SUPERINTENDENT MONTHLY REPORT

NOVEMBER 2026



SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

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This report is for your information only. No items within the report will be discussed during the regularly scheduled board meeting.



Certain Arizona public school districts will be required to spend at least 60% of their day-to-day operating budgets on direct classroom instruction if voters approve a major education mandate on the upcoming November 3, 2026, ballot

The Arizona State Legislature recently approved placing this mandate—officially known as **Proposition 320** (the *Prioritize Teacher Pay Act*)—before voters via legislative referral

The 60% Mandate: Proposition 320 Breakdown

If passed by voters, Proposition 320 will fundamentally reshape school district finance across the state:

- **Who It Affects:** The mandate targets Arizona's largest public-school districts. It applies to any district with **7,500 or more students**, as well as *all* districts operating within **Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal counties** (regardless of student size). This covers roughly 80% to 85% of all public-school students in Arizona

School Finance & Budget Mandates (Prop 320 & HB 2956)

- **Also, Proposition 320 (2026 Ballot Measure):** A legislatively referred state requiring school districts with 7,500 or more students (or located in counties with populations over 500,000 like Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal) to allocate at least **60% of their operational spending** directly to instructional expenses.
- Districts failing to comply face gradual reductions in state classroom funding. Proponents argue it forces dollars into the classroom, while opponents warn it could strip resources from non-classroom staff like nurses, bus drivers, and custodians

The three biggest issues facing education today are

- student mental health and emotional well-being crises
- chronic absenteeism
- severe educator burnout paired with staffing shortages.

Student Mental Health and Emotional Crises

- **Anxiety and Depression:** Post-pandemic surveys show steep rises in student anxiety, depression, and emotional dysregulation.
- **Resource Shortages:** Schools face severe deficits in mental health professionals, with average counselor-to-student ratios often exceeding recommended guidelines.
- **Behavioral Disruptions:** Emotional struggles frequently manifest as behavioral challenges in the classroom, impacting overall learning climates.

Chronic Absenteeism and Disengagement

- **High Absence Rates:**

  Millions of students miss significant portions of the school year, severely affecting academic recovery.
- **Academic Decline:** Standardized test scores in reading and math have dropped or stagnated nationally as a direct result of lost instructional time.
- **Socioeconomic Links:** Attendance issues are heavily tied to family poverty, lack of local support systems, and diminished student engagement.

Educator Burnout and Staffing Shortages

- **High Turnover Rates:** Teacher and staff attrition remains high as added administrative tasks and student behavioral needs pile onto workloads.
- **Unfilled Positions:** A large percentage of school districts report ongoing struggles to hire certified teachers and specialized support staff.
- **Budget Pressures:** The expiration of federal relief funds (ESSER) has forced districts to make difficult staff and resource cuts

HB 2956 (State Budget/K-12 Funding):

- Raised the base-level funding for K-12 public schools, increased charter additional assistance, expanded the **9th Grade On-Track Grant program** through 2030, and mandated that public high schools with athletic programs maintain accessible automated external defibrillators (AEDs).

- Mandates, beginning August 1, 2025, each public high school that sponsors an athletic team or sports program to provide an AED at each school campus and school-sponsored athletic event and ensure that each AED provided is:
    - a) in an unlocked location that is accessible during the school day and at each school-sponsored athletic event;
    - b) in a location from which it may be promptly retrieved and used at the school or school-sponsored athletic event
    - c) maintained in good working order and tested according to manufacturer's guidelines.
    - Allows a school district or charter school to accept gifts, grants and donations to provide AEDs as prescribed.

Empowerment Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) & Voucher Battles

- **The ESA Expansion & Oversight Friction:** Arizona's universal voucher program (allowing families to use public funds for private school or homeschooling expenses) continues to be a central political flashpoint.

Curriculum, Artificial Intelligence, and Math Acceleration

- **HB 4005 (Artificial Intelligence Instruction):** Mandates that public schools provide age-appropriate instruction on the ethical, moral, and practical uses of artificial intelligence (AI) in grades 3, 6, 8, 10, and 12 starting in the 2027–2028 school year.
- **HB 2423 (Advanced Mathematics Enrollment):** Requires school districts and charter schools to automatically enroll students who demonstrate high proficiency on grade-level math assessments into advanced math courses for the following term, shifting the notification model to proactive parent opt-outs.
- **Ban on Ultra processed Foods in Schools:** Enacted rules prohibiting specific artificial food dyes and ultra processed additives in school meals and snacks served during regular hours

