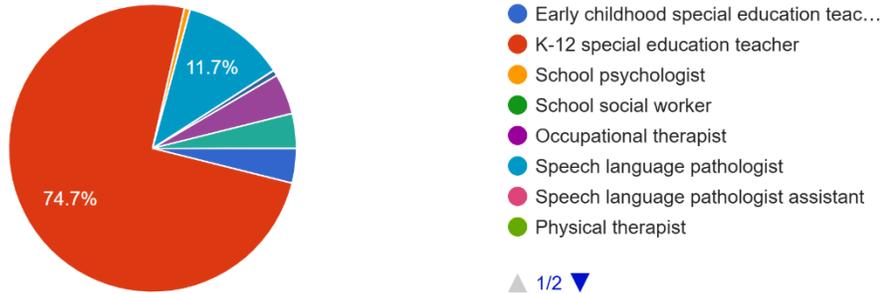


NDU SPED Collective Retention Rubric Survey Responses

What is your current assignment? Choose the assignment that you have for the majority of the school day.

154 responses



Location

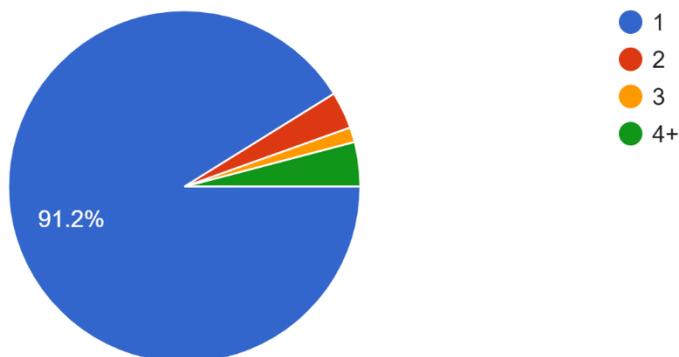
What special education unit do you work for?

148 responses



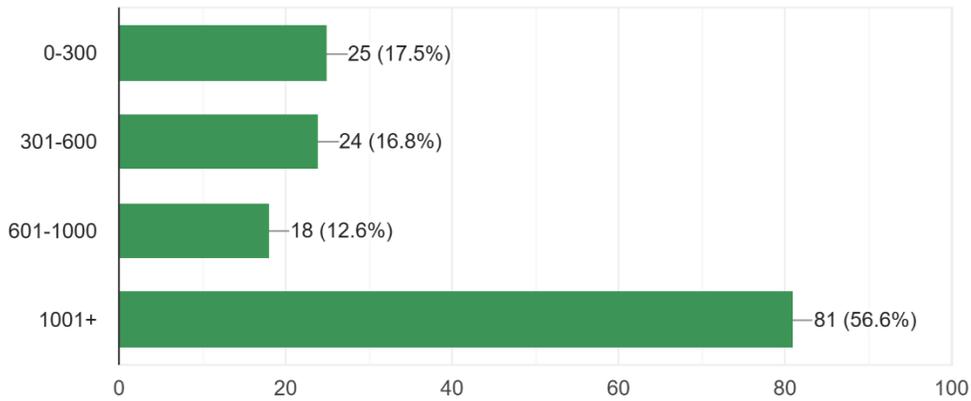
In your current role, how many different school districts do you serve

147 responses



What is the enrollment of the district(s) you serve? Select all that apply

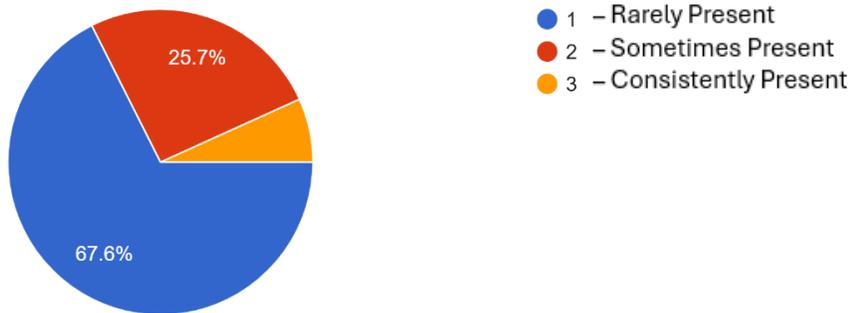
143 responses



Domain 1: Paperwork Requirements and Supports

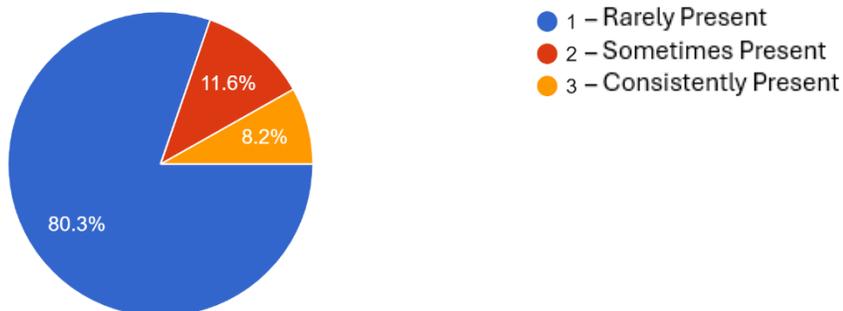
My district provides time during the duty day (outside of prep) for due process paperwork.

148 responses



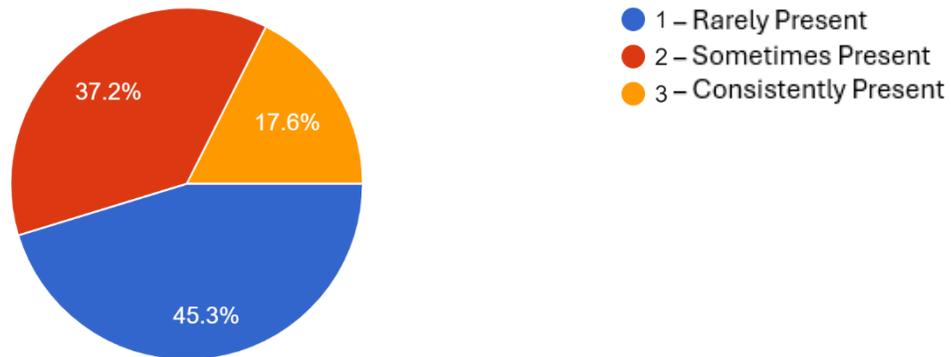
If IEP/evaluation meetings occur outside the duty day or during prep, I receive compensation or additional support.

147 responses



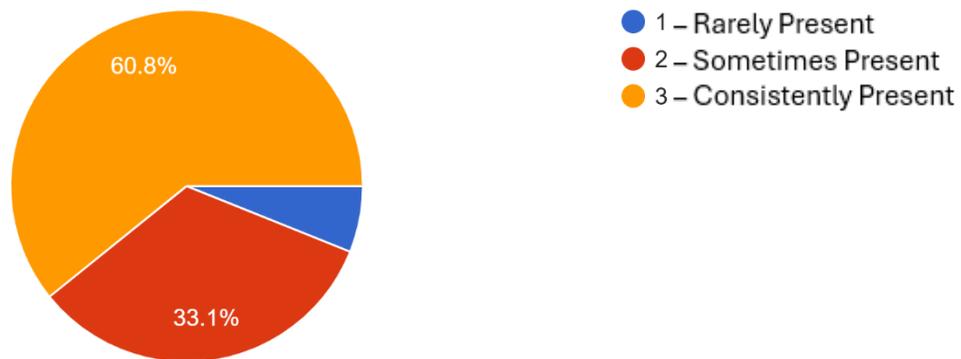
Professional development is available to support due process requirements and paperwork completion.

148 responses



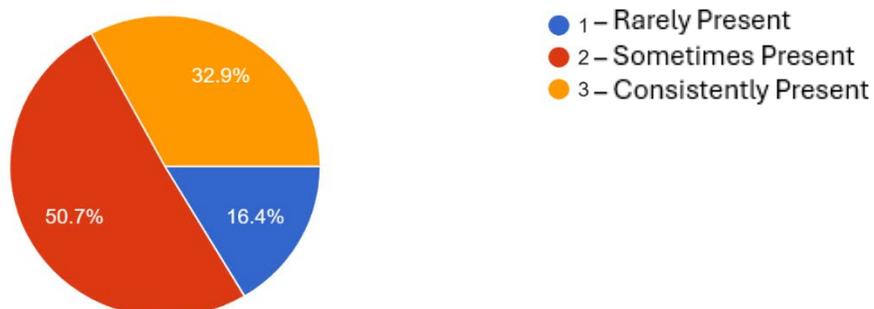
I have access to someone knowledgeable (e.g., facilitator or coordinator) who can answer paperwork questions.

