

TUCSON UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



ANNUAL WORKFORCE REPORT

2023-2024

AUGUST 15, 2024



Human Resources Department

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LET'S GET STARTED!



MESSAGE FROM CHIEF HUMAN CAPITAL OFFICER



Dear Tucson Unified School District Employees and Partners,

As we reflect on the past year, it is clear that our district has made significant strides in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the areas of hiring and staffing. Through diligent monitoring, strategic collaboration, and a focused approach, our Human Resources team has worked closely with district schools and departments to address staffing needs. We have concentrated our efforts on filling critical roles, including bus drivers, food service workers, and special education staff. The progress we have made in these areas is promising, and we are committed to building on this momentum as we move into the 2024-2025 School Year.

We are also navigating the end of key federal grants and adjusting our resources in response to declining enrollment, which has impacted staffing levels district-wide. I am pleased to report that we have successfully integrated federally funded employees who chose to remain with us, helping to reduce vacancy rates.

Despite the ongoing challenges faced by public school districts across the nation in recruiting and retaining educational staff, TUSD remains steadfast in our commitment. Our focus on recruiting, developing, and retaining talent is essential to ensuring that we continue to provide the high-quality services our students deserve. Together, we will continue to overcome these challenges and advance our mission here at TUSD.

JON FERNANDEZ

Chief Human Capital Officer



WHAT WE DO

HR BY THE NUMBERS

23,771

PERSONNEL ACTION
REQUESTS

17,014

JOB APPLICATIONS

8,356

TOTAL
EMPLOYEES

6,375

BENEFIT ENROLLEES
+ DEPENDENTS

3,335

VOLUNTEER
APPLICATIONS

1,963

NEW HIRES
ONBOARDED

1,020

SUBSTITUTE
TEACHERS AVAILABLE

589

ADVERTISED
POSITIONS

450

LOAN FORGIVENESS
APPLICATIONS

114

STUDENT TEACHER
PLACEMENTS

56

INTERNATIONAL
TEACHERS HIRED

44

HUMAN RESOURCES
TEAM MEMBERS

WHO WE ARE WE ARE TUCSON UNIFIED



At TUSD, we know that the success of our students depends on the contributions of our hard-working employees.

During SY2023-24, the Tucson Unified School District ("TUSD") focused on recruiting and retaining educators and staff for 88 schools, serving over 41,000 students. These efforts have been critical to sustaining TUSD's educational mission and services through the COVID-19 pandemic and now during Tucson's recovery.

Despite the challenges, TUSD, led by the Human Resources department, and in partnership with all district schools and departments, has shown progress in filling needed positions. This includes targeting hard-to-fill areas, improving the hiring process, and shifting more focus to employee professional growth, development and retention.

