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# talk2learn highlights

Inspiring leaders;  
improving children's lives

Issue 5b

In case you missed it...

Recent highlights from NCSL in Dialogue, talk2learn's  
online community for national education debate

Also available as a podcast

## Life in the day

**Investigating the reality of working life for today's headteachers, the College's Wellbeing project aims to explore, among other things, what headteachers do to maintain a sound work-life balance while managing the day-to-day challenges of the job.**

In talk2learn's debate on the subject, nursery headteacher Joanne O'Raw said most people probably recognised that headship demanded something special, beyond the basic job description and set hours.

*"I don't suppose you would want to be a head unless you were prepared to go that extra mile but being the head you can create the type of climate you would like to work in."*

added Iain Gilmour, a new primary headteacher. Her own tactics for a sound work-life balance included cycling to work – "it gives me time to wake up and wind down. It also means I have to ration the work I bring home so I don't work all night."

Close scrutiny of how headteachers and leadership teams actually use their time is a good way to assess effectiveness, as well as gauge whether the work-life balance is right, said primary headteacher Darra McFadyen.

Stephen Webb, headteacher of a large primary school, was surprised to find that taking on work of a different kind had acted as a pressure valve for the relentlessness of running a school.

"Bizarrely, I find the work as a consultant has had a positively invigorating impact and hence has helped to diffuse the demands of full-time headship," he said.

A headteacher who has a healthy work-life balance also acts as a role-model for staff – something that many contributors felt was important.



*"I definitely have a life outside school and encourage my staff to have the same,"*

said Dave Vero, who leads a small rural first school. "It is great to see the difference in them when they realise they don't have to work till 5pm just because they always have done."

It also helps to have the backing of governors, added Iain Gilmour, a new headteacher.

"The governors agreed with my request to move meetings from a 6pm start time to 4pm.

*"One parent-governor saw me walking home one day at 4pm and said it was great to see me showing people that you don't have to work all hours."*

**If you are not yet a member of talk2learn and would like to join, more information is available at [www.ncsl.org.uk/onlinecommunities](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/onlinecommunities)**