

August 2019 Tip of the Month- Class Size

Class Size, what a slippery web of data it is. This was by far the hardest thing I had to learn as a teacher and as a Union President. Some grades are a ratio by site, some by district, and some from California Ed code written in 1965. I am going to try and explain it as best as I can. This is all from [Cal. Educ. Code § 41376](#), [Cal. Educ. Code § 41378](#), [Cal. Educ. Code § 54525](#), [Article 17 Class Size from our contract](#), and [Class Size Penalties - CalEdFacts](#)

First of all, a question I get all the time is how long do they have to get my classes fixed so that I fall within my ratio. It is an unspoken agreement that the district has the first two weeks of school or the first week of the semester. However, they have all year to get to the ideal ratio so as long as they fall under it during one point in the year, being over it at first doesn't matter. For example, if a 6th-grade teacher started out with 35 students at the beginning of the year and the district reduces the students in the class down to 32.3 within two weeks the ratio will be within the limit. They could even not replace a student who leaves for a few weeks and reduces the ratio even further.

Class Sizes K-3

24 students to 1 teacher: AVUSD has made this a priority and does not get extra money from the state anymore to keep it this way. The grant money from the state was to help them reduce the large class sizes if they wanted to a few students each year until they met the current 24 to 1 ratio. The state average is 31 students for Kinder and 32 for grades 1-3. Other districts can have this higher number because it is bargained. This average is calculated by grade level and site. For instance, you could have 3 K classes; two with 25 students, and 1 with 23 students and still have a grade and site ratio of 24.3%. The district does try and better balance the students, but some teachers decline because they want to keep their class the same. In most schools in our district it levels out by month because the students transfer from one AVUSD school to another one.

Class Size 4-6

32.3 students to 1 teacher: This average ratio is by grade throughout the whole district. For instance, you could have one site with 34 students in every 6th grade class and a site with 32 students in every 6th-grade class and a site with 31 students in every 6th-grade class. The average of all the sites 6th-grade classes would still be within the 32.3 ratios.

Class Size 7-8

This one is trickier; it follows the CA Ed Code from 1964. It is much like the 4-6 class size because the average ratio is by grade throughout the whole district. The number is the greater of the two:

29.9 or what AVUSD's average number of students per teacher in 1964 (which was between 37 and 38). This ratio also uses the prep period to calculate the ratio. For instance, if a teacher has 42 kids for 6 out of 7 periods, the average is still $42 \times 6 = 252$. Then you divide the 252 students into 7 periods and still get an average of 36 students per period. (I know it is ridiculous, but this is what is stated in [ed code](#)).

High School

High School has no limits, but they average the classes by doing the same trick as grade 7 and 8. This ratio also uses prep periods into the ratio. For instance, if a teacher has 42 kids for 6 out of 7 periods, the average is still $42 \times 6 = 252$. Then you divide the 252 students in between the 7 periods and still get an average of 36 students per period. [Here are some rules, they must follow.](#)

I have seen the severe unbalance of your classes since becoming President. If you have a class that is really full and a class that isn't, (the counselors are doing their best placing all the students in the amount of time and classes they are given at startup) please ask your principal if they can balance it better. Sometimes, it is as easy as buying out a prep period or adding a class. It doesn't hurt to ask and when you do, email it and cc me, so I can check up (pester) them and the District Office about it!

Every year we ask to get more detailed language, but the District Office doesn't want to have their hands tied. The union does ask if this is important when we do the annual negotiation's survey because it would cost money to make it more detailed and have caps in each grade. However, when surveyed it does not come close to the top of priorities of members to fight for in Negotiations.

September 2019 Tip of the Month: Electronic Devices

This month's tip is to NEVER hand over your PERSONAL device to the district or law enforcement without a subpoena.

However, if it belongs to the district, you must give it to them. That is why I don't use my work Chromebook, IPAD, MacBook, etc. for any personal use. It has eyes (camera), ears (microphone) and a GPS Locator. Who cares if it is in your car over the weekend and you are visiting the BIG Eared Mouse? However, what would happen if you are there during a weekday when you are supposed to be at work? They could ping it and there is no explaining that place away. They can even look at the GPS locator later when someone hints of impropriety or a social media post makes its way to the district. For example, if a teacher is out sick for a week with a doctor's note, but in reality went to Italy on an unplanned work week vacation, and takes the work Chromebook with them to call into Aeries, do sub plans, etc., it would be possible for them to check the GPS locator and "discover" the truth.