148 responses



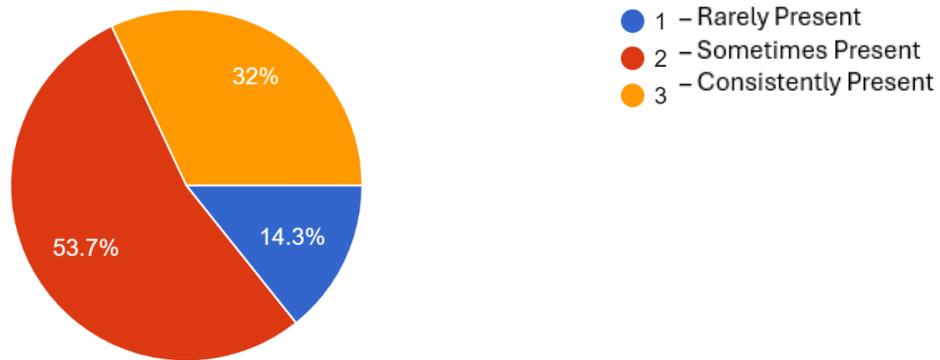
The culture around due process compliance emphasizes support and guidance more than discipline.

146 responses



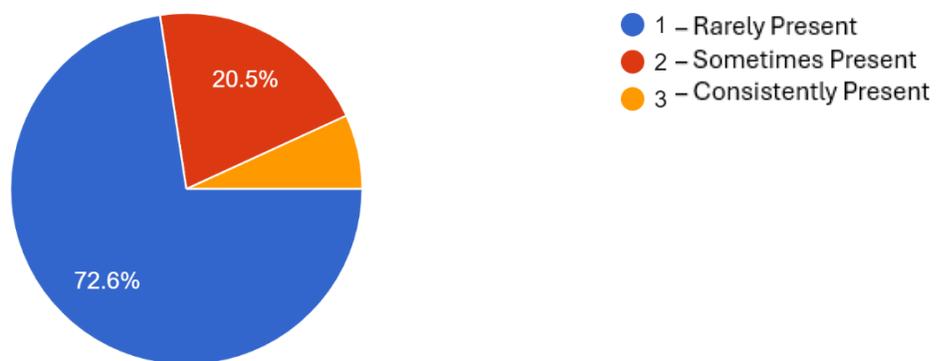
New special educators receive mentoring in due process requirements from experienced educators.

147 responses



Paperwork requirements and supports are addressed in the negotiated agreement.

146 responses

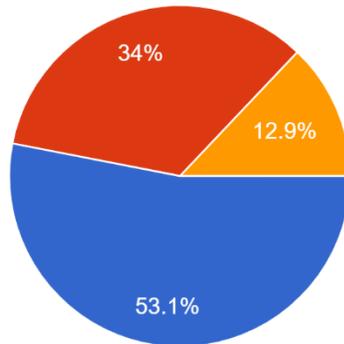


Domain 1 Average: 1.803883495

Domain 2: Workload

My district uses a clear system, developed with special educator input, for assigning workloads and caseloads.

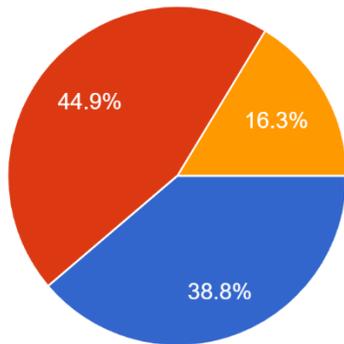
147 responses



- 1 – Rarely Present
- 2 – Sometimes Present
- 3 – Consistently Present

Before changes are made to caseloads, I am included in the review and decision-making process.

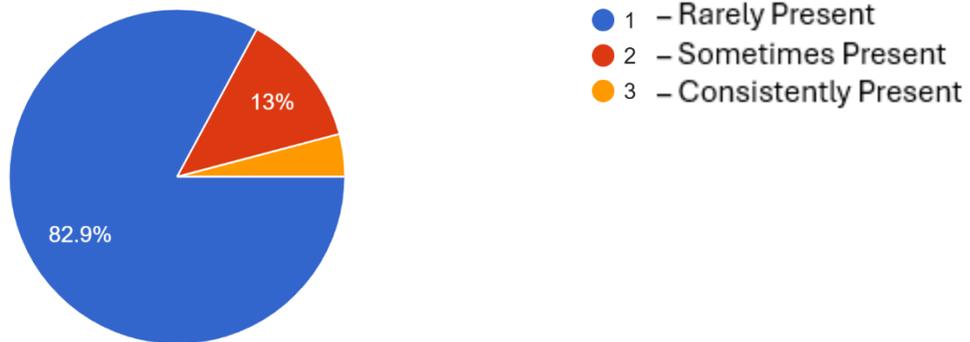
147 responses



- 1 – Rarely Present
- 2 – Sometimes Present
- 3 – Consistently Present

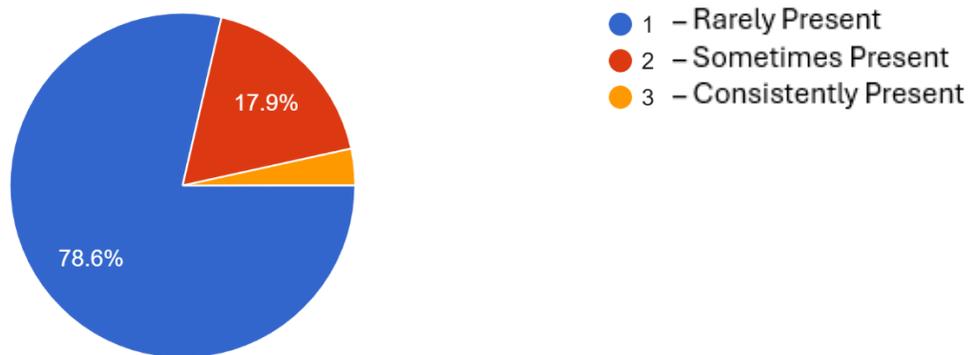
Additional support or compensation is available when workload increases significantly.

146 responses



Workload expectations are described in the negotiated agreement.

145 responses

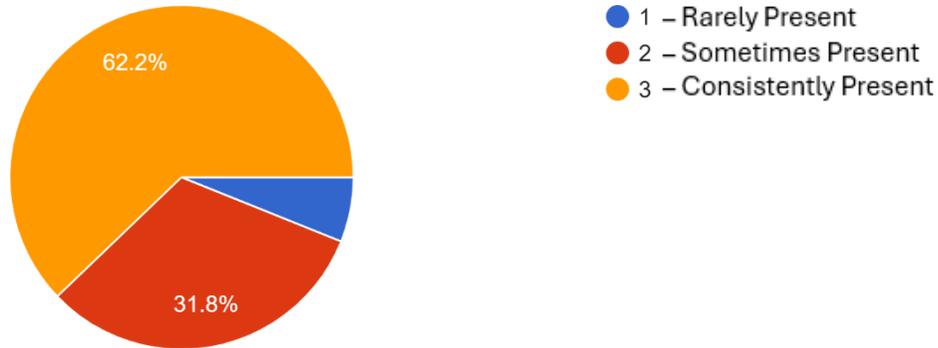


Domain 2 Average	1.45982906
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Domain 3: Student & Staff Safety

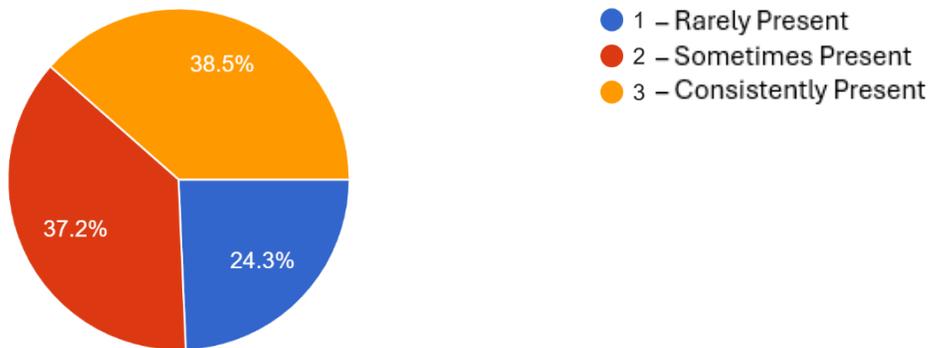
Training and access to district emergency/crisis and lockdown procedures are provided for staff.

