



Teacher Burnout

What Helps(and What to Stop Doing)

Erin Bauer | Compass Partners in Learning

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Erin Bauer

Compass Partners in Learning
A Division of BHSSC

- Former elementary teacher and administrator
- Now focused on supporting educators, strengthening staff, and making the work feel more manageable
- Loves helping people grow
- Outside of work, you can usually find me with my family, at one of my daughters' activities, listening to a podcast, doing yoga, online shopping, or watching a documentary or reality TV show



Purpose + Pressure

An opening activity that begins with meaning before naming the load.

STEP 1

Name what we love and want to protect.

STEP 2

Name the pressure that makes it harder.

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Start with PURPOSE

Begin by naming what educators love and want to protect.

At your table:

What do you genuinely love about this work?

What moments remind you it matters?

What do students, families, or colleagues give you?

2 minutes

Use the positive sticky-note color.
One idea per note. Big and small moments count.

This is the work we want to protect.

Then name the PRESSURE

Make the invisible load visible—without blame or problem-solving yet.

1 minute

We are not naming people or placing blame.

We are noticing what makes it harder to stay connected to purpose.

Second color:

What do educators carry?

Unfinished tasks. Emotional weight. Paperwork. Worries. Follow-up. Things we are trying not to forget.

Meaningful work can still be heavy work.





Choose One of Each

Use the notes to connect purpose, pressure, and today's focus.

Purpose note

One thing educators love and want to protect

Pressure note

One thing that makes it harder to stay connected to purpose

Burnout does not usually happen because educators stop caring.

It often happens because they care deeply and carry too much, for too long.

The data points to conditions — not character.

49

hours/week
teachers reported
working on
average in 2025

+10

hours beyond the
average
contracted
workweek

46%

said work made
them too tired for
private life

16%

intended to leave
their jobs in 2025



If the workday is the **problem**,
the **support** has to show up
inside the workday.

Name It Without Blame

**Blame gives us someone to point at.
It does **not** give us a path forward.**

Be honest

Name what is not working.

Be curious

Look for patterns and pressures.

Be practical

Find something that can improve.

Is It Stress—or Is It Burnout?

Stress can be intense and temporary. Burnout tends to linger.

Stress often sounds like...

"I have too much to do."

"I need to get through this week."

"I feel overwhelmed, but I still feel like myself."

Stress usually improves when the pressure eases and you recover.

Burnout may sound like...

"I do not have anything left."

"I am starting not to care."

"Nothing I do seems to make a difference."

Burnout is a signal that something needs attention.

Burnout is what happens when the **same stressors remain unresolved.**



Burnout Shows Up Before We Name It

Your early warning signs are useful information.

Body

tired
headaches
poor sleep

Emotions

irritable
numb
anxious

Thinking

foggy
replaying
scattered

Work

cynical
avoiding
less patient

Which sign tends to show up first for you?



What Is Your Burnout Pattern?

Overworking

- *stay later
- *take more home

Overthinking

- *replay
- *worry
- *second guess

Over-functioning

solve it for everyone

Withdrawing

- *avoid
- *isolate
- *shut down

Perfecting

make everything polished

Awareness creates a pause.



Transition work has a unique kind of load.

It is not just instruction.

It is coordination, relationships, compliance, and future planning — often all at once.

Coordination	students, families, employers, agencies, schools
Emotional labor	hope, frustration, independence, fear, big decisions
Compliance	timelines, documentation, IEP details, follow-through
Ambiguity	student goals, agency capacity, job-site realities

How do we protect meaningful work without making it unsustainable?

Change the Conditions

Burnout does not improve just because people try harder. It improves when the work becomes clearer, lighter, and more supported.

The most useful support reduces friction where the work actually happens.



You Cannot Control Everything. But You Can Stop Carrying Everything

Control

- Your effort level
- When you ask for help
- What you reuse
- How quickly you respond
- How you talk to yourself

Influence

- Team routines
- Shared expectations
- How work is divided
- Meeting usefulness
- Communication clarity

Concern

- Staffing shortages
- State requirements
- District decisions
- Other people's reactions
- Decisions already made

Which concern are you emotionally carrying as if it belongs in your control circle?



