

Retirement Plan? What Plan? Do I need a Plan?

Tim Jurd

Preamble

Well you've gone through the intricate process of separating from the Department and have done all that financial planning. Now you're safe and secure. I guess you can settle in for some 'me' time with long days sitting by the water or wandering historic places and far flung parts of the globe? Well maybe.

I am nearly four years into retirement and had no plan, but I felt certain that I longed for and deserved a break from the routine of long days as a principal. I was only a boss for five years and many of my colleagues have put in 10, 15 and 25 years or more at the 'helm'. I cannot praise them enough, but I was ready to step away from the job, yet I still felt the need to be busy.

A principal once said to me that he made a sign for his door that simply said 'SOMEBODY' because he knew that every time he heard "Somebody should do something about that!" he would end up with another job. I was ready to drop the 'somebody' tag. Retirement would change all that.

First things first

Firstly, education is your strong field, so work a casual day or two in the first six months to ensure you maintain your DEC number, username and email contact. Be careful if you take on the task of temporary teaching as you may find the role includes the necessities of lesson prep, assessment and reporting – and these may be activities that will mar your relaxation in retirement as they may be too much like 'principal work'.

Be sure to maintain your currency with the Institute of Teachers so that you don't have to go through any labyrinthine paths to maintain (or attain) your accreditation.

You are entitled to a NSW Government Seniors Card so accept the wealth of discounts on offer. I have a half price pool membership and movies are heavily discounted.

Your family should come first as they will want to be reacquainted with you after years of missing your physical and mental presence. Look after them with outings and holidays and put that vast retirement stipend to some good use.

Health

Now attend to your needs and health comes first. Walk every day, preferably with a partner but by yourself is fine. Use that step counter app on your phone to set targets. If you have a dog then the walk can be much more diverting. I like to swim as lap swimming makes me feel less overweight and my dodgy back appreciates the buoyancy. The health benefits of swimming are enormous and as my fitness built I did a scuba course and fulfilled another of my bucket list goals.

Go to the doctor, physiotherapist etc when required. You now have the time. Don't forget to use that bowel screening kit in the drawer in the bathroom that you kept putting off.

Hobbies

Indulge your interests and hobbies. My interest is surf lifesaving and retirement gave me the opportunity to increase my participation. Summer weekends are a chance to patrol on the beach. When not on patrol, I run training squads, teach nippers CPR and assess candidates for Bronze Medallion. Much of the time it is just like being a teacher, but in a unique environment.

I love football (soccer). My wife and I are members of Sydney FC. Going to games and watching matches on TV is very relaxing.

When we have time we like the theatre – especially the Sydney Theatre Company at The Wharf (but please note that The Wharf is currently under development until 2020 so you'll need to find out where the STC performances are being held until then). Go to the matinees and you'll feel part of the demographic.

I am also part of a 'wine appreciation' group of friends who take it in turns to host a wine and cheese night to sample fine wines and talk about anything and everything. It helps that we are all in walking distance and our kids went to the same school, and that we share similar values especially about public education.

Volunteering

As a retired principal you and your skills will be in demand.

Now you have a chance to help your community – and how you do that depends on your interests. Is there a local wetland conservation group? Or perhaps a local politically active group?

I was asked to join the Board of Management of a local not-for-profit organisation and this has been quite demanding. The group relies on grants mainly from FACS (Family and Community Services) and they employ youth and social workers to assist young people and their families in the Inner West. It is a rewarding but very demanding job and I have ended up the Treasurer. Again, the project management skills you developed as a principal come in very handy.

Work in schools

Casual teaching was not on my radar when I retired. I wasn't keen to go back to teaching in the classroom after principalship but I was fortunate that close friends contacted me with offers to do a few days consulting. One was to work on policy development in head office and another was to do a sport review in a high school. These were really interesting and diverting tasks which kept me alive with DEC as a casual.

My daughter had attended our local school and I was good friends with the Principal who asked me to be Presiding Officer for their Trial HSC and HSC exams. The long term PO had just retired and I agreed. I thoroughly enjoyed it and found it a great experience working with students, invigilators and teachers.

Soon after this I was contacted by the Principal at a nearby senior high school to do two days per week supervising their Senior Study Centre. As a large senior high school they had a considerable number of students with free lessons and my role was to manage the study rooms. I had the opportunity to do tutoring, goal setting and mostly 'crowd control'. Overall it was great fun. I made good friends and became familiar with life in the staffroom again. Another bonus was that the commute was a short tram ride from home.

Eighteen months after this, the Principal at my local school informed me that there was a position two days per week supporting numeracy as the numeracy teacher was retiring. I didn't want too many days so I relinquished my Study Centre position and accepted this one. I was sad to leave the senior high and apologised to the Principal, but I wasn't ready to sign a contract for more than two days per week. Here I was moving from seniors to years 7, 8 and 9 students who were numeracy challenged and I was part of a faculty again. I must admit to being on a steep learning curve but it is thoroughly enjoyable. By the way, the walk to school is only 300 metres from my house (yes, a very short stroll each day).

Please note that in both positions I teach kids, something I love to do but without the rigid admin of my classroom colleagues. I have been given the opportunity to design my approach to suit broad role statements, allowing some autonomy and flexibility, and this has made the jobs much more enjoyable and I don't take home any 'baggage'.

Recently the Principal presented me with a 40 year service certificate. I have presented many certificates myself but I had never presented a 40 year award. I was



as proud as a kindergarten kid on assembly.

So working two days a week left me a five day long weekend to enjoy? Not for long, as I will explain below.

Tertiary Mentoring

This is highly recommended. I had friends (principals, deputies) who were employed as Tertiary Mentors for the Faculty of Education at Sydney University. Although all universities employ mentors, it was Sydney Uni that I'd had the most contact with as a DP and Principal. I also urge readers to look at [the excellent article by Ian Paterson](#) on this website about the process of Tertiary Mentoring, as I often seek advice from Ian about the best way to handle tricky situations.

Tertiary Mentoring involves supporting teacher education students in their Professional Experience Practicums. We now are given the chance to go with trainees into the classroom and help them become the wonderful educators that we, as principals, want in our schools.

Tertiary Mentors go to many schools and we are not restricted to public schools so we 'see how the other half lives'. We have student placements in Catholic schools, private schools and specialist schools. Our job is fabulous, talking to new recruits about the standards and about their career as a teacher. It is incredibly rewarding.

I was asked to give the introductory lecture on child protection policy for two years and then was asked to teach Study 1 to Master of Teaching students for a semester whilst the allocated teacher was on sabbatical. This was definitely an honour, but stepping in at the last minute meant hours and hours of reading academic papers, preparation and then came the marking (my class of 25 did four assignments each of 2000 words, and all marking was online). I have much more respect for the staff at the university now. I valued the experience but declined the offer to continue the following semester.

Back to Tertiary Mentoring though – it is great. Don't do it if you want to be rich as the pay is modest. They are always looking for mentors and I have found many of my retiring friends take it on. The work is intermittent and you structure your own hours. Again read Ian's article because it is most informative.

Conclusion

I am often asked about retirement and I think "What retirement?". With my paid work and voluntary roles I often fill five days easily.

I still have a reasonably busy and full diary but now I feel I am in control of what is entered.

Best wishes and enjoy your non-stop retirement journey.

Contributor details

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