



**Striving for
Academic Excellence**

*A Profile of Seven Economically
Disadvantaged School Districts*

**Conducted by
McConnell Jones Lanier & Murphy, LLP
for the
Legislative Budget Board**

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**INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL
DISTRICT PROFILE**

BALMORHEA

BALMORHEA ISD

BACKGROUND

Balmorhea is located in southern Reeves County in West Texas and has a population of 527. According to the 2000 census, Balmorhea's population is 87.1 percent Hispanic. About one-third of the families (32.4 percent) and 36.3 percent of the population are below the poverty line.

In 2006–07, the Balmorhea Independent School District (BISD) had 151 students. The district's student population has been declining. It declined 23.7 percent from 2004–05 and 27.4 percent in the last five years (2002–03 to 2006–07). As shown in **Exhibit 111**, the majority of the student enrollment is Hispanic. The percentage of Hispanic students increased from 87.9 percent in 2004–05 to 92.7 percent in 2006–07. The percentage of Hispanic students in BISD is about twice the state rate, which is 46.3 percent and BISD's Hispanic enrollment is also higher than the Region 18 average of 58.3 percent. BISD also has a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, which was 84.8 percent in 2006–07. Its percentage of economically disadvantaged students is about 30 percentage points higher than the state and Region 18 averages.

Exhibit 112 shows that in 2006–07, BISD had 88 students or 58.3 percent of its students classified as at-risk; a higher percentage than Region 18 (49.3 percent) and the state rate of 48.3 percent.

During 2006–07, BISD had 36.9 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff of whom 18.4 or 49.9 percent were teachers, as shown in **Exhibit 113**. BISD had a higher percentage of minority staff (62.0 percent) relative to the state (42.3 percent). Its percentage of Hispanic teachers (40.2 percent) was twice the state's percentage (20.8 percent). BISD teachers had, on average, 1.6 years less experience than the state average.

BISD had a higher percentage of beginning teachers and teachers with 20 or more years of experience than the region and state as shown in **Exhibit 114**. BISD also had a lower percentage than both the region and the state for teachers with 6 to 10 and 11 to 20 years of experience.

As shown in **Exhibit 115**, BISD had a higher share of teachers with a bachelor's degree in 2006–07 (86.8 percent) than Region 18 (81.5 percent) or the state (77.6 percent) and a lower share of teachers with Master's degrees (11.4 percent)

EXHIBIT 111
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2004–05 THROUGH 2006–07

ENTITY	STUDENT ENROLLMENT	RACIAL/ETHNIC PERCENTAGE				PERCENTAGE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED
		AFRICAN AMERICAN	HISPANIC	ANGLO	OTHER	
2004–05						
Balmorhea	198	0.0%	87.9%	12.1%	0.0%	91.4%
Region 18	74,754	5.7%	56.4%	36.8%	1.2%	57.0%
State	4,383,871	14.2%	44.7%	37.7%	3.3%	54.6%
2005–06						
Balmorhea	165	0.0%	89.7%	10.3%	0.0%	82.4%
Region 18	74,427	5.7%	57.1%	36.0%	1.2%	55.5%
State	4,505,572	14.7%	45.3%	36.5%	3.4%	55.6%
2006–07						
Balmorhea	151	0.0%	92.7%	7.3%	0.0%	84.8%
Region 18	74,494	5.7%	58.3%	34.8%	1.2%	53.7%
State	4,576,933	14.4%	46.3%	35.7%	3.6%	55.5%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), 2004–05 through 2006–07.

**EXHIBIT 112
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF AT-RISK STUDENTS
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2006-07**

ENTITY	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	NUMBER OF AT-RISK STUDENTS	PERCENTAGE OF AT-RISK STUDENTS
Balmorhea	151	88	58.3%
Region 18	74,494	36,745	49.3%
State	4,576,933	2,209,538	48.3%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2006-07.

**EXHIBIT 113
BISD AND STATE STAFF
2006-07**

CATEGORY	DISTRICT TOTAL	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STAFF	STATE TOTAL	STATE PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL STAFF
Teachers	18.4	49.9%	311,466.3	50.7%
Professional Support	1.6	4.3%	50,333.9	8.2%
Campus Administration	1.0	2.7%	17,098.1	2.8%
Central Administration	2.0	5.4%	6,202.1	1.0%
Educational Aides	2.9	7.9%	61,344.6	10.0%
Auxiliary Staff	11.0	29.8%	167,469.2	27.3%
TOTAL	36.9	100.0%	613,914.2	100.0%
Total minority staff	22.9	62.0%	259,842.5	42.3%
Race/ethnicity of teachers:				
African American	0.0	0.0%	29,062.2	9.3%
Hispanic	7.4	40.2%	64,759.7	20.8%
Anglo	11.0	59.8%	213,201.3	68.5%
Other	0.0	0.0%	4,443.1	1.4%
TOTAL*	18.4	100.0%	311,466.3	100.0%
Average years of experience	9.7		11.3	
Number of students per teacher	8.2		14.7	

*Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2006-07.

