

Q&A Poway Federation of Teachers (PFT) Tentative Agreement 2026–2027

1. What salary increases are included in the tentative agreement?

Effective July 1, 2026, all salary schedules will increase by 4% ongoing. An additional 1.5% ongoing salary increase will take effect January 1, 2027. This 1.5% is applied to the new salary amount as of July 1, which is 4% higher than your current salary.

Example: If you apply 4% to \$100, you get \$104. Then in January, 1.5% of \$104 is \$105.56.

For 2027-28 and beyond, the salary increase is slightly more than 5.5%, due to the compounding outlined in the example above.

2. Since this Tentative Agreement extends the bargaining agreement for three years (2026-27, 2027-28, 2028-29), does this mean there will be no more raises until the 2029-30 school year?

NO! This absolutely **DOES NOT** mean we will not get another raise during the duration of this agreement. For each year of a three-year agreement, we go back to the bargaining table and fight for more money! This is called “reopeners.” Salary and Health and Welfare are reopened every year. Four additional contract sections can be opened by each party, and other sections may also be opened by mutual agreement. This is all outlined in [SECTION II – DURATION OF AGREEMENT](#), page 2. Next school year, after the Governor’s January Budget Proposal comes out, we will be back at the table negotiating for 2027-28.

Membership voted to accept two years of 0% salary increases as the district grappled with the expiration of one-time COVID monies and even more importantly, with significant declining enrollment. PUSD is funded based on enrollment and the attendance rate, so losing large numbers of students hit the district budget hard. This caused the need for significant budget reductions for both 2024-25 & 2025-26. The district is also projected to make additional budget reductions for 2026-27. Teachers have done our part during these years of budget woes, allowing district leadership the opportunity to create a plan to fund the newly negotiated increase for 2026-27, as well as those to come in future years. Salary increases for both 2027-28 & 2028-29 are a **MUST!**

3. Is this Tentative Agreement a fair deal?

Your PFT Negotiating Team has tentatively ratified this Agreement and believes it is the best possible deal for PFT membership at this time. (This team currently consists of two elected Executive Board Members, one PFT Member, two PFT Directors, and the

elected PFT President. This team consults with the elected Executive Board on a regular basis).

The Negotiating Team is keenly aware that the cost of living is high and keeps rising, and that we all voted to accept 0% for 2024-25 & 2025-26. Lacking salary increases during those two years means the only compensation bumps that occurred were for those who moved down to a higher salary step (for years of service) or to a new column (for more education). It would be great to have an even higher salary increase! Unfortunately, our district budget cannot sustain one at this time because PUSD is low-funded and because the District must retain a Positive budget certification. Read on for more details about these issues.

- Funding Issues: PUSD receives a base grant per student and additional supplemental funds based on the number of students in PUSD who receive Free and Reduced Meals, are English Learners, or are Foster Youth. Our district has a very low number of students who qualify for the supplemental grant funding. Many other districts like SD Unified receive a great deal of additional supplemental funding. In fact, they have so many qualifying students that they qualify for a “concentration grant” as well. Other districts, such as those on the coast, are considered “basic aid.” This means their property tax revenues exceed the amount of money the state would normally provide, and their schools get to keep these funds. They are also given a constitutionally required amount from the state.

PUSD’s funding is lower than most districts already because of the reasons mentioned, and declining enrollment and the expiration of one-time funds have made things even more challenging.

- Budget Certification Issues: The district must regularly submit a Multi-Year Projection (MYP) to the County. This includes budget projections for three years. The MYP is certified as either Positive, Qualified, or Negative. Districts who do not retain a Positive MYP rating can be taken over by the State of CA. It also means any necessary borrowing the district must do, such as when the state implements “deferrals” of promised revenue, the interest rates on loans will be extremely high.

Here is some additional information regarding the extensive work the Negotiating Team does to ensure we best represent you in negotiations:

- In every round of negotiations, we start by asking you to fill out our bargaining survey. The results from this survey identify our bargaining priorities. The PFT Directors and the PFT President look for patterns in our daily work with members to further identify priorities within the scope of bargaining. The elected PFT Executive Board reads and analyzes all open-ended responses, looking for themes that should also be brought to the table.
- The PFT Directors and the President meet with the PUSD Finance Department numerous times per year, reviewing the budget and asking questions.

- The PFT staff and the President also attend both the January and May School Services of CA state budget workshops, where experts from across the state meet to discuss school funding for the upcoming year.
- Our state affiliate, The California Federation of Teachers (CFT), analyzes the PUSD budget and shares information with the entire negotiating team.
- A PFT Director and the PFT Treasurer conduct online salary searches to pull data from other districts in our region and from other districts in the state that have similar funding to PUSD. We call these, “comps.” The team looks at how we compare in terms of salary alone, as well as in total compensation (salary and benefits).

