

Tustin Unified School District

Budget - Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is happening at the state level and how will this affect our schools?

California is facing an unprecedented \$42 billion deficit over the next 18 months and state law makers have presented a budget that impacts public education as an \$8.6 billion cut in revenue. For Tustin Unified, this translates into \$30 million in lost revenue over the next 17 months. To offset lost revenue, the District will propose \$12.5 million in budget reductions.

2. What are the approved budget reductions for TUSD?

The state expects districts to handle these cuts in two major ways. First, they have increased flexibility in most categorical program budgets, and specifically in the Class Size Reduction (CSR) program. These changes allow Tustin Unified to make the following changes to class sizes: Grade 1 – 24.5:1, Grades 2 and 3 – 29.5:1. There will be no change in Kindergarten class size. Secondly, the state has changed the way districts are allowed to use other categorical funds. Districts will use these designated program funds to offset the decrease in revenue. The current potential recommendations are as follows:

- Reduce Home-to-School Transportation
- Reduce one counselor at each high school
- Eliminate elementary music
- Eliminate ninth grade Class Size Reduction
- Increase class size grades 6 – 12 by one student
- Increase class size in grades 2 and 3 to 29.5 students
- Increase class size in grade 1 to 24.5 students

3. When will we know what the final cuts will be?

The current state budget is based on a few very important assumptions. First, the state has incorporated a healthy tax revenue projection for the remainder of the year. Should the actual tax collection come in below projections, as indicated by the lagging economy, education is likely to receive further budget reductions. Secondly, there are six propositions on a special ballot on May 19. The outcome of this special election will almost certainly further effect the state budget. TUSD will prepare for the unpleasant reality that the state budget cuts to education are most likely not over yet.

4. If the District has a healthy reserve for economic uncertainty, why isn't it used to fill the gap created by the state budget cuts?

Reserves will be used as one important tool to fill the budget gap, but even the District's healthy reserves are not enough to completely fill the unprecedented cuts. All public school districts are accountable to the county and state for maintaining budgets that can demonstrate solvency in the current budget year, plus two more years. If TUSD used only reserves to solve the current budget shortfall, the District would be bankrupt before the end of the third year. Reserves will be an important part of the equation, but they will not be sufficient alone to fill the budget gap.

5. Can we use bond money (Measure G or L) to help during the state's financial crisis?

No. Bond dollars may only be used to build and modernize schools.

6. Why is the District continuing with new building projects during this fiscal crisis?

Again, bond dollars and school building project funds may **only** be used for these specific building projects. If the projects are not completed, the District will lose the funding.

7. Does the proposed budget include any money from the federal stimulus bill?

The proposed TUSD budget does not include any money from the federal stimulus bill. There is no consensus on when or how much of this money the District will actually receive.

8. What are the District's thoughts on fundraising to help during the crisis?

The school district is grateful for such a supportive community; however, funding staff is the District's responsibility. This also ensures equity among schools. Each school will need to rely heavily on their PTA/PTO organizations to assist with particular needs at each site. Remember, site budgets are also dramatically affected by the state funding decisions.

9. What can the community do to help?

It is important for the legislators and the governor to hear from us. Our school district urges legislators to help schools with three actions:

- Giving school districts local control and flexibility with our remaining dollars
- Removing costly, unfunded state mandates
- Making education a top priority by providing a stable source of funding

Parents can also support the Tustin Public Schools Foundation, which raises money for TUSD and supports many innovative programs. We encourage parents to get involved with the local PTA/PTO, which advocates on behalf of our schools. California is already ranked 47th out of 50 states in funding. California schools have some of the most overcrowded classrooms and the greatest shortages of staff. These cuts will greatly impact educational programs in our schools.

10. How can I advocate against further cuts to education?

- Write a letter to the governor insisting he not penalize our schools for the state's budget woes.
- Contact your local assembly member or senator to urge the protection of education funding. (More detailed information is available on the TUSD Web site.)
- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper opposing cuts to education.
 - The Tustin News or Irvine World News: ddennis@ocregister.com
 - Orange County Register: letters@ocregister.com or P.O. Box 11626, Santa Ana, CA 92711-1626
 - Los Angeles Times: ocletters@latimes.com or 202 W. 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012