

Parents for  
Educational  
Excellence in  
Piedmont

# PEEP Board Meeting

April 2, 2024

Hari Titan, President of PEEP

In the hopes of increasing PUSD enrollment that would otherwise go to private schools or even home-schooling, Dr. Hawn is investigating the possibility of adding 2 different independent study programs, one of which was suggested by PEEP.



Parents for Educational Excellence in Piedmont <excellencepusd@gmail.com>

Mar 11, 2024, 5:16 PM



to Jennifer ▾

Hi Jennifer,

It seems like something at

In the meant district revenue

Over the year



Jennifer Hawn

jhawn@piedmont.k12.ca.us



Superintendent • Piedmont Unified School District

[Open detailed view](#)



are on much better terms and worked together on the mini-rightsizing cuts as well as the public survey on a parcel tax hike. I also heard chances. Any idea when that report will become available?

asses and resources is not just for a long-strike scenario (which I am no longer fearful of). The idea could be used to increase

al Malione) and pieced together an opportunity for the district to get more students. Specifically, gifted and talented (GATE) students.

The following needs to be verified using PUSD's internal emails/documents. However my understanding is that:

1. In or around 2014, state funding for a special education program for GATE students was eliminated.
2. The loss of this program disproportionately impacted PUSD because a much higher proportion of Piedmont kids passed the OLSAT test compared to the rest of the nation. When the cutoff was the top 96th percentile, it was reported that 30% [?] of Piedmont students passed the test (as compared to 4% nationwide). Later the cutoff was changed to 98th percentile and that dropped the number to 10% [?] of Piedmont students passing (compared to 2% nationwide). With either cutoff, that's a lot of students impacted.
3. PEF has not tried to fundraise for a replacement program and it just might not fundraise well.
4. Over time, according to Michael, many of these students decided to leave PUSD for private school or homeschooling.
5. This is likely while maintaining their Piedmont residences. In other words, the kids are still local and the parents could be incentivized to change their mind.
6. PUSD could create an independent study program based on supervised homeschooling where a special educator, specializing in the subject the student is most gifted in, would monitor a GATE student's progress and proctor exams to ensure grade progression. Ideally the special educator needs to be someone who can answer the GATE student's questions, not just refer them to online resources.
7. If this new program follows some established syllabus / curriculum, it would help sell the program to GATE parents who might have been disappointed with general educational programs at PUSD, although differentiated, and need a new (solid) hope to return their kids to PUSD.
8. I suspect GATE students would be most successful with the new AI tutoring opportunities in the marketplace. The reason is that these technologies require the user to formulate the next followup question, which is the essence of intelligence. Answering the question correctly requires knowledge and unfortunately many AI tools will be subject to hallucinations and are limited to high-school level answers. There are ways to mitigate the hallucinations and some tools go beyond HS level answers. I'm sure the teachers are being exposed to these options on their professional development day and the ALPS math enrichment trial program might inform how well the tools work.



**Jennifer Hawn**

to me ▼

Mar 12, 2024, 8:48 AM



Thanks, Hari. I always appreciate your thinking about innovation in education. I had not thought about independent study for GATE students, and so I will advise Ariel to explore this option. Ruth is the keeper of the financial and enrollment information, and so I will get together with her for this information. Currently, we are exploring independent study for high school students, basing our model on other districts where I have worked (i.e., Beverly Hills USD) where robust hybrid independent study programs are offered and in very high demand. My hope is that we can fill a gap in our program and that we can increase our enrollment, starting with high school and possibly other grades in the future.

More to come, and thank you for your ideas.

Gratefully,

Jen



Jennifer Hawn, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
Piedmont Unified School District  
(510) 594-2614 · Office

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	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>\$3,549,277</b>	<b>\$2,823,558</b>	<b>\$2,403,060</b>
<b>Revenues:</b>			
LCFF	\$26,566,097	\$26,363,249	\$26,733,053
Other Fed & State	4,273,719	4,323,867	4,354,107
Parcel Taxes	14,141,136	14,370,789	14,605,035
PEF	3,332,000	3,300,000	3,300,000
Other Local	2,682,261	2,884,503	2,916,005
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>50,995,213</b>	<b>51,242,408</b>	<b>51,908,200</b>
<b>Expenses:</b>			
Certificated Salaries	21,169,407	21,146,740	21,064,826
Classified Salaries	7,643,526	7,714,961	7,787,111
Benefits	13,964,980	14,160,975	14,213,186
Non-Personnel Costs	8,254,992	7,249,018	7,437,391
<i>Cost of 2% 2023-24, 24-25, 25-26</i>	<i>688,027</i>	<i>688,027</i>	<i>688,027</i>
<i>Cost of 4% 2024-25, 2025-26</i>		<i>1,403,186</i>	<i>1,403,186</i>
<i>Cost of 3% 2025-26</i>			<i>1,089,972</i>
<b>Budget Adjustments</b>		<b>-700,000</b>	<b>-1,800,000</b>
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>51,720,932</b>	<b>51,662,907</b>	<b>51,883,699</b>
Net Surplus (Deficit)	-725,719	-420,499	24,501
<b>Ending Balance</b>	<b>\$2,823,558</b>	<b>\$2,403,060</b>	<b>\$2,427,561</b>



# SCHOOL GRADING POLICIES ARE FAILING CHILDREN

## A Call to Action for Equitable Grading



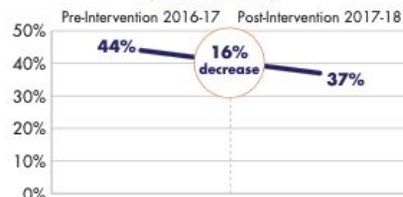
JOE FELDMAN

**District #1: Cohort of 24 teachers across a rural/suburban district's four high schools—over 3,700 grades assigned**

**Percent of End-of-Year D/F Grades Assigned (All Students)**

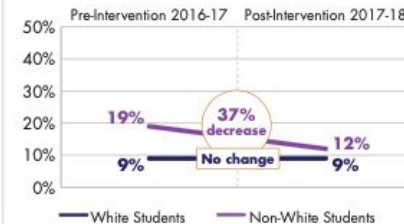


**Percent of End-of-Year A Grades Assigned (All Students)**

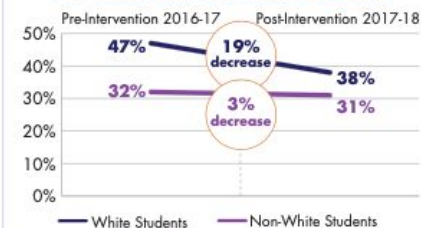


In the charts above, equitable grading resulted in a reduction in the rate of Ds and Fs teachers assigned, as well as a reduction in the rate of As teachers assigned.

**Percent of End-of-Year D/F Grades Assigned for White and Non-White Students**



**Percent of End-of-Year A Grades Assigned for White and Non-White Students**



The charts above indicate that for both the percentage of students earning D/F and earning A grades, equitable grading practices significantly reduced the disparity between white and non-white students. For example, for non-white students, the percentage of D and F grades assigned dropped by more than one-third, from 19 to 12 percent, while there was no change for White students.