**EXHIBIT 114
PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2006-07**

ENTITY	BEGINNING	1-5 YEARS	6-10 YEARS	11-20 YEARS	20+ YEARS
Balmorhea	23.5%	27.1%	10.9%	16.9%	21.7%
Region 18	7.0%	23.8%	19.6%	27.9%	21.6%
State	8.1%	29.1%	19.6%	23.6%	19.7%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2006-07.

compared with 17.7 percent for the region and 21.1 percent for the state average.

AEIS provides information on the percentage of students enrolled in and the percentage of teachers assigned to various program areas. In 2006-07, compared to Region 18 and state averages, BISD had a smaller percentage of students in bilingual/ESL and a higher percentage of students in the Gifted and Talented (G/T) program, Career and Technology Education (CATE), and in special education (**Exhibit 116**).

As shown in **Exhibit 117**, BISD did not have any dropouts in 2005-06 in grades 7 and 8, grades 7 through 12, or grades 9 through 12.

**EXHIBIT 115
DEGREE STATUS OF TEACHERS
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2006–07**

ENTITY	PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS WITH DEGREE				TOTAL*
	NO DEGREE	BACHELORS	MASTERS	DOCTORATE	
Balmorhea	1.8%	86.8%	11.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Region 18	0.5%	81.5%	17.7%	0.4%	100.0%
State	0.8%	77.6%	21.1%	0.5%	100.0%

*Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.
SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2006–07.

**EXHIBIT 116
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND TEACHERS BY PROGRAM
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2006–07**

ENTITY	BILINGUAL/ ESL	CAREER AND TECHNOLOGY	GIFTED AND TALENTED	SPECIAL EDUCATION	REGULAR EDUCATION
Balmorhea					
Students	6.0%	22.5%	9.3%	11.3%	*
Teachers	0.0%	10.6%	0.0%	5.4%	76.5%
Region 18					
Students	9.5%	20.1%	6.6%	10.4%	*
Teachers	6.6%	4.2%	2.9%	8.5%	70.6%
State					
Students	14.8%	20.6%	7.5%	10.6%	*
Teachers	7.6%	3.9%	2.0%	10.0%	70.6%

* AEIS does not provide number of students in regular education.
SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2006–07.

**EXHIBIT 117
ANNUAL DROPOUT RATES
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2003–04 THROUGH 2005–06**

ENTITY	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06
ANNUAL DROPOUT RATE GRADES 7–8			
Balmorhea	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Region 18	0.1%	0.1%	0.5%
State	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%
ANNUAL DROPOUT RATE GRADES 7–12			
Balmorhea	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Region 18	1.1%	1.3%	3.4%
State	0.9%	0.9%	2.6%
ANNUAL DROPOUT RATE GRADES 9–12			
Balmorhea	*	*	0.0%
Region 18	*	*	4.9%
State	*	*	3.7%

*Information not available on AEIS.
SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2004–05 through 2006–07.

As shown in **Exhibit 118**, BISD exceeded the graduation rates of both Region 18 and the state in 2004–05 through 2006–07. Overall, BISD's longitudinal dropout rates were lower than Region 18 and the statewide rates during this same time period.

COMMENDABLE PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES

AVAILABILITY AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Balmorhea ISD (BISD) has a wide range of instructional and administrative technology that is integrated into all grade levels and subject areas. The district superintendent is the technology director and is supported by a network administrator. The district's technology consists of:

- Three computer labs: one lab for elementary grades and two labs for secondary grades. BISD plans to add a third lab in summer 2008 for secondary grades, specifically for a math program (Agile Mind).
- Two distance learning labs: one in the library and one in the technology building. One of the labs was originally

EXHIBIT 118
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS GRADUATING, RECEIVING A
GED, CONTINUING HIGH SCHOOL, OR DROPPING OUT
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
CLASS OF 2004 THROUGH CLASS OF 2006

