



**ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**Staff Report Findings of Fact and Recommendations**  
**Suncoast Charter School**  
**March 24, 2026**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The following is a summary of the review conducted by Orange County Department of Education staff of the charter petition submitted by Suncoast Preparatory Academy, proposing to establish Suncoast Charter School as a countywide nonclassroom-based school, and recommendations for consideration by the Orange County Board of Education (the Board).

Pursuant to Education Code section 47605.6, the Board must approve or deny the petition within ninety (90) days of receipt, unless the timeline is extended by mutual agreement for up to thirty (30) additional days. Suncoast Charter School agreed to a six-day extension to align with the Board's regular meeting schedule. Accordingly, Board action is scheduled for April 8, 2026..

OCDE staff conducted a comprehensive review of the petition, including evaluation of the operator's existing charter school performance, nonprofit governance structure, fiscal position (including debts and liabilities), operational systems, and information provided at the February 19, 2026, clarification meeting. Based on this review, staff recommend approval of the petition, subject to the conditions outlined in Section VI.

**II. BACKGROUND**

On January 2, 2026, the Board received a petition to establish Suncoast Charter School as a countywide nonclassroom-based charter school. Suncoast Preparatory Academy, a California nonprofit public benefit corporation, currently operates a district-denied nonclassroom-based charter school in Orange County. The proposed school intends to serve students in transitional kindergarten through grade twelve beginning in the 2026-27 academic year.

Per statutory requirements, the petitioner notified the following districts of its intent to establish facilities within their boundaries:

- Fullerton Elementary School District
- Fullerton Joint Union High School District
- Placentia-Yorba Linda Unified School District
- Tustin Unified School District

On February 2, 2026, the Board conducted a public hearing on the provisions of the petition and considered the level of support from teachers, parents or guardians, and other employees of the school districts in which the petitioner proposes to operate facilities.

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### III. LEGAL STANDARD

The Charter Schools Act reflects a legislative preference for charter schools that are locally authorized by the district in which they operate. A county board of education may approve a countywide charter school only if it makes specific threshold findings under Education Code section 47605.6(a), in addition to determining that the petition satisfies the criteria set forth in Education Code section 47605.6(b)(1)-(7).

Education Code section 47605.6(a)(1) provides:

“A county board of education may approve a countywide charter only if it finds, in addition to the other requirements of this section, that the educational services to be provided by the charter school will offer services to a pupil population that will benefit from those services and that cannot be served as well by a charter school that operates in only one school district in the county.”

Additionally, Education Code section 47605.6(b) states that a county board may grant a charter only if it is satisfied that:

- 1) Granting the charter is consistent with sound educational practice; and
- 2) The charter school has reasonable justification for why it could not be established by petition to a school district pursuant to Education Code section 47605.

If the threshold criteria are met, the Board must then determine whether the petition satisfies the criteria under Education Code section 47605.6(b)(1)-(7). The Board shall deny the petition if it makes one or more of the following findings:

- 1) The charter school presents an unsound educational program for the pupils to be enrolled in the charter school.
- 2) The petitioners are demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition.
- 3) The petition does not contain the number of signatures required by subdivision (a).
- 4) The petition does not contain an affirmation of each of the conditions described in subdivision (e).
- 5) The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions of the required elements under Education Code section 47605.6.
- 6) The petition does not contain a declaration of whether or not the charter school shall be deemed the exclusive public-school employer of the employees of the charter school for purposes of the Educational Employment Relations Act Chapter 10.7 (commencing with Section 3540) of Division 4 of Title 1 of the Government Code.

- 7) Any other basis that the county board of education finds justifies the denial of the petition.

If a countywide charter petition is denied, there is no appeal to the State Board of Education (5 CCR § 11966.5).

#### **IV. COUNTYWIDE JUSTIFICATION ANALYSIS**

Education Code section 47605.6(a)(1) requires the Board to determine whether the proposed educational services (1) will serve a pupil population that will benefit from those services, and (2) cannot be served as well by a charter school operating in only one school district within the county.

##### **A. Identifiable Pupil Population**

The petition identifies a distinct population of families who intentionally select a public homeschool model rather than a traditional site-based instructional program. During the 2024–25 school year, the existing charter served 1,882 TK–12 students residing across multiple Orange County districts. Enrollment has grown substantially over the past three years.

The program is structured around parent-led instruction supported by credentialed Education Specialists, individualized learning plans, flexible pacing, and optional enrichment opportunities. Survey data submitted by the Petitioner indicates that, if the school were unavailable, many families would continue homeschooling through another homeschool charter program or through private homeschooling.

