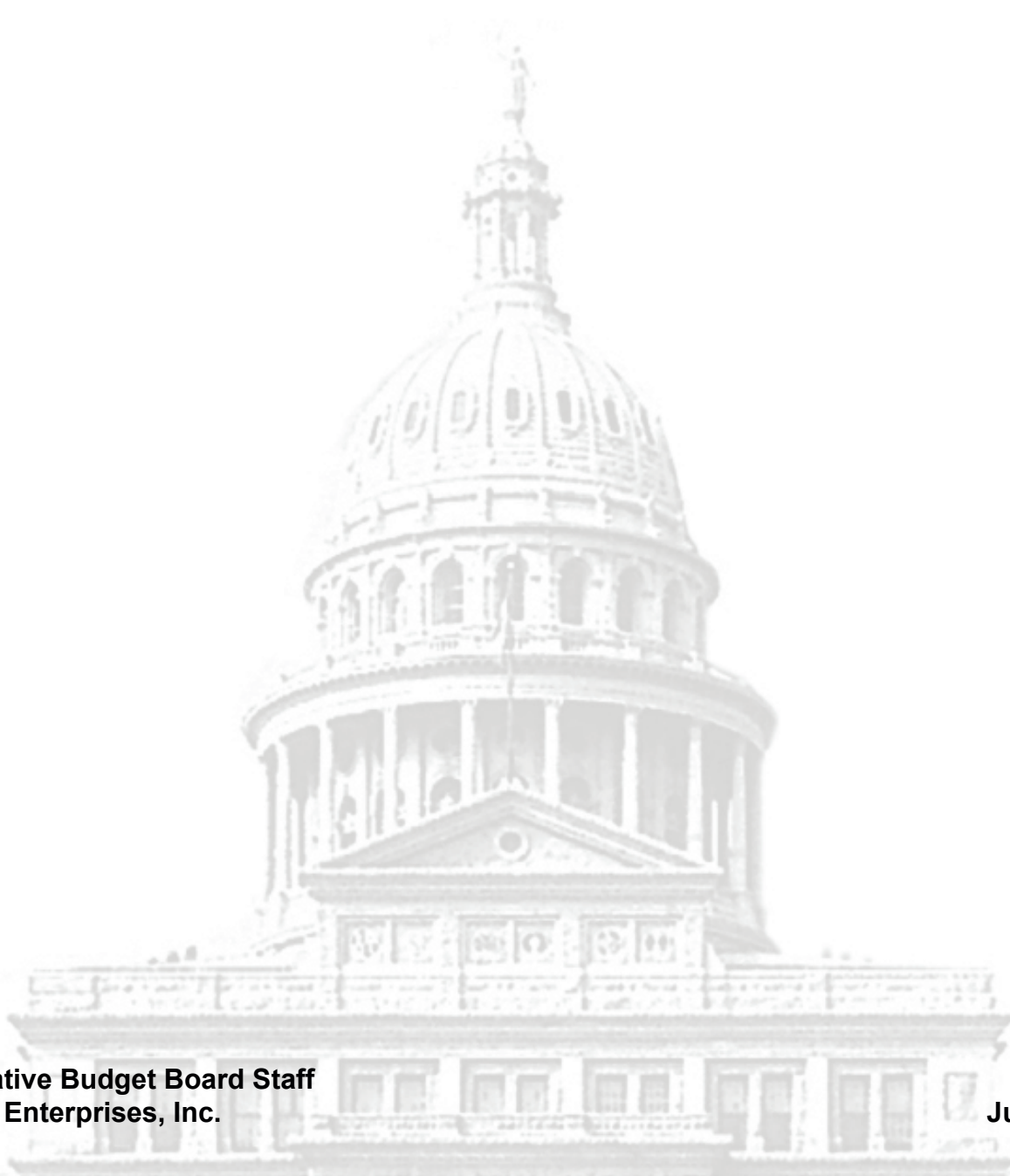




## LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

# Refugio Independent School District Management and Performance Review



Legislative Budget Board Staff  
Hatton Enterprises, Inc.

July 2013

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# **Refugio Independent School District**

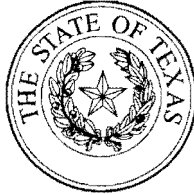
## **Management and Performance Review**

**Legislative Budget Board Staff**  
**Hatton Enterprises, Inc.**

**July 2013**

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## LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

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July 10, 2013

Mr. Jack Gaskins  
Superintendent  
Refugio Independent School District

Dear Mr. Gaskins:

The attached report reviews the management and performance of Refugio Independent School District's (ISD) educational, financial, and operational functions.

The report's recommendations will help Refugio ISD improve its overall performance as it provides services to students, staff, and community members. The report also highlights model practices and programs being provided by Refugio ISD.

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

The Legislative Budget Board engaged Hatton Enterprises, Inc. to conduct and produce this review, with LBB staff working in a contract oversight role.

The report is available on the LBB website at <http://www.lbb.state.tx.us>.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "U. Parks".

Ursula Parks  
Director  
Legislative Budget Board

cc: Mr. Rene Garcia  
Dr. Gary Wright  
Mr. Eugene Lewis  
Mr. Jorge Jaso  
Ms. Ethel Garza  
Mr. Andy Rocha  
Ms. Laura Ann Ramirez

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Texas Legislature created the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) in 1990 to “periodically review the effectiveness and efficiency of the budgets and operations of school districts.” (Texas Government Code, Section 322.016) The Legislative Budget Board’s School Performance Review team conducts comprehensive and targeted reviews of school districts’ and charter schools’ educational, financial, and operational services and programs. The review team produces reports that identify accomplishments, findings, and recommendations based upon the analysis of data and onsite study of each district’s operations. School districts are selected for management and performance reviews based on a risk analysis of multiple educational and financial indicators. A review examines twelve functional areas and recommends ways to cut costs, increase revenues, reduce overhead, streamline operations, and improve the delivery of educational, financial, and operational services.

Refugio Independent School District (ISD) is a rural district, which is located in the Coastal Bend Area of Texas. The district is served by the Regional Education Service Center III (Region 3) located in Victoria. The state legislators for the district are Senator Glenn Hegar, Senator Judith Zaffirini, Representative J.M. Lozano, and Representative Geanie W. Morrison.

In school year 2012–13, the school district had three schools:

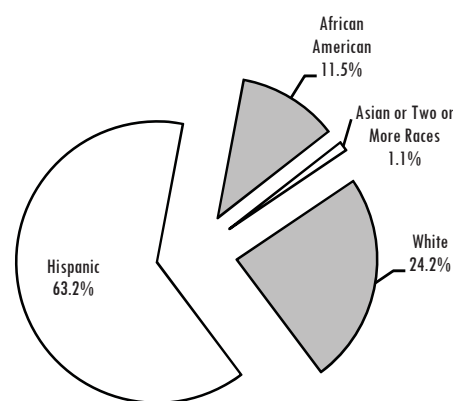
- Refugio Elementary School,
- Refugio Junior High School, and
- Refugio High School.

The district enrollment was 731 students in school year 2012–13. Of that number, 11.5 percent were African American, 63.2 percent were Hispanic, 24.2 percent were White, and 1.1 percent were Asian or Two or More Races as shown in **Figure 1**.

## EDUCATIONAL

**Figure 2** shows a summary of the district’s state and federal accountability ratings for school years 2009–10 to 2011–12. For state accountability, the school year 2011–12 rating is the same as 2010–11 due to transition from the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) to State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR).

**FIGURE 1**  
**REFUGIO ISD STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**



SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System, February 2013.

**FIGURE 2**  
**REFUGIO ISD ACCOUNTABILITY RATINGS**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2011–12**

| SCHOOL YEAR | STATE ACCOUNTABILITY RATING | FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY RATING   |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2009–10     | Academically Unacceptable   | Met Adequate Yearly Progress    |
| 2010–11     | Academically Acceptable     | Met Adequate Yearly Progress    |
| 2011–12     | Academically Acceptable     | Missed Adequate Yearly Progress |

NOTE: Accountability ratings for school year 2012–13 were not available at the time of this report.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, February 2013.

## FINANCIAL

Refugio ISD is a property wealthy or “Chapter 41” district. Chapter 41 of the Texas Education Code makes provisions for certain school districts to share their local tax revenue with other school districts. The funds that are distributed by the property-wealthy districts are “recaptured” by the school finance system to assist with financing of public education. In calendar year 2012, the district’s preliminary wealth per student was \$908,063. The district’s preliminary wealth per



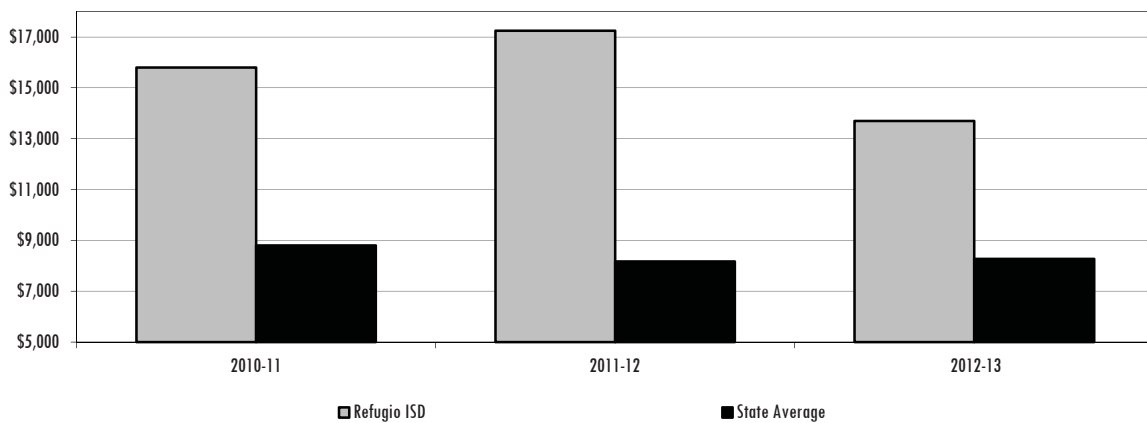
weighted average daily attendance (WADA) was \$587,444. RISD’s total actual expenditures were approximately \$10.7 million.

**Figure 3** shows Refugio ISD’s per pupil actual operating expenditures as compared to the state average for school years 2010–11 to 2012–13. Actual operating expenditures show the amount the district spent in the previous school year.

**Figure 4** shows the district’s instructional expenditures compared to the state average. The percentage of total actual

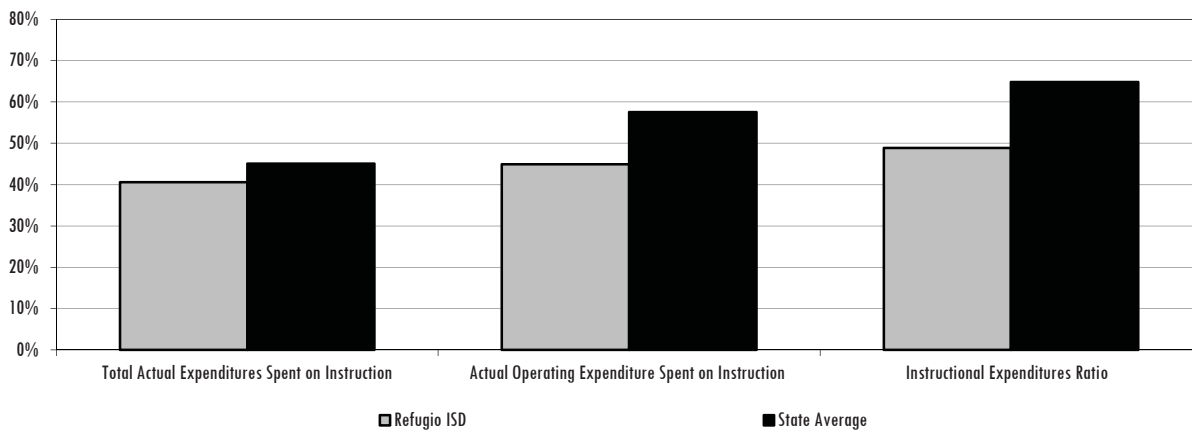
expenditures for instruction shows funds expended for all activities dealing directly with the interaction between teachers and students. The instructional expenditures percentage shows the district’s total actual expenditures for 2010–11 that funded direct instructional activities, which includes Function 11 (Instruction), Function 12 (Instructional Resources and Media Sources), Function 13 (Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development), and Function 31 (Guidance, Counseling, and Evaluation Services).

**FIGURE 3**  
**REFUGIO ISD PER PUPIL ACTUAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGE**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2010–11 TO 2012–13**



NOTE: Actual Financial Data is from the previous school year.  
 SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System report and Public Education Information Management System, February 2013.

**FIGURE 4**  
**REFUGIO ISD INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURES COMPARED TO STATE AVERAGE**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**



SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, February 2013.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Legislative Budget Board's review team identified noteworthy accomplishments during its onsite visit based upon the district's best practices.

### STUDENT RECOGNITION INITIATIVE

The Board of Trustees recognizes students for community service, and athletic and academic performance during its Spotlight on Excellence at the beginning of every monthly board meeting. Staff at each campus identify students to be recognized during the board meetings. A campus representative presents each student's achievements during the meeting. Students are then photographed with their Spotlight on Excellence certificate and congratulated by each board member and the Superintendent. The photographs are posted on the website and often published in the Refugio County Press. Staff and community support the recognition, and indicate that it motivates students and has a positive effect on their academic, athletic, and social behaviors.

### ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

Refugio ISD worked collaboratively with parents, families, and the community to fund and build the playground at Refugio Elementary School. In May 2011, the district applied for a competitive, matching grant to the Kaboom/Dr. Pepper Snapple initiative for funds to assist in the design and building of an elementary school playground. The \$15,000 grant was for 48 percent of the total amount needed to build the playground. In June 2011, RISD received notice that it had been selected out of hundreds of applications for one of the few grants awarded nationwide. The district was then responsible for raising the remaining 52 percent of the matching funds. District administrators and elementary school staff developed plans to secure the required matching funds. Civic groups, local businesses, corporations, and individuals responded to the monetary challenge. Elementary classrooms competed in a "Pennies for Our Playground Contest." Ultimately, through the financial support of those solicited, the district raised the matching funds. In March 2012, approximately 100 volunteers spent a day building the elementary school playground.

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Legislative Budget Board's review team identified significant findings and recommendations based upon the analysis of data and onsite visit of the district's operations. Some of the recommendations provided in the review are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should

be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed by the school district to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

### FACILITIES PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT

The district lacks a protocol to evaluate facilities initiatives and a process for engaging stakeholders in facilities planning. During school year 2005–06, the district contracted for a facilities study and held a bond election to construct two school buildings—an elementary school and junior high school. The district is involved in ongoing litigation related to construction issues with its elementary school building. In 2012, the district reached a settlement related to construction of its junior high school building. Both buildings had developed structural issues shortly after the initial construction projects were completed. While the district used the facility study to assist with planning for the 2005 bond, the district has not engaged in a process to evaluate and plan for facilities initiatives. A long-range facility planning process determines both current and future district facility needs, and evaluates the effectiveness of facilities in supporting a district's priorities. Best practices state that planning for facility needs is an active process that should engage a cross section of all district stakeholders. Facilities should be assessed to identify physical condition, educational suitability, and technical deficiencies. Stakeholders are essential to the planning process and provide a broader perspective to the district's facility needs. Without a facilities evaluation and planning process, the district risks making uninformed decisions related to facilities projects.

Additionally, the district has not completed the process for resolving facilities issues with the elementary school campus. In February 2013, the elementary campus was experiencing several structural issues. Staff indicated that the district has taken some action on issues related to the elementary school building. However, the district has not developed or implemented a plan for how to resolve the ongoing issues. For example, review team interviews indicate that the engineering firms conducting the schools' forensic analysis have verbally informed school administrators and staff that the building is safe to occupy. While a verbal confirmation of the building's safety is helpful given the building's structural issues, the district has not acquired a written certification that the building is safe for occupancy.

Recommendations to assist the district with its facilities planning and stakeholder engagement include:

- develop a comprehensive long-range facility master plan and establish a committee of stakeholders to identify long-range needs; and
- develop a written plan to monitor, evaluate, and make decisions about the elementary school building and conduct frequent meetings to engage and inform the community regarding its decisions.

### **PLANNING FOR PRIORITIES**

The district lacks a long-range strategic planning process to provide direction in meeting district and community needs. Strategic planning includes a process for establishing goals, objectives, and strategies, and for monitoring, evaluating, and amending the plan. A strategic plan should include all district functions that align with the district budget and affect the district and campus improvement planning process. Without a comprehensive strategic planning process, a district cannot ensure agreement on its needs, use of resources, or stakeholder goals. The lack of planning places the district in a reactive mode, concentrating mostly on immediate problems instead of preparing for future issues.

For example, the district does not plan for programmatic and operational needs, use of resources, or stakeholder goals to develop long-range district plans. While the district meets the state's annual planning requirements, it lacks a comprehensive, multi-year board-approved plan that prioritizes instructional and operational needs. Without a comprehensive strategic planning process, a district cannot ensure agreement on its needs, use of resources, or stakeholder goals. Additionally, the district does not coordinate the district and campus improvement planning cycle to ensure budget support of goals, objectives, and strategies in the required annual plans. Without specific written procedures and timelines for coordinating district and campus plans with the budgeting process, the district may not be able to fund activities outlined in the plans, which could limit the effectiveness of the plans intended to increase student performance. Regarding the annual district and campus improvement planning, the district lacks a strategy for defining academic priorities in the plans.

In its technology function, the district does not prioritize or budget for computer replacement, or have a process to identify technology priorities and plan for their implementation. A long-range technology plan identifies the availability of resources and funding, and requires stakeholder

engagement. Without planning and budgeting for equipment replacement, the district may incur a significant financial burden.

Recommendations to assist the district in its planning processes include:

- develop a three- to five-year strategic plan to provide direction for district programmatic and operational needs;
- establish a written procedure to coordinate development of district and campus improvement plans with the budgeting process;
- address student achievement in the development of annual district and campus improvement plans;
- further develop, revise, and maintain its Long-Range Plan for Technology and use it as a guiding document for implementation of technology strategies; including the upgrade or replacement of outdated equipment.

### **FINANCIAL OPERATIONS**

The district's financial operations are not effectively monitored or managed. For example, the business office is not adequately staffed to ensure proper segregation of duties and efficient use of staff. It also lacks a comprehensive training program to properly prepare staff to handle payroll, Public Education Information Management System reporting, and financial accounting. The lack of segregation of duties in the business office may leave the district vulnerable to misappropriation of funds. Without a system of checks and balances, the business office does not have the necessary controls in place to prevent errors or fraud. Further, the lack of training for business office staff puts the district at risk of noncompliance with state and federal regulations. Regarding campus-level financial operations, the district does not have comprehensive written policies and procedures to support campus-level financial activities. Staff attrition in the business office may leave the district vulnerable to inefficiencies because of knowledge not being shared at the campus level. Without detailed procedures, all financial activities rely primarily on the Business Manager's knowledge and discretion.

Regarding financial processes, the district lacks a budget development process that engages administrators and staff. The district's budget development process does not consider scope of the instructional program; the role of athletics in the total program; future facility needs; the current construction

failures and their remediation; and appropriate use of the fund balance to accomplish these goals. Budgeting is an essential tool in educational planning and evaluation, and links educational goals and programs to financial resources. Additionally, the district's approach to monitoring and managing its financial operations does not provide budget stakeholders adequate access to real-time financial information. Financial monitoring and management requires access to current information. Without current account balance information, budget managers do not know if funds are available to approve purchase requests. Finally, the district does not routinely forecast the state's share of funding or the district's recapture payment. Without regular forecasting of Foundation School Program revenue and Chapter 41 recapture, the district is unable to accurately estimate the revenue available for budgeting. By projecting average daily attendance and a district's taxable values for revenue for a minimum of three years, the district can prepare budgets that minimize funding fluctuations.

Recommendations to assist the district in improving its financial operations include:

- create a staff position in the business office and reorganize the accounting and payroll functions to ensure proper segregation of duties and efficient use of staff;
- develop detailed policies and procedures that provide instructions for campus-level financial activities;
- develop a comprehensive annual training plan for business office staff based on the responsibilities of their position;
- implement a budgeting process that includes all stakeholders and incorporates district/campus goals and improvement plans;
- implement its school administration software to the fullest extent to monitor and manage the district's financial operations; and
- establish a process to routinely calculate revenue from the Foundation School Program and estimate Chapter 41 cost of recapture.

### **DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The district lacks effective organization and communication protocols to guide district activities in several functional areas. For example, leadership from district- and campus-level administration lacks administrative focus, effective

communication, team building, and professional development. Leadership team meetings are often informal and do not consistently include all of the members. Further, staff does not regularly meet at a district- or campus-level to monitor delivery of the instructional program. The district does not use effective structures for monitoring student, classroom, and school performance during the school year and for planning meaningful actions to ensure that system goals in their District Improvement Plan are accomplished. Frequent district staff meetings to discuss and review student performance and prioritize strategies may ensure student progress and organizational success.

In the area of stakeholder communication, the district lacks a process to engage parents, families, and the community in supporting student academic performance and promoting high expectations for all students. When stakeholders work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs. Researchers cite parent-family-community involvement as an important factor to addressing the school dropout crisis, and further note that strong parent-family-community partnerships foster higher educational aspirations and more motivated students.

Regarding its organizational structure, the staffing model the district uses is not effective or cost efficient. It does not ensure maximum instructional focus. As in most school districts in Texas, the majority of the district's budget is allocated to staff salaries. Athletic-related positions and salaries also impact the district's staffing decisions. Review of athletic staffing expenditures for school year 2012–13 indicate that 34.2 percent of teachers in grades 7 to 12 are identified as coaches and paid additional coaching stipends and compensation for extra days. Further, the district spends \$501 more per student than the state average, and \$137 more per student than the closest peer district on athletic expenditures, which includes athletic salaries. In the area of instructional staffing, the district has not established formulas or criteria for allocating staff across the district that supports the academic performance of underachieving students. Additionally, the dominant instructional intervention implemented at the district level, which is a remedial approach using supplemental content classes during the instructional day, requires a significant investment of financial resources. With the potential for changes in funding at both the state and federal levels, all school districts must carefully monitor spending, particularly staffing costs, to ensure maximum efficiency of funds.

Regarding its operational areas, the district does not have effective communication systems in its technology infrastructure and transportation operations. For example, the district lacks the bandwidth to effectively support a dynamic technology environment for students and staff. A technology infrastructure should support simultaneous use by all students and educators anywhere in the building and the surrounding campus to use the Internet, multi-media resources, and collaboration software. The district has not designated priorities for programs, campuses, or administration in allocating secure network access. Additionally, in the area of transportation, the district has not equipped its vehicles with communication devices. While state specifications do not list a requirement to have a communication system installed in buses, a communications system would assist the district to ensure the safe transport of students.

Recommendations to assist the district in enhancing its organization and communications include:

- establish a protocol for leadership team communications and a process for continuing professional development to ensure administrative capacity to guide the district;
- establish a comprehensive process to monitor the delivery of educational supports;
- develop a comprehensive parent-family-community involvement plan that prioritizes support for student academics;
- establish a process for annually evaluating the assignment of staff positions, including the athletic-related staff;
- conduct a cost benefit analysis of how the district provides instructional supports to underperforming students, including both staffing allocations at the elementary school and use of the intervention team model at the secondary level;

- upgrade the district’s bandwidth capacity and give priority to staff access; and
- formalize implementation of communication devices for all buses to ensure safety of students, bus drivers, and staff operating district vehicles.

The chapters that follow contain a summary of the district’s accomplishments, findings, and numbered recommendations. Detailed explanation for accomplishments and recommendations follow the summary and include fiscal impacts.

Each chapter concludes with a fiscal impact chart listing the chapter’s recommendations and associated savings or costs for school years 2013–14 to 2017–18.

The following figure shows the fiscal impact of all 52 recommendations in *Refugio ISD’s Management and Performance Review, July 2013*.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

|                | 2013–14           | 2014–15           | 2015–16           | 2016–17           | 2017–18           | TOTAL 5-YEAR<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS | ONE TIME<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Gross Savings: | \$21,183          | \$21,183          | \$21,183          | \$21,183          | \$21,183          | \$105,915                          | \$0                            |
| Gross Costs:   | (\$90,577)        | (\$93,441)        | (\$88,448)        | (\$91,605)        | (\$94,920)        | (\$458,991)                        | (\$17,250)                     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>(\$69,394)</b> | <b>(\$72,258)</b> | <b>(\$67,265)</b> | <b>(\$70,422)</b> | <b>(\$73,737)</b> | <b>(\$353,076)</b>                 | <b>(\$17,250)</b>              |

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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# CHAPTER 1. DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

An independent school district's governance structure, staff management and planning process provide the foundation for effective and efficient education of students. Each school district in Texas is governed by an elected seven-member Board of Trustees. The board focuses on the decision making process, planning, and providing resources for achieving goals. The board sets goals, objectives, and policies, and approves plans and funding necessary for school district operations. The superintendent is responsible for implementing policy, managing district operations, recommending staff levels, and allocating the resources to implement district priorities. The board and superintendent collaborate as a leadership team to meet district stakeholder needs.

Community involvement requires communicating and engaging stakeholders in district decisions and operations. District stakeholders include students, staff, guardians, residents, and businesses. Stakeholders must be aware of issues facing the district, support its priorities, and respond to its challenges. Communication includes public meetings, the district's website, campus-to-home communications, extracurricular activities, and local media.

Refugio Independent School District is located in Refugio County, Texas. Refugio is the county seat of Refugio County, which covers approximately 771 square miles. In school year 2012–13, the district had three schools: Refugio Elementary School, Refugio Junior High School, and Refugio High School. According to the Texas Education Agency's 2012–13 Public Education Information Management System data, in that school year there were a total of 731 students. Of that number, 11.5 percent were African American, 63.2 percent were Hispanic, 24.2 percent were White, and 1.1 percent were Asian or Two or More races.

The district is governed by a seven-member Board of Trustees elected by the citizens of seven single member districts. **Figure 1–1** shows that the district has an experienced board with four members serving over ten years and three members serving 15 or more years. There were three single member district positions open for May 2013 election. Laura Ann Ramirez was elected to fill the position held by Edith Collins. Jorge Jaso and Eugene Lewis were reelected for their positions. The board meets on the fourth Thursday of each month at 5:30 PM.

**FIGURE 1–1**  
**REFUGIO ISD BOARD OF TRUSTEES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| NAME            | TITLE          | EXPIRATION | YEARS |
|-----------------|----------------|------------|-------|
| Jorge Jaso      | President      | 5/2013     | 17    |
| Dr. Gary Wright | Vice-President | 5/2015     | 3     |
| Eugene Lewis    | Secretary      | 5/2013     | 17    |
| Rene Garcia     | Member         | 5/2015     | 12    |
| Ethel Garza     | Member         | 5/2014     | 15    |
| Andy Rocha      | Member         | 5/2014     | 4     |
| Edith Collins   | Member         | 5/2013     | 2     |

NOTE: In May 2013, Laura Ann Ramirez was elected to fill the position held by Edith Collins. Jorge Jaso and Eugene Lewis were reelected for their positions. Following the election, Rene Garcia was appointed as the Board of Trustee President.

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Central Office, Board of Trustees Membership, February 2013.

As outlined in board policy, the Superintendent oversees the management of the daily operations of the district. Other leadership team positions are shown in **Figure 1–2** and include the Business Manager, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Athletic Director, and the campus principals and assistant principals.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

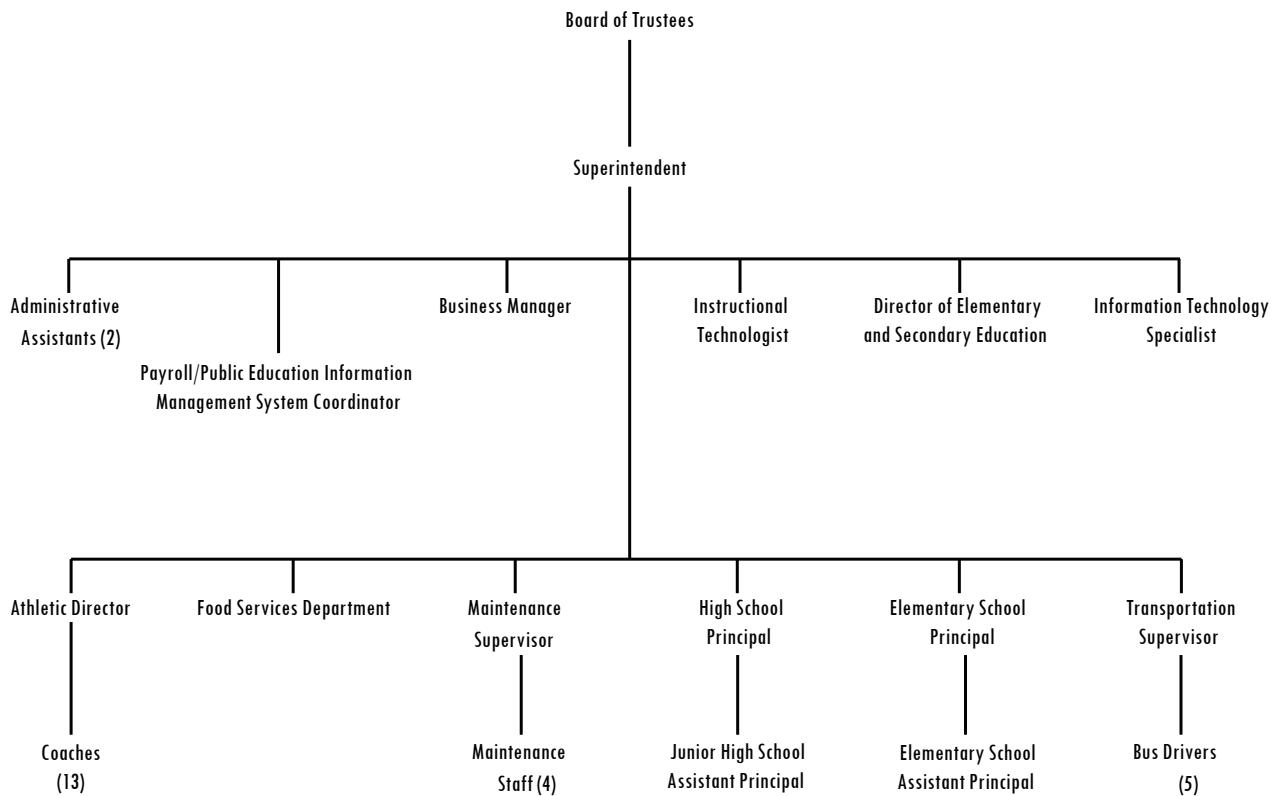
- ◆ The Board of Trustees recognizes students for community service, and athletic and academic performance during its Spotlight on Excellence at the beginning of every monthly board meeting.
- ◆ The district worked collaboratively with parents, families, and the community to fund and build the playground at Refugio Elementary School.

