

Teacher Time Savers

How to Keep From Drowning in Paperwork

1. Keep a classroom set of red pens. When it comes time to grade a paper, pass out a pen to each student and have them remove all other items from their desks. Let them grade their own papers. Make sure that they use only the red pens (this way they can't go back and change answers). Walk around and spot check. This saves time for you and gives students instant feedback.
2. Specify one day per week for students to do something that will allow you to grade papers. Give them library research, a guided Internet project or have them complete an activity related to the viewing of an educational film. While they work, you work as well.
3. Grade as you go. Require project presentations and grade them on the spot as the students present.
4. Give oral tests. Take the time to make a quality rubric and grade as you go. Add up and record the scores immediately.
5. Keep a filing cabinet sorted by class and a folder for each student. Pass out papers and have the students file them themselves. When you want student work samples, just pull the folder.
6. Don't grade everything. Have your students put everything that you do not take up in a three-ring binder. The binder will be organized according to sections that you specify (grammar, vocabulary, culture, misc.). Near the end of every grading period, take up the binder and choose a few items to check for a major grade. Students will never know which items you are going to check, so they will have to do everything you assign. Grade all of the notebooks in one or two days while your students complete a project or watch an educational film.
7. Bell work rules the world. It gives you time to take care of administrative tasks while your students do something productive. To keep bell work from creating more work for you when it is time to grade papers, have students keep the work in that three-ring binder to turn in all at once. Choose only a few to check. Put announcements, homework assignments and upcoming deadlines on the bell work so that you don't have to remember to talk about them.
8. Assign buddies for each student. When a student's buddy is absent, it is his/her responsibility to take notes and get extra photocopies for the buddy.
9. Use a classroom website to manage assignments and parent-teacher communication. Any time you create a new project or study guide, upload it to the website so that students who lose papers can access it at home.
10. Talk to your school's art teacher about assigning a student to help you make materials for your class. Keep a running wish list of pictures, cartoons and other artwork that you want for your classroom and have the art students make them.