Similarly, the following charts reveal the same type of improvement in closing achievement gaps in an urban district's high school and middle schools.

# OPINION

## Do grade distributions prove bias?

By Hari Titan, Ph.D.

By California Education Code, teachers can individually use any course grading formula they see fit for the subject and course level they are teaching. In 2020, Piedmont Unified School District passed a Racial Equity board policy that made Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Dr. Cheryl Wozniak responsible for its implementation. Dr. Wozniak thought the course grading formula should be standardized keeping a goal of racial equity in mind. Since roughly 2020, some PMS and PHS teachers voluntarily began experimenting with a grading system based on a book called “Grading for Equity” by Joe Feldman.

Do racial differences in grade distributions prove a biased education? As school board president, Veronica Andersen Thigpen agendized this topic for action by the board at a public meeting on March 22, 2023, but did not appear at the meeting to defend her position. Thigpen, who is a Fellow at Just Equations, a non-profit that reconceptualizes the role of math in ensuring educational equity, ran for school board in 2020 on the premise that there should be equity in educational outcomes for all races.

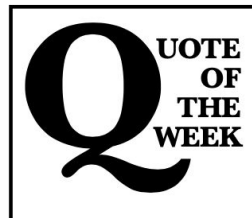
At the public meeting on March 22, 2023, Wozniak led

a presentation on “Equitable Grading Practices” to update the school board on her efforts with support from PMS and PHS school principals. Wozniak argued: *“Teachers sincerely want their students’ grades to be objective, but our grading systems historically have systematically perpetuated opportunity gaps and biases. For example: providing extra credit, penalizing for lateness, punishing cheating in the grade, evaluating student behavior (like how often a student raises their hand and participates), and including homework. These are all biased grading practices and dependent on a student’s life circumstances, culture, and for all kinds of reasons.”*

Feldman’s grading is solely based on a student’s mastery of the content based on assessments, nothing behavioral. Feldman prohibits grading credit for homework completion, class participation, extra credit, or grade punishment for cheating because it disproportionately impacts low-income and minority students. Instead, he promotes giving students the option to be retested or resubmit work in subject areas the student did not master (a.k.a. Mastery-Based Grading), and instead of a failing grade below 50%, he would give students an incomplete that would not count against their GPA.

These features of “Grading for Equity” would inflate or deflate grades for different types of students relative to the teacher’s prior grading formulas. The net impact of these grading changes is very important for college admission. School administrators did not present student grade distributions for the courses before and after the change to Grading for Equity. In 2018 Feldman produced a [report](#) that Grading for Equity reduced the number of Ds and Fs, along with the number of As. Slide 11 of his report showed a school district reduced the number of As by 16%, which was a 19% reduction for White students and a 3% reduction for Non-White students.

Blindly following Feldman without before and after grade distribution data is **not helping Piedmont students**. The student school board representative reported that delays from the new grading were stressful to students and consequential for college applications. At the time of this writing, the administration is continuing this effort. Equitable grade distributions are one of many possible racial equity goals that may be seen as unconstitutional under the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution.



Watch the March 2023 School Board meeting for more arguments against Grading for Equity.

## Required Skills

### Ability to:

- Plan, organize, and direct the daily operations of the assigned school
- Organize, direct, train, evaluate, and supervise certificated and classified staff
- Plan and lead organizational change
- Plan and lead conversations related to racial diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice
- Establish and maintain communication with community and parent groups
- Plan, implement, direct, and evaluate instructional and categorical programs in accordance with applicable laws
- Plan and direct the budget and business operations of the school
- Read, interpret, apply and explain rules, regulations, policies, and procedures
- Work collaboratively with others
- Communicate effectively both orally and in writing
- Prepare and deliver oral presentations

### Knowledge and Implementation of:

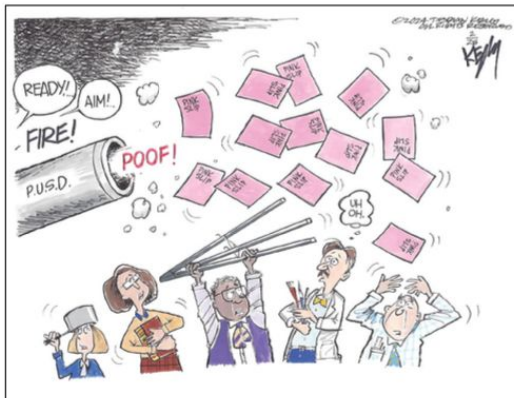
- Professional learning communities, response to intervention, multi-tiered systems of support, and equitable grading practices
- Program evaluation with measurable student outcomes
- Best practices in technology integration for students and staff
- Current state testing programs
- Budget management



**[bit.ly/PUSDBudget](https://bit.ly/PUSDBudget)**



# OPINION



## OPINION

### Rightsizing in school district is right thing to do

By: Hari Titan, Ph.D.

Student enrollment has been going down due to 1) a declining birth rate, 2) increased expense for families to move to Piedmont, 3) families who can afford private schools, and 4) empty-nesters who remain in Piedmont.

PUSD presented a budget workshop on January 11 to discuss possible cuts that would achieve the cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA) the union was seeking. Out of fear of a strike, I decided to analyze past budgets ([bit.ly/PUSDbudget](https://bit.ly/PUSDbudget)) myself and found a number of interesting things which I presented to district leadership.

PUSD enrollment declined

14.8% (2014-23) despite a total funding increase of 47% over the same time period. This student enrollment decline was roughly 8% above the state's average decline rate of 6.7%.

State income taxes (including capital gains tax) went up much higher over those years and a fixed percentage of that goes toward TK-12 education. Had that not occurred, revenue from the state could have been roughly 8% higher. That's the revenue "loss" referred to by PUSD in recent documents.

The schools don't really need that extra money because there are fewer students to support. Logically, if enrollment goes down by 8%, staff should corre-

