









MONTEREY COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

# 2026-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN


DR. DENEEN GUSS

MONTEREY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

# Message From Monterey County Superintendent of Schools

When I was elected as Monterey County Superintendent of Schools in 2019, one of my first priorities was to engage our Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) community in creating a clear and meaningful direction for our collective work. Through extensive collaboration with employees, families, school districts, and community partners, we developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan that guided MCOE from 2020 through 2025. This plan provided a strong foundation, defining priorities, setting measurable goals, and aligning our efforts to ensure we continue to deliver exceptional leadership, service, and support to all schools and districts in Monterey County.

As my second term as County Superintendent comes to a close in January 2027, I am proud to introduce a new two-year Strategic Plan that builds upon the progress we've made and carries MCOE forward through the remainder of my term. This plan ensures stability, continuity, and focus as we prepare the organization for the next chapter of leadership and for the development of new goals by the next County Superintendent.



The challenges and opportunities that have shaped public education in recent years, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the evolving needs of students and families, have reminded us of the importance of adaptability, innovation, and equity. This updated plan reflects these lessons and reaffirms MCOE's commitment to supporting every student's success through collaboration, creativity, and compassion.

It continues to be an honor to serve the students, staff, and families of Monterey County, and I remain deeply proud of the work we have accomplished together. Our collective dedication ensures that the future of education in our county remains strong, inspired, and full of promise.

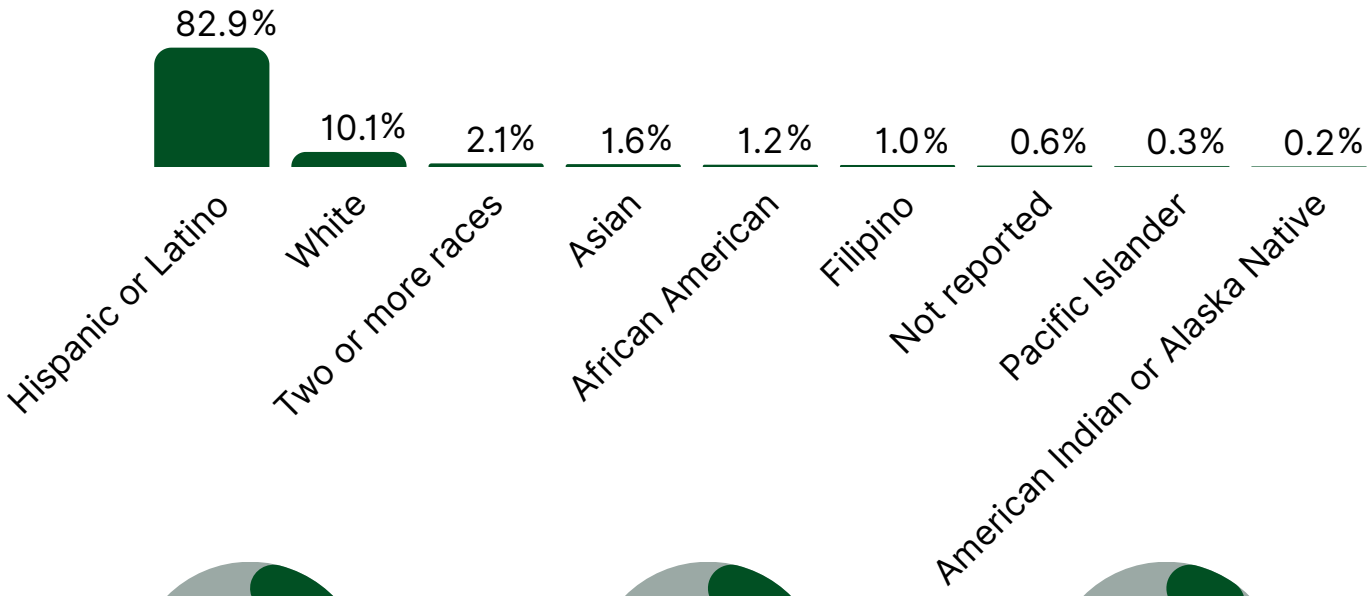
Sincerely,

Deneen Guss

Dr. Deneen Guss
Monterey County Superintendent of Schools

# Monterey County Data

Monterey County is a unique and diverse county with over 72,000 public education students. Some important data points considered in this strategic planning process include those below.