148 responses



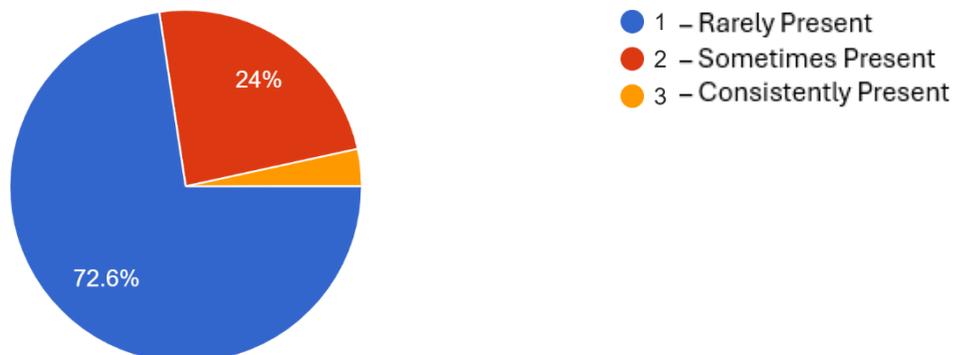
A crisis intervention team exists, with protocols and trained members.

148 responses



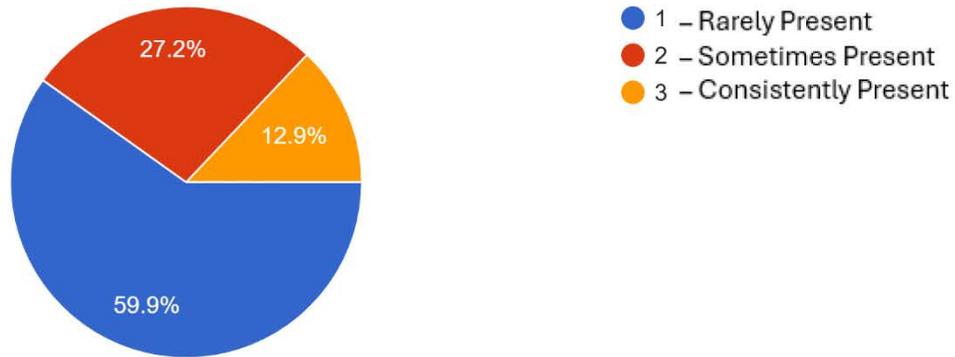
Staff have access to time or compensation for planning and implementing behavior intervention plans.

146 responses



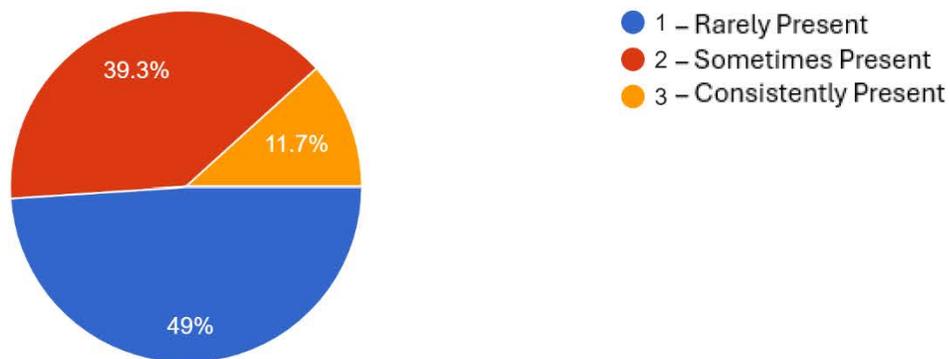
Debriefing, break, or leave options are provided for staff following a crisis.

147 responses



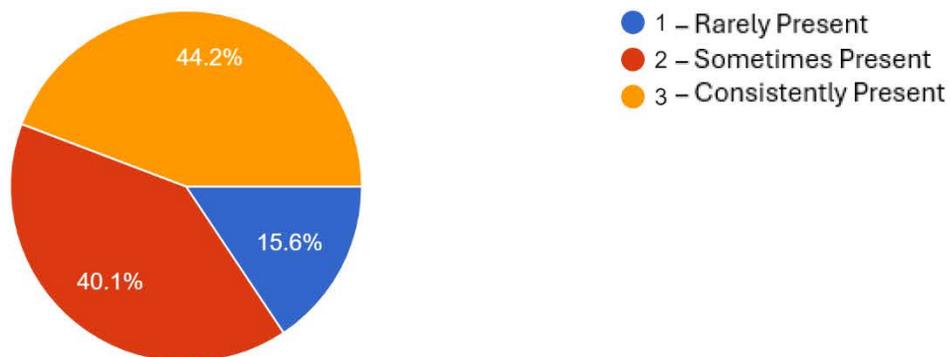
When crisis team members are unavailable, consistent trained staff fill in so services are not disrupted.

145 responses



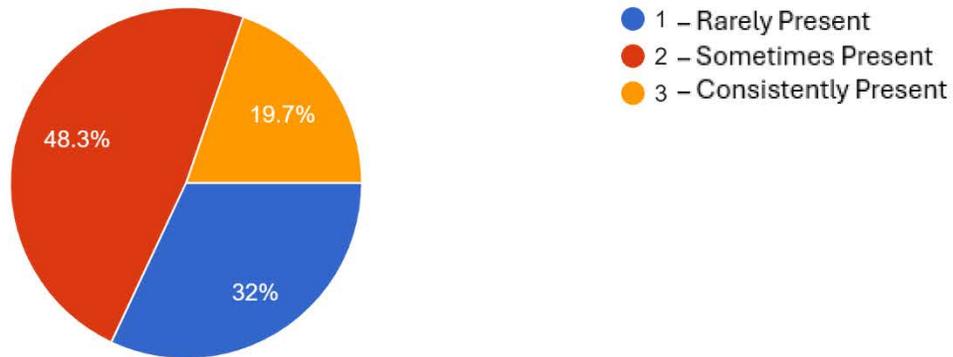
Training in de-escalation, protective measures, and restrictive procedures is provided to staff.

147 responses



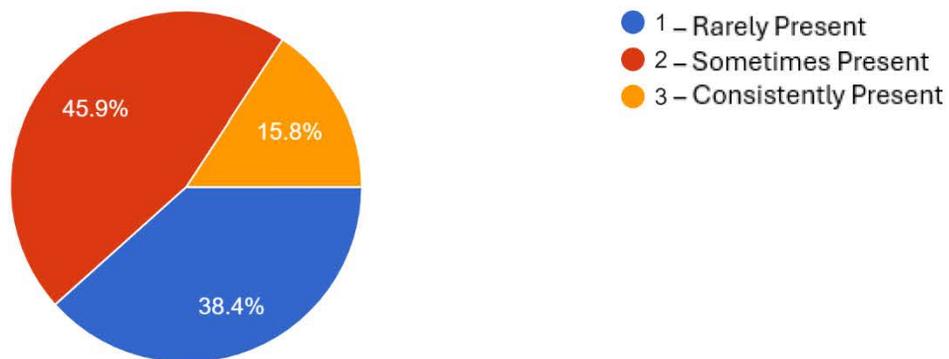
Notification and support are provided when students with a history of violent behavior are placed in an educator's class or caseload.

147 responses



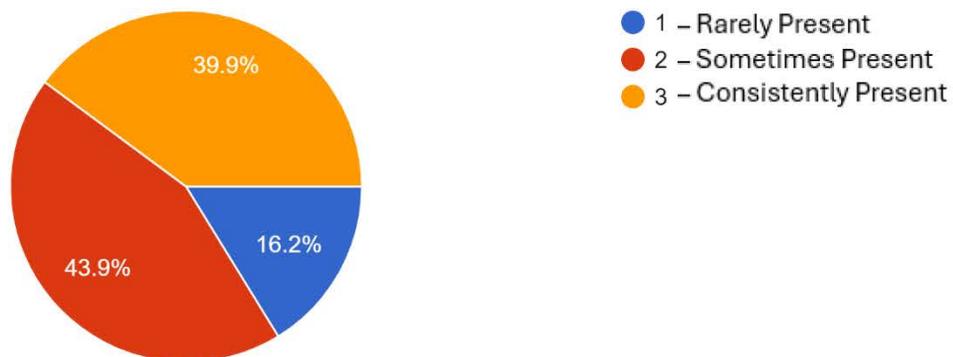
Protective gear and related training are made available to staff when needed.