## FINDINGS

- ◆ The district does not have an organizational structure that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in relation to reporting responsibilities and span of control.
- ◆ The district lacks a process to engage parents, families, and the community in supporting student academic performance and promoting high expectations for all students.



**FIGURE 1–2  
REFUGIO ISD ORGANIZATION  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**



NOTE: In February 2013, the junior high school assistant principal served in a leadership position at the junior high school and as an assistant principal at the high school.

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Central Office, District Organizational Chart, February 2013.

- ◆ Leadership from district and campus-level administration lacks administrative focus, effective communication, team building, and professional development.
- ◆ The district does not plan for programmatic and operational needs, use of resources, or stakeholder goals to develop long-range district plans.
- ◆ The district lacks a coordinated district and campus improvement planning cycle to ensure budget support of goals, objectives, and strategies in the required annual plans.
- ◆ The district lacks a process for monitoring and evaluating potential for conflicts of interest in the district.
- ◆ The district does not leverage the use of its website to ensure the transparency of business and decisions as presented at Board of Trustees meetings.

- ◆ The district lacks a consistent comprehensive communication method to inform community stakeholders.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ◆ **Recommendation 1: Decrease the number of direct reports to the Superintendent to provide more time for districtwide decision-making.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 2: Develop a comprehensive parent-family-community involvement plan that prioritizes support for student academics.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 3: Establish a protocol for leadership team communications and a process for continuing professional development to ensure administrative capacity to guide the district.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 4: Develop a three- to five-year strategic plan to provide direction for district programmatic and operational needs.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 5: Establish a written procedure to coordinate development of district and campus improvement plans with the budgeting process.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 6: Develop a process to monitor conflict of interest disclosures to prevent a board or staff member from engaging in inappropriate behavior related to contracts or expenditures.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 7: Develop an administrative procedure that ensures the communication and archiving of Board of Trustee decisions.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 8: Develop a plan for stakeholder communications.**

## DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### **STUDENT RECOGNITION INITIATIVE**

The Refugio Independent School District (RISD) Board of Trustees recognizes students for community service, and athletic and academic performance during its Spotlight on Excellence at the beginning of every monthly board meeting. Staff at each campus identify students to be recognized during the board meetings. A campus representative presents each student's achievements during the meeting. Students are then photographed with their Spotlight on Excellence certificate, and congratulated by each board member and the Superintendent. The photographs are posted on the website and often published in the *Refugio County Press*. Staff and community support the recognition, and indicate that it motivates students and has a positive effect on their academic, athletic, and social behaviors. A member of the Legislative Budget Board's (LBB) review team attended the Spotlight on Excellence during the February 2013 board meeting, and observed the positive response of everyone present, particularly the students and parents.

### **ELEMENTARY PLAYGROUND COLLABORATIVE EFFORT**

RISD worked collaboratively with parents, families, and the community to fund and build the playground at Refugio Elementary School.

In May 2011, RISD applied for a competitive, matching grant to the Kaboom/Dr. Pepper Snapple initiative for funds to assist in the design and building of an elementary school playground. The \$15,000 grant was for 48 percent of the

total amount needed to build the playground. District staff gathered input and ideas from the elementary staff, playground equipment manufacturers, and construction experts, and then submitted the grant application. In June 2011, RISD received notice that it had been selected out of hundreds of applications for one of the few grants awarded nationwide.

The district was then responsible for raising the remaining 52 percent of the matching funds. District and elementary school staff developed plans to secure the required matching funds. Civic groups, local businesses, corporations and individuals responded to the monetary challenge. Elementary classrooms competed in a "Pennies for Our Playground Contest." Ultimately, through the financial support of those solicited, the district raised the matching funds. In March 2012, approximately 100 volunteers spent the day building the elementary school playground.

The following six committees assisted with Lil' Cats Play Scape Community Project Build:

- Children's' Activities Committee—responsible for organizing and managing activities for students/youth during the Project Build
- Food Committee—responsible for ensuring that snacks and refreshments were available during the work day
- Safety Committee—responsible for ensuring safety during the Project Build, and for ensuring that the Lil' Cats Play Scape is maintained and remains safe for children
- Fundraising Committee—responsible for fundraising and/or requesting donations from community members/organizations, including food meals for the Project Build workday.
- Construction Committee—responsible for building the playground equipment and/or supplying tools/equipment needed for project completion
- Public Relations Committee—responsible for advertising the playground project, ensuring everyone had a chance to be involved, and writing thank you notes to those providing resources (human or material) for the project.

Thank you notes were handwritten to the volunteers that contributed to the funding and physical building of the Lil' Cats Play Scape.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE EFFICIENCIES (REC. 1)

The district does not have an organizational structure that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in relation to reporting responsibilities and span of control.

As shown in **Figure 1–2**, the Superintendent reports to the Board of Trustees and oversees the management of the district daily operations as outlined in Board Policy BJA (LEGAL) and BJA (LOCAL). As shown in the organizational chart, the Superintendent supervises and evaluates 12 direct reports, including the administrative assistant (in training) and the Superintendent’s administrative assistant who will retire at the end of school year 2012–13. Direct reports do not include a position in food service operations. The Superintendent is also responsible for supervising seven different functional areas of operation, including educational service delivery, transportation, maintenance, athletics, business operations, technology, and the food service operations. According to the district, the Superintendent meets every two or three weeks with the principals and, depending on the agenda, the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Athletic Director, and the Business Manager. Meetings with other direct reports are informal or as needed. Interviews with district staff and community members indicated that the Superintendent is accessible and has an open-door policy. The Superintendent attends all school events and is often present at community activities. Administrators describe the Superintendent as “being everywhere.”

In addition to supervising and evaluating 12 direct reports, and the many duties required by board policy, the Superintendent has spent a significant amount of time managing legal and building issues due to facility litigation described in Chapter 5.

Given the breadth of the responsibilities of this position, it is not possible for the Superintendent to proactively supervise all of the direct reports. The American Association of School Administrators states that superintendents once were considered successful if they could manage the “B’s” of district leadership: buildings, buses, books, budgets and bonds. Now the challenge is to shift the focus of district leadership to the “C’s;” things like connection, communication, collaboration, community building, child advocacy, and curricular choices that lead to academic progress for all children.

Additionally, superintendents are at risk of spending all of their time managing staff which diminishes the amount of time available for planning to ensure student success. This structure can also limit effective decision-making, which can diminish staff morale. Span of control, also known as span of management, is a human resources management term that refers to the number of staff a supervisor can effectively manage. This concept is an important one for leaders of small organizations. A January 2001 article in *Entrepreneur* reported that few leaders of small organizations are willing to admit any limit to the number of people they can effectively supervise. Even the best managers tend to lose their effectiveness when they spend all their time managing people and their issues, and are unable to focus on long-term plans. Research reveals that all managers experience a decrease in effectiveness as their span of control exceeds the optimal level. The limitations implied by span of control are not short-comings of certain individual managers, but rather of managers in general. Even though a leader may be accountable for hundreds of employees, his or her span of control only includes the department heads or functional managers who report to the leader directly.

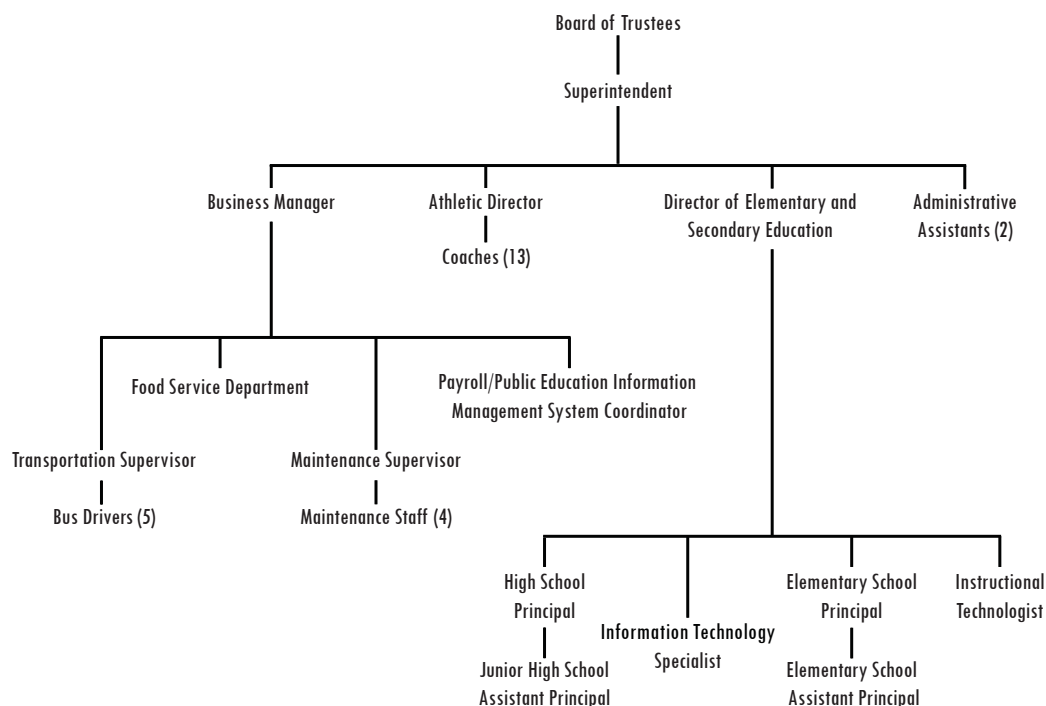
Managers with a wide span of control might become overloaded with work, have trouble making decisions, and lose control over their subordinates and long-term direction of the organization. While research indicates limiting span of control to four to six staff, experts state the similarity of subordinates’ tasks affects span of control. In school organizations, teachers may be considered to have similar tasks while food service staff, custodians, bus drivers, curriculum leaders, and campus administrators’ tasks vary considerably.

RISD should decrease the number of direct reports to the Superintendent to provide more time for districtwide decision-making. **Figure 1–3** shows a recommended RISD organizational chart limiting the span of control of the Superintendent.

The recommended reporting structure combines functions to establish an educational services department and business and operations department. This functional reporting structure relieves the Superintendent of supervision of some staff and functions.

In the recommended organizational chart, the educational services department indicates a reporting structure for positions involved with the direct delivery of educational services which allows for increased communication in this

**FIGURE 1–3**  
**RECOMMENDED REFUGIO ISD ORGANIZATION CHART**



SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, April 2013.

area. Positions report to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education to assist with planning in that area. For example, technology-related positions and the principals would report to this director.

Additionally, the recommended organizational chart indicates a reporting structure for a business and operations department. As shown in **Figure 1–3**, positions related to these areas would report to the Business Manager. These positions would include staff in the maintenance, transportation and food service departments. In addition, the payroll/PEIMS coordinator would also report directly to the Business Manager instead of the Superintendent.

As a component of implementing the recommended organization structure, the district should align new roles and responsibilities with position titles and reflect any changes in the job descriptions. Any changes resulting from the recommended structure should be implemented during the summer prior to school year 2013–14. The district should also consider the costs associated with aligning new responsibilities with position titles during the budgeting process.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT PERFORMANCE (REC. 2)**

RISD lacks a process to engage parents, families, and the community in supporting student academic performance and promoting high expectations for all students.

Review team interviews revealed a consistent concern about the level of involvement of families and community members in support of student academic efforts. Those interviewed applauded the long and rich tradition of support for athletics, and unanimously voiced a desire for that level of support to be generalized to academic efforts. Further, interviews found that there is a common belief that many students are underperforming because of the lack of high expectations at home. Additionally, there is a common belief by district stakeholders that many in the community are satisfied with the status quo and do not encourage or expect students to set higher academic performance goals or strive to excel at school. When administrators and community stakeholders were asked “what is the greatest challenge for the district?” responses included:

- “...motivating students...”
- “...parent expectations. It is very discouraging when you realize there are just low expectations of many families and community members. There have never been other expectations...”
- “...most folks are interested in athletics but do not care much about academics...”
- “...parents get involved in athletics but not academics...”
- “...staff gets frustrated with not being able to get parents to increase their expectations...”
- “...cannot get parents involved – many parents have two or three jobs—do not know how they feed their kids much less help with homework...”

RISD conducts an annual comprehensive needs assessment before developing the district and campus improvement plans. The Superintendent, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, principals, and site-based decision making teams collaborate to identify stakeholder activities to support students. The Director of Elementary and Secondary Education schedules meetings and collects data to evaluate the effectiveness of the District Improvement Plan (DIP) community involvement strategies for the previous year. The data are sent to administrators and Refugio Education Improvement Committee (REIC) members to review before attending the needs assessment meetings. During the meetings, the director reviews the previous year’s strategies and data. With this information, the group adds strategies or amends strategies based on the needs assessment data for the next year’s plans.

As a result of the school year 2011–12 comprehensive needs assessment, the district included the following priorities: (1) increase parent and community involvement; (2) increase positive parent communications and documentation; and (3) strengthen parent volunteer program. The district and campus improvement plans identified parental involvement strategies as shown in **Figure 1–4** based on these priorities.

In addition to listing the parental involvement strategies, the district and campus improvement plans identify the person(s) responsible for implementation, a general timeline, the budget resources and evaluation criteria. However, the plans do not provide a specific task analysis identifying the sequence of implementation tasks, a person responsible for each task, and a timeline for implementing the tasks. The

plans also do not provide a comprehensive districtwide parent-family-community involvement plan that prioritizes academics and aligns the strategies.

Furthermore, the school year 2012–13 comprehensive needs assessment does not address the lack of high expectations for academics or the value placed on athletics over academics as issues. Student performance gaps are addressed in the district and campus improvement plans, and each plan has multiple programmatic strategies for increasing student performance on state tests; however, a review of the plans indicates that they do not include strategies to address increasing expectations for student performance.

In the past, nationally, parent involvement was characterized as volunteers, mostly mothers, assisting in the classroom and with fundraising. A new model has evolved nationally with a much broader set of stakeholders. Today parent-family-community partnerships include mothers and fathers, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, other relatives and caregivers, business leaders and community groups—all participating in goal-oriented academic support activities at all grade levels, linked to student achievement.

Parent, family, and community involvement in education correlates with higher academic performance and school improvement. When stakeholders work together to support learning, students tend to earn higher grades, attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs. Researchers cite parent-family-community involvement as a key to addressing the school dropout crisis, and further note that strong parent-family-community partnerships foster higher educational aspirations and more motivated students. The evidence holds true for students at both the elementary and secondary level, regardless of the parent’s education, family income, or background.

The Texas Center for District and School Support (TCSS), a coordinating point for statewide school improvement initiatives of the Texas Education Agency (TEA), defines family and community involvement as an effort that calls for increased opportunities for input from parents and the community, as well as the necessity for effective communication and access to community services. TCSS lists family and community engagement as one of seven critical success factors for effective schools.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University suggest that engaging families and communities begins by establishing a team that includes administrators, teachers, students, family members and others in the school or community important

**FIGURE 1–4**  
**REFUGIO ISD PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| <b>DISTRICT STRATEGIES</b>  | <b>REFUGIO HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGIES</b>  | <b>REFUGIO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGIES</b>  | <b>REFUGIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STRATEGIES</b>  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Campuses will offer Parental Involvement opportunities during the school year.  | RHS will hold an Open House during the fall semester.  | RJHS will hold an Open House during the fall semester.  | All classroom teachers will schedule a conference with each student's parent during the fall and spring semesters, and provide positive feedback each semester.                  |
| Parents and grandparents will be invited to eat with and participate with students on special event days.   | Teachers will issue progress reports on any student at risk of failing at the 3-week point, and may also issue notices of concern at any time.                             | Teachers will issue progress reports on any student at risk of failing at the 3-week point, and may also issue notices of concern at any time.                                    | The campus will host parent/community events such as Meet and Greet, Open House, Thanksgiving Luncheons, Science Night, Family Literacy Nights, Book Fairs, and Parent Trainings |
| School newspapers and letters will be published periodically, and Refugio ISD website will be updated regularly.  | Teachers will conduct and document parent/teacher conferences, and will have a parent compact signed by parents.   | Teachers will conduct and document parent/teacher conferences, and will have a parent compact signed by parents.  | Campus staff will continue to work with all parents and volunteers in school by supporting the efforts of the Campus PTA, and increase membership.                               |
| The district will continue and expand the VIP Parent Volunteer Program on campuses, including business and community involvement.   | The high school will provide information, and seek parent input using flexible methods.  | The junior high school will provide information, and seek parent input using flexible methods.  | Teachers will identify and communicate volunteer opportunities.  |
| The district will continue to issue Gold Passes to senior citizens for admission to school events.  | Parents will have online access to grades through Skyward.   | Parents will have online access to grades through Skyward.  | Campus staff will recognize businesses (churches, civic organizations, etc) that contribute or participate in the educational processes at the elementary school.                |
| Parent conferences and positive parent contact from core teachers will be required.   | Teachers will have positive parent contact through postcards mailed to their homes.  | Teachers will have positive parent contact through postcards mailed to their homes.   | Staff and community will provide local field trips to enhance vocabulary, language development, and life skills.   |
| Parents will be informed about their child's progress through: 6-week reports, progress reports, assignment notebooks, Skyward Parental Access, E-mail, automated message system, conferences, and correspondences. | The high school will distribute the Parental Involvement Policy to all parents to make parents aware of parental involvement opportunities and guidelines for involvement. | The junior high school will distribute the Parental Involvement Policy to all parents to make parents aware of parental involvement opportunities and guidelines for involvement. | All mandatory correspondence to parents will be typed in English and Spanish   |
| Refugio ISD will partner with local library, Boys and Girls Club, daycares, and nursing homes to offer a variety of literacy activities, trainings, and student performances.                                       | Campus administration will make home visits to targeted populations.   | Campus administration will make home visits to targeted populations.  | Administrators and teachers will encourage parent/community members to attend Morning Assembly.  |

**FIGURE 1–4 (CONTINUED)  
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGIES  
REFUGIO ISD SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| DISTRICT STRATEGIES | REFUGIO HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGIES | REFUGIO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STRATEGIES   | REFUGIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STRATEGIES   |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
|                     |                                | <p>Partner with local library, Boys and Girls Club, and Nursing homes to offer a variety of literacy activities, trainings, and student performances.</p> <p>Purchase paperback books for students in grades 7 and 8 two times per year in an effort to increase access to books in the home.</p> | <p>The principal will provide information on how to obtain District/Campus Policies and Compacts at PTA meetings.</p> <p>Administration will collaborate with Head Start Program and local daycare centers to ensure successful transition into public education.</p> <p>The campus will partner with local library, Boys and Girls Club, and Nursing Homes to offer a variety of literacy activities, trainings, and student performances.</p> <p>The campus will provide early literacy programs and computer tablets to local daycares and Head Start Program to develop foundational early literacy skills.</p> <p>The campus will purchase paperback books for students in grades Pre-k to grade 6 two times a year in an effort to increase access to books in the home.</p> |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, District and Campus Improvement Plans, February 2013.

to the school’s work with families. This team should develop a districtwide plan for involving all appropriate stakeholders in a support system for student success. Planning should begin with the district and campus improvement plans and emphasize at least two academic goals. The team should then write and implement a one-year action plan, with activities carefully linked to their goals, monitoring outcomes and continually adjusting the plan as needed. District leadership for partnerships is essential to ensure that every school welcomes, informs, and engages parents, family, and the community.

An issue brief published by the Pathways to College Network discusses the need for school districts to have a culture of high expectations for students. It stresses that education leaders must champion a compelling vision of high expectations with their districts, schools, and communities. District stakeholders must believe that all students are capable of achieving at high levels.

The district should develop a comprehensive parent-family-community involvement plan that prioritizes support for student academics. The Superintendent should identify a team of stakeholders to serve as a steering committee to design a planning process and identify the members of an action team for partnerships who will collaboratively develop the districtwide plan. This team should include administrators, teachers, students, family members, and community members representing all three campuses and the demographics of the district. The planning process should include the development of a vision and mission statement specific to the parent, family, and community involvement effort. The final parent-family-community involvement plan should also include the following:

- goals (academic goals from district improvement plan);
- objectives (academic objectives from district improvement plan);

- strategies involving parents, family, and community members in the achievement of the objectives;
- task analysis of each strategy;
- person(s) responsible for each task;
- detailed timelines for items listed in the task analysis;
- budget resources for each strategy; and
- evaluation of each goal, strategy, and objective.

The planning process should begin immediately, and the plan should be in place for school year 2013–14.

As a part of the planning process, the district should also identify and promote the benefits of supporting student academics. RISD should create a positive brand and public relations plan to recruit parent, family, and community support of academics. Much like athletics, academics should have a logo and motto to bring attention to its importance. The district can use its website to share the plan and recruit volunteers. The website should expand on the parent resources section and include an academic volunteer section. The Superintendent should identify a staff and student team to serve in the support of academics public relations role, and elevate the importance of supporting students in their academic efforts.

The district can implement this recommendation with its existing resources.

### **DISTRICT AND CAMPUS LEADERSHIP (REC. 3)**

Leadership from district and campus-level administration lacks administrative focus, effective communication, team building, and professional development.

**Figure 1–2** shows the district’s leadership team is composed of both district and campus-level administrators. This team includes the Superintendent, the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Business Manager, the Athletic Director, the elementary and high school principals, and the elementary and junior high school assistant principals. Most of the team members are relatively new to the district. For example, the Superintendent and Director of Elementary and Secondary Education have held their positions for less than four years. Additionally, the elementary principal and junior high school assistant principal have been in the district for less than two years.

Review team interviews with staff indicate that district and campus leadership does not engage in frequent and formal

communications. Leadership team meetings are often informal and do not consistently include all of its members. As an example, the Superintendent and principals meet every two or three weeks and the rest of the team is invited as needed. Further, interviews revealed that communications between campus-level administrators does not frequently occur. Although all administrators report frequent and daily communication with the Superintendent and the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, interviews with campus leaders indicate minimal communications occur between the principals and few conversations occur between the team as a whole. The most common form of communication is one-on-one conversations with the Superintendent. Campus principals indicated that most of their communication occurred informally or during the superintendent leadership meetings.

Further, there are no indications that the leadership team meets frequently to plan for district initiatives. A review of the 10 leadership team meeting agendas provided for January 2012 to January 2013 showed consistent operational agenda items for discussion with occasional items addressing instructional leadership capacity:

- calendar;
- board meetings;
- discipline concerns;
- personnel issues;
- report from curriculum;
- reports on classroom observations;
- reminder to visit classrooms;
- any other discussion.

Non-operational items that appeared on the agenda one or two times included:

- Legislative Budget Board visit;
- Foundations of High-Performing School Districts (handout);
- School Transformation (handout);
- bullying;
- district and campus goals (submit to superintendent);
- Student Handbook;
- elementary playground build day; and



- administrator annual evaluation.

Moreover, a review of the DIP shows that the district has not articulated leadership strategies to ensure that members of the leadership team are participating in professional development activities. Interviews with team members further indicated that there is no coordinated plan to ensure team members’ professional development needs are being met. During annual administrative appraisals, at least two administrators were encouraged to participate in more professional development. According to administrators interviewed, leaders are allowed to select individual professional development opportunities and sometimes share that information with the other administrators.

Without effective leadership communication and professional development, the district may risk making uninformed academic decisions and allowing inconsistent alignment across the district.

In January 2011, the Broad Foundation funded the publication *Turning Around the Nation’s Lowest-Performing Schools: Five Steps Districts Can Take to Improve Their Chances of Success*. The research offered school districts five steps for effectively improving their campus programs:

- Step One—understand what each school needs;
- Step Two—quantify what each school gets now and how it is used;

- Step Three—invest in the most important changes first;
- Step Four—customize the strategy to each school; and
- Step Five—change the district, not just the school.

In step five, districts are encouraged to examine the district as a system and not a group of individual buildings or grade levels. It is recommended that districts identify the positive strategies and procedures at each campus and apply those strategies districtwide.

TEA in collaboration with the TCDSS has developed a framework to ensure continuous school improvement in school districts. This framework emphasizes systemic change at the district level. The model includes the critical success factors, support systems, and commitments. Districts are encouraged to review and ensure appropriate organizational structures, articulated processes and procedures, strong communication, and leadership capacity. **Figure 1–5** shows the district support systems as defined by TCDSS.

The district should establish a protocol for leadership team communications and a process for continuing professional development to ensure administrative capacity to guide the district. The protocol should define methods to promote communication between all team members, such as email groups or distribution lists. The protocol should include regularly scheduled meetings between all team members to

**FIGURE 1–5  
DISTRICT SUPPORT SYSTEMS**

| ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE   | PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES   | COMMUNICATIONS   | CAPACITY AND RESOURCES   |
|--|--|--|--|
| The district organizational structure has clearly delineated roles and responsibilities for personnel that focus on teaching and learning with accountability and impact on student achievement. | Priority is placed upon teaching and learning when establishing and implementing system operational protocols that guarantee accountability, availability of resources, and their effective use. | A clearly defined process ensures a consistent message is being sent, received and acted upon using multiple, effective delivery systems.                      | The district organization strategically utilizes internal and external human capital and necessary resources to meet all needs for successful learning environments. |
| The district eliminates barriers to improvement, redefines staff roles and responsibilities, as necessary, and empowers staff to be responsive in support of leadership.                         |  | Proactive efforts are engaged by district level staff to establish effective internal communications systems and transparent external communication practices. | Expertise is purposefully cultivated and sustained through targeted professional development, recruitment, retention and succession planning.                        |
|  |  | Communication is focused on a shared and clear vision for continuous improvement which streamlines collaborative efforts toward student success.               |  |

SOURCE: Texas Center for District and School Support, District Support Systems Framework, 2011.

discuss district priorities and alignment of campus activities. The minutes of these meetings should be recorded and shared. Further, the team meetings should include an opportunity for members to discuss the team's responses to priorities in the district and campus improvement plans.

To address professional development needs, the process should include development of an annual professional development plan for the team. The plan should include a calendar of off-site trainings and a list of timely academic and operational topics to be discussed during meetings.

The Superintendent should also adopt an annual orientation process for the team. The process should include a day-long retreat in late July or early August. During the day, members should review policies and procedures, including any changes resulting from the latest legislative session. The district and campus plans should be reviewed, and time allotted to plan for mutual campus support. This discussion is necessary to ensure understanding of campus priorities and alignment between the campuses. This discussion will also provide the team an opportunity to collaborate about needed professional development and discuss a professional development schedule. The ultimate goal of the retreat is to provide the administrative team time to collaborate on district priorities.

The district can implement this recommendation with its existing resources.

#### **DISTRICT LONG-RANGE PLANNING (REC. 4)**

RISD does not plan for programmatic and operational needs, use of resources, or stakeholder goals to develop long-range district plans.

RISD annually plans for instruction following TEA's requirements for district and campus improvement planning. The district completes an annual comprehensive needs assessment to review and modify the previous year's district and campus improvement plans. The Board of Trustees approves completed plans in the fall, which are then posted on the district website. While the district meets the state's planning requirements, it lacks a comprehensive, multi-year board-approved plan that prioritizes instructional and operational needs. These needs include facilities, transportation, child nutrition program operations, security, and business operations.

A review of strategic goals and objectives adopted by the board on June 24, 2008 included:

- recruit and retain quality professional employees and provide appropriate staff development creating a greater more competent school staff;
- implement a discipline management plan that ensures a productive learning environment;
- provide and maintain facilities and equipment that ensure a positive and safe learning environment for students and staff;
- use technology to enhance the instructional process;
- enhance student success through positive community relations and parental involvement;
- promote a higher level of expectation for academic achievement with the community and student population; and
- create a sound financial plan and maintain financial security.

The Superintendent developed a district immediate action plan in August 2009, with a revision in 2011. A review of the plans indicate that specific strategies were included, but they did not include goals, objectives, resources, timelines, or evaluations to ensure the strategies were implemented or effective.

Without a comprehensive strategic planning process, a district cannot ensure agreement on its needs, use of resources, or stakeholder goals. Strategic planning includes a process for establishing goals, objectives, and strategies, and for monitoring, evaluating, and amending the plan. A strategic plan should include all district functions that align to the district budget and affect the district and campus improvement planning process.

There are many approaches for developing a strategic plan, but most contain the following elements:

- mission;
- vision;
- comprehensive needs assessment to determine organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats/challenges;
- goals;
- objectives to ensure goals are met;
- strategies and activities to ensure that objectives are completed;

- a task analysis to ensure each strategy is implemented;
- resources and a timeline for each task analysis;
- an evaluation for each goal, objective and strategy; and
- a monitoring process.

Devine ISD conducted a strategic planning process in 2007 and 2012. Consultants from Education Service Center (ESC) Region 20 assisted with the planning and facilitating of both planning cycles. The process included a workshop for the Board of Trustees to identify priorities for the planning process. The board and administrators then identified a group of 25 stakeholders—educators, parents, community members, and students to meet over a two-day period to review and revise, if appropriate, the mission and vision statements. In addition, sub-teams reviewed data related to the board-identified priorities and developed goal statements for each priority. In addition, the central office staff and ESC consultants scheduled staff meetings at the five campuses and reviewed the work of the stakeholder meetings. The district then identified a team of about 20 staff to develop goals, objectives, strategies, task analysis, resources, timeline, and evaluation for each priority. Plans were submitted to the superintendent for board approval. The strategic plan was then used as part of the district and campus planning process.

RISD should develop a three- to five-year strategic plan to provide direction for district programmatic and operational needs. The Superintendent and leadership team should establish a process and timeline for strategic planning.

The steps of the strategic planning process are sequential and should include the following activities and timeline:

- identify an out of district facilitator ( early July 2013);
- conduct a workshop for the board and superintendent to identify the priority areas for the planning activities (early July 2013);
- identify a districtwide steering committee of stakeholders (early July 2013);
- determine the time and location for the steering committee meeting (mid September 2013);
- determine the time and locations for steering committee updates for staff and communities (early October 2013);
- identify an action writing team (early October 2013);

- determine the time and location for the action writing team meetings (late October 2013 to early February 2014);
- determine deadline for all action plans submitted to superintendent for final compilation of strategic plan (early February 2014);
- determine date and time of the final steering committee meeting to approve the strategic plan before board approval (mid February 2014);
- identify date of the strategic plan being placed on board agenda (late February 2014);
- approve or modify strategic plan based on board input (late February 2014);
- post strategic plan on district website (early March 2014);
- use of the strategic plan annually as part of the district and campus improvement planning process (early March 2014); and
- include resources in the campus and district budget process immediately after board approval of plan (mid March 2014).