QUICK FACTS

41,091

STUDENTS
ENROLLED

8,356

DEDICATED
EMPLOYEES

88

UNIQUE
SCHOOLS

57

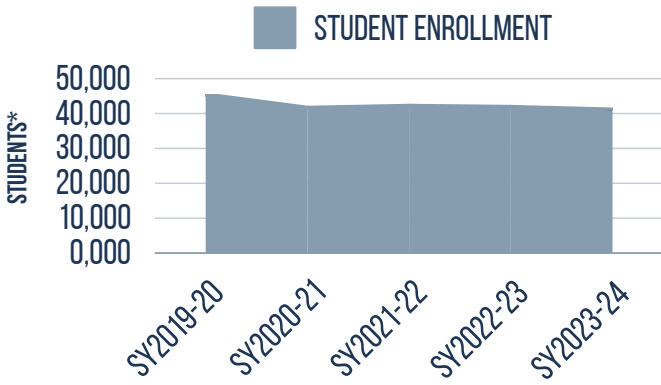
SUPPORTING
DEPARTMENTS



STAFFING TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

TUSD STUDENT ENROLLMENT

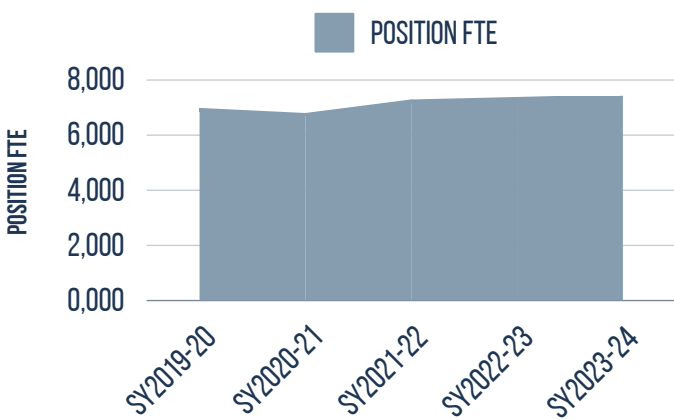
SY2019-21 TO SY2023-24



*Based on 40th day enrollment.

TUSD POSITION FTE

SY2019-21 TO SY2023-24



With over 41,000 students, TUSD has worked to maintain a staffing level of over 7,000 FTEs. These positions include classroom teachers, support staff, and central office workers, all focused on providing services for children.

DECLINING ENROLLMENT

In the SY2023-24, TUSD reported 41,091 students, a 9.5% decrease since SY2019-20. This decline follows national trends and is influenced by Arizona's growth in charter schools and the Empowerment Scholarship for private school tuition. With fewer students, TUSD's state funding has also dropped, reducing resources for staffing. The end of federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds this year has forced tough budget decisions to maintain support services.

LOSS OF POSITION FUNDING

In March SY2023-24, TUSD had 7,407 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, a 7% increase from 6,914 FTEs in SY2019-20, due to federal COVID-19 relief funds. With these funds expiring in 2024, the FTE count for SY2024-25 is 6,562.3.

FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) is a unit that measures an employee's work time in relation to a full-time schedule, where 1.0 FTE equals full-time work. It helps standardize work hours across various employment types, making it useful for budgeting, staffing, and assessing overall labor capacity.



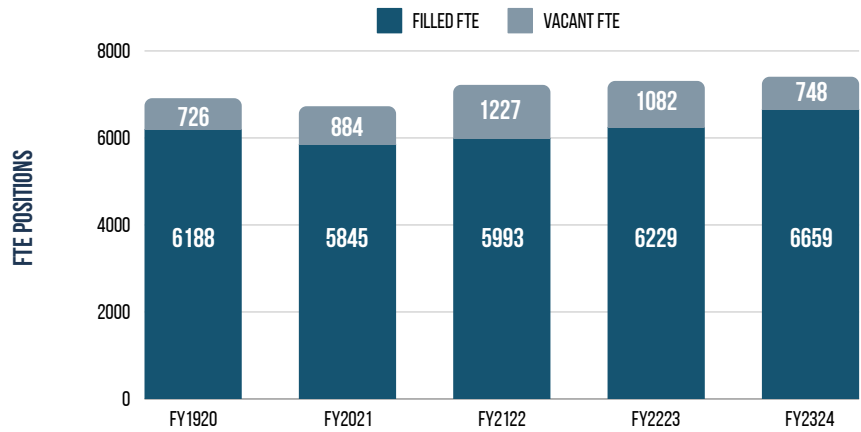
WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

REDUCING VACANCIES

TUSD's Human Resources department aims to fill vacant positions to ensure schools have enough staff to serve students and families. Over the past five years, TUSD has averaged 933 vacant full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, or 13.1% of total FTEs. The vacancy rate peaked at 17% in SY2021-22 but dropped to 10% (748 FTEs), in SY2023-24.

This increase in vacant positions in SY2021-22 resulted from the influx of federal ESSER funds, which allowed TUSD to add positions focused on school support and learning recovery. Due to the slow return of applicants, it took TUSD additional time to fill all new positions. Now that federal funds are expiring, many of our federally funded employees have chosen to remain with TUSD to continue their critical roles, leaving fewer positions to fill.

