



Steve Chapman Coaching

Work/Life Balance Coaching

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

Mention the words 'Work life balance' to many Senior Managers and it instantly conjures up feelings of uncertainty and fear:

'Um...do we have a problem here?'

'We'll have a staff uprising'

'It will cause unnecessary unrest'

'Staff will start making unrealistic demands'

Uh...We really haven't got time to be looking at this right now!

Are the staff not happy, why?

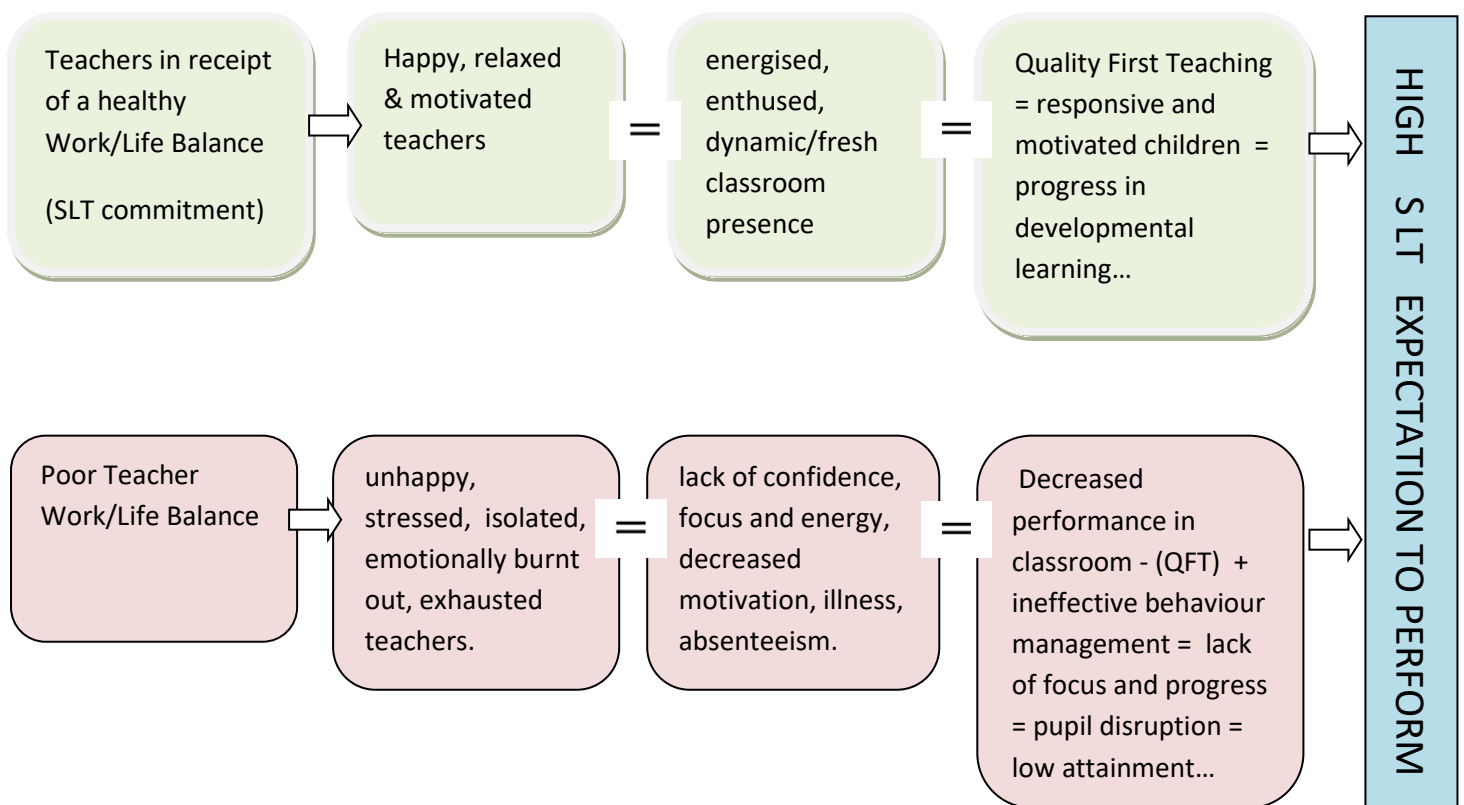
'People will stop working so hard and won't meet their targets!'

From traditionally being a taboo subject - never has it been of more importance in modern day education than it is now. With such high expectations set of both staff and pupils - time, resource and well-being has to be stretched. Teachers are working under increasing pressure driven by their

own desires to do a good job and by the expectations of others to perform and achieve within school, and with families and colleagues outside school. As a result, they often have a poor work-life balance and do not know how to improve it. If left un-addressed, it can cause issues around the individual and for the school - culminating in a 'domino effect' of problems.