146 responses



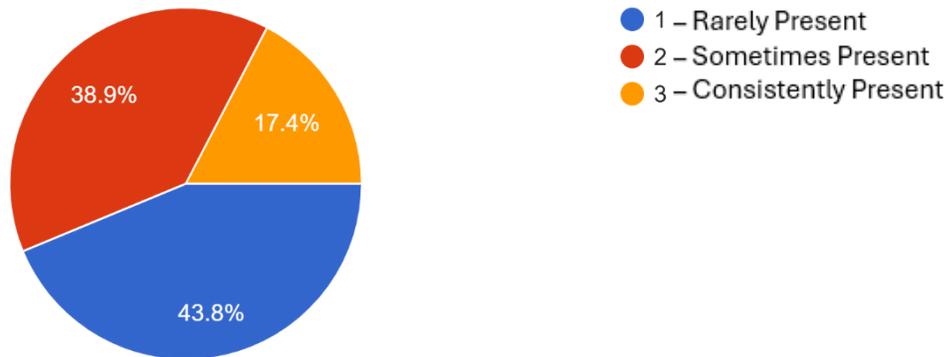
Policies on staff injuries are communicated, and staff are expected to document incidents.

148 responses



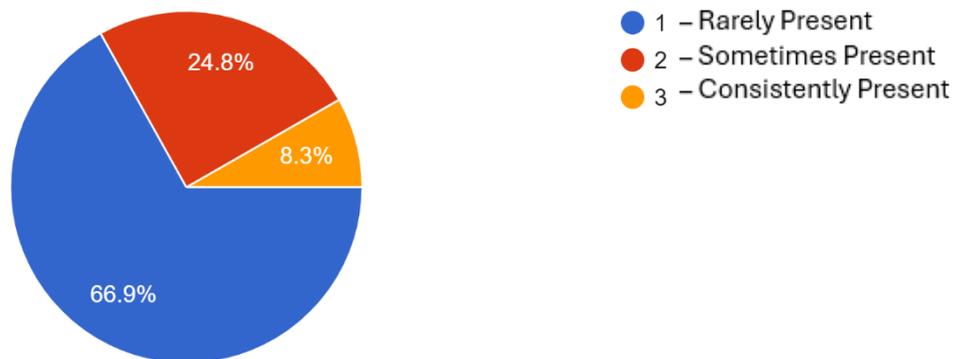
Leave options are available for staff injured during a crisis, without loss of pay or expectation to continue working.

144 responses



Student and staff safety is addressed in the negotiated agreement.

145 responses

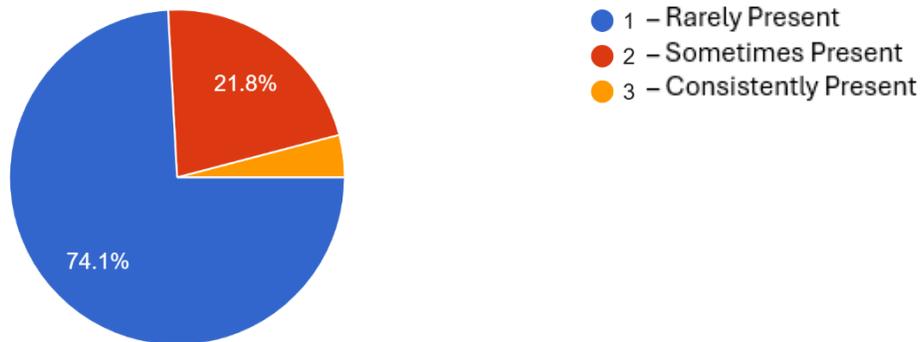


Domain 3 Average 1.865301055

Domain 4: Paraprofessional Management

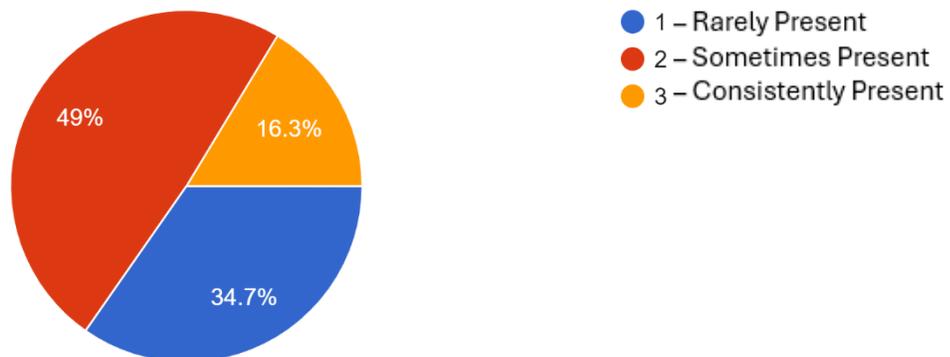
Pay and benefits for paraprofessionals keep pace with cost of living.

147 responses



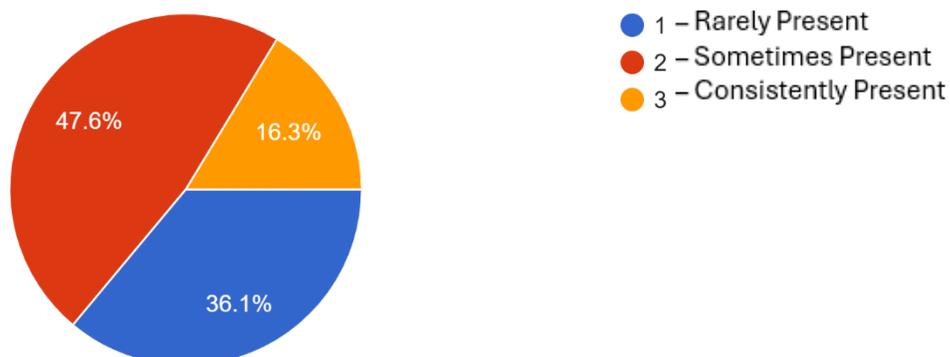
Paraprofessionals are able to provide feedback, and administration addresses it.

147 responses



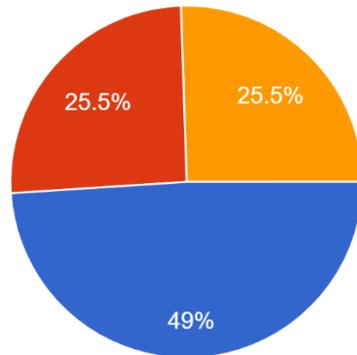
Paid professional development opportunities are available for paraprofessionals without increasing teachers' workload.

147 responses



A designated staff member manages paraprofessional schedules and training, with adjusted workload when needed.

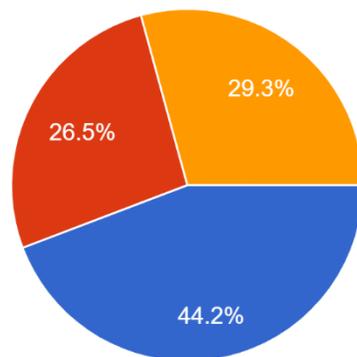
145 responses



- 1 – Rarely Present
- 2 – Sometimes Present
- 3 – Consistently Present

Annual professional evaluations for paraprofessionals are conducted by administrators.

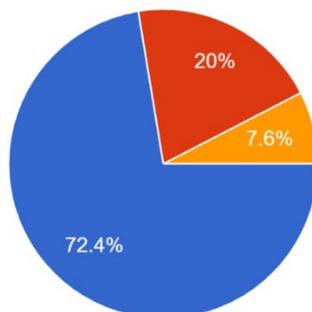
147 responses



- 1 – Rarely Present
- 2 – Sometimes Present
- 3 – Consistently Present

Paraprofessional management is described in the negotiated agreement.

145 responses



- 1 – Rarely Present
- 2 – Sometimes Present
- 3 – Consistently Present

Domain 4 Average 1.648063781

Comments

What additional supports would make your job more sustainable?

To improve job sustainability, it is essential to establish proper compensation for due process paperwork completed outside of contract hours. This measure respects the personal time required to meet critical deadlines and directly helps mitigate burnout. Furthermore, increasing the pay and training for Educational Support Professionals (ESPs) will stabilize staffing, ensure we hire capable personnel, and ultimately lead to better classroom support, reducing the burden on case managers.

Equally important is implementing structural changes to workload distribution. We need to guarantee protected planning time with other specialists for collaborative lesson development. Crucially, we must ensure an even caseload/workload balance across all staff. The current practice of assigning the most challenging students primarily to specific case managers creates unbalanced responsibilities, significantly increasing behavioral issues and driving up staff burnout, which is detrimental to the entire special education program's effectiveness.