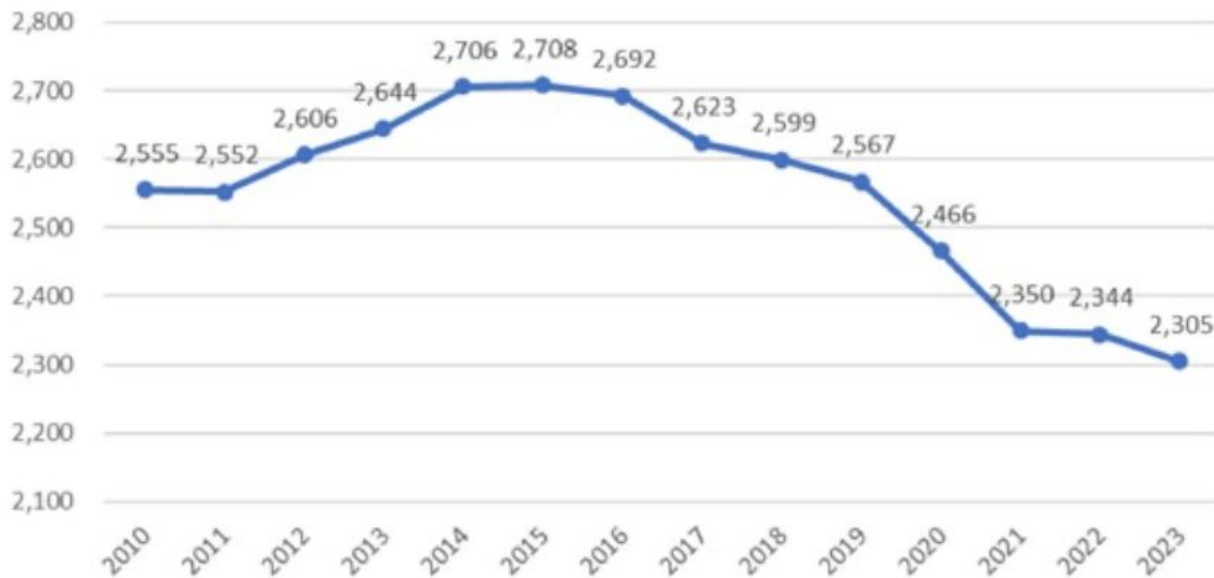
spondingly go down by a similar percentage. Deciding which smaller classes to merge and which staff to reduce is not easy. The resulting savings would help cover the COLA.

Property taxes and our parcel taxes act as a bit of a buffer on the rightsizing needed since those funding sources are locked in for 8 years, independent of enrollment changes.

I urge the community to review the Budget Workshop presentation attached to the January 11th board meeting. The presentation had a slide that revealed the downward enrollment trend, grade by grade. 12th and 11th grades in 2023 are well above 200 students, middle school grades are below 190, elementary grades below 175, with 1st and 2nd grades below 160 and the Kindergarten class at 135 students.

Lower enrollment isn't temporary and requires addressing staffing levels, not papered over with higher parcel taxes.

### Enrollment on Census Day

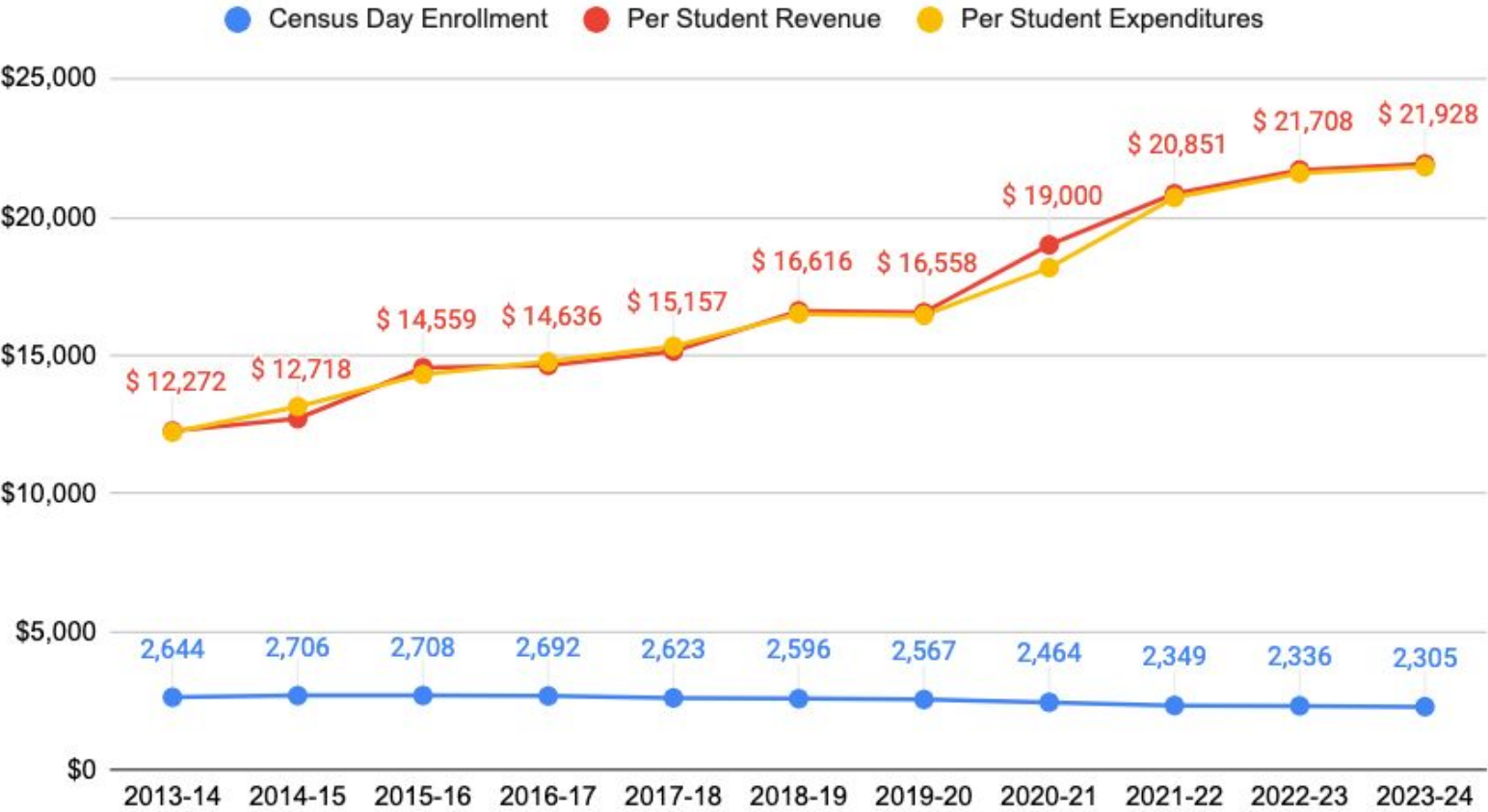


**Much of the trouble in raising teacher pay owes to the fact that over half of PUSD funding depends on student enrollment, which has declined for nearly a decade.**