Testing, Accountability, and Teacher Standards (HB 2032)

- **HB 2032 (Assessment and Accountability Adjustments):** Expanded the statewide testing window for grades 3–8 from four to six consecutive weeks, adjusted reporting and contractor deadlines, and allowed long-term contracts for norm-referenced assessments.
- **Science of Reading & Literacy Endorsements (HB 2026 / Ongoing Mandates):** Continuing state rollouts require K–5 literacy instructors to hold specialized reading/literacy endorsements grounded in the "science of reading," alongside required dyslexia training for K–3 teachers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary focus for the superintendent is securing qualified classroom teachers to directly support student instruction and ensure fully staffed classrooms as the school year progresses.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

Continuation of Goal and Number 1 Priority:

- SUSD primary mandate to parents and the community is to fill classroom positions with teachers in classrooms.
- **Applications are checked in the frontline platform for completion and highly qualified applicants**
- Every open teaching position directly affects class sizes and student learning
- All auxiliary support positions cannot take precedence over classroom teachers
- Staffing the classroom is of the highest priority in our district.

Instructional Staffing Over Support Roles:

- The superintendent has explicitly pivoted organizational resources and hiring efforts toward filling certified teaching vacancies,
- The superintendent is ensuring academic programs and daily student learning are not compromised.

Organizational Obligations: As we advance further into the academic year, our highest organizational obligation is ensuring that our students receive continuous, high-quality instruction. During the next board meeting I would like to outline the administration's staffing focus, resource allocation, and next steps regarding open district positions.

Adherence to Governance Boundaries

- The superintendent will always maintain proper administrative separation between board oversight and executive hiring authority.

Operational Stability for the School Year:

- Administrative energy is directed where the **operational risk is highest**—**unstaffed classrooms**—while placing non-instructional, auxiliary staffing requests on hold until core academic staffing needs are met.

RE: IMPACT AID Application Training:

Planning: working on Application during the month of November

Source Check: Reflect in the month of October (highest ADM)

Application Open: November 4, 2026

Application Due: January 31, 2027, or earlier submission

Training: October 28, 2026 (Flagstaff)

***Total of 7 staff attended training = *2 retrained and 5 staff first-time trained**

Attendance as of October 27, 2026

☐ Sanders Primary School	115
☐ Sanders Intermediate School	131
☐ Sanders Middle School	168
☐ Valley High School	208
☐ Sanders Unified School District Total	**Total - 623**

Conference and Workshop October 2026

☐ Beyond Textbook – October 3
☐ AVID Director District Training (virtual) October 7-8
☐ 2026 ASA Fall Leadership Conference: Leading Beyond the Noise - October 25-27

Positions Filled or to be filled (November 2, 2026)

☐ PK Teacher (tbf)	☐ Counselor for High School (tbf)
☐ Counselor for Elementary School (tbf)	☐ Art Teacher (To be approve)
☐ Counselor for Middle School (tbf)	☐ Social Studies (SMS) (tbf)
☐ Inclusion/Resource teacher (SMS & VHS) (tbf)	☐ Life Skill Teacher (SMS)

**tbf (to be filled) *tba (to be approved)*

BUDGET & FINANCE

Sanders Unified School District
Summary of Operation (Unaudited)
FY2027 - AS OF 10/20/26

Budget-Controlled Funds		Budget (Adopted)	YTD Expenses	Balance	Encumbrances	Budget Balance
001	Maintenance & Operation	$ 8,775,251.00	$ 1,530,520.93	$ 7,244,730.07	$ 3,599,783.53	$ 3,644,946.54
010-013	Classroom Site Funds	$ 1,550,907.00	$ 156,950.95	$ 1,393,956.05	$ 300,544.29	$ 1,093,411.76
110	Title I	$ 928,559.83	$ 196,064.31	$ 732,495.52	$ 151,933.17	$ 580,562.35
610	Unrestricted Capital Outlay	$ 2,167,805.88	$ 156,750.20	$ 2,011,055.68	$ 241,648.52	$ 1,769,407.16
Cash-Controlled Funds		**Beginning CB**	**YTD Revenues**	**YTD Expenditures**	**Encumbrances**	**Current Cash Balance**
378	Impact Aid	$ 3,878,662.24	$ -	$ 2,008,579.72	$ 8,029,135.75	$ 1,870,082.52
570	Indirect Costs	$ 423,140.82	$ -	$ 8.58	$ -	$ 423,132.24
580	Teacherage	$ 217,980.68	$ 32,036.77	$ 23,407.74	$ 42,244.62	$ 226,609.71

