

The TORRANCE TEACHER

Published by TORRANCE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION CTA / NEA
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 October 1, 2025

Health Care Premiums Hit Pocketbooks

October 5th Pay Warrants Reflect up to a 43% Increase for All TUSD Employees

Last May, TUSD announced the 2025-2026 health care benefits rates with a much larger than anticipated increase in out-of-pocket expenses for employees. The announcement set off finger pointing and soul searching as to how we all got to this point. While we can look back in time to better understand how we got here, which we will do, determining how to move forward is the most important consideration for members right now.

A Dozen Years

In 2012-13, TTA negotiated an increase in TUSD’s annual contribution to \$9,000 in 2013-2014 (up from \$8,400) and \$10,000 in 2014-2015. In 2015-16, TTA negotiated an additional \$500, putting the cap at its current \$10,500. The TTA team used (and continues to use) the bargaining principal that the individual employee should be covered by TUSD’s contribution. Since 2015-16, TUSD has not raised the premium charged to employees for the EPO plan—until this year (Kaiser was raised last year). In the intervening years, rates that TUSD paid did increase though. Substantially. TUSD just didn’t pass those increases through to the employee. They instead used the benefit pool’s reserve fund to subsidize costs for employees. This past spring, that reserve fund was exhausted, passing the entire 9 years of rate increases to employees all at once.

Enough Blame to Go Around

TTA Leaders met with our labor partners last week. During that meeting, all agreed that labor shouldered some of the blame by becoming too comfortable with the rate passes, but that ultimately, TUSD, who has fiduciary duties to their employees, needs to do better. Each local (CSEA 19, CSEA 845, SEIU 99, and TTA) all agreed that TUSD’s bargaining tactic of forcing labor to choose between salary and fringe contributed to the issue. Labor agreed that being put into a position of benefits subtracting from salary as part of a “total compensation” number at the table stifled labor’s willingness to increase benefit caps—especially when TUSD continued to offer rate passes year after year. TUSD absorbed the increases and thought that they were doing right by employees by trying to keep rates down. But last year, the reserves exhausted, and utilization increased, driving up rates to unexpected levels.

Comparable Districts to TUSD

Salary Comparison				
District	Effective Schedule Date	Beginning Salary BA+30 (or equivalent)	Top Salary Last Column&Row	Top Salary Rank
ABC	7/1/2023	\$ 67,399	\$ 127,886	5
Bellflower	7/1/2025	\$ 75,278	\$ 138,637	2
Burbank	7/1/2023	\$ 63,201	\$ 116,494	12
Culver City	7/1/2023	\$ 64,596	\$ 120,580	9
Downey	8/1/2023	\$ 75,767	\$ 145,180	1
Glendale	7/1/2025	\$ 58,956	\$ 125,703	6
Hacienda La Puente	7/1/2023	\$ 73,716	\$ 134,578	3
Manhattan Beach	7/1/2025	\$ 63,159	\$ 118,867	11
Palos Verdes Peninsula	7/1/2024	\$ 67,427	\$ 123,108	7
Placentia-Yorba Linda	7/1/2024	\$ 61,890	\$ 134,287	4
Redondo Beach	7/1/2023	\$ 67,025	\$ 120,343	10
Torrance	7/1/2025	\$ 65,097	\$ 122,300	8
Average (w/out TUSD)		\$ 67,129	\$ 127,788	
TUSD - Average (difference)		\$ (2,032)	\$ (5,488)	
% needed for TUSD to get to Average		3.12%	4.49%	
Median (w/out TUSD)		\$ 67,025	\$ 125,703	
TUSD - Median (difference)		\$ (1,928)	\$ (3,403)	
% needed for TUSD to get to Median		2.96%	2.78%	

Source for Salary: Posted salary schedules on districts' websites

Benefits Comparison				
District	2020-2021 Benefits Max Annual Employer Contribution	2023-2024 Benefits Max Annual Employer Contribution	% Growth from 20/21 to 23/24	23/24 Benefits Rank
ABC	\$ 21,980	\$ 27,024	22.95%	4
Bellflower	\$ 16,157	\$ 19,577	21.17%	6
Burbank	\$ 12,000	\$ 16,750	39.58%	10
Culver City	\$ 11,499	\$ 17,154	49.18%	9
Downey	\$ 28,162	\$ 30,049	6.70%	3
Glendale	\$ 29,247	\$ 36,843	25.97%	1
Hacienda La Puente	\$ 11,900	\$ 12,900	8.40%	11
Manhattan Beach	\$ 20,923	\$ 24,006	14.73%	5
Palos Verdes Peninsula	\$ 8,484	\$ 17,229	103.08%	8
Placentia-Yorba Linda	\$ 28,955	\$ 33,123	14.39%	2
Redondo Beach	\$ 17,917	\$ 17,917	0.00%	7
Torrance	\$ 10,500	\$ 10,500	0.00%	12
Average (w/out TUSD)	\$ 18,839	\$ 22,961	21.88%	
TUSD - Average (difference)	\$ (8,339)	\$ (12,461)		
% needed for TUSD to get to Average	79.41%	118.68%		
Median (w/out TUSD)	\$ 17,917	\$ 19,577	9.26%	
TUSD - Median (difference)	\$ (7,417)	\$ (9,077)		
% needed for TUSD to get to Median	70.64%	86.45%		

