



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

Riverside County
Board of Education

Jamie Azpeitia-Sachs

Kim J. Cousins

Ray "Coach" Curtis

Bruce N. Dennis

Ben Johnson II

Jennifer Mejares Pham

Elizabeth F. Romero

DATE: August 30, 2024
TO: Ms. April Smith, District Superintendent
Ms. Jamey Mullion, Board President
Ms. Rachel Angel, Director of Business Services
Ms. Lois Shaffer, Director of Data, Assessment, and Accountability
Palo Verde Unified School District
FROM: Edwin Gomez, Ed.D., Riverside County Superintendent of Schools
BY: Scott Price, Ph.D.  Amanda Corridan 
Chief Business Official
(951) 826-6790
Chief Academic Officer
(951) 826-6648
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.

Palo Verde 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	2,813	210	2,311	367	54	76
Enrollment Percent 2023 ¹	N/A	7.5	82.2	13.0	1.9	2.7
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-72.4	-101.7	-79.8	-142.8	-108.0	-121.8
Mathematics Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-122.9	-147.8	-130.4	-191.4	-150.3	-168.4
English Learner Progress Indicator 2023 ²	N/A	41.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Graduation Rate 2023 ²	92.7	89.5	91.0	85.7	*	*
A-G Completion Rate 2023 ²	28.9	5.3	21.5	3.6	*	*
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2023 ²	9.3	5.3	9.0	0.0	*	*
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2023 ²	41.4	38.7	44.1	49.8	41.8	54.7
Suspension Rate 2023 ²	12.2	9.3	13.4	20.0	21.3	19.8

¹2023 California School Dashboard Downloadable Enrollment File
²2023 California School Dashboard/Dashboard Additional Report Downloadable Data Files
* Data Suppressed for Student Privacy Reasons

Palo Verde 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	2,813	19	8	234	8	2,064	7	399	52	
Enrollment Percent 2023 ¹	N/A	0.7	0.3	8.3	0.3	73.4	0.2	14.2	1.8	
English Language Arts (ELA) Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-72.4	-114.0	*	-113.3	*	-72.7	*	-49.1	-85.7	
Mathematics Distance from Standard 2023 ²	-122.9	-113.9	*	-162.9	*	-125.3	*	-86.2	-146.7	
English Learner Progress Indicator 2023 ²	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Graduation Rate 2023 ²	92.7	*	*	87.5	*	92.8	*	95	*	
A-G Completion Rate 2023 ²	28.9	*	*	6.3	*	32.6	*	22.5	*	
Career Technical Education (CTE) Completion Rate 2023 ²	9.3	*	*	0.0	*	9.4	*	15.0	*	
Chronic Absenteeism Rate 2023 ²	41.4	62.5	*	48.6	*	41.1	*	36.2	49.0	
Suspension Rate 2023 ²	12.2	4.8	*	30.5	*	10.1	*	10.0	15.2	

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 large gains in graduation rates from 87.4 percent in 2022 to 92.7 percent in 2023. Palo Verde High School increased from 90.4 percent to 96.8 percent during the same period. The district is also commended for its exemplary efforts in significantly improving the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Reading and Math results over the past three years. The dedication to improving literacy and fostering academic math knowledge and skills has been evident through the consistent and notable progress in student academic

performance. From Spring 2021 to Fall Semester 2023, there are observed and remarkable improvements across various grade levels. The strategic initiatives have led to an impressive 9 percent overall increase in both reading proficiency and math performance, averaging a commendable 3 percent rise each year. This achievement reflects the hard work, dedication, and innovative approaches implemented by your educators and staff. In addition, the district is to be commended for the percentage of English learners progressing at least one level from 35.7 percent to 42.2 percent as measured by the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI). District efforts to use local data such as STAR reading and STAR math reports, as well as classroom walkthrough data to monitor English learners' progress towards redesignation is proving to be effective.

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

- How might the insights gained from both qualitative and quantitative data collected for English Learners contribute to and improve academic interventions for all student groups?
- How might schools use site-based Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to review informal and formal data, such as STAR reading and math and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), to inform instruction throughout the year?
- How can the district advance K-12 intervention, progress monitoring, and learning acceleration strategies to be more targeted, data-driven, and in line with academic objectives, ensuring all students receive tailored support to excel academically?

Student Access, Enrollment, and Success in Rigorous Coursework

The district is to be commended for the outstanding work around expanding elective programs to increase student engagement. Examples include adding upper elementary visual and performing arts offerings, Freshman and Senior seminar classes to strengthen students' college and career knowledge and skills, expanding Junior and Senior leadership class, and adding Journalism, Advanced Music, and additional CTE courses. These actions represent the district's affirmative action in relation to student, community, and staff input. The district is to be commended for outstanding achievement in the College and Career Indicator as represented by the percent of students earning college credit. District efforts in increasing student access to college courses resulted in moving from 0 percent in 2018 to 37.4 percent of students completing a college course in 2023. Palo Verde USD leads the entire Riverside County in student access to college credit outperforming the nearest district by over 10 percentage points.

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 efficacy of district professional development efforts be measured to identify the strategies which are most effective and scale them out to build teacher capacity to improve student learning and specifically close the achievement gap?

- How might the district further utilize the grade-level continuum of scores on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) English language arts and mathematics exams and Smarter Balanced Interim Assessments to drive standards-based instruction to accelerate learning and increase course rigor for all students?
- What additional data collection and progress monitoring strategies could be implemented to monitor the effectiveness of the expansion of the newly implemented elective offerings?

Student Engagement and School Climate

The district is commended for focusing on increasing student attendance and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) through elementary certificated support, positive behavior support, professional learning for teachers, secondary counseling and the addition of a dropout prevention specialist. The district is to be commended for implementing evening professional learning sessions to parents to strengthen parent engagement. The sessions are offered monthly and serve to teach parents strategies to support their children on how to navigate and thrive at school.

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 structure their survey process to increase student, parent, and staff participation so that educational partners hear their voice in the LCAP? What other resources or data may be used to capture students' perspectives or suggestions?
- How might conducting student and parent focus groups and/or a root cause analysis of attendance patterns identify the district's next steps to decrease chronic absenteeism for all student groups?
- How might the district explore and measure the impact of professional development efforts to increase high-quality instruction as it relates to improving student engagement and attendance?
- What kind of evidence-based positive behavior strategies can the district identify that can lead to decreased suspension and chronic absenteeism rates? What kind of professional learning might staff need to implement the positive behavior strategies effectively? What data might the district use to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies?

To access resources and tools that will support future LCAP development, please go to

<https://www.rcoe.us/lcap-support>.

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 2,272 ADA for the current fiscal year, or a 4.9 percent decrease from the certified 2023-24 P-2 ADA. For 2025-26, the district projects a 1.8 percent decrease in ADA. For 2026-27, the district projects a 1.3 percent decrease 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 1.07 percent, 2.93 percent, and 3.08 percent for the 2024-25, 2025-26, and 2026-27 fiscal years, respectively. Our office recommends a contingency plan should LCFF funding not materialize as projected in the 2024-25 State Budget.

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 \$1.7 million in 2024-25, \$0.1 million in 2025-26, and \$0.7 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 25, 2024, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations are complete with the certificated bargaining unit for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

As of the board date, June 25, 2024, the district reports salary and benefit negotiations continue with the classified bargaining unit 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 Palo Verde 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 2024-25 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.

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.