Your PFT Negotiating Team uses all this data to determine a fair deal.

4. How does our total compensation compare to other districts in our region?

Each year, PFT pulls data regarding total compensation (salary and health & welfare benefits) from a set list of other districts in our region. We use this data to see how we compare to neighboring districts in total compensation. We refer to this data as, “comps.” If this TA is ratified by the negotiating team, the PFT Rep Council, Membership, and the PUSD School Board, here is how our rankings will advance for beginning, mid-career, and career teachers.

- Beginning teachers (BA+30): from 11th to 5th out of 15 comparison districts
- Mid-career teachers, Step 11 (BA+60): remains 3rd
- Maximum salary: from 11th to 4th

The District and PFT have agreed that our joint goal is to be in the top third of our comp districts in total compensation. The above data are a snapshot in time as settlements in each district occur at different points in time. We will revisit the updated comps again next January when we reopen negotiations for 2027-28.

5. Could we have achieved a higher salary increase if we had held out and threatened to strike or had gone on strike?

In the opinion of your PFT Negotiating Team, no. For the reasons outlined in question 3 (Funding and MYP), your PFT Negotiating Team agrees this is the best possible deal for PFT membership at this time. We believe a strike would not have resulted in a higher increase and instead would have resulted in a delayed salary increase for 2026-27, lost pay for strike days, and layoffs.

The negotiations process can be a very long one. After every effort to settle has been made, the parties cannot reach an agreement, we could apply for a declaration of impasse. If the Public Employment Relations Board declares us to be at impasse, they would assign us a mediator. The mediator may not be scheduled to come to our district

for some time. The mediator would continue to try to help the parties reach agreement. If we still could not reach agreement, we would enter fact finding. A report would be issued. It's our understanding, the parties are often unhappy with the report, as it doesn't get either party what they were hoping for. The District can choose to follow the fact-finding report or choose to impose their own terms on our unit. If the District imposes terms, the union can strike.

6. We have anti-strike language in our contract during the three-year term of this agreement. Isn't this a problem? What if we need to strike as we work to negotiate salary increases for 2027-28 or 2028-29?

Per our Labor attorney, most districts in the state have anti-strike language. This language has been a longstanding part of the [PFT contract](#); it is not something that we negotiated in this deal.

Despite this language, if the district commits an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP), such as refusing to bargain in good faith or failing to provide information needed for bargaining, PFT has the right to strike. We could also do a "safety strike" if certain conditions were met. Or we could engage in a sympathy strike with PSEA or with a union in another district since our bargaining agreement language does not preclude this. Many say that the organizing and actions taken leading to a strike are far more powerful than a strike itself. We always have the right to organize.

As of our April 17 negotiation with the district, we were significantly far apart on reaching a fair deal. The district heard our concerns, and came to the table on May 7, ready to work toward a fair package. They also re-committed to the Interest Based Problem Solving process going forward, and to target being in the top third for total compensation as compared to our comp districts. We have every reason to believe that the district will negotiate in good faith going forward, but if this for some reason does not occur, we have options.

7. SD Unified & LA Unified both engaged in concerted action and threatened to strike. How do we compare to them in salary?

SD Unified: SD Unified's deal involves a 2.5% increase for 2026-27, contingent upon dollars in the May Revise. If their deal is ratified, here is how we would compare:

- Beginning teachers (BA+30): For a beginning teacher. SD Unified teachers will receive \$64,699 as of July 1, 2026, while PUSD teachers will receive \$63,576.
- Mid-career teachers, Step 1: On step 11, SD Unified's furthest right salary schedule column (BA + 90 or MA + 84) is \$103,357. On step 11, PUSD's furthest right salary column (BA+60) is \$106,225. Our salary schedule pays more money for fewer units.

- Maximum salary: For the career teacher, SD Unified teachers will receive \$129,065 as of July 1, 2026, while PUSD teachers will earn \$130,900 on the max step and column (non-prime) and \$134,827 for teachers on the max step and column (prime).

Los Angeles Unified: LA Unified has an extremely complex settlement, in which different unit members will receive different levels of increase depending on where they are on the salary schedule. This information reflects our best understanding from their website. Historically, they have been noted as being very low paid. This increase does appear to remedy this, and even puts them ahead of us for beginning and mid-career teachers.

