RIVERSIDE COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
EDWIN GOMEZ, Ed.D.
County Superintendent of Schools

DATE: August 28, 2026

TO: Dr. Sonia Llamas, District Superintendent
Dr. Noemi Hernandez Alexander, Board President
Ms. Christeen Betz, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services
Dr. Daniel Sosa, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction TK-12
Riverside Unified School District

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

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SUBJECT: **2026-27 LCAP and ADOPTED BUDGET – APPROVAL**

The County Superintendent of Schools is required to review and approve the district's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) before 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 2026-27 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 2026-27 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.

Riverside Unified School District
Student Groups – Program Participation Status

Indicator	LEA	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged (SED)	English Learner (EL)	Long-Term English Learner (LTEL)	Foster Youth (FY)	Homeless Youth (HY)	Students with Disabilities (SWD)
Enrollment Count 2025[1]	38,033	28,430	6,376		202	1,792	5,397
Enrollment Percent 2025[1]		74.8	16.8		0.5	4.7	14.2
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Proficiency 2025[2]	-9.8	-25.8	-63.9	-99.3	-46.3	-58.7	-90.6
Mathematics Distance from Proficiency 2025[2]	-51.1	-69.5	-96.5	-160.3	-95.0	-99.7	-126.5
Science Points 2025[2]	51.7	48.2	39.7	34.0	41.2	43.3	38.6
English Learner Progress Indicator 2025[2]			43.7	45.0			
Graduation Rate 2025[2]	95.6	95.1	88.3	93.0	92.9	91.9	85.3
College/Career Indicator Rate 2025[2]	52.6	46.4	21.6	21.2	17.9	31.3	11.6
A-G Completion Rate 2025[2]	53.4	47.1	25.5	26.6	14.3	29.5	17.2
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2025[2]	18.0	18.1	11.4	14.7	10.7	15.9	17.9
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2025[2]	18.0	20.9	17.1	18.7	27.6	29.4	23.7
Suspension Rate 2025[2]	4.0	4.5	4.1	8.7	11.9	5.4	5.9

[1]2025 California School Dashboard Downloadable Enrollment File (No LTEL Data Available)
[2]2025 California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report Downloadable Data Files
Note: Blanks indicate that no public data is available for this data point.

Riverside 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 2025[1]	38,033	105	1,539	2,100	414	26,478	118	5,916	779
Enrollment Percent 2025[1]		0.3	4.0	5.5	1.1	69.6	0.3	15.6	2.0
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Proficiency 2025[2]	-9.8	-44.2	63.1	-24.0	61.7	-23.3	-23.9	27.3	35.7
Mathematics Distance from Proficiency 2025[2]	-51.1	-92.5	44.8	-75.4	25.5	-67.8	-50.8	-4.7	-4.4
Science Points 2025[2]	51.7	45.0	68.3	48.9	67.5	48.4	43.3	60.9	60.2
Graduation Rate 2025[2]	95.6	91.7	92.1	96.4	97.1	95.8		95.4	97.0
College/Career Indicator Rate 2025[2]	52.6	33.3	78.4	51.0	80.0	47.6		63.7	60.6
A-G Completion Rate 2025[2]	53.4	33.3	76.3	56.0	88.6	47.8		64.2	65.2
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2025[2]	18.0	8.3	19.4	17.1	17.1	18.5		17.6	13.6
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2025[2]	18.0	32.9	9.4	22.3	8.9	19.2	27.4	13.3	16.7
Suspension Rate 2025[2]	4.0	7.0	1.9	7.0	0.5	3.9	9.1	3.6	4.5

[1] California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report Files
[2] CDE Dataquest and Files
Note: Blanks indicate that no public data is available for this data point.

We offer the following commendations and inquiry questions to consider for the implementation of the 2026-27 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 sustained investment in job-embedded professional learning and instructional coaching as a key strategy for strengthening academic outcomes. By building educator capacity through ongoing, collaborative professional learning, the district is fostering consistent, high-quality instructional practices that enhance literacy instruction across all schools. This long-term commitment to continuous improvement reflects a systemic approach to supporting educators, promoting instructional coherence, and ensuring students have equitable access to effective, evidence-based literacy instruction that prepares them for long-term academic success.

The district is also to be commended for its intentional implementation of standards-based planning and its commitment to aligning instruction with the rigor of California's academic standards and clearly defined learning targets. This coherent instructional approach has strengthened teaching and learning across grade levels, contributing to measurable gains in student achievement. These outcomes reflect the district's strategic focus on high-quality instruction, instructional coherence, and continuous improvement to ensure students are equipped for academic success.

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

- How will the district evaluate the effectiveness of its English language development (ELD) supports and Dual Language programs in improving English Learner outcomes, including English language proficiency, English language arts (ELA) achievement, and the success of Long-Term English Learners, to inform continuous improvement?
- How will the district continue to leverage instructional coaches [Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSAs)], professional learning, and professional learning communities (PLCs) to strengthen the consistent implementation of high-impact literacy practices, deepen collaborative use of student data, and improve instructional effectiveness and student outcomes?
- How will the district build on its current efforts to strengthen mathematics instruction and targeted support for student groups identified through Differentiated Assistance, and what measures will be used to evaluate progress toward improved mathematics outcomes?