The district can implement this recommendation with an outside facilitator for an approximate \$10,000 one-time cost. Several regional education service centers provide this service for a flat fee of \$10,000 for a district the size of RISD. The service would include assisting the Superintendent in planning the process, facilitating the board workshop to identify the priority focus areas, facilitating the steering committee meeting, the action writing team meetings, and the updates for staff and communities. In addition, the facilitator(s) would be present during the board meeting where the strategic plan is presented to the board.

#### **PLANNING CYCLE ALIGNMENT TO BUDGET DEVELOPMENT (REC. 5)**

RISD lacks a coordinated district and campus improvement planning cycle to ensure budget support of goals, objectives, and strategies in the required annual plans.

District and campus improvement plans are developed during late spring through late September and are presented to the Board of Trustees in October. RISD has both legal and local board policies guiding the district and campus improvement planning processes. As indicated during review

team interviews, the district conducted a comprehensive needs assessment in April 2012 to be used during the district improvement planning process for school year 2012–13. Development of the DIP involves the Superintendent and Director of Elementary and Secondary Education meeting to review the previous year’s plan. They review data from the comprehensive needs assessment to determine which strategies were successful and to modify the plan as appropriate. The Superintendent and Director of Elementary and Secondary Education then present the plan to the Refugio Education Improvement Committee (REIC) and they modify based on committee’s input. Finally, the DIP is submitted for board approval. Each campus follows a similar process to develop Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) with the additional steps of reviewing the DIP prior to CIP modifications and submitting the plan to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Superintendent for review prior to board approval.

As of February 2013, the elementary school and the high school board-approved CIPs were available on the district website. Those plans contain all of the components required by Board Policy BQ (LEGAL):

- comprehensive needs assessment;
- district performance objectives;
- strategies for improvement;
- resources;
- staff responsible;
- timelines; and
- evaluation methodology

According to staff, school year 2012–13 was the first year for Refugio Junior High School to develop its own CIP. Interviews with the review team indicated that the school’s CIP was developed and submitted to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Superintendent, and then to the board for approval. A review of the document found the same goals, objectives, strategies, resources, timelines, and evaluation as the DIP; however, the plan does not appear on the district website with the other CIPs.

Board of Trustee minutes for fall 2013 indicate that on October 23, 2012, the board approved in separate motions:

- the Refugio Elementary School Improvement Plan for Missing Adequate Yearly Progress;

- the Refugio Elementary School Improvement Plan for 2012–13;
- the Refugio Junior High School Improvement Plan for 2012–13;
- the Refugio High School Improvement Plan for Missing Adequate Yearly Progress;
- the Refugio High School Improvement Plan for 2012–13; and
- the Refugio ISD District Plan for 2012–13.

At the time of these approvals, the budget was in its third month of implementation and almost three months of instruction had taken place.

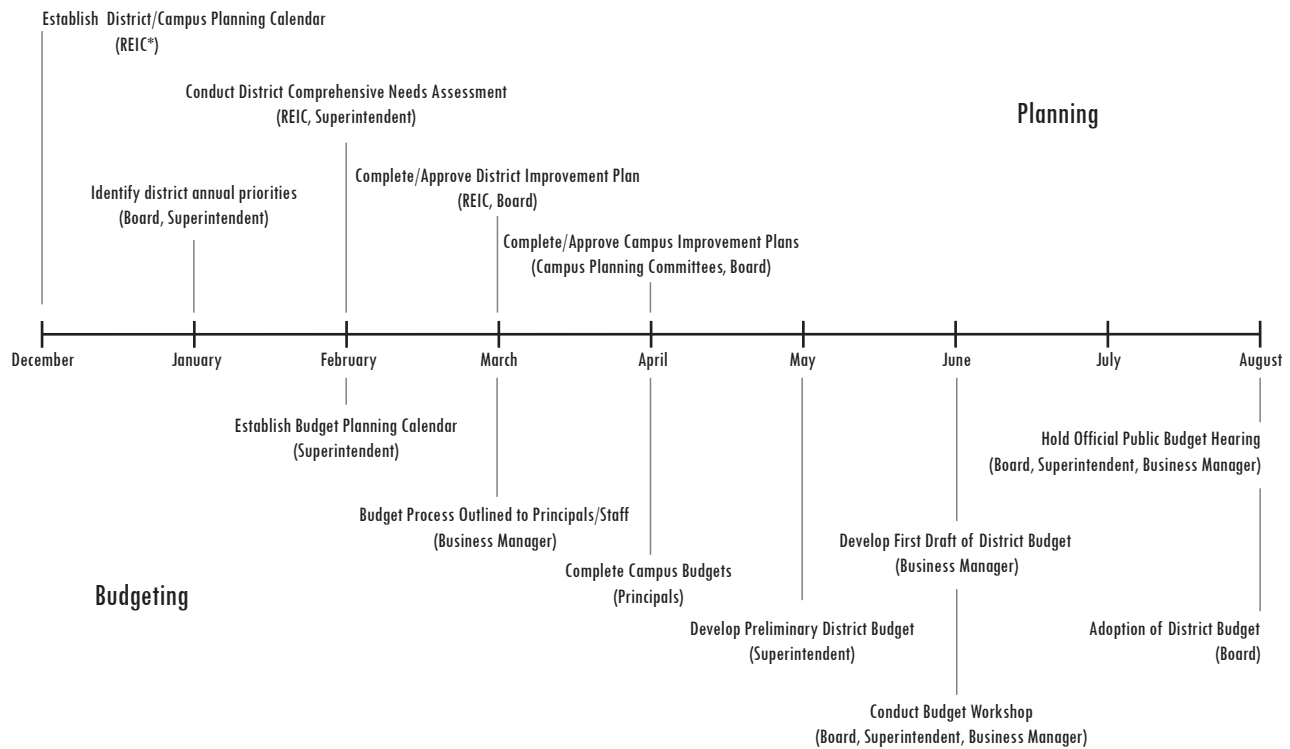
Without specific written procedures and timelines for coordinating district and campus plans with the budgeting process, RISD may not be able to fund activities outlined in the plans. This lack of coordination could limit the effectiveness of the plans intended to increase student performance.

Many districts begin the district and campus improvement planning process in the spring to ensure both budgetary resources and implementation of the plans. **Figure 1–5** shows the process and a timeline effective districts use for development of district and campus improvement plans to ensure alignment with the budgeting process.

This timeline allows coordinated development of campus plans and campus budgets to ensure financial resources for planned strategies and activities. It also ensures that all plans are in draft form by the end of the school year and that strategy implementation resources are included in the budget for board approval in July/August. When state assessment results are received during the summer or early fall, administrators can review and modify the goals and objectives directly related to student performance before the beginning of the school year. This review process allows principals to present the district and campus improvement plans to campus staff, allowing all staff to begin the school year with consistent priorities and with the immediate implementation of planned strategies.

Budgeting is the process of allocating resources to the prioritized needs of a school district. In school districts, the adoption of a budget implies that a set of decisions have been made by school board members and school district administrators which culminate in matching a school

**FIGURE 1–5  
TIMELINE FOR PLANNING AND BUDGETING ALIGNMENT**



SOURCES: Education Service Center Region 20; Texas Education Agency, Financial Accountability System Resource Guide, Module 2.

district’s resources with its needs. As such, the budget is a product of the planning process. In Module 2 (Budgeting) of the Financial Accountability System Resource Guide, TEA recommends that districts begin their budget planning process in February to ensure an appropriate budget is reviewed and approved by the board by the end of the fiscal year.

RISD should establish a written procedure to coordinate development of district and campus improvement plans with the budgeting process. Performing this procedure would ensure review and approval of the plans prior to board approval of the budget.

In developing the procedure, the district could use the steps as shown in **Figure 1–5**. For example, in December, the REIC would develop a milestone for the submission of all improvement plans to the board before the final budget approval. Then, the board and Superintendent would develop annual district priorities in January or early February aligned to a strategic planning process. Next, the improvement committee and the Superintendent would conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and develop a district plan

that reflects priorities/goals and any state/federal requirements during February and March. In March, the committee would complete the district improvement plan and submit for board approval. Following completion of the district planning process, the principals would provide the DIP to the campus improvement committees for the campus improvement needs assessment and plan development during the spring, and submit for board approval in June.

To align the district and campus improvement plans with budget development, central office staff and principals would include resources in the budgets as a part of the development process by the end of May. These requests would be considered and approved by the board in July or August. The DIP would be presented at the August staff orientation meeting. Principals would then present the CIP to staff at campus faculty meetings during the first week of school in August. Finally, district and campus improvement committees would review Academic Excellence Indicator System and Adequate Yearly Progress results and modify student performance goals/objectives to reflect annual needs and requirements of state/federal improvement plans in August and September.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST (REC. 6)**

RISD lacks a process of monitoring and evaluating potential conflicts of interest in the district.

A review of RISD policies shows that the following board-approved policies related to conflict of interest:

- Board Policy BBFA (LEGAL) Ethics and Conflict of Interest Disclosures for Board Members (Update 87 Date Issued 2/3/2010)
- Board Policy DBD (LEGAL and LOCAL) Employment Requirements and Restrictions, Conflict of Interest (Update 82 Date Issued 1/10/2008)

Each policy specifies the conflict of interest procedures and processes for board members and staff. Board Policy BBFA (LEGAL) provides definitions of conflicts of interest in business entities and real property for board members including disclosure requirements, necessary actions, and violations. Board Policy DBD (LEGAL) provides definitions for conflicts of interest for board members and staff related to bribery, illegal gifts, honoraria, and abuse of public employment including disclosure requirements, necessary actions, and violations. Additionally, Board Policy DBD (LOCAL) provides guidance for staff on reporting potential conflicts of interest to his or her supervisor and also instructs the Superintendent regarding conflict of interest reporting procedures.

While the district has developed policies related to conflict of interest disclosure, it has not developed a process to ensure that the potential for conflict of interest is monitored within the district. As an example, review team interviews indicate that the district encountered conflict of interest issues with the building selection process for the junior high school and elementary school campus following the 2006 bond election. A senior administrative staff member, who had previously worked for the district and was serving in an interim capacity, also worked part-time for the contractor designated as the construction manager. Review team interviews indicated that it was common knowledge that the interim senior administration staff member worked for the company as a consultant and that the staff member was advising the Board of Trustees on the selection of a contractor. However, board minutes did not disclose this relationship, or that the board deliberated about the staff member's potential conflict of interest during board meetings.

RISD should develop a process to monitor conflict of interest disclosures to prevent a board or staff member from engaging in inappropriate behavior related to contracts or expenditures. As part of the process, the district should assign staff responsibilities related to conflicts of interest. Ideally, a superintendent is accountable for ensuring potential conflicts of interest are addressed and considered. Best practice is to annually provide copies of the appropriate policies to the board and staff along with professional development. This training should be provided by the Board of Trustees President for the board. The Superintendent should provide this training for district staff. Additionally, the district should consider whether to extend the existing policies to require contractors to disclose potential conflicts of interest.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

### **BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING TRANSPARENCY (REC. 7)**

RISD does not leverage the use of its website to ensure the transparency of business and decisions as presented at Board of Trustees meetings.

According to review team interviews, board agendas are prepared collaboratively by the Board of Trustee president and the Superintendent. Any board member may request that a subject be included on the agenda and the Superintendent includes all requested subjects on the draft agenda for the president's final approval. Board-requested agenda items may not be removed from the agenda without the requesting board member's specific authorization.

In collaboration with the Superintendent, the administrative assistant prepares the notice of the board meeting and posts it in the central administration office 72 hours before the scheduled meeting. Board Policy BE (LEGAL) requires that a district that maintains a website, also place the notice on its website concurrent with other posting requirements. A review of documents revealed that, as required by policy, board actions are recorded and official minutes are prepared and made available to the public during regular central office hours. The administrative assistant also provides documents to the Information Technology (IT) department for posting on the website for public review. A review of the Board of Trustee's link on the RISD website on March 18, 2013, found the following postings: the board agenda for the regularly called board meeting of February 28, 2013; the notice of cancellation of a special called board meeting of February 19, 2013; and the board minutes for December 17, 2012.

Board Policy BED (LOCAL) and the Texas Constitution provide residents the right to public comment during board meetings. Board Policy BED (LOCAL) allots 30 minutes during regular board meetings for persons who wish to participate in public comment to sign up with the presiding officer or designee prior to the beginning of the meeting. A resident wanting to address the board signs in with the Superintendent’s administrative assistant immediately before the board meeting and is allowed to address the board after the meeting is brought to order. A review of board minutes and a review team member’s presence at a RISD board meeting indicated that the policy is consistently followed.

While the district practices are supported by both legal and local policy, without a comprehensive electronic archiving of postings, agendas, and minutes, the Refugio community lacks an opportunity for a better understanding of district’s business, which may be discouraging more community involvement.

The Center for Public Education, in an article *Eight Characteristics of Effective School Boards: At A Glance*, 2011, shares that effective boards have a collaborative relationship with staff and the community and establish a strong communications structure to inform and engage both internal and external stakeholders in school business affairs.

Navarro ISD is a school district of approximately 1500 students, and maintains a website of similar design as RISD. A review of the Board of Trustees link at Navarro ISD website on March 18, 2013, found timely and comprehensive archived information, as shown in **Figure 1–6** about both regular and special called board meetings from June 18, 2012 to February 18, 2013. In addition, the visitor can select any board meeting from the current year to 2007.

A website visitor in Navarro ISD can go to the most recent board meeting of February 18, 2013, and view the notice of meeting, the meeting agenda, and the board packet. For all meetings posted prior to the most recent meeting, a visitor may view the notice of the meeting, the meeting agenda, the board packet, and the approved minutes for the meetings.

RISD should develop an administrative procedure that ensures the communication and archiving of Board of Trustees decisions. The Superintendent should work with IT staff to examine the possibilities of adding more comprehensive information about board activities to the district website. The Superintendent should then coordinate the following activities:

**FIGURE 1–6  
NAVARRO ISD ARCHIVED BOARD MEETING INFORMATION  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| MEETINGS                                   | TYPE OF MEETING                          |
|--|--|
| Monday, February 18, 2013<br>At 7:00 P.M.  | Regular                                  |
| Monday, January 28, 2013<br>At 7:00 P.M.   | Regular                                  |
| Monday, December 17, 2012<br>At 7:00 P.M.  | Special Workshop                         |
| Monday, November 19, 2012<br>At 7:00 P.M.  | Regular                                  |
| Monday, October 15, 2012<br>At 7:00 P.M.   | Regular                                  |
| Monday, September 17, 2012<br>At 7:00 P.M. | Regular                                  |
| Monday, August 27, 2012<br>At 6:30 P.M.    | Regular                                  |
| Monday, August 13, 2012<br>At 6:30 P.M.    | Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees |
| Monday, July 30, 2012<br>At 6:30 P.M.      | Special Meeting of the Board of Trustees |
| Monday July 16, 2012<br>At 7:00 P.M.       | Regular                                  |
| Monday, June 18, 2012<br>At 7:00 P.M.      | Regular                                  |

SOURCE: Navarro Independent School District Website.

- identify a staff member to be responsible for posting meeting notices, meeting agendas, board packets, board minutes on a specified timeline;
- train the staff member in the policies and procedures for posting and maintaining identified documents; and
- ensure that the staff member’s job description and annual appraisal instrument reflect these responsibilities.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**COMMUNICATION (REC. 8)**

RISD lacks a consistent comprehensive communication method to inform community stakeholders.

When asked about the greatest strength of the district, there was an overwhelming response by district stakeholders that a major strength is the open-door policy of the Superintendent. Specific responses included:

- “...we always have access to the Superintendent—he is all over the place...”
- “...the Superintendent is close and personable—always available...”
- “...the Superintendent is very visible at all events—everyone knows who he is—it is very evident that all stakeholders can come to him...”
- “...dealing with the Superintendent is just great—very open...”
- “...to be honest, our greatest strength is the Superintendent...”
- “...our greatest strength is the Superintendent’s open-door policy. We follow the chain of command but the Superintendent is always open to visit with anyone—staff and community...”

The Superintendent’s availability and willingness to communicate with all stakeholders provides an informal means of communication for the district, and provides a positive model for all staff to communicate with all stakeholders.

A review of the DIP found that the plan addresses school/community communication. The DIP includes a strategy requiring school newspapers and letters to be published periodically and the RISD website to be updated regularly. However, other than updating the website, there is no strategy in place requiring a regular communication from the district to parents and community members. During school year 2011–12, the Superintendent submitted regular articles about the school district to the *Refugio County Press*; however, that practice has not continued into school year 2012–13. This newspaper covers the Spotlight on Excellence during which the board recognizes students at their monthly board meetings. In addition, parents and community members attending the monthly board meetings receive principal monthly updates about student and teacher activities.

Other communication methods used by the campuses include the use of School Messenger, which is a telephonic/internet based communication service allowing administrators to contact stakeholders for routine, periodic, or emergency messages. It allows contact for each stakeholder through cell phone, landline, e-mail, or texting.

Additional communication methods include a comprehensive Refugio Elementary School Calendar for parents, which

includes activities for each day of the month, and invitations to all stakeholders for school assemblies. The elementary library shares a library newsletter and there are periodic publications of the *Kitten Express*. Both elementary school and high school libraries participate in the Reading for Imagination, Success, and Education program, and regular newsletters highlighting that program are shared with students and parents.

The district website provides information links for students, teachers, and parents; however, there is not a link specified for community members. The parent center section of the website provides additional access to information categorized as:

- Family Access;
- Library;
- Ideas for parents;
- Cafeteria Payment;
- Programs;
- Student Regulations; and
- Accelerated Reader (AR) Home Connect.

A review of those links provides basic information on library hours, cafeteria payments, general information about special academic programs, student rules, and security protected links labeled family access, ideas for parents, and AR Home Connect. However, there is no information for parents about general academic education requirements, graduation plans/requirements, testing information, or college application/admission information. While some additional information for parents is provided in the Counselor’s Corner on each campus’ link, this information is not prominently displayed on the website. Moreover, there is minimal information provided on the Counselor Corner for the elementary school and junior high school; however, the Counselor’s Corner for the high school does provide student dates for events related to graduation and college preparation.

The website does not prominently display information for community members other than athletic schedules under the athletic link. A search of the website reveals a public information link in the Human Resources Section that provides the following information:

- Academic Excellence Indicator System reports;
- No Child Left Behind Report;



- Bids;
- Budget Documents;
- Conflict of Interest;
- Employment Policies;
- Highly Qualified Plan;
- Improvement Plans;
- Landowner’s Bill of Rights;
- Orders and Notice of Special Tax Ratification Election – August 20, 2011;
- Refugio ISD Gifted and Talented plan;
- Refugio Education Improvement Committee;
- Tax Rate Ordinance 2012; and
- Wellness and Health.

While this information is available to the public, users unfamiliar with the website could find it difficult to find specific information.

The review team survey results, **Figure 1–7**, indicate a difference in perception among stakeholders in three key areas related to community involvement/communication. On a scale of one to five, parents rated questions related to

timely district communication, sufficient number of school volunteers, and availability of use of district facilities for community use, lower than either campus or administrative staff.

Without a comprehensive and purposeful review of the existing communication methods, there is no assurance that RISD will have communication methods that address the needs of all stakeholders.

Effective communication is essential for establishing stakeholder relationships. The National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) asserts that effective, on-going, two-way communication is at the heart of successful schools that help students succeed. Parents have very specific expectations for school communication. Changing media and greater access to information-on-demand places more pressure on schools to be open, responsive and transparent. Communities have their own specific set of stakeholders with specific expectations. Schools should never plan in isolation. Instead, stakeholders should participate in the communication planning process.

RISD should develop a plan for stakeholder communications. The development process should be led by the Superintendent and include representatives of all stakeholder groups. The NSPRA provides a design for a communications plan. The Superintendent and the communications planning team

**FIGURE 1–7  
REFUGIO ISD DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF, CAMPUS, AND PARENT SURVEY  
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SECTION  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| QUESTION/RESPONSE   | STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE | NO OPINION | DISAGREE | STRONGLY DISAGREE | RATING |
|---|----------------|-------|------------|----------|-------------------|--------|
| <b>The district communicates with parents in a timely manner.</b>                               |                |       |            |          |                   |        |
| District Administrative Staff   | 60.0%          | 40.0% | 0.0%       | 0.0%     | 0.0%              | 4.60%  |
| Campus Staff  | 14.1%          | 75.6% | 9.0%       | 1.3%     | 0.0%              | 4.03%  |
| Parents   | 13.3%          | 60.0% | 13.3%      | 0.0%     | 13.3%             | 3.60%  |
| <b>Schools have a sufficient number of volunteers to help with student and school programs.</b> |                |       |            |          |                   |        |
| District Administrative Staff   | 80.0%          | 20.0% | 0.0%       | 0.0%     | 0.0%              | 4.80%  |
| Campus Staff  | 2.6%           | 19.2% | 17.9%      | 2.49%    | 15.4%             | 2.49%  |
| Parents   | 0.0%           | 33.3% | 26.7%      | 33.3%    | 6.7%              | 2.87%  |
| <b>District facilities are available for community use.</b>                                     |                |       |            |          |                   |        |
| District Administrative Staff   | 80.0%          | 20.0% | 0.0%       | 0.0%     | 0.0%              | 4.80%  |
| Campus Staff  | 15.4%          | 53.8% | 29.5%      | 1.3%     | 0.0%              | 3.83%  |
| Parents   | 6.7%           | 46.7% | 33.3%      | 0.0%     | 13.3%             | 3.33%  |

NOTE: Data were compiled from a survey of Refugio District Administrative Staff, Campus Staff and Parents.  
SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team Survey, February 2013.

should modify the activities shown in **Figure 1–8** to address the district’s needs.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**FIGURE 1–8  
COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNICATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

| PRE-PLANNING   | PLANNING   | POST-PLANNING  |
|--|--|--|
| Ask a small team of representatives to help you organize the planning process.   | Organize participants into stakeholder groups.   | Review all the information you have received, and develop your communication strategies to reflect stakeholder needs and align with district/campus goals. |
| Identify a process that fits your district or school culture.  | Ask what their hopes are for communication in the district.                                  | Post the plan on the district website.   |
| Ask them who the stakeholder groups are in your district.  | Ask participants to identify what they think the key issues are in the school/district.      | Implement the plan.  |
| Identify key trusted leaders in each group as well as connectors and critics.  | Ask what they want to know about those issues.   | Monitor and modify the plan.   |
| Use a variety of invitation strategies including asking the team members to make personal contact inviting the people they have identified. Also employ written invitations, face-to-face invitations, second party invitations, and electronic invitations. | Ask what they need to know to help all students be successful in school.                     |  |
| Provide childcare, snacks, and transportation.   | Ask how they want to be informed.  |  |
| Send easy to understand background information that will help participants know more about the issues.   | Ask what they need to see/experience to know the school/district is communicating with them. |  |
| Translate all materials developed and provide translations at all meetings.  |  |  |
| SOURCE: National School Public Relations Association, The Essential Ingredients to Student and School Success, www.nspr.org, accessed February 2013.   |  |  |

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 1: DISTRICT ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT**

| RECOMMENDATION          |  | 2013-14    | 2014-15    | 2015-16    | 2016-17    | 2017-18    | TOTAL<br>5-YEAR<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS | ONE<br>TIME<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS |
|-------------------------|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1                       | Decrease the number of direct reports to the Superintendent to provide more time for districtwide decision-making.   | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | \$0                               |
| 2                       | Develop a comprehensive parent-family-community involvement plan that prioritizes support for student academics.   | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | \$0                               |
| 3                       | Establish a protocol for leadership team communications and a process for continuing professional development to ensure administrative capacity to guide the district.         | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | \$0                               |
| 4                       | Develop a three- to five-year strategic plan to provide direction for district programmatic and operational needs.   | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | (\$10,000)                        |
| 5                       | Establish a written procedure to coordinate development of district and campus improvement plans with the budgeting process.   | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | \$0                               |
| 6                       | Develop a process to monitor conflict of interest disclosures to prevent a board or staff member from engaging in inappropriate behavior related to contracts or expenditures. | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | \$0                               |
| 7                       | Develop an administrative procedure that ensures the communication and archiving of Board of Trustee decisions.  | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | \$0                               |
| 8                       | Develop a plan for stakeholder communications.   | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0        | \$0                                   | \$0                               |
| <b>CHAPTER 1-TOTALS</b> |  | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b> | <b>\$0</b>                            | <b>(\$10,000)</b>                 |

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## **CHAPTER 2**

# **EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 2. EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

An independent school district's educational services delivery function is responsible for providing instructional services to Texas students based on state standards and assessments. A school district should identify students' educational needs, provide instruction, and measure academic performance. Educational service delivery can encompass a variety of student groups, and requires adherence to state and federal regulations related to standards, assessments, and program requirements.

Managing educational services is dependent on a district's organizational structure. Larger districts typically have multiple staff dedicated to educational functions, while smaller districts have staff assigned to multiple educational-related tasks. Educational service delivery identifies district and campus priorities, establishes high expectations for students, and addresses student behavior. The system should provide instructional support services such as teacher training, technology support, and curriculum resources. To adhere to state and federal requirements, an educational program must evaluate student achievement across all content areas, grade levels and demographic groups.

Refugio ISD is located in Refugio County, in the Coastal Bend Area of Texas. The Texas Education Agency's Public Education Information Management System fall 2012 submission shows a student enrollment of 731 students for school year 2012–13, distributed across three campuses:

Refugio Elementary School, 413 students; Refugio Junior High School, 107 students; and Refugio High School, 211 students.

The district's enrollment is representative of most south Texas communities, largely Hispanic and from low-income backgrounds. However, this demographic shift has come relatively slowly to this school district, occurring most aggressively during the past ten years. Census data comparisons for Refugio County, Texas from 2000 and 2010 reflect that two groups, Hispanics and Two or more Races have increased over the ten year period; while, White-Non Hispanic, African-American, Asian, and American-Indian population groups have decreased. Overall, the population of Refugio, Texas decreased over the ten-year period from 2,941 to 2,890. A slight decrease in number (51) and percent (1.73 percent), yet significant, because for the first time in the town's history, the White, Not of Hispanic or Latino Origin population group is not the majority group. Hispanics with other groups comprise a majority of the population.

**Figure 2–1** shows the population changes from 2000 to 2010 by demographic group for Refugio, Texas, where the school district resides.

The school year 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System shows the impact of the changing demographics of the community. In school year 2009–10, Hispanic students

**FIGURE 2–1**  
**REFUGIO, TEXAS CENSUS POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS**  
**2000 AND 2010**

| DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP         | 2010 CENSUS |                | 2000 CENSUS |                | PERCENT CHANGE<br>2000 TO 2010 CENSUS |
|---------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
|                           | NUMBER      | PERCENT        | NUMBER      | PERCENT        | PERCENT                               |
| American Indian           | 10          | 0.35%          | 15          | 0.51%          | (33.13%)                              |
| Asian Alone               | 6           | 0.21%          | 15          | 0.51%          | (60.00%)                              |
| African American or Black | 330         | 11.42%         | 394         | 13.40%         | (16.24%)                              |
| Hawaiian Pacific          | 0           | 0.00%          | 3           | 0.10%          | (100.00%)                             |
| Other Race Alone          | 287         | 9.93%          | 276         | 9.38%          | 3.99%                                 |
| Two or More Races         | 56          | 1.94%          | 46          | 1.56%          | 21.74%                                |
| Hispanic or Latino        | 1500        | 51.90%         | 1303        | 44.30%         | 15.12%                                |
| White                     | 1390        | 48.10%         | 1638        | 55.70%         | (15.14%)                              |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>2890</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>2941</b> | <b>100.00%</b> | <b>(1.73%)</b>                        |

SOURCE: Texas Census, Refugio Texas Demographic Statistics and Quick Facts, 2010 and 2000.

made up 58.5 percent of the district's enrollment; while in school year 2011–12, Hispanics were 63.2 percent of the enrollment which is an increase of 4.7 percent in two years. Of the remaining school year 2011–12 enrollment, 10.5 percent are African-American, 24.6 percent White, and 1.7 are Asian or Two or More Races. The Economically Disadvantaged student group increased from 61.3 percent in school year 2009–10 to 63.1 percent in 2011–12. Additionally, 48.3 percent were from at-risk conditions, and 3.6 percent were English Language Learners. The Academic Excellence Indicator System shows student enrollments of 704 students in school year 2011–12, 727 students in 2010–11, and 763 students in 2009–10.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ The junior high school implements an innovative character education program to supplement its academic program.
- ◆ The elementary school employs a general assembly for students and staff that is having a positive impact on the organizational culture of the campus and its relationship with parents and community.

## FINDINGS

- ◆ The district lacks an articulated instructional framework that defines the scope of educational and support services.
- ◆ The district lacks a strategy for defining academic priorities in the district and campus improvement plans.
- ◆ Staff does not regularly meet at a district- or campus-level to monitor delivery of the instructional program.
- ◆ District staff are not engaged in the design and implementation of effective instructional interventions to address student academic performance.
- ◆ The staffing model the district uses for instructional support is not effective or cost efficient.
- ◆ Professional development opportunities are limited and typically do not align with the district's instructional priorities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 9: Develop an instructional framework to articulate the district's K-12 educational program.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 10: Address student achievement in the development of annual district and campus improvement plans.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 11: Establish a comprehensive process to monitor the delivery of educational supports.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 12: Review and revise its Response to Intervention framework by using school year 2012–13 data to determine if the instructional interventions yielded expected results.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 13: Conduct a cost benefit analysis of how the district provides instructional supports to underperforming students.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 14: Identify the training priorities and schedule for all teachers, and allocate funds necessary to implement the district's curriculum and instructional priorities.**

## DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### CHARACTER EDUCATION

The junior high school implements an innovative character education program to supplement its academic program.

The school serves 107 students in grades 7 and 8. School year 2012–13 is the first year the campus has been a stand-alone school with its own district-campus number. Staff indicated that three student recognition and character-building initiatives, agreed upon by all staff, are creating the desired behavioral and academic conditions at their new campus. These initiatives are: *The Essential 55*, *Spotlight on Excellence*, and *The Wall of Honor*.

*The Essential 55* is the core of the program and was selected to help students understand the importance of respect, manners, and an appreciation of others. Based on Ron Clark's book, *The Essential 55: An Award-Winning Educator's Rules for Discovering the Successful Child in Every Student*, the 55 rules cover all aspects of life, from the classroom to the world. Manners, respect, discipline, and accountability are cornerstones of successful students. This initiative has become an integral part of the school's instructional program.

For example, every day after announcements, the first period teacher reads one rule to his/her class and leads a discussion on how this rule can be applied to daily life. On Fridays, each class has guest speakers, which rotates over an eight-week period, reads the assigned rule of the day and leads a discussion. The guest speakers include the Superintendent, the three campus principals, the Athletic Director, and the junior high school and high school counselors. Review team interviews indicate that both the teacher and the students look forward to the guest speakers. Several of the speakers, including the Superintendent, the Athletic Director, and the junior high counselor, spoke of how much they enjoy participating in the activity and about the attentive and respectful responses of the students. Using guest speakers from other campuses provides an opportunity for a vertical connection across campuses, and to establish a common set of student expectations. For example, the elementary school principal has made *The Essential 55* a part of the elementary school's everyday assemblies with students and teachers this school year. This is an example of how good ideas can be shared in a format outside of traditional communication structures. The *Essential 55* initiative is now operational in pre-Kindergarten to grade 8. There is now one set of student behavior expectations clearly defined for all students of the district.