To make my job more sustainable, additional supports would include consistent access to high-quality, adaptive curriculum tools that are aligned with standards and reduce the amount of time required for planning across multiple grade levels and ability levels. Increased support staff or access to trained paraprofessionals would help meet the diverse needs of my students more effectively. More time built into the schedule for collaboration, data review, and IEP documentation would also support both instructional planning and compliance. Finally, ongoing professional development tailored to the realities of special education—such as behavior management, trauma-informed practices, and inclusion strategies—would help ensure we're equipped to meet the complex needs of our students while avoiding burnout.

In my district, paraprofessionals are not paid living wages. Most have part time hours (6.25 hours a day or less) and are offered no benefits. We have had more and more open positions with no applicants over time. Currently at my school this is a major problem, as our students are not receiving adequate supports. As the case manager / special education teacher, I am instructed to tell parents these students do have "adult support" which in truth means that the regular education teacher will provide that extra support. It also sends more students to the Resource Room, which I cover by myself while also working with students scheduled into my classroom to work on their goals. My district does not have an adequate budget to address this problem currently.

Additional supports that would make my job more sustainable include stronger systems for managing aggressive behaviors and clearer procedures for supporting students with disabilities who also demonstrate significant behavioral challenges. At times, it feels that concerns about due process or potential repercussions outweigh staff and student safety. When a student poses a danger to themselves or others, there should be consistent options for temporary placement in alternative or self-contained settings until they develop the necessary skills to safely participate in the

general/special education environment. Establishing these systems would help protect everyone's well-being and ensure that all students receive appropriate, individualized support.

Better pay for our paras would keep our students better supported. Having additional pay or time for paperwork or for missed planning and paperwork would be beneficial for SPED teachers due to the increasing numbers of students on our caseloads, especially students with behavioral disabilities. We are grossly understaffed and left with little supports, and often caseloads increase without proper supports in place for those students to be successful in school. Curricular resources are not typically provided to SPED teachers either, and we constantly beg, borrow, and steal curricular resources. We NEED our own teacher manuals for classroom instruction and curriculum so we are not faced with the extra work of scanning and making copies of lessons.

- time to complete paperwork and testing
- clear district expectations on Sped referrals for initial IEP's
- caps on caseloads for all areas- SLD, SLP, ED, etc.
- in the elementary setting assign & pay a Sped department lead at the schools- this position is present in Middle Schools & High Schools- some elementary building have as many if not more Sped staff then the MS & HS
- provide district wide training on modifications and accommodations for staff
- provide district wide expectations for accommodations on the STAR test and other district wide assessments
- time to meet with all sped elementary teachers to discuss how programing is implemented, planning and goal writing
- training on how to manage meetings with advocates
- time

It would be beneficial to have "protected" time set aside for legal paperwork and staff management during the school day each week, that does not need to be justified to other teachers/professionals in the building (e.g. Special Education strategists have these extra duties, therefore, they have more non-student time assigned to complete these duties). It would be beneficial to have more paraprofessionals to support student learning/behavior management in classrooms. It would be helpful to have more support from coordinators and behaviors analysts (e.g. actually doing the work) when special education strategists are expected to provide Setting C supports in a school without the Setting C resources (e.g. space/materials/staffing).

More para support to help with the students as it is either the paperwork or working with students gets done. Both cannot be done successfully. Paras should have benefits so they are wiling to stay longer. When they work less than 6.25 hours, they are barely making enough to survive if they lived alone. There is not enough time to implement a behavior plan successfully when I am given no extra time to train staff. I have to take time out of my day to go find them so we are following the legal document. It is hard when you have to meet with 5-6 different teachers on their off hour and takes forever to do. This

takes time from my day. We only got an off hour because we worked with our counselors to make it happen.

Having a separate paid position in the district that is specialized in behavioral education and supports. This would free up case managers and special education teachers to complete their required progress monitoring of educational goals and would allow individuals with strengths in the area of behavior to thrive, to help students meet their potential. I would also suggest paying paraprofessionals a living wage, they are the ones on the ground with out students day in and day out and need to be compensated for their amazing work. Many great paras leave school districts because they are not being paid for the work they are doing for our students.

More para support (higher pay for them to aid in hiring/retention), sitting in on para interviews-more specifically for setting C rooms, time outside of prep(when we can even access prep) to work on due process paperwork, more space/ bigger classroom-room so small with high needs students that they get overwhelmed/overstimulated in confined space leading to behaviors, para option for paid training outside school day-not choosing between working with students in order to be more adequately trained, more specified curriculum for certain disabilities areas such as LD, ID, ASD to resource teacher isn't trying to make curriculum as well.

School wide training of behavior expectations. More accountability for general education teachers. When there are concerns/problems they are just put on the special education teacher to solve and fix. Therefore, it is very hard to get a prep for planning, collaborating, or paperwork, as we are having to teacher academics and put out fires that happened somewhere else. It is very frustrating to not have a break or lunch all day, when general education teachers within my building have over their contracted minutes for lunch everyday by 20 minutes.

We need to implement support that ensures an even distribution of responsibility across the department. The current system inadvertently punishes competence by disproportionately assigning the most difficult and time-consuming cases to the highest-performing staff. A balanced approach isn't just about fairness; it's about maintaining quality and consistency. Overloading the most capable staff eventually leads to their reduced effectiveness and negatively impacts the overall standard of service across the entire student body.

Pay increases that match cost of living would be greatly beneficial, as well as being paid for the additional time that we spend before/after/outside of school working on progress reports, IEP's, anything relating to a student's special education programming, etc. Additionally, I know many of us would appreciate it if someone would look more closely at the caseloads/level of needs that we have, and help us determine a more sustainable plan, as we are often overloaded with students.

Additional supports that would make my job more sustainable include consistent access to instructional materials and visual supports, ongoing professional development related to diverse learning needs, and sufficient planning and collaboration time with teachers and support staff. Having

clear communication, manageable caseloads, and adequate staffing would also help ensure that students receive the support they need while allowing me to maintain effectiveness and avoid burnout.

Time built into my day to do compliance paperwork. I have one prep hour, but I teach 3 English classes, one math class, a TSL, and a Peer2Peer class. I have assignments to grades, lessons to plan, etc. This is on top of the goal work I need to do with the students I personally case manage. I also supervise (schedule, train, manage, problem-solve, help with making accommodations, etc) 6 paraprofessionals. I also attend all IEP meetings for students who are in my classes.

Dedicated and protected time for paperwork, reduced caseload when other duties are taken on (para management, department chair duties, etc.), additional staff (paraprofessionals) to support student needs, additional hours for paraprofessionals to cover the entire school day, a system to communicate concerns in a seamless manner to district leadership (limit back and forth from teacher to principal to district to principal to teacher and so on)

Time for testing, paperwork and planning instruction for students. As well as making parent phone calls, scheduling meetings and reaching out to all team members. Also a discussion of capping caseloads/of students per case manager. Behavior supports: space, materials and options for students whose behavior impacts all the learnings in a classroom. More education provided to gen ed teacher so they can understand the process.

Having allotted paperwork hours built into the workday would significantly improve sustainability. Currently, there is no designated time for paperwork, so scoring assessments and writing reports are often completed at home. Dedicated paperwork time during the school day would help support work-life balance and allow tasks to be completed more efficiently and accurately.

Having a supportive administration that understands the workload of a special education teacher and understands that behaviors and services to other students can't be met at the same time and have clear expectations for where you are supposed to be and not reprimand the special education teacher if they miss services of other students to deal with a student in crisis.

Enough well trained, motivated support staff to support increasing number of one-to-one students on caseload- extremely low presently.

More actual resource room physical space for high behavior ED and ID range student needs - for safety of staff and students.

Policy in place for removal of student following disruptive/violent behaviors

Sustainability would improve with pay that reflects supervisory duties, reliable paraprofessional coverage, and realistic caseload limits. Currently, special education teachers are expected to manage paraprofessionals and assume their duties when they are absent without additional compensation, while carrying excessive caseloads.

My job would be more sustainable if I was given more time within the contract day to complete due process paperwork outside of my prep time. I am given no time outside of my prep time to complete

paperwork and am expected to either complete it during this time or take it home and finish it (which frequently is the case).

A lessened workload and caseload. I truly am really burnt out and feel like I'm constantly attending meetings, doing paperwork, testing students, etc. I don't feel like I can give every student the time and devotion that I'd like to due to all the extra workload and the increasing caseload and referrals I receive.

