balance back and relax, reflect, and breathe. It’s often full of parties and gatherings, friends and family. But, it’s also a bit of a binge, as if we are making up for the time we spent working the last five months, leastwise, that’s how it’s often felt to me.

Many teachers have trouble finding ways to get some time back. It might not always be possible to work to our scheduled hours but it’s worth remembering that we are only obligated to work for those 7.5 hours each day. I know, I know, then when does any planning get done? When do I do my grading? I brainstorm some ways to get back some time.

1. Instead of grading an entire essay, try grading only one paragraph. Tell students that you will choose a paragraph at random and focus on the standards you are assessing. Or, for math, grade selected problems instead of all of them.

2. Set a time, say from 3:30 until 4:30 p.m., for grading each day. Stop when you reach the time limit.

3. Pick a standard to focus on when grading and only grade on that one instead of multiple.

4. Consider having students create bulletin boards as part of a project.

5. Do you grade notebooks? Instead of collecting them and carrying them home, choose a day at random and do a spot-check of the notebooks. Check the last couple of pages instead of all of them.

6. Don’t grade every piece of work students turn in or produce. If students ask, explain that practice doesn’t always need to be assessed.

7. Stop grading homework or practice work. Give credit for completion instead.

8. Split work between PLC members when planning lessons. Share your best practices and lessons with each other.

Those are just some ideas. Our veteran teachers might even have more.

Another practice to consider is limiting your contact with work email. Many of us get our work email on our personal computers and electronic devices. There’s a tendency to want to respond as soon as we receive an email. But, you don’t have to. You might even consider taking your work email account off of your mobile phone, that way you aren’t tempted to start working when you should be at home. In Germany, it’s actually against the law for your employer to email or phone you during non-work hours! Imagine?!

Use a budget. Student fundraisers, notebooks, pencils, markers, Kleenex all cost money. We can go broke trying to support our kids. Set an amount you know you can afford. I’m not going to try to convince you to stop buying things for your students, because it would make me a hypocrite and be a useless endeavor. But, instead, stop buying so much! The hearts of some teachers are clearly bigger than their wallets. We don’t have to do that.

Most of these suggestions are about working smarter, not harder. Teaching is already a tough job. And don’t fall for the guilt trip. There’s always going to be someone who’ll suggest you aren’t doing enough for your kids. Let it go. The balance of life and work is your choice and only you can really judge if the balance is right or not. This is especially true for newer teachers. For some reason, there are admin who spread propaganda that if you’re not exhausted at the end of the day then you’re doing it wrong. If your family doesn’t miss you during the school year then you’re not getting enough done. Don’t believe it.

Give yourself a gift in the coming year. Give yourself the one thing we can never get more of: time. I wish you and yours a spectacular holiday season. Be kind to yourself and the people you run into. And, have a happy new year!
What happens if you go on an unpaid leave of absence?

You will lose your membership unless you pay a portion of your union dues. Maintaining membership during a leave of absence is critical because participation in the CTA group legal services program requires that membership be maintained while legal assistance is provided. Also, it will help keep your eligibility for the death and disbursement plan provided to you as a CTA member and avoid insurance interruption on any CTA insurance programs you participate in. Contact Nathalie at FTA for more information nalvarez@fontanateachers.org.
WinterFest, the Bay Area’s newest and most immersive holiday tradition, brings holiday cheer to California’s Great America select dates November 23 - December 31, 2018. During WinterFest, Great America is magically transformed into a winter wonderland and holiday festival where guests can skate in front of the iconic Carousel Columbia. Holiday activities include magnificent displays of lights and décor, viewing spectacular live holiday shows, experiencing more than 60 rides and attractions, seeing Santa’s workshop and Mrs. Claus’ kitchen, and enjoying scrumptious holiday fare at numerous dining locations.

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with your updated membership information.

Thank you!
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UNION CODE OF CONDUCT

- I will not criticize any union colleague except to the individual directly.
- If any union colleague is being criticized in my presence, I will confront the criticism and ask that it stop.
- I will not participate in any conversations with management that criticize, or negativity speculate about any union colleague.
- I will settle my differences with colleagues within the union.
- I will engage in debate, offer others every opportunity for debate and respect the minority viewpoints, but I will observe and support the majority mandate of the union.
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Fontana Teachers Association
IPD Training Offerings and Dates
2018-2019

All Trainings Held at FTA Office 3:45-5:45

Tuesday, January 22/IEP’s
Thursday, February 21/Technology & Social Media
Tuesday, March 26/ELD
Tuesday, April 16-Assessment & Universal Design
Tuesday, May 14/Crispy Around The Edges

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