FILLED VS. VACANT FTE FY2019-20 TO FY2023-24



This year, TUSD hit its lowest vacancy rate since before the COVID-19 pandemic, thanks to the teamwork of HR and hiring managers across the district.

FILLED VS. VACANT POSITIONS SY2019-2020 TO SY2023-2024

Since SY2019-20, TUSD has had an average of 2,859 certified classroom teacher positions, with about 276 (9.6%) of these vacant. HR recruits and hires teachers throughout the year and provides schools with short-term or long-term substitutes as needed. Schools use strategies like 6/5ths stipends (teachers working during prep time), combined classrooms, and administrator substitutes to keep classes covered.

| SCHOOL YEAR | VACANT FTE % |
|-------------|--------------|
| SY2019-20 | 11.0% |
| SY2020-21 | 13.0% |
| SY2021-22 | 17.0% |
| SY2022-23 | 14.8% |
| SY2023-24 | 10.0% |

HR TRIAGE SUPPORT

IMPROVED TEAM COLLABORATION AND INNOVATION

Higher vacancy rates have been seen in Transportation (bus drivers), Food Services, school psychologists, Exceptional Education teachers, and teacher assistants. TUSD faces the same bus driver and special education shortages as other districts and is also affected by a national shortage of candidates in specialized areas.

Last school year, using an approach that prioritizes hard-to-fill positions, HR focused on three key areas with high vacancies: bus drivers, food service workers, and Exceptional Education teachers and teacher assistants. HR partnered with hiring sites to track applicants, set interviews, and expedite hiring weekly, improving communication and focus on finding good candidates. This approach has been effective.

TEAMWORK

THE WAY WE
WORK TOGETHER
DETERMINES THE
WAY WE SUCCEED.

KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR APPROACH



**WEEKLY
COLLABORATION**



**IMPROVED
COMMUNICATION**



**INNOVATIVE
SOLUTIONS**



HARD-TO-FILL POSITIONS: BUS DRIVERS

SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

The number of school bus drivers dropped sharply during the COVID-19 pandemic but increased last year due to collaboration between Human Resources and the Transportation department. The Governing Board's decision to raise starting pay from \$13.35 per hour in SY2019-20 to \$18.97 per hour in SY2023-24 also attracted more applicants. In SY2024-25, starting pay will rise again to \$21.33 per hour.

Filled bus driver positions have risen steadily, reaching 156 in March 2024 and over 180 by the end of SY2023-24. For SY2024-25, the number is projected to be around 190, the highest since COVID-19 began.



STRATEGIES

1

PAY INCENTIVE

TUSD has raised bus driver pay year over year, to **\$18.97** per hour in SY2023-24. Over a five dollar increase since SY2019-20. In SY2024-25, starting pay will increase again to \$21.33 per hour.



2

BUS DRIVER CANDIDATE SOURCING

| SCHOOL YEAR | DRIVERS |
|-------------|---------|
| SY2022-23 | 134 |
| SY2023-24 | 156 |
| SY2024-25* | 190 |

*At the time of this publication.

HARD-TO-FILL POSITIONS: FOOD SERVICES

FOOD SERVICE WORKERS

High turnover has made it difficult to keep food service positions filled. Using a new approach to source applicants, but Food Services also quickly restructured its interview and selection process. This helped fill positions, increasing to 214 last school year, just above the pre-COVID number in March 2020.

With Food Services now providing breakfast and lunch at no cost to students, while also shifting to more scratch-based meal production, staffing is more critical than ever.



STRATEGIES

1

STREAMLINE HIRING PROCESS

The TUSD Human Resources and Food Services departments have collaborated to streamline the hiring process by transitioning to Indeed.com for recruitment, simplifying reference checks, and accelerating interview and hiring decisions.



2

FOOD SERVICE CANDIDATE SOURCING

| SCHOOL YEAR | FS WORKERS |
|-------------|------------|
| SY2022-23 | 194 |
| SY2023-24 | 214 |
| SY2024-25* | 264 |

*At the time of this publication.

