

BASE REVENUE LIMIT YEARS

Data is only as good as the story it tells. And to understand the story of TTA salary settlements with TUSD means we must look at our history. Where we came from lends insight into how we got to where we are now. This story goes back to before The Great Recession (2008-2012) to the days of a different way to finance school districts.

The old school finance system paid a BASE REVENUE LIMIT (BRL) for each student using average daily attendance (ADA) and then gave a funded amount in Categorical Programs (such as class size reduction, PAR, Special Education, ELD, and professional development) in which that money could only be spent in the designated programs in which TUSD participated. During the BRL years, TUSD was given the rather contradictory title of a “low wealth” district. This basically meant that TUSD relied more on property taxes because of supposed land wealth. The BRL system locked Torrance into a lower dollar amount per student than most of our neighboring districts even though Torrance demographics changed substantially over the years to the point that property taxes did not adequately supplement the education budget like other low wealth or “basic aid” districts (like Palos Verdes and Beverly Hills). Even capturing 96% of the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) from the state through negotiations in 2006 meant that Torrance teachers were still paid less than surrounding districts because TTA and TUSD were negotiating increases on a smaller amount of money than other districts.

The BRL history shows that under Dr. Don Stabler (Chief Business Officer) and Dr. George Mannon (Superintendent) TUSD generally paid teachers more than 75% of new money coming from the COLA except for The Great Recession years. However, that didn’t mean that all went smoothly. In the months before The Great Recession, TTA and TUSD reached a tentative agreement for a 3.5% raise. TTA membership ratified the agreement. The Board of Education contemplated not approving that ratified agreement because of their fears of what the impending recession would bring to the district. TTA Leadership worked tirelessly to get that ratified salary increase pushed through. Even during the recession, TTA Negotiators worked diligently to secure language wins despite being in concessionary bargaining cycles—wins like “no tell” days and the sick leave incentive. Hindsight has shown that TUSD overreacted to the dismal financial picture and built a 30%+ reserve on the backs of educators deeply impacting students and their learning environment. Hence, in the four years after The Great Recession, TTA negotiated raises that exceeded COLA and demanded that TUSD put that huge reserve back into the classroom with the students and teachers where it belonged.

THE EFFECTS OF THE GREAT RECESSION

School Years 2006-2013	COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) (11.26% total)	Settlement (6% total)	Settlement % of COLA (53% total)
2006-2007	6.77%	6.5%	96%
2007-2008	4.5%	3.5%	77%
2008-2009	2.9%	0%	0%
2009-2010	-8%	0%	0%
2010-2011	-39%	-4% (5 furlough days)	n/a
2011-2012	2.24%	-4% (5 furlough days)	-56%
2012-2013	3.24	4% + fringe contribution	123%

Red = below 50% of COLA
Yellow = 51-74% of COLA
Green = 75+% of COLA

CBO 2006-2016 = Dr. Don Stabler (red and green)

BRL ends.

LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA (LCFF) BEGINS

In 2013, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a restructuring of the way school districts are funded. The new system was called the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). While BRL and Categorical Programs no longer existed, the effects of decades of underfunding remained.

Under the new formula, all school districts are given a BASE GRANT. In the base grant, school districts receive a different base amount per student based upon their grade level. For example, the state paid TUSD \$6,337 per K-3 student while paying only \$3,493 per middle school student in last year’s base grant. About 90% of school districts qualify for a SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT that is tied to “unduplicated pupil” counts of students with the most need—like foster youth and homeless students. Supplemental funds are tied to the students they are designed to serve. About half of school districts

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qualify for CONCENTRATION GRANT funds for having over 60% of students being part of the unduplicated pupil significant subgroups with the most need. Like many suburban districts, TUSD receives the BASE GRANT and the SUPPLEMENTAL GRANT—but DOES NOT RECEIVE CONCENTRATION GRANT funds (like LAUSD and Long Beach).

