



**SANTA MONICA-  
MALIBU UNIFIED  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

# **SMMUSD Unification**

*to form a discrete*

*Santa Monica Unified School District  
& Malibu Unified School District*

**December 1, 2025  
Special Board Meeting**

# Timeline and History

- Creating an independent Malibu USD and Santa Monica USD has been a topic of conversation in both communities for many years.
- In 2014, SMMUSD took its first official step toward unification with the creation of the Malibu Unification Negotiations Committee (MUNC), consisting of three non-elected community members from both Santa Monica and Malibu.
- In 2017, the City of Malibu unilaterally submitted a Petition to the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization to create an independent Malibu School District.
- In 2018, SMMUSD approved a 50-year revenue sharing plan for a potential unification and then created a “Unification Sub-Committee” to identify an equitable process for unification based upon ideas presented within that agreement.
- In mutual efforts to find an equitable resolution of the Petition, it was determined to delay the City of Malibu’s unilateral petition process and allow the parties to negotiate through mediation.
- Ultimately, the City’s 2017 Petition was denied by the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization in May 2025, and the City has appealed this denial to the California State Board of Education.
- Notwithstanding this, mediation efforts continued, ultimately culminating in the current “three agreement” framework.



# Mediation

- In February 2022, an independent mediator was engaged to assist SMMUSD and the City of Malibu to resolve issues with unification, separate from the 2017 Petition formal process.
- Mediations were guided by two core guiding principles:
  - The formation of two independent school districts, MUSD and SMUSD, is in the best interest of all students;
  - Both successor educational entities are to be allocated a sufficient share of funding to provide a similar level of service provided throughout the district as prior to separation.
- As mediation progressed, major sticking points were resolved, including:
  - Determination of an equitable revenue sharing mechanism allowing for predictable funding for each successor educational entity;
  - Determination of an equitable allocation of assets and liabilities;
  - Formation of a plan to transition operations from a single entity to two successor entities.
- The mediations culminated in a proposed pathway to unification that has been independently vetted and tested by each party and resulted in the creation of three separate agreements to facilitate the unification (creation of two separate, independent school districts from SMMUSD).



# Three Agreements

Through extensive mediations, review, feedback, and editing, SMMUSD and the City of Malibu were able to craft plans to holistically address the potential formation of a discrete Santa Monica USD (SMUSD) and Malibu USD (MUSD), which are memorialized in these “three agreements”

## **Property Tax Revenue Sharing Agreement (PTRSA or Revenue Sharing Agreement)**

Addresses equitable allocation of existing SMMUSD funding between SMUSD and MUSD with a multi-year period of MUSD property tax sharing with SMUSD to allow for predictable annual operational funding for each entity

## **Operational Transfer Agreement (OTA)**

Addresses the functional division of assets, liabilities, and programmatic resources between MUSD and SMUSD with a focus on allowing for a smooth transition for students and staff from a single educational entity to two separate entities

## **Joint Powers Agreement (JPA)**

Forms a joint body comprised of representation from each community and one neutral representative to administer the implementation of the unification consistent with the terms and conditions of the PTRSA and OTA.



# Community Outreach

- While SMMUSD and the City of Malibu have engaged in mediation, their work was not conducted in a vacuum; extensive interactions with constituents has been ongoing since prior to mediation commencing.
- As the three agreements took shape and approached finalization, SMMUSD has conducted outreach to:
  - SMMUSD departmental leadership
  - SMMUSD advisory bodies
  - SMMUSD labor organizations
  - Santa Monica community organizations
- Concerns voiced through this robust community outreach process have been reviewed by both parties and, where appropriate, discussed and addressed with modification of the agreements,
- At this time, feedback from this outreach has been incorporated into the three agreements currently under consideration by both parties, and a viable pathway to unification is evident.



# Next Steps

- Should the SMMUSD Board of Education approve the three agreements tonight, there yet remains the question of how to incorporate the agreements into an approval process and a recognition that special legislation will be needed to fully implement the unification.
- The specific process moving forward will still need to be mediated with the City of Malibu.
- Simultaneously, the parties will connect with their local and state legislative representatives to discuss a special legislation package that will facilitate the implementation of unification in the coming years.

