

Work-Life Balance for the Busy Band Director

Ryan D. Shaw, Michigan State University
Laura Hyler, Belding Area Schools

Why don't band teachers achieve their desired work-life balance?

- The pressure to maintain a program—pressure from students, parents, administrators...and from oneself!
- Extreme time commitments and administrative duties that must be dealt with after school, at night, on weekends, etc.
- Time spent with student and parents blends work and home domains—it becomes hard to switch out of teacher persona
- Personality traits—many music teachers identify as “type A,” perfectionist, control freak, etc. This makes delegating and letting go difficult or impossible for some.

Proactive Strategies:

- **Setting “hard and fast” personal rules**
 - (e.g., I won't work on Sundays, I won't check/reply to my work email when at home)
- **“Making time” for family/friends**
 - Prioritizing and setting aside blocks of time
 - Date nights (with or without kids)
 - Quality one-on-one time with significant other, close friend or family member
- **Finding a support system**
 - Co-complaining/venting to colleagues, friends
 - Communication and partnership with significant other or family member/friend
 - Form a “band director club,” bowling team or other social group
- **Become an obsessively proactive and organized planner**
 - Make a plan for busy times of year/events
 - Go home in between school and events OR Skype/FaceTime with family
 - Set up “breaks” and extra help for significant other

Proactive Strategies (continued):

- **Being open and flexible in your mindset**
 - Be willing to consider cutting back or changing something that's "always been done this way"
 - Be open to the idea that more time spent does not automatically make for success (quality vs. quantity, the power of a looming deadline).
- **Let go and delegate**
 - Being convinced that you must have sole control of all aspects of your classroom and program is a harmful delusion
 - Empowering others (students, staff) improves everything from your work-life balance to others' sense of identity and worth

Frightening realities to remember:

- Around 50% of teachers quit the profession before 5 years of teaching; stress can be a major factor
- Workloads are intensifying in subtle ways through new focus on teacher accountability and "data-driven instruction"
- Off-kilter work-life balance often leads to...
 - Burn-out, bitterness, disillusionment with work
 - Health problems
 - Arguments, disagreements, fights with loved ones
 - Divorce (can be a factor among many)

Luckily, many of these things are (at least somewhat) in your control: take a step back and prioritize.

Contact us:

Ryan Shaw: rydshaw@gmail.com

Laura Hyler: hylerl@bas-k12.org