For *Spotlight on Excellence*, one junior high student is selected each month to be recognized at a Board of Trustees meeting for outstanding contributions to the campus. Recognition is based on exemplary effort or manners. Teachers attend the board meeting and read positive statements about the student being recognized. This honor can be earned for hard work, respectfulness, honesty, and not necessarily for academic, University Interscholastic League (UIL), or athletic accomplishments.

The *Wall of Honor*, another component of the character education program, is based on junior high school staff and students shared belief that excellence should be recognized. The campus has established a central Wall of Honor, a bulletin board in the main hall that posts all of the achievements included in any newsletter or media publication. In addition, the campus student council created individual student "walls of honor." The student council members post locker decals on individual student lockers for perfect attendance, honor roll, athletic, and other UIL participation. Every student activity or honor has its own symbol, as does each sport.

At the beginning of every six-week period, a general assembly is held in the main hallway of the small campus. As the assistant principal and counselor announce the perfect attendance and honor roll recipients, the student council members post the corresponding decal on the honoree's locker. The decals accumulate and remain posted throughout the year. Student lockers serve as public recognition of student accomplishments and are a source of pride for the students and their parents.

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The elementary school employs a general assembly for students and staff that is having a positive impact on the organizational culture of the campus and its relationship with parents and community.

The school serves 413 students from early childhood through grade 6 with 28 teachers, a principal, an assistant principal, and a nurse. The campus has experienced many changes since school year 2011–12, including a new principal and changes in staff. The conditions that the new principal inherited were challenging, including low teacher morale and underperforming students with significant gaps in reading. The faculty included a professional cadre of teachers split almost evenly into two groups—highly experienced, many with strong loyalty to the former campus leader, and a relatively younger, less experienced teaching cohort with limited connection to the campus and community. The principal came from a different school district in the region, with her most recent professional experience as a math and science coordinator.

To address the challenges to the campus, the elementary school principal focused on improving teacher morale and building a strong sense of community among the staff. The principal and staff developed Five-Year Targets: to create a culture of high expectations for all students—"No Excuses." They outlawed the phrase "These kids cannot...", and they set a goal to have the best teachers in the district—"All Teachers as Masters of their Art." Teachers stated during interviews with the review team that significant improvement has been made in creating a strong sense of community among teachers, between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents. Repeatedly, one event was consistently cited as a key contributor to creating a strong sense of unity across the campus—the new general assembly instituted by the principal in 2012–13.

The general assembly is for all teachers and students and begins promptly at 7:55 AM—fifteen minutes before the



tardy bell at 8:05 AM. The assembly is held in a large open area, and parents are welcome. At the general assembly, announcements are made, school, teacher and student accomplishments are celebrated, and Ron Clark's *The Essential 55* rules are shared and discussed, focusing on one rule per day. The teachers' role is to reinforce the rule of the day in their classrooms. This initiative has improved more than communication between the teachers; it has created a positive environment for the school. Teachers reported that they look forward to the general assembly, and their children and parents look forward to it as well. Teachers stated that they notice more parents walking their children into the building and staying for the morning assembly. The assembly is informative, positive, energizing; and adults and students enjoy this start to every day. The general assembly has had significant impact at this campus. Every individual who was interviewed by the review team from this campus mentioned the general assembly as one of the best things about this school.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK (REC. 9)

The district lacks an articulated instructional framework that defines the scope of educational and support services.

Review team interviews indicate that the district does not use a comprehensive K–12 instructional framework to guide the district's instructional program and define the educational services delivery model employed to ensure success for all students. An instructional framework guides teaching and assessment in a district by defining district-wide instructional practices and aligning those practices to staffing needs, requirements, and allocation of fiscal resources.

In school year 2009–10, the district adopted CSCOPE as a curriculum management system. CSCOPE is a systematic K–12 curriculum model designed, maintained, and continuously developed by Texas Education Service Center personnel working with district teachers. The curriculum management system is designed to align the written, taught, and tested curriculum, and stresses higher order thinking skills development and project based learning for students. CSCOPE includes:

- vertical alignment documents;
- year at a glance—a snapshot of the entire years instructional plan;

- instructional focus documents—groups of specified learning standards;
- exemplar lessons; and
- unit assessments.

While the district has adopted a curriculum management system to guide instruction, the review team found that the district leadership team, which consists of the Superintendent, Business Manager, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, Athletic Director, the elementary school and high school principals, and the elementary and junior high school assistant principals, have not engaged in the development of a systematic process to define the education programs of the district in a consistent and reliable fashion. The lack of a comprehensive educational framework compromises mastery of the organization's learning goals. Further, the district lacks written guidelines for proper selection of program services and initiatives; determining appropriate program staffing and staff development; and appropriate allocation and expenditure of fiscal resources matched with the instructional model's legal requirements, purpose, goals, and best practice design.

Interviews with staff suggest that district organizational structures and programs have marked independence and autonomy in defining operational standards and school and classroom practices. For example, there are discrepancies in how instructional decisions are made regarding all aspects of the instructional program across campuses. As indicated by interviews, each principal provides oversight, leadership, and guidance for all aspects of the instructional program without the support and guidance from central office. The result is the absence of a cohesive K–12 instructional program framework.

In addition, a review of documents indicate that special program services that supplement the core instructional program to facilitate the academic success of special needs students, such as Gifted/Talented (G/T) Education, are randomly selected and may differ at each campus. Additionally, special programs change when campus leaders change. Further, there is no coherent district model for the Bilingual/ESL Education (ESL), Career and Technical Education (CTE), Special Education, or G/T Education programs. For example, the high school currently offers Dual Enrollment opportunities for their students, but no comprehensive district plan exists for integrating college readiness skills across the K–12 curriculum. The high school also offers Advanced Placement (AP) classes; however, the

district had not established guidelines to direct students to the more appropriate option or combination of options for them, such as Pre-AP, Honors, or Dual Enrollment classes. Additionally the elementary G/T program typically matriculates to the secondary program, but there are no program guidelines to delineate the vertical sequence of the program from the elementary school to the secondary schools.

Further, expertise for designing districtwide special program models responsive to student needs and the leadership to ensure implementation of pedagogically sound strategies for teaching and testing are lacking. RISD is the fiscal agent of a multi-district cooperative for Special Education; however, the cooperative's administrator only oversees student support services. Design and supervision of all educational services provided by the district's Special Education program are primarily the responsibility of campus principals. These students typically have the biggest learning gaps and require personalized, customized supports to make significant academic progress.

Another component of an instructional framework is appropriate staffing and budgeting for instructional needs. A review of district documents indicates that the district does not align fiscal resources to instructional needs. For example, decisions regarding the use of general education and special program funding allocations are reserved primarily for the Superintendent and Business Manager. The Director of Elementary and Secondary Education and the campus principals are provided with a campus budget for expenditures other than personnel. A review of documents indicates that the district does not have written guidelines to address criteria for the allocation of personnel units at each campus or for specific uses of special program funds. Fiscal resources

designated for campus budgets are based on traditional teacher material allocations rather than aligned with program design, goals, documented student needs, or student performance data. The district does not set annual student academic targets by grade level, subject, or group; thus, critical evidence for driving district decision-making regarding personnel, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and budgeting is ignored by district leaders.

**Figure 2–2** shows a summary of the fiscal resources expended by RISD and peer districts to support educational services for students. Peer districts are districts similar to RISD that are used for comparison purposes. Financial data represent the reported expenditures as reported in the TEA AEIS report from school year 2011–12. Special Education funds for RISD include all support service cooperative expenditures.

The data in **Figure 2–2** show that RISD expended less for Bilingual/ESL Education, Career and Technology, and G/T Education than the other four districts, and less than three of the four cohort districts for Accelerated Education. The three school districts that expend more instructional funding than RISD to serve special population students also have higher Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) results for At-Risk students and Economically Disadvantaged students. The concept that educational excellence is achieved through equity in funding is supported by these data. At-Risk student success is dependent on excellence in the instructional interventions offered by the school district.

The lack of a clearly articulated district instructional framework has created a district of separate units working independently. The review team found several discrepancies across the three campuses. For example, the district does not have written guidelines to establish priorities regarding student grouping structures, instructional methodology,

**FIGURE 2–2**  
**REFUGIO ISD ACTUAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| DISTRICT           | TOTAL       | BILINGUAL/<br>ENGLISH AS<br>A SECOND<br>LANGUAGE | CAREER AND<br>TECHNICAL | ACCELERATED<br>EDUCATION | GIFTED/<br>TALENTED | REGULAR<br>EDUCATION | SPECIAL<br>EDUCATION |
|--------------------|-------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Refugio            | \$8,994,555 | \$8,279  | \$134,493               | \$915,676                | \$11,501            | \$3,628,365          | \$3,667,770          |
| Banquete           | \$7,390,208 | \$0  | \$2,876,980             | \$2,876,980              | \$864               | \$3,262,362          | \$404,887            |
| Karnes City        | \$6,706,444 | \$19,112   | \$201,028               | \$1,393,198              | \$270,976           | \$3,895,374          | \$690,681            |
| Skidmore-<br>Tynan | \$5,763,326 | \$47,453   | \$230,368               | \$1,172,861              | \$23,238            | \$3,025,595          | \$717,373            |
| Stratford          | \$4,843,218 | \$140,716  | \$280,101               | \$688,431                | \$14,866            | \$2,967,857          | \$481,565            |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, District Profiles, February 2013.

instructional time allocation, professional development or fiscal priorities. Alternative and ancillary supports, curriculum differentiation, alternative assessment strategies for exceptional student support are not published or connected to any system of staff development or staff evaluation. No internal system of accountability for student results is in place at any level of the organization.

Further, student performance results are not improving for the district. State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) results for at-risk learners trail their comparison districts. Students at high risk of failure are the fastest growing demographic groups in the district. As with Bilingual Education, G/T Education and Special Education, a comprehensive structure of services for At-Risk underperforming students is not available.

**Figure 2–3** shows the STAAR results for special program groups from Refugio Elementary School. Grades 3 to 6 STAAR results for G/T and Special Education are not included in **Figure 2–3**.

The data in **Figure 2–3** show the academic gaps between RISD students and Texas students as a whole when examining average passing rates for grades 3 to 6 on the STAAR 2012 administration. RISD students are lagging behind their state peers in eight of ten subject areas, with Math and Writing at grade 4 and Science at grade 5 showing the biggest lags between RISD and the State. At-Risk students, students

from Economically Disadvantaged backgrounds, and Limited English Proficient students of RISD are performing significantly below the state average in all grade levels and all tests taken.

**Figure 2–4** shows the TAKS results for Grades 10 and 11, Sum of All Tests for RISD and its peer districts as reported in the AEIS school year 2011–12 reports for each district. The data reflect that three of the four districts had higher passing rates for Economically Disadvantaged and At-Risk student groups. A 30 percent difference in the TAKS passing rates between At-Risk students from RISD (57 percent) and Banquete ISD (87 percent) highlight the challenge confronting the RISD instructional program.

Quality school districts offer one comprehensive instructional program with a complex system of interdependent supports to accommodate the variant learning styles and needs of all its students. A comprehensive and innovative school improvement framework is the impetus for building a quality organization; a total system model that is driven by authentic knowledge and best practice. A fundamental premise is that through the implementation of a comprehensive K–12 model for school improvement, all components of the system are acting as one cohesive unit to achieve a common set of organizational goals. A quality instructional framework begins with a powerful mission/purpose statement, a challenging vision, a student-centered set of organizational beliefs, and clear and ambitious goals for student learning.

**FIGURE 2–3  
STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMIC READINESS LEVEL II: SATISFACTORY RATES  
SPECIALS PROGRAMS IN GRADES 3 TO 6  
SPRING 2012**

| GRADE | SUBJECT | STATE | CAMPUS | TITLE I PART A | AT-RISK | ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED | LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT |
|-------|---------|-------|--------|----------------|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3     | Reading | 76    | 64     | 64             | 43      | 53                         | 50                         |
| 3     | Math    | 68    | 75     | 75             | 67      | 67                         | 67                         |
| 4     | Reading | 77    | 61     | 61             | 32      | 52                         | 60                         |
| 4     | Math    | 68    | 39     | 39             | 12      | 30                         | 40                         |
| 4     | Writing | 71    | 47     | 47             | 16      | 33                         | 40                         |
| 5     | Reading | 77    | 67     | 67             | 25      | 63                         | *                          |
| 5     | Math    | 77    | 71     | 71             | 25      | 63                         | *                          |
| 5     | Science | 73    | 57     | 57             | 29      | 53                         | *                          |
| 6     | Reading | 75    | 70     | 70             | 40      | 64                         | *                          |
| 6     | Math    | 77    | 80     | 70             | 40      | 64                         | *                          |

NOTE: \*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.

SOURCE: Refugio Elementary School, STAAR District Summary Report, February 2013.

**FIGURE 2–4**  
**TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS MET 2012 STANDARD (SUM OF GRADES 10 AND 11) ALL TESTS**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011-12**

| DISTRICT       | AFRICAN AMERICAN | HISPANIC  | WHITE     | SPECIAL EDUCATION | ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED | AT-RISK   |
|----------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Refugio</b> | <b>63</b>        | <b>78</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>42</b>         | <b>74</b>                  | <b>57</b> |
| Banquete       | *                | 78        | 91        | *                 | 90                         | 87        |
| Karnes City    | 44               | 71        | 89        | 40                | 81                         | 76        |
| Skidmore-Tynan | *                | 81        | 96        | 64                | 81                         | 67        |
| Stratford      | *                | 71        | 85        | 29                | 66                         | 54        |

NOTE: \*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.  
SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, February 2013.

The framework accommodates the specific learning strengths and challenges of all students from accelerated education to gifted and talented education. It delineates the district's instructional design/models for each special student group. A strong sense of equity of services permeates the framework, and all stakeholders in the organization can justify every decision and expenditure made at every level of the organization. This quality framework for educational services creates consistency across all units of the organization and preserves a constant focus on the desired outcomes. Once the district's educational services framework is defined, all program, policy, personnel, and fiscal decision-making parameters and practices are aligned with the framework.

District leaders must challenge themselves to integrate creative and innovative practices successful in comparable communities throughout the country. The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) publishes guidelines that school districts can use to design an instructional framework built on research-based models that withstand the test of scientific-testing practices. The USDE stresses that a district's instructional program should ensure that all children have opportunities to succeed through the integration of research-based instructional practices that have achieved proven results in a variety of classrooms across the country. A list of research-based instructional models is available on the USDE website to assist school districts. Educational literature can also provide a school district with instructional models to facilitate this work. Educational research offers districts a wealth of scientifically-based models. Most models incorporate the attributes listed below.

According to *The Quality District: A Total System Model*, the district's instructional framework must engage the

organizational community in the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of:

- a vision for learning that is shared and supported by the school community;
- a set of high and appropriate learning standards that are non-negotiable for all students;
- an operational belief system that advocates the educability of all students and high levels of personal and organizational performance;
- clearly defined goals that feature student learning and achievement of specific and measureable end results;
- the allocation of teachers based on educational criteria and student needs;
- the implementation of a rigorous and relevant curriculum in general, with each program component of high quality aligned with the learning goals defined for all students;
- varied academic learning time strategies to accommodate the learning needs of students in each program;
- differentiated teaching and learning strategies, with opportunities for re-teaching and re-testing;
- fluid, flexible re-grouping of students based on data;
- open access to enrichment learning activities, based on motivation and performance of smaller units of learning; and,
- wide varieties of data-collection strategies, formal and informal, to ensure that student learning is measured using an assortment of techniques.

The district should develop an instructional framework to articulate the district's K–12 educational program. In designing a comprehensive instructional program, RISD should consider a Pre-K–16 or PK-20 design. A comprehensive school improvement framework is cutting-edge and future-focused. It is based on best practice, delineates the district's purpose and goals, and defines all components of the district's instructional program, including General Education, Bilingual/ESL, Career and Technical, Accelerated Education, G/T Education, and Special Education.

Development of an instructional framework requires the district to engage in a thorough review of its current educational program, including an assessment and evaluation of each component of the instructional program. Evaluation must examine clarity of purpose and goals; level and quality of student engagement in substantive thinking skills development; alignment of curriculum and pedagogy to desired learner outcomes; assessment of student progress during program participation; the culture of the learning environment, and the quality of district level administrative support. A flow chart of services and the impact of those services over time should be examined. If student achievement data do not support the value of the services offered from the program(s), those services must be eliminated, re-framed, or adapted to effect desired change. La Joya ISD in south Texas publishes its comprehensive instructional framework aligned with the Quality District Model and provides a model that may serve as a guide for RISD.

The fiscal impact assumes the district will contract with an external entity for support in developing its comprehensive instructional framework. The district may choose to contract with its regional education service center for this support. Regional Education Service Center I provides this service as a two-year initiative. Cost for a district of comparable size to RISD is \$16,000 or \$8,000 per year. The service is called the Turnaround Educator System (TES). Specific focus of the TES is to train a district team to do comprehensive needs-assessment and build a long term instructional improvement plan.

The fiscal impact for developing a comprehensive instruction framework is a cost of \$16,000, divided equally over school years 2013–14 and 2014–15.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING (REC. 10)**

The district lacks a strategy for defining academic priorities in the district and campus improvement plans.

The Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 11, Subchapter F, outlines requirements for district-level planning and decision making in Section 11.252 and in Section 11.253 for campus planning and site-based decision-making. TEC defines the purpose for district improvement planning as well as all provisions that must be addressed. RISD has board-approved policies in place in Board Policy BQ (LEGAL) that address all of the required components.

District and campus improvement planning are initiated by the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment completed in the spring of each year. The plans include goals and objectives, strategies for improvement, resources, staff responsible, timeline, and evaluation. District personnel complete an annual needs assessment to review and modify the previous year's district and campus plans. The District Improvement Plan (DIP) is developed first, submitted to the Refugio Education Improvement Committee (REIC) for input and approval. The revised DIP is then distributed to campus administrators to incorporate into the campus improvement planning process. The Campus Improvement Plans (CIPs) are submitted to Campus EICs for input and approval. Completed plans are approved by the Board of Trustees in the fall and posted on the district website.

A review of district documents indicates that RISD district and campus improvement plans developed for school year 2012–13 do not delineate specific performance expectations for students and educators. For example, the DIP does not address the role of data for evaluating the quality of services offered by the district. There are no strategies for identifying barriers to student learning in the instructional program and practices of the schools or district. There are no district processes in place that explain how instructional leaders determine annual student performance goals, select intervention activities, monitor student progress towards goal attainment, or change practices if prescribed actions are not producing the desired outcomes specified in district and campus improvement plans. Additionally, the DIP and CIPs do not adequately define activities, person(s) responsible, timeline, or criteria that indicate attainment of the goals and objectives.

The DIP for school year 2012–13 was approved by the board on October 17, 2012. RISD goals for its DIP are based on *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) student performance goals

which define the federal accountability system for public schools. NCLB goals include the following:

- Goal 1: By 2013–14, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- Goal 2: All limited-English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.
- Goal 3: By 2005–06, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.
- Goal 4: All students will be educated in learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.
- Goal 5: All students will graduate from high school.

The DIP for school year 2012–13 includes two district goals based on three NCLB student performance goals. **Figure 2–5** shows the goals and objectives listed in the DIP.

As shown in **Figure 2–5**, the DIP lists seven objectives in Goal One, (objectives 1 to 6 and 8) that address the student performance areas from the TEA AEIS 2011–12 report. These are the same goals and objectives in the three campus plans. A review of these seven objectives and their corresponding action plan give no indication of how close or how far the schools are from meeting the objectives. Based on STAAR results there are significant variances between grade levels, content areas, and student group results to make these general goals and objectives viable one year targets, especially without further disaggregation into smaller learner cohorts, and without addressing barriers that may be creating these results.

**Figure 2–6** shows the STAAR results for grades 3 to 6.

Student results for African American, Hispanic, Economically Disadvantaged, and At-Risk student groups are significantly below the state average in reading, math, writing, and science in the first year of the new state assessment. Best practices note the importance of disaggregating data by content area and student cohorts to prescribe relevant and meaningful instructional supports to close the performance gaps that

**FIGURE 2–5  
REFUGIO DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PLAN  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| GOAL   | OBJECTIVES   |
|--|--|
| <p>Goal One:<br/>By 2013–14, all students will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.</p>        | <p>Objective 1: All student groups will reach high standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in Reading/Language Arts for school year 2012–13.</p> <p>Objective 2: All student groups will reach high standards, at minimum level attaining proficiency or better in Writing for school year 2012–13.</p> <p>Objective 3: All student groups will reach high standards, at minimum level attaining proficiency or better in Math for school year 2012–13.</p> <p>Objective 4: All student groups will reach high standards, at minimum level attaining proficiency or better in Science for school year 2012–13.</p> <p>Objective 5: All student groups will reach high standards, at minimum level attaining proficiency or better in Social Studies for school year 2012–13.</p> <p>Objective 6: In 2012–13, all students taking college entrance exams will score at or above target levels. On the Texas Higher Education Assessment, students will meet the state standard, demonstrating college readiness.</p> <p>Objective 7: Parents and community members will become more involved in the programs and activities of our schools.</p> <p>Objective 8: All students in special populations, including special education, will meet or exceed proficiency or better in reading, language arts, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies.</p> |
| <p>Goal Two:<br/>By 2005–06, all students will be educated by highly qualified staff in learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.</p> | <p>Objective 1: Refugio ISD will ensure appropriate, adequate, and quality staff are available.</p> <p>Objective 2: Refugio ISD will provide a positive and safe environment for students and staff.</p>   |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Central Office, School year 2012–13 District Improvement Plan, February 2013.

**FIGURE 2–6  
STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMIC READINESS RESULTS: REFUGIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, GRADES 3 TO 6  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| GRADE | SUBJECT | STATE | DISTRICT | AFRICAN AMERICAN | HISPANIC | WHITE | ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED | AT-RISK |
|-------|---------|-------|----------|------------------|----------|-------|----------------------------|---------|
| 3     | Reading | 76    | 64       | 57               | 61       | 73    | 53                         | 43      |
| 3     | Math    | 68    | 75       | 57               | 75       | 82    | 67                         | 67      |
| 4     | Reading | 77    | 61       | 86               | 49       | 79    | 52                         | 32      |
| 4     | Math    | 68    | 39       | 29               | 29       | 64    | 30                         | 12      |
| 4     | Writing | 71    | 47       | 57               | 31       | 79    | 33                         | 16      |
| 5     | Reading | 77    | 67       | *                | 70       | 67    | 63                         | 25      |
| 5     | Math    | 77    | 71       | *                | 73       | 78    | 63                         | 25      |
| 5     | Science | 73    | 57       | *                | 61       | 56    | 53                         | 29      |
| 6     | Reading | 75    | 70       | 100              | 65       | 80    | 64                         | 40      |
| 6     | Math    | 77    | 80       | 80               | 74       | 100   | 71                         | 55      |

NOTE: \*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Refugio Elementary School, STAAR Summary Report, February 2013.

exist in an expedient manner that accelerates student progress. The DIP and CIPs do not incorporate content-area initiatives, appropriate instructional resources, professional development support, and systems for tracking each group’s progress towards mastery of state learning standards.

Goal Two in the district’s DIP is a combination of the NCLB student performance Goal 3 and Goal 4 statements. Goal 2 states “By 2005–06, all students will be educated by highly qualified staff in learning environments that are safe, drug-free, and conducive to learning.” Goal 2 is broad-based and was written for attainment by school year 2005–06. The inclusion of Goal 2 in school year 2012–13, seven years later than the date listed for attainment, is not consistent with data, which shows the district has been certified as having 100 percent highly qualified teachers at all campuses. These data are not consistent with inclusion of this goal in the DIP.

Additionally, a review of the DIP and corresponding action plan indicate that the plan does not include descriptions of what “high standards” are or what defines “minimum proficiency” in each subject area or for each special population group. There are no data that identify how near or how far the district’s students are to reaching “minimum proficiency” on the district’s “high standards.”

Review of district documents revealed that the three CIPs include the same goals, objectives, and strategies, and timeline as the DIP. CIPs are general without specifically addressing the differing levels of student performance and needs. There is no indication of what the individual campus

needs assessment process identified as key strengths or challenges for each campus. There is no differentiation of structures or approaches, and no delineation of how the district’s fiscal resources support the priority needs of each unit. Further, there are no campus-specific supporting data that define the current performance status, the desired status, and the existing gaps between the two for students, staff, or the campus. Implementation strategies are not targeted to specific learning targets for campus student groups. Evaluation activities are general and not targeted to specific improvement outcomes for the campus, making it impossible to determine if the targeted initiatives and strategies are truly effective in producing student success at the campus level.

Campus teachers, intervention specialists, and campus administrators use data disaggregate techniques throughout the instructional year from multiple sources to identify specific student learning needs. CSCOPE unit tests, grade-level and academic content benchmark testing, and computer-based program formative and summative assessments are used to monitor students’ academic progress throughout the school year. Teacher and principal conferences are held to discuss student status and to modify classroom teaching practices when student results do not meet expected learning targets. However, there is no evidence in the CIPs that reflect that the summative results of this process inform the campus planning process. Data disaggregation from multiple sources typically establish a baseline and support for campus selected initiatives to include in the CIP for the next school year, but the school year 2012–13 CIPs make no

reference to that data. Defining the actual academic gains attributable to district and campus selected initiatives and strategies are not part of the needs assessment criteria used to target specific growth outcomes in campus plans. Previous-year data including student grades, attendance, and behavior are examined to identify learner needs and potential supports, but no summary of results are included to support the campus strategies incorporated into the plan for each objective. Campus principals review teacher and class results to determine the teacher supports needed, and the overall campus strengths and challenges are examined to determine the resources needed for capacity building at that level, but there are no goals or strategies for building the staff and organizational capacity to be more responsive to student needs in the campus plans. The initial campus planning process involves all levels of the organization, but there is no alignment or connection with the budget planning process to ensure that resources are available to support the CIP activities. When state test results are received during the summer or early fall, the goals/objectives directly related to student performance are reviewed and modified for the beginning of the school year, but no evidence exists to support that strategies change or that resources are reallocated to target newly-identified student, staff, or campus needs. Staffing and budgeting priorities do not support an equity-based process of resource allocation across the campuses.

Interviews with the review team indicate that district and campus leaders do not work together to ensure that district and campus improvement plans reflect fidelity to data-driven decision making. For example, review team interviews indicate that student performance data on state assessments are reviewed when the district receives reports from TEA. District performance is summarized by campus, subject area, and grade level. Comparisons of district passing rates with state passing rates are made and recorded. Typically, a call to a neighboring district is made to compare results. However, the data are not broken down by student group, nor do any administrator discussions occur to examine the strengths and challenges of the data based on student groups. There is no evidence that disaggregation of data by tested objective and examination of any links to the district curriculum occurs in any district-level, organized process. Moreover, historical or legacy data are not compared by subject area or tested objective and addressed in the campus or district improvement plans.

RISD's 2012–13 DIP and CIPs offer no specific actions or strategies to close the academic gaps that exist between and

across grade levels and campuses, and across different subject areas and student groups. The plans do not create the conditions for improving teaching and learning in schools because the plans fail to address organizational change in school and classroom practices. District and campus actions and strategies include the same initiatives that brought student performance to its current achievement level. Doing the same thing will yield the same results. Meaningful data analysis as a means of feedback regarding the effectiveness of a school's current practices has no apparent role in district and campus planning efforts. There are no strategies targeted at building staff expertise or addressing staff and school accountability for student results.

In 2004, the USDE delineated guidance for school improvement planning as part of NCLB. It stated that “the purpose of a school improvement plan is to improve teaching and learning in the school so that more students meet core academic subjects.” A meta-analysis of research on effective school improvement planning was conducted and a policy report published by the UCLA Center for Program and Policy Analysis. The list of recommendations is provided as a guide to facilitate the school improvement planning process. The five recommendations in the UCLA policy brief are listed below.

School improvement planning should:

- incorporate standards and accountability indicators for each area of content learning, for each grade level, and for each campus;
- focus on development of a comprehensive, multi-faceted, and cohesive learning-supports system fully integrated with improving instruction at the school site level;
- delineate strategies for creating an engaging learning environment, focused on the development of higher-order critical and creative thinking skills, processes, and products;
- specify ways to weave school and community resources into a cohesive and integrated continuum of interventions over time; and
- include an emphasis on redefining and reframing roles and functions and redesigning infrastructure to ensure learning supports are the primary and essential component of the plan; and, promote economies of scale.



Data-driven decision-making is strategic and involves more than the disaggregation of reports from an external accountability system like TEA. Quality schools immerse themselves in educational literature and professional development to identify effective school models that align with the desired student achievement outcomes not yet reached by the district. In today's public education system of external accountability, districts must use data to reshape the central practices and cultures of their schools and for identifying new direction and setting new goals. Data-driven decision making can re-frame the traditional practices of curriculum design, professional development, teacher and principal evaluation, and organizational culture. Data must challenge the status quo and the district and campus plans should challenge traditional programs and practices if aggressive student achievement targets are to be attained.

Best practices indicate that a DIP should inform the campus improvement planning process; however, campus improvement plans must delineate bridge activities to close the gap between a campus's current performance level and the district's expected performance outcomes. The reform strategies included in both district and campus improvement plans should determine how those strategies will impact results. Goals and strategies should be connected with staff capacity building, parent communication and involvement, and expenditures. These are critical components typically defined in written procedures guiding the planning process.

RISD should address student achievement in the development of annual district and campus improvement plans. Student accountability data from external and internal sources should provide the basis for establishing specific annual learning targets by subject area, campus levels, and student group. Curriculum, teaching practices, program services, professional development, and budgeting practices should be re-framed or adapted to better align with desired learner outcomes. Processes and structures for monitoring students' progress towards goals attainment should be instituted, and accountability for student success should be shared by all stakeholders—administrators, teachers, students, and parents.

District and campus leaders should begin by delineating specific, measureable improvement targets for student progress on the learning standards of the external accountability system. The implementation process commences with a review of student performance data on the AEIS indicators, such as: STAAR, disaggregated by student groups, attendance, promotion and retention data,

advanced placement, ACT/SAT and others, to establish current level of performance for the district. As an example, if the STAAR 2013 data reflect that 64 percent of RISD students passed the Math test across all tested grades 3 to 11, then the school year 2013–14 objective for Goal One, Objective 1 in the DIP may establish the annual achievement target to be an increase of 10 percent higher passing rate in Math. The activities and strategies would identify specific strategies for accelerating student learning to achieve that target by spring 2014; delineate how progress will be monitored throughout the school year towards meeting that target; and what will be available to support educators, grade levels, or campuses not tracking positively towards meeting the district-defined expectation.

