

INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP
ASSOCIATION

The
Instructional
Leadership
Show

Episode #86

Action Plan for Preventing Teacher Burnout

VIRTUAL

INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP
CHALLENGE



PREVENTING
TEACHER
BURNOUT

VIRTUAL
INSTRUCTIONAL
LEADERSHIP
CHALLENGE

PREVENTING TEACHER BURNOUT



An Action Plan

- Help teachers set clear boundaries on their work hours
- Identify high- and low-impact work, and eliminate 80%+ of the most time-consuming, low-value work
- Endorse “good enough” and stigmatize perfectionism

Preventing Teacher Burnout



“Whatever It Takes”?

When fully meeting our students’ needs is impossible, a “whatever it takes” mindset is a recipe for burnout.

Preventing Teacher Burnout



Work Usually Fits



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What Is Burnout?

- Exhaustion
- Alienation from work
- Reduced performance

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279286/>

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Focus On Practice

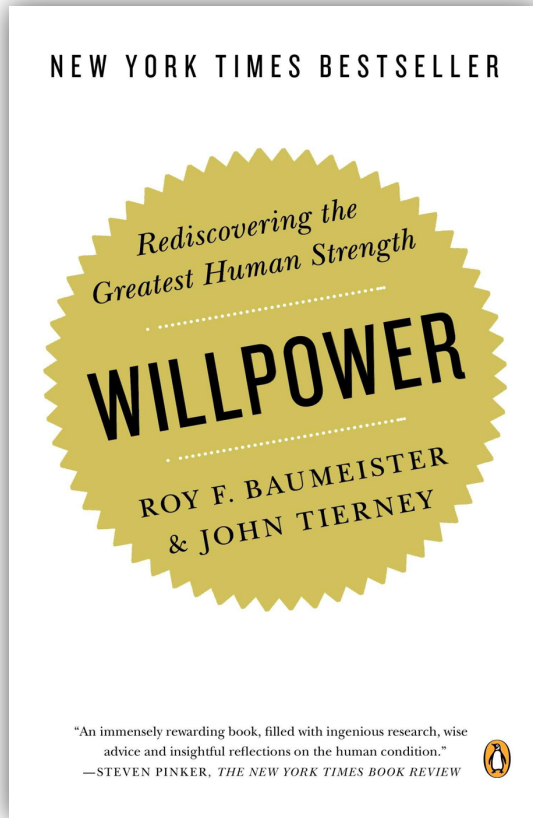
When we can't get the results we want due to circumstances beyond our control, we must focus on

practice
not outcomes.

Preventing Teacher Burnout



Understanding Energy



Preventing Teacher Burnout

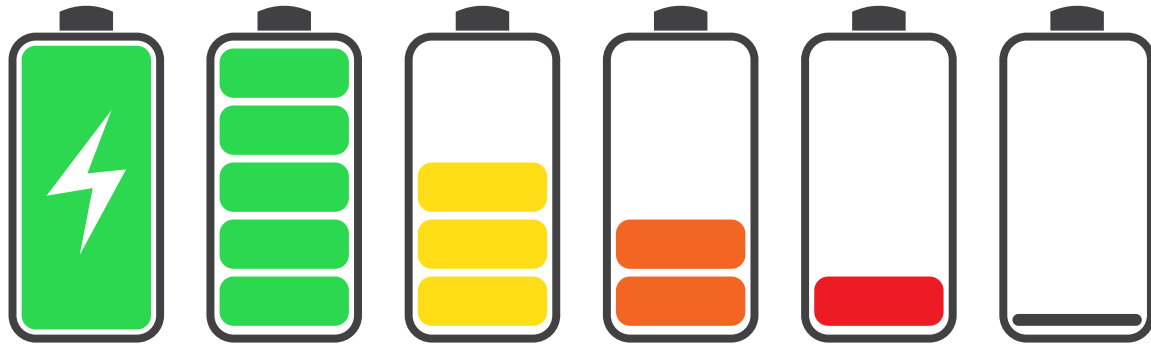
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Understanding Energy

- We have a fixed amount of mental energy each day
- Decision-making, self-regulation, and heavy thinking cause us to expend our mental energy
- Stress and physical exhaustion further drain this store of energy
- This energy is replenished each night by rest, and by eating throughout the day