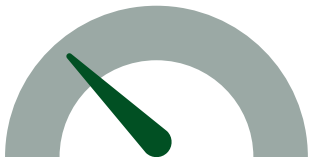

32.4% of students in Monterey County are English Learners



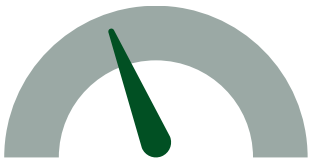
77.2% of students in Monterey County are Socioeconomically Disadvantaged



13.9% of students in Monterey County are Students with Disabilities



39.7% of students in Monterey County meet or exceed state standards for English Language Arts*



27.4% of students in Monterey County meet or exceed state standards for Mathematics*



90.9% of Monterey County students graduate with a high school diploma or equivalent**

*Most recent California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress data, 2024-25 school year
**Four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, 2024-25 school year

# THE MONTEREY COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

## Our Mission

The mission of the Monterey County Office of Education is to provide the leadership, support, and service excellence needed to prepare the diverse students of Monterey County for success in each step of their educational journey.

## Our Vision

The vision of the Monterey County Office of Education is that every student will be provided an enriched educational experience through the leadership, support, and service of the Monterey County Office of Education that prepares them for success as productive and contributing members of a global society.

## Our Core Values

**Accountability**

We are accountable in all we do, always operating in a transparent manner, building and upholding the public's trust.

**Collaboration**

We promote a collaborative culture that empowers organizational synergies and strong partnerships.

**Innovation**

We are committed to dynamic leadership that fosters innovative ideas, builds effective systems, and expands our organizational capacity to serve our mission.

**Diversity**

We value and promote diversity, respecting different perspectives, cultures, and experiences to better serve our communities.

**Equity**

We foster a culture of equity and inclusion to provide opportunities for everyone to perform at their highest levels of achievement.

**Excellence**

We strive for excellence in everything we do.

# Our Strategic Planning Process

Through a comprehensive and inclusive process, the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) gathered valuable input from employees, district and school leaders, and community partners to better understand organizational strengths, areas for growth, and opportunities to expand impact. These insights assisted in the development of a focused strategic plan designed to establish clear goals and guide our work moving forward.

This two-year Strategic Plan provides a strong foundation for enhancing services and strengthening education across Monterey County, while ensuring stability through the remainder of the current County Superintendent's term and supporting a smooth transition for future leadership.

While not encompassing every service MCOE provides, the plan serves as a strategic roadmap to keep our efforts aligned with our shared mission and vision, ultimately supporting the success of every student in Monterey County.

The following pages highlight key insights that emerged from these surveys.



# Survey & Needs Assessment

## Organizational strengths identified

- Provides high-quality programs and supports that strengthen student learning and district success.
- Delivers a variety of professional development opportunities to build educator capacity and instructional excellence.
- Leverages the knowledge, expertise, and dedication of staff to meet the needs of students, schools, and the community.
- Advances equity and inclusive educational opportunities that address long-standing achievement gaps and benefit all students.
- Builds and maintains strong partnerships with school districts, community organizations, and the public to maximize impact.
- Fosters collaboration and cohesion across departments to improve efficiency, innovation, and shared purpose.
- Engages actively with stakeholders to gather input, shape programs, and ensure services align with community needs.
- Innovates with partners to develop solutions addressing challenges such as the educator shortage.
- Promotes transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility to build trust and sustain organizational stability.
- Recognizes and celebrates staff dedication, expertise, and achievements, fostering pride and a culture of excellence.
- Strengthens school safety and fosters safe, healthy communities by advancing coordinated, countywide approaches.





# Survey & Needs Assessment

## Areas for improvement & opportunities for growth

- Strengthen communication, collaboration, and shared leadership across divisions, districts, and partner agencies.
- Expand support for student social-emotional and behavioral well-being while elevating student voice and youth leadership.
- Ensure coherence, alignment, and articulation across state-required and local plans.
- Identify, share, and scale highly effective practices and initiatives that benefit all students.
- Build leadership capacity, civic engagement, and advocacy for education at the local, regional, state, and national levels.
- Continue to advance equity and inclusion through continuous improvement supports and strengthen a diverse educator workforce that reflects our communities.
- Continue to maximize local, regional, state, and federal funding opportunities to support countywide priorities.
- Expand access to high-quality professional development, coaching, and continuous learning opportunities that strengthen instructional practice and leadership effectiveness.
- Strengthen the educator and staff workforce (including substitutes) through recruitment, retention, pipelines, professional development, coaching, and internal advancement pathways.
- Leverage AI and emerging technologies to enhance educational outcomes, innovation, and operational effectiveness.





