

The TORRANCE TEACHER

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Why Now?

How TTA Settled Total Compensation for 2026-2027

By Carlos Anwandter
TTA President

Since the announcement of the tentative agreement on salary and benefits on September 4, TTA leadership has had several inquiries about how this agreement came about, given our previous “last-best-final” proposal in July. We appreciate the feedback and the questions we’ve received, and we believe strongly that transparency builds trust and solidarity. In light of that, we have put together the following report for the membership. As you read the report, please note the following:

1. There are many aspects of the Negotiations process that are confidential. While we believe strongly in transparency, some conversations - both at and away from the official negotiating table - are had in confidence. The effectiveness of the process requires that those conversations remain private.
2. The Negotiations process is NOT a space for organizing tactics. How the Negotiations Team navigates the process and our relationship with the District’s team is strictly governed by PERB (the Public Employees Relations Board). Actions by either side that violate those rules can lead to formal accusations of bad faith bargaining that have the potential to derail the entire process and further damage an already fractious relationship, making future negotiations that much more difficult. For example, holding firm on a position - refusing to move towards an agreement - simply to make a point or to force impasse would be bad faith bargaining.
3. The Negotiations Team does not make decisions in a vacuum. No final decision is made without explicit direction and approval from the TTA Executive Board.

With those important facts in mind, here is a breakdown of how we arrived at the tentative agreement on total compensation:

On July 24, TTA expressed that our proposal of 4% on salary and a \$2,000 increase to the health care cap was our “last-best-final” offer. That position was taken for two key reasons:

1. It was the third time we had presented that exact proposal. If we had not declared “last-best-final,” there was a risk the District would accuse us of bad faith bargaining due to lack of movement.
2. The Negotiations Team had not received direction or authority from the Executive Board to move off of the proposal, so we had to stay at those numbers.

The session closed without a counter to the proposal from the District. The next session was scheduled for September 11th.

During August, Carlos Anwandter (TTA President), Julie Shankle (TTA Executive Director), and Amy Irwin (TTA Negotiations Chair and Vice President) had multiple conversations with District leadership, including members of the Board of Education. These conversations presented a few pertinent facts:

- The Board of Education (BOE) was directing their team to avoid impasse, BUT they were NOT willing to approve any deal that would put the District under their 3% mandatory reserves at any point in time.
- Dr. Butler provided the BOE with projections that our proposal (4% + \$2K) would have put the district under that threshold in two years (the 27-28 school year) and insolvent in the third year (28-29). TTA requested and received copies of those projections.
- Any money added to the healthcare cap must be reported to the county by September 10th in order to be applied to this year’s health plan. Without an agreement before that date, any addition to the healthcare cap would have to wait until July 1, 2027, or be given in the form of a one-time, off schedule bonus. In order to meet the September 10th deadline, the BOE would have to approve the agreement at the September 8th meeting. In light of this deadline, a negotiating session was scheduled for September 4th.
- The district was not willing to negotiate salary and benefits separately, but they did agree to approving any agreed increase to benefits cap via MOU in order to facilitate reporting the increase to the county by the September 10th deadline. **It was made clear to us that the District’s agreement to add this money via MOU was a direct consequence of the pressure brought by members during school board meetings.** TTA insisted that the salary portion of any total compensation agreement be subject to member ratification along with the rest of the tentative agreement.

In light of the information received from these conversations, Julie Shankle contacted CTA Bargaining Specialist Stephanie Tellez, as well as CTA legal, to discuss the situation and gather information to advise TTA leaders. The feedback from CTA was reported to and discussed with Carlos Anwandter and the Negotiations Team with the intention of providing a report and a recommendation for the Executive Board at the September 3rd meeting.

On September 3rd, the TTA Executive Board received Julie’s report and recommendation and had an extended discussion on how to proceed. The result of the discussion was a clear direction, approved without opposition, allowing the Negotiations Team to move off of the “last-best-final” proposal and attempt to arrive at an agreement on total compensation. The primary guidelines were that any deal should maximize members’ net pay after healthcare contributions are deducted and that the total compensation package could not be less than 4.31%, 100% of state funded COLA.