HARD-TO-FILL POSITIONS: EX ED TAs

EX ED TEACHER ASSISTANTS

To address vacancies in Ex Ed teacher assistant positions, HR and Ex Ed recruited heavily, inviting ESSER-funded TAs to job fairs and offering incentives like covered CPR/First Aid training and state-required Paraprofessional exams. Ex Ed took over centralized hiring to streamline the process, previously managed by individual school sites. This collaboration filled 339 Ex Ed teacher assistant positions in SY2023-24, reducing vacancies by 40%. Projections for SY2024-25 are expected to remain strong.

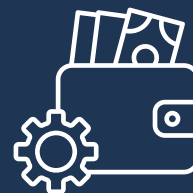


STRATEGIES

1

HIRING PRIORITIZATION

TUSD Human Resources and the Exceptional Education department have centralized and prioritized the hiring of Ex Ed teacher assistants, allowed more hours to increase pay, and offered to cover expenses for CPR/First Aid and Paraprofessional exams.



2

EX ED TA CANDIDATE SOURCING

| SCHOOL YEAR | EX ED TA'S |
|-------------|------------|
| SY2022-23 | 339 |
| SY2023-24 | 377 |
| SY2024-25* | 379 |

*At the time of this publication.



HARD-TO-FILL POSITION: EX ED TEACHERS

EX ED TEACHERS

Exceptional Education has also improved, with a focus on recruitment and hiring. The Governing Board increased Ex Ed teacher pay by \$4,000 more than general classroom teachers and \$10,000 more for those in self-contained classrooms. Hiring international teachers has also helped, with 56 hired last year alone. Filled Ex Ed teacher positions reached 377 in March 2024, higher than the previous two school years.

RECRUITING INTERNATIONALLY

The nationwide teacher shortage, especially in special education, has led us to focus on recruiting internationally. In SY2023-24, TUSD hired 56 international teachers. Nearly half of them certified in special education, filling a critical need. We expect similar results in SY2024-25. We plan to continue recruiting international teachers through the next five years and developing support programs, including induction and targeted professional development, to help them adjust to their new schools and community.

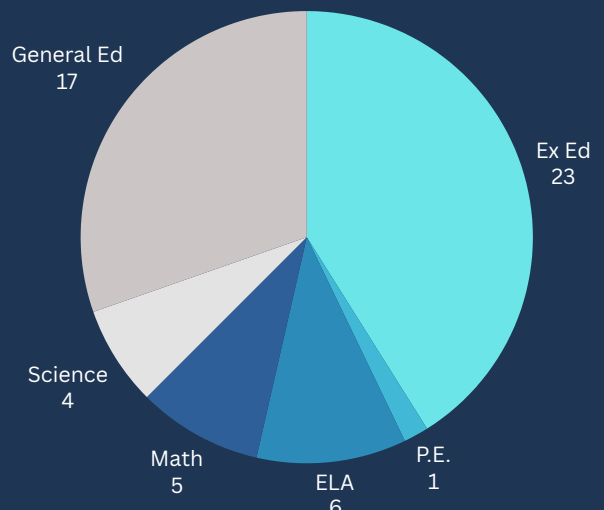
STRATEGIES

TEACHER PAY

Increasing Ex Ed teacher pay has been a critical strategy to recruit and retain our teachers. All Ex Ed teachers now earn an additional \$4,000 compared to general education teachers or an additional \$10,000 if they choose to work in self-contained classrooms.