Based on the record presented, staff find that the petition identifies a defined and substantial pupil population that will benefit from the proposed services.

##### **B. Inability to Serve as Well Through a Single-District Charter**

The charter petition describes a student population that is geographically dispersed across multiple school districts and enrollment is driven by program design rather than district residence. The proposed nonclassroom-based model is structured to operate countywide and does not rely on daily site-based attendance. Countywide authorization provides a unified governance and accountability framework aligned with the school’s enrollment pattern and operational design.

While some districts offer independent study options, the record does not demonstrate the availability of a comparable comprehensive TK–12 homeschool partnership model operating at similar scale within a single district.

##### **C. Staff Determination**

Based on enrollment data, geographic distribution, and program structure, staff find that:

- 1) The proposed educational services will benefit a distinct pupil population; and

- 2) That population cannot be served as well by a charter school operating in only one school district.

Accordingly, staff conclude that the petition satisfies the threshold countywide criteria set forth in Education Code section 47605.6(a)(1), subject to the findings and conditions outlined elsewhere in this report.

## **V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Orange County Department of Education staff reviewed the charter petition and all supporting documentation, including materials presented at the public hearing and information obtained during the clarification meeting.

The petition contains only partial descriptions and incomplete metrics for certain measurable student outcomes within the charter petition. Additionally, the operator’s existing charter school, Suncoast Preparatory Academy, demonstrates student assessment participation rates and performance levels significantly below the federal and state accountability threshold and overall academic performance below the statewide average, as reflected on the California School Dashboard.

These findings may constitute grounds for denial under applicable law but may also be addressed through conditions of approval.

### **A. Reasonably Comprehensive Descriptions (Education Code § 47605.6(b)(5))**

The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions required under Education Code section 47605(c)(5)(A)(ii) regarding annual goals for all pupils and for each subgroup identified pursuant to Education Code section 52052, aligned to state priorities under section 52060(d). Specifically:

#### **1) State Priority 4 – Pupil Achievement**

The petition does not adequately describe how the school will measure:

- The percentage of students who pass an Advanced Placement (AP) examination with a score of 3 or higher; and
- The percentage of students demonstrating college readiness pursuant to the Early Assessment Program (EAP) or any successor college-readiness assessment.

#### **2) State Priority 5 - Pupil Engagement**

The petition does not include measures of goals or reporting metrics for:

- School attendance rate
- Chronic absenteeism rate (students missing 10% or more instructional days)
- Middle school dropout rate

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**B. Unsound educational Program** (Education Code § 47605.6(b)(1))

The Petitioner currently operates Suncoast Preparatory Academy, which implements the same nonclassroom-based instructional model described in the proposed Suncoast Charter School petition. If approved, Suncoast Charter School would replace the existing charter school authorized. Accordingly, the academic and operational performance of Suncoast Preparatory Academy provides relevant information for the Board’s consideration in evaluating the educational program in the Petition.

**1) Assessment Participation**

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires schools to test at least 95 percent of eligible students. The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) similarly requires a 95 percent participation rate. Schools that fall below this threshold receive a Lowest Obtainable Scale Score (LOSS) assignment for each non-participating student, which negatively affects Distance from Standard calculations on the California School Dashboard. These assigned lowest scores are incorporated into the Distance from Standard calculation on the California Dashboard.

Suncoast Preparatory Academy increased participation from 39 percent to 71 percent in 2025, reflecting significant improvement; however, the rate remains below the 95 percent requirement and below other OCBE-authorized charter schools.

**2) Academic Performance**

Overall performance remains below statewide averages:

- English language arts (ELA): 43% met/exceeded vs. 49% statewide
- Mathematics: 35% met/exceeded vs. 37% statewide

Subgroup strengths include:

- Hispanic students exceeding statewide averages in ELA (44% vs. 39%) and mathematics (35% vs. 26%).
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged (SED) students meeting/exceeding statewide averages in mathematics (31% vs. 27%).

The 2025 California School Dashboard reflects an overall “Orange” (Low) performance level in both ELA and Mathematics — the first year the school has been designated at this level. While mathematics demonstrated subgroup growth year-over-year, only the Hispanic subgroup demonstrated growth in ELA.

During the clarification meeting, school leadership acknowledged current performance levels and described ongoing strategies to improve outcomes.