On September 4th, the Negotiations Team met with the District and tentatively agreed to a 3.35% salary increase (retroactive to July 1, 2026) and an additional \$1200 added to the healthcare cap. The healthcare portion of this agreement was approved by the BOE on September 8 and will be effective for this year. The total compensation agreement is 4.31%. **When combined with the \$2,000 added to the cap on July 1, 2026, the full total compensation package for the 26-27 school year is 3.35% salary increase (retroactive to July 1, 2026) and a \$3,200 increase to the healthcare cap, a total compensation package of 5.91%, 1/6% in excess of the 4.31%.**

As mentioned above, the TTA Executive Board made the decision to move off of our “last-best-final” proposal. That decision was the result of a lengthy conversation, with the final decision being made based on many factors, including the following:

Practical Considerations

The conversations with District leadership, especially school board members, made it clear that the BOE would not approve our proposal (4% + \$2K) under any circumstances. Based on the projections given to them by Dr. Butler, the BOE is convinced that our proposal will leave TUSD insolvent in three years. They are simply not willing to take that risk.

Dr. Butler’s projections would have been the determining factor in the impasse process, both in mediation and in fact-finding. Given the findings of those projections, it was highly unlikely that the impasse process would have ended in our favor. Our only chance to change this dynamic would be to prove (to a mediator, a fact-finding panel, and/or the BOE) that Dr. Butler’s projections are incorrect or inaccurate. That would require a lengthy and expensive analysis of the TUSD budget and Dr. Butler’s assumptions and numbers in his projections. This was not a viable option, given the time restraints and the resources available to us. Therefore, the most likely outcome would have been imposition by the District of their “last-best-final” proposal, which at the time was 3% + \$1200 to the cap.

This assessment of the practical situation was confirmed by CTA Bargaining Specialist Stephanie Tellez, who recommended that we move off our “last-best-final” and avoid impasse. Her recommendation highlighted the fact that we were currently only 1% and \$800 apart. Her assessment was that this gap is too small to warrant impasse, and that a refusal to move may incur an accusation of bad faith bargaining against TTA.

Strategic Considerations

First and foremost, the fiduciary duty of the Negotiations Team is to get the best possible deal for the membership. The Executive Board considered several scenarios in giving direction to the Negotiations Team, and ultimately determined that the goal was to maximize the amount of money going directly into members’ pockets. As seen in the charts below, the deal fulfills that direction:

Column 3, Step 1 (all amounts are annual)	25-26	26-27
Gross Salary	\$66,548.00	\$68,778.00
Healthcare Rate (EPO+Dental PPO+VSP+Life)	\$12,863.20	\$14,578.30
Cap Contribution	\$10,500.00	\$13,700.00
Out of Pocket Expense for Individual (Healthcare Rate - Cap Contribution)	\$2,363.20	\$878.30
Net Salary (Gross Salary - Out of Pocket Expense)	\$64,184.80	\$67,899.70 (+\$3,714.90)

Column 4, Step 12 (all amounts are annual)	25-26	26-27
Gross Salary	\$98,786.00	\$102,096.00
Healthcare Rate (EPO+Dental PPO+VSP+Life)	\$12,863.20	\$14,578.30
Cap Contribution	\$10,500.00	\$13,700.00
Out of Pocket Expense for Individual (Healthcare Rate - Cap Contribution)	\$2,363.20	\$878.30
Net Salary (Gross Salary - Out of Pocket Expense)	\$96,422.80	\$101,217.70 (+\$4,794.90)

Column 6, Step 24 (all amounts are annual)	25-26	26-27
Gross Salary	\$125,027.00	\$129,216.00
Healthcare Rate (EPO+Dental PPO+VSP+Life)	\$12,863.20	\$14,578.30
Cap Contribution	\$10,500.00	\$13,700.00
Out of Pocket Expense for Individual (Healthcare Rate - Cap Contribution)	\$2,363.20	\$878.30
Net Salary (Gross Salary - Out of Pocket Expense)	\$122,663.80	\$128,337.70 (+\$5,673.90)

Any negotiated deal includes agreements on BOTH contract language AND salary/benefits. In this bargain, we have reached tentative agreement on a wide range of contract language, and we still have several significant proposals on the table. Impasse on salary and benefits would risk losing the gains we have made in these areas.

Over the last several years, dating all the way back to The Great Recession, TTA has been building strength. The process has been slow, uneven, and frustrating at times, but the reality is that we are stronger now than we ever have been. This strength is evident in our relationships with TUSD leadership, especially the school board. Impasse in this situation would likely have set that progress back significantly, for minimal gain. Like Kenny Rogers famously sang - “You’ve got to know when to hold ‘em, know when to fold ‘em ... “

Organizing Considerations

Finally, the Executive Board considered the situation from an organizing perspective. In the likely event that the impasse process would have ended in imposition, we would have had the option to strike. According to the most recent member survey (from Spring 2026), only 50% of respondents were willing to actually go on strike. In addition, only 65% of members responded to the survey. So, the actual number of members who are willing to strike is about 33%. In order to call a strike, we must have at least 90% of members vote yes on a strike vote. We are clearly not at that threshold yet.