INTERNATIONAL TEACHER HIRES SY2023-24

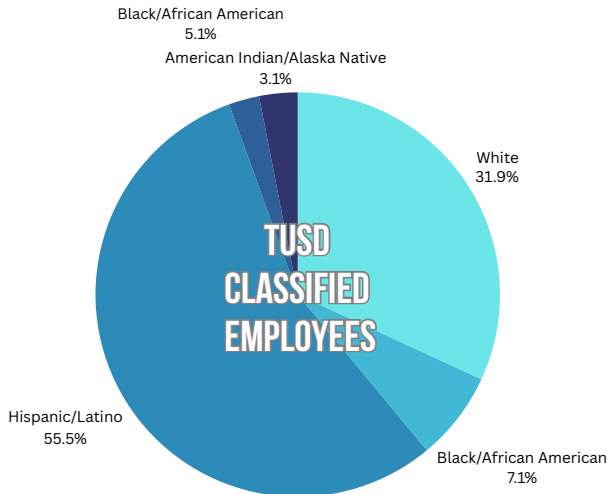
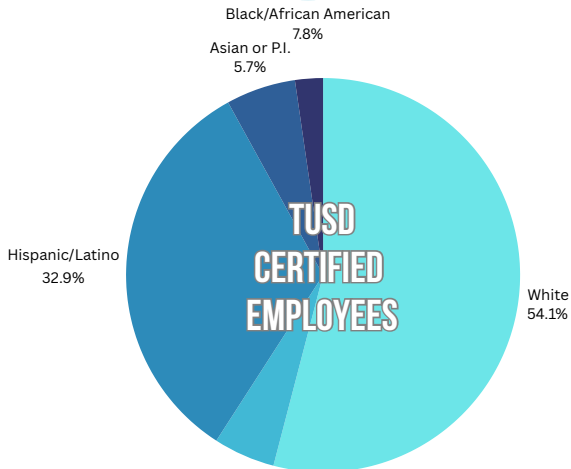
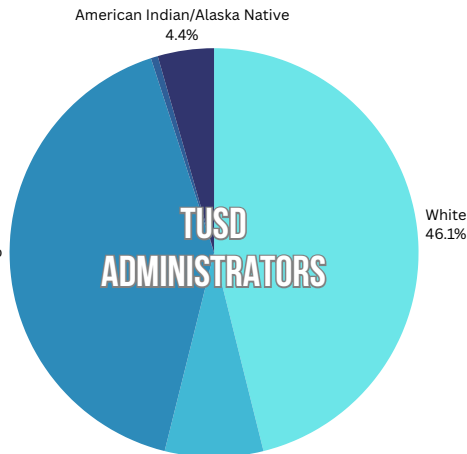
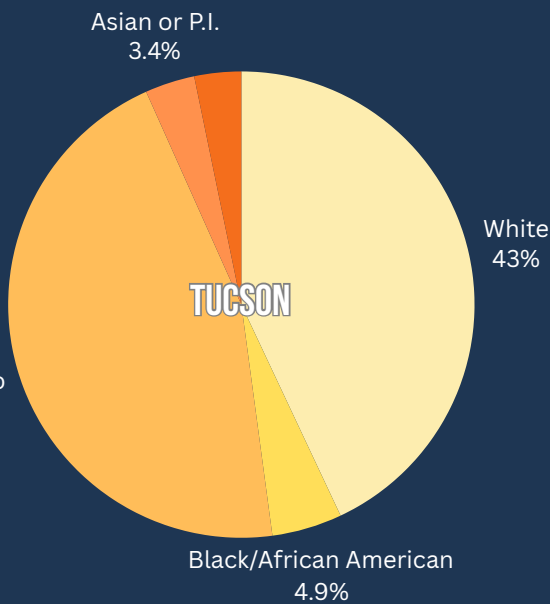




STRENGTH LIES IN OUR DIFFERENCES

DIVERSITY AT TUSD

TUSD's workforce remains diverse: 54.1% White, 32.9% Hispanic, 5.1% Black, and 5.7% Asian or Pacific Islander. Among administrators, 46.1% are White, 41.1% Hispanic, 7.8% Black, and 0.6% Asian or Pacific Islander. TUSD compares well with Tucson metropolitan area demographics and other Arizona school districts. Human Resources remains dedicated to maintaining diversity at TUSD.