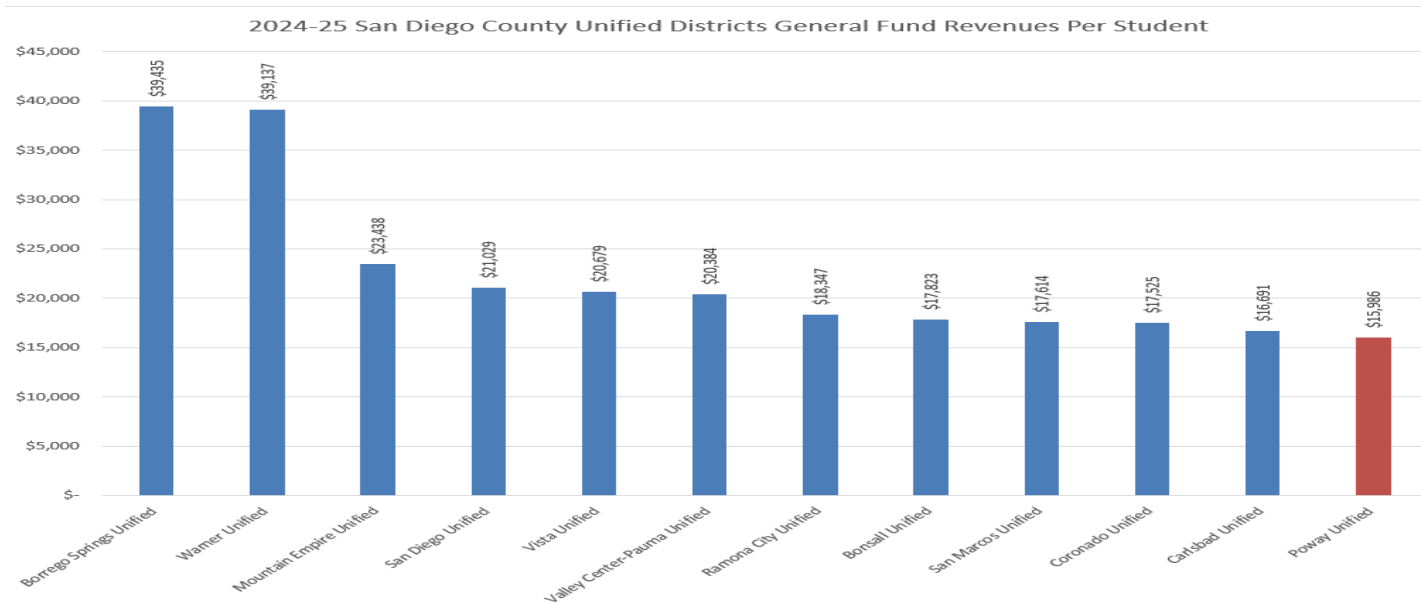
However, for the career teacher, LA Unified will be paying \$130,874 by January 1, 2027, while PUSD will be paying \$130,900 on the max step and column (non-prime) and \$134,827 for teachers on the max step and column (prime).

8. How much did PUSD actually make in cuts the last couple of years?

Over three years from 2024-25, 2025-26, and 2026-27, the District has cut over \$30 million from its general fund budget.

9. How does PUSD funding compare to other districts in San Diego County?

Poway Unified is the lowest-funded unified district in San Diego County based on total general fund revenue per average daily attendance.



10. Will unit members receive a one-time payment?

Yes. Current unit members employed as of July 1, 2026, will receive a one-time payment of \$760 per Full-Time Equivalent (FTE). Payment will be issued by September 30, 2026. PUSD self insures for dental, vision, and prescriptions. This amount represents an excess amount available in the self insurance fund, based on an actuarial analysis. We were able to negotiate an equitable distribution of these funds to our members.

11. What impact does declining enrollment have on a district?

- PUSD receives about 70% of its total revenue from the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which provides funding to the district based on the average daily attendance of students by grade level.
- While the dollars-per-student may increase year-over-year, a drop in attendance lowers the amount of revenue the district is entitled to.
- In 2024-25, our LCFF was actually lower than 2023-24 due to the impact of declining enrollment.
- Short and long-term enrollment projections show that PUSD will continue to decline by 1-2% each year.
- The primary reasons for declining enrollment in PUSD are a drop in birth rates and the increase in housing costs in the district

12. What about the unit member health and welfare contribution increase that was scheduled to take place January 1, 2027?