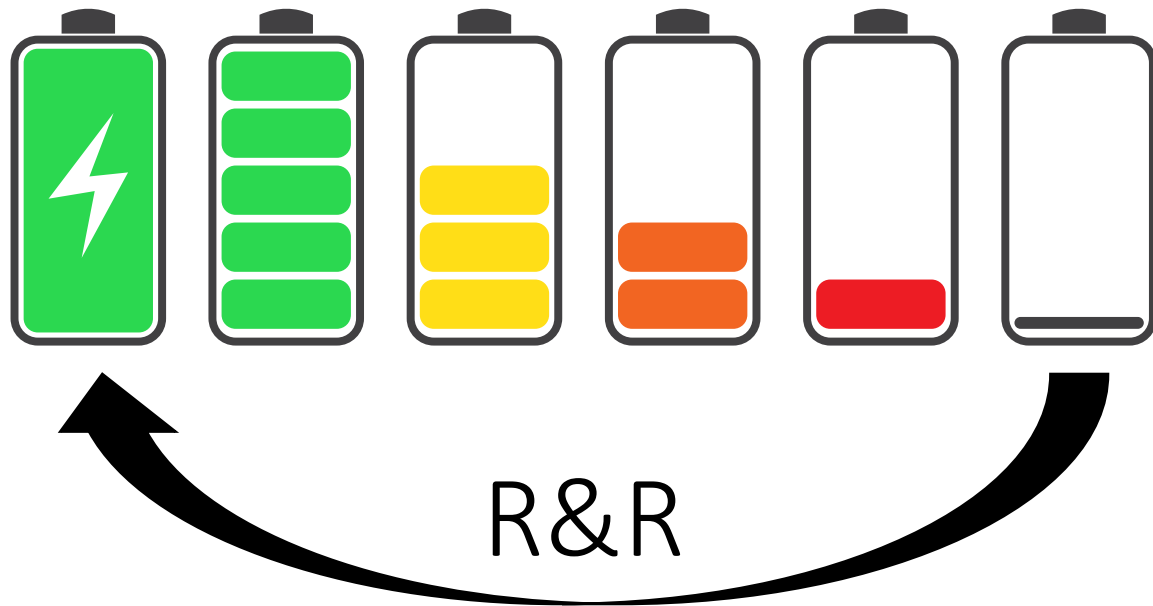
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Understanding Energy



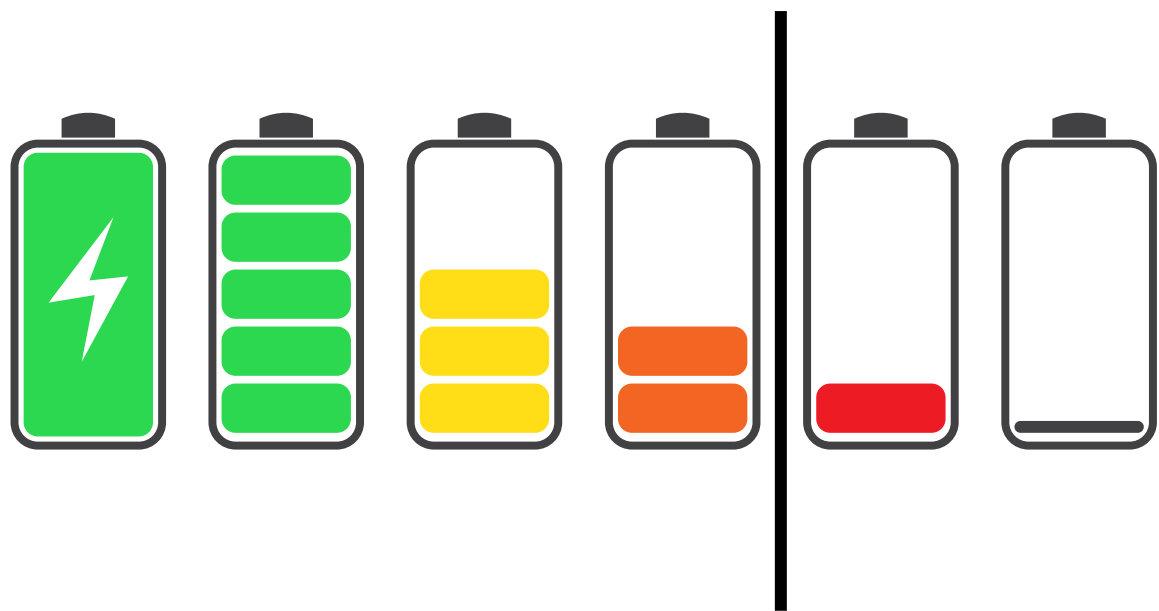
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Understanding Energy