Lighten the Work Behind the Work

Planning, remembering, deciding, organizing, following up—and carrying it all in your head.

Start with what exists

Reuse lessons, templates, emails, and checklists.

Decide once

Create routines for repeated decisions.

Capture loose ends

Use one trusted place for reminders.

Ask earlier

Do not wait until it becomes urgent.

Clarify ownership

Caring does not mean owning every piece.



Burnout grows when demands outrun resources.

Sustainability is not about lowering care. It is about changing the equation.

DEMANDS

workload • urgency • student needs •
unclear priorities • extra initiatives



RESOURCES

time • autonomy • support • clarity •
belonging • tools

Reduce avoidable demands and **increase** meaningful resources.

Frame: Job Demands–Resources model; teacher burnout research links high demands and limited resources to exhaustion.

**Caring
Does
Not
Mean
Carrying
Everything**

Support people **without taking away** their ownership—or **sacrificing** all your energy.

- What am I doing for someone that they could do with support?
- What am I holding because it feels faster to do it myself?
- Where can I ask for shared ownership?

You can care deeply and still not carry every part.

Boundaries Can Sound Like This

A boundary is clarity about what you can realistically give.

"I can do that, but I need help deciding what moves down the list."

"I can give this 20 minutes today. Will that meet the need?"

"Can you clarify what is required and what is optional?"

"I want to help, but I cannot be the person who owns this."

"I will look at this during my planning time tomorrow."

Practice the sentence before you need it.



Recovery During the Workday

Take three quiet minutes before a hard email

Finish one task before opening another

Talk with someone who helps you feel grounded

Eat without working for part of lunch

Walk one hallway before the next demand

Leave one nonessential task unfinished on purpose

Sometimes your **nervous system** just **needs a few minutes** without another demand.



Stay connected to the work.

Burnout narrows your view.
Purpose widens it again.

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Burnout often tells us we should handle it alone. That is usually a lie.

- Ask for a resource
- Ask someone to think through a situation
- Name what you need specifically
- Share the emotional load with a safe person
- Notice who helps you feel more capable



**Do Not
Isolate
When
Work
Gets
Hard**

Your Work Is Bigger Than Your To-Do List

**Burnout makes work heavy.
Purpose helps you remember what matters.**

Remember

A student who grew
because of you

Notice

A family who felt
supported

Keep

One piece of
evidence that your
work matters

Impact is not always measurable on the day you make it.

My Burnout Protection Plan

Choose one thing that gives you more energy, clarity, or breathing room.

I notice burnout beginning when...

one early warning sign

I will protect my energy by...

one boundary or routine

I will stop...

one unnecessary habit or expectation

I will ask...

one person for specific support

I want to remember...

one reason my work matters



Leave With One Small Next Step

Small enough to start. Meaningful enough to matter.

For the next 30 days, I will _____
so I have more _____ and less _____.

STOP

One habit that
drains energy

SIMPLIFY

One repeated task or
decision

ASK

One person for
support



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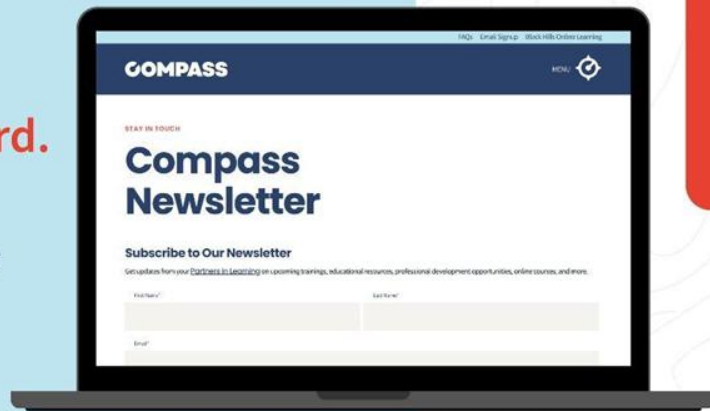
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