Impact Aid

- FY25 Expenses:
- $5,292,983
- FY26 Expenses: $6,865,868
- FY25 Ending Cash Balance: $4,695,328
- FY26 Ending Cash Balance: $3,891,570

Consultant

Assist with Federal Grants for compliance and other duties as assigned

Grants include:

- Federal, Title I, Title II, Title IV, IDEA, ESEA

Average working hours: 15-18 hours a week for $50 an hour

Costs on average - $900 a week or less

- **Targeted Consultant Support**: To maintain compliance on state and federal grants while my capacity is divided,
- The consultant **does not get**: benefits, retirement contributions, or long-term contractual liability,

SUSD is not in a state of financial jeopardy because:

- Our grant deadlines and financial reporting are currently secured through our consultant and existing internal workflows,

In the Meantime: Multi-Role Fulfillment and Fiscal Stewardship

Due to regional administrative turnover and scarcity of qualified candidates, I am actively performing the duties of four distinct positions:

- Superintendent of Schools (Chief Executive Officer)
- Human Resources Director $80-$90K+
- Interim Exceptional Student Services (ESS) Director$85K -$90K
- Grant Writer & Federal Programs Coordinator $85K - $100K+

By absorbing these director-level roles, the school district has not paid out over **$250,000-$300,000 in gross annual personnel savings** (market salary plus benefits) SY2026-2027 alone.



• What's Possible? Redefining Career Exposure in Rural Education
• Leveling Up: Capitalizing students' interest (and potential addiction to) gaming
• Four Futures, One Roadmap: Implementing Arizona's New AI Guidance



STRATEGIC PLAN OVERVIEW # 1 GOAL

GOAL #1 – ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT		
ACADEMIC	**PROGRESS**	
#1 Academic Achievement	Improvement in reading and math on state assessment and ACT There is a slight decline in the middle school statement	According to the preliminary state metrics projection, there will be an A school letter grades for both the elementary and the high schools bring the overall district average to a projected "B" rating for the district
	Staff Training & Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) Provide focused, job-embedded professional development to all district staff at least twice per month	Completed & sustained. Job-embedded Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are fully built into the weekly district schedule.
	Evaluation & Accomplishments: Fully Completed. SUSD integrated a mandatory bi-weekly professional learning schedule across all campuses	Completed. Integrated via district-wide School Integrated Action Plans (SIAP) and standardized parent portal tracking.
	Completed Tactics: Faculty operations at Sanders Middle School and other campuses are structured around dynamic, collaborative teaching and learning cycles to keep staff aligned on data-driven instruction	

*It is extremely important that your work as board members continue to remain focused on the Vision and Mission of Sanders Unified School District and most importantly, student achievement.

Advocating for Student Achievement Outcome is the Main Responsibility of Each Board Member.

*Purpose of being a board member relies on four (4) key roles

Governing Board Roles Responsibilities		**Governing Board Roles and Responsibility**	**Benefit**: When the school Board works with the Superintendent they contribute to a well-run school district for the purpose of student achievement. Being clear about our roles will also help to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Students will then benefit.
4 Roles of the Governing Board	1	Accountability:	• Ensure Accountability for student success
	2	Maintain standards for ethical conduct	• Consistently
	3	****Advocate for Student Outcome****	****Main Purpose of the board****
	4	**Abide by ethical standards**	• **Prioritize student welfare above personal interests.** • Avoid conflicts of interest and refusing to use the position of board member for personal gain or to benefit friends and family
			• In the event the Board President need an answer to a question, **it is best to speak with the Superintendent instead of other individuals**
4 Specific Duties/Responsibilities of the Governing Board	1	Hiring and evaluating the district superintendent	
	2	Approving the budget and adopting the annual budget	

	3	Setting policies and approve curriculum materials	
	4	**Progress Monitoring the Strategic Plan**	
			All are tied to student achievement

For New Board President

Goals and Guardrails **For the Board President to work on:** ***Center around Student Achievement***	**Create 5** Goals for the rest of the school year	
	Create 5 Guardrails to support each goal	
	Progress Monitoring for the goals	
	50% of the time (bi- weekly once every other week)	
Key: Board members' role **does not** include hiring or terminating staff. **This responsibility comes from the recommendations from administrators to superintendents and from the superintendent.**		