With the LCFF coming into place, TTA demanded that TUSD start to pay teachers what they were owed from getting the district through The Great Recession years, particularly for the lost wages due to furlough days and restoration of positions lost due to layoffs. That payback was incomplete due to continued lower funding per student because of an inadequate Base Grant.

TUSD changed spending priorities at this time as well. The District chose to expand the number of programs and the administrative coordinator and director classes. They created a “breadth” model that added certificated positions through several one-time money and grants from the state, then kept the positions in place after the one-time money was exhausted. With this program proliferation came the creation of administrative positions to oversee these numerous projects/programs. TTA was concerned about the sustainability of this model. TTA worried that the instability in funding sources could lead to future layoffs. Also, TTA identified that this TUSD priority created the inability to focus resources on recruitment and retention due to prioritizing money into sustaining programs instead. Also, TTA foresaw teacher shortages. That is why TTA Leadership prioritized recruitment and retention as a top organizational goal as early as the inception of the LCFF in 2013. As a matter of fact, at every LCAP (Local Control Accountability Plan) consultation meeting with TUSD Administrators, TTA made recruitment and retention our number one priority. TUSD disagreed with TTA’s priority citing that Torrance is a “Destination District” and that teachers are willing to take a pay cut to teach here.

There was so much disagreement over the post-recession “rebuilding” that the TTA Executive Board refused to endorse school board candidates in 2013 even though we had supported them in prior elections. And after the Board of Education chose to unilaterally impose a contract rather than continue negotiating in good faith in spring 2018, TTA Leadership ensured that members of the school board were held accountable by ousting three sitting members of the board in elections the following fall. The priority differences between TTA and TUSD led to a chill in relational dialogue and working collaboratively to resolve issues—so much so that the distrust from that time period unfortunately still lingers in relations to this day.

School Years 2013-2020	Funded COLA (10.97%)	Settlement (12.36% + off schedule, fringe, & CSR)	Settlement % of COLA (113%+ off schedule, fringe, and CSR)
2013-2014	1.57%	2% + class size reduction	127%
2014-2015	.85%	4.36%	512%
2015-2017	1.02%	\$2800 off schedule + \$500 in fringe in 15-16; 4% prospective for 16-17	392%+
2017-2018	1.56%	1% Jan. 1, 2018 (equalling .5 for the year) + 1% July 1, 2018 (imposed)	32% in 17-18
2018-2019	2.51%	(the 1% imposed for July 1, 2018)	40% in 18-19
2019-2020	3.46%	0%--prospectively bargained salary of 2.5% for 20-21* \$150 for COVID online supplies negotiated by MOU.	0%

*2019-2020 Negotiations cycle ended during the COVID shutdown with great economic uncertainty, hence the salary was made prospective while awaiting the state’s answers on how to fund schools in the coming year. MOUs were signed during this time adding some additional one-time funds for teachers setting up online instruction.

Red = below 50% of COLA
Yellow = 51-74% of COLA
Green = 75+% of COLA

CBO 2006-2016 = Dr. Don Stabler (green)
CBO 2016-2020 = Dr. Tim Stowe (all red)

TTA Leadership has continued to hold true to our Core Values and Organizational Goals, including the top goal to “establish and maintain comparable and competitive salaries/benefits utilizing revenues and reserves that builds a comprehensive salary schedule and benefits program for the unit member at TUSD expense in order to attract the highest

level of professional personnel.” But note, just because it is our goal, doesn’t make it a reality. That takes long term, constant organizing among our members around the goals to create the movement we seek from the Board of Education.

Regardless, TUSD’s salary schedule has historically remained uncompetitive because it started from an uncompetitive place to begin with—and in the aftermath of The Great Recession, the TUSD Board of Education and top administration did not see the need to take bold action to recruit and retain teachers. For years, TTA Leadership has lobbied and pushed for TUSD administrators to take a long view because TTA identified that teacher shortages would create new and different problems—and frankly, our educators deserve to be valued as the great educators they are. TUSD’s mantra that Torrance is a “Destination District” that people want to come to work for regardless of low pay sets us all up for hardships we are currently facing in workload and undervaluing pay.

