



**Riverside County
Board of Education**

Jamie Azpeitia-Sachs

Ray "Coach" Curtis

Bruce N. Dennis

Ben Johnson II

Michael Martinez Scott, Ph.D.

Jennifer Mejares Pham

Elizabeth F. Romero

DATE: August 28, 2026

TO: Dr. Kelly May-Vollmar, District Superintendent
Mr. Humberto Alvarez, Board President
Mr. Jordan Aquino, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services
Dr. Marcus Wood, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services
Desert Sands Unified School District

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

BY: Scott Price, Ph.D.  Amanda Corridan 
Associate Superintendent Associate Superintendent
(951) 826-6790 (951) 826-6648

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.

Desert Sands 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	23,571	18,727	4,473		150	504	3,070
Enrollment Percent 2025 ¹		79.4	19.0		0.6	2.1	13.0
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Proficiency 2025 ²	-34.0	-47.1	-76.1	-131.4	-65.6	-76.5	-118.8
Mathematics Distance from Proficiency 2025 ²	-77.5	-90.9	-116.3	-194.9	-94.8	-124.2	-152.2
Science Points 2025 ²	49.0	46.6	40.0	32.2	43.2	39.6	35.2
English Learner Progress Indicator 2025 ²			45.8	46.2			
Graduation Rate 2025 ²	93.7	93.2	85.6	86.4	92.6	79.3	83.0
College/Career Indicator Rate 2025 ²	56.4	52.7	24.7	24.7	33.3	20.9	13.0
A-G Completion Rate 2025 ²	57.4	53.6	28.2	27.2	40.7	20.7	15.6
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2025 ²	23.9	23.4	14.7	15.9	7.4	11.7	12.2
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2025 ²	27.1	30.0	29.2	37.0	36.8	50.9	33.4
Suspension Rate 2025 ²	3.4	3.7	3.8	8.3	10.2	4.9	5.3

¹2025 California School Dashboard Downloadable Enrollment File (No LTEL Data Available)
²2025 California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report Downloadable Data Files
Note: Blanks indicate that no public data is available for this data point.

Desert Sands 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	23,571	81	473	295	164	18,643	22	2,931	424
Enrollment Percent 2025 ¹		0.3	2.0	1.3	0.7	79.1	0.1	12.4	1.8
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Proficiency 2025 ²	-34.0	16.4	32.7	-62.7	56.5	-43.3		14.7	29.2
Mathematics Distance from Proficiency 2025 ²	-77.5	-40.0	1.1	-111.2	10.9	-87.9		-27.6	-12.6
Science Points 2025 ²	49.0	61.4	62.4	43.6	64.9	46.8		59.8	60.2
Graduation Rate 2025 ²	93.7		97.6	97.6	95.2	93.0		96.2	97.9
College/Career Indicator Rate 2025 ²	56.4		82.9	48.8	95.2	52.0		70.2	72.9
A-G Completion Rate 2025 ²	57.4		82.9	58.5	95.2	52.6		72.8	72.9
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2025 ²	23.9		24.4	17.1	38.1	23.5		25.3	22.9
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2025 ²	27.1	25.9	13.5	29.8	3.6	28.6	41.2	19.4	25.0
Suspension Rate 2025 ²	3.4	5.7	2.2	7.6	1.2	3.4	0.0	2.9	4.3
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 strategically investing in staffing, professional learning, reduced class sizes, and paraeducator support to strengthen instructional capacity and improve academic outcomes for Students with Disabilities in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics.

The district is commended for its strategic and transparent approach to improving mathematics achievement. The LCAP identifies mathematics as a priority area and outlines a comprehensive strategy that includes targeted interventions, instructional coaching, professional learning, progress monitoring, and differentiated support for English Learners, Students with Disabilities, and other student groups. The district's commitment to engaging educational partners, using data to guide decision-making, and continuously refining its strategies demonstrates a strong commitment to improving mathematics outcomes for all students.

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

- How can the district leverage the positive outcomes of its early literacy initiative to ensure that foundational reading gains continue into the intermediate grades while accelerating achievement for English Learners, Students with Disabilities, and other historically underserved student groups?
- How will the district continue to build leadership capacity and strengthen data-informed decision-making so that investments in professional learning, instructional coaching, and intervention systems produce measurable improvements in student achievement at every school site?
- What evidence will the district use to determine which literacy and mathematics interventions are having the greatest impact on improving ELA outcomes for Long-Term English Learners and other student groups with identified achievement gaps?

Student Access, Enrollment, and Success in Rigorous Coursework

The district is to be commended for implementing a comprehensive system of college and career readiness supports that expands access to rigorous coursework, Career Technical Education (CTE), advanced academic opportunities, and postsecondary pathways for all students, with a targeted emphasis on English Learners, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students, and Foster Youth.

The district is commended for expanding access to rigorous academic and career pathways that prepare students for postsecondary success. Through increased opportunities in Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Dual Enrollment, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), and Career Technical Education (CTE), the district has contributed to improved College/Career Indicator (CCI) outcomes, with a greater percentage of students graduating as "Prepared." The district's continued investment in expanding access, including early AVID implementation and increased opportunities for historically underserved students, reflects a strong commitment to college, career, and life readiness for all students.

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 can the district build upon the significant gains in CCI, A-G completion, AP, IB, and CTE participation to ensure that every student group, including students experiencing homelessness and Students with Disabilities, experiences comparable levels of success?
- How will the district evaluate whether English Learners and Long-Term English Learners are successfully accessing and completing rigorous coursework, including AP, IB, AVID, and Dual Enrollment opportunities?
- How is the district monitoring access and successful completion of AP, IB, Dual Enrollment, A-G coursework, and CTE pathways across all student groups, particularly Students with Disabilities, Foster Youth, and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students?

Student Engagement and School Climate

The district is to be commended for intentionally engaging English Learners, Long-Term English Learners, and their families through advisory groups, districtwide surveys, and ongoing educational partner engagement opportunities. These efforts demonstrate the district's commitment to elevating multilingual family voices and to using their input to inform continuous improvement in student support and school climate.

The district is commended for implementing a comprehensive and data-informed approach to educational partner engagement and continuous improvement. Through Panorama surveys, ThoughtExchange, empathy interviews, Youth Leadership Days, advisory committees, and Differentiated Assistance processes, the district meaningfully engages educational partners, incorporates multiple perspectives, and uses root cause analysis to identify and address disparities in attendance, school climate, and student engagement.

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 use educational partner feedback and school climate data to continuously refine school climate, attendance, and student wellness initiatives, while addressing differences in student experiences across school sites to ensure all students, particularly historically underserved student groups, experience a strong sense of belonging, safety, and engagement?
- How is the district using student feedback about differences in engagement, belonging, and representation across student groups to identify systemic factors contributing to these disparities and inform continuous improvement efforts?
- As the district continues expanding attendance, behavioral health, and school climate initiatives, how is it ensuring these efforts operate as a coordinated system that removes barriers to learning and creates opportunities for all students?

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 20,955 ADA for the current fiscal year, or a 1.5 percent decrease from the certified 2025-26 P-2 ADA. For 2027-28, the district projects a 1.7 percent decrease in ADA. For 2028-29, the district projects to remain flat in ADA. 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 \$4.9 million in 2026-27, \$3.4 million in 2027-28, and \$6.0 million in 2028-29. 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 23, 2026, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations are complete for the certificated bargaining unit for the 2026-27 fiscal year.

As of the board date, June 23, 2026, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations continue with the classified bargaining unit 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 Desert Sands Unified School District's size is 3.0 percent. The district projects to meet the minimum-reserve requirement 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.