



**Riverside County
Board of Education**

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DATE: August 30, 2024

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.  Amanda Corridan 
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SUBJECT: 2024-25 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 2024-25 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.
- The plan adheres to the expenditure requirements for funds apportioned on the basis of the number and concentration of unduplicated pupils.
- The plan includes the calculations to determine whether there is required carryover. If applicable, the plan includes a description of the planned uses of the specified funds and a description of how the planned uses of those funds satisfy the requirements for specific actions to be considered as contributing toward meeting the increased or improved services requirement.

The district's adopted LCAP has been analyzed in the context of the guidance provided by the California County Superintendents and the California Department of Education (CDE). Based on our analysis, the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan for the 2024-25 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 the refinement of future Local Control and Accountability Plans and any additional plans designed 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 necessary to be successful in both college and career. The Riverside County Office of Education conducted a review of research on TK-12 college readiness indicators to identify those that would align with the LCAP purpose and have the greatest impact. As a result of this research, we recommend that local education agencies (LEAs) closely monitor the metrics listed in the data table below for all student groups.

Desert Center Unified School District Student Groups – Program Participation Status						
Indicator	LEA	English Learner	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	Students with Disabilities	Foster Youth	Homeless Youth
Enrollment Count 2023 ¹	26	4	18	4	*	4
Enrollment Percent 2023 ¹	N/A	15.4	69.2	15.4	*	15.4
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-43.8	*	*	*	*	*
Mathematics Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-48.1	*	*	*	*	*
English Learner Progress Indicator 2023 ²	N/A	*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
A-G Completion Rate 2023 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2023 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2023 ²	32.1	*	40	*	*	*
Suspension Rate 2023 ²	6.9	*	9.5	*	*	*
¹ 2023 California School Dashboard Downloadable Enrollment File ² 2023 California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report Downloadable Data Files * 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 2023 ¹	26	*	*	*	*	17	*	8	1
Enrollment Percent 2023 ¹	N/A	*	*	*	*	65.4	*	30.8	3.8
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-43.8	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Mathematics Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-48.1	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
English Learner Progress Indicator 2023 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
A-G Completion Rate 2023 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2023 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2023 ²	32.1	*	*	*	*	11.8	*	*	*
Suspension Rate 2023 ²	6.9	*	*	*	*	0.0	*	*	*
¹ California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report 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 2024-25 Local Control and Accountability Plan and the refinement of the plan in future years:

Student Success in Academics

The district is to be commended for its success in maintaining 100 percent credentialed teachers and enrolling teachers in an induction program. These efforts underscore a commitment to professional development and ensuring high-quality instruction. Additionally, the district’s dedication to academic excellence is evident in the substantial improvement of California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores, with English language arts (ELA) scores rising from 18.75 percent to 28.67 percent of students meeting or exceeding standards and mathematics scores from 12.50 percent to 42.85 percent of students

meeting or exceeding standards. These significant gains reflect effective teaching practices and a supportive educational environment that nurtures student achievement and growth.

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

- How might the district utilize existing data measurement tools to determine the impact of the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program to improve student outcomes and college readiness indicators?
- How might the district align professional learning opportunities to best meet short-term and long-term LCAP Goals to support student success?

Student Access, Enrollment, and Success in Rigorous Coursework

The district is to be commended for developing initiatives to support teacher retention and recruitment that include offering a competitive salary and other incentives such as district-provided housing. These efforts demonstrate a commitment to attracting highly-qualified teachers to support the district's students. Moreover, dedication to student access is demonstrated by a commitment to rigorous coursework by increasing access to science coursework from two days to three days a week within the integrated classroom. This commitment will help to ensure that the students are prepared for college and career as they transition to higher education. The district shall be further commended for ensuring access through a tiered intervention model which includes Tier II and Tier III services.

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

- How might the district prepare students with the critical skills to be ready for rigorous high school coursework and CTE Pathways?
- How can the district leverage community partnerships to enhance the integration of a multi-disciplinary and balanced curriculum [including science, social studies, art, and social and emotional learning (SEL)]?

Student Engagement and School Climate

The district is to be commended for its remarkable achievements in reducing chronic absenteeism rates. From a high of 54.8 percent to a significantly improved 32.1 percent, and with an even greater decline among socioeconomically disadvantaged students, dropping from 40 percent to 13.6 percent, these efforts demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing educational equity and student well-being. Moreover, the increase in parent participation from 53 percent to 75 percent, facilitated by expanding engagement opportunities and moving meetings/events into the community, reflects proactive steps to strengthen the partnership between families and the school community. These initiatives not only foster a supportive environment but also contribute to improving overall educational outcomes.

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

- How might the district utilize data tools to strengthen its mental health initiative through a continuous improvement plan that addresses the identification of student needs and ensures those who need services are connected to a tiered continuum of services?
- How might the district utilize improvement science methods to identify attendance patterns and determine the next steps to further decrease chronic absenteeism and improve overall attendance for all student groups?

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

In accordance with California Education Code (EC) Section 42127, our office has completed its review of the district's 2024-25 Adopted Budget to determine whether it complies with the criteria and standards adopted by the SBE and whether it allows the district to meet its financial obligations for the 2024-25 fiscal year, as well as satisfy its multi-year financial commitments.

Based on our analysis of the information submitted, we approve the district's budget, but would like to highlight the following:

Enrollment and Average Daily Attendance (ADA) – The district estimates 21 ADA for the current fiscal year, or a 0.4 percent increase from the certified 2023-24 P-2 ADA. For 2025-26, the district projects a 1.6 percent decrease in ADA. For 2026-27, the district projects a 9.1 percent decrease in ADA.

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.

Unrestricted Deficit Spending – The district's Adopted Budget indicates a positive ending balance for all funds in the 2024-25 fiscal year. However, for the unrestricted General Fund, the district anticipates expenditures and uses will exceed revenues and sources by \$0.2 million in 2024-25, \$0.2 million in 2025-26, and \$0.2 million in 2026-27. Our office strongly discourages districts from committing to additional ongoing expenditures without offsetting reductions and stresses the need to continue identifying solutions to reduce any potential structural deficit.

Employee Negotiations – As of the board date, June 26, 2024, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations continue with both the certificated and classified bargaining units for the 2024-25 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 \$87,000 or 5.0 percent. The district projects to meet the minimum-reserve requirement in the current and two 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 2024-25 fiscal year.

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.