THE COVID EFFECT

In the spring of 2020, the COVID global pandemic shut down schoolhouses moving the profession online temporarily. The shutdown left everyone in a state of economic uncertainty—whether teachers would even have jobs was in question in the early months. Having a strong state and local union allowed for teachers to remain working and fighting for accommodations for members’ and students’ safety. Continued uncertainty was exacerbated by a school board eager to return to an open schoolhouse as soon as possible regardless of the workload it caused. The retirement of Dr. Mannon in the early onset of the pandemic also created uncertainty. Trust in TUSD was already low in the aftermath of the 2018 imposition, but when Dr. Tim Stowe was selected as Dr. Mannon’s interim replacement without completing the hiring process promised to employees, that distrust deepened. When Dr. Stowe shifted roles, Dr. Keith Butler was hired as CBO. After serving only one year in their new roles, each received a substantial raise (double what was negotiated for teachers), along with Dr. Krumpke, the Chief Academic Officer. This added to the existing mistrust, but also showed another shift in priorities for TUSD. Instead of proliferating programs, TUSD showed that it prioritized keeping programs that aren’t regularly reviewed for efficacy while spreading those practitioners thin and paying top administrators above the median with comparison districts—while all other employees, including [site administrators](#), struggle with below median pay.

TUSD Administrator	Salary Ranking Among Comparison Districts ‘22-‘23
Dr. Tim Stowe—Superintendent	1*
Dr. Keith Butler—CBO	1
Dr. Kati Krumpke—CAO	1
Gil Mara—Technology Officer	2
Dr. Dylan Farris—CPO	4

*ranked highest after the retirement of RBUSD’s Steven Keller in December 2022. Current RBUSD Superintendent Dr. Nicole Wesley’s salary is based upon [news reports](#).

Information is based upon data from Transparent California [2022 data](#). Two comparison districts did not yet have 2022 data available.

During the uncertainty of the COVID years—March 2020 to June 2023—TTA Leadership and Negotiators continued to fight for member safety, extra pay for extra work (like stipends for teachers who taught simultaneously in class and online), as well as the lion’s share of statutory COLA. Luckily, with NEA working at the federal level and CTA working at the state level, COVID Relief funds and sick leave reimbursements helped provide some relief in school districts across the state 2020-2023. These one-time funds shored up programs and help offset the negative impact of declining enrollment. So much so that TUSD now has double the usual amount in rollover funds from last spring to this fall ([see attached ending balance trends](#)). The problem for TTA Negotiators is that even if it’s possible to negotiate for any of those funds, it’ll be one-time money, not ongoing. TUSD has made it clear that they will not deficit spend, and they will not use one-time funds for ongoing costs.

As for the impact of ADA on this year’s funding, TUSD is showing their math for the hit against statutory COLA. Up until COVID hit, TUSD had steadily received fully funded COLA because declining enrollment, while happening, was a slow trickle. COVID changed that overnight. Not only did enrollment take a hit, but attendance took a big hit—and this negatively impacted LCFF funding for TUSD as the COVID relief money expired. How much money TUSD gets from the state is a formula that includes COLA, adjustments to per pupil funding by grade level, and either the highest of current year ADA, prior year ADA, or an average of the three prior years of ADA ([see attached TUSD formula](#)). For this year’s budget, TUSD used the three-year average because it provided the highest rate in determining how much funding TUSD received from the state. This means that for the first time since the LCFF was put into place, TUSD received less than the statutory amount for COLA because of declining enrollment and lower attendance. According to TUSD’s numbers, which Dr. Butler says have been reviewed for accuracy by independent auditors, last year TUSD was funded at 11.4% of the 13.28% statutory COLA. The projection for funded COLA for this year, 2023-2024, is 5.6%. This projection was based off enrollment

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numbers from last spring. According to Dr. Butler, enrollment numbers will be updated as part of the first interim report—typically presented at the December Board of Education meeting. With TUSD’s current proposal at the table, TTA will have captured 76% of funded COLA since the start of COVID in 2020. With TTA’s current proposal, that number increases to 88%.