**Current Year State Comparison**

| 2024-25                  |                  |       |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------|
| CAASPP Comparison (MATH) |                  |       |
| Student Group            | (% Met/Exceeded) |       |
|                          | Suncoast Prep    | State |
| All                      | 35%              | 37%   |
| SED                      | 31%              | 27%   |
| SWD                      | 8%               | 13%   |
| Hispanic                 | 35%              | 26%   |

| 2024-25                 |                  |       |
|-------------------------|------------------|-------|
| CAASPP Comparison (ELA) |                  |       |
| Student Group           | (% Met/Exceeded) |       |
|                         | Suncoast Prep    | State |
| All                     | 43%              | 49%   |
| SED                     | 31%              | 38%   |
| SWD                     | 15%              | 17%   |
| Hispanic                | 44%              | 39%   |

**Two-Year Performance Data**

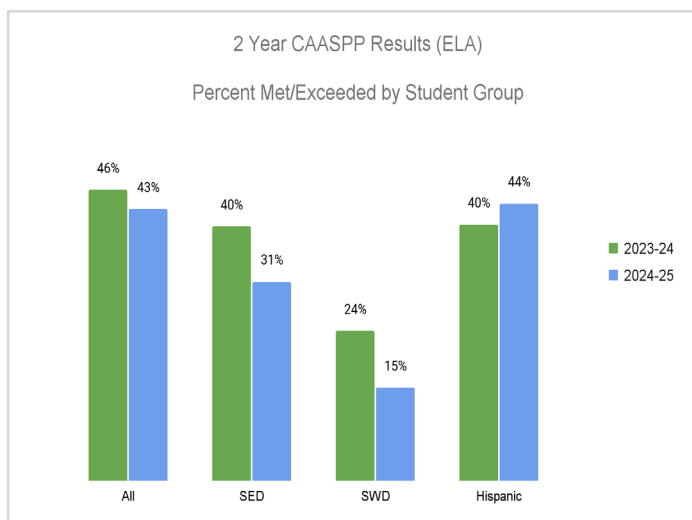


Figure 1. 2024-25 CAASPP comparison (ELA) by student group.

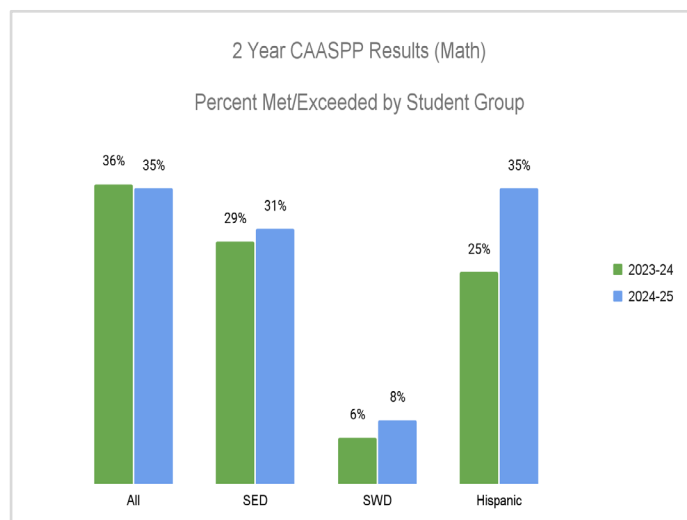


Figure 2. 2024-25 CAASPP comparison (Math) by student group.

**VI. CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL**

Should the Board approve Suncoast Charter School, staff recommend that the following conditions be incorporated into the Agreement/MOU:

**Condition 1:** The school shall develop and adopt a comprehensive plan to achieve a 95 percent participation rate on English language arts and mathematics statewide assessments in 2026–27. The plan shall include family communication timelines; student test scheduling; make-up procedures; accommodations; transportation supports, where applicable; and site test-coordinator assignments. The plan shall also describe how the school will maintain a 95 percent participation rate in subsequent years.

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**Condition 2:** The school shall provide a plan with baseline data, annual performance targets, and strategies to improve student outcomes in English language arts and mathematics.

**Condition 3:** Amend the petition to include measurable goals and reporting methods for:

- Advanced Placement pass rate (score of  $\geq 3$ )
- College readiness (EAP/successor assessments)
- School attendance rate
- Chronic absenteeism rate
- Middle school dropout rate

## **VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Orange County Department of Education staff recommend that the Board approve, with conditions, the petition of Suncoast Preparatory Academy to establish Suncoast Charter School as a countywide nonclassroom-based charter school for a three, four, or five-year term, and approve an Agreement delineating the operational relationship between the parties and conditions addressing the identified concerns with execution to occur no later than June 2026.

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