Since we had not had an increase in the Out-Of-Pocket (OOP) employee share of health and welfare premiums for many years, membership voted to accept an increase to employee out-of-pocket premiums in the [2024-25 Agreement](#), which was set to take effect January 1, 2027. As a result of the current TA, this employee contribution increase has been postponed until January 1, 2028. This means that we will have 19 consecutive years without an increase to the out-of-pocket amounts that our members pay to cover spouses and dependents! We've also kept the employee-only coverage free.

In addition to our salary comp work, PFT looks at comparable medical plans in regional comparison districts. We have made comparisons between the employee rates for PUSD teachers as compared to other regional districts. In doing this comparison, we have discovered that:

- On our agreed upon regional comp list, half of the districts have an Out-of-Pocket Cost (OOP) for employee only coverage. PFT has managed to keep the OOP cost for employee-only in PUSD at zero.

- Even in regional comparison districts that offer employee-only coverage at no OOP cost, in most of these districts, the OOP costs to cover spouses and dependents is significantly higher than the OOP costs in PUSD.
- Some districts in our region have district contribution caps. This means the district will only pay a set amount toward health care premium costs, regardless of how high premiums rise. PFT has worked very hard to avoid caps on the district contribution because this can result in ongoing uncontrolled increases in the amount employees pay out of their pockets.
- Some districts in our region have cost sharing models, which involve a set percentage split between the amount the district and the employee pay in covering health care premiums.
- Some districts now offer high deductible plans that have a lower OOP contribution, but offer significantly lesser benefits and higher deductibles.

PFT has worked tirelessly to ensure the plans offered are high quality at the best possible cost. We recognize that SD Unified offers no cost coverage to employees, spouses, and dependents. However, no other districts on our regional comp list offer zero cost coverage for spouses and dependents. In fact, in nearly all of the districts on our regional comp list, employees are paying higher OOP premium costs than we do in PUSD.

13. Are there changes to salary schedule steps?

Yes. Effective July 1, 2026, columns B/B' and C/C' on all salary schedules will expand to 26 steps.

Employees currently at the highest existing step in:

- B/B' will move to B8/B'8
- C/C' will move to C11/C'11

The Adult Education hourly rate will now be based on column C of Salary Schedule and will also be expanded from step 16 to step 26.

14. What changes affect Career Technical Education (CTE) teachers?

Beginning July 1, 2026:

- CTE teachers currently on the CTE Salary Schedule will move to Salary Schedule I, column C/C'.
- Teachers who meet qualifications may be placed on column D/D' or E/E' at the appropriate step.

15. Will CTE teachers still receive CF3 Funds?

No, CF3 funds are not paid to teachers on Salary Schedule I. With the proposed salary increases along with the credit for industry experience, that will more than make up for no longer receiving those funds. Additionally, CF3 funds were not on a salary schedule. Earning more money “on schedule” will be beneficial for final retirement compensation.

16. Will CTE teachers with Designated Subjects Credentials receive experience credit?

Yes. Those currently on the CTE salary schedule and newly hired CTE teachers teaching under a Designated Subjects Credential will receive three years of experience credit to recognize industry experience.

17. Are there updates for district nurses regarding salary advancement?

Yes. Starting July 1, 2026, nurses may use Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for salary schedule advancement at a ratio of 15 CEU hours = 1 semester unit.

To receive advancement for the current school year:

- Official transcripts must be submitted to Personnel Support Services by October 1.
- Transcripts received after October 1 will apply to the following school year.

18. How does the agreement impact Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs)?

Effective July 1, 2026, SLPs will receive salary schedule credit for years served in K–12 school districts, whether employed directly or through an agency.

Current employees will have their placement re-evaluated.

19. Is there a new Pregnancy Disability Leave benefit?

Yes. Unit members will be eligible for up to 15 consecutive workdays of paid Pregnancy Disability Leave following delivery.

These days:

- Are paid

- Will not be deducted from accrued sick leave
- Must be accessed during the Pregnancy Disability time period

20. Can this Pregnancy Disability Leave be used during the Child Bonding period?

Unfortunately, no. This leave must be used consecutively during the Pregnancy Disability Leave period.

21. Were any Bereavement Leave provisions updated?

Yes. "Niece" and "nephew" will now be included in the definition of "immediate family" for bereavement and Personal Necessity Leave purposes.

22. Why aren't we getting raises equivalent to or more than COLA?

For public school districts, COLA must also fund roll forward costs/cost increases each year. These include teacher step and column increases, increases in teacher health and welfare premium costs, and increases in the district's STRS/PERS contributions for each teacher. These are also part of our total compensation.

23. Are there additional contract updates not listed here?

Yes. Additional language updates will take effect July 1, 2026, and are included in the attached contract documents.