The district and campus improvement plans must become the culmination of a process involving administrators, teachers, and students in data review, data reflection, and an analysis of the school's curriculum, culture, and practices. Data reflection provides organizational members the opportunity to study and share understandings about such features as: what were the organization's priorities, what did it do well and poorly, what problems or challenges is the school now facing, and how might it solve them. Effective schools engage large groups in making sense of achievement data and setting organizational goals. Collaborative reflection and engagement in campus and district planning increases ownership of the plan and the likelihood that action will be taken to establish new organizational practices to reach unaccomplished goals.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### ***INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM OVERSIGHT (REC. 11)***

Staff does not regularly meet at a district- or campus-level to monitor delivery of the instructional program.

The district does not use effective structures for monitoring student, classroom, and school performance during the school year and for planning meaningful actions to ensure that system goals in their DIP are accomplished. The district has not defined processes to review the quality and completeness of the DIP, to monitor the quality of plan implementation, or to make modifications to initiatives not contributing to student and organizational success at the district or campus-level. Further, effective planning structures to set annual student performance goals; to delineate purposeful efforts of curriculum and instruction in General

Education and Special Programs; and to responsibly allocate resources are absent.

Instructional leadership team members, including the Superintendent, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, and campus principals do not meet regularly at the district-level. Interviews with the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education and the campus principals revealed that few regularly scheduled administrator meetings are held by the Superintendent. Instead, district administrators communicate mostly informally due to the close proximity of all campuses to the central office. The purpose of the informal meetings is for information sharing, and a general discussion of emerging or pending issues. However, meetings of the central office and campus administrators seldom occur for the purpose of discussing student, campus, and district progress. The strengths and challenges of curriculum implementation, quality and gaps of the district's professional development efforts, and adequacy and viability of fiscal and material resources are not part of planned, on-going discussions by the district leadership team. Leadership team meetings to brainstorm new ideas, to seek innovative programs and initiatives for reforming or redesigning educational practices appear to merit little consideration or contemplation based on data from teachers and administrators.

Meetings at the campus level between administrators and teachers and among teachers to discuss student progress, to discuss barriers to student success, or propose innovation are also not occurring on a regular basis. During interviews with the review team, teachers stated that one planning period per day was eliminated from their teaching schedules, and that lost planning time virtually eliminated all opportunities to proactively review campus goals and student progress. Teachers also indicated that planning outside of their grade levels or departments has become too difficult since tutorials are held after school and there is no time left to discuss strategies for making schools more responsive to students' educational needs.

In spring 2010, the Refugio Education Improvement Committee (the district's site-based decision making committee) developed a school calendar consisting of 180 instructional days, and stopped the practice of taking six extra staff development days during the school year. The increase of instructional days, from 174 to 180, was in response to the district's Academically Unacceptable rating in school year 2009–10.

During interviews with the review team, some teachers expressed that the staff development days might have been better used to outline strategies for closing the achievement gaps for different cohorts of students. Teachers explained that planning at the beginning of the school year allowed time for them to meet by content areas and define timelines and strategies for meeting the goals of their campus improvement plans. Time for discussing cohorts of special needs students and for brainstorming specific strategies to accelerate their success was also lost. Planning time was also used by teachers to review the curricular sequence of the four content areas; identify the strengths and weaknesses of the district's curriculum based on student performance data; and, define strategies to improve curriculum alignment. Lesson planning ideas were exchanged, regrouping of students for re-teaching and enrichment determined, and opportunities for personalized student supports created.

From the teachers' perspective, planning time now is barely adequate for attending to department priorities and requirements. Credible and innovative ideas exist within each campus and grade level across the organization to increase student achievement and to introduce innovative practices. However, a review of district data and interviews with staff indicated that there are no structures for collaborative discussions focused on innovation and change. There are also no structures in place to review student data and discuss implications of the data. The educational benefit of reviewing grades, absences, benchmark assessment results by class, grade level, and campus reflect a lack of accountability for outcomes.

The Academically Unacceptable rating earned by the district in school year 2009–10 is an indication that the district has challenges. The district's rating was a significant disappointment and drop in status for the organization. In a small school with a low student enrollment, it takes only a few students not passing a state assessment to compromise the overall rating of a campus and subsequently, the district. It was the first time this organization received a public notice of failure. It shows that failure can come swiftly even to the most advantaged organizations. This organization has not achieved the higher levels of the accountability system for the past three years. Even before the financial crisis created by poor facilities lead to severe limitations on staff development and other instructional supports, this district was not performing at the Recognized or Exemplary levels.

**Figure 2–7** shows a summary of the district's accountability ratings for school years 2009–10 to 2011–12. The school

**FIGURE 2-7  
REFUGIO ISD ACCOUNTABILITY RATINGS  
SCHOOL YEARS 2009-10 TO 2011-12**

| SCHOOL YEAR | STATE ACCOUNTABILITY RATING | FEDERAL ACCOUNTABILITY RATING   |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2009-10     | Academically Unacceptable   | Met Adequate Yearly Progress    |
| 2010-11     | Academically Acceptable     | Met Adequate Yearly Progress    |
| 2011-12     | Academically Acceptable     | Missed Adequate Yearly Progress |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, February 2013.

year 2011-12 rating is the same as 2010-11 due to transition from TAKS to STAAR.

As shown, RISD did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2011-12. RISD missed AYP in school year 2011-12 based on Reading performance. The district failed to meet the 87 percent met standard with four groups: All Students, African-American, Hispanic, and Economically Disadvantaged. Special Education and Limited English Proficient students tested did not meet the minimum size criteria to be included in the AYP evaluation but their passing rates fell significantly below the standard required.

Group data on STAAR 2012-13 from the elementary school and junior high school show significant gaps in passing rates among the different student groups across all grade levels. The assessment data show the lack of increased oversight of instructional delivery and more focused discussions and on-going planning at the district level. **Figure 2-8** shows a summary of STAAR passing rates for the elementary school, grades 3 to 6 and junior high school, grades 7 and 8 across test subject areas. State passing averages are also included.

RISD student data in **Figure 2-8** show the challenges that the district faces. In 14 of the 17 STAAR indicators, RISD's

**FIGURE 2-8  
REFUGIO ISD STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF ACADEMIC READINESS LEVEL II RESULTS:  
SATISFACTORY RATES GRADES 3 TO 8  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012-13**

| GRADE | SUBJECT        | STATE | DISTRICT | AFRICAN AMERICAN | HISPANIC | WHITE | AT-RISK |
|-------|----------------|-------|----------|------------------|----------|-------|---------|
| 3     | Reading        | 76    | 64       | 57               | 61       | 73    | 43      |
| 3     | Math           | 68    | 75       | 57               | 75       | 82    | 67      |
| 4     | Reading        | 77    | 61       | 86               | 49       | 79    | 32      |
| 4     | Math           | 68    | 39       | 29               | 29       | 64    | 12      |
| 4     | Writing        | 71    | 47       | 57               | 31       | 79    | 16      |
| 5     | Reading        | 77    | 67       | *                | 70       | 67    | 25      |
| 5     | Math           | 77    | 71       | *                | 73       | 78    | 25      |
| 5     | Science        | 73    | 57       | *                | 61       | 56    | 29      |
| 6     | Reading        | 75    | 70       | 100              | 65       | 80    | 40      |
| 6     | Math           | 77    | 80       | 80               | 74       | 100   | 55      |
| 7     | Reading        | 76    | 62       | *                | 62       | 75    | 41      |
| 7     | Math           | 71    | 76       | *                | 74       | 89    | 57      |
| 7     | Writing        | 71    | 58       | *                | 74       | 89    | 57      |
| 8     | Reading        | 80    | 90       | *                | 87       | 94    | 79      |
| 8     | Math           | 76    | 86       | *                | 80       | 94    | 71      |
| 8     | Science        | 70    | 77       | *                | 71       | 94    | 56      |
| 8     | Social Studies | 59    | 41       | *                | 34       | 50    | 22      |

NOTE: \*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, STAAR Summary Report, February 2013.

satisfactory rates are below state averages. The passing rates for At-Risk and Economically Disadvantaged students significantly lag behind the state averages in all 17 indicators.

Moreover, personnel changes in the district have been significant. A change of superintendent in school year 2009–10, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education in school year 2010–11, and the elementary school principal in school year 2011–12, and the approval of a stand-alone junior high school in school year 2012–13 show additional challenges occurring in the district. Teacher turnover is also relatively new to the district. Twenty-three teachers, student support professionals, and administrators resigned or retired in school year 2010–11, and twenty-five in school year 2011–12, excluding personnel retirements and resignations from the Special Education cooperative. At the elementary school, 13 of 28 teachers have taught there two years or less; at the junior high school, six of the 10 core subject teachers have two or fewer years at the campus, and at the high school, 11 of 24 teachers have two or less years of experience at the campus and 17 of 24 teachers have been teaching at this campus three or less years.

**Figure 2–9** shows staff changes in the district. The leadership and instructional levels at which these changes have occurred can affect staff morale, relationships within and across stakeholder groups, and the quality of educational services delivery. Without thoughtful, planned meetings of the district leadership, this type of adverse organizational culture may develop, resulting in the lack of prioritizing the instructional focus of the district.

Dr. Howard Knoff of Project Achieve at the University of Alabama proposes that effective organizations need an evidence-based academic and instructional system to successfully address the differentiated needs of all students

while improving their rate of learning. Schools must develop functional assessments and monitoring approaches that are curriculum-based and are used to evaluate the impact of the instructional system and guide development of successful, strategic interventions with students who are not responding to the instructional program. District and campus level Problem Solving Teams may be established to regularly meet to review evidence collected and propose appropriate interventions to accelerate student, school, and district success.

RISD should establish a comprehensive process to monitor the delivery of educational supports. District leadership must develop systemic structures for evidence-based problem-solving and decision-making. It is important for stakeholders across the organization to meet frequently in order to discuss and review student performance and to delineate strategies they believe will accelerate student progress and organizational success. As a component of developing a comprehensive monitoring process, the district should establish a leadership team to review district-level and campus-level progress based on formative and summative student achievement data. The team should include administrators from the district and campus levels. In RISD, campus counselors have significant input in student grouping assignments, scheduling, student testing, and data disaggregation, and would bring those perspectives to the instructional leadership team. Teachers are the masters of curriculum and instruction and are the front-line service providers to students. They are vital members of a district leadership team because of their ability to present and clarify student needs, and their knowledge of curriculum and the teaching/learning process. It would be helpful to include at least one teacher representative from each campus at some meetings during the year.

**FIGURE 2–9**  
**REFUGIO ISD STAFF CHANGES**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2012–13**

| POSITION                                       | 2009–10  | 2010–11  | 2011–12  | 2012–13   |
|--|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Superintendent                                 | 1        |          |          |           |
| Director of Elementary and Secondary Education |          | 1        |          |           |
| Elementary Principal                           |          |          | 1        |           |
| Elementary School Teachers                     |          | 5        | 2        | 6         |
| Junior High School Teachers                    |          | 1        | 1        | 2         |
| High School Teachers                           | 6        | 3        | 2        | 5         |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>6</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>13</b> |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Central Office, District Personnel Resignation Reports and Campus Master Schedules, February 2013.

The district's leadership team should meet monthly. The agendas for each meeting should be developed before each meeting, and all stakeholders provided an opportunity to place items on the agenda. Minutes of all meetings should be distributed to all campuses soon after the meetings are held. Regular updates should be provided to the campus staff, the Refugio Education Improvement Committee (REIC), Board of Trustees, parents, and the community. The updates can be formal or informal, written or verbal, and can utilize multiple formats. Further, the leadership team should establish monitoring timelines to review the data and hold planning meetings that correspond with campus timelines for collection and review of student progress.

The major purpose of this group is to build a coherent, comprehensive program of instruction and to monitor the successful articulation of that program in the classrooms of the district. This system of collaborative planning and decision-making will create a stronger sense of unity among the staff, and increase commitment to the organization's goals.

Further, the leadership team should consider that student performance data must be broken down by grade level, subject, special program and demographic group. While teacher review of student data occurs at all campuses; there is no evidence that formative campus data are aggregated at the district level and that responsive and corresponding actions occur at that level throughout the school year. Different sources for collecting student data should be used throughout the school year. Grades, unit tests, and benchmark testing are available to determine student progress on the curriculum. Students' historical educational data are stored in a district system. Special program participants have supplemental assessment and achievement data. These data provide a record of individual student progress towards mastery of mandatory learning targets. Student data must be carefully scrutinized and instructional modifications recommended, and action taken to ensure that all students succeed throughout the organization at all levels, classroom, campus, and district.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTIONS (REC. 12)**

District staff are not engaged in the design and implementation of effective instructional interventions to address student academic performance.

RISD administrators have failed to integrate innovative, responsive instructional interventions targeted at increasing the academic success of students at risk of failure. The learning gaps between student groups are significant and the response to interventions inadequate. At the elementary grades, a strong emphasis on Accelerated Reader drives instructional interventions. Reading was established as a district priority for all campuses due to not meeting AYP in school year 2011–12. The elementary school has a reading specialist to support students with dyslexia and reading disabilities. The district received one year of funding from a literacy grant that significantly enhanced the resources for the elementary campus' Accelerated Reader program. Hand-held NEOs were purchased to motivate students to read and test more often, additional books were purchased for libraries, classrooms, and homes, and teacher coaching and training were provided with grant resources. The elementary school principal used project funds to contract with a literacy coach to observe teachers in the delivery of instruction and to provide one-on-one coaching for teachers.

Principal and staff interviews also revealed that the elementary school uses computer-assisted instruction to supplement classroom instruction for academic improvement. Intervention groups are formed by the principal and teachers based on data disaggregation results. Students may be pulled from the regular classroom during the school day or assigned tutorials for additional instruction after school. The principal stated that teachers monitor student progress with Response to Intervention (RTI) reporting using district-provided procedures.

At the secondary level, supplemental remedial content courses are the dominant strategy used to support struggling students based on grades, teacher recommendation, and test data. As described during interviews with the review team, students who fail core courses or fail to reach the satisfactory standard on state assessments or benchmark assessments are scheduled into a second class of a particular content area(s). The junior high school counselor guides the implementation of the campus intervention classes and afterschool tutorials. For school year 2012–13, the teachers, counselor, and lead administrator agreed to homogenous grouping across the campus to facilitate lesson-planning and teaching. An evaluation of the impact of this grouping structure on student performance will occur at the end of the school year to determine if the campus will continue with homogenous grouping for school year 2013–14.

The counselor reported that she meets with teacher leaders of the different content area teams to determine the intervention classes needed based on formative and summative assessment results. Assignment to tutorials also occurs based on data disaggregation. The counselor meets with teachers to assign students to intervention classes, whenever possible preserving opportunities for students to participate in electives. Assignment and exit from intervention classes are carefully monitored by the counselor and fluid, flexible re-grouping utilized based on student progress as determined by formative assessments. Teachers guide tutorial assignments, monitor student progress, and approve student exit.

The high school relies primarily on intervention classes and afterschool tutorials to supplement academic support for underperforming students based on formative and summative data. At the high school level, interviews with staff indicated frustration with the intervention team model, the selection of personnel, and the course selections provided to students. There is no evidence of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the district's intervention strategies.

According to review team interviews, the district describes all instructional supports provided to special program students as interventions. However, these interventions do not meet the critical components of a RTI. In an RTI framework all students are screened to identify who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes. More than one screening tool is used. There are established routines and procedures for data analysis and data-based decision-making, to ensure equity of resources among students, classes, and schools, and training for teachers. On-going monitoring and adjustments to the services provided to students are fluid and continuous. No documentation was provided from the district instructional support administrators for the intervention strategies being employed by campuses. There are no formal procedures for monitoring implementation or for evaluation of the intervention strategies.

Further, there is no evidence to support that the district has engaged in the process for implementing RTI, nor provided the resources needed for framework implementation. The lack of a clearly defined instructional framework, comprehensive strategic plan, and equity-based resource allocations are in conflict with the fundamental principles of an RTI framework. Data disaggregation does occur at the campus and district level but not to the degree that evidence-based decision making requires in an RTI model.

Data review, observations and interviews highlight the inadequacy and inefficiency of the district's instructional interventions. The secondary campuses have more personnel units assigned for intervention classes and offer both enrichment and acceleration classes. At the junior high school, specialized academic content enrichment classes are provided in science, social studies, and mathematics for high-performing students, and intervention classes in all content areas are available for learners at risk of failure. The high school intervention team is assigned Dual Enrollment classes, remedial or supplementary academic classes, In-School Suspension supervision, Peer Assistance and Leadership program (PAL) classes, and Physical Education and Athletics. At the elementary school, interventions are provided by regular program teachers within the classroom or supported by the Reading Specialist, or assigned to content area teachers for designated class periods. All staff members at the three campuses are available to support afterschool tutorials.

The variance in student scores across subject areas and grade-levels tested indicate that interventions offered are not aligned with student data. Student scores in mathematics, writing, science, and social studies are lower than reading in most grades 3 to 8, yet reading interventions receive the most emphasis in the district intervention supports. The elementary school is the lowest performing campus in terms of numbers of students not meeting test standards yet have the fewest number of intervention classes available and the fewest number of intervention team professionals assigned. The majority of intervention teachers and classes are assigned to grades 7 to 12; yet, the secondary campuses have considerably fewer students who require supplementary instruction in all subject areas.

**Figure 2–10** shows school year 2011–12 state, regional, and district data for RISD and its state assigned cohort school districts. Results are also shown for peer districts, which are identified by regional education service center location. Peer districts are districts similar to Refugio ISD used for comparison. Peer districts include: Banquete ISD (ESC2), Karnes City ISD (ESC3), Skidmore-Tynan ISD (ESC2), and Stratford ISD (ESC16) for all tests, sum of grades 10 and 11.

**Figure 2–11** shows the 2012 TAKS Met Standard for RISD and its peer districts. The passing rates for the All Students group show RISD's performance as slightly above the state average, and in the middle of its cohort comparison group. However, a comparison of performance across student groups shows that the district's student performance is below peer districts. Student group data for RISD and cohort

**FIGURE 2–10**  
**TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS MET 2012 STANDARD (SUM OF GRADES 10 AND 11) ALL TESTS**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| DISTRICT       | ALL       | STATE     | REGION   | REGION ALL |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|
| <b>Refugio</b> | <b>80</b> | <b>75</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>69</b>  |
| Banquete       | 81        | 75        | 2        | 68         |
| Karnes City    | 75        | 75        | 3        | 69         |
| Skidmore-Tynan | 87        | 75        | 2        | 68         |
| Stratford      | 77        | 75        | 16       | 72         |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2011–12 District Performance, February 2013.

**FIGURE 2–11**  
**TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS MET STANDARD (SUM OF GRADES 10 AND 11) ALL TESTS**  
**2012**

| DISTRICT       | AFRICAN AMERICAN | HISPANIC  | WHITE     | SPECIAL EDUCATION | ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED | AT-RISK   |
|----------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Refugio</b> | <b>63</b>        | <b>78</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>42</b>         | <b>74</b>                  | <b>57</b> |
| Banquete       | *                | 78        | 91        | *                 | 90                         | 87        |
| Karnes City    | 44               | 71        | 89        | 40                | 81                         | 76        |
| Skidmore-Tynan | *                | 81        | 96        | 64                | 81                         | 67        |
| Stratford      | *                | 71        | 85        | 29                | 66                         | 54        |

NOTE: \*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2011–12 District Performance, February 2013.

school districts are included in **Figure 2–11** for African American, Hispanic, White, Special Education, Economically Disadvantaged, and At-Risk.

RISD performance of students receiving special education services, students at-risk, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds is significantly lower than comparison districts. There is a 30 percent difference between the passing rates of RISD At-Risk students (57 percent) and the performance of the same student group in Banquete ISD (87 percent), the highest performing school in the cohort group; and, a 22 percent difference between the Special Education passing rate of RISD (42 percent) and Skidmore-Tynan, with a Special Education passing rate of 64 percent.

Recent educational research has highlighted the value of monitoring the academic progress of all students and applying a variety of instructional interventions to accelerate the learning of students and close the academic gaps that plague many of our nation’s schools. Geoge Sugai and Robert Horner are leaders in a distinguished group of researchers who have developed considerable research on the concept of a pyramid of increasingly intensive interventions that schools can apply to accelerate students’ academic progress. The model has proven successful by aggressively and intentionally

focusing supports on the top 20 percent to 25 percent and the bottom 20 percent to 25 percent. The generally accepted norm of an RTI model is to get 80 percent of students as a whole, and every student group to meet state standards on all tests. When schools and districts fall below that accepted target, an RTI model delineates appropriate system interventions to improve results. The major premise of an RTI model is that all students deserve a quality curriculum, excellent teaching, early academic intervention, and frequent progress monitoring to ensure that the interventions are a good match for the learners.

An RTI model is focused on improving student learning outcomes through data-based decision-making for screening, progress-monitoring, and implementation of multi-level prevention system of supports. The National Center on Response to Intervention states that rigorous implementation of RTI includes a combination of high quality, culturally and linguistically responsive instruction; assessment and evidence-based intervention. Implemented correctly, a comprehensive RTI framework will contribute to more meaningful identification of learning and behavioral problems, improve instructional quality, and provide all students with the best opportunities to achieve academic

success. An RTI framework is established at the district level in collaboration with campus staff. District-level procedures guide, support and monitor campus implementation.

Implementing RTI is a process that involves reflection and research, collaborative planning by district and campus teams, continuous monitoring and evaluation, and evidence of strategy refinement based on evidence. A school district participates in a four step process with strong documentation of participation and completion of each stage. The four stages include:

- Exploring and Adopting—During this stage sites assess their needs, gather information about the RTI framework, determine if a match exists between the needs of the site and the expected outcomes of RTI, and achieve a consensus among key stakeholders to put RTI in place;
- Planning—At this stage sites prepare for implementation, data are gathered and reviewed, an action plan is developed, and measureable benchmarks of progress are defined;
- Implementing—Full operation of RTI occurs when the framework is embraced by practioners and integrated into all schools and classrooms with integrity. RTI becomes woven into the culture of the school, staff is skilled in data-based decision making, instruction is evidence-based and culturally responsive, administrators and teacher leaders support and facilitate new practices, procedures and processes, community members understand and support the framework, and the expected outcomes are clear and incorporated into district and campus planning; and
- Continuously Improving—During this stage, the district and campuses evaluate their progress, adjust their practices based on evaluation, and monitor changes to ensure sustainability of RTI.

RISD should review and revise its RTI framework by using school year 2012–13 data to determine if the instructional interventions yielded expected results. The RTI framework of the district must be thoughtfully developed, implemented, and evaluated according to the model's guidelines. The district's RTI framework should be guided by scientific knowledge, and implemented consistently across the school district. Clear, measureable performance data for evaluating the impact of the RTI must be gathered and used as the basis for making improvements to the framework. The district must determine if intervention classes are the best

instructional response based on documented evidence that student gains are significant enough to justify retention of these classes in 2013–14. Further, the district should incorporate the revised set of interventions into the 2013–14 RTI practices at the district and campus level.

A review process of RTI practices should be repeated annually to ensure that strong academic gains are made by all student groups. A long term approach is critical to ensuring that the district's instructional framework is robust and future-focused, and incorporates best practice and knowledge on school improvement. This approach will significantly increase program integrity across the district and improve the quality and effectiveness of instructional interventions offered to the students of the RISD.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT STAFFING (REC. 13)**

The staffing model the district uses for instructional support is not effective or cost efficient.

A review of district documents and interviews with staff indicate that the dominant instructional intervention implemented at the district level, and used extensively at the secondary level, is a remedial approach using supplemental classes in the content areas during the instructional day. The district has not established formulas or criteria for allocating personnel units across the district that supports the academic performance of underachieving students. During interviews with the review team, staff could not provide an explanation regarding how personnel units are determined for each campus or why accelerated classes and tutorials were selected as the district's primary instructional interventions for underperforming students at the secondary schools.

Students who fail core courses or fail to reach the satisfactory standard on state assessments are scheduled into a second class of a particular content area(s). At the secondary schools, the remedial classes are taught by intervention teachers. Intervention teachers teach supplemental content courses for underperforming students, generally those students who failed to meet satisfactory passing standards on state or local accountability measures, like TAKS, or STAAR; or, students who failed to earn sufficient course credits for promotion to the next grade level.

The RTI framework for secondary schools relies heavily on intervention team supports, a high-cost intervention model. As an example, the junior high school offers 12 sections of



“special courses” including nine Accelerated Instruction sections, two Special Projects and one Enrichment Science class. This equates to two teachers, classrooms, and associated costs that may not be used effectively and efficiently for the acquisition of supplemental instructional and related services. Of the current 48 students in grade 8, nine students did not meet the mathematics STAAR passing standard last spring, 18 failed to meet the standard in reading, and 19 failed to meet the writing standard. Offering responsive interventions by hiring more teachers and making students take two sections of one subject with two different teachers may be an inefficient method of use of limited resources.

The intervention approach used by the secondary schools requires a significant investment of fiscal resources; however the schedules of the intervention team reflect minimal priority to instructional intervention. For example, at the time of the review in February 2013, certain intervention teaching positions were responsible for teaching dual-enrollment classes, physical education at all three campuses, health, and coaching athletics in addition to their instructional intervention assignment(s). Assigning these responsibilities to a single teaching position may not qualify as providing a pyramid of increasingly intensive instructional

interventions for struggling students, and may not close the academic gaps of underperforming students.

District enrollment data, student-teacher ratios, and campus master schedules show the disparities and inequalities in personnel unit allocations across campuses. PEIMS data for school year 2012–13 show student enrollments range from 42 to 59 students across the grade levels specified. **Figure 2–12** shows school year 2012–13 enrollment for Refugio ISD by campus, grade-level and student group as reported in the fall 2012 PEIMS submission.

Grade level enrollment is almost equally distributed from grades 1 to 12; yet student-teacher ratios are vastly different across the three campuses. A significant contributor to the disparity is the number and cost of intervention teachers employed for secondary schools.

The elementary school serves 413 students from Early Childhood Education through grade 6. Campus staff includes a principal, an assistant principal, and 28 teachers: 22 regular program teachers, two Special Education teachers, one Reading Intervention/Dyslexia teacher, one part-time Math Intervention teacher/mentor, one Art teacher, one Physical Education (PE) teacher (one full-time equivalent

**FIGURE 2–12  
REFUGIO ISD ENROLLMENT BY CAMPUS, GRADE LEVEL, AND GROUP  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| CAMPUS             | GRADE | HISPANIC   | AFRICAN AMERICAN | WHITE      | OTHER     | TOTAL      |
|--------------------|-------|------------|------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Elementary School  | EE    | *          | *                |            |           | 5          |
|                    | PK    | 16         | 7                | 11         |           | 34         |
|                    | KG    | 45         | 8                | 12         | *         | 67         |
|                    | 1     | 35         | 7                | 10         |           | 52         |
|                    | 2     | 32         | 5                | 5          |           | 42         |
|                    | 3     | 35         | *                | 13         | *         | 52         |
|                    | 4     | 39         | 6                | 8          | *         | 55         |
|                    | 5     | 32         | 7                | 16         | *         | 56         |
| Junior High School | 6     | 33         | 5                | 11         | *         | 50         |
|                    | 7     | 39         | 6                | 12         | *         | 59         |
| High School        | 8     | 36         | *                | 9          |           | 48         |
|                    | 9     | 33         | *                | 17         | *         | 54         |
|                    | 10    | 26         | 6                | 17         |           | 49         |
|                    | 11    | 31         | 10               | 15         |           | 56         |
| <b>Total</b>       | 12    | 28         | 6                | 18         |           | 52         |
|                    |       | <b>462</b> | <b>85</b>        | <b>174</b> | <b>10</b> | <b>731</b> |

NOTE: \*Numbers less than five have not been cited due to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 34CFR Part 99.1 and Texas Education Agency procedure OP 10-03.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System, February 2013.

shared by two teacher/coaches assigned to the high school campus), and a full-time registered nurse (RN). The elementary campus shares a counselor with the junior high.

The junior high school serves 107 students in grades 7 and 8. The campus has a principal and a part-time counselor. The campus master schedule reflects that this campus is staffed with 10 academic content teachers, two Special Education teachers, and 13 PE teachers/coaches who each are assigned a section of PE during first period. There are also two sections of band, two of Spanish I, and one section of Algebra I, one section of Accelerated Instruction grade 7, and one ESL grade 7-8 taught by high school teachers. The junior high school has 10 core content teachers and one full-time equivalent (FTE) for special education. The core content teachers teach nine sections of Accelerated/Intervention classes, one Enrichment Science class, and two Special Projects sections. The junior high school shares a full-time licensed vocational nurse (LVN) with the high school for grades 7–12.

The high school serves 211 students in school year 2012–13. Campus staff includes a principal, one counselor, two Library staff, 18 Core and Intervention teachers, one Special Education, two band directors (one teaches two classes at the junior high school), two Career and Technical teachers, and two teachers of Spanish. Band and Spanish teacher numbers were counted as 1.5 each because the assistant band director teaches two sections and one Spanish teacher teaches two sections at the junior high school.

Using total student enrollment and total teachers assigned, the teacher to student ratios, by campus, are listed below:

Elementary School—28 teachers and 413 students = 1:14.75

Junior High School—14 teachers and 107 students = 1:7.64

High School—24 teachers and 211 students = 1:8.79

For calculating the total number of teachers for the junior high school, six sections were combined to make one FTE. There are 13 sections of PE/Athletics offered first period, taught by 13 different teachers from the junior high school and the high school. This was converted to two FTEs in the total teacher count; six sections of electives equals one FTE, seven sections of special education equals one FTE. Adding these four FTEs to the 10 FTEs that teach the four core subjects, including the Accelerated classes, gives this campus a total of 14 teachers to serve 107 students. As shown, intervention teachers inflate the number of personnel units at the secondary campuses.

Another example of the inconsistencies in the prioritization of RISD campuses to address academic performance is reflected in campus budget allocations. **Figure 2–13** shows the total 2012–13 General Fund budgets for each campus, the average per pupil allocation per campus, and the variance between the highest campus and the other schools. The high school has the largest per pupil allocation at \$11,254, whereas the elementary school has the lowest at \$3,707, despite this campus having the largest concentrations of underperforming students.

Campus master schedules also show the inconsistencies and discrepancies that can occur when there is absence of direction from the district level through a comprehensive K-12 instructional framework to drive decision-making. At the high school, there are four teachers that comprise the intervention team. The class assignments for each intervention teacher by class period are shown in **Figure 2–14**.