GRADUATING CLASS	BISD	REGION 18	STATE
Class of 2006			
Graduated	88.2%	77.1%	80.4%
Received GED	0.0%	3.0%	2.3%
Continued HS	5.9%	8.2%	8.6%
Dropped Out (4-year)	5.9%	11.6%	8.8%
Class of 2005			
Graduated	94.7%	80.2%	84.0%
Received GED	0.0%	4.3%	3.8%
Continued HS	0.0%	8.6%	7.9%
Dropped Out	5.3%	6.9%	4.3%
Class of 2004			
Graduated	100.0%	81.7%	84.6%
Received GED	0.0%	4.4%	4.2%
Continued HS	0.0%	8.0%	7.3%
Dropped Out	0.0%	5.9%	3.9%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2004–05 through 2006–07.

for community members to take college classes, but no community member has requested such classes. One lab is for teachers and one is for students. Students use the lab to take dual credit courses from Odessa College and Sul Ross College and to take a physics class because BISD does not have a physics teacher. BISD plans to add a third distance learning lab this summer for college classes. The district is connected through Region 18's wide area network and has an interactive video conferencing capability.

The district also has the following technology:

- Each classroom is equipped with one teacher computer and at least two student computers, a television, and a VCR;
- A mobile laptop cart with 10 laptops and a printer;
- Fifteen laptops that students and teachers can check out;
- Five portable smart boards with projectors;
- Two document cameras that teachers can use; and
- A total of 217 computers with Internet access running Windows XP or Windows 2000.

The number of computers available to students provides a ratio of 1 computer to 1.25 students.

BISD considers technology a high priority. The BISD board of trustees is very supportive of the district's investment in technology. BISD established and upgraded its technology resources through a series of grants. BISD received four Telecommunication Infrastructure Fund (TIF) grants, including a Community Networking Grant for 2001 through 2003, allowing it to upgrade its technology infrastructure and computers. BISD used e-rate to replace its servers and cabling. One of the first steps BISD took was to increase community access to technology and the technology competencies of community members. BISD achieved this goal by providing a computer, printer, and wireless access to the district's network and Internet to each student household.

BISD continuously expands its technology offerings in both equipment and software programs. The BISD administrators and teachers attend the state's technology conference and look at new equipment and programs and decide what is most suitable for the district. Recently, BISD acquired LCD projectors and smart boards, a program (Deep Freeze) that allows a teacher to monitor all student computers; PhotoShop, and Dream Weaver. The district also implemented a robotics program in summer 2007.

BISD enhances students' technology skills and competencies through a Tech Connect program. The program teaches students the different MS Office applications. Training begins in pre-kindergarten and continues through seventh grade, teaching keyboarding and technology applications. BISD also offers CATE technology classes, including IT essentials with emphasis on CISCO II, BCIS I and II, video technology, webmastering, and animation and graphics.

BISD teachers have integrated technology into instruction in all subject areas and grade levels. Technology use and integration is very intensive at the elementary level. Elementary teachers use projectors, smart boards, document cameras, video streaming, and prepare PowerPoint presentations. Students in early elementary grades use computers for educational games. Elementary grade students go to the computer lab two to four times a week or use the mobile laptop cart. By third grade, students have good keyboarding skills, according to elementary teachers, and can type up their work. Students in secondary grades prepare PowerPoint presentations, make movies, take online tests, do research, write papers, and design web pages. Students in fifth to seventh grades compete with students from other countries in math. Students also take career inventories online and search college information online. Teachers use administrative technology for attendance taking and grading. Parents can access their child's grades through the online Grade Book Parent Portal the district has installed.

CONTINUOUS MONITORING OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Balmorhea ISD administrators and teachers continuously monitor student learning and performance. The district adjusts their teaching methods to ensure that all students make progress and meet academic standards. BISD uses several strategies to monitor student performance on an ongoing basis. These strategies are feasible because of BISD's small class sizes, as shown in **Exhibit 119**. Elementary grades' class sizes range from 6 to 14 students. Secondary grades typically have only 10 students.

EXHIBIT 119
AVERAGE CLASS SIZE BY GRADE LEVEL
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2006–07

GRADE	BALMORHEA	REGION 18	STATE
Elementary			
Kindergarten	14.0	18.8	19.5
Grade 1	13.0	18.3	19.5
Grade 2	6.0	18.4	19.6
Grade 3	11.0	18.1	19.5
Grade 4	8.0	19.6	20.2
Grade 5	13.0	23.5	22.3
Grade 6	10.0	22.4	21.8
Secondary			
English Language Arts	10.5	18.2	20.0
Math	10.3	18.2	20.0
Science	9.9	19.1	21.0
Social Studies	11.0	20.2	22.0

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2006–07.