HOW DOES TUSD MEASURE UP?



IT TAKES A TEAM EDUCATOR PATHWAYS

TUSD PARTNERS

TUSD works with partner institutions of higher learning to expand pathways for educators and administrators to achieve certification and join our district team. Through this strategic collaboration, we are able to recruit new applicants to TUSD as well as "grow our own" employees to be able to advance to the classroom and on to administrative leadership positions.



**THANK YOU TO
OUR PARTNERS!**

**FOR YOUR INVALUABLE
COLLABORATION IN PREPARING
FUTURE LEADERS IN
EDUCATION. YOUR SUPPORT IS
INSTRUMENTAL IN OUR SHARED
SUCCESS.**



PATHWAY PROGRAMS



OUR INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

Our focus on providing TUSD employees with growth and development opportunities, such as the those offered through Educator Pathway programs, is contributing to our students' success. As a result of TUSD participation in these programs, we have welcomed over **200 new teachers and administrators** into our district in the last five years.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

| SCHOOL YEAR | ADMINISTRATORS | GROW YOUR OWN (TEACHERS) | ALTERNATE TEACHER PATHWAYS |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| SY2019-20 | 32 | 35 | - |
| SY2020-21 | 4 | 8 | 8 |
| SY2021-22 | 33 | 9 | 16 |
| SY2022-23 | 31 | 28 | 45 |
| SY2023-24 | 46 | 57 | 42 |

Programs include: Leadership Prep Academy, Principal BOOST, UA Masters of Educational Leadership, Grow Your Own: UA Pathways, Teaching Fellows, Make the Move, Teacher Development Academy, EachONE TeachONE, Alternate Teacher Pathways, Make the Move, Teachers of Tomorrow.

HAPPY EMPLOYEES STAY EMPLOYEE RETENTION

ATTRITION

EMPLOYEE DEDICATION TO TUSD

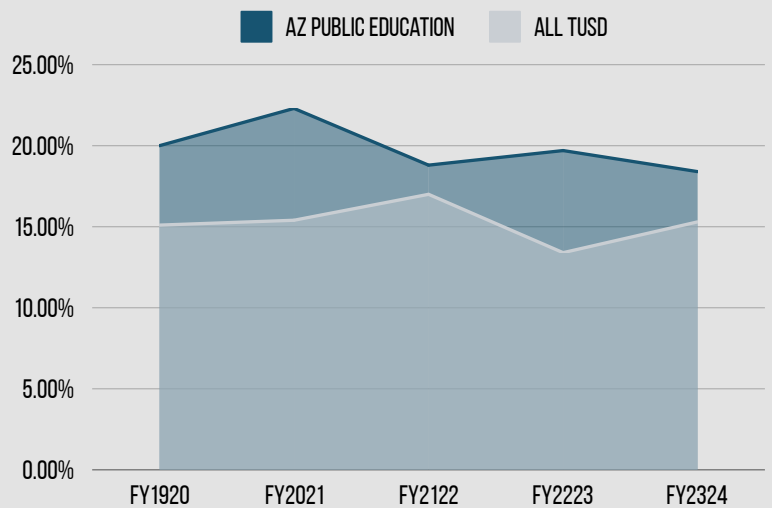
Retaining talent is a priority for TUSD. Over the past five years, TUSD has had lower attrition rates than other Arizona public schools.

In SY2019-2020, TUSD's attrition rate was 15.1% compared to the state's 20%. Rates rose during the pandemic but have since declined to 15.3% for TUSD and 18.4% for the state in SY2023-24. The return to pre-pandemic attrition rates is encouraging.