Source for Benefits: Ed Data

The Promise of Equalization Guttled

In 2022-2023, during a year in which TTA did not have the ability to reopen for negotiations, the state issued an unexpectedly large COLA. TUSD had been looking to restructure the teacher salary schedule, which was an expensive task. During that year, TUSD brought forward its “salary equalization” plan to norm each cell of the salary schedule against our mutually agreed upon comparison districts to raise TUSD salaries “to the median or better.” Every member got at least a 6% raise, with some getting as high as \$17.5%. Since 2013, TTA members have had salary increases of a minimum of 35.36% (up to 46.36% depending on salary equalization) with 2% longevity and \$4,800 off schedule. Despite these increases, TUSD still hasn’t caught up with our comparison districts. As of the start of this school year, TTA ranks 8th of 12 in top salary and 7th of 12 in beginning salary. Those rankings take a stark turn for the worse when benefits are included. Torrance ranks dead last in benefits contributions. When benefits are added to salary, TUSD drops to from 7th/8th to last because the contribution to benefits is so abysmally low. TUSD now has a problem that won’t be easy to fix. To get to the “median or better”—as promised during the equalization process—becomes a difficult task even with a good plan. And TUSD has yet to put forward a plan that gets salary to the median or better, much less benefits.

District	Top Salary + Benefits (combined)	Rank
Downey	\$ 175,229	1
Placentia-Yorba Linda	\$ 167,410	2
Glendale	\$ 162,546	3
Bellflower	\$ 158,214	4
ABC	\$ 154,910	5
Hacienda La Puente	\$ 147,478	6
Manhattan Beach	\$ 142,873	7
Palos Verdes Peninsula	\$ 140,337	8
Redondo Beach	\$ 138,260	9
Culver City	\$ 137,734	10
Burbank	\$ 133,244	11
Torrance	\$ 132,800	12
Average (w/out TUSD)	\$ 150,749	
TUSD - Average (difference)	\$ (17,949)	
% needed for TUSD to get to Average	13.52%	
Median (w/out TUSD)	\$ 147,478	
TUSD - Median (difference)	\$ (14,678)	
% needed for TUSD to get to Median	11.05%	

What’s Next?

TUSD is already investigating options to bring to the Insurance Advisory Committee (comprised of representatives from all stakeholder groups), such as joining a larger insurance pool. TTA and our labor partners are demanding a plan that addresses bringing contributions to the “median or better” along with salary. Labor maintains that TUSD is losing highly qualified talent to work in the district because of the excessive out-of-pocket burden of healthcare coupled with salaries that just aren’t competitive. TUSD has spent a lot of time, effort, and money investing in top administrators and expanding midlevel management. TTA and our labor partners are demanding that same level of investment in the frontline workers who provide an excellent and safe learning environment for over 22,000 students. TUSD employees have done more with less for far too long. TUSD ranks 4th among our comparison districts in the percentage of students who meet or exceed state standards, yet we continue to be compensated in a less than commiserate manner. Our members constantly go above and beyond enacting the Portrait of a Graduate and creating a growth mindset and lifelong learning for our children. TTA is working with our labor partners and TUSD to determine options that we will be presenting to members for feedback as we negotiate a successor agreement in the spring. In the meantime, TTA has a reopener contract negotiation this fall in which we have prioritized salary to offset some of the increased benefits cost. So, be on the lookout for negotiations updates regarding the reopeners in the coming weeks. Also, members are invited to join the TTA Competitive Compensation Action Committee that will meet regularly as well. Their first meeting of the year is today, October 1st, at the TTA Office.

Final Slate of Candidates for CTA State Council Seats

CTA State Council seats are elected at large and in accordance with CTA Election Bylaws and Standing Rules.

CTA State Council Seat 1
America Moreno

CTA State Council Seat 2
No Declared Candidate

Each seat is for a three-year term. There will be space for write-in candidates for each seat. Ballot boxes will be delivered on Monday, October 6th with the election being held October 7th-10th. Ballot boxes must be returned to the TTA Office by 5 PM on October 10th. Ballots will be counted on Friday, October 10th beginning at 5:30 PM.

