showbie

Teacher Burnout & a Well Organized Class

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Most teachers (85%, when surveyed) said they became teachers because they wanted to make a difference in children's lives (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014). These noble professionals cannot help students if they quit their jobs, yet many do. In fact, 15% of U.S. teachers (approximately half a million) leave their teaching positions every year, and this rate grows to 20% of teachers at high-poverty schools (Seidel, 2014). Teacher burnout has reached epidemical proportions.

I researched key contributors to the teacher burnout epidemic while writing my recent book: *First Aid for Teacher Burnout: How You Can Find Peace and Success* (Rankin, 2016). Three of the most tenacious burnout contributors relate to environment, grading, and technology. Other burnout-related topics are also covered in the book, but these three areas are unique in that use of a product such as Showbie holds potential to help in all three areas simultaneously. For example, Showbie can help a teacher:

- Tame a chaotic or ineffective environment.

- Streamline grading practices for increased efficiency and reduced loss of time.

- Harness user-friendly technology to make professional duties easier.

Consider each of these separately.

Environment

Removing classroom clutter has been found to improve students' test scores and increase students' "on-task" time (Morrison, 2015). This is understandable, considering Princeton University researchers found that physical clutter in a workspace limits one's ability to process information and focus, while simultaneously making one more irritable and less productive (McMains & Kastner, 2011).

"Going paperless" is a huge win for teachers or students when done effectively, as there is less lag time in getting papers turned in or distributed back out again, both stakeholders can easily access the work wherever they are, and homework piles don't have to be lugged around for grading or lost by students. After going 95% paperless, teacher Kelly Turcotte (2016) reported that none of her fifth graders' assignments were missed for two straight years. Imagine the time saved on the busy teacher's end.

When Turcotte (2016) described her decision to use Showbie, she indicated wanting a tool that kept all her classwork organized in a single place while also helping each student stay organized. The heightened engagement and participation for which she uses Showbie are factors that also contribute to a more peaceful environment through improved student behavior.
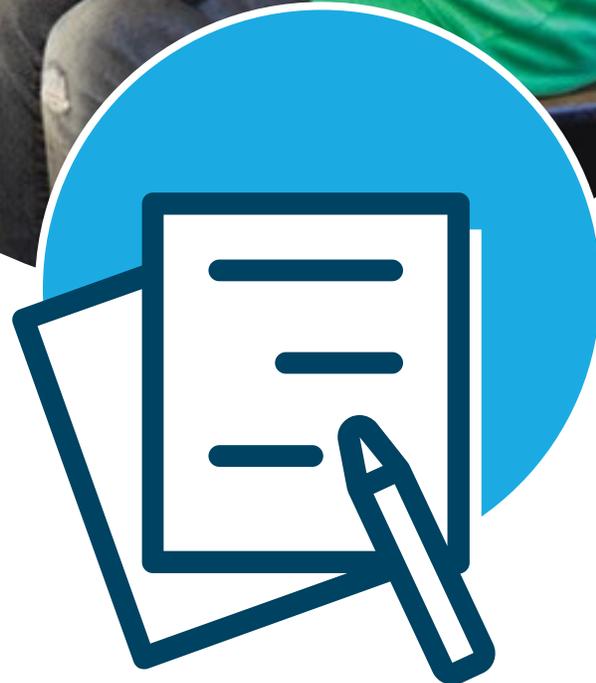
Grading

The U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics found teachers spend 20% of their working time grading student work, and on an average day teachers are more likely than other professionals to continue their work at home (the figure was 30% of teachers compared to 20% of other full-time professionals) (Krantz-Kent, 2008). Teachers are simply spending too much time grading, and much of this time is wasted on the logistics of grading in an antiquated way.

Outdated grading practices result in lost personal time and contribute to stress as teachers try to pack the rest of their professional duties into remaining time. This dynamic contributes to burnout in teachers. Thus any easy-to-use product that streamlines grading practices should be considered, even by the most technology-wary teachers.

