

The Teacher Burnout Job Check

This is a job description, not a self-assessment. Write sentences. There is nothing here to add up and nothing to compare yourself against.

1. Load

What is on my plate this year that was not on it last year?

2. Control

Which of those did I choose?

3. Recovery

In a normal week, when am I off the clock and actually off?

4. Support

Who do I ask when something goes wrong, and did I ask them this month?

5. Direction

Is this heavier, lighter, or about the same as three months ago?

Three rules that make this different from a quiz. No scale and no total — a cut-off you invent at the kitchen table is still an invented cut-off, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory's own publisher deleted its thresholds in 2016 for having no diagnostic validity. **No names** — not a student's, not a colleague's. A sheet with a student's name on it stops being private reflection and becomes a record about a child. **Paper only** — a work device is not a private place to write that you are not coping.

Five minutes and no more? Answer question 5 on its own. Direction is the single most useful line on this sheet, and it is the honest version of what a score was pretending to give you.

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What the five answers are for

Read them together as a description of a position, not a verdict on a person. You are looking for two things and neither of them is a number.

1. **One sentence about the job.** Not about you. “Three preps, two duties, no planning period on A days, and it has been getting heavier since August” is a sentence somebody can act on.
2. **One name.** The person who could change one item on the list — usually whoever builds the schedule or assigns the duties.

Taking it somewhere

- **Bring one item, not the sheet.** A completed reflection sheet handed across a desk reads as the opening of a grievance. Bring the sentence and one request, as a question.
- **Question 4 is the one that most often has a fixable answer.** Knowing who to ask is learnable. But a coaching cycle offered in place of removing an item from question 1 is not an answer to question 1.
- **If there is nobody** — you are the only person teaching your course, the building is between principals — write the item down anyway. A written description of the job is what every later conversation needs, including one about whether to stay.

If you are an administrator

- **Never attach a threshold to this.** “Three or more, refer for follow-up” invents exactly the kind of cut-off the MBI’s authors withdrew in 2016 — with no normative sample behind it, attached to somebody’s employment.
- **Never collect them.** The sheet is honest because nobody reads it. A collected sheet is also a record, and records can be requested.
- **There is a version that works:** ask the five questions of a *role* rather than a person, in August, before anybody is in it. That is a scheduling conversation.

This is not a screening instrument and it returns no score. There is no validated cut-off in this literature for a person to cross, which is why nothing on page 1 adds up to anything. It cannot tell you whether you have burnout, and it is not a substitute for anyone’s professional judgement.

When the answer is a person, not a sheet. “Is this job too heavy?” is answered by describing the job. “Am I all right?” is a different question. If something is wrong in a way a schedule change would not touch, that is a conversation with your doctor or a counselor — someone who can ask you a follow-up question. Your employer’s employee assistance program is free and confidential, and 988 is available to anyone in emotional distress, not only in a crisis.