Electronic devices this day and age are connected through Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, hotspots, and clouds. Connecting to a school or district Wi-Fi or checking your work email from your own personal device allows them an opening into anything you have on that device. That is why it is so important to separate home and work accounts and devices. As teachers, we are held to a higher standard than most and can lose our credentials for things that normal workers would not. Therefore, a picture of you drinking shots on the bar should not be seen by your bosses, but if it is on your phone that you use to check your work email or connect to AVUSD's Wi-Fi, they could. Recently we had an issue where the tech guy at a site went class to class searching for a phone connected to AVUSD's Wi-Fi that had malware on it. They interrupted classes and asked teachers to hand over their phone, most did because they were not even thinking.

If you are asked to hand over your phone you ask them for a subpoena. It will take the district time to get the subpoena if they can, and by that time, the union will have gotten you legal advice on what to do. If your personal devices are connected to AVUSD's Wi-Fi, please disconnect them now and forget the network. We are in the land of unlimited data really worth the amount you save? As always if you have any questions, email me.

November Tip of the Month- District Technology Use

Sorry, it has been a while since my last tip. Between the sites' lunch visits with the superintendent, assuming the treasurer job until the election was completed, and member investigations, I haven't had the time to sit down to write the Monthly Tip of the month. November's tip is on technology use. All of you have had to sign an internet agreement to even get an AVUSD email account and then sign them yearly to keep it. There have been some issues with people sending emails to the whole certificated staff (admin included) by mistake and on purpose. The district does not allow you to send an email to all certificated staff unless you have prior approval and normally Laura Nunes (Trenae's assistant) will send it for you.

Board Policy 4040 states the following:

- 1) the employee is responsible for their account and using it for personal use is not allowed. For instance, if this is your only email and you use this to get personal correspondence, bills, and confidential information, it is not allowed.
- 2) The district reserves the right to monitor any account and employees should have no expectation of privacy. For example, if you go on an inappropriate site, someone sees something on your computer, or an internet search alerts the technology department, they have the right to look).
- 3) Technology cannot be used for discrimination, threats, obscenity religion or political beliefs. This is why AVUTA sends things to your personal email.

Lastly, if any of these items or others mentioned in the attachments may result in "Cancellation of the employee's user privileges, disciplinary action, and or legal action". Please take your time when you are emailing and make sure you know exactly who you are sending an email to, what website you are visiting, or that you are not using the district's internet or computer for personal use.

December 2019 Tip of the Month Catastrophic Leave Donation

Our December 2019 Tip of the month has to do with donating leave to fellow colleagues. Unfortunately, a member cannot donate to a fellow colleague just because they run out of sick leave. It has to be because something catastrophic has happened and it will be for an extended amount of time (more than 5 consecutive days absent). For instance, emergency surgery, longer than normal maternity leave, diagnosis of long-term illness, etc. If you believe you fall under one of these categories, you have to follow the attached Board Policy 4261.9.

- 1) Write a letter and include verifying documentation including a doctor's note that is signed by the employee and indicated the incapacitating nature and probable duration of the illness/injury to the personnel office.
- 2) If it is determined you qualify you can ask colleagues to donate accrued vacation/sick leave time. You may not ask beforehand and you may not send a blanket email to all certificated staff because it violates the Technology Use board policy.
- 3) A single employee can only donate 5% of their current sick time. For example, if I have 100 hours of leave time, I can only donate 5% of that, which would 5 hours.
- 4) The requesting employee can not pressure others to donate.

I have attached the board policy and donation form to this email. Please follow the policy as it affects all of us when not followed.

January 2020 Tip of the Month Certificated Sub Rate

February is close to being done and once again I am playing catch up. Negotiations, board meetings, non re-elects, discipline meetings, and replacing the AVUTA Treasurer has encompassed my time. I am hoping that with the new treasurer taking over, I will have some freed-up time. This month's tip is about subbing when there is a sub shortage.