# Strategic Priorities

The Monterey County Office of Education's strategic planning process continues to center on six key priorities that will guide our work over the next two years. While these priorities are closely connected and often overlap, many are presented separately for planning and implementation purposes.

As part of this updated plan, MCOE has identified new initiatives and progress indicators within each strategic priority. These priorities and initiatives do not capture all of the work of the organization but provide a framework for our major areas of focus.

Over the next two years, MCOE will carry out these strategies through our programs and partnerships. Activities and initiatives may evolve each year based on the needs of our stakeholders and will be reviewed and assessed twice annually to ensure continued progress and alignment with our goals.





The Monterey County Office of Education is a vital component of our K-12 education system. We serve as a critical link between our county's schools and both state and federal governments, and we provide indispensable and cost-effective services to local schools and districts.

## Divisions/Departments of the Monterey County Office of Education

- County Superintendent
- Communications
- Deputy Superintendent
- Educational Services
- Finance & Business Services
- General Services
- Human Resources
- Information Technology Services
- Special Education
- Student Services

# Strategic Priorities

## 1 Successful Students

All students will receive a high quality education to ensure success in college, career and in life.

## 2 Supported & Prepared Educators

All educators will be provided the resources, professional development, and environments to learn and grow in their craft.

## 3 Healthy & Safe Schools

All schools will promote the physical and mental health of their students and staff by creating safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environments.

## 4 Informed & Engaged Community Partners

Community members will be informed about education in Monterey County and engaged in building countywide community support for education.

## 5 Fiscally Solvent, Innovative & Efficient Systems

MCOE policies and systems will proactively and creatively align resources to support dynamic teaching and learning while remaining fiscally solvent.

## 6 Engaged & Thriving Workforce

MCOE will promote and support an engaged, thriving, and highly-skilled education workforce and promote employment within public education throughout the community.



# Strategic Priority 1

**Successful Students:**
**All students will receive a high quality education to ensure success in college, career, and in life.**

## Strategies

- **1A** Implement quality early learning systems and programs.
- **1B** Provide access to 21st-century learning experiences for educators and students.
- **1C** Engage students in high quality, year-round, extended learning opportunities.
- **1D** Expand course access and improve indicators in all required subject areas (ELA, Math, Science, VAPA, CTE, P.E., Health, HSS/Civic Education).
- **1E** Develop, use, and share comprehensive data and assessment systems and continuous improvement tools to monitor and accelerate student performance.
- **1F** Support educators in the implementation of the English Learner Roadmap to ensure successful outcomes of English Learner students.
- **1G** Develop and implement leadership practices to improve college and career readiness.
- **1H** Assess special education program needs on an annual basis to provide services closer to districts of residence.
- **1I** Provide professional learning and capacity building to address disparities in K-12 education systems.
- **1J** Recognize individual student's learning styles and strengths to appropriately differentiate instruction.
- **1K** Appropriately engage student's parents or guardians as an equal partner in the education of their child through increasing their understanding of their child's learning style, strengths, and areas of need.
- **1L** Expand access to relevant post high school options in college and career planning, inclusive of college and vocational education and workforce readiness.

# Strategic Priority 2

**Supported & Prepared Educators:**
**All educators will be provided the resources, professional development, and environments to learn and grow in their craft.**

## Strategies

- **2A** Strengthen the pipeline of skilled and fully credentialed teachers and administrators.
- **2B** Increase teacher training in order to provide rigorous and engaging instruction in California's academic content and performance standards.
- **2C** Emphasize high-quality staff professional development focused on English Learner support, social emotional development, student progress indicators, and IEP goal assessments.
- **2D** Provide safety and management training opportunities and build capacity of staff in classrooms for high-risk special education students with intensive behavioral challenges.
- **2E** Provide infant development training opportunities and build capacity of staff in the Early Start program for infants and toddlers with disabilities.
- **2F** Ensure equitable access and outcomes for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students by implementing standards-aligned assessments, strengthening staff capacity, and empowering families to support student success.
- **2G** Provide Dignity-in-Movement training opportunities and build capacity of staff in programs for students who are medically fragile, orthopedically impaired, and/or chronically ill.
- **2H** Provide Assistive Technology and Assistive Augmentative Communication training opportunities and build capacity of staff who work with students with intensive communication needs.
- **2I** Increase recognition opportunities for all educators and classified staff.
- **2J** Encourage a climate of reinvention and continuous improvement.
- **2K** Strengthen onboarding, development, and retention supports.
- **2L** Promote the implementation of the Community School Framework by building capacity and increasing awareness among staff and those serving at-risk students and housing-insecure families.