In addition, CTA resources advised the Executive Board that attempting to strike when there is only a 1% gap between us and the district, and when there are no other issues at stake, is not viable. When UTLA threatened to strike last year, they had 10 issues they were fighting for, only one of which was compensation. Those other issues included several workload and classroom environment issues that drew support from parents and the community at large. Without support from parents and the broader community, a strike is far less likely to succeed.

It is clear that, instead of spending precious time and resources on a fight with little if any upside, we are better off closing out this bargaining cycle so that we can preserve the momentum we have established up to this point. Most importantly, we need to build a message that resonates beyond our membership, especially to parents. The experiences of the last few months have revealed that **the core issue in TUSD is divestment from the classroom**. Over the last ten years, the percentage of the budget that has been allocated to the classroom has dropped from an average of 65% to 58% in 26-27. Why is TUSD moving money AWAY from the classroom? Where is that money going? This is an issue that matters to teachers, parents, students, local businesses, and the entire Torrance community. This is an issue on which we can win. Our fight isn’t just for compensation. Our fight is about priorities. This fight is ongoing. And when we fight, we win.

Torrance Teachers Recommend



Ryan Rauzon

TUSD Trustee, Area D

Learn about Ryan at ElectRyanR.com



Why Grievances Are Important

Grievances and Other Tools Are An Extension of Site Organizing

In the past few years, TTA members have taken ownership of the TTA/TUSD Collective Bargaining Agreement, commonly called “the contract” or “CBA,” by filing grievances for TUSD infractions against the mutually agreed upon language. Contract ownership and a willingness to know the protections of the contract assist every member of the Association. It provides a mechanism to hold the District accountable when they don’t live up to their side of the bargain.

Some members have expressed disappointment with the process, expressing that they feel like our enforcement is powerless and that TUSD holds all the cards. It is hard to not feel powerless at times, because the power structure is tilted in the administration’s favor. But it is for that very reason that it is vital to enforce the contract whenever and wherever we can. Contract enforcement is a gauge of the District’s conduct. It allows the Association to determine if there is a specific area of continued violation as well as creating a documented record of TUSD behavior. Filing a grievance also puts the District’s interpretation of the contract language into writing, which can be used for future negotiations to clarify and strengthen language to work for both parties.

Filing grievances isn’t just about building a case for potential arbitration either. Most importantly, it is about organizing around our issue and creating pressure on management to work with us to create better working conditions for our members and better learning environments for our students. Through our organizing, we gain power and create parity with administrators. Through setting site or Association goals, we can work collectively to make everyone’s workplace safer and better.

In 2024-2025, TTA members filed 11 grievances. The beginning of the school year started with one grievance going to level three (arbitration) and four grievances going to level two. By the end of the year, the remaining grievances were all settled at the informal or level one stage. Fifty percent of those grievances settled during the informal stage. In 2025-2026, TTA members filed 5 grievances. Two were settled at level 1 and two were settled during the informal stage, and one resulted in a settlement agreement for compensation for harmed members. When union members own their contract and enforce it regularly, the number of grievances that settle in the informal stage tends to increase because it forces the District to learn and own the contract too. This year, there has been one grievance filed so far. That grievance was settled at the informal level.

Ultimately, grievances and contract ownership are valuable tools in our labor toolkit. They are among the few tools available to us as labor to address our needs. Others include lobbying, filing complaints, and filing unfair labor practice charges. The most important course of action is to create an organizing plan with escalating tactics. The better we organize, the more empowered we become. So, use the grievance process as an extension of site organizing to resolve issues. That is how we create a better workspace for us all.

Quick Hits

Workplace Violence Prevention Plan—As the school year gets underway, it is important to remember to report incidents of workplace violence. Workplace violence is defined as violence or the threat of violence that occurs in a place of employment. The law recognizes four types/categories: violence committed by a person who has no legitimate business at the worksite, violence directed at employees by students, parents, or visitors, violence against an employee by a present or former employee, supervisor/manager, and violence committed against an employee by a person who does not work there but has/had a relationship with an employee. To assist in keeping our campuses safe for staff and students, it is essential to report all instances of workplace violence. The report can also be used as an important documentation tool to assist in obtaining changes to student behavior plans to protect all involved, the student, other students in the room, and staff. To find the report, go to the TUSD Portal under the Quick Links. The report forms are maintained by the TUSD Risk Management Department. There are both a digital Google Form version to fill out and a pdf version and fill it out by hand to turn it in to your principal. TTA recommends that you keep copies of all reports for your documentation.

