TORRANCE
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## 2025 STATE OF OUR SCHOOLS

Annual Report to Our Community

# Empowering every student, every day.







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tusd.org

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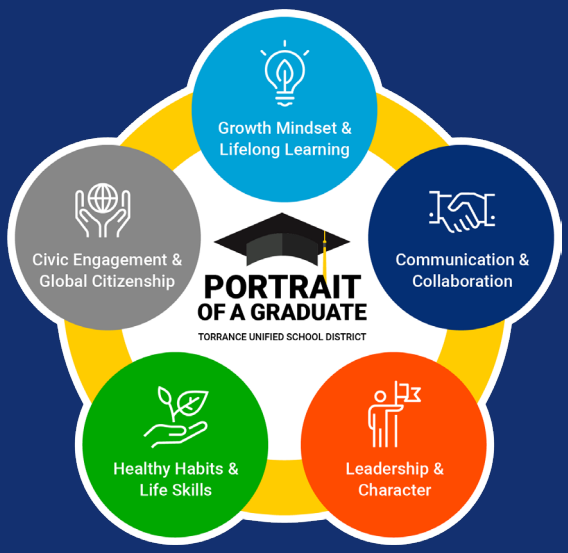
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# A Message from Our Superintendent

We are proud to share this year's State of Our Schools annual report with you. This publication reflects the incredible work happening every day across our schools and the many ways our students continue to excel in academics, arts, athletics, and service. Whether or not you have children in our schools, we believe these stories matter to the entire Torrance community. A strong school district adds value to our city, and our graduates will help shape our collective future.

This year, we are honored to be named the **Best Public School District in the South Bay** for the fifth year in a row. This recognition is a direct result of the dedication, skill, and care of our remarkable staff, and I am deeply grateful for their tireless commitment to our students.

This school year, we will continue to focus on our **Portrait of a Graduate**, the vision for the skills and attributes we believe every Torrance Unified student should attain by the time they graduate. Last year, we focused on building awareness for the Portrait and its five elements. This year, we are moving forward with the vital work of defining how our students will demonstrate these skills in meaningful, authentic ways, at all grade levels, ensuring they are prepared for the future that awaits them. You will see that we have aligned our stories this year with the various elements they exemplify.






Thank you for your continued partnership in making Torrance Unified a place where every student is supported, challenged, and inspired to reach their full potential. Together, we will continue to uplift every student, every day.

**Dr. Tim Stowe**
Superintendent of Schools

**Scan Here**
For More Information
About Portrait of a Graduate

# Torrance Unified at a Glance

**22,023**
**Students**

**34**
**Schools**

17 Elementary Schools
8 Middle Schools
4 High Schools (HS)
1 Continuation HS
1 Alternative School
3 Adult Campuses

**3,600+**
**Employees**

**96.1%**
**Graduation Rate**
(vs. 87.4% Statewide)

**100%**
**of Schools in Good Repair**

**English Language Arts (ELA) State Assessments**
Ranked #1 among comparison districts with a **"HIGH"** rating on the CA School Dashboard.

**Math State Assessments**
Ranked #1 among comparison districts with a **"HIGH"** rating on the CA School Dashboard.

## Budget Breakdown

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **43%** | Certificated Salaries | $151,886,000 |
| **17%** | Classified Salaries | $58,456,000 |
| **22%** | Employee Benefits | $77,970,000 |
| **4%** | Supplies & Materials | $13,234,000 |
| **14%** | Other Operating | $48,818,000 |
| | **Total** | **$350,364,000** |

## Student Ethnicity

| | |
|---|---|
| **34.8%** | Hispanic/Latino |
| **26.9%** | Asian |
| **18.5%** | White |
| **9.6%** | Two or More Races |
| **4.7%** | Filipino |
| **4.1%** | Black / African American |
| **0.4%** | Pacific Islander |
| **0.2%** | American Indian |
| **0.7%** | Other / Not Reported |

# Future Entrepreneurs Internship Launches Pilot Year in Torrance

Twenty-six ambitious students from four of our high schools stepped beyond the classroom and into the real world of business through the inaugural **Future Entrepreneurs Internship**. The four-week program gave students a hands-on look at business and marketing in action, far beyond textbooks and lectures.






Funded through a generous donation from **Surf Management, Inc.** in memory of Karl and Sally Fechner, the program brought students behind the scenes at **American Honda**, **Robinson Helicopter Company**, **Bluestem Hotel**, and **Torrance Unified School District**. At each site, industry professionals shared their expertise while mentors guided students through weekly design challenges. Under the leadership of **Dr. Tracy Nickl** (California Lutheran University Professor) and **Mr. Don Glavich** (THS Teacher), using a curriculum from **Project ECHO**, students developed and practiced professional skills, business fundamentals, and marketing strategies.