It is now that we need to embrace Work/Life Balance in a more positive light. Not only do we need to acknowledge the importance of WLB agenda and treat it as a working document. We need to involve it in our daily practice as teachers and Senior Leaders and use it to our advantage.

IT'S QUITE SIMPLE REALLY:



As this flow chart shows, whichever model is followed; it still leads to the same outcome.

WORK/LIFE BALANCE (WLB) → WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S THE DEFINITION?

⇒ Well....there isn't one.

There is no generally accepted definition of WLB.

Individuals and employers tend to define it differently:

Employers usually define it in terms of the people management strategies, policies and practices they introduce in order to support their employees.

Employees cannot easily measure their employee's feelings, or build up detailed knowledge of the issues their staff deal with in their lives beyond work, so they tend to judge success in achieving WLB in terms of:

- improvements in organisational performance
- the success of well being programs.

They then equate these successes with the success in terms of helping people achieve WLB.

They do not create WLB for people; people do that for themselves. This factor is often overlooked.

As a result of these different perceptions it is very easy to talk cross purposes about WLB - often getting work/life balance and well-being mixed up.

It is very difficult to ascertain whether an individual has mastered a healthy work/life balance. Traditional performance management practices do not address this. However, it is possible to recognise signs that could indicate smouldering issues:

Common signs of a poor Work/Life Balance can include:

- frequent instances of absenteeism.
- working long hours in school.
- increased volatility of behaviour (mood swings).
- poor standards of performance.
- high turnover of staff.

- lack of commitment, motivation and enthusiasm.
- tasks not complete on time.
- late for meetings.

These have a huge, direct and negative impact on the working environment, but mostly has a direct impact on the lives and the performance of the pupils.

THE SLT INVOLEMENT:

The governing body has a statutory responsibility to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.

Every school should have in place a Work/Life Balance directive which should be shared with staff and reviewed annually (click here for an example, or find attached). Teacher workload is the responsibility of the CEO, Head teacher and Senior Leadership team. It is essential, in order to achieve Work/Life Balance for Teachers, that the Work/Life Balance directive is an open working document that has regular referral in the School Development Plan and forms parts of INSET and/or staff meetings. The Work/Life Balance program will be far more effective if the management have an open and honest dialogue when discussing workload. It is not in the remit of this program for the coach to get personally involved with the internal politics of the school system.

Teaching staff in particular are adversely affected by WLB. After having the WLB policy shared with them it is normally up to the individuals to act upon their own Work/Life Balance; this is where the difficulty lies.

WLB is a very personal thing to each individual. Management of this takes a great deal of skill, expertise, time and discipline. Often staff feel overwhelmed and don't know how to deal with maintaining a Work/Life Balance which then produces a 'cause and effect' syndrome; the consequences of which then start to appear in daily school life...

.....this is where Work/Life Balance Coaching can help.

WILL IT WORK?

Yes, there will be a positive and noticeable effect. But the degree of success will be dependent on the involvement and support of the SLT.

In essence:



Suggested impact of the program if the teacher works individually on Work/Life Balance.



Impact if the Teacher works alongside the support of friends and family.



Likely impact if the teacher works on Work/Life Balance with friends/family and the SLT.



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THE WORK/LIFE BALANCE PROGRAM

The Work/Life Balance program has been designed essentially for one overall outcome -> to increase the efficiency of the teaching staff in your school.

Essentially, the program offers coaching models, techniques and methodologies to empower individuals to take responsibility for their own Work/Life balance with a view of increasing their overall effectiveness and satisfaction in the workplace.

AREAS COVERED IN THE WORKGROUPS INCLUDE:

- Developing skills to prioritise and manage workload.
- Discussing working models to control fears, stresses and worries.
- Improving time management skills and productivity.
- Improving confidence to speak up about important issues.

- Overcoming setbacks and how to turn it into a 'positive'.
- Personal goal setting.
- Developing a positive balance between home life and work.
- Identifying what success will look like.
- Challenging the feelings of guilt.

SESSION FEATURES

A typical session will run between 45- 60 mins and will be totally interactive including equal participation from all group members. There will be no 'death by PowerPoint'.

As coaching is a developmental process, it is recommended that the work groups should be delivered over 3- 6 sessions.

As the workgroups are coaching based sessions the session structure will be continuously reflective with cognitive exercises, deep thinking and questioning through conjecture.

We will question stereotypes and traditional ways of thinking and how these could be helpful or unhelpful to sustaining a WLB.

We will discuss the ideology of being busy vs. being effective.

The sessions will be directed by the coach, but participants will be expected to engage in peer to peer coaching and some mentoring in order to help develop confidence towards achieving a sustained Work/Life Balance.

Coaching will not just be confined to the sessions - Participants will be encouraged to continuously reflect outside the sessions by completing daily logs and manageable tasks within agreed time-scales. During the final sessions the participants will set up their own Work/Life Balance plan and complete an 'impact' task which measures the impact of the sessions and how they feel they have made progress.



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