



# **PreK Unfiltered: Helping Educators Master the Shift from Survival to Success**

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**A TeachTown eBook**

# Introduction: The Sunday Scaries



## AN INTRODUCTION

We've all been there. It's 7:00 PM on a Sunday. You're sitting on your couch, but your mind is already in the classroom. You're thinking about the blue sensory bin in your classroom that leaks, the IEP meeting on Tuesday that you haven't finished the data for, and that one student - let's call him Weston - who finally made eye contact today, but only for a split second.

You went into the field of education because you love those split-second moments. You love the smell of playdough and the sound of a four-year-old finally mastering the "L" sound. But lately, those moments are being buried under a mountain of compliance forms, staffing shortages, and a "to-do" list that feels more like a ***never-gonna-get-done*** list.

In this eBook, we'll provide a ***pivot plan*** designed to help you stop reacting to the chaos that can ensue in an early childhood setting, and instead - start leading through it.

# The Never-Ending Paperwork

Everyone knows someone like Miss Kennedy.

Miss Kennedy was the kind of PreK inclusion teacher who could turn a cardboard box into a spaceship in four minutes flat. But Miss Kennedy had a secret: she spent every Friday night at her kitchen table, crying over progress reports.

"I'm choosing between being a good teacher and being a legally compliant one," she says.

That is the ultimate Paperwork Paradox - especially as an inclusion or special education PreK teacher. Federal law (IDEA) demands data for your students with disabilities, but your heart demands connection.

## Helpful Tips for Tackling Paperwork

FOR ADMINS:

➤ MICROLOG YOUR DATA

➤ THE 10-MINUTE BUFFER

➤ DICTATION IS YOUR BFF

➤ STREAMLINING & AUTOMATION



# The Pivot: Work Smarter Not Harder

We can't make the paperwork go away, but we can change how we approach it. Here are unfiltered truths that can help you more easily tackle paperwork:

## ✓ MICROLOG YOUR DATA

Don't wait for a "quiet moment" to document data and goals - they rarely exist in PreK. Place a clipboard or a sheet of labels in each zone of the classroom (rug, art, library, sensory, etc.). When you see a milestone happen, jot the student's name down, along with the quick update. By the end of the week, you will have high-quality data on all of your students without the Friday night blues.

## ✓ DICTATION IS YOUR BFF

Use a school-approved recording device throughout the day to make sure you are capturing what you need. "Weston shared a toy today without a prompt." Boom. Data collected. Transcribe it later.

## ✓ THE 10-MINUTE BUFFER

If you want your PreK teachers to conquer paperwork, you have to ensure they have the time to do so. Create space for them in the schedule - even if it's just 10-15 minutes at a time - where their door is shut, and the pens are moving.

## ✓ STREAMLINING & AUTOMATION

Additionally, your teachers are likely drowning in compliance fatigue. Before you ask them for a new form or a new tracking sheet, ask yourself: Is this helping the child, or just checking a box? If it's just a box, find a way to automate what you need.

## The Heart of the Matter

At the end of the day, Miss Kennedy realized that her students didn't need her to be a perfect teacher - they just needed her to be present. When she streamlined her data, she found her magic again. She stopped looking at Weston as a set of goals on a page and started seeing him as the kid who loved the blue sensory bin (yes, the one that leaks!).

You deserve that magic, too.





## Breaking Up With Burnout *(It's Not You, It's the System)*

If you've ever sat in your car for an extra ten minutes after pulling into your driveway, staring blankly at the steering wheel because you don't have the energy to get out - this section is for you. Burnout in PreK isn't just about being tired. It's the feeling that no matter how much water you pour, the bucket has a hole in the bottom. In early childhood, we don't just teach ABCs - we coregulate nervous systems and we fix boo-boos (and so much more). When a child has a meltdown, you absorb that energy. Do that eight times before lunch, and your own battery gets drained.

### REDEFINING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WORK

To help save your passion, you have to "break up" with the version of yourself that thinks you can do it all alone.

### SET BOUNDARIES

We've been told that a good teacher stays late and spends their own money on supplies. Setting boundaries though - like leaving at 4:00 PM twice a week - isn't failing your students... it's ensuring you're able to teach them tomorrow with the energy you need to make an impact.

### THE 60-SECOND RESET

Unfortunately, you can't take a spa day on a Tuesday at 10:00 AM - but you can take a minute to reset. While your students are washing hands, close your eyes and take three deep breaths. It sounds cheesy, but it helps switch your body out of fight-or-flight mode.



# For the Administrators: The Retention Pivot

If you want to keep your teachers, you have to protect their peace.



## ACKNOWLEDGE THE INVISIBLE

Tell your teacher, “I saw how you handled Weston’s sensory overload today. That was master-level work.”



## THE MENTAL HEALTH SUB

If you have an extra body, don’t use them for filing. Use them to give a teacher an unexpected 20-minute break.



## COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM

Ensure your teachers have access to a comprehensive, inclusive early childhood curriculum, like [TeachTown’s Launch for PreK](#), for example, that meets the needs of young learners with developmental delays and disabilities as well as the peers who learn alongside them. By providing a consistent, differentiated curriculum with two full years of instruction and assessments in one place, you reclaim valuable planning time for your teachers - empowering them to focus on what they do best: teaching.

# Reclaiming the *Magic*

No one enters PreK for the paycheck or the glamorous faculty meetings. You entered this profession because you believe that the first five years of a child's life are the most critical years of development.