***"The program is a really good opportunity for students to get out of their shells,"*** said participant, **Amelia Chang**. ***"I personally am very introverted and I had never experienced having to present every day. I think anyone who is even remotely interested in business and wants to work on their public speaking skills should try this program."***

The final judged presentations showcased the students' growth, innovation, and teamwork, with the winning HoloTeach team marketing their idea of a holographic teaching platform using AI-generated imagery. The experience instilled the students with far more confidence, networking skills, and a clearer sense of the possibilities for their future. They discovered new strengths and opened doors they hadn't previously known existed, forming a true launchpad for future success.

# Language Classes Give Students Global Travel Opportunities

In November 2024, five **West High School** students demonstrated exceptional global citizenship when they traveled to Seoul, Korea, as part of the Student Cultural Exchange Program organized by the **Daegu Office of Education** in **Korea**. They teamed with students from Korea, Uzbekistan, and Australia during their journey. ***"The warmth and kindness of the people I met made the experience even more special,"*** said **Lyrik Salausa**, a recent graduate. ***"They ensured I felt welcome and cared for the entire time."***




Our students immersed themselves in Korean culture through city tours, visits to Korean Royal Palaces, museums, schools, historical sites, and interactions with local citizens. **Mrs. Karyn Lee**, WHS Korean World Language Teacher and trip chaperone, expressed how much the students' immersion in the trip to visit her home country meant to her. ***"Watching my students perform a K-pop dance at the Cultural Exchange Program filled me with immense pride,"*** said Mrs. Lee. ***"I look forward to many more opportunities to explore, celebrate, and share the beauty of Korean culture with my students."***

SOUTH BAY'S BEST
34TH ANNUAL READERS' CHOICE AWARDS
2025
DAILY BREEZE
THE BEACH REPORTER

## Why Torrance Unified?

We were voted "Best Public School District" by the Daily Breeze/Beach Reporter annual Readers' Choice Awards for the fifth year in a row and won 32 additional awards, including Best (High School - North), (Middle School - Casimir) and (Elementary - Carr).

In addition, this year, John Adams, Arlington, Towers, and Yukon Elementary Schools were all honored as 2025 Distinguished Schools. Work with our knowledgeable Family Welcome Enrollment Center to find out more:

# Investing in Our Future Teachers

The **South Bay Consortium Teacher Residency Program**, a partnership between Torrance, Lawndale, and Wiseburn School Districts, is helping address the teacher shortage in high-need areas such as Special Education, Dual Language, and STEM. The program focuses on ***"growing our own"*** educators by recruiting local residents and former students to return to the Torrance community as teachers. This approach strengthens our educator pipeline and ensures that students see themselves reflected in their teachers, fostering connection, representation, and inspiration.

Residents from our first cohort are thriving, with three earning **TUSD PTA Educator Awards** for modeling excellence across our schools. **Alex Smith**, a North Torrance resident and lifelong South Bay musician who has opened for artists such as Neil Young and John Mayer, brings music into his classroom at **Casimir Middle School** to engage and strengthen student learning. **Emilie Solandt**, a South Bay resident and dance instructor at a local studio, is beloved by students, families, and colleagues at **Magruder Middle School** for her dedication and is among the first to pilot Special Education co-teaching in her classroom. **Sara Romero**, a former professional soccer player, shares her passion for the sport with her students at **Riviera** and **Walteria** elementary schools, often joining them on the field to play. She is deeply committed to providing the best learning experience possible and is a valued colleague.



Funded by a **State of California Implementation Grant**, participants receive a **$40,000 stipend while earning their teaching credential and Master's Degree** and gain invaluable guidance from mentor teachers. Many mentors share that they learn just as much from their residents as they teach, reigniting their own passion for the profession.

With the launch of our third cohort for the 2025–26 school year, we continue shaping the next generation of Torrance Unified teachers who uplift every student, every day.

# High School Students Make Their Civic Mark

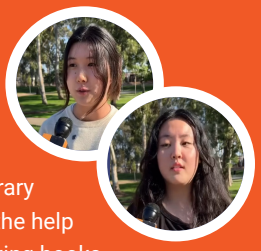
Every year, Torrance Unified high school students are invited to commit to a community project to serve others and qualify to earn **California's State Seal of Civic Engagement,** demonstrating excellence in civic education. The following students took on the challenge over the past two school years, with our local media partners periodically highlighting their outstanding work and project sustainability.

***North High School***
*Tyler Tanaka, Recent Graduate*



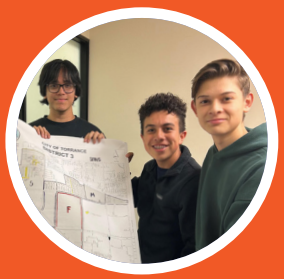
**Math Improvement Program**
Tyler created a program that both encouraged and prepared Torrance Unified elementary school students to appreciate math and improve their skills as they transition into middle and high school.

***South High School***
*Alexis Choi & Kaelyn Kang, Recent Graduate*



**"Little Libraries" Installation**
Alexis and Kaelyn created storybook-inspired library stations throughout City of Torrance parks with the help of South High's arts and woodshop classes, making books and reading opportunities accessible to the Torrance community.

***Torrance High School***
*Seth Montenegro, Farhaan Farooq, Miguel Reyes, Recent Graduates*



**Tactile Pavement Installation**
The team identified missing sidewalks near Torrance High School, using maps and technology to improve pedestrian and traffic safety.