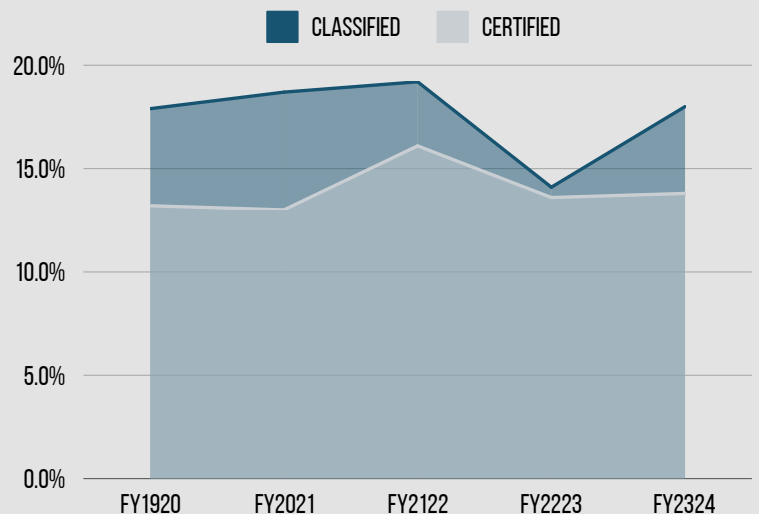
KEY OBSERVATIONS

Attrition peaked at over 25% for classified employees, such as teacher assistants, in SY2020-21, while classroom teacher turnover, for the most part, remained much lower. In SY2023-24 we can see the challenge TUSD faces with turnover in classified positions compared to stable trends among classroom teachers.

ATTRITION OF AZ STATE VS. TUSD 2019-2024



TUSD ATTRITION BY JOB CATEGORY 2019-2024



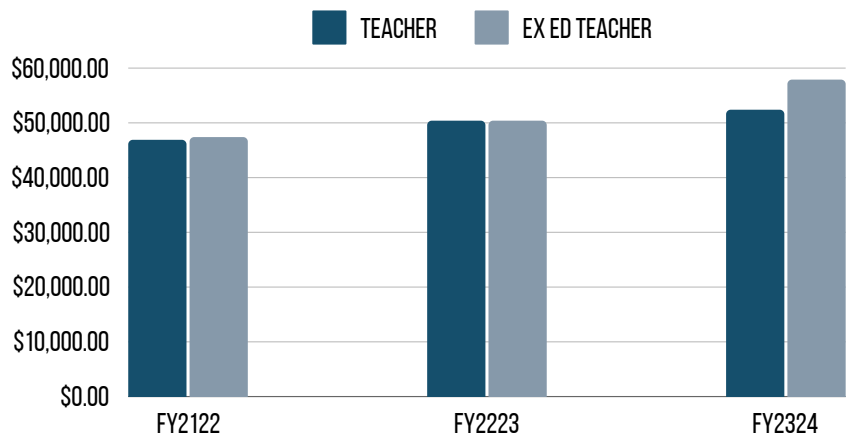
COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

COMPENSATION

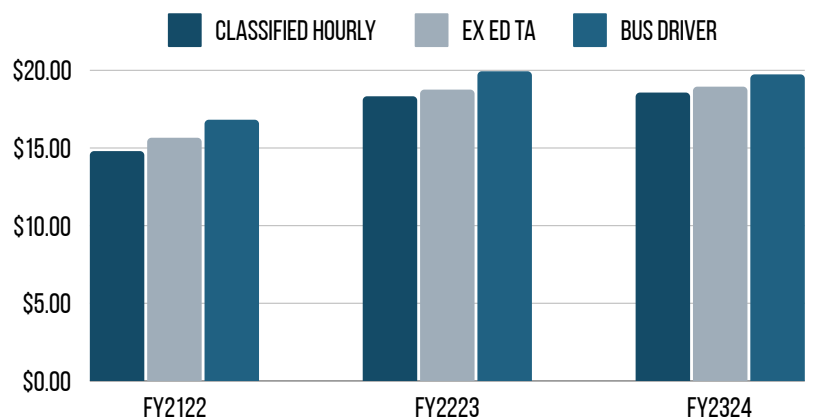
Employee retention can be influenced by compensation and benefits. In the past five years, the Governing Board improved compensation and absorbed increasing benefits costs. The average teacher salary grew by 6%, while Exceptional Education teacher salaries increased by 19%, thanks to recent raises.