Do know that according to Article 13 A.3 and 13 A.4 of our contract, a certificated member gets \$50.00 an hour when AVUSD is shorts subs and they have to sub instead. It works a little different by segment so I will split it up as follows:

HS/Phoenix 7-8/SBA 7-8) Period School Subbing: This is where you sub a class period with a full roster of students. It is a teacher's responsibility to write on a timecard and have all pertinent info (teacher name, date, period, amount)

K-6/K-8 (Sandia and Mariana) Non-Period School Subbing: This is where you sub for a class that has been split among several teachers. The total per hour is \$50, but split among the total amount of teachers it took to split the students. For instance, if a class is split and sent to 3 teachers, the amount each teacher will get will be $50/3=\$17$ per hour you have them. One of the teachers on the above-mentioned day would get $\$17 \times 7.18=\122.00 . I know it isn't \$50 an hour, but sometimes teachers only have 5 kids out of the split class and we have come a long way in getting more money when this happens.

This was renegotiated last year with the hourly rate increase. Even if your office manager doesn't write it correctly, Celeste in Payroll has assured me she pays it correctly. I have attached the amended article from last year that you can share with your principal and office manager. You still have to fill out a timecard, it is not the responsibility of the office manager. You can write it on your time card like this: ($\$50/3$ teachers).

February 2020 Tip of the Month-Flexible Spending Account

This month's tip is about the flexible spending account that American Fidelity (AF) offers during open enrollment in May to AVUSD employees. The reason I chose to do this particular tip is because it came up at Rep Council and a lot of the people in the room did not know about this product. I am not receiving any kickback or freebies from American Fidelity for telling you about this, but it is such a great product, I felt the need to inform you of it.

A Healthcare Flexible Spending Account (FSA) or (HCFSAs) allows you to deduct money from your paycheck, pre-tax, and deposit those funds into an account to pay for eligible medical expenses. I have attached an intro video from American Fidelity regarding their FSA card. Expenses include prescriptions, dental and vision essentials, deductibles, and copayments. Also attached to this email is a list of things you can purchase using the FSA

You can put up to \$2750 on the card for the 2020 tax year and it is taken out of your paycheck for 10 months out of the year (it is also pre-taxed so you end up paying less out of your paycheck than you think). If you don't know how much to load on your card, use this AF estimator (<https://americanfidelity.com/support/fsa-worksheet/>). You are given a debit card with the amount you select to use preloaded on July 1st of each year. You can use the debit card at any place that accepts it (doctors, chiropractors, optometrist, dentist, etc.) and if they don't, you just upload the receipt on the phone app or website and they deposit the money within 5 days into a bank account you selected. If you pay with the debit card, just keep the receipt because sometime they ask you to upload it and if you don't, they will pause your card until you do so.

What I love about it is that it is preloaded in July. When do teachers have time to go to medical appointments? Summer. However, we also spend the most money then because we are not working, on vacation, and buying things for our classroom for the next school year. This card allows me to go to the eye doctor and get my glasses and sunglasses without having to cough up any additional money. I even use mine for massages and essential oil purchases, however my doctor had to write a prescription that I emailed to American Fidelity. I have to upload my receipts for these things and then get reimbursed 5 days later. You can use it for any member of the family that is covered under your insurance.

One drawback, if you don't spend the money by August of the following year (they give you a grace period), you lose it. However, American Fidelity (https://fsastore.com/?a_aid=540f02ea1da1f&utm_source=American+Fidelity&utm_medium=TPA+Public+Banner&utm_campaign=TPA+Partner) and Amazon (<https://www.amazon.com/FSA-Store/b?ie=UTF8&node=17904040011>) have a store that allows you to spend your FSA money on items that have been preapproved. You just have to add your card to Amazon under the FSA tab. Things like Band-Aids, braces, etc. are things you can purchase for later use.

In order to sign up or ask questions about the FSA card, make an appointment with American Fidelity in May when they come to your site or the district office. You can also go online to FSA and it has a FAQ section (<https://americanfidelity.com/support/hcfsa/>). I will send an email out once I know the schedule.

Once again, this is just a tip. I have had my FSA for about 10 years and love it. If you have any questions, you can email me or write them down and ask the AF rep when you speak with them.