The small class size allows teachers to know each student's academic strengths and weaknesses and individualize instruction accordingly. BISD teachers indicated that because of the small class sizes there is more time to be spent during class with individual students, ensuring that the students understand and follow what is being covered. According to the superintendent, teachers spend a great amount of time with their students. Teachers feel a personal investment in their students. Teachers also consult each other about their students and may refer a student to another teacher whom can better help that student.

Teachers closely monitor student performance through multiple assessments that are conducted. The instructional programs the district uses are assessment driven. In addition to the benchmark tests in the fall and spring, BISD uses TAKS release tests, KAMICO, WEBCCAT, Glencoe, ACCESS, Step Up to TAKS, My Reading Coach, V-Math,

and TAKS Coach. Teachers are expected to use assessment results to identify weakness areas and adjust the instructional timelines to re-teach those areas. The superintendent and principal monitor teachers to verify the use of the assessment results in determining the most appropriate resources and interventions that can be used.

Students in grades 4 through 12 receive weekly progress reports from the principal. These reports inform each teacher, student, and the respective parent as to how well the student is performing and where the student needs help. The weekly progress reports allow the principal and the teachers to catch students immediately who are not performing well. Teachers do not allow students to fail; immediate intervention is implemented. Because teachers know each student so well, the most effective intervention for helping that student can be selected.

One of the interventions includes BISD's tutorial program. BISD has an extensive tutorial program. The tutorial program is built into the 8-period day. Daily, from 11:00 AM to 11:40 AM, teachers tutor students who need help. Tutoring is also available from 3:30 PM to 4:00 PM for struggling students and from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM for students who are failing a class and students who need intensive individualized instruction as identified through weekly objectives and/or six week assessments. The district pays teachers who tutor from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM.

The attitude permeating the district is that "student achievement is non-negotiable" and that staff will "do whatever it takes" to make students succeed.

INSTRUCTIONAL TIMELINES AND CROSS SUBJECT AREA INTEGRATION

The instructional approach BISD implemented since 2004–05 increased student performance on the TAKS in all subject areas. BISD has been a *Recognized* district since 2005–06. BISD has organized its curriculum around TAKS objectives; developed instructional timelines across all subject areas; reinforced content knowledge; and reading, writing, and math skills in all subject areas.

All teachers develop instructional timelines before the beginning of the school year. The instructional timelines developed for each six-week period specify the performance indicators to be addressed; the TAKS objectives, strategies, activities, and resources the teacher will use; the type of assessments the teacher will administer; and the time frame, as shown in **Exhibit 120**. The weekly lesson plans teachers submit specify the daily essential elements teachers will address.

EXHIBIT 120
BISD INSTRUCTIONAL TIMELINE
SUBJECT: SCIENCE; FIFTH SIX WEEKS
2007–08

STATE PERFORMANCE STUDENT INDICATORS	STATE TAKS OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	RESOURCES	ASSESSMENT	TIME FRAME
5.1A-B 5.2A-E 5.4A-B 5.3A-E	1. The student will demonstrate an understanding of the nature of science.	Teacher modeling Calls/group discussion	Laboratory investigations Reading Texts	AIMS Scott Foresman Step up to TAKS	Quizzes Daily work Experiment participation	February 18, 2008 to April 4, 2008
2.9A-B 3.8A-B 4.6A 5.5A-B	2. The student will demonstrate an understanding of life sciences.	Question Answer Exploration	Experiments Observations Field trips	Kamico Guest speakers	Objective assessment	
5.6C 5.9A 5.7A-D 5.8A-D	3. The student will demonstrate an understanding of physical sciences.	Lecture Testing	Written reports	Streaming videos		
3.11A, C, D 4.11A-C 5.6A	4. The student will demonstrate an understanding of earth sciences.					

* Objective must be taught and mastered before state test is administered.

SOURCE: BISD, Instructional Timeline, 2007–08.

The timelines are a useful tool for teachers and administrators. The development of instructional timelines ensures that all topics are taught before the TAKS. The timelines also keep teachers on track and help the principal and superintendent monitor that teachers are progressing as planned. Tying the lesson plans to the timelines also helps teachers focus on the TAKS objectives.