Having dedicated and consistent time for compliance paperwork. Being able to balance out caseloads after the school year has started, not having to teach applied (lower level classes) more time to prep for the classes we do teach. Basically more uninterrupted time in our contract day to get things done.

Incentives for more Special Educators to STAY in their education careers. We cannot continue to lose high quality and knowledgeable teachers. Those of us who are choosing to stay cannot complete the requirements of this career without compromising who we are when we are not inside a school building.

Additional staff (paras and case managers), transparency in decisions related para allowance/hours, lower caseloads, defined and uninterrupted time for paperwork set by the district, 4 day instructional work week leaving the 5th day for paperwork, compensation for working outside contracted hours

A caseload cap, benefits for my paras, an academic support center for my kids to get homework help, and where I can pull from for my kids to get individualized instruction, and a district-approved and funded curriculum for working on reading, writing, math, and executive functioning deficits.

Supports with keeping up with paperwork, but also keeping up with programming for students . If we had a 'secretary' that was shared amongst many schools to help draft IEPs, send meeting notices, call for meeting times, and help file paperwork that would take a load off of the shoulders.

A manageable caseload, dedicated time for paperwork (outside of instructional planning time), fair pay, and being treated as a professional would make my job more sustainable. I handle multiple responsibilities, but the role is often misunderstood and under-appreciated.

Extra compensation for time spent outside of the school day working on IEPs, grading papers, etc. Being able to take a paperwork day and spend it at home working on paperwork rather than at school where I end up getting called out for behaviors or other things.

Access to mental health supports for staff and students, people to check in after a crisis or injury, and I think that parent support is must. If they can not be held accountable there is nothing that the school will be able to do to support the student better.

Having more time to complete special education paperwork and implement behavior plans. I'm unable to keep up with paperwork with a 45-minute a day prep, if I get one. I often have to skip prep or lunch to fill in when paras are absent or students are in crisis.

Time to do the IEP, IWAR paperwork, time to teach others how to implement behavior plans, collaboration with behavior staff on development and implementation of behavior plans. I can teach or I can case manage but I can't do both to my desired level of quality

Paperwork time. Lunches and Preps are taken with student issues, IEP meetings, Co-teaching meetings and prep for the co-taught classes. For this survey for the "rarely option" if there was a just another option such as "never" option I would've marked that.

A manageable caseload that considers numbers, severity and timing of evaluations and IEPs
Sufficient personnel to support the needs of students so that they can make measurable progress
Adequate time to meet caseload expectations during the school day

More staff. Service Minutes add up quickly and paperwork is always done outside of school because there is little time to do it during the paid day. If there was more staff, responsibilities would be more evenly distributed.

The state's lack of Special Education teachers makes it difficult for any of our jobs to be sustainable. The state needs to increase the pay so that more people go into education so that our jobs can be more sustainable.

A sub or another person who can teach my students so I could do paperwork would be helpful. I have to do most paperwork after hours or on the weekends. I like to use my 25 minute prep time for planning for students.

being able to co-teach would be beneficial and help with work load, also given designated times during the semester dedicated to paperwork only....one day a month or at least one day a semester to just do paperwork.

I think having caseload management as part of the negotiated agreement would be good. We teach all day like our colleagues in general education but then have case management to deal with, all of which takes time.

Additional staff to support student needs, time for paperwork and other duties built into day, more transparency in special education related decisions, more communication and input opportunities.

Additional compensation for increased caseload and paraprofessional management. Compensation for outside work time and paperwork time. Compensation for missing lunch (part of negotiated agreement)

Special Ed staff are expected to train and manage paraprofessionals without additional compensation. Additional Compensation needs to be addressed when additional staffing is not available.

More appropriate equipment in my room. More space in my room. More paid time to complete paperwork when prep time is lost. More consistent training for all staff for ED behavior students.

The Workload Analysis tool is not effective. I asked at what point I should be on overload and was not given an answer. I am getting new students weekly and I am not given additional pay.

Hiring paras and providing a fair living wage with benefits. Hiring special education teachers that are have a degree and certified. Having compensation for supervising paras.

Safety measures being a priority. Adequate time for paperwork and prep. Compensation for managing paraprofessionals and/or the responsibility given to administration.

Having my own space to provide my services. Being able to use professional development days to improve my knowledge in my area of service rather than gen ed topics.

Academic assessment teams would be greatly appreciated as assessments/testing time can become a overwhelming especially if your caseload has multiple assessments.

Being able to work from home without distractions when overloaded with paperwork. Not being expected to attend meetings that have nothing to do with SPED.

More consistent support from sped administration: show up, same message to all, procedural consistency, district transparency, support for new hires.

Better communication: stop the practice of having any educator or paraprofessional as a body in the room, instead of the right person for the role.

we are non compliant in our support needs in the classroom setting. People won't work for the low pay/benefit package offered through our district.

Having someone that provides extra training and support for paraprofessionals. Getting further assistance after/during a crisis to allow debriefing,

An additional prep time that is dedicated to just paperwork rather than both paperwork and prepping/planning for lessons or having IEP meetings.

More breaks and TIME to recover and actually plan or do paperwork. Administrator support to administer consequences to students who break rules.

Additional para support and or additional tutorial time for special education teachers in high school to give more one on one student support.

enough staff to effectively meet student needs, a duty free lunch, prep time, time to complete paper work, support with student behavior.

This is the first year in 23 years that I have an off hour to be able to do paperwork, testing, parent calls, etc while on on the job.

Another teacher or para- i don't have enough time in the day to address behaviors, complete paperwork, teach lesson, collect data.

A designated day for paperwork, enough para support proportionate to students' needs, no additional classes added on to my day.

More professional development for new teachers on IEP development, planning, classroom management, and conducting meetings

more supports for student's with extreme behaviors, Education to the administrators who don't understand special education

Although Goalbook is helpful, it does not replace the problem of little to no time to do paperwork during the school day.

More time for paperwork, more help in the classroom, gen ed teachers doing their part in differentiating assignments.

Would like to get paid for not having a prep and or lunch hour each day. This is a constant issue in our district.

Guidance and clear support are better for me than scaring me of failure for not complying with state requirements.

I believe I am getting a lot of support from staff. Getting more support from families isn't always there.

More time to complete paperwork, smaller caseloads so we can reach our students to work on their goals.

Options for additional para support and extra time given throughout the school day to work on paperwork.

Smaller caseloads more time for paperwork and ability to support paraprofessionals in the classrooms

increased time for paperwork; additional support for direct service minutes or creation of materials

Help with managing para-support staff and having more staff to support the students with behaviors.

A cap on caseload and a plan for what happens if the caseload hits the cap during the school year.

Training and understanding from classroom teachers on working with special education students.

We don't have enough para support and not enough time to complete paperwork or assessments.

an additional stipend for paperwork and caseload or different pay scale for SPED teachers.

More time for due process paperwork, assessments, and time to write and implement BIP's

Additional time for writing and reviewing behavior plans and making necessary supports.

Better ways to address caseload by needs of students than just number (weighted scale)

We need more adults for behavioral support to prevent learning loss to other students

Having a special education secretary to schedule meetings and help prepare paperwork

increase compensation when caseloads increases and overtime work due to paperwork

Better health insurance would be better and extra pay for paperwork compensation

Less paperwork, much of it is repetitive. Lack of training for paperwork.

Help with testing, more paperwork time, another special education teacher

More support and staffing. It is dangerously when we are understaffed.

The availability of people applying for paraprofessional positions

More personnel or compensation at every level of special education

protected prep time - Currently I do not have any prep in my day.

Time to complete paperwork and meetings during contracted hours.

more behavior support, more time for planning and IEP paperwork

A consistent way of completing documents/forms across the board

Structured time for paperwork or meetings to stay in compliance

Safety due to violent students being addressed is a priority.

Compensation for work outside of the negotiated agreement.

More support via administration for aggressive behaviors/

Addition paid training, training on behavior management

Time for paperwork to be completed during school hours.

Knowledge and access to curriculums the district uses

Caseload input and clear plans on changing caseloads

More relevant professional development opportunities

Having time through the day to complete paperwork.

Less paperwork or more time to complete paperwork.

Time outside of prep periods to work on due process

Due process/ paperwork time outside of prep time.

Time for paperwork - IEPs, IWARS, progress reports

Time to schedule meetings and complete paperwork.

Additional SPED teachers and crisis team members

Prep period offered to special education staff.

additional para support to meet student's needs

Guaranteed prep time. Greater para support.

Compensation for work hours beyond contract

To have a schedule time for paperwork day

Smaller caseloads - additional sped staff

More case managers to decrease case loads.