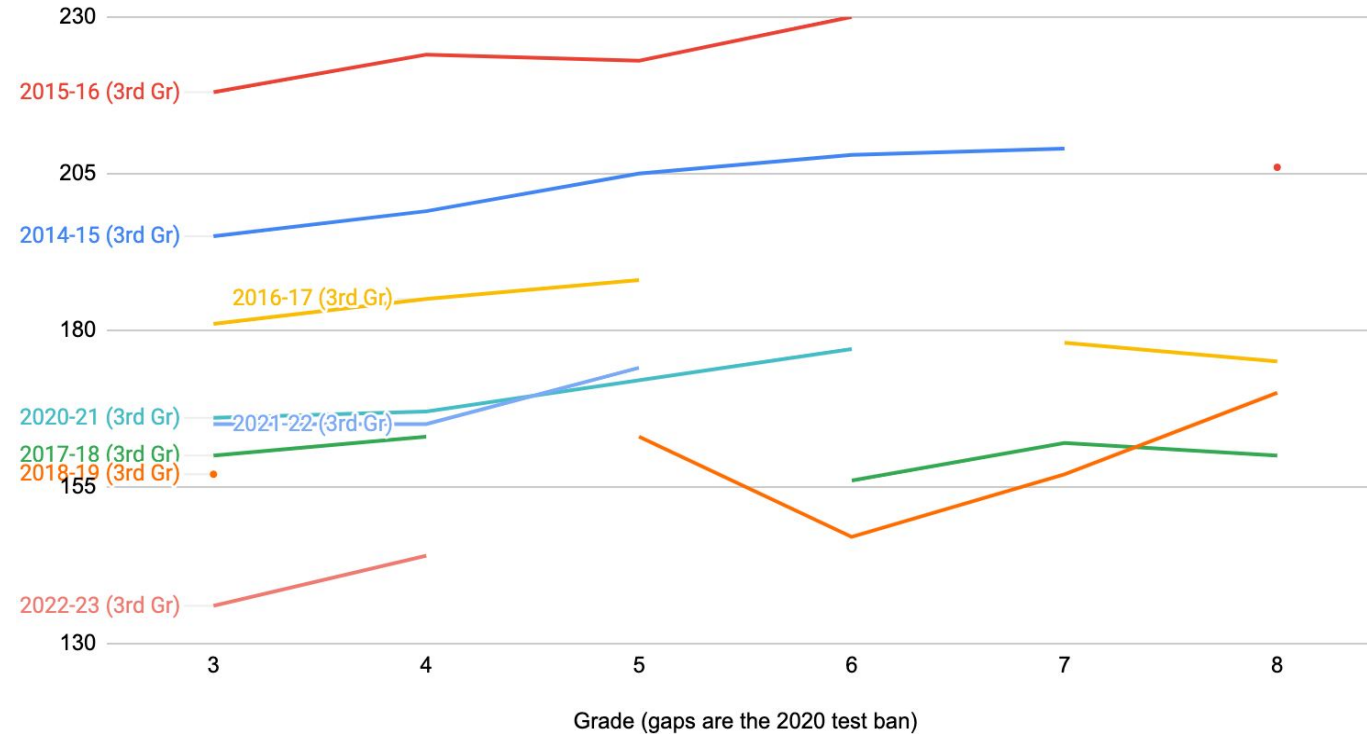
#### Piedmont Post news rack at Mulberry's

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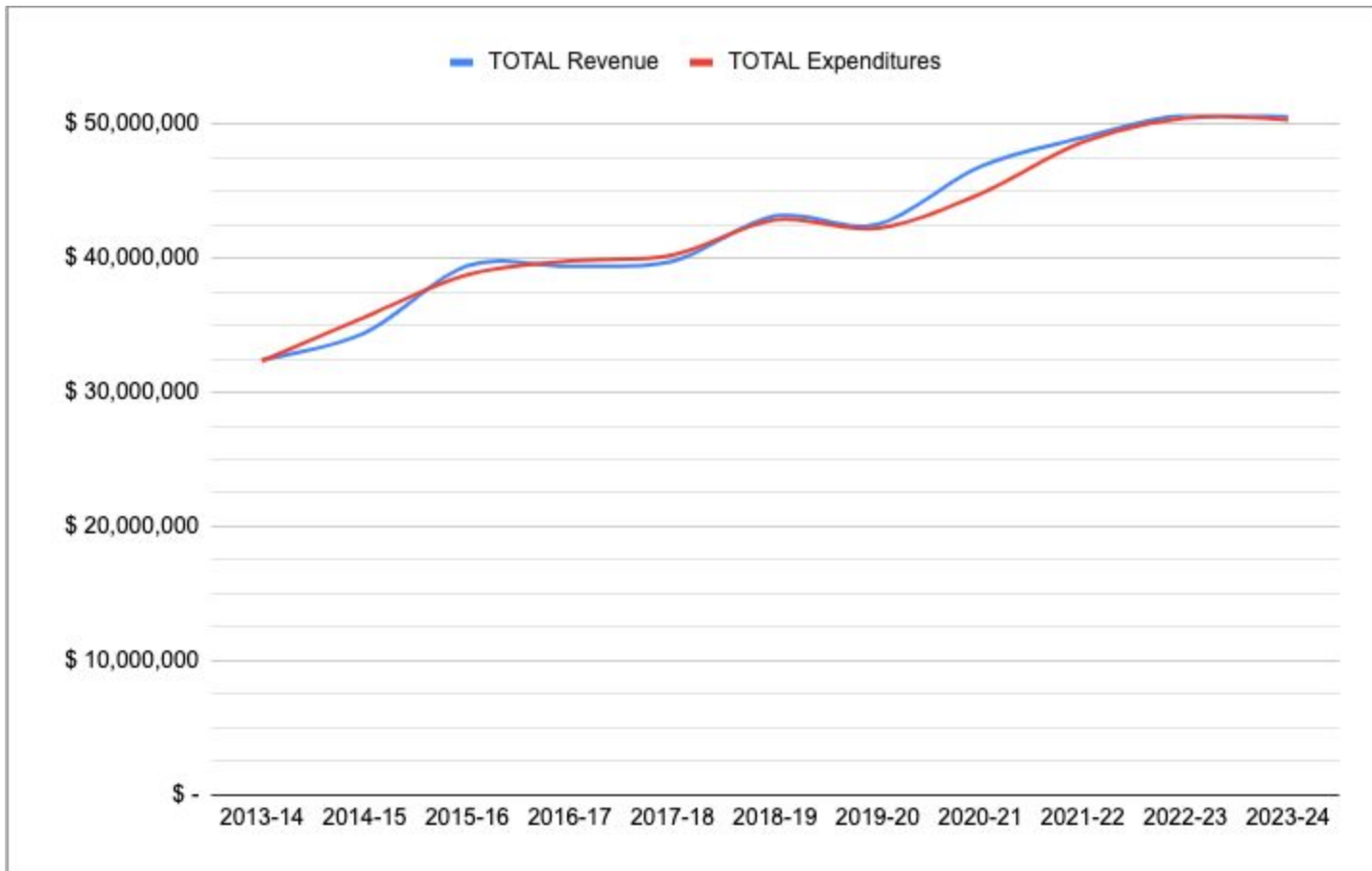
# Piedmont Unified (PEEP assembled data)



## Following 3rd Grade Cohorts (# Students tested on CAASPP for ELA)



- Cohort class sizes stay within a +/- 10% band
- Class size grew in 2015-16, then declined 2016-19
- 2020-22 recovered a little bit above 2017-18 levels
- Decline resumed in 2022-23
- Total enrollment reflects all cohorts (and the untested grades)
- The last 6 years (2017-23) are below average
- If the next few years remain below average, total enrollment will continue declining



