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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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DATE: August 25, 2021

TO: Dr. Greg Sackos, District Superintendent
Mr. Dean Primmer, Board President
Desert Center Unified School District

FROM: Edwin Gomez, Ed.D., Riverside County Superintendent of Schools

BY: Scott Price, Ph.D.  Chief Business Official (951) 826-6790
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SUBJECT: 2021-22 LCAP and ADOPTED BUDGET – APPROVAL

The County Superintendent of Schools is required to review and approve the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan or the annual update to an existing Local Control and Accountability Plan prior to the approval of the district's Adopted Budget [Education Code Section 42127(d)(2)].

Adopted Local Control and Accountability Plan

In accordance with California Education Code (EC) Section 52070, our office has completed its review of the district's 2021-22 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) to determine whether it adheres to the guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE).

The district's adopted LCAP has been analyzed to determine whether:

- The plan adheres to the template adopted by the State Board of Education;
- The budget includes sufficient expenditures to implement the actions and strategies included in the plan, based on the projected costs included in the plan; and
- The plan adheres to the expenditure requirements for funds apportioned on the basis of the number and concentration of unduplicated pupils.

The district's adopted LCAP has been analyzed in the context of the guidance provided by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) and the California Department of Education (CDE). Based on our analysis, the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan for the 2021-22 fiscal year has been approved by the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools. Our goal is to further enhance the performance of students by providing feedback and inquiry questions that will support your refinement of the 2021-22 Local Control and Accountability Plan to close the achievement gap in metrics that impact student preparedness for college and career.

Student Achievement

The purpose of the LCAP is to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills needed to be successful in both college and career. Riverside County Office of Education conducted a review of research on K-12 college readiness indicators to identify those that would align with the LCAP purpose and have greatest impact. As a result of this research, we recommend that local education agencies (LEAs) closely monitor the metrics listed in the data tables below for all student groups.

Desert Center Unified School District Student Groups – Program Participation Status						
Indicator	LEA	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	English Learner	Foster Youth	Homeless Youth	Students with Disabilities
Enrollment Count 2020 ¹	28	17	4	N/A	9	4
Enrollment Percentage 2020 ¹	N/A	60.7%	14.3%	N/A	32.1%	14.3%
ELA Distance from Standard 2019 ¹	-43.0	-56.5	*	N/A	*	*
Math Distance from Standard 2019 ¹	-52.4	-62.3	*	N/A	*	*
English Language Progress Indicator Rate 2019 ¹	N/A	N/A	*	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reclassified Fluent English Proficient Rate 2021 ^{2†}	N/A	N/A	0.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Graduation Rate 2020 ¹	22.6%	20.0%	*	*	33.3%	*
College and Career Prepared Rate 2020 ¹	0.0%	0.0%	*	N/A	0.0%	*
A-G Completion Rate 2020 ²	0.0%	0.0%	*	N/A	0.0%	*
CTE Completion Rate 2020 ¹	28	17	4	N/A	9	4
Dropout Rate 2020 ²	N/A	60.7%	14.3%	N/A	32.1%	14.3%
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2019 ¹	-43.0	-56.5	*	N/A	*	*
Suspension Rate 2020 ²	-52.4	-62.3	*	N/A	*	*
Expulsion Rate 2020 ²	N/A	N/A	*	N/A	N/A	N/A
¹ California School Dashboard Data Files ² CDE Dataquest and Files [†] Indicator Includes Charter Schools Within the District *Data Suppressed for Student Privacy Reasons						

Desert Center Unified School District Student Groups – Race/Ethnicity									
Indicator	LEA	American Indian	Asian	Black/African American	Filipino	Hispanic	Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races
Enrollment Count 2020 ¹	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13	N/A	9	6
Enrollment Percentage 2020 ¹	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	46.4%	N/A	32.1%	21.4%
ELA Distance from Standard 2019 ¹	-43.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*	N/A	*	N/A
Math Distance from Standard 2019 ¹	-52.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*	N/A	*	N/A
Graduation Rate 2020 ¹	22.6%	*	*	*	*	17.6%	*	18.2%	*
College and Career Prepared Rate 2020 ¹	0.0%	*	*	*	*	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
A-G Completion Rate 2020 ²	0.0%	*	*	*	*	0.0%	*	0.0%	*
CTE Completion Rate 2020 ¹	28	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13	N/A	9	6
Dropout Rate 2020 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	46.4%	N/A	32.1%	21.4%
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2019 ¹	-43.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*	N/A	*	N/A
Suspension Rate 2020 ²	-52.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*	N/A	*	N/A
Expulsion Rate 2020 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
¹ California School Dashboard Data Files									
² CDE Dataquest and Files									
*Data Suppressed for Student Privacy Reasons									

We offer the following commendations and inquiry questions to consider for the implementation of the 2021-22 Local Control and Accountability Plan and the refinement of the plan in future years:

Student Academic Success in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics

The district is to be commended for their full-inclusion special education program, use of an assessment tool to further identify needs regarding administrative leadership and the implementation of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), as well as for the response to individual (student, family, staff) pandemic-related needs despite limited resources.

Additional dialogue related to the questions below may support achievement of the goals and desired outcomes aligned to student achievement in ELA and mathematics:

- How might you maximize current teacher professional learning opportunities to increase impact on student learning outcomes?
- What metrics might further inform the strategic use of paraprofessionals in the classroom?