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When The Workday Ends



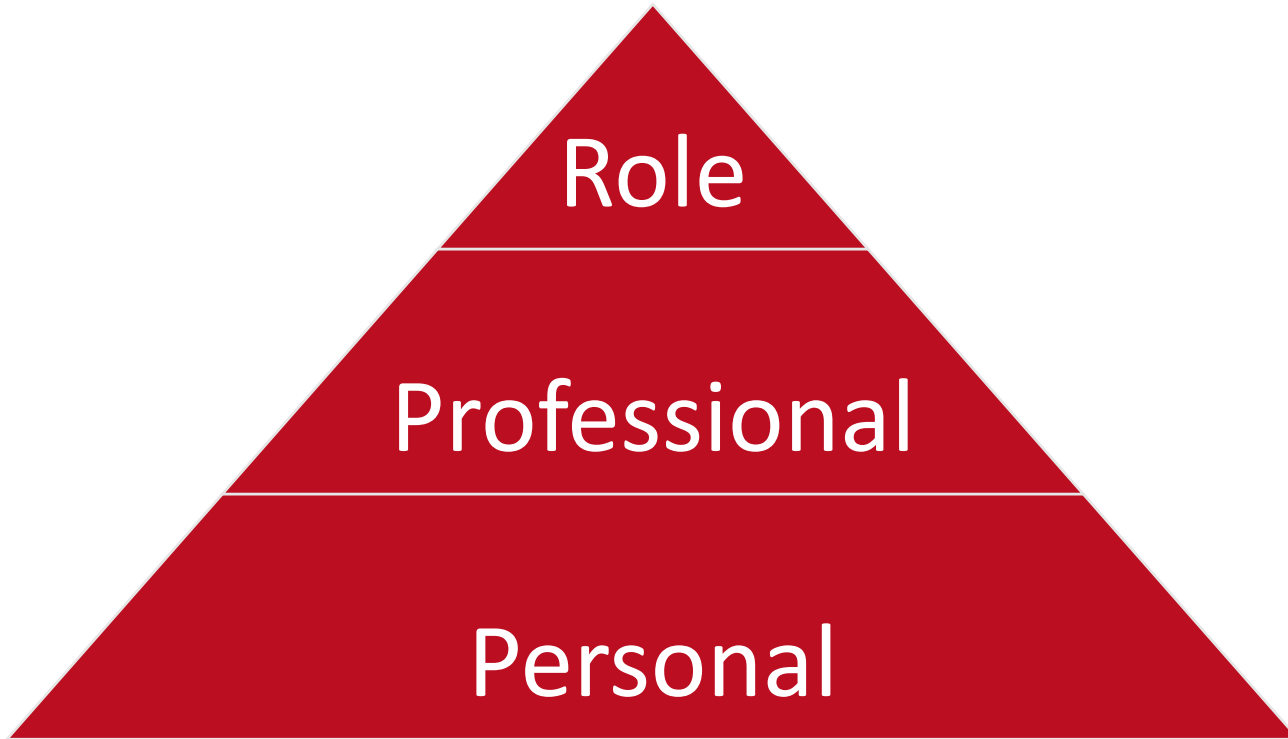
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When The Workday Ends



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A Modified Maslow-Style Hierarchy of Needs



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When Educators Can't Recharge After Work



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When Educators Can't Recharge After Work



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A Hard Stop To The Day

Teachers need leaders to model and communicate that it's OK to stop working at the end of the work day.

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Action Item #1

Help teachers set clear
boundaries on their work
hours

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Action Item #1

How to help teachers set boundaries:

- Schedule emails to go out during work hours
- Don't expect responsiveness at all hours
- Explicitly tell people to stop working at night

Parkinson's Law



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Parkinson's Law

“Work expands to fill the time available for its completion.”