School Years 2020-2024	Funded COLA (24.36% funded out of 28.86% statutory COLA)	Settlement (13.5% minimum not including 23-24; 18.5% w/ TUSD; 21.5% w/ TTA)	Settlement % of COLA w/off schedule (55%+ w/o 23-24; 76%+ w/ TUSD; 88%+ w/ TTA)
2020-2021	2.29%	2.5% +1,000 off schedule	109%
2021-2022	5.07%	5%	99%
2022-2023 (closed bargaining year)	6.7% statutory COLA + 6.58% added to LCFF Base Grant= 13.28%; 4.82% funded COLA + 6.58% Base Grant = 11.4%.	Schedule restructure MOU—everyone received a minimum of 6%. Total Compensation cost 8.1%	45% of statutory COLA 53% of funded COLA
2023-2024	8.22% statutory COLA 5.6% funded COLA	TUSD current proposal is 5% TTA’s current proposal is 8%	TUSD current proposal is 89% of funded COLA and 61% of statutory COLA. TTA current proposal is 142% of funded COLA and 97% of statutory COLA.

Red = below 50% of COLA
Yellow = 51-74% of COLA
Green = 75+% of COLA

CBO 2020-present = Dr. Keith Butler (green/yellow)

TUSD’S SALARY EQUALIZATION PLAN

Dr. Stowe and Dr. Butler have shown that they are willing to shift money to employees in the past few negotiations’ cycles because, as TTA Leadership predicted, TUSD is experiencing teacher shortages—particularly in special education. Also, the Board of Education is on record saying that they want TUSD educators to have competitive pay. TUSD is finding fewer teachers willing to take pay cuts to come to work for them. Destination District or not, competitive pay must become and stay a priority. This past January, the Board of Education made a public commitment to work toward competitive pay for its employees. They instructed Dr. Butler to conduct a cell-by-cell analysis of each TUSD salary schedule compared to our agreed upon comparison districts. TUSD hired School Services of California to apply a methodology to the study. The end product was called “salary equalization.” Since the 22-23 school year was a closed bargaining year (meaning TTA could not reopen contract negotiations for the 22-23 year), TUSD brought forward their equalization plan to correct historical structural issues with salary schedules and begin the process of moving to competitive pay in the district. In subsequent months, TTA Negotiators have been taking a deeper look at the equalization data and have identified concerns that provide challenges in moving toward competitive pay. These include:

1. There is a one-year data lag—the TUSD salary schedules were brought up to the median of comparison districts using prior year data. So, the schedule is competitive (supposedly) with last year’s salaries in the eleven comparison districts.
2. Column 6, steps 20 & 50 should have been normed to comparison districts’ top salaries but were instead compared to year 20 steps resulting in a greater lag in those two cells.
3. Top paid administrators rank well above the median while site administrators, teachers, and other employees struggle below the median.

Because of these concerns, TTA membership is lobbying the Board of Education to hold true to their commitment to competitive salaries. Since deficit spending and dipping into the reserves have been taken off the table by TUSD, competitive salaries may not be accomplished during this bargain. But that doesn’t mean that the quest for competitive salaries is over. It has only just begun. TTA is asking members to assist in the lobbying effort beyond the contract negotiations to hold TUSD to their commitment. Our students deserve highly qualified teachers who aren’t overworked, undervalued, and feeling disrespected. In the end, this is all about TUSD’s priorities. As we move forward with this bargain and beyond it, competitive salaries, manageable workload, and teacher agency for all employees will be our top organizational goals—so that our children can continue to have the highly qualified teachers that they deserve.