Best practice models suggest that calling these teachers an intervention team does not fit the traditional high school intervention model. The high school intervention team includes four FTEs, but these teachers, in reality, provide instruction for only one intervention class at junior high school, one class of Content Mastery, and two sections of Dual Enrollment. The remainder of their schedules include: eight classes of Athletics, four classes of PE, four sections of ISS, one section of Health, and one of PALS. Two academic

**FIGURE 2–13**  
**REFUGIO ISD GENERAL FUND CAMPUS BUDGETS AND PER PUPIL ALLOCATION**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| CAMPUS             | TOTAL STUDENTS | TOTAL BUDGET | PER PUPIL ALLOCATION | VARIANCE FROM HIGHEST |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Elementary School  | 413            | \$1,530,870  | \$3,707              | (\$7,547)             |
| Junior High School | 107            | \$606,534    | \$5,669              | (\$5,585)             |
| High School        | 211            | \$2,374,676  | \$11,254             | \$0                   |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, 199 General Fund Budget for school year 2012–13, February 2013.

**FIGURE 2–14**  
**REFUGIO HIGH SCHOOL INTERVENTION TEAM SCHEDULE BY CLASS PERIOD**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| TEACHER | CLASS PERIOD                                       |                                      |                                      |                       |                                      |                      |                                 |
|---------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
|         | 1ST  | 2ND                                  | 3RD                                  | 4TH                   | 5TH                                  | 6TH                  | 7TH                             |
| A       | High School Athletics                              | Elementary School Physical Education | Elementary School Physical Education | High School Athletics | Conference                           | Content Mastery      | Junior High School Intervention |
| B       | Junior High School Athletics                       | In-School Suspension                 | In-School Suspension                 | High School Athletics | In School Suspension                 | Conference           | High School Athletics           |
| C       | Junior High School Athletics                       | Dual Enrollment                      | Dual Enrollment                      | In-School Suspension  | Conference                           | In School Suspension | High School Athletics           |
| D       | High School/ Junior High School Physical Education | Health                               | Dual Enrollment                      | PALS                  | Elementary School Physical Education | Conference           | High School Athletics           |

NOTE: Peer Assistance and Leadership Program (PALS).  
 SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Refugio High School, Refugio High School Master Schedule, February 2013.

support classes are taught by this team, one at the junior high school and one at the high school; and two academic support classes for top performing student through Dual Enrollment.

Typically, high schools have several enrichment tracks to support students in the top 20 percent to 25 percent and focus small group, highly personalized interventions for under-performing students in the bottom 20 percent to 25 percent. At the high school, the lowest 20 percent to 25 percent group would be comprised of approximately 50 students. The high school student results on TAKS recorded in the district AEIS 2011–12 reports reflect that at grade 10, 68 percent of students passed all tests taken, 94 percent of grade 11 students passed all tests taken, and 80 percent of the sum of grades 10 and 11 passed all tests taken. **Figure 2–15** shows the data for each group by subject area tested.

The data show that the high school has already met the RTI goal of 80 percent of all students meeting state standard, so the allocation of four, high salaried teachers for RTI at the high school campus is neither effective nor cost-efficient. Further, during interviews with the review team, district administrators repeatedly stressed that the district lacks the fiscal resources needed to support instructional resources acquisition, staff development, and equipment upgrades, making the implementation of this instructional intervention highly impractical for the district.

The district’s practice of intervention team is not well-developed and its chances of success poor. The achievement

gaps among student groups are growing, and the external accountability stakes are getting more challenging through STAAR. The district has the means to offer a wide range of intervention supports. The implementation of a RTI framework is the marriage of special education, general education, and federal programs. Its goal is to offer students’ academic and behavioral support using scientifically-based methodologies. A student’s progress must be carefully monitored through effective and continuous analysis of data points to determine if the interventions need to be changed or continued. Student participation in interventions is fluid, not a long-term placement to repeat courses. However, student data does not appear to inform and guide RISD decision-making regarding instructional supports for students.

Intervention classes are a costly instructional support that may not be commensurate with need or yield. The four intervention team teachers employed at the high school are the highest paid teachers in the district, earning an average salary of \$66,185 each because athletic coaching stipends ranging from \$14,770 to \$17,926 supplement the teaching salaries for these four teachers. The average salary is calculated using the salaries of three of the four intervention team teachers listed in the high school’s master schedule that are also listed in the district’s school year 2012–13 personnel roster. A fourth teacher on the team is not included in the salary roster provided by the district. Using the average

**FIGURE 2–15**  
**REFUGIO HIGH SCHOOL TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS MET STANDARDS**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| GRADE     | SUBJECT AREA          | PERCENT PASSING STATE | PERCENT PASSING REGION | PERCENT PASSING DISTRICT |
|-----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 10        | English Language Arts | 91                    | 90                     | 88                       |
|           | Math                  | 75                    | 69                     | 78                       |
|           | Science               | 75                    | 68                     | 76                       |
|           | Social Studies        | 94                    | 92                     | 91                       |
|           | All Tests             | 65                    | 57                     | 68                       |
| 11        | English Language Arts | 93                    | 93                     | 98                       |
|           | Math                  | 91                    | 87                     | 96                       |
|           | Science               | 93                    | 92                     | 99                       |
|           | Social Studies        | 98                    | 97                     | 99                       |
|           | All Tests             | 85                    | 82                     | 94                       |
| 10 and 11 | English Language Arts | 92                    | 92                     | 92                       |
|           | Math                  | 82                    | 78                     | 86                       |
|           | Science               | 84                    | 79                     | 87                       |
|           | Social Studies        | 96                    | 94                     | 95                       |
|           | All Tests             | 75                    | 69                     | 80                       |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2011–12 District Performance Summary, February 2013.

salary cost for the fourth teacher brings the total cost for the high school intervention team to \$264,341.

Intervention classes at the junior high school are distributed across core teachers. Two teachers employed and assigned to teach core courses are not included in the district's personnel roster for school year 2012–13. Determining the salaries of these teachers is not possible, so the average salary for the eight core teachers listed on the district's roster is used to determine the cost of two instructional units at that campus. The average salary for content area teachers at the junior high school is \$40,821. The cost of two teachers at this average salary would be \$81,642.

The district should conduct a cost benefit analysis of how it provides instructional supports to underperforming students. This includes both staffing allocations at the elementary school and use of the intervention team model at the secondary level. This cost benefit analysis should be used to determine whether other approaches would be more appropriate.

As part of the analysis, the district should review district enrollment data, student-teacher ratios, and campus master schedules to determine staffing patterns. Further, the district should review student performance data to determine whether the staffing method used is providing support and

producing positive results. The district may also consider addressing the inefficiencies. For example, the elementary school has the highest number and percent of underperforming students and the highest student-teacher ratios of the three campuses. Due to the larger enrollment and the significance of the student performance gaps, additional resources are needed at the elementary grades. These include highly-qualified personnel, instructional planning time, curriculum training, teacher mentoring and coaching, better technology, and fiscal resources.

RISD should consider increasing the campus budget for the elementary school beginning in school year 2013–14 to lower teacher to student ratios and increase instructional resources, curriculum and staff development support to improve student performance. Bringing the elementary school's budget to the 2012–13 per pupil allocation level of the junior high school's 2013–14 budget, based on the current year enrollment (413 students x \$5,669), would add \$2,341,297 to the current year budget of \$1,530,870 for a total of \$3,872,167. The total cost would impose a significant burden on the district's budget for 2013–14; therefore, it is recommended that the district leadership team, consisting of the Superintendent, Business Manager, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the campus principals, develop budget resource allocation parameters to

support more equitable resource allocations beginning in school year 2013–14.

The purpose of Accelerated Instruction classes and the intervention team should be clarified and explained in the context of appropriate Response to Intervention. This should include a re-examination of the intervention team positions. There are six intervention teachers assigned at grades 7 to 11. Strong documentation to prove the academic advantage of this instructional arrangement is critical. Gathering valid and reliable data regarding the success of the intervention team approach should be a mandatory expectation to justify this instructional intervention approach. If the decision is made to retain this instructional approach, then the district should consider assigning educators to these positions whose content area focus matches the content area needs of its underperforming students.

However, alternate service models should also be considered. These could include computer-assisted instruction, digital multi-media strategies, reading and math labs, intervention models that use college and community tutors, and peer coaching. These options should be explored as a possibility for integration into the RTI model at the secondary level. Information on these and other possible service models can be identified either through a literature review or through support from the special program specialists of their regional education service center.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until completion of the cost benefit analysis of district instructional supports structure, including staffing allocations at the elementary school and use of the intervention team model at the secondary level.

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (REC. 14)**

Professional development opportunities are limited and typically do not align with the district's instructional priorities.

The district does not have a system-wide professional development plan in place. The district staff development program consists primarily of leadership team members' participation at state or regional conferences. For example, the Superintendent attends the Commissioner's Mid-Winter Administrators Conference, the Athletic Director attends the Texas Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance conference, and the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education attends CSCOPE training. Instructional and support personnel attend certification or

re-certification training, such as bus driver training, and G/T training. As indicated by review team interviews, professional development for teachers occurs on the campus and is primarily the responsibility of the campus principals. Teacher professional development is managed with the resources appropriated by the Superintendent and Business Manager to each campus budget. As described by staff during interviews, the majority of campus funds in the budget are designated by department and controlled primarily by the teachers in that area.

Professional development at the campus-level varies significantly. The elementary school principal selected a literacy coach for teacher development at her campus for school year 2012–13 through funding from the district's Early Literacy Grant. The literacy coach provides a form of on-going, job-embedded professional learning through supportive feedback based on teacher observation. The high school has a Professional Service Provider (PSP) assigned to coach/mentor and train teachers from the math department due to the district's Academically Unacceptable accountability rating in school year 2009–10 and the high school's Academically Unacceptable rating in school year 2011–12. The PSP employs a coaching/mentoring model to work primarily with teachers new to the campus. The major role of the PSP is to coach new teachers to align curriculum to test specifications and to share teaching strategies for working successfully with underperforming students.

Further, district financial data show the lack of commitment to creating a professional learning community through minimal investments in instructional-related services and curriculum and staff development. For example, less than one percent of the school year 2011–12 district expenditures were for Instructional Related Services, which includes media services, curriculum and staff development. Additionally, district budget expenditures for Instructional Related Services have decreased each year since school year 2009–10. Since the onsite review, district administration indicated that the district pays for staff development and curriculum support training from various funds and functions, not just through Function 13.

**Figure 2–16** shows the district's instructional expenditures from all funds for school years 2009–10 to 2011–12.

The data in **Figure 2–16** show the decrease of expenditures for instruction since the district engagement in facilities litigation. Total instructional expenditures decreased by

**FIGURE 2–16**  
**REFUGIO ISD INSTRUCTIONAL EXPENDITURES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2009–10 TO 2011–12**

| SCHOOL YEAR | INSTRUCTION<br>(FUNCTION 11) | INSTRUCTIONAL<br>RESOURCES AND MEDIA<br>(FUNCTION 12) | CURRICULUM AND STAFF<br>DEVELOPMENT<br>(FUNCTION 13) | INSTRUCTIONAL<br>EXPENDITURES TOTAL<br>(FUNCTIONS 11, 12 & 13) |
|-------------|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 2009–10     | \$4,182,393                  | \$135,452   | \$3,152  | \$4,320,997  |
| 2010–11     | \$3,700,862                  | \$103,478   | \$0  | \$3,804,340  |
| 2011–12     | \$3,243,825                  | \$109,259   | \$525  | \$3,353,609  |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, District Annual Audits, February 2013.

\$967,388, or 22 percent, from school year 2009–10 to 2011–12.

**Figure 2–17** shows the amount and the percent of district expenditures for Instructional Resources and Curriculum and Staff Development for school years 2009–10 to 2011–12. The data show that the district has not placed a high priority on curriculum and staff development support for educators due to the insignificant funding allocated for these services in relation to total expenditures.

Moreover, district financial records submitted to TEA and converted to eFACTS+ by the Texas Association of School Business Officials reflect that the district expended less than one dollar (\$0.968) from the General Fund for curriculum and staff development support in 2011–12. Peer district expenditures ranged from \$15,859 to \$106,980 from their General Fund (199) for curriculum and staff development support. **Figure 2–18** shows the total General Fund expenditure per pupil for each district, the total expenditure for Instruction and Instruction Related Services per student for each district, the Curriculum and Staff Development per pupil expenditure, and the total 2011–12 investment in curriculum and staff development in dollars by district. Less than \$1.00 for professional development from the General Fund in a full school year signals that staff capacity building is an extremely low priority.

RISD has employed 38 new professional educators, including a new Superintendent, Director of Elementary and Secondary

Education, a campus principal, and 35 classroom teachers since 2009–10. Forty-eight professionals resigned, retired, or were re-assigned in 2010–11 and 2011–12. The district employs 66 teachers in 2012–13 and 35 have been in their positions less than three years, which means that more than half (53 percent) are relatively new to the organization.

In addition to having a professional staff turn-over exceeding 50 percent since school year 2010–11, there have been significant changes in the system. The district's first Academically Unacceptable accountability rating occurred in school year 2009–10, a new state assessment, and new state accountability standards are being developed. Construction and litigation over construction have caused a physical re-organization of students and staff. A new junior high school campus was approved as a standalone school beginning in school year 2012–13. A full-time principal was employed for the campus on February 28, 2013. Student mobility and student demographic shifts are occurring annually with increased student populations of at-risk and economically disadvantaged students in the district and community for the first time in its history. Yet, the mission statement and goals published in the school year 2012–13 District Improvement Plan were developed in 2008, before these changes occurred.

The district's curriculum (CSCOPE), data-collection and disaggregation system, or Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum (DMAC), and the STAAR are also new to the district. CSCOPE and DMAC were selected prior to the

**FIGURE 2–17**  
**REFUGIO ISD INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES AND CURRICULUM AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2011–12**

| SCHOOL YEAR | INSTRUCTIONAL<br>RESOURCES | PERCENT OF TOTAL<br>EXPENDITURES | CURRICULUM AND STAFF<br>DEVELOPMENT | PERCENT OF TOTAL<br>EXPENDITURES |
|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2009–10     | \$135,452                  | 3.1%                             | \$3,152                             | 0.007%                           |
| 2010–11     | \$103,478                  | 2.7%                             | \$0                                 | 0%                               |
| 2011–12     | \$109,259                  | 3.3%                             | \$525                               | 0.0016%                          |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, District Annual Audits, February 2013.

**FIGURE 2–18  
CURRICULUM AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES  
SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| DISTRICT       | ENROLLMENT | TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT | TOTAL INSTRUCTIONAL RELATED SERVICES | TOTAL CURRICULUM AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT | TOTAL 2011–12 EXPENDITURE | VARIANCE FROM HIGHEST |
|----------------|------------|---|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Refugio</b> | <b>704</b> | <b>\$12,451</b>                             | <b>\$5,233</b>                       | <b>\$0.00</b>                          | <b>\$0.97</b>             | <b>(\$106,979)</b>    |
| Banquete       | 806        | \$9,340                                     | \$4,909                              | \$132.73                               | \$106,980                 | \$0                   |
| Karnes City    | 997        | \$9,422                                     | \$4,881                              | \$32.67                                | \$32,572                  | (\$74,408)            |
| Skidmore-Tynan | 807        | \$8,532                                     | \$4,818                              | \$121.13                               | \$97,752                  | (\$9,228)             |
| Stratford      | 590        | \$11,010                                    | \$6,634                              | \$26.88                                | \$15,859                  | (\$93,121)            |

SOURCES: Texas Association of School Business Officials, e FACTS+; Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System, February 2013.

employment of the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the elementary school and high school principals, and over 50 percent of the teaching staff. Staff support for the curriculum is mixed across groups, administrators and teachers, and between teachers. Implementation is largely autonomous, based on teacher willingness, rather than district-led expectation. A substantial literacy grant was awarded to the school district for the procurement of technology aids for enhancing reading and writing literacy; but the equipment selected was based almost exclusively on the recommendation of IT specialists who have no teaching background. Non-internet accessible tools were purchased at a time when school districts are procuring internet ready tablets for all students beginning in early childhood.

Educational literature cites us that in rapidly changing environments, both organizations and the people who make up those organizations, must engage in continual growth, or risk becoming obsolete. Best practices identify common components that should be evident in a district’s professional development program. These components include:

- Provide teachers with opportunities for collaboration and coaching;
- Allow active engagement in reflection, inquiry, research, and collective problem-solving;
- Be grounded in instructional practices, assessments, and results specific to the participants’ content area or school improvement process;
- Be on-going, sustained, rigorous, and job-embedded; and

- Have the necessary resources and opportunities to grow and learn effectively.

The professional development process that effective districts implement supports the immediate and future needs of the organization and embraces the concept of “life-long learners” for students and staff. Through professional development, organizations prepare staff for the dynamic and rapidly-changing environment that exists in the education system of today and tomorrow. Professional development refers to building the skills and knowledge of an organization’s members to optimize their personal development and enhance their job performance. Professional development is an extensive and collaborative process. Generally, it refers to on-going learning opportunities available to teachers and other education personnel through their school or district. Effective professional development is often seen as vital to school success and teacher satisfaction. Schools today face an array of complex challenges— from working with an increasingly diverse student population, integrating new technology in the classroom, meeting rigorous academic standards and goals, and dealing with new state assessments and accountability indicators. This is a critical time to stress the need for teachers to be able to enhance and build their instructional knowledge.

Professional development encompasses all types of learning opportunities, ranging from college courses to conferences, and informal learning opportunities situated in practice. There are a variety of approaches to professional development, including consultation, coaching, communities of learning or practice, lesson study, mentoring, reflective supervision, and technical assistance. Professional development is a broad term. Those who engage in professional development share a

common purpose of enhancing their ability to do their work. At the heart of professional development is creating educators who themselves are life-long learners, committed to increasing their own knowledge and skills.

Creating professional learning communities is an emerging model in professional systems. Its central premise is that when individuals work together in professional learning teams, the new learning comes from sharing and exchanging ideas with people who do the same job. In professional learning communities teachers in either grade level or content area teams meet several times per week to collaborate on instructional strategies and solve problems. In the most sophisticated models, teachers set common instructional goals, teach lessons in their individual classrooms, administer informal assessments to determine levels of mastery, and then re-group as a team to analyze data together. Then they pinpoint areas of success, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for future teaching.

The district should identify the training priorities and schedule for all teachers, and allocate funds necessary to implement the district's curriculum and instructional priorities. All campus determined in-service development must also be aligned with district priorities. In addition, the RISD annual budget planning process should include the allocation of a per student amount for professional development. The staff development and the instructional materials per student allotments should provide discretionary responsibility for campus site-based decision making regarding best use of the funds and allow them to expend the funds to meet evidence-based needs.

The fiscal impact of the recommendation is based on the average per student expenditures for curriculum and staff development for RISD's peer districts as shown in **Figure 2-18**. In school year 2011-12, RISD's peer districts' per student expenditures for curriculum and staff development ranged from \$26.88 to \$132.73, with an average per student expenditure of \$78.35. Using the peer district average per student expenditure to calculate the recommended budget allocation for curriculum and staff development in RISD results in \$57,274 (731 students x \$78.35 per student) for curriculum and staff development in school year 2013-14.

The fiscal impact also assumes that the district would increase the amount allocated for curriculum and staff development by five percent annually for school years 2014-15 to 2017-18. Increasing the total expenditure by five percent annually would increase the total curriculum and staff

development from \$57,274 in school year 2013-14 to \$69,618 in school year 2017-18. The five percent annual increase would also result in increasing the per student allocation for curriculum and staff development from \$78.35 in school year 2013-14 to \$95.24 in school year 2017-18. This per student amount is still below the school year 2011-12 expenditure of two peer districts.



**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 2: EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY**

| RECOMMENDATION          |  | 2013-14           | 2014-15           | 2015-16           | 2016-17           | 2017-18           | 5-YEAR<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS | ONE-TIME<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 9                       | Develop an instructional framework to articulate the district's K-12 educational program.  | (\$8,000)         | (\$8,000)         | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | (\$16,000)                   | \$0                            |
| 10                      | Address student achievement in the development of annual district and campus improvement plans   | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                          | \$0                            |
| 11                      | Establish a comprehensive process to monitor the delivery of educational supports.   | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                          | \$0                            |
| 12                      | Review and revise its Response to Intervention framework by using school year 2012-13 data to determine if the instructional interventions yielded expected results. | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                          | \$0                            |
| 13                      | Conduct a cost benefit analysis of how the district provides instructional supports to underperforming students.   | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                          | \$0                            |
| 14                      | Identify the training priorities and schedule for all teachers, and allocate funds necessary to implement the district's curriculum and instructional priorities.    | (\$57,274)        | (\$60,138)        | (\$63,145)        | (\$66,302)        | (\$69,617)        | (\$316,476)                  | \$0                            |
| <b>CHAPTER 2-TOTALS</b> |  | <b>(\$65,274)</b> | <b>(\$68,138)</b> | <b>(\$63,145)</b> | <b>(\$66,302)</b> | <b>(\$69,617)</b> | <b>(\$332,476)</b>           | <b>\$0</b>                     |

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# **CHAPTER 3**

# **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 3. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

An independent school district's financial management function administers a district's financial resources and plans for its priorities. Administration may include budget preparation, accounting and payroll, administrative technology, tax appraisal and collection, and auditing. Planning may include aligning a district's budget with its district and campus priorities, allocating resources, and developing a schedule with milestones.

Financial management is dependent on a district's organizational structure. Larger districts typically have staff dedicated to financial functions, while smaller districts have staff with multiple responsibilities. Budget preparation and administration are critical to overall district operations. It includes budget development and adoption; oversight of expenditure of funds; and involvement of campus and community stakeholders in the budget process. Managing accounting and payroll include developing internal controls and safeguards; reporting of account balances; and scheduling disbursements to maximize funds. Management of this area includes segregation of duties, use of school administration software systems, and providing staff training. Texas state law requires all school districts to have an external auditor review the district's compliance with established standards and practices. The audit provides an annual financial and compliance report; an examination of the expenditure of federal funds; and a report to management on internal controls.

Refugio Independent School District is a small, Chapter 41 school district in south Texas. The Texas Education Code, Chapter 41, makes provisions for certain school districts to share their local tax revenue with other school districts. The relative wealth of the school district is measured in terms of the taxable value of property that lies within the school district borders divided by the number of students in weighted average daily attendance. The funds distributed by the property-wealthy districts are "recaptured" by the school finance system to assist with financing of public education. In school year 2011–12, the district had a refined average daily attendance of \$642. Refined average daily attendance is a funding element used in the state's Foundation School Program and is calculated by dividing the total eligible student days present by the number of days taught. The state's funding system has different funding weights for

instructional categories and all of the weights are multipliers of the district's refined average daily attendance in each category. An increase in refined average daily attendance will mean the district will receive more funding, and a reduction of refined average daily attendance will mean less funding for the district. Since refined average daily attendance is a fundamental element in calculating weighted average daily attendance, increases or decreases in refined average daily attendance will cause increases or decreases in weighted average daily attendance. Districts that are considered to be Chapter 41 are particularly sensitive to decreases in weighted average daily attendance. Normally, a decrease in refined average daily attendance will mean the Chapter 41 district will have less funding available and will also mean that the district is wealthier per student. The increase in wealth per student will require the district to pay more in recapture.

The refined average daily attendance has declined each year for the past three years from a 2008–09 refined average daily attendance high of \$713. The loss of \$71 refined average daily attendance represents a 10 percent reduction of an important number used in the calculation of Foundation School Program (FSP) funding. **Figure 3–1** shows a summary of the district's financial information from school years 2007–08 to 2011–12.

The property value of the district used in the foundation school program formulas was approximately \$596.4 million for school year 2011–12. There has been an increase in property value during the last four years. The property value of the district was \$480.2 million in school year 2008–09. The increase of \$116.2 million in property value over the past four years represents a 24 percent increase. The maintenance and operations tax effort of the district has been \$1.04 for the last five years, which is the maximum level a district can tax without a voter approved tax rate election. In an attempt to cope with declining revenue and mounting facilities cost, the district presented a tax increase to the voters in 2010 for approval, but the tax rate election was not approved. The failure of the tax rate election has forced the district to fund facilities repairs and increased cost of recapture from the general operating budget.

The district received approximately \$1.875 million through the Foundation School Program in school year 2008–09, and the amount received in school year 2011–12 was \$1.877

**FIGURE 3–1  
REFUGIO ISD GENERAL FINANCE INFORMATION  
SCHOOL YEARS 2007–08 TO 2011–12**

|  | 2011–12          | 2010–11       | 2009–10       | 2008–09       | 2007–08       |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Refined Average Daily Attendance         | \$642            | \$665         | \$700         | \$713         | \$697         |
| Property Values                          | \$596,434,052    | \$533,525,972 | \$563,239,589 | \$480,205,963 | \$484,068,575 |
| Tax Rate Maintenance & Operations        | \$1.04           | \$1.04        | \$1.04        | \$1.04        | \$1.04        |
| Interest & Sinking Fund Collections      | \$715,841        | \$697,671     | \$706,840     | \$712,521     | \$702,109     |
| Bond Payment                             | (\$692,531)      | (\$694,906)   | (\$694,094)   | (\$694,000)   | (\$694,000)   |
| Maintenance Note                         | (\$309,791)      | (\$293,831)   | (\$377,681)   | \$0           | \$0           |
| Debt Payments                            | (\$286,481)      | (\$291,066)   | (\$364,935)   | \$18,521      | \$8,109       |
| Maintenance & Operations Collections     | \$5,660,094      | \$6,177,978   | \$5,564,385   | \$5,931,919   | \$4,990,062   |
| State Foundation Revenue                 | \$1,877,633      | \$991,702     | \$2,027,402   | \$1,875,804   | \$2,747,475   |
| Recapture                                | (\$680,243)      | (\$16,907)    | (\$16,382)    | (\$136,581)   | (\$331,457)   |
| Available Foundation Program Revenue     | \$6,857,484      | \$7,152,773   | \$7,575,405   | \$7,671,142   | \$7,406,080   |
| Total Available Revenue                  | \$6,571,003      | \$6,861,707   | \$7,210,470   | \$7,689,663   | \$7,414,189   |
| Cost of facilities litigation and repair | \$2,288,560      |               |               |               |               |
| Settlement                               | \$1,535,720      |               |               |               |               |
| <b>Net loss</b>                          | <b>\$752,840</b> |               |               |               |               |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Foundation School Program Summary of Finances, Cost of Facilities Litigation spreadsheet developed by RISD Business Manager, and 2011–12 RISD Financial Audit report.

million. Though the amount received from Foundation School Program is nearly the same in both of the years, the loss of enrollment and the increase in property values caused the amount of recapture the district paid to the state to change significantly. The amount the district paid in recapture varied widely over the four-year span from school years 2008–09 to 2011–12:

- \$136,581 in 2008–09;
- \$16,382 in 2009–10;
- \$16,907 in 2010–11; and
- \$680,243 in 2011–12.

The net amount of available Foundation School Program revenue after recapture has declined each of the last four years. The district had approximately \$7.7 million available for use in school year 2008–09 and the amount available decreased to \$6.9 million in school year 2011–12. The loss of \$813,658 over four years is 10.6 percent from the amount available in 2008–09.

The district experienced a construction failure during school year 2008–09 which has proven to be a long expensive endeavor. To finance the litigation and facility repairs, the district borrowed \$2 million in a maintenance tax note,

which has required the district to pay between \$293,831 and \$377,681 in payments each year. The debt payment for the maintenance note has added to a decrease in funds available for district operations. The business manager has tracked the expenses incurred during the last three years, and the cost of the project has been approximately \$2.3 million. The district’s lawsuit with the companies that originally constructed the junior high facility was finalized during school year 2011–12, and the district received a settlement amount of approximately \$1.5 million. The district spent \$288,560 more on the project than was borrowed, and during the term of the project, the excess project costs were taken out of the district’s operating budget. The settlement amount of \$1.5 million could decrease the amount that was borrowed but will not be enough to completely pay off the \$2 million loan. The combined financial impact on the district over the four year period has been a loss of approximately \$2 million; \$923,961 in maintenance debt payments, \$813,658 in foundation program funding reduction, and \$288,560 in excess construction repair cost. The district has been able to meet these obligations by reducing the general operating budget each year.

Figure 3–2 shows the district’s actual revenues and expenditures for fiscal years 2008 to 2012.

**FIGURE 3–2**  
**REFUGIO ISD GENERAL FUND SUMMARY ACTUAL REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES**  
**FISCAL YEARS 2008 TO 2012**

| FISCAL YEAR | REVENUES    | EXPENDITURES | OTHER SOURCES | CHANGE IN FUND BALANCE | ENDING FUND BALANCE |
|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 2008        | \$8,540,362 | \$9,682,026  | (\$913,483)   | (\$2,055,147)          | \$3,505,145         |
| 2009        | \$8,267,425 | \$8,543,246  | (\$261,062)   | (\$536,883)            | \$2,968,262         |
| 2010        | \$8,136,646 | \$8,967,147  | \$2,024,169   | \$1,193,668            | \$4,161,930         |
| 2011        | \$7,778,562 | \$9,051,644  | \$0           | (\$1,273,082)          | \$2,888,848         |
| 2012        | \$7,985,509 | \$7,758,457  | \$41,004      | \$1,803,776            | \$4,692,624         |

## NOTES:

(1) In fiscal year 2010 Other Sources includes \$2 million Maintenance Tax Note.

(2) In fiscal year 2012 Change in Fund Balance includes \$1,535,720 in litigation proceeds, the \$2 million Maintenance Tax Note is outstanding.

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Annual Financial Reports, February 2013.

**Figures 3–3 to 3–6** compare Refugio ISD and four peer districts: Banquette ISD, Karnes City ISD, Skidmore-Tina ISD, and Stratford ISD. Peer districts are districts similar to Refugio ISD that are used for comparison purposes.

**Figure 3–3** shows Refugio ISD and the peer districts' refined average daily attendance for Function 11 expenditures, which include instruction costs. The district's expenditure of \$5,051 per student for instruction for school year 2011–12 was within the range of its peer districts, whose expenditures per refined average daily attendance ranged from \$4,221 to \$6,520. Since school year 2009–10, all but one of the districts reduced instruction-related expenditures.

**Figure 3–4** shows refined average daily attendance for Function 23 expenditures, which include school leadership, for Refugio ISD and the peer districts. Refugio ISD's expenditure of \$501 per student was within the range of the peers whose expenditures per refined average daily attendance ranged from \$467 and \$551.