Teachers collaborate across all subject areas by coordinating the topics addressed and academic skills needed. For example, the agriculture science teacher uses the timelines to coordinate the topics covered in his classes with the topics covered by different content area teachers. This collaboration both reinforces students' content knowledge as well as students' reading, writing, math and science skills. When the students learn about genetics in science, the lessons are reinforced by teaching the genetics of animals in agriculture science classes as well. When the biology teacher covers the topic of reproduction, the agriculture science teacher addresses plant reproduction. The agriculture science teacher requires students to do a lot of measurements and problems that require higher order thinking skills, reinforcing students' math skills. Similarly, in Business Computer Information Systems (BCIS) classes, students work with graphs and charts reinforcing their math skills. Reading and writing have been integrated in all subject areas. The writing standards the agriculture science teacher and the career investigations teacher use complement those required in English classes. In addition, the district uses an accelerated reading program at all grade levels to increase students' reading.

Teachers also reinforce content knowledge and academic skills by integrating real world examples and life skills into their classes. In third grade, the teacher incorporated topics like diet into the curriculum, making it more relevant for students. In science, the teacher focuses on issues that are relevant in daily life such as global warming. In agricultural science, junior and senior students create and manage their own business and invest in the stock market. Additional projects have included building a utility trailer and a 3-horse slant trailer. In the Future Farmers of America (FFA) club, starting in grade 3, students not only work with and take care of animals, but also write checks, address envelopes, and write thank you notes.

These instructional strategies improved BISD TAKS performance. As shown in **Exhibit 121**, BISD increased the percentage of its students passing TAKS from 2004–05 to 2006–07 by 12 percentage points in Reading/ELA (from 85 to 97 percent), 28 percentage points in math (from 61 to 89 percent), 9 percentage points in writing (from 90 to 99 percent), 22 percentage points in science (from 61 to 83 percent) and 29 percentage points in all tests (from 54 to 83 percent). In 2006–07, the BISD TAKS passing rates exceeded the state average in all content areas and in all tests. BISD exceeded the state TAKS passing rates from 7 to 12 percentage points for these years.

Exhibit 122 compares BISD and the state TAKS passing rates in 2006–07 by subject area and grade level. BISD TAKS passing rates met or exceeded the state rate in 2006–07 in all

EXHIBIT 121
BISD PASSING RATES ON TAKS BY SUBJECT AREA
2004–05 THROUGH 2006–07*

TAKS	2004–05		2005–06		2006–07	
	BISD	STATE	BISD	STATE	BISD	STATE
Reading/ELA	85%	83%	88%	87%	97%	89%
Math	61%	71%	69%	75%	89%	77%
Writing	90%	90%	86%	91%	99%	92%
Science	61%	63%	96%	70%	83%	71%
Social Studies	97%	87%	88%	87%	97%	89%
All Tests	54%	62%	64%	67%	83%	70%

*Sum of all grades excluding Grade 8 Science; Standard Accountability indicator using the 2006 standard.
 SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2004–05 through 2006–07.

subject areas and grade levels with a few exceptions. These exceptions included grade 3 reading and grade 5 math.

U.S. News and World Report listed Balmorhea as one of 1,086 high schools in 40 states that “serve their students well.” The district was also identified as an academic “outperformer” in 2006 by Standard & Poor’s School Evaluation Services; one of 77 other districts around the state to receive this

recognition. Based on 2005–06 state reading and math test results, Balmorhea High School students were performing better than statistically expected for the average student in Texas. Balmorhea High School’s economically disadvantaged students also performed better than their peers in Texas.

COLLEGE GOING CULTURE

BISD has created a college going culture and prepares all its students for post-secondary education. BISD staff communicates to students the importance of attending college beginning in pre-kindergarten. Administrators, teachers, and professional staff tell students at all grade levels who are going to college that it is not a choice but a must; it is expected. The special education teacher communicates a similar message to special education students that “college is not a question, it is expected.” Students at all grade levels wear t-shirts bearing names of different colleges. In third grade, the teacher helps students prepare budgets and connects earnings to level of education. The teacher also reviews newspaper want ads with students, emphasizing how many of the ads for jobs require a college education. In fifth grade, students write essays about their academic and professional ambitions.