Consider the teachers at Azle Independent School District (ISD), who found Showbie allowed them to give feedback to students on the fly, making it easier for them to create, collect, and grade student work (Tong & Alford, 2016). With Showbie, Turcotte (2016) doesn't have to worry about students losing graded papers or parents not being able to instantly and clearly view their children's progress. She also noted that giving feedback has become quick, easy, and instantaneous. Such achievements work against the kind of stress that causes many teachers to lose enjoyment of their jobs.

Technology

Most teachers never used existing technologies in their own educations, and this makes it harder for teachers to become proficient in using an educational technology (a.k.a. edtech) product (Bhaskar, 2013). For this reason, selecting easy-to-use edtech products is an essential step in effective technology use. In fact, using poorly-designed edtech tools, or using tools that do not fit with teachers' individualized needs, wastes teachers' time and increases stress, making burnout harder to recover from or avoid.

Technology should make teachers' jobs easier, not harder. Sadly, not all educational technology products achieve this, which can cause burnout-inducing problems such as stress. When teacher Turcotte (2016) described her selection of Showbie, she indicated wanting a tool that was easy to use, worked with all subjects she taught, and applied to a variety of lessons. For example, Turcotte (2016) and Cameron were impressed by how many tools and resources were compatible with Showbie's paperless workflow, which is also an important consideration.

Tong and Alford (2016) also praised Showbie's simplicity and how this interface makes it simple for any teacher to use.

In addition to being easy use, edtech tools should offer qualities and functions that streamline teaching, as this makes the job easier and more enjoyable for teachers. For example, consider how technology coordinator Amy Tong noted that students can retain the same Showbie login each year to maintain their work portfolios as they progress from grade to grade (Tong & Alford, 2016). This means less work on the teachers' end while also offering benefit on the students' end.

Conclusion

As the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) found, 85% of teachers became teachers because they wanted to make a difference in children's lives. Someone with such a noble goal deserves to enjoy his or her job, and to enjoy a personal life untainted by excessive work demands. Educational technology tools play a vital role in the fight against teacher burnout. When paired with other strategies, such as those covered in _First Aid for Teacher Burnout: How You Can Find Peace and Success_ (Rankin, 2016), good teachers can last a long time in the profession... while enjoying their jobs along the way.
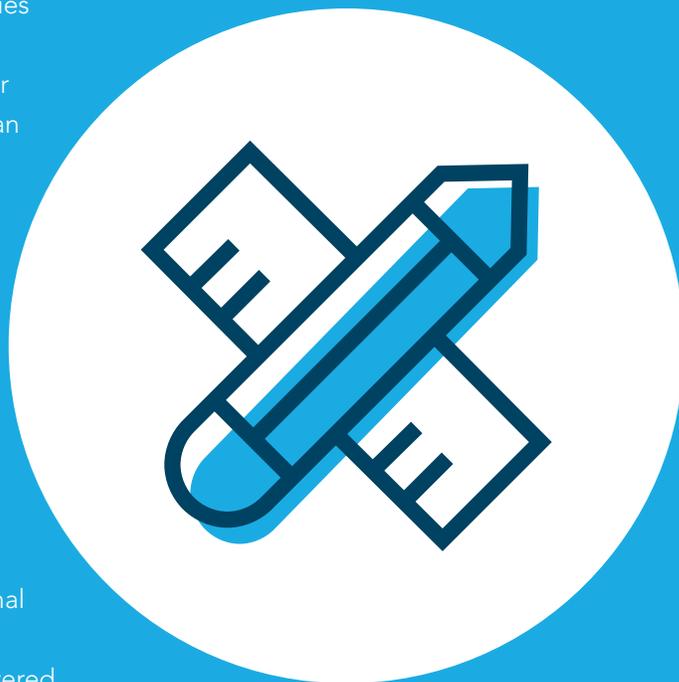
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