**Figure 3–5** shows the refined average daily attendance for Function 41 expenditures, which include general administration, for Refugio ISD and its peers. The district's expenditure of \$644 was within the range of the peers whose expenditures per refined average daily attendance ranged

**FIGURE 3–3**  
**ANNUAL AUDITED EXPENDITURES PER EARNED REFINED AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR INSTRUCTION**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2007–08 TO 2011–12**

| DISTRICT       | 2007–08 | 2008–09 | 2009–10 | 2010–11 | 2011–12 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Refugio        | \$6,242 | \$5,732 | \$5,970 | \$5,559 | \$5,051 |
| Banquette      | \$4,619 | \$4,835 | \$4,916 | \$5,215 | \$4,221 |
| Karnes City    | \$5,465 | \$5,170 | \$5,028 | \$4,851 | \$4,803 |
| Skidmore-Tynan | \$4,966 | \$5,110 | \$4,588 | \$4,877 | \$4,622 |
| Stratford      | \$6,298 | \$6,401 | \$6,882 | \$7,010 | \$6,520 |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Annual Audit Reports and Final Summary of Finances, February 2013.

**FIGURE 3–4**  
**ANNUAL AUDITED EXPENDITURES PER EARNED REFINED AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2007–08 TO 2011–12**

| DISTRICT       | 2007–08 | 2008–09 | 2009–10 | 2010–11 | 2011–12 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Refugio        | \$501   | \$628   | \$557   | \$715   | \$501   |
| Banquette      | \$473   | \$483   | \$479   | \$499   | \$525   |
| Karnes City    | \$490   | \$467   | \$489   | \$467   | \$467   |
| Skidmore-Tynan | \$512   | \$510   | \$470   | \$508   | \$551   |
| Stratford      | \$484   | \$531   | \$536   | \$531   | \$533   |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Annual Audit Reports and Final Summary of Finances, February 2013.

**FIGURE 3–5**  
**ANNUAL AUDITED EXPENDITURES PER EARNED REFINED AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR GENERAL ADMINISTRATION**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2007–08 TO 2011–12**

| DISTRICT       | 2007–08      | 2008–09      | 2009–10      | 2010–11      | 2011–12      |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Refugio</b> | <b>\$728</b> | <b>\$777</b> | <b>\$629</b> | <b>\$638</b> | <b>\$644</b> |
| Banquete       | \$709        | \$718        | \$821        | \$862        | \$701        |
| Karnes City    | \$519        | \$471        | \$516        | \$460        | \$469        |
| Skidmore-Tynan | \$495        | \$518        | \$545        | \$697        | \$551        |
| Stratford      | \$540        | \$562        | \$578        | \$582        | \$592        |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Annual Audit Reports and Final Summary of Finances, February 2013.

from \$469 to \$701, but more than the expenditures of three peer districts.

**Figure 3–6** shows refined average daily attendance for Function 51 expenditures, which includes facilities maintenance and operations, for Refugio ISD and its peers. Refugio ISD’s expenditure of \$2,114 per student was more than all other districts. The peer district expenditures ranged from \$954 to \$1,341. This expenditure is the result of the district’s facility litigation and construction issues. The expenditure per refined average daily attendance impact on the Refugio ISD general operation budget is more clearly realized by adding the total amount expended over the last three years. During the three year time span, the district expended \$5,876,514. An amount this large will have a significant impact on the district’s budget and attempts to evaluate functional expenditures as a percent of the total budget will lead to invalid and misleading conclusions.

School districts in Texas are rated by two governmental ratings, the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas and Financial Allocation Study for Texas. The Texas Education Agency administers the Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas, and its purpose is to ensure that school districts and open-enrollment charter schools are held accountable for the quality of their financial management practices and achieve

improved performance in the management of their financial resources. The system is designed to encourage Texas public schools to manage their financial resources better in order to provide the maximum allocation possible for direct instructional purposes. The system will also disclose the quality of local management and decision-making processes that impact the allocation of financial resources in Texas public schools. Of the 1,029 districts rated for school year 2010–11, 900 rated Superior Achievement and 86 were rated Above Standard Achievement. Refugio ISD rated Above Standard Achievement.

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts administers Financial Allocation Study for Texas, which is a detailed study of Texas public school funding and its relation to academic achievement. An accompanying web-based tool allows anyone with Internet access to see the results of the study and to use its data to compare school districts with one another on measures of spending and academic success. Refugio ISD received two stars of the possible five stars and was rated very high on the Spending Index. The district rated near 50 of a possible 100 on the Academic Progress scale.

The business office is responsible for effective financial management of the district. The business functions of the district are the responsibility of the Business Manager and

**FIGURE 3–6**  
**ANNUAL AUDITED EXPENDITURES PER EARNED REFINED AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR FACILITIES MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2007–08 TO 2011–12**

| DISTRICT       | 2007–08       | 2008–09       | 2009–10       | 2010–11       | 2011–12       |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Refugio</b> | <b>\$1553</b> | <b>\$1603</b> | <b>\$2648</b> | <b>\$4001</b> | <b>\$2114</b> |
| Banquete       | \$1347        | \$1727        | \$2646        | \$1646        | \$1341        |
| Karnes City    | \$948         | \$1040        | \$1119        | \$1094        | \$954         |
| Skidmore-Tynan | \$1518        | \$1161        | \$1075        | \$1147        | \$1131        |
| Stratford      | \$1556        | \$1078        | \$1121        | \$794         | \$1007        |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Annual Audit Reports and Final Summary of Finances, February 2013.

payroll/Public Education Information Management System coordinator. Both positions report to the Superintendent. The Business Manager is responsible for most of the financial-related duties, including accounting, accounts payable, internal control, financial performance, planning and budgeting, administrative technology, coordinating external audits, and coordination with tax appraisal and collection agencies. The payroll/Public Education Information Management System coordinator is responsible for payroll and Public Education Information Management System data collection and submission to the Texas Education Agency.

### ACCOMPLISHMENT

- ◆ The business office provides comprehensive financial information to the Board of Trustees monthly for its consideration.

### FINDINGS

- ◆ The district lacks a budget development process that engages administrators and staff.
- ◆ The district's approach to monitoring and managing its financial operations does not provide budget stakeholders adequate access to real-time financial information.
- ◆ The business office is not adequately staffed to ensure proper segregation of duties and efficient use of staff.
- ◆ The business office lacks a comprehensive training program that ensures the staff is properly prepared to handle payroll, Public Education Information Management System reporting, and financial accounting.
- ◆ The district does not have comprehensive written policies and procedures to support campus-level financial activities.
- ◆ The district does not have a policy to routinely rotate its external financial auditor.
- ◆ The district has an inefficient payroll process.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 15: Implement a budgeting process that includes all stakeholders and incorporates district/campus goals and improvement plans.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 16: Implement its school administration software to the fullest extent to monitor and manage its financial operations.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 17: Create a staff position in the business office and reorganize the accounting and payroll functions to ensure proper segregation of duties and efficient use of staff.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 18: Develop a comprehensive annual training plan for business office staff based on the responsibilities of their position.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 19: Develop detailed policies and procedures that provide instructions for campus-level financial activities.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 20: Develop a local board policy regarding external audit firm selection and rotation that ensures audit firm rotation at least every five years.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 21: Reduce payroll processing to once per month.**

### DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENT

#### FINANCIAL REPORTING

The business office provides comprehensive financial information to the Board of Trustees monthly for its consideration.

Comprehensive financial information provides the board with information about all aspects of the district's financial status and enables the board to monitor the financial well-being of the district. The financial information provides the information necessary to make well informed decisions and provides a measure of accountability for district actions.

The board packet has information about many financial areas which detail expenditures, budget, banking, investments, profit/loss statements, energy management, and the self-funded workers compensation insurance program. Specific documents include:

- Check Register Summary by Fund;
- Goliad Special Education Cooperative Check Register;
- Balance Sheet for Local Maintenance and Food Service;



- Comparison of Actual Revenues and Expenditures to Official Budget;
- Current Year Budget Plus Amendments Report;
- Workers Compensation Insurance Report;
- Incentive Account;
- Summary of Investment Portfolio;
- Schedule of Investments;
- Interest Earned by Security;
- Month-end Account Details by Fund;
- Schedule of Securities Pledged by Depository Bank;
- Check Register Detailed Listing;
- Cafeteria Profit/Loss Report; and
- Energy Usage.

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) provides guidelines regarding accountability in government entities, including school districts. Financial reporting should assist in fulfilling an organization's duty to be publicly accountable and should allow stakeholders to assess accountability. It should provide information to determine whether current-year revenues were sufficient to pay for current-year services, demonstrate whether resources were obtained and used in accordance with the organization's adopted budget, and provide information to allow stakeholders to assess the service efforts, costs, and accomplishments of the organization.

The packet the Business Manager provides to the board is evidence of the district's financial accountability. The Check Register Summary by Fund report shows the total amount spent from all the different fund accounts. This report includes detailed information of each check, including vendor, invoice description, account description, and amount. The Business Manager also brings copies of each check to meetings as an informational resource.

The information about budget includes a comparison of the initial budget to the amended budget and a comparison of revenues and expenditures to budget. Banking is monitored through the schedules of securities pledged by the district's depository bank and the use of local maintenance and food service reports. The investment report is presented monthly even though it is only required on a quarterly basis. Each quarter the board formally approves the quarterly report. The

monthly and quarterly investment report includes all of the specific items required by the Texas Government Code, Chapter 2256, and RISD board policy. Special account information is included in the incentive report and the Workers Compensation Insurance report. District efficiencies are tracked in the Cafeteria Profit/Loss and the Energy Usage reports.

All reports are created by the Business Manager who is available at all board meetings to address any questions or to offer detailed explanations when necessary.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### **BUDGET DEVELOPMENT PROCESS (REC. 15)**

The district lacks a budget development process that engages administrators and staff.

Review team interviews indicate that each February budget managers, campus principals, and department heads receive a copy of their current budget with instructions to adjust the budget according to current financial situations. For the past several years, they have received directives from the business office to make significant reductions by a specific percentage. Principals are instructed to give each teacher/coach a budget packet that contains a budget calendar, budget worksheet, object code reference sheet, and budget request forms. Staff list all needed items for the next school year on the budget request forms. If staff has a specific need that will not be funded due to a budget restriction, they present the need to their budget manager for consideration. After completing the budget request forms, staff record the total for each object code (i.e., functional category) on their budget worksheet.

Once staff packets are complete, budget managers review staff budget request forms, justify the expenditures, and record the total on the master budget worksheet. The budget is submitted to the business office in April. In June, the campus and department budget managers present their budgetary needs to the Superintendent and Business Manager at scheduled budget hearings. Review team interviews indicate that the District Improvement Plan and Campus Improvement Plans are not included in the budget instructions given to budget managers, and the plans are not considered as the budget is developed. The improvement plans are not a priority in the budget process and are funded with any remaining funds.

Although Refugio is a property wealthy district, legislation passed by the Eighty-second Legislature has limited state

revenue available to the district. Developing the district's budget has been significantly difficult because of the limited state revenue, and the district's cost related to two recent construction projects. These projects have resulted in litigation and repair costs due to issues related to the structural soundness of the new elementary school and junior high school. The repair cost to the buildings has exceeded the settlement received from the litigation. The district has funded these additional costs from current year budgets, which limits the amount of funding available for district services and staffing. As a result of this budgetary limitation, the district has mandated percentage reductions during the budget development process. The percentage reductions occur with little discussion or collaboration between district administration and budget managers. This lack of collaboration limits the district's ability to effectively adjust the reduction of available funding to meet the district's goals. In some cases, principals may make budgetary adjustments such as allocating funds from their consumable supplies account to fund other campus priorities.

The district's lack of an effective budget development process is evident in the difference in the amount expended for curriculum and instructional staff development, and extracurricular activities. **Figure 3-7** shows the district's refined average daily attendance (RADA) for Function 13

expenditures, which include curriculum development and instructional staff development. The district's expenditure of \$1 per student for curriculum and staff development in school year 2011-12 was below the range of peer districts, whose expenditures per RADA ranged from \$31 to \$149. Peer districts are districts similar to Refugio ISD used for comparison purposes. In the past, the district has funded curriculum and staff development at a much lower level than its peer districts.

**Figure 3-8** shows the district's RADA for Function 36 expenditures, which include extracurricular activities. The district's expenditure of \$809 per student was significantly greater than peer districts, whose expenditures per RADA ranged from \$359 to \$517. RISD expended more than its peer districts and expended 156 percent of the amount expended by the next highest spending district, Stratford ISD, and more than twice the amount spent by the other three districts.

Best practice states that the budgeting process should consider the input of campus and district stakeholders. This process integrates department and functional areas with campus school improvement plans. The foundation of the budget process is the district's mission statement and goals. Campuses and departments develop annual strategies and

**FIGURE 3-7**  
**ANNUAL AUDITED EXPENDITURES PER EARNED REFINED AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF DEVELOPMENT**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2007-08 TO 2011-12**

| DISTRICT       | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Refugio        | \$5     | \$6     | \$4     | \$0     | \$1     |
| Banquete       | \$168   | \$146   | \$170   | \$141   | \$144   |
| Karnes City    | \$44    | \$38    | \$32    | \$34    | \$31    |
| Skidmore-Tynan | \$113   | \$119   | \$118   | \$128   | \$149   |
| Stratford      | \$32    | \$40    | \$33    | \$29    | \$31    |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Annual Audit Reports and Final Summary of Finances, February 2013.

**FIGURE 3-8**  
**ANNUAL AUDITED EXPENDITURES PER EARNED REFINED AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE FOR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2007-08 TO 2011-12**

| DISTRICT       | 2007-08 | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Refugio        | \$841   | \$887   | \$844   | \$780   | \$809   |
| Banquete       | \$504   | \$594   | \$611   | \$561   | \$359   |
| Karnes City    | \$394   | \$347   | \$369   | \$365   | \$365   |
| Skidmore-Tynan | \$491   | \$490   | \$652   | \$567   | \$375   |
| Stratford      | \$508   | \$560   | \$536   | \$537   | \$517   |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Annual Audit Reports and Final Summary of Finances, February 2013.

improvement plans in support of the district's goals and priorities. Budgeting is an essential tool in educational planning and evaluation, and links educational goals and programs to financial resources. This link is critical to effective budgeting, and may enhance budgetary and educational performance evaluation since budget allocations are closely associated with instructional plans.

The link between educational goals and programs to financial resources makes a district's budget the most critical policy document since it is the financial plan a school district uses to achieve its goals and objectives. A budget reflects:

- stakeholder decisions and the resources and services the district will provide;
- a district's priorities for its various activities;
- various stakeholder influence in the budget development process; and
- a district's acquisition and allocation of resources.

Liberty Hill ISD provides an example of a district that uses a budget preparation process that involves all stakeholders both vertically and horizontally aligned. The vertical budgeting process includes multiple meetings and discussions between the campus administrators and the central office leadership team, which includes representatives from general administration, business and curriculum/instruction. The process is also coordinated horizontally at the campus and district level. The horizontal campus budget development includes the coordinated efforts of grade level committees, subject area committees, campus leadership and the campus site-based decision-making committee. The horizontal district budget development includes discussions between campuses, district level departments, and the superintendent.

Refugio ISD should implement a budgeting process that includes all stakeholders and incorporates district/campus goals and improvement plans. To engage community stakeholders, district administration and the Board of Trustees should include community involvement in setting district goals.

The discussion at all levels of budget development should include:

- scope of the instructional program;
- role of athletics in the total program;
- future facility needs;

- current construction failures and their remediation; and
- appropriate use of fund balance to accomplish these goals.

The budgeting process should have opportunities for the board, district departments, and campus departments to allocate funding to meet the district's priorities. All district staff should participate in developing goals and setting priorities. Budget preparation guidelines should involve stakeholders, and incorporate district and campus priorities and improvement plans in the budget development process.

**Figure 3–9** shows recommended roles and responsibilities for the district's budget preparation. These recommendations emphasize the involvement of staff at all levels in the planning process to assign resources with the district's priorities.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **ADMINISTRATIVE SOFTWARE (REC. 16)**

The district's approach to monitoring and managing its financial operations does not provide budget stakeholders adequate access to real-time financial information.

Review team interviews indicate the district provides inadequate access to and use of its school administrative software. The district has a paper-based financial system that relies on monthly printouts to provide financial information to budget managers (e.g., department heads and principals). The Business Manager provides paper copies of the budget and distributes them monthly to budget managers and the Superintendent. Budget managers do not have access to the financial module of the district's administrative software for real-time access to financial information. Instead, budget managers keep a separate set of records to track purchases made after the date of the budget printout. Interviews indicate that budget managers may call the business office to request current financial information for a specific account.

Further, review team interviews indicate that the district's purchase order system relies on staff making a purchase request. For example, to order an item, staff must complete a paper purchase request, include a vendor on the approved vendor list, and send the purchase request to the business office for review and approval. The Business Manager reviews the purchase request to ensure that the request is from the proper account, there are funds available for the request, and that it uses an approved vendor. At this time a purchase order

**FIGURE 3–9**  
**RECOMMENDED ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BUDGET PREPARATION**  
**APRIL 2013**

| POSITION   | BUDGET ROLE                   | RESPONSIBILITIES  |
|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Campus Principals  | Budget Managers               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appoints staff to serve on the Campus/ Program Resource Planning Group (RPG)</li> <li>• schedules, chairs, and maintains records of meetings of RPG</li> </ul>   |
| Maintenance Supervisor, Transportation Supervisor, Information Technology Specialist and Athletic Director | Budget Managers               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coordinates with other affected budget managers in the development of the resource plan for their respective service areas</li> </ul>  |
| Director of Elementary and Secondary Education   | Co-budget manager             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coordinates the involvement of principals for their respective programs</li> </ul>   |
| Campus staff   | Resource planning group (RPG) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• considers allocations and budget requests according to planning priorities and identified student needs</li> <li>• develops justification for each budget request and assigns a funding priority to each budget request</li> <li>• reviews allocations and budget requests developed by the RPG and offers advice in terms of meeting the goals and objectives of the Campus Improvement Plan</li> </ul>   |
| Superintendent, Director of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Business Manager                       | Budget Review Team (BRT)      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledges review of Campus Resource Plan to be submitted for district level review</li> <li>• provide feedback and recommendations in an advisory capacity to improve the process and communicate any funding needs to administration</li> </ul>  |
|  |                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coordinates with budget managers the funding priorities assigned to non-allocated requests</li> <li>• recommends revised allocation plans and appropriate non-allocated budget requests with assigned funding priorities</li> <li>• makes districtwide adjustments to allocations or budgets based on changes in available revenue sources</li> <li>• recommends to the superintendent a funding level that will be committed to non-allocated requests in the district and which of the priorities can be addressed within that funding level</li> </ul>  |
|  |                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviews campus and program allocation plans submitted by the budget managers for the appropriateness of proposed expenditures in addressing stated campus, program, and district goals and objectives and in targeting resources to identified student needs</li> <li>• reviews allocation plans submitted by support service budget managers as to appropriateness of proposed expenditures in meeting stated service or department objectives and district goals</li> <li>• reviews budget requests and priorities recommended by the budget managers, if applicable</li> <li>• evaluates the intended purpose of each non-allocated request, if available, and determines if any requests are inappropriate for the intended purpose</li> </ul> |

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, April 2013.

is created in the system. Upon approval, staff initiates the purchase order by mailing it to the vendor. Following receipt of the purchased item or service, staff (purchaser) verifies the order is correct, and notifies the business office that payment can be made.

While the district has purchased several modules from Skyward, the district's school administrative software, only

the business office can access the financial management module.

**Figure 3–10** shows the 15 modules purchased by the district to manage its financial, human resources, payroll, PEIMS data collection, and student records needs.

**FIGURE 3–10  
REFUGIO ISD SKYWARD MODULES PURCHASED  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

- PEIMS Student Records
- SKY2GO
- Family Access
- Food Service
- Educator Gradebook
- Health Records
- Student Management
- School Based Activity Accounting
- Financial Management
- PEIMS Finance
- Fixed Assets
- Employee Management
- Payroll
- Salary Negotiations
- True Time

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Skyward Agreement, February 2013.

Figure 3–11 shows the capabilities of the financial module to assist with monitoring and management of many financial operations. With approved access to the module, staff could view selected accounts. Details of the selected accounts (e.g., budget amounts, encumbered amounts, and account balances) could be viewed in real-time. However, in February 2013, other than the Business Manager, staff did not have access to the financial module.

**FIGURE 3–11  
SKYWARD FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT LICENSE  
FUNCTIONAL AREAS  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

|                              |                       |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| State Reporting              | Accounts Payable      |
| Account Management Reporting | ACH                   |
| Budget Management            | Contracts             |
| Data Mining                  | eCommerce             |
| General Inputs               | Personnel Profile     |
| Payroll                      | Purchasing            |
| Grant Management             | Retirement Processing |
| Chart of Accounts            | SkyPort (dashboard)   |
| Time Off                     | Vendor Master         |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Skyward Agreement, February 2013.

The use of monthly printouts rather than real-time information limits the effectiveness of budget managers. Without current account balance information, budget managers do not know if funds are available to approve purchase requests. Keeping a separate set of books or contacting the business office to verify account balances is inefficient. Financial monitoring and management requires access to current information. Budgets often require business managers to transfer funds between accounts to fund shifting priorities. This real-time financial information allows budget managers to optimize their budgets.

All school districts in Texas use a school administrative software system. These systems are highly integrated information systems focused on student and business applications. They are tailored solely to the operational and reporting requirements, and are designed and configured to meet the needs of districts. The software systems are integrated and provide real-time information. For example, information in one module are applied to the software’s database and may be accessed by other modules. District PEIMS requirements, school district practices and education law are inherent in the software, which allows a district to easily extract and submit PEIMS data. Districts use the software modules to manage finances, accounts receivable, asset management, budget and payroll while ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations.

Liberty Hill ISD uses school administrative software to manage and monitor its finances. For example, the district provides each budget manager account access. As a result, they can view their budgets in real-time and with all transaction detail. This detail includes the original budgets, amended budgets, encumbrances, expenditures, individual account balances, and important information about purchase orders. Additionally, the district uses the software to manage the purchase requests.

The Copperas Cove ISD business office uses a financial module for the purchasing process. The system allows staff to complete a purchase request. The software is linked to the general ledger accounts and the district’s approved vendor list, and restricts staff to approved accounts. The system prevents staff from completing a purchase request if adequate funds are not available in the account. The link to the approved vendor list verifies that the district has the information needed to correctly process the request. Staff submits their purchase request, and the request follows the appropriate approval path. General education requests would follow an approval path that would include a principal, the

accounts payable clerk, and the business manager. Items that affect a department such as special education, Title I, or technology items have an approval path that includes the department supervisor. During the approval process, the request is verified for the proper account, uses an approved vendor, and is consistent with the district's priorities. Once approved, the request is converted into a purchase order and placed with the vendor, and the appropriate account is encumbered. When the staff (purchaser) receives the order, the purchase order is checked against the items that are received, and the business office is notified that the purchase order can be paid.

The district should implement its school administration software to the fullest extent to monitor and manage its financial operations. As part of the recommendation, the district should create individual accounts for all budget managers to improve access to real-time financial information. The individual accounts should provide all budget managers inquiry and report access to the financial accounts, and allow them to view general ledger account detail and summary information. It is essential for the Superintendent to have inquiry and report access to all of the district's accounts and the ability to view both general ledger account detail and summary information.

The school administrative software that RISD purchased can manage the district's financial operations and the purchase order process more efficiently. The purchasing module would allow the district to streamline the purchasing process by entering and approving requisitions electronically, enforce budget control with built-in restriction tools, and provide full integration with accounts payable, accounts receivable, and the general ledger. By using the software, the district could also save money by reducing paper waste and save time by reducing redundant data entry.

Regarding purchasing functions, the district should provide all individuals making purchase requisitions access to their budget accounts, and limit access to inquiry and completion of purchase requests. The approval process should include additional steps for requisitions outside of the general education program, such as special education and technology.

As part of implementation, the district must train all staff that are given access to the financial module. This annual training should include an introduction to the financial module and continued training related to process and procedural changes. In addition, the Business Manager should develop a user's manual for staff making purchase

order requests, and conduct annual training for new users and update sessions for current users. The manual should include screen shots of the school administrative software followed by step-by-step procedures for completing a purchase request.

The district can implement this recommendation using its existing resources.

#### **BUSINESS OFFICE STAFFING (REC. 17)**

The business office is not adequately staffed to ensure proper segregation of duties and efficient use of staff.

The business office has a staff of two, the Business Manager and the payroll/PEIMS coordinator. The Business Manager has held this position since school year 2000–01 when promoted from a clerical position due to the retirement of the previous Business Manager. This change reduced the number of business office staff to two positions because the district did not fill the vacated clerical position. The two remaining staff handled the daily operations without a third position. In fall 2011, the former payroll supervisor unexpectedly resigned. This vacancy was filled by a food service clerk. Without outside assistance or training, the payroll/PEIMS coordinator and Business Manager, who had not performed a payroll function in over 10 years, managed to complete payroll functions in school year 2011–12.

During school year 2012–13, the payroll/PEIMS coordinator has become capable of manually completing the two payrolls each month. In fall 2012, the payroll/PEIMS coordinator was assigned the duties of a PEIMS coordinator, but training for the new duties did not occur. The payroll/PEIMS coordinator indicated the workload of processing two payrolls monthly, calculating all payments outside the regular pay cycle, and managing the accounting of staff leave did not allow for off-site training. The payroll/PEIMS coordinator was not able to complete the fall or spring PEIMS submission, which was performed by staff previously responsible for PEIMS submission.

The Business Manager spends a significant portion of time on accounts payable and other clerical duties. These clerical tasks are not typical duties of a district's business manager. The payroll/PEIMS coordinator is responsible for the district's payroll functions. These duties include assigning bus drivers and buses for all extracurricular activities, issuing keys to the vehicles for these trips, and approving expenditure requests made by the maintenance and transportation departments. The clerical workload has limited the Business

Manager's ability to implement the financial module of the school administration software, monitor the district's activity accounts, and forecast the district's revenue and recapture payment. During the district's annual financial audit for school year 2011–12, the external auditor noted the incorrect accounting in the debt service fund and the schedule of expenditures by function. For at least five years, the annual audits have also indicated the district has a significant deficiency due to inadequate segregation of duties in the business office. The current staffing approach of the business office may be contributing to the auditor's findings.

The district's payroll/PEIMS coordinator is responsible for generating payroll and all payroll supervisory tasks. Additionally, the Business Manager is responsible for generating and supervising accounts payable tasks. These assignments do not provide a distinct segregation of duties. Segregation of duties refers to a measure of control in which no person is given responsibility for more than one related task. This practice reduces errors and creates a system of checks and balances. To ensure a district's financial integrity, these tasks are typically designated to separate positions.

Additionally, the Business Manager's multiple clerical tasks do not align with this position's typical responsibilities and have resulted in inadequate coverage of the core financial responsibilities of a business manager. These responsibilities include financial planning, staff supervision, staff training, monitoring of district activity account operations, and the development of district business office procedures and processes.

The lack of segregation of duties in the business office leaves the district vulnerable to misappropriation of funds. Without a system of checks and balances, the business office does not have controls to prevent errors or fraud. For one example, assigning all payroll responsibilities or accounts payable responsibilities to one position could result in inadvertent payments to staff or vendors. The only deterrence the district has against the misappropriation of funds is the detailed reporting submitted to the Board of Trustees for review. The board receives check registers that provide details for all expenditures.

The Texas Education Agency's Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG), Module 1, Chapter 1.5 Internal Control, states that a strong system of internal control enables the school district to ensure that resources are properly handled, properly used and are available for management's and the board's designation. In addition,

various federal and state agencies require school district auditors to report on the internal control structure as a whole and as it relates to the federal funding.

Comparing staff size of the RISD business office to two of the peer districts, Stratford ISD and Banquete ISD, indicate that both peer districts perform their duties with a larger staff than RISD. Additionally, neither of the peer's business office is responsible for the PEIMS data collection. Stratford ISD, with an enrollment of 590, has three business office staff, which include a business manager, accounts payable clerk, and payroll/insurance/wellness coordinator. Banquete ISD, with an enrollment of 806, has four business staff, which include an assistant superintendent for business, business office manager, accounts payable specialist, and a payroll specialist. RISD, with an enrollment of 704, is operating its business office with a staff of two, and have the additional responsibility to collect and coordinate PEIMS data.

The district should create a staff position in the business office and reorganize the accounting and payroll functions to ensure proper segregation of duties and efficient use of staff. The district should consider creating a business office clerk position, which would allow many of the clerical tasks to be removed from both the payroll/PEIMS coordinator and the Business Manager. This new organizational structure would separate the clerical and approval responsibilities.

**Figure 3–12** shows the review team's recommended responsibilities for the business office staff. These responsibilities are divided between the positions to ensure segregation of duties.

A business office staff of three would benefit the district in the following ways:

- allow the Business Manager to manage the district's financial affairs;
- allow the Business Manager to provide oversight of the campus activity accounts and all aspects of the business office;
- provide segregation of duties;
- provide cross-training of staff; and
- improve accountability and enhance business office management support.

The fiscal impact of creating a business office clerk position assumes an entry level salary of \$23,053, including benefits. This salary is based on an average of other entry level central office positions in the district.