EXHIBIT 122
PERCENTAGE OF BISD AND STATE STUDENTS TESTED (IN ENGLISH)
MEETING TAKS STANDARD BY SUB-TEST AND GRADE
2006–07

GRADE	DISTRICT/ STATE	PERCENTAGE OF BISD AND STATE STUDENTS TESTED MEETING TAKS STANDARD						
		READING	MATH	WRITING	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS	SCIENCE	SOCIAL STUDIES	ALL TESTS
Grade 3	BISD	73%*	82%					73%
	State	89%	82%					78%
Grade 4	BISD	99%	99%	99%				99%
	State	84%	86%	91%				75%
Grade 5	BISD	83%	83%			67%		58%
	State	83%	86%			78%		69%
Grade 6	BISD	99%	99%					99%
	State	92%	80%					78%
Grade 7	BISD	99%	78%	99%				78%
	State	85%	77%	93%				71%
Grade 8	BISD	99%	88%			94%	99%	88%
	State	89%	73%			71%	87%	61%
Grade 9	BISD	99%	78%					78%
	State	87%	61%					60%
Grade 10	BISD		75%		88%	88%	88%	75%
	State		65%		85%	59%	87%	51%
Grade 11	BISD		99%		99%	99%	99%	99%
	State		81%		91%	78%	94%	70%

*First administration only.

NOTE: Blank cells indicate that test not given at that grade level.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2006–07.

The BISD board of trustees and administrators encourage teachers and students to pass TAKS at the commended level, indicating that “to be college ready students need to be commended.” One of the district goals included in the 2007–08 District Improvement Plan is to raise the percentage of students achieving Commended Performance on TAKS by 20 percent annually.

BISD administrators and teachers also communicate to parents the importance of college education. Parents are supportive of college going goals. Some of the teachers are first generation college graduates and serve as role models to the students and their families. The community has several families with parents who are also first generation college graduates, and these parents have an impact on the students. The district also participates in first generation college going programs like GEAR UP with Sul Ross College. Students who are in the program have a mentor from the college who helps them with the application process. These students also take six college hours the summer following their graduation.

The counselor goes into high school classes and helps prepare students for college. The counselor talks to students about their college interest, availability of financial aid, and the application and financial aid forms the student and their parents will have to fill out. Each senior has to have a folder with three applications to colleges and three letters from colleges. BISD assists high school students and their parents with college applications and financial aid forms. BISD invites representatives from colleges to come to the district and meet with students. The college recruiters visit classrooms and present information to students starting at the freshman year. Recruiters build relationships with students early in high school. The counselor also takes seniors to a nearby town (Fort Stockton) for a College and Vo-Tech Program Day Fair with representatives from a large number of colleges and vocational/technical programs. The College Day Fair scheduled for October 9, 2008 invited representatives from more than 120 colleges. Similarly, the special education teacher takes special education juniors and seniors to a transition fair at the Region 18 education service center. The fair has college representatives who inform special education students about the assistive services the students can receive at the respective colleges.

BISD strengthened its curriculum with college preparation classes. BISD offers four years of math and science. It offers a physics course through distance learning. BISD also replaced Coordinated Vocational Academic Education (CVAE) classes such as home economics with classes in anatomy/physiology, environmental science, and geology/meteorology/oceanography. In 2006–07, the district hired a math and science teacher specifically for grades 7 and 8 to

improve the math and science performance of students in these grades. The district has also targeted parents of students in grades 7 and 8 by making them aware of early college possibilities and offering summer enrichment programs that include pre-algebra, algebra I, robotics, and the Path to Scholarships. The goal of the Path to Scholarships program is to inspire, empower, and prepare students successfully for college. The program targeted at economically disadvantaged students has a mandatory community service component and a character component.

As part of its college preparation program, BISD offers pre-AP and dual credit (concurrent) courses instead of AP classes. In 2008–09, it plans to offer an Advanced Placement (AP) class in Spanish. BISD offers dual credit courses with Odessa College in English, government, economics, world history, and introduction to psychology. The district pays for the students’ dual credit courses and books. The superintendent has also encouraged the teachers to get masters degrees so that the educators will be also be able to teach college-level courses. The district will pay for part of their master program studies. BISD increased student participation in advanced/dual credit courses from 2004 to 2006. In 2004, only 6.1 percent of BISD students completed such classes compared with 23.9 percent in 2005 and 34.0 percent in 2006. In 2005 and 2006, BISD surpassed the rate of advanced/dual credit class completion both in Region 18 and statewide (**Exhibit 123**). BISD also surpassed Region 18 and the state in the percentage of students taking advanced/dual credit tests. BISD increased from 2004 to 2006 the percentage of its advanced/dual credit examinees with scores exceeding criterion and the percentage of all AP scores exceeding criterion.