Course Access and Student Enrollment in Rigorous Coursework and Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathways

The district is to be commended for their cycle of weekly teacher collaboration meetings, academic progress monitoring, adjusted instruction based on data and collaboration, and the use of technology-based individualized learning platforms to increase rigor.

Additional dialogue related to the questions below may support achievement of the goals and desired outcomes aligned to course access and student enrollment in rigorous coursework and CTE pathways:

- How might you expand usage of existing individualized instruction and technology resources to amplify access to rigorous coursework that accelerates college and career preparedness?
- How might collaboration with the secondary district be utilized to strengthen CTE pathways for K-12 students?

Pupil Engagement and School Climate

The district is to be commended for their use of feedback from School Site Council and the Student, Staff, and Families Survey to strengthen the current emotional support curriculum and the development of students' social skills. The district should also be commended for their use of art curriculum as enrichment activities with family and community members.

Additional dialogue related to the questions below may support achievement of the goals and desired outcomes aligned to pupil engagement and school climate.

- How might the data from the Student, Staff, and Families Survey and the current social and emotional learning program inform the development of progress indicators toward increased social and emotional well-being?
- How might you continue to strengthen your processes and programs to address the individuality of each student, as well as, increase school engagement and socialization?

Monitoring Progress

It is recommended that the district utilize a process that continually assesses the progress of each planned action and its effectiveness in achieving the *Desired Outcomes* related to each goal specified in the LCAP. Identifying leading indicators for progress on goals and developing a system to monitor those indicators throughout the year is encouraged. The information received from progress monitoring can support communication with stakeholders and provide information the district will need to clearly articulate, in the *Goal Analysis* section of the plan, the effectiveness of the planned actions/services.

To access resources and tools that will support future LCAP development, please go to <https://www.rcoe.us//lcap-support>.

Fiscal Recommendations

During our review, we identified opportunities to improve data accuracy between the district's LCAP and fiscal documents. After board adoption, the district revised certain items, which had no material impact on the implementation of the district's plan.

Adopted Budget

The district's Adopted Budget was developed in the context of the Governor's 2021-22 May Revise. Subsequently, the 2021-22 State Budget was adopted, which contained significant differences from the May Revise. The district should update and revise its budget projections to reflect changes in available funding and the associated programming responses.

Based on our analysis of the information submitted, and our assessment of revenue changes in the enacted State Budget, we approve the district's budget, but would like to highlight the following:

Enrollment and Average Daily Attendance (ADA) – The district estimates 19 ADA for the current fiscal year, or a 25.5 percent decrease from the held harmless 2020-21 P-2 ADA. For 2022-23 and 2023-24, the district projects 20 ADA and 17 ADA, respectively. It will be important for the district to monitor enrollment in the current and subsequent years to ensure accurate LCFF revenue and plan accordingly.

Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) – As a “basic aid” district, the district's primary revenue source is property taxes. Our office recommends the district closely monitor actual property tax receipts throughout the year and revise its budget and multi-year financial projections accordingly.

Employee Negotiations – As of the board date, June 15, 2021, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations continue with both the certificated and classified bargaining units for the 2021-22 fiscal year. Prior to entering into a written agreement, California Government Code (GC) Section 3547.5 requires a public school employer to publicly disclose the major provisions of a collective bargaining agreement, including but not limited to, the costs incurred in the current and subsequent fiscal years. The disclosure must include a written certification signed by the district superintendent and chief business official that the district can meet the costs incurred by the district during the term of the agreement. Therefore, please make available to the public and submit a disclosure to our office at least ten (10) working days prior to the date on which the governing board is to take action on a proposed agreement.

Reserve for Economic Uncertainties – The minimum state-required reserve for a district of Desert Center Unified School District's size is the greater of \$71,000 or 5.0 percent. The district projects to meet the minimum reserve requirement in the current and subsequent fiscal years.

Cash Management – Attention to cash solvency remains a critical fiscal practice and should continue to be prioritized in the coming year. The district projects sufficient cash balances to cover projected expenditures during the 2021-22 fiscal year. Should the district identify the need for other temporary borrowing options, our office strongly advises districts to consult with legal

counsel and independent auditors prior to using Cafeteria Special Revenue Fund (Fund 13) and Building Fund (Fund 21) for temporary interfund borrowing purposes to remedy cash shortfalls.

COVID-19 Response Funds – Both the Federal and State governments have provided substantial one-time funding to schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic which include specific restrictions on timing and use of the funds. The enacted budget trailer bill extended several timelines for the one-time funding, therefore developing multi-year plans on the use of these funds, as well as capturing additional detail required for federal reporting purposes, will be critical to the district's long term plan. We encourage districts to begin formulating a plan for these funds that incorporates Federal and State requirements and how the district will mitigate any ongoing expenditures that are planned to be supported by one-time funding.

AB 2756 – Current law, as enacted through AB 2756 (Chapter 52, Statutes of 2004), requires the County Superintendent to review and consider any studies, reports, evaluations, or audits that may contain evidence a district is showing fiscal distress. Our office did not receive any such reports for the district.

Conclusion

Our office commends the district for its efforts thus far to preserve its fiscal solvency and maintain a quality education program for its students. If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our office.