# Strategic Priority 3

**Healthy & Safe Schools:**
**All schools will promote the physical and mental health of their students and staff by creating inclusive and respectful learning environments.**

## Strategies

**3A** Assist our 24 districts and eight charter schools to promote the understanding of diverse cultural characteristics, positive disciplinary practices, improving school climate, and providing students with social-emotional support that will lead to increased physical well-being.

**3B** Continue to prioritize student and staff safety and continue to offer safety trainings to include crisis and emergency response.

**3C** Implement the MCOE Facilities Master Plan to address the support, service, and program needs of MCOE through facilities expansions and improvements.

**3D** Strengthen and align community partnershps to enhance collaboration and communication in support of students' physical, mental, and social-emotional well-being.

**3E** Increase school staff knowledge to provide suspension and expulsion alternatives that increase student engagement in school.

**3F** Promote healthy and productive school environments that encourage physical and mental health to maximize learning and productivity.

**3G** Ensure that all staff understand the principles of restorative justice and trauma informed practices to model and engage students in healthy relationships and positive behavior.







# Strategic Priority 4

**Informed & Engaged Community Partners:**
**Community members will be informed about education in Monterey County and engaged in building countywide community support for education.**

## Strategies

**4A** Enhance communication between MCOE, school districts, and the community by sharing timely, accessible information that promotes services, opportunities, and responsive support for schools.

**4B** Build and sustain partnerships with higher education, government, businesses, and community organizations to address inequities and create impactful professional development and learning opportunities.

**4C** Improve the community's understanding of the successes and challenges of Monterey County public schools through transparent and engaging communication efforts.

**4D** Strengthen leadership engagement through regular site visits and direct interaction with schools to better understand needs and enhance support and advocacy.

**4E** Improve collaboration and communication with community-based organizations and government agencies to align efforts and better support students and families.



# Strategic Priority 5

**Fiscally Solvent, Innovative & Efficient Systems: MCOE policies and systems will proactively and creatively align resources to support dynamic teaching and learning while remaining fiscally solvent.**

## Strategies

- **5A** Monitor financial information and provide direction to assist MCOE and all LEAs in maintaining fiscal stability.
- **5B** Provide training and guidance related to the financial impact of annual legislative challenges.
- **5C** Expand support to school districts in communications planning, audits, and crisis management.
- **5D** Provide fiscal support and feedback to districts in their implementation of the LCAP process to ensure stakeholder engagement, timely tools, and practices to guide effective planning, policy, and instructional decisions at all schools.
- **5E** Use technology for innovative solutions to improve productivity, efficiency, and processes across the organization.
- **5F** Leverage integrated technology systems to promote physical safety, situational awareness, and healthy learning environments across all MCOE sites.
- **5G** Efficiently expand business operations and services and programs to county school districts and partners.
- **5H** Continuously employ innovative and efficient systems, protocols, and procedures to maximize resources and adjust program services to the needs of students and staff.
- **5I** Equip educators and staff with modern, secure devices and management tools that ensure consistent access and reliable performance.
- **5J** Modernize and secure infrastructure to support scalable, efficient, and secure operations across MCOE systems.

# Strategic Priority 6

**Engaged & Thriving Workforce:**
**MCOE will promote and support an engaged, thriving, and highly-skilled education workforce and promote employment within public education throughout the community.**

## Strategies

- **6A** Improve employee engagement and job satisfaction.
- **6B** Improve the quality of MCOE's internal two-way communication to share and receive information with and from employees.
- **6C** Recognize and celebrate employee contributions and achievements.
- **6D** Ensure cultural competence by enhancing bias awareness and advancing equitable hiring practices.
- **6E** Increase employee capacity, performance, and effectiveness, while promoting positive organizational health.
- **6F** Provide technology solutions that reduce friction and empower staff with secure, efficient access to the tools they need.
- **6G** Increase awareness of careers in education.















Monterey County Office of Education

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