## Total Revenue

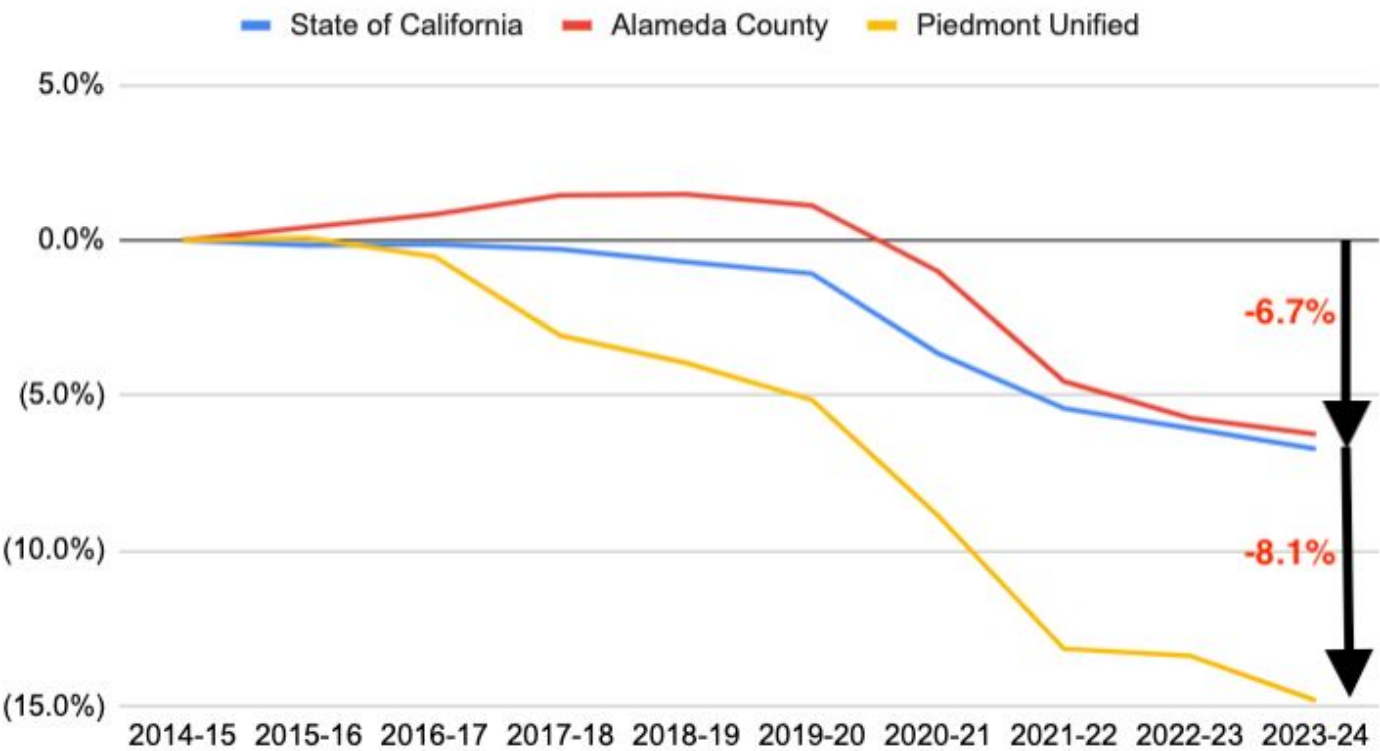
~= Per Pupil  
Revenue \*  
Enrollment

Is also growing  
but the growth is  
slowing to a  
crawl.

Total and per  
pupil revenue  
growth  
confirmed by  
CBO.



# K12 Cumulative Change in Enrollment since 2014



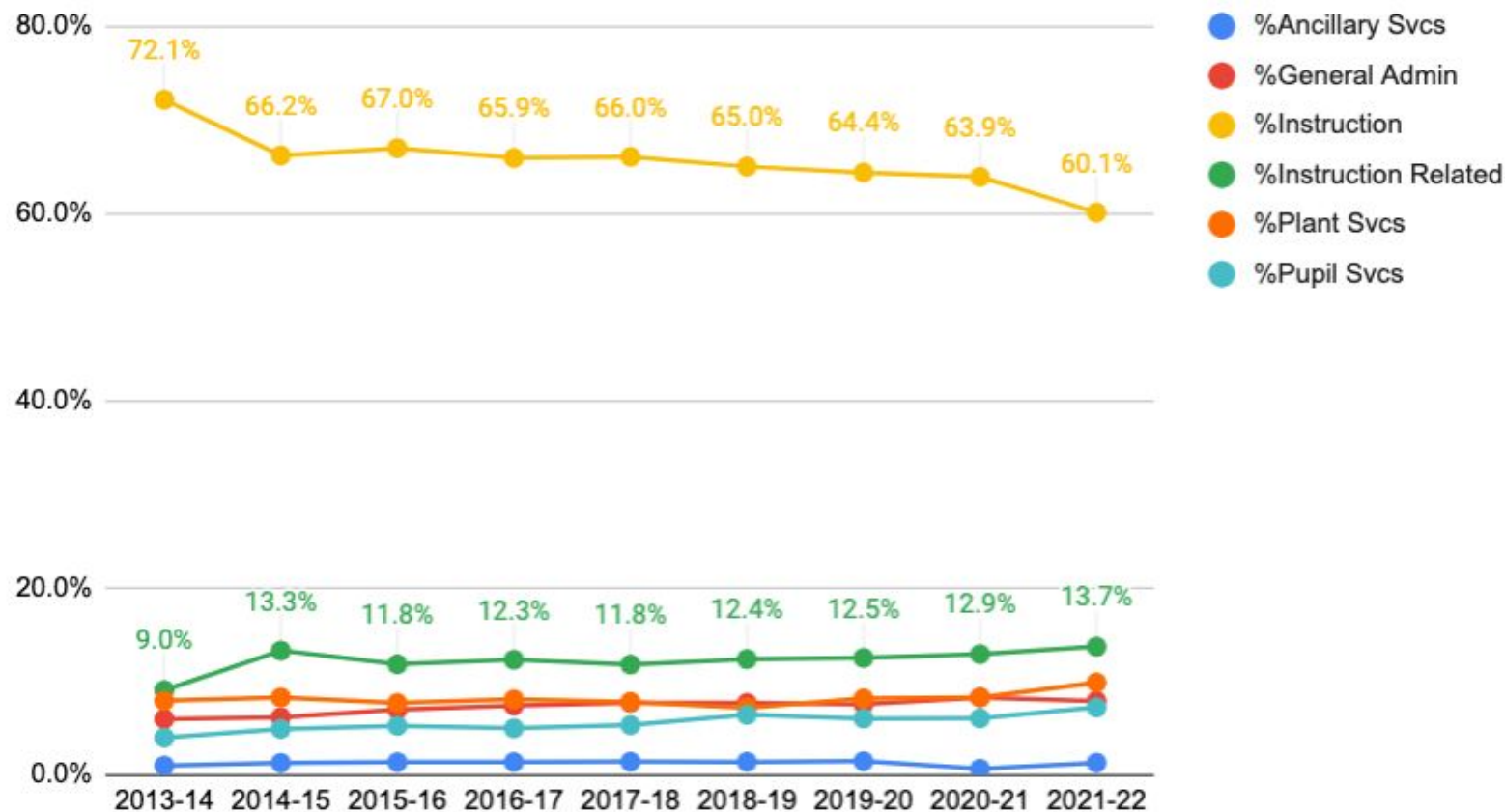
The extra 8.1% decline needs right-sizing.