**You are a master of the “light bulb moment.”**

Reclaiming your passion isn't about trying harder - sometimes it's about narrowing your focus.



## The Pivot: Find Your “One Small Thing”

Passion doesn't return in a grand gesture - it returns in the margins. To find it again, try the following:

### THE 5-MINUTE FAVORITE

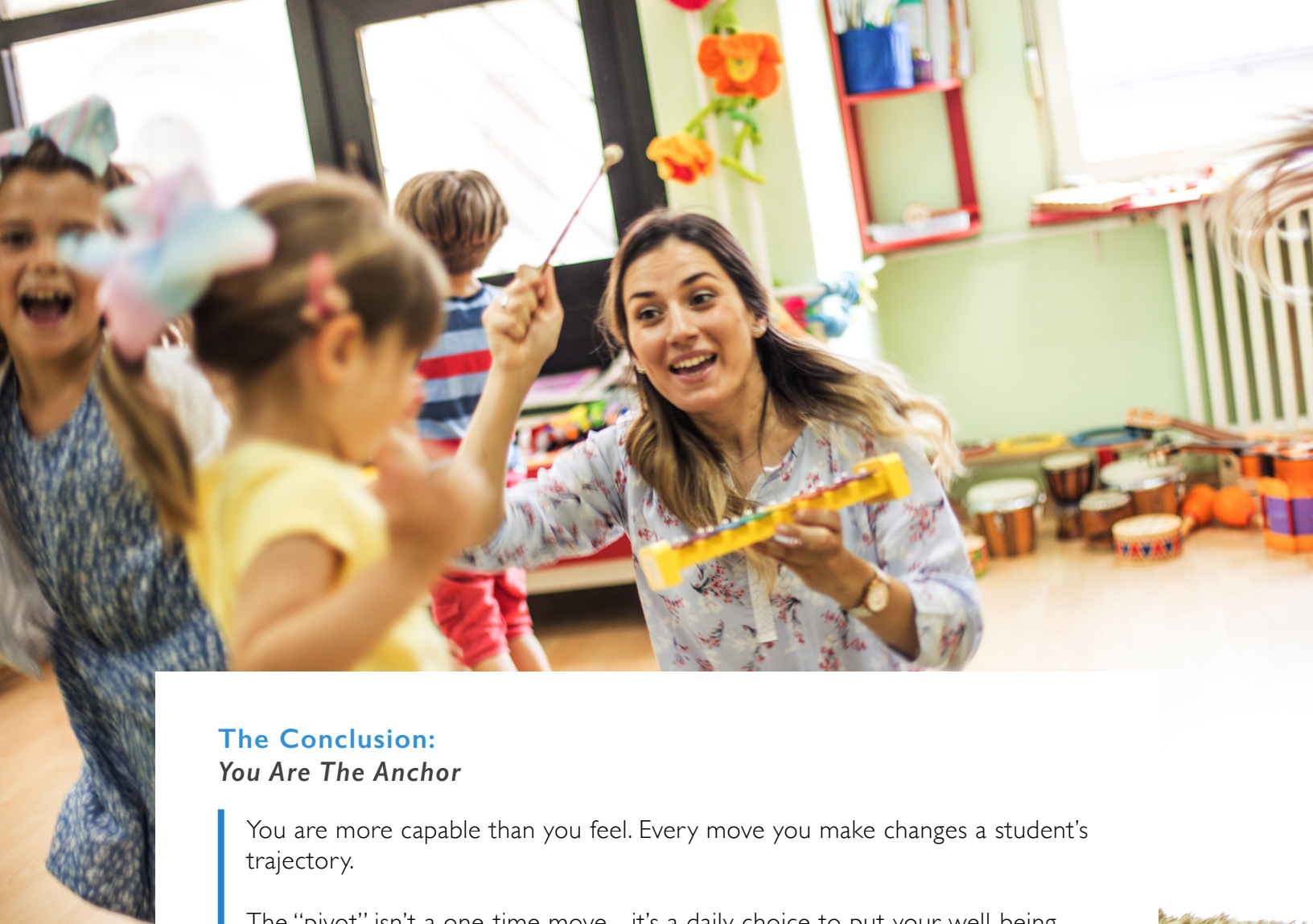
What is the one part of the day you enjoy the most? Is it storytime? Is it the messy art table? For one week, protect that 10-minute block at all costs. Make it your sanctuary where the paperwork panic doesn't creep in.

### THE WIN JAR

We are wired to remember the student who bit us more than the student who said “thank you.” Put a jar on your desk. Every time a child does something that makes you smile, scribble it on a scrap of paper and drop it in. On a “Level 10” tough day, read three of them.

### RE-CENTER THE RELATIONSHIP

The next time a student experiences back-to-back challenging behaviors, pivot your perspective. Instead of seeing a challenging behavior pattern, see a communication puzzle. This will help you feel like you're up against an intellectual challenge rather than an emotional drain.



### **The Conclusion:** ***You Are The Anchor***

You are more capable than you feel. Every move you make changes a student's trajectory.

The "pivot" isn't a one-time move - it's a daily choice to put your well-being on the same priority level as your students' IEP goals. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and remember - your students don't need a perfect teacher - they need a present one.

**Go home. Close the laptop. Breathe.  
You're doing better than you think.**



Visit [TeachTown.com](https://www.teachtown.com) to learn more about how TeachTown delivers a personalized, measurable whole child education for PreK-12+ students with disabilities.