Exhibit 124 shows that as part of its college preparation and college going culture, BISD also increased the percentage of students taking the SAT/ACT from 2004–05 to 2006–07. The percentage of students taking the SAT/ACT increased from 58.3 percent in 2004–05 to 100.0 percent in 2006–07. BISD exceeded the Region 18 and state rates of students taking the SAT/ACT in each of these three years. BISD encourages students to speak with the counselor in their junior year to determine which college admission exam is most appropriate for them to take. The district pays the fees for SAT/ACT as well as for the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) test. BISD teachers have implemented strategies to improve student performance on the SAT/ACT. To address low student performance on the verbal portion of the SAT/ACT, the English Language Arts teacher is teaching more vocabulary, incorporating SAT/ACT vocabulary, and gives weekly vocabulary tests.

BISD improved its higher education readiness since 2004–05 from 42 percent to 70 percent in 2006–07 in English

EXHIBIT 123
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE PERFORMANCE ON ADVANCED/DUAL ENROLLMENT COURSES AND
ADVANCED PLACEMENT CLASSES AND EXAMINATIONS
2004–05 THROUGH 2006–07

ENTITY	2004	2005	2006
PERCENTAGE COMPLETING ADVANCED/DUAL ENROLLMENT COURSES			
Balmorhea	6.1%	23.9%	34.0%
Region 18	17.7%	17.5%	16.7%
State	19.9%	20.5%	21.0%
PERCENTAGE TAKING ADVANCED PLACEMENT TESTS			
Balmorhea	40.0%	34.5%	27.3%
Region 18	10.7%	9.9%	8.9%
State	17.4%	18.4%	18.9%
PERCENTAGE OF AP EXAMINEES WITH SCORES EXCEEDING CRITERION			
Balmorhea	8.3%	10.0%	50.0%
Region 18	41.6%	39.8%	42.2%
State	53.9%	51.8%	51.3%
PERCENTAGE OF ALL AP SCORES EXCEEDING CRITERION			
Balmorhea	7.1%	10.0%	37.5%
Region 18	36.1%	37.3%	39.6%
State	49.3%	47.4%	47.2%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2004–05 through 2006–07.

EXHIBIT 124
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS TAKING ACT/SAT EXAMS,
MEETING CRITERIA
2004–05 THROUGH 2006–07

ENTITY	STUDENTS TAKING SAT/ ACT EXAMS	STUDENTS MEETING SAT/ ACT CRITERIA	MEAN SAT SCORE
2004–05			
Balmorhea	58.3%	0.0%	834
Region 18	48.4%	26.0%	980
State	61.9%	27.0%	987
2005–06			
Balmorhea	84.2%	25.0%	894
Region 18	50.8%	25.4%	995
State	65.5%	27.4%	992
2006–07			
Balmorhea	100.0%	0.0%	830
Region 18	50.6%	25.7%	994
State	65.8%	27.1%	991

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2004–05 through 2006–07.

Language Arts and from 23 percent in 2004–05 to 80 percent in 2006–07 in math as reflected in **Exhibit 125**.

BISD higher education readiness in English Language Arts exceeded both Region 18 and state rates during each of the three years. While BISD lagged behind Region 18 and the state in having students ready for higher education in math in 2004–05 and 2005–06, it exceeded both in 2006–07. In 2006–07, 80 percent of BISD students were considered higher education ready in math compared with 48 percent in Region 18 and 54 percent statewide.

College readiness was reported by more than 90 percent of BISD seniors in the district's annual survey for classes in 2006 and 2007. The BISD college going culture is reflected in student plans to attend a post-secondary program, with an increasing number of students planning to go to a 4-year college and more students feeling prepared for college. **Exhibit 126** shows selected results from BISD's annual senior year surveys for the classes of 2005, 2006, and 2007.

BISD also provides financial support to all its college going students through scholarships. The counselor contacts local

**EXHIBIT 125
HIGHER EDUCATION READINESS—TEXAS SUCCESS INITIATIVE
BISD, REGION 18, AND STATE
2004–05 THROUGH 2006–07**

ENTITY	ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS		MATH
	2004–05		
Balmorhea	42%		23%
Region 18	33%		41%
State	39%		48%
2005–06			
Balmorhea	58%		25%
Region 18	29%		45%
State	40%		51%
2006–07			
Balmorhea	70%		80%
Region 18	46%		48%
State	53%		54%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, AEIS, 2004–05 through 2006–07.

families and businesses and asks them to provide scholarships for graduating students. Some organizations, like the Balmorhea board of trustees, hold fund-raisers for scholarship money. The scholarships, according to the superintendent, signal to the community the importance of college education. The scholarships provided to students are, in turn, evidence of community support for post-secondary education. In 2006–07 BISD offered 11 scholarships to students, including:

- C.T. Gray Jr. Scholarship
- Floyd Estrada Memorial Scholarship
- Reeves County Sheriff's Posse Scholarship
- Reeves County Juvenile Detention Center Scholarship
- West Texas National Bank Scholarship
- Jerry Ray Mendoza Scholarship

**EXHIBIT 126
COLLEGE PLANS AND DEGREE OF PREPAREDNESS
BISD SENIOR CLASS 2005 THROUGH 2007**

	CLASS OF 2005 (N=19)	CLASS OF 2006 (N=13)	CLASS OF 2007 (N=11)
What areas do you plan to pursue immediately after high school?			
4-year college	57.9%	23.1%	72.7%
2-year college	36.8%	61.5%	18.2%
Vocational/Technical program	0.0%	7.7%	9.1%
Did school make learning exciting and encourage you to continue your education?			
Yes	73.7%	76.9%	100.0%
Were school counselors helpful in the selection of a path to follow after graduation?			
Yes	68.4%	92.3%	100.0%
Do you feel prepared for the transition to college courses?			
Yes	68.4%	92.3%	90.9%
Did your teachers generally hold high standards and demand quality work?			
Yes	*	100.0%	81.8%
Did you have a positive experience at Balmorhea high school?			
Yes	84.2%	100.0%	90.9%
How well did your teachers encourage you to study?			
Excellent	*	53.8%	54.5%
Good	*	30.8%	36.4%
Average	*	15.4%	9.1%
How well did your teachers motivate you in the classroom?			
Excellent	21.1%	38.5%	18.2%
Good	26.3%	53.8%	54.5%
Average	47.4%	7.7%	27.3%
Below Average	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%
How well did your parents support you with school?			
Excellent	47.4%	84.6%	45.5%
Good	47.4%	15.4%	27.3%
Average	5.3%	0.0%	18.2%
Below average	0.0%	0.0%	9.1%

*Not asked in survey.

Note: Totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding.

SOURCE: Balmorhea High School Senior Surveys, Classes 2005 through 2007.

- Balmorhea Board of Trustees Scholarship
- Spanish Club Scholarship
- History Fair Club Scholarship
- Business Professions of America Scholarship
- Pecos Downtown Lion's Club Scholarship

Indeed, of the 11 seniors in the class of 2007, 8 (72.7 percent) will attend college in fall 2008.

KEY FINDINGS AND KEY FACTORS

Balmorhea ISD has established a culture of high academic expectations for all its students—"student achievement is not negotiable"—and has been implementing it successfully. The results of its high academic expectations are manifested in students' performance on TAKS, the district achieving a *Recognized* accountability rating, and aiming for an *Exemplary* rating, high rate of graduation (100 percent in 2006–07), and high rate of college attendance.

The district has tailored its instructional programs and strategies to meet student needs, not letting any student lag behind academically or fail. Due in part to its size, all teachers and staff know all students and their families. Because of small class sizes, instruction is individualized and student performance is carefully and continuously monitored through assessments and weekly progress reports on each student. Instruction is continuously adjusted based on student performance and problems are addressed immediately either in the classroom or in the district's tutorial program that is incorporated into the school day and available also after school. The "whatever it takes" attitude reflects the district's approach to helping students succeed.

BISD offers a wide range of resources, including technology, to students and teachers and continuously identifies, acquires, and uses new resources the teachers evaluate as effective. The district is rich in technology and responsive to teacher requests for resources. However, the district is selective in acquiring new resources, targeting its financial resources to address areas where academic performance is weak. Teachers also get a lot of professional development.

The district sends a high percentage of students to college and their students are well prepared. College attendance, according to district administrators and staff, is presented to students and parents not as a choice but as a must, especially in light of the lack of economic opportunity in the community. This notion is imbued in students beginning in pre-kindergarten and supported through a strong college preparation program and financial support in the form of district payment of college admission exam fees and

scholarships. All students take the SAT/ACT regardless of plans after graduation, whether to attend a community college, four-year college, vocational or technical school.

The superintendent is an excellent academic leader pushing and motivating everyone to excel—both students and teachers. The high academic goals the superintendent has set go beyond performance on TAKS to what students need to know to succeed in college. The superintendent is a risk taker and innovator who is not afraid to try new things, creating a culture where teachers can do so as well.

The superintendent is also an effective executive. The superintendent made significant changes in district operations, stabilizing the district financially through consolidation of administrative and staff positions in response to declining student enrollment, and moving the school from a block schedule to an eight-period day. In response to declining student enrollment, the superintendent put all grades under one principal and assumed the positions of technology director, maintenance and personnel director, and grant writer.