Heat Mitigation—Heat in classrooms throughout September and early October is continuing to cause concern amongst TTA members who are lobbying for safe learning and working conditions. Torrance students and teachers continue to face overheated rooms. While TUSD has been taking more visible and active steps to mitigate heat, there’s much more to do. TTA leaders are still lobbying for remedies like setting up shade spots, having clear procedures for use of cooling centers, and having access to cold water and cold compresses. Remember, per CalOSHA guidelines, *evacuate your students if temperatures in your classrooms exceed 87° F to prevent heat injury*. Work with your site administrator to know where the cooling center(s) are located and how to provide cool-down rest periods for students and staff alike.

Fall Election Waived—At the first TTA Representative Council of the year, the slates for two open Executive Board seats were finalized with no candidates for either seat. The South and West area elementary seats were declared vacant, the special election was waived, and the two seats are now up for appointment by the TTA President per the TTA Bylaws. If you are an elementary educator interested in serving on the TTA Executive Board, contact the TTA office for information.

FAQs

Understanding ITDPs and Evaluations

Q: What is the difference between Individual Teacher Development Plans (commonly called ITDPs) and Site Goals?

A: ITDPs are part of the evaluation process. Certificated Educators, who are up for evaluation, MAY be required by their site administrator to set two specific individual areas of growth based upon either the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs) or state content standards. Per Article VII of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), ITDPs should be developed, with input from the evaluator, by October 15th. The ITDPs also may be modified throughout the evaluation process due to circumstances that change. These goals should be a driver for conversations between the evaluator and the educator. Educators who are not being evaluated should not be asked to provide ITDPs.

Site goals, on the other hand, are outlined in Article XV of the CBA. As part of the “culture of continuous reflection and improvement,” site administrators MAY require up to three annual goals that support District, school site, department/grade level or subject area goals. These goals are NOT part of the evaluation process. These goals are for professional development purposes designed to improve practice and student achievement.

Q: What is the evaluation process?

A: The evaluation process essentially starts October 1st and ends May 1st of each school year. There are several important steps along the way. The timelines are essential for educators and administrators alike to allow for maximum ability to develop growth, assess performance, and improve strengths. The philosophy of the process is to have a constructive experience that allows for educators to continually learn, grow, and become more effective in their professional roles. TTA published a guide for the Evaluation Process. It can be found on the TTA website [HERE](#). The document outlines the process with a checklist, FAQs, and a timeline. The first important date is October 1st, when any TTA unit member being evaluated should be notified that they are up for evaluation and who their evaluator will be. It is important for members to familiarize themselves with the process, especially new hires. If you have any questions or concerns about the process, please contact your site representatives and Executive Board members for assistance.

Vote YES on Prop 3!

Protect Our School Funding

Last year, TTA leaders asked for members to assist in collecting signatures to get an extension of Prop 55 onto the November 2026 ballot. We succeeded! That extension is Prop 3.

TTA and CTA are currently hosting canvassing in support of Prop 3. Over 33,000 doors were knocked across the state this last weekend—and the work to keep the funding we already have is just starting.

TTA is currently asking all members to sign commitment cards. Currently, only 44 members have signed cards in support of keeping over \$50 million dollars in TUSD’s \$355 million budget.

TTA is also asking for members to talk to family and friends about voting YES on Prop 3. Here are some key things to keep in mind when talking about Prop 3:

- Prop 3 permanently extends Prop 30/55 preserving vital funding for public school and community colleges.
- Failing to pass Prop 3 will result in a 15% cut to funding for public schools and community colleges, with one in every six educators potentially losing their jobs.
- Prop 3 does not raise taxes on anyone—it extends an existing tax applied to couples earning more than \$740,000 a year.
- Failing to pass Prop 3 cuts taxes for the rich.
- Without Prop 3, Torrance will return to funding levels not seen since the Great Recession—when classrooms routinely had more than 40 students, nearly 400 educators were laid off, and the remaining educators were furloughed for 10 days.

For those interested in canvassing, contact the TTA office for details.
Join TTA in supporting the measure and voting YES on Prop 3!

