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Riverside County  
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**DATE:** August 29, 2025  
**TO:** Dr. Kelly May-Vollmar, District Superintendent  
Dr. Kailee Watson, 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. *SP* Amanda Corridan *AC*  
Associate Superintendent Chief Academic Officer  
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**SUBJECT: 2025-26 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 2025-26 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 2025-26 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 2024 <sup>1</sup>	23,753	18,538	4,914	N/A	158	348	2,994
Enrollment Percent 2024 <sup>1</sup>	N/A	78.0	20.7	N/A	0.7	1.5	12.6
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Standard 2024 <sup>2</sup>	-39.2	-52.0	-79.5	-132.6	-84.6	-90.9	-127.7
Mathematics Distance from Standard 2024 <sup>2</sup>	-79.7	-92.9	-114.2	-188.7	-102.1	-124.0	-156.2
Science Distance from Standard 2024 <sup>2</sup>	-16.8	-18.9	-24.9	-33.4	-24.0	-24.9	-30.7
English Learner Progress Indicator 2024 <sup>2</sup>	N/A	N/A	45.3	50.4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Graduation Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	92.7	92.3	82.6	83.8	89.7	84.3	78.5
College/Career Indicator Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	48.7	45.1	15.8	15.6	20.7	28.4	12.9
A-G Completion Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	52.0	47.6	21.2	20.4	34.5	33.6	13.2
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	19.2	19.3	10.0	11.2	17.2	11.2	8.9
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	29.2	32.3	30.7	34.1	40.5	55.9	37.1
Suspension Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	3.8	4.1	4.2	9.0	5.8	4.9	6.4

<sup>1</sup>2024 California School Dashboard Downloadable Enrollment File (No LTEL Data Available)

<sup>2</sup>2024 California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report Downloadable Data Files

\* Data Suppressed for Student Privacy Reasons

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 2024 <sup>1</sup>	23,753	80	455	319	161	18,633	23	3,103	416	
Enrollment Percent 2024 <sup>1</sup>	N/A	0.3	1.9	1.3	0.7	78.4	0.1	13.1	1.8	
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Standard 2024 <sup>2</sup>	-39.2	12.3	31.9	-62.6	55.3	-49.8	*	11.0	25.3	
Mathematics Distance from Standard 2024 <sup>2</sup>	-79.7	-53.2	7.4	-103.9	4.5	-90.9	*	-29.0	-20.8	
Science Distance from Standard 2024 <sup>2</sup>	-16.8	-12.6	-1.9	-19.4	-2.9	-19.1	*	-7.2	-9.1	
English Learner Progress Indicator 2024 <sup>2</sup>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Graduation Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	92.7	*	100.0	84.2	100.0	91.9	*	95.4	97.1	
College/Career Indicator Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	48.7	*	81.5	21.1	78.3	44.0	*	65.5	67.6	
A-G Completion Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	52.0	*	85.2	26.3	78.3	47.5	*	67.4	64.7	
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	19.2	*	20.4	10.5	30.4	19.7	*	17.1	20.6	
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	29.2	16.7	17.3	27.2	13.4	30.8	43.8	21.1	27.8	
Suspension Rate 2024 <sup>2</sup>	3.8	5.6	1.7	6.0	0.6	4.0	0.0	2.8	3.0	

<sup>1</sup> California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report Files<sup>2</sup> 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 2025-26 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 having an equity-centered approach that is driving impressive academic gains for its underserved students, such as Foster Youth and Homeless

students. Strategic investments in early literacy, full-day kindergarten, and a strong Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework are closing the gap, contributing to a 92.3 percent graduation rate for Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students and a 6.4 percent increase from baseline for Foster Youth. With 45.3 percent of English Learners making progress on the 2024 Dashboard, the district's integrated academic and wellness supports are clearly advancing student success.

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

- How is the district using assessment tools such as iReady, California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP), and internal data to inform instruction, and what protocols are in place at school sites to ensure student growth data is regularly reviewed and acted upon through professional learning communities (PLCs) and leadership teams?
- What targeted instructional strategies and intervention models are driving academic growth for Foster Youth, Homeless students, and other underperforming groups in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, and how can these approaches be scaled to support Long-Term English Learners and Students with Disabilities?
- How can the district strengthen core instruction and address the emotional, social, and systemic barriers that impact underserved students, especially Foster Youth, Homeless students, and Long-Term English Learners, to ensure access to grade-level content and consistent school attendance?

#### **Student Access, Enrollment, and Success in Rigorous Coursework**

The district is to be commended for demonstrating strong progress in postsecondary readiness, outperforming the state with 48.7 percent of students classified as prepared on the 2024 College/Career Indicator. Notable gains from the 2023 baseline include a 13.9 percent rise in Career Technical Education (CTE) completion for Foster Youth, a 27.1 percent increase in Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) success for Homeless students, and a 29 percent growth in middle school second year enrollment in Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) enrollment among English Learners as compared to the 2024 baseline. These outcomes reflect the district's commitment to equitable access and early preparation for college and career success.

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 is the district ensuring equitable access and participation in A–G coursework, AP/IB programs, and CTE pathways for underrepresented student groups, including English Learners, Students with Disabilities, Foster Youth, and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged students?
- What systems are in place to identify students who are off-track or near meeting college and career readiness indicators, and how are supports—including academic

interventions, counseling, and community partnerships—being deployed to close those gaps?

- How can schools and community partners design equitable, college and career readiness strategies that effectively engage and support Foster Youth in accessing tools to achieve postsecondary success?

### **Student Engagement and School Climate**

The district is to be commended for strengthening whole-child support systems through expanded Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and mental health services across all sites. The implementation of the Second Step SEL curriculum in TK–8 and increased staffing of counselors have improved student engagement and behavior. Site-level root cause analysis and culturally responsive attendance strategies have reduced chronic absenteeism, especially at Paige and Glenn middle schools, and among Foster and Homeless Youth. Student voice initiatives, wellness centers, and expanded restorative practices are helping foster stronger school belonging and safer learning environments.

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

- How is the district ensuring that all students, especially those from historically underserved groups, feel a sense of safety, belonging, and connection to their school community, and how is this being measured and acted upon over time?
- What systems, supports, and community partnerships have been most effective in reducing chronic absenteeism, particularly for Students with Disabilities, Foster Youth, and Homeless students, and how can these strategies be scaled to schools with persistently high rates?
- In what ways is the district elevating student, family, and staff voices to co-create a positive, inclusive school climate, and how can we ensure their input meaningfully informs districtwide wellness, engagement, and SEL practices?

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 2025-26 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 2025-26 fiscal year, as well as satisfy its multi-year financial commitments.

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The district's Adopted Budget was developed in the context of the Governor's 2025-26 May Revise. Subsequently, the 2025-26 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 21,594 ADA for the current fiscal year, or a 0.2 percent decrease from the certified 2024-25 P-2 ADA. For 2026-27 and 2027-28, the district projects to remain flat 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 2.30 percent, 3.02 percent, and 3.42 percent for the 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 fiscal years, respectively. Our office recommends a contingency plan should LCFF funding not materialize as projected in the 2025-26 State Budget.

*Unrestricted Deficit Spending* – The district's Adopted Budget indicates a positive ending balance for all funds in the 2025-26 fiscal year. However, for the unrestricted General Fund, the district anticipates expenditures and uses will exceed revenues and sources by \$6.8 million in 2025-26, \$5.3 million in 2026-27, and \$2.0 million in 2027-28. 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 24, 2025, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations continue with both the certificated and classified bargaining units for the 2025-26 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.

*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 2025-26 fiscal year. Should the district identify the

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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.