Classified employees, like bus drivers, saw their pay rise by over 40%, and Exceptional Education teacher assistants getting nearly a 60% increase. In SY2024-25 TUSD's bus drivers will now start at \$21.33 per hour making it the highest entry rate in the region.

TEACHER AND EX ED TEACHER MEDIAN SALARY 2021-2024



CLASSIFIED HOURLY MEDIAN WAGE RATE 2021-2024



EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

TUSD also offers a wide range of benefits, including medical, dental, vision, life, and pet insurance, in addition to wellness incentives. The Governing Board has subsidized rising health insurance premiums for the past three years, keeping employee deductions flat since 2021. Currently, over 6,375 employees and dependents are enrolled in TUSD's benefits.



EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Retention isn't just about pay and benefits; employee engagement is also crucial. To give employees a voice and show appreciation, HR introduced an official employee appreciation calendar for TUSD in SY2023-24. This calendar recognizes different employee groups throughout the year at board meetings, school sites, and on social media.

Last school year, HR held a forum with Exceptional Education employees to discuss improvements in hiring and gather feedback. They presented compensation increases and efforts to improve communication through weekly articles, newsletters, office hours, and recognition events. They also addressed professional development, classroom support, compensation, retention, and teacher mentorship.

At the end of SY2023-24, HR conducted a district-wide workplace survey with over 1,700 employee responses. The survey collected feedback on supports, resources, and opportunities provided by the district. Key findings below.

#TEAMTUSD WORKPLACE SURVEY RESULTS

STRENGTHS TO SUSTAIN

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE

CONCERNS TO ADDRESS

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| I HAVE FLEXIBILITY AND INDEPENDENCE AT WORK. | I WILL SEEK PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEXT 2 YEARS. | I AM SATISFIED WITH MY COMPENSATION. |
| I HAVE ACCESS TO EQUIPMENT AND TOOLS I NEED. | TUSD EFFECTIVELY DIRECTS RESOURCES. | I WILL SEEK PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEXT 2 YEARS. |
| EVERYONE HAS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES TO SUCCEED. | TUSD'S OVERALL STRATEGY IS TAKING TUSD IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. | I AM KEPT INFORMED ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING. |
| I AM PROUD TO WORK FOR TUSD. | TUSD IS A PLACE WHERE I CAN BUILD A CAREER. | TUSD EFFECTIVELY DIRECTS RESOURCES. |
| I HAVE ACCESS TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT. | I AM SATISFIED WITH THE BENEFITS I RECEIVE FROM TUSD. | I FEEL SUPPORTED BY MY SITE. |

KEY: 80% OR MORE EMPLOYEES AGREE 20-35% EMPLOYEES NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE 19% OR MORE EMPLOYEES DISAGREE

In the coming months, TUSD plans to share more detail regarding the survey results and to work with sites to determine how best to address employee input at their sites. The Human Resources department plans to conduct this survey annually.





A SPECIAL THANKS

TUSD HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM

We are committed to cultivating a safe, diverse, and equitable workplace that attracts, develops, and retains qualified talent. We provide opportunities for growth and development, ensuring that each employee, from newly hired to seasoned professional, contributes to and benefits from an inclusive community. We aim to build a dynamic team that thrives on a wide array of skills and ideas, reinforcing our commitment to student success and continuous improvement.



CONTRIBUTING TEAM MEMBERS SY2023-24

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SUPERINTENDENT



NATALIE LUNA ROSE
BOARD PRESIDENT



JENNIFER ECKSTROM
BOARD CLERK



DR. RAVI SHAH
BOARD MEMBER



SADIE SHAW
BOARD MEMBER



VAL ROMERO
BOARD MEMBER

TUCSON UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT

INTERESTED IN OPPORTUNITIES AT TUSD?



VISIT [JOBS.TUSD1.ORG](https://jobs.tusd1.org)

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