Special Education Action Committee Meets

The Special Education Action Committee met on September 23rd. The Committee identified issues surrounding inclusion as a top concern in addition to the ongoing issues such as staffing, access to protocols and materials and training on safety protocols. TTA leaders continue to work with members on several issues, including workload and working environment, workplace violence, staffing, and seemingly arbitrary movement of special educators.

TTA leadership has also been meeting regularly with Deanna Sinfield (Assistant Superintendent of Student Services), Dr. Rosa Isiah (Assistant Superintendent of Education Services), Julio Hernandez (Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources), and Dr. Tim Stowe (Superintendent).

Site organizing and coordination with labor partners at Magruder MS recently scored a win when their organizing efforts reversed arbitrary movement of special education personnel. TTA members, in support of our CSEA 845 partners, made the case that the staff movement created inconsistencies and undue workload and stress on those being moved.

It has also been reported that school psychologists have yet again started the year without the necessary protocols and assessments to do their work. Mrs. Sinfield said that she is aware of the issue as TUSD is in the process of moving protocols online. But she reiterated that no one should have to go without and to cc: her on requests. TUSD has also unilaterally added to their workload. The Association will continue to work with TUSD to find remedies for these and other issues.

Staffing continues to be a top priority districtwide. TTA has requested information on elementary learning center staffing ratios as part of an ongoing grievance process started last spring. Another significant issue that is “huge on the radar” according to Mrs. Sinfield is that of ensuring training on de-escalation and on what type of training to provide “behavior emergencies.” She says she is digging deeper into best practices for TUSD to use moving forward. She said she was a CPI trainer for 18 years, but she is investigating other options to better serve students and educators. She also acknowledged that TUSD needs to assist educators on collaborative teaching models that have been rolled out with little to no structure and minimal support. Mrs. Sinfield also requested time to get together with school psychologists to work with them on their issues.

While our conversations have been positive, TTA leaders are looking for actions that support the words. Both Mrs. Sinfield and Dr. Isiah are interested in more direct communication with employees and building more responsive systems for our educators.

In the interim, continue to report your special education issues to your site representatives and TTA Executive Board members—and join the Special Education Action Committee. Committee membership is open to all TTA members. The committee is working on developing updated contract language proposals for future negotiations with the intent of addressing the many needs that exist. The committee will meet next on October 27th at 4:15 PM at the TTA office.

WHAT IS PROP 50?

The Election Rigging Response Act is a bold response from California to a blatant power grab by Texas Republicans working with the Trump administration to slash funding for public education, healthcare and more to provide tax cuts for billionaires.



You can learn more at: stopelectionrigging.com

WHY DOES IT MATTER TO US?

Congressional Republicans are trying to rig elections to cut funding for public education and services for our communities. Critical funding for special education, school meals for hungry children and more has already been slashed and jeopardized. Now is the time for union educators to stand together and fight back against the nine members of congress in California who threw our students under the bus and voted to cut critical funds for public education.



Learn more about how these cuts have impacted your district at: cta.org/trumpcuts

HOW TO TAKE ACTION

1. Vote YES on Prop 50 on, or before, November 4
2. Visit cta.org/prop50 to sign up for more information on how to volunteer



Ready, set, go!

Starting a new job comes with lots of opportunities — including the chance to protect your paycheck and peace of mind.



New to your district this school year? This offer is for you.

- ✔ **CTA-endorsed Disability insurance:**
Helps protect your paycheck if you're unable to work due to illness, injury, pregnancy or childbirth.
- ✔ **CTA-endorsed Life insurance:**
Coverage options up to \$400,000* to help protect your loved ones.



Apply within 270 days of your start date with no health questions asked at standard.com/cta/newhire

*Coverage reduces to 65% of the amount in force at age 70, 45% of the amount in force at age 75 and 30% of the amount in force at age 80. Offer not available to retirees. For costs and further details of the coverage, including exclusions, benefit waiting periods, any reductions or limitations and the terms under which the policies may be continued in force, please contact Standard Insurance Company at 800.522.0406. Standard Insurance Company, 1100 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, OR 97204 GP190-LTD/S399/CTA.1 GP190-LIFE/S399/CTA.3 SI 25154-CTAvol-A (5/25)

COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION ACTION COMMITTEE

Wednesday October 1st
4:15pm
TTA Office
1619 Cravens Ave

SAVE NOW BUY LATER

BUDGET

ZERO DEBT

SAVINGS

Don't agonize ORGANIZE

Florynce Kennedy

TTA Organizing Team Meeting
October 8
4:15 PM
TTA Office

**SHIRT UP!
SHOW UP!**

JOIN TTA & LABOR
TUSD BOE
6 PM
OCTOBER 13TH
@EMB

ACTION COMMITTEE

SPECIAL EDUCATION

OCTOBER 27TH
4:15 @ TTA OFFICE