

Sadie Sadler
May 2026
Education Studies Senior Seminar Final Paper

From Yapping to Yoga: How Teachers Experience and Limit Burnout - Excerpts

Themes/RQs	Codes	Description
Why Teachers Experience Burnout	Workload and time expenditure	Had a heavy workload and too many demands. Needed to spend a lot of time outside of school hours to do school work.
	Administration	Faced conflict between teachers' and administrators' priorities. Felt unsupported by administration.
	Families	Faced anger and conflict with students' families. Felt disrespected or unappreciated.
	Student misbehavior or apathy	Faced student entitlement, rowdiness, or a lack of engagement. Had to spend a lot of class time managing behavior.
	Limited free time	Had back to back classes with no break. Had little free time during the school day.
	Emotional expenditure	Spent a lot of mental energy on students and the institution. Did not feel valued in return. Felt mental weight.

Pandemic Faced challenges because of the impact on classroom instruction and the nature of education. Had to redo all lesson plans and learn how to teach online in a short period of time.

How Teachers Experience Burnout Tired, exhausted Felt extreme tiredness, physical and mental exhaustion, or a lack of energy. Felt depleted, deflated, or fatigued.

Overwhelm, stress Felt overwhelmed or stressed because of the high demands or emotional toll.

Trouble sleeping Got less sleep or had trouble sleeping. Found it harder to fall and stay asleep.

Irritable, impatient Was more irritable and had a greater lack of patience with people inside and outside of school.

Self-doubt Had self-doubt or regret about certain actions or words. Questioned their own teaching ability.

Cynicism, dread Thought that nothing makes teaching worth it, nothing will get better. Dreaded going to school. Had a constant negative mindset.

Wanting to leave teaching Felt they no longer wanted to be classroom teaching.

How Teachers Respond to Burnout Time and curriculum management Figured out how to best structure their time and curriculum. Planned ahead and did not procrastinate.

Separate work and home	Set boundaries between work and non-work life. Did not do work after leaving the school building or did not work in their house and instead went elsewhere.
Talk with colleagues	Found comfort in conversing with colleagues who offered empathy and solutions. Minimized feeling alone.
Activities with others	Invested time in friendships and partners and did activities together outside of school.
Individual activities	Did individual activities and engaged in their hobbies.
Self Reminders	Had certain self reminders or ways of thinking and personal mottos.
More rest and sleep	Took a break during the school day or after returning home. Prioritized sleep.
Physical exercise	Engaged in physical exercise and had a consistent, established routine.

From this study, I learned that many teachers experience burnout because of the heavy workload that forces them to do work outside of school hours. This causes teachers to feel overwhelmed and stressed. To mitigate the effect of a heavy workload on my own mental and physical health, I must set boundaries and separate work and non-work. I also must prioritize rest

and sleep when possible so that the lack of free time I have during the school day does not make me extremely tired and exhausted. As many participants advised me, it is okay to say no. I should not overload myself with duties, especially as a new, young teacher with a lot of energy and determination.

I also learned that the demands and behaviors of various people within the school community—administration, students, and students’ families—can contribute to burnout. To balance out negative experiences and interactions with these people, I should build camaraderie and find support from colleagues. Participants advised me to find a school in which I can trust and collaborate with colleagues, rather than compete. I must also prioritize spending time with friends outside of school and doing fun activities together. Friendships will be very important to maintaining my mental health.

In addition, the mental weight and emotional expenditure spent on students and the school can lead to burnout. Deep care can lead to deep struggle and heartbreak, especially when a teacher does not feel valued in return. To avoid or mitigate feelings of self-doubt, cynicism, dread, or attrition, I must maintain the mindset that “teacher” is not my whole identity. I must remember to find joy and purpose in teaching *and* in my personal life outside of school. I should prioritize “me time” and do activities that restore energy and make me happy. Hobbies and physical exercise are just as important as lesson planning and grading.

This study revealed that there are many ways teachers experience and respond to burnout. There is no single, universal story about teacher burnout, nor is there a “one size fits all” solution. Each participant had a slightly varied way of defining burnout. Many participants had very similar experiences and feelings, such as a heavy workload, limited free time, or emotional exhaustion, but because they think about burnout differently, their answer to the question “do you experience burnout?” was different. This study also revealed that burnout can happen among seasoned teachers in a private school with an abundance of funding and resources. Burnout is not limited to new teachers or teachers in public, under-funded schools.

Teachers are resilient. They develop ways to manage stress and exhaustion and maintain their physical and mental health. Despite burnout, they continue to put their heart and soul into nurturing and educating the next generation of humans. But addressing teacher burnout is not the individual responsibility of teachers. They operate in various larger systems that can tear teachers down and test their limits. Teacher burnout must be addressed by teachers, students, students’ families, administrators, *and* policy makers. Teachers deserve more respect, lighter workloads, higher pay, and greater decision-making power.

This study was very meaningful for me personally. It was so valuable to hear my former teachers’ stories and advice. They are the reason why I am pursuing a career in education. I will certainly keep this study in my mind as I go on to become a classroom teacher so I can avoid and mitigate burnout and retain my passion for teaching.