6.7% fewer students helped increase per pupil state funding.

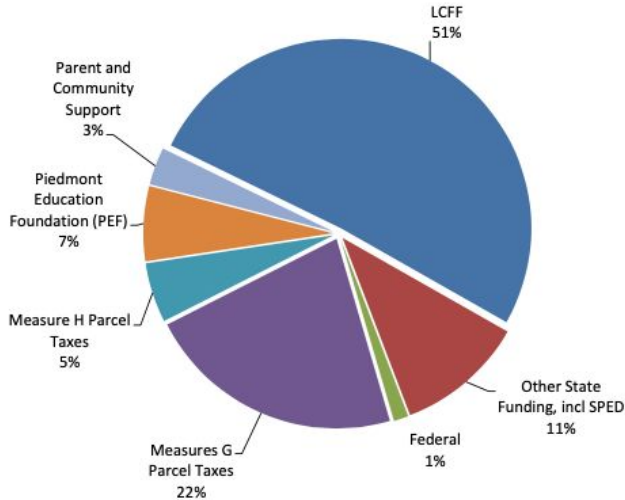
Inflation inflates state taxes as well.

Where did this money go?

## % Expenditures for Instruction has declined relative to all others



**PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
GENERAL FUND  
REVENUE SOURCES  
2023-24 SECOND INTERIM REPORT**



Revenues	Amount	% of Total	
LCFF	\$ 26,613,423	51%	State/Fed 63%
Other State Funding, incl SPED	5,731,692	11%	
Federal	655,595	1%	
Measures G Parcel Taxes	11,520,758	22%	Local 37%
Measure H Parcel Taxes	2,658,496	5%	
Piedmont Education Foundation (PEF)	3,332,000	6%	
Parent and Community Support	1,674,129	3%	
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 52,186,093</b>	<b>100%</b>	

The share of expenditures for teachers went down from 72% a decade ago to 60% a couple of years ago.

The latest district report shows it's gone down further to 53%.

Expenditures	Amount	% of Total
Certificated (non-Admin) Salaries & Benefits	\$ 27,232,858	53%
Classified (non-Admin) Salaries & Benefits	10,536,253	20%
Administrator Salaries & Benefits	4,500,920	9%
Books & Supplies	1,753,891	3%
Services & Other Operating Costs	7,216,078	14%
Capital Outlay (Over \$5000)	356,183	1%
Transfers Among Funds	120,681	0%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 51,716,864</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

<b>Compounded Annual Growth Rates (CAGR)</b>	
<b>Ancillary Services</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
<b>General Administration</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
<b>Instruction</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
<b>Instruction Related Services</b>	<b>10.8%</b>
<b>Plant Services</b>	<b>8.2%</b>
<b>Pupil Services</b>	<b>13.3%</b>
<b>TOTAL Expenditures</b>	<b>5.2%</b>

Annualizing the growth using the CAGR formula helps put the spending increases in context of annual inflation numbers.

In the absence of growing staff, CAGR is the maximum COLA possible, every year!

# WHAT DOES \$1.4 M LOOK LIKE?

Another way to consider the district budget is by program. The following list is for purposes of providing examples of programs and is **not** a recommendation for cuts.

Program / Expense	Unrestricted (includes Parcel Taxes & PEF Grant)	Parent Contributions	Restricted Grant	Total
Athletics	\$418,933	\$278,594	\$73,598	\$771,125
Wellness Center	161,326	63,089	60,149	284,564
Libraries	773,918	24,602	0	798,520
Arts Program	1,439,403	88,990	0	1,528,393
Counseling (K-12)	979,465	86,026	0	1,065,491
DEIB	182,702	0	196,158	378,860
Professional Development	158,567	5,354	6,665	170,586
IT Hardware - Chromebooks	145,700	19,970	0	165,670
IT Software	352,572	0	5,853	358,425
TOTAL	\$4,612,586	\$566,625	\$342,423	\$5,521,634





**Hari Titan**

The word "budget" in budget cuts is a bit misleading. The actual school budget has grown each year for the past decade despite declining enrollment (confirmed by the district CBO).

Declining student enrollment reduced the growth in budget to a near crawl, making it all but impossible to offer a cost-of-living-adjustment (COLA).

The union could have chosen no COLA and kept ALL the teachers, including the ones you love the most.

The union ignored that option and claimed the district was negotiating in bad faith, calling in a state mediator to independently look at the district finances. The union had previously made a case to the public that other school districts managed to give COLAs to their teachers but did not look at the district finances themselves to see where all the money from years of budget growth went.

For a deeper understanding see [bit.ly/PUSDBudget](https://bit.ly/PUSDBudget)



2d Like Reply



**John Savage**

**Hari Titan** Hi Hari- the budget has grown every year as funding has increased every year per student from the state. Also, as a percentage of the total budget, the amount allocated towards teacher salaries has decreased. Any insight as to why that is?

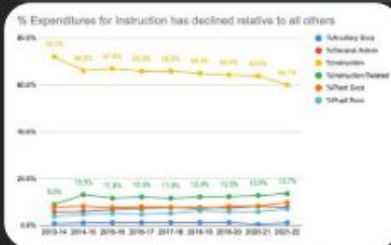
As you talk about not increasing COLA, and keeping all teachers, understand that a) we are already understaffed (I have 190+ students in 6 classes and we had to hire a long term sub for the science dept) and b) our insurance costs are about to double or more, c) teachers are already struggling to make ends meet, and d) I can go make an extra \$10-30k a year in another district nearby.

2d Like Reply



**Hari Titan**

**John Savage** I presented all my charts in [bit.ly/PUSDBudget](https://bit.ly/PUSDBudget) to the district a while ago. I think I was the first one to tell the district that the amount allocated to teacher salaries has decreased from 72% of the budget a decade ago down to 60% of the budget.



2d Like Reply



**Hari Titan**

Administration positions have increased over the years, in large part from PEF donor requests. E.g. Director of Communications, Director of DEI, 2 Vice principals for PHS, Assistants to Assistant Superintendents etc. That's partly where the teacher COLA ended up. Utility bills have also gone up for the district, growing at 8.2% compounded annually. Pupil services like the Wellness Center and associated contract counseling staff have grown at 13.3% compounded annually.

#### Compounded Annual Growth Rates (CAGR)

Ancillary Services	9.0%
General Administration	9.0%
Instruction	2.9%
Instruction Related Services	10.8%
Plant Services	8.2%
Pupil Services	13.3%
TOTAL Expenditures	5.2%

2d Like Reply





**Hari Titan**

My departmental percentages add up to 100% each year. While the teacher percentage went down, other percentages went up. My CAGR table shows the new revenue (growth in revenue) was not shared equally with teachers.

Over the years new revenue was directed to increased spending on Administration positions, higher utility (HVAC) bills, and Wellness visits. Teachers got at most 2.9% annual growth in pay&benefits over those years. That could have been from step&column increases or COLA adjustments or a change in compensation seniority.