Better training for crisis and behavior

An "off" hour or at least 5th hour pay.

More paperwork training for new teachers

More educated special education staff

guaranteed subs that aren't pulled

Hard work with additional trainings

Extra prep for all the paperwork

More paraprofessional support

building wide communication

Stronger administration;

Behavioral interventions

Prep and paperwork time

More time for paperwork

Having Full Time Paras

Reasonable workload

I am not certain

Crisis training

paperwork time

I don't know

2 paid prep

Not sure

More help

nothing

time

NA

n/a

N/A

n/a

Na

NA

Is there anything else you'd like us to know about your current assignment?

I teach 6 supplanted classes, and write a full weeks lesson plans for 7 students all at different levels, plus lesson plans for one student who is in a one to one classroom for 80% of day. It takes me generally 5 hours a week, sometimes more to just do lesson plans. I am in the middle of a BIP, I have had two assessments and 13 meeting so far, with eleven IEPs , half of those Transition IEPs, plus progress reports to do at each quarter. We are supposed to complete IEP's within two weeks of meeting. I take paperwork home ever night, and every weekend. Any day off in the fall, I am doing special Ed paperwork. I get paid 8-4, yet I can easily say I put an average of 15-20 hours of my own personal time in each week. It consumes my life. I can't sleep, I get migraines and neck pain from numerous hours on my computer. My kids come home from college and I am stuck doing Spec. Ed paperwork. I also have 4 paras to supervise. I have 13 students on my caseload, two with significant behavioral issues. Along with my special education duties, I also manage 13 student during Cardinal time each day, plus normal lunch and recess duties. I am also on the school MTSS team. Since my students are in my room for study hall, there is not a time or period in my day that someone is not in my room. At times, there are 4 special Ed staff assisting students in one room. Our school has a few small spaces to work with students, but very few consistently open. I have to fight for meeting space with the young mothers that are breast feeding. On Thursdays when LRSE staff come, we are consistently fighting for space. I am currently teaching one student in the track coaches office. Because I don't have many complete curriculums, I am constantly trying to find supplemental work at all the different levels of students. I spend wasted time running off page after page or blowing up the tiny test provided in the teacher's addition, because the additional teacher materials were not ordered. I get some work past hours is likely, but current demands are unhealthy. If we want people to stay in this profession, things have to change. Burn out is real!

I am very happy with my current assignment and have no concerns regarding my building administration. They are supportive, responsive, and genuinely invested in our students and staff. My frustrations lie primarily with district-level administration. There continues to be a noticeable lack of support and advocacy for special education staff and programs from our special education coordinator and upper administration.

It is disheartening to see substantial district spending directed toward additional administrative positions and TOSAs serving in administrative capacities out of CAB, while we are repeatedly told there are no funds for additional special education teachers, paraprofessionals, or updated curriculum and materials. These priorities make it difficult to feel that the district truly values or understands the needs of our students and staff.

At the building level, I am proud of the program we have developed; it is strong, effective, and well-run. However, it often feels as though no one at the district level is aware of the work being done or the outcomes being achieved. I believe I could serve as a valuable resource in mentoring and supporting new special education teachers, sharing successful practices, and contributing to district-wide improvement. Unfortunately, because our coordinator and district administrators seem disconnected from our schools and programs, these opportunities for collaboration and growth are consistently

overlooked.

Each year, I become more disappointed by the lack of visibility, communication, and advocacy for special education within our district leadership. I truly hope to see a shift toward greater engagement with and investment in the staff and programs that directly serve students.

I have had to work through lunch and preps quite often. It got to be a regular thing last year for IEP Meetings, Reading and Modifying tests to students (due para shortage and absent paras), student issues, etc. I am trying to put my foot down now. I did not realize it, but my administrator was deciding that all those things are “part” of my job so therefore missing preps should not be compensated for. He has told me on a couple of occasions. It is the “nature of the job” so basically anything I have to do that is remotely tied to special ed students or special ed during my prep is my job and cannot be compensated for. He crossed off a lot of my missed prep hours, so I did not get paid for them. Under his logic, technically missing my preps all the time then would be fine. Also, we have positions that regularly have to lose their lunches and instead of them trying to find coverage so that that teacher can have a lunch they threw back at us that we are in violation of our contracts if we are working during lunch, not that they are violating our contracts by forcing us to miss our lunches, but that we are violating our contracts (like it’s a choice for us in those situations). So basically any missed preps or lunches that we try to claim will be faced with retaliation. Regularly missing preps and our lunches is not a choice we like to make we of course would love to have that time to work on the things we need to work on.

The way the self-contained ED classrooms are functioning at this time has been difficult. Paras don't come to work to be physically abused, and they are certainly not paid enough to even feel like it's worth it. Turnover is very high and support is lacking for our students. We are failing them consistently when proper support cannot be offered. The hiring freeze in our district due to financial stressors is also having a major impact on our ability to hire and pay our support staff. There also has to be a better system in place for what that ceiling of "enough is enough"; these students are not able to adequately learn in a school setting is. Much of our jobs right now in self-contained ED classrooms is managing behaviors and responding to constant crisis with students who have received interventions consistently and with fidelity and can still not cope or learn in the school environment. Direct instruction on academic and social emotional goals gets missed and consistently pushed to the side when we are in constant crisis interventions the entire school day. It should be no surprise ED specialist are not sticking around without adequate support, resources, or processes in place to remove students who cannot be successful in school due to mental illnesses or trauma. There is only so much we can do as SPED teachers.

One thing I'd like to share about my current assignment is that it is both incredibly rewarding and highly complex. I support students across grades K–5 with a wide range of academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs. I work in small groups with 30-minute rotations throughout the day, which requires detailed planning, flexibility, and ongoing collaboration with general education teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialists.

I also serve as a case manager, writing and managing IEPs for a diverse caseload of students. This includes frequent parent communication, progress monitoring, and ensuring compliance with legal requirements—all while maintaining a student-first mindset.

In addition to my teaching responsibilities, I'm involved in several district-level committees and mentorship programs, including serving as a mentor in both the Resident Teacher and North Dakota Mentorship programs. These opportunities allow me to support others while continuously learning and growing in my own practice.

Despite the demands, I remain passionate and committed to this work. However, sustaining this level of involvement requires strong systems, collaborative support, and access to tools that reduce planning and documentation workload so I can focus on what matters most—student success.

As a new Special Education teacher/case manager, I've found the role to be quite overwhelming at times. Our classroom is always busy, which makes it challenging to keep up with paperwork, schedule meetings, monitor goal progress, support students in meeting their goals, and attend all the required SPED, building, district, and IEP meetings.

In addition, we frequently need to call or message parents during the day, and when students are skipping classes, it can feel like we're expected to track them down, even though the decision to skip is ultimately the student's choice. There are so many responsibilities placed on case managers, and often tasks that should be handled by others are redirected our way simply because a student is on an IEP. This adds an extra layer of pressure that can be difficult to manage.

There are frequent interruptions throughout the day, and when work has to be taken home or when I'm constantly worrying about unfinished tasks, it becomes difficult to maintain a healthy work-life balance. As a new teacher, the expectations feel high and, at times, overwhelming, leading to a persistent sense of stress and discouragement.

It is hard to get support from the coordinators as they are expected to do so much. It is also hard to advocate for the support we need. I know the upper people see it as we are just asking for more help that is going to cost more money but they never come to see how we are doing. They don't talk directly to us about our problems. They make suggestions like just have the para come in later and not thinking about how that is going to affect is in the morning and it still is a problem. We have 5 case managers in our room that have over 5 years experience so we know what to do. We are not asking for help because we do not want to work. We are drowning with our work and having to stay after school or do work at home. It is only going to led to people not wanting to work here or eventually not doing as good of quality because it can't be done.

My district will not give black and white answers when it comes to anything in special education. My district lives in the grey. I have 20 students on my caseload and a handful that have physical behavior outbursts. I am expected to handle the outbursts whenever they arrive and miss my other students, but if I miss my other students I get reprimanded by my principal. When I have asked what I should do he

says that he can't give me guidance. If I don't respond to the behavior outburst I am reprimanded for that as well. My principal was never an educator and does not listen to the concerns of the special education team. When he does listen he doesn't give a solution and says that he will get back to us and never does. Our special education team is pulled in 100 directions and not supported in any.

