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Following Teacher Layoffs, Six in Ten SD52 Classrooms Are Overcapacity

According to a recent survey of teachers in SD52, as many as six out of every ten classes in the district is currently overcapacity. A class is overcapacity when the number of students exceeds either the class size limit or the class composition limit. The survey was conducted in the first two weeks of the new school year by the PRDTU and reflects overcapacity levels as of Sept. 17, 2021.

Over 60 PRDTU members participated in the online survey and 61.7% of the classroom teachers who responded to the survey reported that their class is overcapacity in terms of class composition. A class exceeds the class composition limit when there are more than three students with a special education designation or when there are more than two students with a “low-incidence” special education designation.

Students with a special education designation require additional support from their classroom teacher. Class composition limits help balance a teacher’s time to meet the educational needs of all students. When these limits are exceeded, teachers struggle to support all learners and must reduce the supports that each student will receive. Overcapacity classes restrict access to help, increase workloads, and reduce how much individual time each student will receive from their teacher.

“When SD52 laid off nearly 10% of its teachers it reduced the level of supports that all students have access to,” said PRDTU President Gabriel Bureau. “Clearly, the school district needs more, not fewer, teachers to bring class sizes to the levels required for meeting the educational needs of our students.”

Many of the laid off teachers provided additional supports to teachers whose classes were overcapacity last year. Given this, the PRDTU expects a shortage in student support teachers and teachers on call for the upcoming school year. This may result in an increased use of non-certified teachers to cover the shortages caused by the layoffs last year.

“At the time of last year’s decision to cut instructional spending, managers said these cuts were required due to budget challenges. But there should be no layoffs of teachers when there are this many overcapacity classes,” said Bureau. “Instructional spending should be the school district’s number one priority, especially when so many students are in classes that exceed the class composition limits for SD52.”