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Parkinson's Law



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The Power of Stopping Points

Hard Stop → Better Prioritization

Open-ended → Poorer
Prioritization

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Action Item #1

Help teachers set clear
boundaries on their work
hours

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Progressively Poorer Prioritization

The longer and harder teachers work, the more effort they are putting into low-value work.

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The Pareto Principle



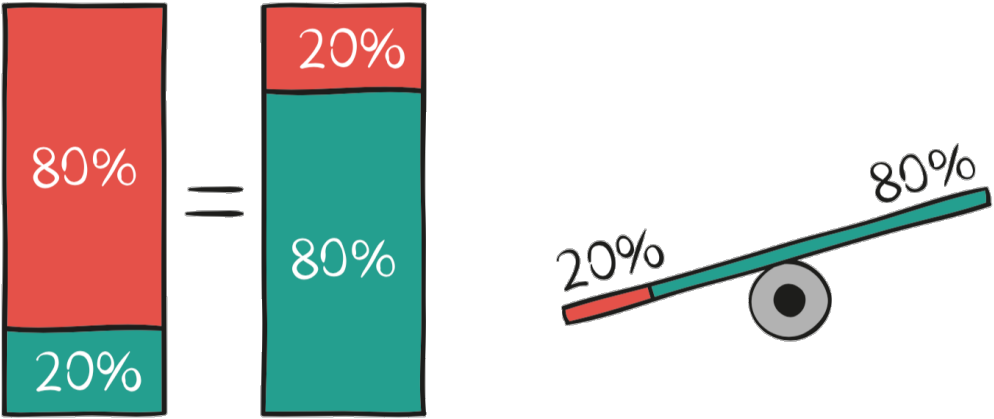
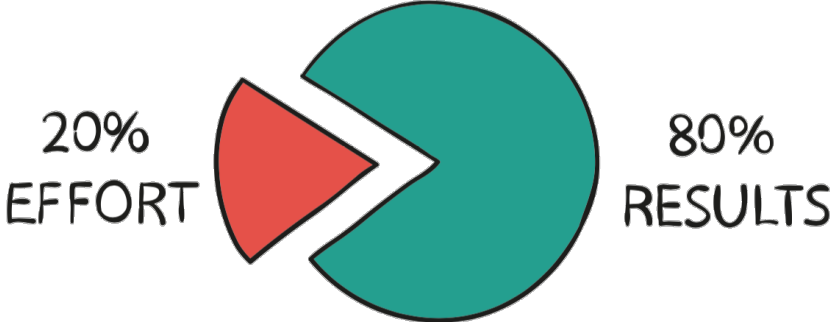
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The Pareto Principle



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The Pareto Principle



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Action Item #2

Identify high- and low-impact work, and eliminate 80%+ of the most time-consuming, low-value work

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Low-Value Work

- Duplicating effort within a team/role
- Reinventing the wheel
- Keeping students busy
- Grading for the sake of grading

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Action Item #2

How to help teachers eliminate 80%+ of the most time-consuming, low-value work:

- Encourage curation
- Encourage new divisions of labor across organization
- Eliminate anything that won't have a big impact on student learning

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Action Item #3

Endorse “good enough” and
stigmatize perfectionism

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Satisficing

*Herbert Simon,
decision-making &
administration
pioneer*



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Satisfice = Satisfy + Suffice

“Good enough is good
enough.”

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Guilt Over Unsolvable Problems

Often, we over-work from a sense of guilt about problems that we can't really solve.

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A Thought Experiment

If I could work 24/7, would I be able to fix everything?

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A Thought Experiment

If I could only work half as many hours, what would I focus on?

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Perfectionism



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Action Item #3

How to stigmatize perfectionism & help teachers realize that good enough is good enough:

- Discourage originality—encourage use of existing materials
- Encourage sharing of prep/materials across team & beyond
- Cut back on expectations for students to be working remotely

Preventing Teacher Burnout



An Action Plan

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Preventing Teacher Burnout



Who?

- Who is most at risk of burning out?
- What boundaries do they need to put in place?
- What low-impact work do they need to eliminate?
- What “good enough” alternatives could they adopt?