<u>Student Access, Enrollment, and Success in Rigorous Coursework</u>

The district is to be commended for its intentional efforts to expand access to rigorous coursework and create pathways that prepare students for college, career, and future success. Through strategic course offerings, thoughtful academic planning, and targeted student support, the district is increasing opportunities for students to engage in challenging learning experiences, including advanced coursework, Career Technical Education (CTE), Dual Enrollment, and other college- and career-ready pathways. These efforts reflect a strong commitment to removing barriers to participation, promoting high expectations for all students, and ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed in rigorous academic programs aligned with their goals and aspirations.

The district is also to be commended for its intentional use of a comprehensive "family" model that cultivates a strong sense of belonging, strengthens student engagement, and fosters supportive relationships that encourage students to persist in rigorous academic pathways. The district further demonstrates a strong commitment to educational success by designing differentiated supports that address opportunity gaps and expand access to college- and career-ready experiences for historically underserved student groups. Together, these efforts create inclusive learning environments where students are empowered to engage in challenging coursework, build confidence in their academic abilities, and achieve success in pursuit of their postsecondary goals.

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 will the district continue to evaluate and refine the long-term impact of its family model on student access to and success in rigorous coursework, including A-G completion, graduation rates, college enrollment and persistence, and students' sense of belonging, to inform the sustainability and expansion of these effective practices?
- How will the district continue to strengthen collaboration among counselors, administrators, and teacher leaders to ensure that student data, on-track indicators, and college and career readiness metrics are consistently used to identify student needs, monitor progress, and provide timely supports that increase student success in rigorous coursework and postsecondary readiness?
- How will the district continue to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic interventions to determine which strategies are producing the greatest improvements in outcomes for English Learners, Foster Youth, Students with Disabilities, and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students, and how will those findings inform continuous improvement and the refinement of supports?

Student Engagement and School Climate

The district is to be commended for its comprehensive approach to fostering positive school climates through the implementation of Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), restorative practices, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), social-emotional learning, and anti-bullying initiatives. These integrated efforts have contributed to declining suspension rates across multiple student groups and improvements in students' perceptions of safety and belonging, reflecting the district's commitment to creating inclusive, supportive learning environments where all students can thrive.

The district is commended for its strategic and student-centered approach to improving attendance through the implementation of attendance teams, Student Attendance Review Teams (SART)/Student Attendance Review Board (SARB) processes, case management, and personalized support. These targeted efforts have contributed to reductions in chronic absenteeism among several high-need student groups, including English Learners and Foster Youth, demonstrating the district's commitment to removing barriers to attendance and promoting student engagement and success.

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

- How will the district continue to evaluate the impact of its family engagement initiatives on improving attendance and students' sense of belonging, particularly for student groups experiencing higher rates of chronic absenteeism, and use these findings to strengthen and sustain effective practices?
- How will the district continue to evaluate the effectiveness of its school climate initiatives in promoting improvements in students' sense of belonging, safety, and engagement across all student groups, and use these results to inform continuous improvement?
- How will the district build on its current school climate efforts to address identified gaps in students' sense of belonging and classroom engagement, particularly for student groups with comparatively lower survey results, and evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies over time?

To access resources and tools that will support future LCAP development, please go to https://www.rcoe.us/services-for-districts/assessment-accountability-and-continuous-improvement/lcap-support/.

Adopted Budget

In accordance with California Education Code (EC) Section 42127, our office has completed its review of the district's 2026-27 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 2026-27 fiscal year, as well as satisfy its multi-year financial commitments.

The district's Adopted Budget was developed in the context of the Governor's 2026-27 May Revise. Subsequently, the 2026-27 State Budget was adopted, which contained differences from the May Revise. The district should update and revise its budget projections to reflect changes in available funding.

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 34,746 ADA for the current fiscal year, or a 1.2 percent decrease from the certified 2025-26 P-2 ADA. For 2027-28 and 2028-29, the district projects a 1.2 percent decrease in ADA each year. 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) – The district's Adopted Budget included Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs) for LCFF funding of 4.31 percent, 3.30 percent, and 3.09 percent for the

2026-27, 2027-28, and 2028-29 fiscal years, respectively. Our office recommends a contingency plan should LCFF funding not materialize as projected in the 2026-27 State Budget.

Unrestricted Deficit Spending – The district's Adopted Budget indicates a positive ending balance for all funds in the 2026-27 fiscal year. However, for the unrestricted General Fund, the district anticipates expenditures and uses will exceed revenues and sources by $17.6 million in 2026-27.

Employee Negotiations – As of the board date, June 25, 2026, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations continue with both the certificated and classified bargaining units for the 2026-27 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 Riverside Unified School Ditrict's size is 2.0 percent; however, the governing board requires the district maintain a 4.0 percent reserve for economic uncertainties. In light of the current fiscal environment, our office recommends districts maintain reserves higher than the minimum and commends the district's board for this fiscally prudent practice. The district projects to meet the minimum-reserve requirement and the board-required reserve in the current and two subsequent fiscal years. Additionally, existing law imposes a 10.0 percent cap on the amount school districts can maintain in their reserves in fiscal years immediately succeeding those in which the Public School System Stabilization Account balance is at least 3.0 percent of TK-12 Prop. 98 funding. This condition was met with the 2025-26 deposit amount, triggering the local reserve cap for the 2026-27 fiscal year. The district projects to meet the statutory 10.0 percent reserve cap.

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 2026-27 fiscal year. Should the district identify the need for 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.

Fiscal Distress Documentation – Education Code Section 42127.6 requires the County Superintendent of Schools to review and consider any studies, reports, evaluations, or audits that may indicate a school district is experiencing 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.