

# Time Management

*"Efficiency is doing things right; effectiveness is doing the right things."*  
Peter Drucker

Building on last month's topic—planning and prioritizing, this issue focuses on scheduling things that you've identified as priorities and planning your work week.

Last month we addressed developing goals with a focus on things that have a possibility for change. As a next step, you took that great big "To Do" list and ranked items as important and urgent/not so urgent. So now you have a To Do List of reasonable magnitude—a list of things that need to be accomplished in the short-term.

Set aside some planning time on a Friday. If you outline the next week before you leave the office, you're ready to begin on Monday morning! Take some highlighters of different colors - red, yellow, green (or select other colors that you will represent a priority order sequence to you). Or, if you prefer, instead of using colors, you can use an A-B-C categorization to prioritize tasks.

Next step - set your priorities. Use color codes for this purpose...something like this:

- Red: Truly urgent and important, must be done (completed)  
Monday or Tuesday

- Yellow: Important, has to be done in the next week, but could be accomplished by Wednesday or Thursday.
- Green: You must get around to doing it. Say, in the next 2 to 4 weeks.

Be realistic as you schedule your week. If too many things are marked in red...that's a sign you haven't set your priorities well. If you think carefully through your list, you may discover - surprise, surprise - that you have no reds at all!! What a liberating feeling!

On Monday, start off on the first red task. Never mind if it scares you to death. Or bores you to tears. Just think through what really must be done and do it. Then repeat the cycle. Once the reds are done, go on to the yellows. Forget about doing the greens with the reds and yellows. What do you do if new tasks land up at your desk during the week? Just allot them colors and add them to your list.

At the end of week one, set aside a few minutes to go through all the green items, those that need to get done in a month's time. Get rid of those that you can now see were not important anyway. You can often



## Idea of the Month

Teaching and Learning Collaborative  
Child & Family Studies Research Programs  
130 South 9th St, Suite 500  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
<http://jeffline.jefferson.edu/tlc>  
215.503.4019

cross off an amazingly large number of greens! Some greens may move up to become yellows or reds. Of those that remain, see if there are any that can be delegated to others. Or maybe you can use some sort of technology to deal with them, instead of spending your time on them. Underline such items on your greens list.

At the end of week two, take another look at the green items and cull the list like above, with one difference. If you have green items that have not either been crossed off or moved up to yellows or reds, either remove them or move them to a new "long-term category". If a task has not been moved somewhere in that timeframe, then it probably won't get done in the next month either, so don't retain it as a green.

Chunk your time into reasonable blocks—that may be half-hours, 45 minutes, or something else. Determine that you will finish a task either completely or partly in that time. And schedule a few minute break every two hours. These two actions will do wonders for your productivity—if you use them.

Keep working at this deceptively simple system for one month. You will be astonished at how much you managed to get done and how clear your head is!

Adapted from [TimeManagementX.com](http://TimeManagementX.com)

*Mary Muhlenhaupt*

Teaching and Learning Collaborative  
Idea of the Month—March 2009