Typically teachers don't publicly complain when discretionary expenses rise in operational areas.

I think the new admin positions and wellness center expenses were being advocated for by large PEF donors (often anonymously), and rubber stamped by our school board of fundraisers, most of whom were endorsed by the teacher's union or their highest representative at PEF (Cathy Glazier, largest donor to PEF).

2d Like Reply



**Linda Cuckovich**

Thank you for sharing these. Seems worth having a conversation about whether the budget includes too many administrators relative to the number of teachers and kids.

Meanwhile, I wouldn't frame teacher salaries as flat absent a COLA. If nominal salar... [See more](#)

2d Like Reply

3



Reply to John Savage



**John Savage**

**Hari Titan**- thank you for breaking it down. Seeing all the numbers is quite useful for all parties. What to do next is the hard part.

2d Like Reply



**Linda Cuckovich**

**Dai Meagher** This seems worth investigating for sure.

At the same time, I'm assuming at least some of that unreimbursed care applies to kids with Kaiser insurance. Kaiser won't reimburse for care provided outside the Kaiser system unless it's specifically approved in advance.

2d Like Reply



**Dai Meagher**

**Linda Cuckovich** In talking with other stakeholders, we concluded that going forward PUSD could insist that some or all of those working in the "wellness center" could be required to be "approved" providers by Kaiser, etc.

2d Like Reply

3



**Linda Cuckovich**

Seems well worth putting some serious time and thought into this. The kind of thing that all those extra administrators could do to add value.

1d Like Reply



Reply to Linda Cuckovich



**Hari Titan**

**Dai Meagher** is referring to the Wellness Center (\$285k) and I believe the Counseling services (\$1.07M).

#### WHAT DOES \$1.4 M LOOK LIKE?

Another way to consider the district budget is by program. The following list is for purposes of providing examples of programs and is not a recommendation for cuts.

Program	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Admin	\$415,000	\$275,000	\$175,000	\$271,120
Wellness Center	161,326	61,000	60,145	384,064
Livelihood	715,012	24,000	0	760,100
Arts Program	1,400,400	60,000	0	1,500,500
Counseling (K-12)	670,400	60,000	0	1,065,481
DEIB	460,000	0	100,000	170,000
Professional Development	100,000	0,000	0,000	170,000
PEF Services - Circumstances	100,000	100,000	0	100,000
IT Software	500,000	0	0,000	500,000
TOTAL	\$4,012,000	\$900,000	\$340,000	\$6,611,000

2d Like Reply



**Dai Meagher** replied · 1 Reply

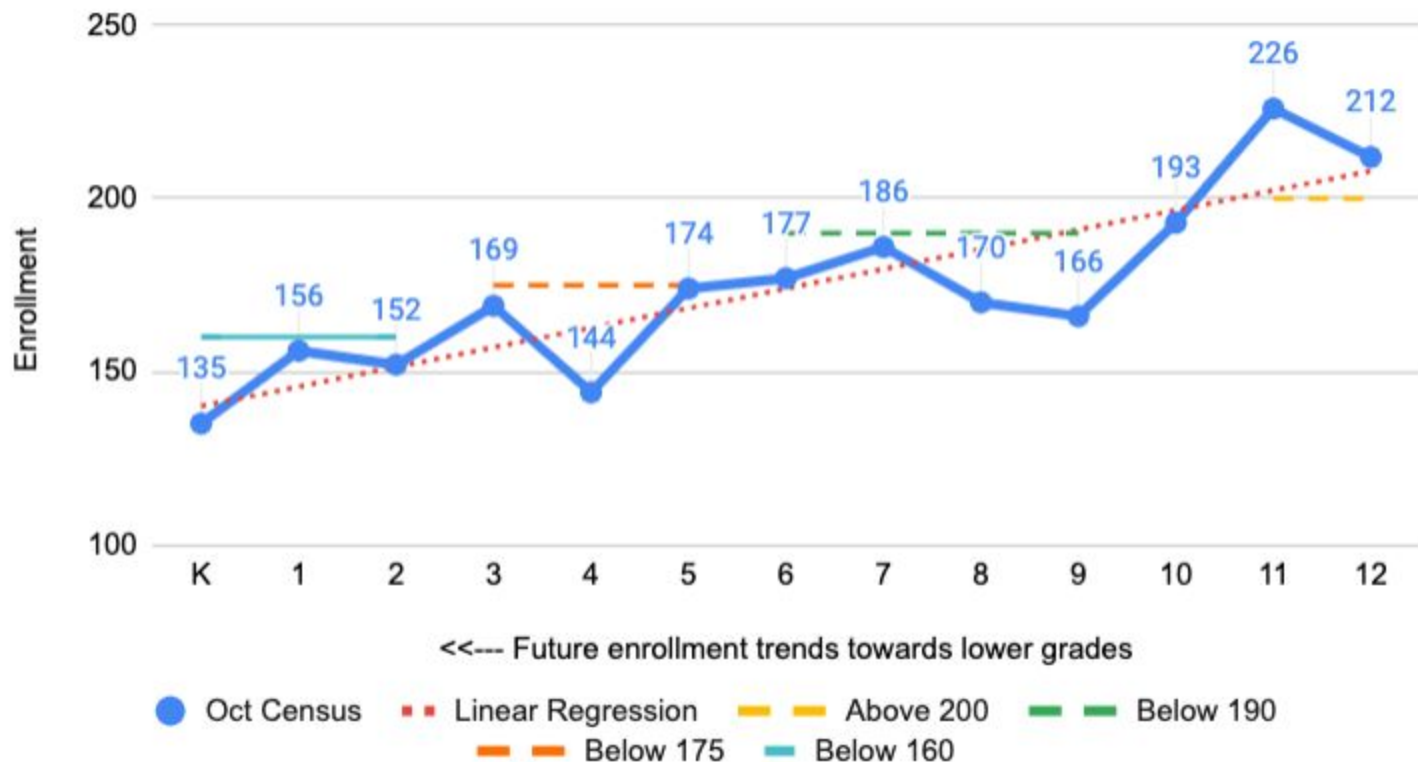


**Hari Titan**

**Dai Meagher** In effect the \$379k for DEIB could be considered part of "Wellness" since the DEIB staff don't have authority to hire for more diversity and don't have authority to increase inter-district transfers. Those authorities rest with the school principals and superintendents of other school districts from where the students want to leave.

