

The TORRANCE TEACHER

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1619 CRAVENS AVENUE, TORRANCE, CA 90501 (310) 320-8200 www.torrance teachers.org
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NEGOTIATIONS EDITION

Tentative Agreement Reached for Reopener Urgency to Offset Impact of Benefits Increases Drives Quick Settlement

The TTA Negotiations Team met with the TUSD Team on October 29th for the 2025-2026 Reopeners. By the end of the day, the teams had reached a tentative agreement on salary and benefits.

Many members reached out to their elected representatives expressing surprise at the quick turnaround for this bargain. Some questioned whether the TTA team acted with due diligence by not going back for multiple sessions. But this bargain was always intended to be short. The Negotiations Team presented their recommendations for bargaining strategy to the TTA Executive Board in October and were given the green light to proceed with the plan as presented.

For context, contract reopeners have limits on the number of articles that can be opened by either team. Those limits are negotiated during successor bargains. The limits agreed upon by TTA and TUSD in 2023 were to have salary, benefits, up to two articles, and one item of mutual consent (usually calendar) during two rounds of reopeners. TTA's initial proposal for this round of reopeners listed salary, benefits, one article (discipline), and calendar. TUSD's initial proposal listed salary, benefits, and calendar. When bargaining commenced, TTA, as approved by the Executive Board, pulled the discipline article and calendar. TUSD agreed to pull the calendar. This allowed both teams to focus solely on salary and benefits.

TTA's goal coming into the room was to capture all the state-funded COLA to TUSD and more for benefits. The immediate goal was to offset the net loss in pay for members due to the health premium increase as much as possible. TTA negotiators feel they accomplished this goal. On Thursday, November 6th, the TTA Executive Board agreed by voice vote to send the tentative agreement out to the membership for ratification.

TUSD's state-funded COLA (based upon ADA) for 2025-2026 is 2.23%. Hence, the agreed upon salary increase is 2.23%. TTA secured a 100% pass through of COLA for salary. TTA was also able to secure a \$2,000 increase to the benefits cap. The cap will move from \$10,500 to \$12,500 on July 1, 2026. The reason for the cap not being retroactive is due to open enrollment laws preventing us from making mid-stream changes. That is where the off-schedule amount of \$1,500 comes in. The off-schedule amount is intended to offset the lack of the \$2,000 cap increase for this school year. TTA and TUSD went back and forth on the amount before landing at \$1,500. The off-schedule amount is not viewed as a bonus by TTA. It is an extension of the cap for this school year. The team recognizes that it is not a 1 for 1 return but felt that going back to the table again to continue going back and forth on the off-schedule amount would cause more harm than good for our members. That harm would be caused by delaying money getting into members' pockets and ensuring that the successor bargain for the whole contract would not start until late spring. By settling now—with ratification and approval—TUSD is locked in for at least the \$2,000 cap increase. And TTA made it very clear that we are coming back for more. TTA leadership is insistent that the short-term goal is to ensure that the individual employee not have to pay out of pocket for benefits. TTA negotiators and leaders take their responsibility to members seriously. When weighing the return on the investment of the extra time needed to only maybe procure a minimal amount of off-schedule money, the team and leadership felt it more beneficial to act swiftly to get money to members and go back for more in the spring.

Next steps include: a ratification vote, school board approval, scheduling of new pay, working with members at forums for successor campaign, development and approval of initial proposal, sunshining that proposal, and negotiating the entire contract. There is a lot of work yet to be done this school year with a whole new round of bargaining coming in the spring if this reopener is ratified and approved.

Ratification Vote Timeline

November 6 th	TTA Executive Board votes to send the tentative agreement to the membership for ratification
November 7 th	The tentative agreement is officially announced and sent to members
November 7 th -December 2 nd	Information period—members attend bargaining forums, representatives hold meetings, information shared, member questions answered
December 1 st	Ratification materials delivered to sites
December 2 nd -5 th	Ratification voting period
December 5 th	Ballot boxes, rosters, materials returned to the TTA office no later than 5:00 PM Ballots counted
December 8 th	Results announced If ratified, TUSD School Board votes for approval—TTA members shirt up and show up to support approval

Why a YES Recommendation?

Members have asked what a yes vote means versus what a no vote means on the contract ratification vote. Here’s what it means and why it matters—and why the TTA Negotiations Team and Executive Board have recommended a YES vote on ratifying the Tentative Agreement.

YES Vote	NO Vote
<p>What it means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New salary will take effect on January 5th pay warrant • Retro check and off-schedule check (two separate checks) will be available by March 5th • TTA negotiators can return to the table in the spring to negotiate more for salary, benefits, work relief, and agency 	<p>What it means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TTA negotiators would return to the table to negotiate for more money • More than likely impasse would be declared • The likely outcomes would be either the current TA is imposed, or the status quo would be declared essentially erasing the entire bargain • If an agreement is reached, it would only be a minimal amount of off-schedule money • The timeline to start the successor agreement would be pushed back until late spring at the earliest.
<p>Why it matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members get money in their pockets quickly to offset the pain of the benefits’ cost increase • TTA members can harness the energy from this win to parlay into a successful spring successor campaign • TTA leaders and members can continue to pressure for a change of TUSD priorities from a space of relational trust 	<p>Why it matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members would not see any new money in their pockets until deep into spring, if then • TTA members would be using their energy for little potential gain

Successor Campaign Update—The Quest for Justice Continues

Martin Luther King, Jr. once echoed the words of Theodore Parker when he said that “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” And justice is what we seek together with our labor partners. We have spent far too long fighting TUSD administrators’ power over us and begging for crumbs. Pope Francis once wrote that “if one person lacks what is necessary to live with dignity, it is because another person is detaining it....” That is why it is imperative that our membership embrace the “five practices of democracy” as we find our power and wield it in the fight for dignity and justice. Those five practices are: building relationships, telling stories, strategizing, acting, and structuring.

Members have been hearing the TTA leadership’s call for relationship building and developing relational trust through benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. That is merely one part of what we need in creating a shared value and future with TUSD. In working to explain this philosophy, model it, and practice it, TTA leadership has evolved in how to approach bargaining. Hence, the change in how to engage with members as we survey through face to face forums as well as digital surveys.

So far, TTA Negotiators have hosted six of eleven scheduled members-only forums to prepare for the successor bargain in which the entire contract is up for negotiations. A twelfth date has been added. Remaining forum dates and locations are as follows:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Room Number</i>
<i>Nov 12 – 4:15 pm</i>	South High School	Rm L2
<i>Nov 12 – 4:15 pm</i>	West High School	Rm 6103
<i>Nov 13 – 4:15 pm</i>	Hickory Elementary	Science Lab
<i>Nov 13 – 4:15 pm</i>	Arnold Elementary School	TBD
<i>Nov 18 – 4:15 pm</i>	TTA Office	1623 Meeting Hall
<i>Dec 3—3:30 PM</i>	Zoom	

TTA leadership believes that we can work together strategically to face the challenges ahead as we identify our shared values and fight for the things we hold dear, like earning living wages, being able to care for our families and community, and feeling psychologically safe and valued as a human being while at work. These shared values have prompted us to continue demanding that administrators and the school board trust, value, and respect us as we hold to our principles seeking agency/autonomy, workload relief, and competitive and dignified compensation. So, join us in preparing for the upcoming successor bargain—and supporting it as we move forward.