

The Special Education Workload Audit

ELEVATETHENORM.COM

Four facts about the job, not judgements about you. Fill it in, then take the two biggest gaps to the person who can change them. Grades 6–12. Free, no email required.

Before you write anything. Counts and dates only — never a student's name or initials. Item 2 can identify a student with no name on it at all, because a dated meeting is traceable, which is why it is a count per week rather than a list. Keep this sheet somewhere that is yours: a district device is not a private place to write that you are not coping.

1 • The caseload number, and where it came from

Students on your caseload today	
Students on it in August	
Who set the number, and what rule did they use?	

If nobody in the building can name the rule the number came from, that is itself the finding — write “no stated rule” and move on.

2 • Compliance events per week, next 60 days

Wk 1	Wk 2	Wk 3	Wk 4	Wk 5	Wk 6	Wk 7	Wk 8

A count per week — meetings, evaluations, reviews. Not the total: whether the load is spread, or stacked into two weeks that were always going to break.

3 • Co-planning time: scheduled versus actual

Co-teacher / class period	Minutes per week on the schedule	Minutes you actually got last month

4 • Unfilled positions, and whose work landed where

What is vacant right now	
What is covered provisionally	
Which pieces of that came to you	

Five minutes, not twenty? Do items 1 and 3 only. They are the pair most likely to produce a change.

What the four answers mean together

- **Item 1 with no stated rule.** The caseload is a habit rather than a decision. Ask for the criterion to be written down, not for your own number to be lowered.
- **Item 2 stacked into two weeks.** This is a scheduling problem with a scheduling fix. The ask is redistribution of dates, not fewer obligations.
- **Item 3 with a large gap.** Scheduled minus actual is the request, and it is somebody's signature rather than your organisation. Co-planning time was discussed almost entirely as a question of administrative support in the research.
- **Item 4 with work that landed on you.** An unfilled position is a labour market, not a favour you volunteered for. Name what moved and when.

Where it goes

1. Your special education coordinator or department chair first, then whoever builds the master schedule.
2. Open it as a question rather than a case: *"here is what I am carrying — can we look at whether this is the intended distribution?"* That lands very differently from a document handed over in silence.
3. Ask for the criterion rather than the favour. A load lightened by private arrangement creates a fairness problem down the hall.
4. **If you are the only special educator in your building** — common in small secondary schools — there is no department to take this to. Go to the district's special education director, and sideways to a counterpart at another school or your state's technical assistance center. Do not skip the step because the usual person does not exist.
5. Expect "not this year" on some of it. A written record of a load and a dated request is what makes a pattern visible later.

This is not a screening instrument and it returns no score. Nothing on this sheet can tell you whether you are burned out. Burnout is an occupational condition, and there is no validated cutoff that turns a set of numbers into a finding about a person. If what you are carrying has stopped being about the job — if it follows you home, into the weekend, into how you feel about yourself — that is a conversation with your doctor or a counsellor, not with a worksheet.

Keep this separate from compliance itself. This is a record of workload, not a log of deadlines you expect to be missed. If you believe a legal deadline is about to be blown, that goes to your coordinator today, on its own, in writing.

One thing this sheet is not about

It is not about the students. A caseload is a staffing decision, a compliance calendar is a federal statute, an unfilled position is a labour market and a co-teaching structure is a master schedule. Every load on this page came from an adult decision, and a student with an IEP is who those decisions exist to serve.

From **Special Education Teacher Burnout: The Three Loads That Are Not on the General List** at ElevateTheNorm.com. Free to print, copy and adapt. No email address required. Grades 6–12.