1d Like Reply

## 2023 PUSD Enrollment w/ Trend suggesting continued decline



HT: The enrollment decline is not temporary and the trend suggests it will continue

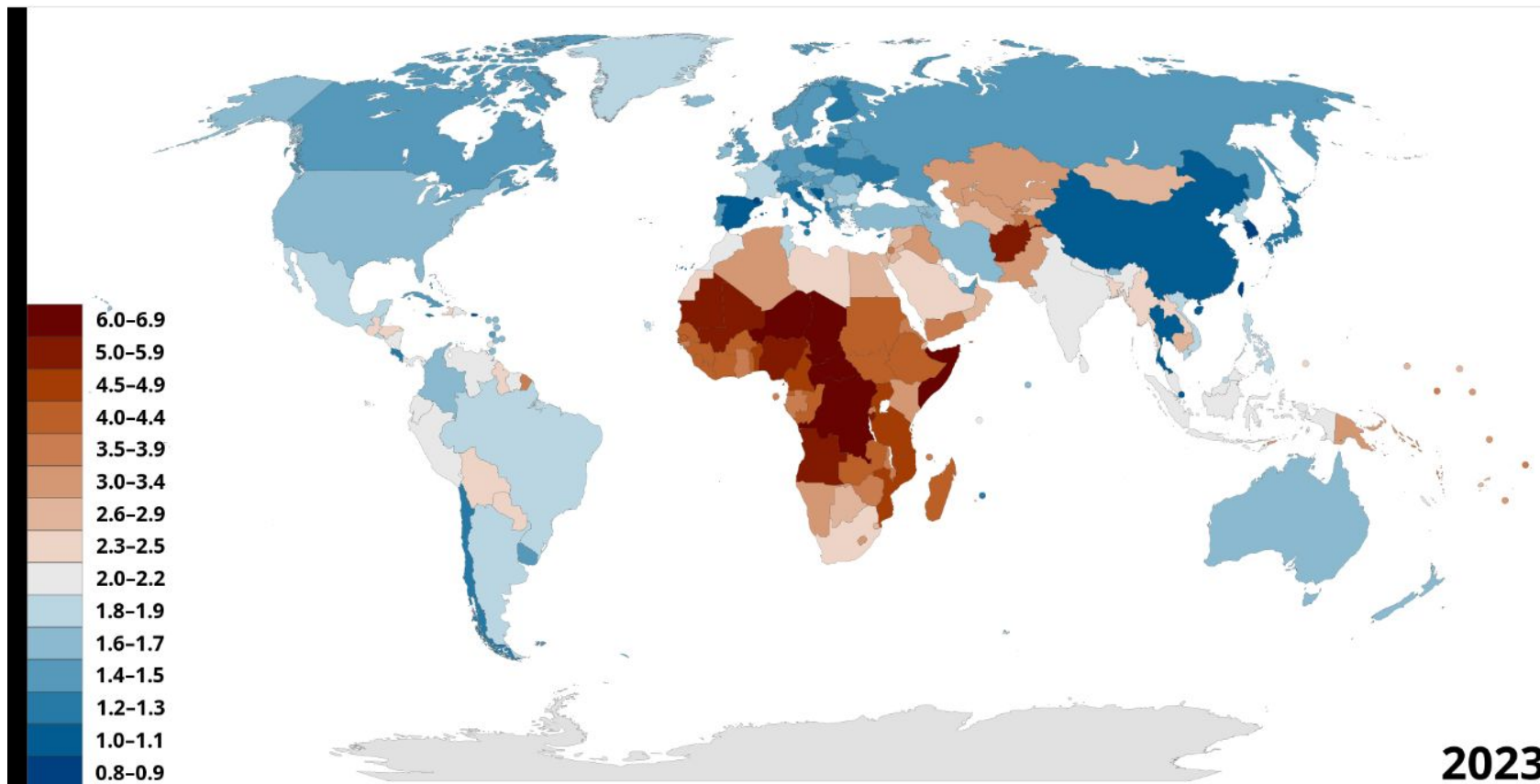
PUSD Parents & Guardians

~ 3000

PUSD Students

~ 2400

Will Piedmont parents eventually get to an average of  $> 2$  kids  
(i.e.  $\# \text{ Parents} < \# \text{ Students}$ )?



2023

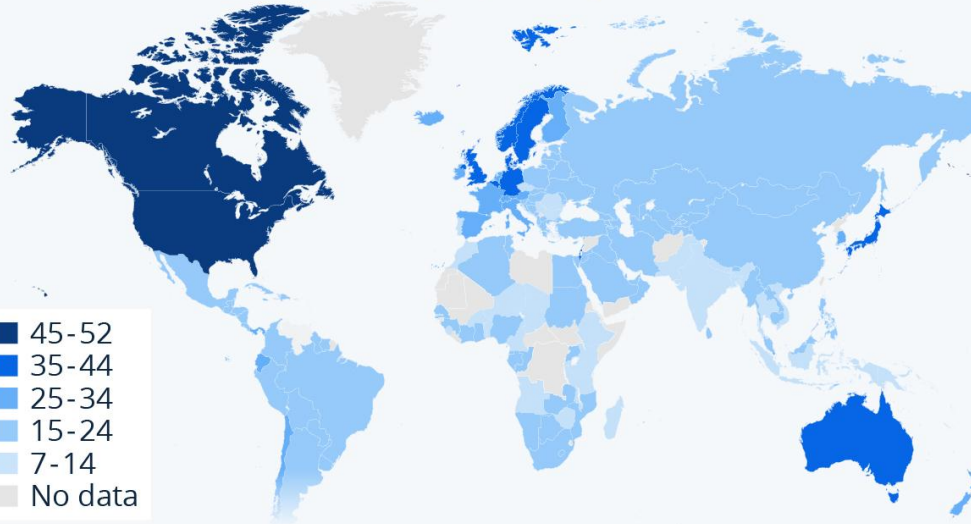
tries by fertility rate (2020), according to the [Population Reference Bureau](#)



# The World Map of Video Streaming



Penetration rate of video-on-demand\* services around the world in 2022 (in percent)



\* Video-on-demand: digital subscription services, pay-per-view, downloads.  
2021 data for Ukraine.

Source: Statista Digital Market Outlook



statista

Africa has the least penetration of video streaming and from the prior slide has the highest birth rates. Other areas appear to have a similar correlation.

Video streaming services are streaming western values (e.g. female, LGBTQ liberation).



Apps

## Bumble cuts ~350 employees as dating apps face a reckoning

Kyle Wiggers @kyle\_i\_wiggers / 4:05 PM PST • February 27, 2024

Comment



Image Credits: Salesforce

Bumble, a once-powerful force in online dating, is facing a reckoning.

The company posted weak Q4 2023 results today showing a \$32 million net loss and \$273.6 million in revenue. While up from the same period a year ago, earnings came in below Wall Street expectations and were paired with a disappointing Q1 2024 forecast — sending Bumble's stock tumbling ~10% in after-hours trading.

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## Match Group Stock Is Collapsing: Is There Any Hope Left for the Dating Giant?

By Brett Schafer – Nov 7, 2023 at 10:04AM

### KEY POINTS

- Match Group's revenue and profits grew in the third quarter.
- Investors sold off the stock due to Tinder's declining payer count.
- Shares look cheap at these discounted levels.
- 10 stocks we like better than Match Group

nytimes.com/2024/03/12/business/dating-apps-tinder-bum...



New

## *Dating Apps Have Hit a Wall. Can They Turn Things Around?*

The apps have changed our love lives, but they haven't been able to convince enough young users to pay.

# California birth rate worse than US average which is below replacement