I have a current SLD caseload of 25 students, 7 of whom I share with the ED staff. One student has had multiple instances of physical aggression (moving/throwing furniture), but even though the team agreed that Dakota Memorial School at the Boys and Girls Ranch would be most appropriate, they are "full", as is the district's self-contained option, so we are being told to "self-contain" him between our LD and ED resource rooms. I have 2 paras total to work with our 25 kids, and I also have 5 resource hours scheduled. I often have kids drop in for support during all hours of the day, so I don't get "2 preps", as is the district expectation. However, I also don't get compensated for working more than 5 hours, as general education teachers do.

Very frustrating having setting B students on setting C teacher caseloads because strategists "don't know how to work" with the student once they have made so much progress and moved out of a Setting C room. It is harder to get to them when we are so focused on behaviors within the room/caseload that they end up missing an abundance of minutes. It's not fair to the student and it puts us in a gross position choosing between breaking their IEP with missed minutes and safety of those in the room, especially when setting C rooms are running 2-5 paras short on a daily basis.

I love my job. I don't love the time it takes away from my personal time. I spend time outside of school hours grading papers, working on compliance paperwork, lesson planning, collaborating with others, and I'm not compensated for this. I am also expected to do NWEA testing for all of my English classes as well as my math class. I am also responsible for alternately assessing my students who qualify for that. This is not true of all specialists in my building. Not everyone supervises paras, administers testing, administers AA, and teaches core classes.

I was moved to behavior and regulation the last two school years based on the amount of needs. This school year 2025-2026 I'm expected to do both academics and all the social skills minutes, plus regulation. Administration only looks at numbers, not at students and the amounts of needs that each one has, which is really hard. We have tried to explain but they don't understand special education at all. I also feel like there is no support from our special education unit, however we went with them as they were cheaper.

I am an SLP and go to 2 schools. I currently have about 60 students in one school and then 15 in the other school. Most are on IEPs and the rest are on Intervention Plans (MTSS approach for speech therapy). I have a SLPP now 2 days a week in Carrington and 2 days in Buchanan for my other school. I am in Carrington full time and then go to Buchanan once a month to see the kids and supervise the SLPP in that school setting. Even with her working 4 days a week in speech, I still feel so behind and cannot keep up with it all.

The assignment has evolved into an unsustainable mixed-disability overflow classroom. The combination of varied student needs, beyond the scope of my designated area, is leading to a

significant increase in the frequency and intensity of disruptive behavior compared to the general education environment. While we are being creative to manage the situation, the complete absence of dedicated support staff means we are failing to provide the level of intervention and safety mandated for these students.

The job of special education case manager as it currently is in my district is unsustainable. The job requirements are FAR larger than time allows in the day. IEP meetings - scheduling and holding, paperwork, working with students on IEP goals as well as classwork, paraprofessional management and scheduling, communication with parents, communication with general education teachers, communication with administration, it is simply too much to be effective in any area.

I teach 5 applied topics classes each day, manage a caseload, manage 6 paras, and do all of my own paperwork. My planning periods are often full of meetings or spent managing behaviors for students on my caseload while they're supposed to be in other classes. It is a lot! Most days I work at least an hour over contract time at school, and do lesson planning at home. Many evenings I spend all evening still at the school preparing for meetings.

Nearly half of the students on my caseload have moderate to significant social and emotional needs. When in crisis, some require multiple staff members to support them (and they aren't aggressive), leaving other students hanging and waiting for services and support. Once the crisis has ended, there is no debriefing nor an opportunity for staff to re-regulate, as students are waiting and often have another crisis to support.

As a high school teacher, I have to teach classes as well as work on goals and keep up to date with students IEP's and support.....there is a disconnect with general education teachers and willingness to support our students. Not only do special education teachers take on our dedicated roles, we often wear the hats of general education teachers as well, as modifications and supports are often left up to support staff or us.

I am at the secondary level, in which sped students are enrolled in a class period with case managers to get support. The expectations of my job are too much for me to fulfill at the moment. I do not have enough time in the day to do all things effectively between paperwork, meeting minutes with students, meetings, para supervision/scheduling, parent communication, and teacher communication/collaboration.

TOOOOOO much paperwork in ND. Paperwork needs to be streamlined to be more efficient. Not enough evaluation kits in the district, not enough time given to complete evaluations. The state needs to put forth more money to help the teachers/paras. Our district is too top heavy, lacks communication between schools and teachers/paras. Paras aren't support at the administration/district level.

I only case manage nine students, but they all have behavior and learning challenges. I'm extremely burned out and feel like I'm a great educator with 25 years of experience. I'm exhausted and do not do

any paperwork at home as I need time to myself to be energized for the next day. I want to continue teaching special education until retirement age. It's my passion!

I need more help, but help is not available. There really isn't anything my school district can do about it. Being in a rural school district, there are not enough people willing to work for the peanuts that paras get paid. The only people that apply are not able to do the academic work required to assist the students with the class work.

The parents expect their kid not to fail because they are on an IEP but not attending class or completing/ submitting assignments. They demand reduced workload/extended time but there disability does not justify this. Are we really educating all learners for the future when parents decide things like this?

North Dakota should increase the amount of funding allocated to school districts' special education departments. Current funding levels make it difficult to maintain appropriate staffing, manageable caseloads, and competitive compensation, which directly impacts sustainability and retention.

Many times if you are secondary SPED you get a bit more consistent prep times. Elementary it is extremely hard to get a prep and the stay on top of programming, prep work for direct instruction, supporting classroom teachers, and supporting aides. It is a true burn out job!

My contract states I am a teacher, but I am not offered the same prep, lunch, duty-free times as general education teachers. I have been told by special Ed administration that I should expect to work through my lunch and not get prep, since I am a special education teacher.

Good case managers will have the highest caseloads. While those that do not follow policies or out of compliance will have the lowest. While I understand the intent, it burns out the educators that are both good at their jobs and good at paperwork.

I'm at a Level D building so we do have better safety training than most buildings I've been in prior however student needs and support staff numbers are difficult to manage and student to teacher ratio aren't always a realistic picture

Honestly my admin is great but sped needs to be on a different pay scale than general education teachers. This job is difficult and the amount of paperwork is not the same as what a general education teacher is expected to do.

I enjoy my job, my coworkers, and students. I am currently case managing 40 students with a para-to-teacher program, and she will be a good teacher once she finishes her program, but it is a lot at the moment.

I don't feel I should have to take personal/sick leave when I am injured by a student, which has happened. There should be better placement options/mental health supports for violent students.

This has been my worst year yet. There's no time for prep or paperwork and it feels like there's no support from administration. This is likely going to be my last year with special education.

I haven't had a lunch or planning period for the last 7 years at my district. I teach behaviors and do not have enough paras because the district doesn't offer benefits or a fair wage.

The work environment SPED is expected to work in is sometimes terrible. Being thrown in a closet, ID rooms without a door, ID room in the middle of an open area with make shift walls.

I love my current assignment, I just wish there was more time in the day to complete paperwork and use my prep time to get work ready for students to work on their goals.

This off hour that I have been provided has been a life-saver/game changer. Special ed staff need their designated hours off too for planning/paperwork/testing/etc...

This career is HEAVY. It is meaningful work, but the stress and challenges can brutally take away peace from educators lives.

- yearly, there are lots of referrals and testing to be completed; this greatly impacts any time to prep or plan for groups

I feel behind once I walk in the door when school starts. It is hard to keep up and still have a life outside of teaching.

So far none and I was able to manage my caseload this year with the help of my para professionals and my admin staff.

What can be done at the high school level to allow us to do our jobs rather than be a glorified study hall tutor?

Wonder why ED students get LD support without qualifying and take up minutes and take away from true LD students.

high workload with little to no time to complete paperwork, all work done outside of work hours is unpaid

I am overworked and just pushed to side the fact I am at work until 540 each night just to do my job.....

I want to teach students, not try to learn one more miracle solution for challenges faced in school.

Expectations are high, but support is limited. More check-ins and support would be appreciated.

I answered based on both my special education unit (negotiated agreement) and district (para pay)

Caseload and paraprofessional management has more than doubled, with no additional compensation.

The safety concerns regarding student behaviors and guidance on how to retain staff.

We need to recruit more SLPs and not rely on SLPAa or SLPPs or UND student SLPs

Special education units are not required to negotiate under ND Century code.

Too many students to case manage effectively and provide adequate services

I work in a class B school; I am not sure these answers are valid.

Shortage of support staff is affecting student progress.

I am not even sure what is in the negotiation agreement.

Pay does not keep up with the cost of living

Having a great team makes it worth it.

very little administrative support

Send help the burn out is real.

Won't be staying in position.

No, THANK you for doing this.

I love what I do!

Not that I know of

Nothing

N/A

n/a

N/A

No.

N/A

n/a

No

No

NA

NA

NA

no

No

No