***Torrance High School***
*Cara Kim, Grade 11*



**"Tartar Threads" Donation Boutique**
Cara created an in-school, fashionable donation center where students in-need can privately access clothes and additional necessities.

# Marine Corps Veteran Gets Second Chance at Diploma

Every graduation season, many students receive the coveted diplomas they've worked tremendously hard for over their high school careers. But what if life threw them a curveball, and they had to fast-track their teenage lives into adulthood? That was the case for **West High School** student **Robert Taylor**, a 74-year-old veteran who had to leave **West High** suddenly in 1968 to join the **United States Marine Corps** as he was transitioning into his senior year of high school after a family tragedy.

Through a growing veteran-focused program called **"Operation Recognition," Torrance Adult School (TAS)** proudly graduated Taylor with the Class of 2025 after nearly 60 years – a dream transformed into reality. The program recognizes and honors eligible veterans of WWII, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War, and those held in internment camps, by awarding them their high school diplomas if they were deployed before graduating.






***"When you get older, you hope there's something that keeps you going,"*** said **Charm McElree**, the veteran volunteer advocate who reached out to TAS Director, **Dr. Stephanie Lewis**, for Taylor's recognition.

While expressing his gratitude for this valuable program, Taylor shared, ***"Primarily…it's how people can be better positioned for opportunity. You're dealing with different generations…not having that diploma might prevent that*** *[opportunity]****, when in fact the opportunity to receive the diploma is available to them."***

If you know a veteran who might benefit from Operation Recognition, please encourage them to learn more by visiting **tusd.org/tas**.

# Accelerating Math Success from Elementary School through Graduation

Student demand for Torrance Unified's **Math Acceleration Program** continues to expand. This past summer, all eight middle schools offered summer acceleration– a first for our district. This program continues to give students in grades 5–9 the opportunity to demonstrate readiness for above-grade-level coursework through individual preparation, open enrollment, assessment, or summer classes. Students receive ongoing support after acceleration to ensure success in their next course.

***"Acceleration makes it possible for hundreds of students each year to reach our highest-level courses and succeed."*** said **Dr. Scott McDowell**, Director, State and Federal Projects.

**The results are exceptional**: In just five years, more than 1,000 students have accelerated. Ninety-five percent earn As or Bs in future math courses, and **100% continue with advanced math every year through graduation**. Acceleration also creates room in students' schedules for additional high-level courses, opening pathways to AP Calculus, AP Statistics, AP Computer Science, and Data Science.





Aligned with our **Portrait of a Graduate** element for **Growth Mindset** and **Lifelong Learning**, the program helps students problem-solve and think strategically in every facet of life, preparing them for success in any college or career path.

# Students Continue to Enjoy Professional-Level Performance Experiences

Each year, middle school performers are invited to audition and share the spotlight with high school casts in our state-of-the-art Performing Arts Centers. Thanks to you, our community, and your support of **Measures T & U and Arts and Music in Schools (AMS)** funding, these young performers now enjoy the hands-on experience of working in professional-grade venues with advanced lighting, sound, and stage technology. Not long ago, the only middle school production experiences students had access to were held in multipurpose cafeterias, often alongside folded lunch tables. Today, students are able to step into spaces designed for world-class performances, and enjoy bringing productions such as **Calle Mayor's** *Beetlejuice*, **Torrance High's** *SpongeBob the Musical*, **North High's** *Legally Blonde*, and **West High's** *Finding Nemo Jr.* to life with skill and confidence.

Theatre nurtures healthy habits for life by fostering emotional expression, collaboration, and resilience. In *Beetlejuice*, students explored themes of grief, friendship, and self-acceptance, sparking meaningful conversations about mental health. Experiences like these give students tools to express themselves in healthy ways, build positive relationships, and develop the life skills they need to thrive in school and beyond.




# Alumni Spotlight

Since graduating from **West High School** in 2001, **Wendy Cucho** has become a four-time Emmy Award winner as an Associate Producer for FOX Sports. Her passion for athletics and knowledge in graphics production led to an unexpected role on the FOX Sports MLB team, where she and the team earned an Emmy for their notable World Series "Field of Dreams" special in 2022.

Exemplifying **"Leadership and Character"** through her patience, understanding, and guidance of team members – Wendy says she learned these traits from her former high school band director, James Banim, who passed in 2019. Wendy honors his legacy, stating, ***"Watching how he handled us with steady leadership left a lasting impression on me, and I've carried that approach into my own work."***

Throughout her career, Wendy has taken on several leadership roles and wants Torrance Unified students to know there are many different career pathways to pursue. ***"My advice is to keep an open mind, don't give up, and be willing to create your own niche if you need to. Your path might be unexpected, but it can still be incredibly rewarding."*** While winning an Emmy wasn't her goal, Wendy describes the honor as ***"the cherry on top"*** of an already rewarding career.

If you have another example of an alumni success story, we'd love to hear about it! Email **communications@tusd.org** and let us know.