**FIGURE 3–12**  
**RECOMMENDED REFUGIO ISD BUSINESS OFFICE POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

| <b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>   | <b>BUSINESS<br/>MANAGER</b> | <b>PAYROLL/PEIMS<br/>COORDINATOR</b> | <b>BUSINESS<br/>OFFICE<br/>CLERK</b> |
|---|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Maintain district payroll registers, payroll check registers and employee payroll information.  |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Calculate employee wages, salaries, hours worked, overtime pay, and determine withholdings, deductions and net pay.   |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Prepare paychecks and maintain employee payroll history.  |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Balance payroll earnings and deductions; make related transfers of funds and deposits.  |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Receive and audit time sheets for all district employees.   |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Prepare and submit payroll reports and forms including those required by Internal Revenue Service, Teacher Retirement System, Division of Workers' Compensation of the Texas Department of Insurance, and the Texas Workforce Commission. |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Prepare and post all payroll changes including payroll deductions, salary, termination and new employee information.  |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Other duties as assigned by the business manager.   |                             | X                                    |                                      |
| Supervise and control payroll preparation and production. Ensure adherence to standards and procedures, and take steps to correct problems, delays and inaccuracies.  | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Ensure accuracy of payroll data input and calculations, balancing each payroll prior to check disbursement.   | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Process payment of all liabilities generated through payroll, including taxes, TRS deposits, insurance, etc.  | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Process and resolve direct deposit and other banking interactions.  | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Select, train and supervise all business office staff.  | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Receive and process for payment all accounts payable invoices, requisitions, purchase orders, receipts and vendor information.  |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Match invoices with proper purchase orders; ensure completeness and accuracy of invoices and shipments.   |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Detect and resolve problems with incorrect orders, invoices and shipments.  |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Contact district personnel and vendors to correct or obtain information needed.   |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Confirm balances in accounts for all requisitions.  |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Prepare and distribute paid invoices at designated times.   |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Maintain vendor files and set up new accounts when changes occur.   |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Other duties as assigned by the business manager.   |                             |                                      | X                                    |
| Develop and implement procedures to ensure timely processing of all accounts payable invoices, requisitions and purchase orders.  | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Maintain accurate records of accounts owed.   | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Prepare invoices, including computing discounts.  | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Process timely payment of all liabilities generated.  | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Conduct periodic checks of department payables, including travel reports and food service orders.   | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Keep the superintendent informed on the business affairs of the district.   | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Evaluate accounting procedures, systems and controls.   | X                           |                                      |                                      |
| Maintain a continuous auditing program for all funds and assist the district's independent auditors in conducting the annual audit.   | X                           |                                      |                                      |



**FIGURE 3–12 (CONTINUED)  
RECOMMENDED REFUGIO ISD BUSINESS OFFICE POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES  
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

| RESPONSIBILITIES   | BUSINESS<br>MANAGER | PAYROLL/PEIMS<br>COORDINATOR | BUSINESS<br>OFFICE<br>CLERK |
|--|---------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ensure that accounting systems comply with applicable laws and regulations including TEA's FASRG.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Develop period cash flow analysis to aid in determining cash available for investment and payment of bills.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Develop period calculations of the FSP revenue and Chapter 41 recapture.   | X                   |                              |                             |
| Maintain the district investment portfolio.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Prepare monthly bank reconciliations for all accounts and review reconciliations of vendor and payroll clearing accounts.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Assist in the preparation of the budget and development of long and short range objectives for the business operations of the district.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Work with district personnel to project student enrollments, staffing needs, building and facility's needs, energy needs, capital equipment needs and other cost items for district and individual school improvement. | X                   |                              |                             |
| Ensure that business operations support the district's goals and objectives.   | X                   |                              |                             |
| Prepare and evaluate monthly financial statements and related budget reports.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Develop semi-annual financial information for submission of data to TEA.   | X                   |                              |                             |
| Prepare quarterly and final reports for all federal or grant funds.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Maintain accurate and current computerized inventory records of the district's fixed and movable assets.   | X                   |                              |                             |
| Organize and conduct sales to dispose of surplus and salvage equipment.  | X                   |                              |                             |
| Prepare bids and bid specifications.   | X                   |                              |                             |
| Receive and open bids, tabulate results and prepare written recommendations.   | X                   |                              |                             |
| Develop training options and/or improvement plans to ensure exemplary business operations.   | X                   |                              |                             |
| Evaluate job performance of employees to ensure effectiveness.   | X                   |                              |                             |

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, April 2013.

**TRAINING OF BUSINESS OFFICE STAFF (REC. 18)**

The business office lacks a comprehensive training program that ensures that the staff is properly prepared to handle payroll, PEIMS reporting, and financial accounting.

The Business Manager has a Master's degree and a Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) certificate, but does not attend the area TASBO meetings or attend the activities offered at the Regional Education Service Center III (Region 3). Review team interviews indicate that the Business Manager planned to attend the midwinter TASBO conference, but had not made any plans to attend any of the training classes. Review team interviews indicate the payroll/PEIMS coordinator has received some PEIMS and Skyward training as well as some on-the-job training provided by the Business Manager.

The lack of comprehensive training for business office staff puts the district at risk of noncompliance with Texas Education Agency procedures, Teacher Retirement System procedures, Internal Revenue Service regulations, and the federal Fair Labor Standards Act. Without proper training of the payroll/PEIMS coordinator, possible PEIMS reporting errors could cause the district to lose funding of programs that are dependent on PEIMS data reporting. The reporting of PEIMS data is a detailed and complicated activity that requires training and continued updates related to changes in the PEIMS process, as well as campus oversight.

The Business Manager's lack of training has resulted in financial inconsistencies. The external auditor noted an accounting finding due to improper posting of federal funds (American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009). Additionally, review team interviews indicate that staff lack

an understanding of the district's recapture payment to the state, which fluctuates each year.

Despite the Business Manager having the proper credentials and extensive district experience, these examples indicate that problems resulted in the business office due to the lack of ongoing training. Rio Hondo ISD's business office requires its staff to attend training. For the past 20 years, the district has paid for the business office staff and campus activity secretaries' TASBO membership and one course at an annual TASBO conference each year. The district's business manager credits the training that the staff has received as being the primary reason the district received a perfect annual financial audit with no findings this year. The business manager stated that the knowledge and understanding of the detail documentation received at the training sessions as a key to having a staff that functions at this level.

Many organizations provide business, financial, and accounting opportunities for staff training. These organizations include the Government Finance Officers Association, the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, regional education service centers, and TASBO. Additionally, TASBO offers certification programs for business office staff. Certification courses include: Accounting, Distribution and Inventory, Maintenance and Operations, Information Technology, Information Technology Management, Payroll, PEIMS, Personnel, Purchasing and Supply Management, Risk Management, Safe Schools, School Nutrition, Textbooks, and Transportation. Management courses are also provided, but are not considered an area of specialization.

RISD should develop a comprehensive annual training plan for business office staff based on the responsibilities of their position. When developing a training plan, the district should identify additional opportunities for staff to learn or enhance their job skills that may occur throughout the school year. The annual training plan should include a staff development component that requires staff to attend appropriate courses based on their positions.

The fiscal impact of providing annual business office staff development assumes the district provide an annual budget of \$2,000 for training opportunities.

#### ***BUSINESS OFFICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES (REC. 19)***

The district does not have comprehensive written policies and procedures to support campus-level financial activities.

The business office has a finance manual that includes general procedures. Review team interviews indicate that campus staff were not aware of the finance manual and had not been trained on campus-level financial operations. While the manual covers fundamental operations for the campuses, it does not include detail for campus-level financial tasks.

All campus secretaries have ten or more years of experience; however, the lack of detailed campus-level procedures places the district at risk. Staff attrition may leave the district vulnerable to inefficiencies because of knowledge not being shared at the campus level. Without detailed procedures, all financial activities rely on the Business Manager's knowledge and discretion. The Business Manager's retirement or resignation would put the viability of the financial services at risk.

The Government Finance Officers Association best practice recommendation states:

Every government should document its accounting policies and procedures. Traditionally, such documentation has taken the form of an accounting policies and procedures manual. An appropriate level of management to emphasize their importance and authority should promulgate accounting policies and procedures. The documentation of accounting policies and procedures should be evaluated annually and updated periodically, no less than once every three years, according to a predetermined schedule. Changes in policies and procedures that occur between these periodic reviews should be updated in the documentation promptly as they occur. A specific employee should be assigned the duty of overseeing this process. Management is responsible for ensuring that this duty is performed consistently. The documentation of accounting policies and procedures should indicate which employees are to perform which procedures. Procedures should be described as they are actually intended to be performed rather than in some idealized form. Also, the documentation of accounting policies and procedures should explain the design and purpose of control related procedures to increase employee understanding of and support.

A well-designed and properly maintained system of documenting financial policies and procedures enhances both accountability and consistency. The resulting documentation can also serve as a useful training tool for staff.

The district should develop detailed policies and procedures that provide instructions for campus-level financial activities. The Business Manager, payroll/PEIMS coordinator, and campus staff with financial responsibilities should revise the current finance and activity accounting manuals. The revised manuals should include samples of work, screen shots, and descriptions of the steps required to accomplish each activity. Staff should meet regularly to develop the manuals as they complete work in their job cycle. The manuals should become the primary repository of financial policies and procedures and should mitigate the risk of long-term absence or resignation affecting the district's financial services.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **FINANCIAL AUDITOR POLICY (REC. 20)**

The district does not have a policy to routinely rotate its external financial auditor.

RISD has not issued a request for proposals (RFP) for external financial auditing services in at least 10 years. Review team interviews indicate that staff could not recall using a different auditing firm. By using the same audit firm for an extended period, the district may receive an audit report that is less rigorous due to the complacency of the auditor. The district may not recognize issues in areas that the auditor fails to closely review. This familiarity and comfort level associated with an extended relationship could create the perception that the external auditor lacks independence.

Best practice requires auditors to maintain independence so opinions, conclusions, judgments, and recommendations will be viewed as coming from a knowledgeable and impartial third party. School districts are required by state and federal law to have their financial statements undergo an annual external audit. While neither state nor federal law requires a periodic change of auditors, best practice states that auditor independence is enhanced by the district periodically replacing the current auditor with another. Additionally, the perspective of a different audit firm assures the auditor's independence from school district influence.

The Texas Education Agency's Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG) includes a sample request for auditor qualifications. The sample specifies the terms, conditions, evaluation criteria, and scope of the work required. It also requests information from interested accounting firms concerning estimated fees, qualifications of the audit staff, and proposed approaches to conducting the audit. The sample also includes provisions for extending a

contract upon the satisfactory delivery of the services, which includes an extension of four years.

The district should develop a local board policy regarding external audit firm selection and rotation that ensures audit firm rotation at least every five years. The Board of Trustees, Superintendent, and Business Manager should develop a local policy for selection and rotation of audit firms. The policy should reflect best practice.

Additionally, the Business Manager should prepare a RFP for auditing service. In developing the RFP, the Business Manager should refer to the FASRG's sample request for qualification. The district must ensure that firms responding to the RFP are presented to the Board of Trustees for review. The board should study each firm's qualifications to determine which service the district will use.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **FREQUENCY OF PAYROLL (REC. 21)**

The district has an inefficient payroll process.

The district pays its staff biweekly. This practice requires the payroll/PEIMS coordinator to process two complete payrolls each month. Biweekly payroll processing for all staff is not a typical business office practice. The typical payroll process includes a single payment and one payroll cycle each month. This practice reduces the volume of work required of business office staff.

**Figure 3–13** shows the tasks required to complete a payroll cycle. Specific tasks are required for a single payroll cycle, monthly reporting, and quarterly reporting.

Research states that an effective payroll process must use a structured approach. To support the efficient operation of the payroll department, a district should minimize pay cycles, pay on the same schedule, use an integrated payroll system, and outsource to an external vendor if expertise is not available or outsourcing is more cost effective.

RISD should reduce payroll processing to once per month. The district could allow hourly staff to "opt in" to receive payroll checks bimonthly, with salaried staff receiving one paycheck per month. This change should occur in September at the start of school year 2013–14. The Business Manager should present the policy change to all district staff during the summer.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**FIGURE 3–13**  
**PAYROLL CYCLE TASKS**


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**PER PAYROLL**


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- 1 Process Pre-Notes on new direct deposit requests
- 2 Create pay calculations: new hires, exits, pay changes, etc.
- 3 Organize tickler file to prepare spreadsheets and data entry updates
- 4 Update spreadsheets: healthcare, court order, retiree, part-time, non-Teacher Retirement System (TRS) eligible, etc.
- 5 Audit time sheets for overtime and leave discrepancies
- 6 Update overtime (transmittal) spreadsheet
- 7 Update balance spreadsheet (minus last pay variables, plus this pay variables)
- 8 Data Entry: new hires, exits, pay changes, accounting changes, court orders, transmittals, leave, etc.
- 9 Run pay test, double-check all changes and correct any errors
- 10 Balance the balance sheet (minus last pay, plus this pay)
- 11 Update check register spreadsheet to ensure no duplication of check numbers
- 12 Print finance inquiry on payroll accounts to monitor proper balance of accounts
- 13 Submit payroll
- 14 Submit accounting documents to accountant: Fund Transfer Summary, Liability Summary, Distribution report., etc.
- 15 Encumber funds for remaining payrolls
- 16 Process Liability reports; check extracts, deduction register, liability check run, etc.
- 17 Process Automated Clearing House (ACH) for payroll direct deposits
- 18 Process ACH for liability deposits
- 19 Print live checks: liabilities and payroll
- 20 Complete W2 and Electronic Federal Tax Payment System (EFTPS) spreadsheet
- 21 Pay EFTPS online
- 22 Post EFTPS in general ledger
- 23 Print finance inquiry on payroll accounts to monitor proper balance of accounts
- 24 Upload fund transfer summary in general ledger
- 25 Provide human resources with deduction register reports for reconciliation of benefit deductions
- 26 Finalize check register spreadsheet
- 27 File paperwork associated with the payroll cycle, keep changes necessary for next payroll in tickler
- 28 Balance payroll reconciliation spreadsheet

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**MONTHLY REPORTING—IN ADDITION TO PAYROLL PROCESS**


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- 1 Process TRS TRAQS: Member Data (MD), Employment of Retired Members (ER), Regular Payroll (RP), Federal, Surcharges, FSP, etc.
- 2 Update TEXNET Spreadsheet
- 3 Pay TEXNET
- 4 Post TEXNET in general ledger
- 5 Print finance inquiry on payroll accounts to monitor proper balance of accounts
- 6 Run files and upload to TRS TRAQS system: MD, ER, RP
- 7 Submit signatures to TRS TRAQS reports
- 8 Post Foundation School Program system (FSP) data on FSP website

**FIGURE 3–13 (CONTINUED)  
PAYROLL CYCLE TASKS**

**QUARTERLY REPORTING—IN ADDITION TO PAYROLL PROCESS**

- 1 Process Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) report and upload on TWC website
- 2 Process 941 reports
- 3 Balance 941 reports to ongoing W2 and EFTPS spreadsheets
- 4 Complete Form 941 and submit to IRS

NOTES:

- (1) 941 report - this report provides year-to-date totals for reporting payroll taxes.
- (2) Pre-Notes - the term used to "test" the direct deposit information prior to running payroll.
- (3) TEXNET - electronic payment network that sends TRS (TRAQS) related payments.
- (4) TRAQS - TRS Reporting and Query System.

SOURCE: Regional Education Service Center XIII Payroll Department.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 3: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

| RECOMMENDATION   | 2013–14           | 2014–15           | 2015–16           | 2016–17           | 2017–18           | TOTAL<br>5-YEAR<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS | ONE-<br>TIME<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 15 Implement a budgeting process that includes all stakeholders and incorporates district/campus goals and improvement plans.  | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                                   | \$0                                |
| 16 Implement its school administration software to the fullest extent to monitor and manage its financial operations.  | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                                   | \$0                                |
| 17 Create a staff position in the business office and reorganize the accounting and payroll functions to ensure proper segregation of duties and efficient use of staff. | (\$23,053)        | (\$23,053)        | (\$23,053)        | (\$23,053)        | (\$23,053)        | (\$115,265)                           | \$0                                |
| 18 Develop a comprehensive annual training plan for business office staff based on the responsibilities of their position.   | (\$2,000)         | (\$2,000)         | (\$2,000)         | (\$2,000)         | (\$2,000)         | (\$10,000)                            | \$0                                |
| 19 Develop detailed policies and procedures that provide instructions for campus-level financial activities.   | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                                   | \$0                                |
| 20 Develop a local board policy regarding external audit firm selection and rotation that ensures audit firm rotation at least every five years.                         | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                                   | \$0                                |
| 21 Reduce payroll processing to once per month.  | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0               | \$0                                   | \$0                                |
| <b>CHAPTER 3—TOTALS</b>  | <b>(\$25,053)</b> | <b>(\$25,053)</b> | <b>(\$25,053)</b> | <b>(\$25,053)</b> | <b>(\$25,053)</b> | <b>(\$125,265)</b>                    | <b>\$0</b>                         |

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# **CHAPTER 4**

# **ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 4. ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT

An independent school district's asset and risk management function controls costs by ensuring that it is adequately protected against all significant losses with the lowest possible insurance premiums. This protection includes the identification of risks and methods to minimize their impact. Risks can include investments, liabilities, capital assets, and insurance.

Managing assets and risks is dependent on the organizational structure of the district. Larger districts typically have staff dedicated to asset and risk management, while smaller districts assign staff these responsibilities as a secondary assignment. Managing investments includes identifying those with maximum interest earning potential while safeguarding funds and ensuring liquidity to meet fluctuating cash flow demands. Forecasting and managing revenue includes efficient tax collections to allow a district to meet its cash flow needs, earn the highest possible interest, and estimate state and federal funding. Capital asset management should identify a district's property (e.g., buildings, vehicles, equipment, etc.) and protect it from theft and obsolescence. Insurance programs cover employees' health, workers' compensation, and district liability.

The Refugio Independent School District's business office is responsible for asset and risk management. These functions are the responsibility of the Business Manager and payroll/PEIMS coordinator. Both positions report to the Superintendent. The Business Manager is responsible for cash management and operations, cash management policies and procedures, investment policies and procedures, cash flow forecasting, risk management, insurance coverage, capital asset management, bond issuance and indebtedness, and review and evaluation of contracting process. The payroll/PEIMS coordinator has clerical responsibilities related to insurance and estimating funding.

The district conducts an inventory of capital assets each October under the direction of the Business Manager. The district classifies capital assets as items valued at \$5,000 or greater. The campus principals, transportation supervisor, maintenance supervisor, and information technology specialist record the inventory. The Business Manager submits the inventory to the district's financial auditor for review.

### FINDINGS

- ◆ The district does not routinely forecast the state's share of funding or the district's recapture payment to the state.
- ◆ The district does not have established cash control procedures.
- ◆ The district lacks a comprehensive manual for activity accounting and staff training related to activity funds.
- ◆ The district has minimal administrative oversight of activity accounts.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 22: Establish a process to routinely calculate revenue from the Foundation School Program and estimate Chapter 41 cost of recapture.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 23: Develop written cash handling procedures and train all individuals who handle funds in the proper use of those procedures.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 24: Develop a comprehensive manual for activity accounting, and establish a training program for new and existing staff.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 25: Establish a process for auditing all activity account transactions.**

### DETAILED FINDINGS

#### **REVENUE AND RECAPTURE FORECASTING (REC. 22)**

Refugio ISD (RISD) does not routinely forecast the state's share of funding or the district's recapture payment.

During review team interviews, the Business Manager explained that there had not been time to properly calculate revenue from the Foundation School Program (FSP), which is the state program that establishes the amount of state and local funding due to school districts under Texas school finance law and that provides the state share of this funding to districts. The Superintendent commented that the district's recapture payment, or Chapter 41 payment, was confusing and seemed to fluctuate greatly from year-to-year. Chapter 41 of the Texas Education Code makes provisions for certain



school districts to share their local tax revenue with other school districts. The funds that are distributed by the property-wealthy districts are “recaptured” by the school finance system to assist with financing of public education. Review team interviews occurred in February 2013, and calculations for FSP and Chapter 41 had not been prepared.

The Business Manager indicated that the district had occasionally used the summary of finances template to forecast earned FSP revenue and Chapter 41 cost; however, this practice did not occur on a regular basis. A district’s funding comes from three main sources: local school district property taxes, state funds, and federal funds. The majority of funding comes from local property taxes, which are collected by school districts, and state funding. State funding, or FSP revenue, is based on the amount and the number of students in average daily attendance (ADA). The forecasting of FSP revenue provides a basis for districts to plan their budgets.

The lack of routine FSP calculations and projections may not allow a district to be prepared to meet its financial obligations. Without regular forecasting of FSP revenue and Chapter 41 recapture, a district is unable to estimate the revenue available for budgeting. Without adequate forecasting, a district may be forced to supplement revenue using its fund balance. Districts do not receive local and state revenue in monthly installments. The revenue that a district receives will primarily come from local taxes in February and from FSP payments in August, September, and October. A district must forecast for the fluctuations in funding and revenue installments to maintain an adequate balance. By projecting ADA and a district’s taxable values for revenue for a minimum of three years, a district can prepare budgets that minimize funding fluctuations.

The Texas Education Agency *Financial Accountability System Resource Guide* (FASRG), Version 15.0, 2011, has information related to planning and forecasting. Financial forecasting is the practice of projecting the quantitative impact of trend and changes in a school district’s operating environment on its future operations. Chapter 2.11 of the Budgeting Module in FASRG presents a discussion of reliable forecasting techniques and the reasons that financial forecasting is important.

According to the FASRG, business managers should complete a summary of finances template at the end of each six weeks. The tool commonly used is a summary of finances template available on the Region 13 website ([www4.esc13.net](http://www4.esc13.net)).

Additionally, the Region 13 Business Management Cooperative offers training each February on the summary of finances template. The completed templates can calculate FSP revenue based on actual district attendance for the current school year. The templates have data entry tabs for future years allowing business managers to build projects based on a set of assumptions. Using locally developed assumptions for future years, the templates can calculate FSP revenue and Chapter 41 cost of recapture through school year 2015–16.

The district should establish a process to routinely calculate revenue from the FSP and estimate Chapter 41 cost of recapture. The completion of summary of finances templates every six weeks will help the district to plan its annual budget and meet its obligations to the state for Chapter 41 cost of recapture.

The district can implement this recommendation with its existing resources.

#### **CASH CONTROL PROCEDURES (REC. 23)**

The district does not have established cash control procedures.

Staff does not have written procedures for cash handling. At the campus level, sponsors submit fundraising proceeds to the campus secretary for deposit. Review team interviews indicate that campuses use inconsistent procedures for cash handling since standardized procedures do not exist. For example, one secretary gives sponsors receipts once cash is deposited, while another secretary does not.

The process the district uses for football game ticket sales is vulnerable to theft or loss of funds. The gatekeepers are given start-up game boxes and sell tickets at the game. At half time of the game, the Business Manager picks up locked deposit bags and is escorted by a police officer from the Refugio city police department to the bank where the bags are left in the night deposit. However, the district does not use a ticket numbering system that would allow it to match cash receipts to ticket sales. Without matching receipts to ticket sales, a ticket seller could keep a portion of the cash collected at the event. The current practice assumes that the amount of cash placed in the locked deposit bags is the actual amount that was received as a result of ticket sales.

Without a consistent cash handling process, the district is at risk of possible theft or loss of activity funds. Best practice indicates that effective cash handling involves having sponsors submit funds in sealed deposit bags or count the funds in the presence of the position with cash handling

responsibilities and be given a receipt. Furthermore, a ticket numbering system that verifies the actual number of tickets sold and the amount of cash collected is essential to effective cash control.

Copperas Cove ISD uses sealed deposit bags for all of their daily cash deposits. The deposit bags are tamper proof, and are given to all individuals responsible for depositing funds. All of the district organizations use this process. The sponsor counts the deposit, completes a numbered deposit slip, and places both the deposit and the deposit slip in a deposit bag that is sealed by the sponsor. The sealed deposit bag is given to the campus bookkeeper and a receipt is given to the sponsor. The sealed deposit bags are then placed in a locked bank bag that is delivered to the bank. The bank uses their key to unlock the bank bag and the funds are counted, matched to the deposit slip, and deposited in the account indicated on the slip.

The district should develop written cash handling procedures and train all individuals who handle funds in the proper use of those procedures. The cash handling procedures should detail the proper process needed for the handling of cash at the campus level, at extracurricular events. When developing the procedures, the district should consider using tamper evident deposit bags and two-part double roll tickets for athletic events. The training for cash handling should include campus secretaries, club and class sponsors, and extracurricular event ticket sellers. The Business Manager should conduct training at the start of the school year.

The fiscal impact assumes the district's purchase of tamper evident deposit bags and two-part double roll tickets to improve cash handling procedures. During school year 2011–12, the district made a total of 676 cash deposits. These deposits include:

- high school, 84;
- junior high school, 12;
- elementary school, 24;
- athletics, 152;
- cafeteria, 371; and
- central office, 33.

The approximate cost of 700 tamper evident deposit bags is \$220. The cost of purchasing 10,000 two-part double roll tickets is approximately \$30 (2,000-ticket roll at \$6 per roll x 5 rolls). The total fiscal impact to the district for purchasing

the bags and the tickets is \$250 (\$220 + \$30) each school year. The total five-year cost would be \$1,250.

#### **PROCEDURES AND TRAINING FOR ACTIVITY ACCOUNTS (REC. 24)**

The district lacks a comprehensive manual for activity accounting and staff training related to activity funds.

The district does not have written procedures for activity account sponsors that identify the records that should be kept and the process used to document the sponsor's actions. The district operates three activity accounts. Each of the campuses—elementary, junior high school and high school—have a combined activity account that is managed in Skyward, the school's administrative software. The software's accounting module allows the district to separate the activity account into sub-accounts. The elementary school has 10 sub-accounts, the junior high school has 11 sub-accounts, and the high school has 30 sub-accounts. **Figure 4–1** shows details of the accounts during school year 2011–12.

Each campus secretary uses the software's accounting module to operate the activity accounts. The secretaries use the software to collect funds and credit individual accounts. The accounting module gives each secretary the ability to expend funds by printing checks. Two administrators are required to sign the checks to make payments to vendors. The primary support the secretaries receive in using the software occurs by calling the central office or calling the software vendor's help desk. The only instruction available is a district-made manual comprised of screen shots, which provides rudimentary use of the software; however, the manual does not include district specific procedures for activity accounting.

The district is depending on its experienced staff and the use of the software to manage their activity accounts. While the district is managing its activity accounts, the lack of procedures, processes, and training puts the district at risk when there are changes in staffing. Without written procedures, the district relies on staff to learn about and follow the legal aspects of the activity accounting process.

Lackland ISD business office posts an activity account manual on its website, which includes procedures for individual student accounts, fundraisers, returned checks, sales tax, and vendors. The manual also specifies the roles and the responsibilities of the club sponsor, the campus secretary and the campus principal. The manual includes forms used for activity account tasks.

**FIGURE 4-1**  
**REFUGIO ISD ACTIVITY ACCOUNTS**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011-12**

| <b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>        |                          |                     |                      |                       |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>ACCOUNT</b>            | <b>BEGINNING BALANCE</b> | <b>DEBIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>CREDIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>ENDING BALANCE</b> |
| Combined Activity Account | \$26,531                 | \$135,347           | \$114,208            | \$47,670              |
| High School Annual        | \$243                    | \$2,001             | \$4,136              | \$2,378               |
| Biology                   | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |
| Bobcat Band               | \$1,555                  | \$10,233            | \$9,298              | \$621                 |
| Baseball                  | \$560                    | \$180               | \$339                | \$719                 |
| Basketball                | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |
| Cheerleaders              | \$1,809                  | \$12,286            | \$12,869             | \$4,391               |
| FCA                       | \$86                     | \$1,514             | \$1,510              | \$82                  |
| FCCLA                     | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |
| FFA                       | \$1,046                  | \$13,656            | \$14,451             | \$1,841               |
| Freshman                  | \$27                     | \$27                | \$54                 | -                     |
| Girls Athletics           | \$17                     | \$4,506             | \$5,941              | \$1,453               |
| General Fund              | \$1,657                  | \$13,797            | \$14,192             | \$2,052               |
| Juniors                   | \$315                    | \$7,438             | \$8,011              | \$888                 |
| Lost Books                | \$42                     | \$547               | \$1,228              | \$723                 |
| Library                   | \$3,539                  | \$1,300             | \$1,125              | \$3,364               |
| Letterman                 | \$9,204                  | \$38,574            | \$49,973             | \$20,603              |
| NHS                       | \$156                    | \$757               | \$915                | \$314                 |
| OAP                       | \$44                     | \$394               | \$391                | \$41                  |
| PALS                      | \$2                      | \$97                | -                    | \$95                  |
| Power Lifting             | \$1                      | -                   | -                    | \$1                   |
| SDFS                      | \$84                     | -                   | -                    | \$84                  |
| Softball                  | \$680                    | \$677               | -                    | \$3                   |
| Sophomores                | \$1,025                  | \$3,814             | \$4,624              | \$1,835               |
| Seniors                   | \$306                    | \$4,036             | \$5,203              | \$1,473               |
| Student Council           | \$2,921                  | \$496               | \$5,032              | \$2,984               |
| Sales Tax                 | \$7                      | -                   | -                    | \$7                   |
| Teacher Fund              | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |
| Tennis                    | \$252                    | \$776               | \$1,122              | \$598                 |
| Track                     | \$116                    | -                   | -                    | \$116                 |
| Vending                   | \$907                    | \$1,109             | \$1,411              | \$1,209               |
| <b>JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL</b> |                          |                     |                      |                       |
| <b>ACCOUNT</b>            | <b>BEGINNING BALANCE</b> | <b>DEBIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>CREDIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>ENDING BALANCE</b> |
| Combined Activity Account | \$3,971                  | \$2,535             | \$2,767              | \$3,740               |
| Grade 7                   | \$9                      | -                   | -                    | \$9                   |
| Grade 8                   | \$1                      | \$569               | \$697                | \$129                 |
| Annual                    | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |

**FIGURE 4–1 (CONTINUED)**  
**REFUGIO ISD ACTIVITY ACCOUNTS**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| <b>JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (CONTINUED)</b> |                          |                     |                      |                       |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>ACCOUNT</b>                        | <b>BEGINNING BALANCE</b> | <b>DEBIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>CREDIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>ENDING BALANCE</b> |
| Boys Athletics                        | \$55                     | -                   | -                    | \$55                  |
| Girls Athletics                       | \$483                    | -                   | -                    | \$483                 |
| General Fund                          | \$809                    | \$222               | \$381                | \$967                 |
| Lost Books                            | \$713                    | -                   | -                    | \$713                 |
| Science Club                          | \$73                     | -                   | -                    | \$73                  |
| Spirit Club                           | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |
| Student Council                       | \$1,599                  | \$1,782             | \$1,428              | \$1,245               |
| Vending Machine                       | \$230                    | \$195               | \$30                 | \$65                  |
| <b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>              |                          |                     |                      |                       |
| <b>ACCOUNT</b>                        | <b>BEGINNING BALANCE</b> | <b>DEBIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>CREDIT AMOUNT</b> | <b>ENDING BALANCE</b> |
| Combined Activity Account             | \$10,586                 | \$59,199            | \$47,756             | \$22,029              |
| Grade 5                               | \$42                     | \$41                | -                    | \$1                   |
| Grade 6                               | \$30                     | -                   | -                    | \$30                  |
| General Fund                          | \$2,517                  | \$22,176            | \$30,269             | \$10,609              |
| Lost Books                            | \$591                    | \$58                | \$304                | \$837                 |
| Library                               | \$3,508                  | \$8,565             | \$14,494             | \$9,437               |
| Ladies of Distinction                 | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |
| Playground Equipment Fund             | \$3,617                  | \$16,781            | \$13,165             | -                     |
| Physical Education                    | \$282                    | \$136               | \$969                | \$1,115               |
| PTA                                   | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |
| SES Club                              | -                        | -                   | -                    | -                     |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Chart of Accounts, February 2013.

RISD should develop a comprehensive manual for activity accounting, and establish a training program for new and existing staff. The manual should have written procedures for activity account sponsors that identify the records that should be kept and the process used to document the sponsor's actions. This annual training should include an introduction in activity accounting procedures for new staff and continued training for existing staff related to process and procedural changes. The continued training should include any change in laws or procedures and remedial training targeting the areas of weakness that were discovered during the district's internal reviews.

The Business Manager should develop a draft manual for activity accounting and present it to the principals and their secretaries for review. Prior to the start of school year 2013–14, the finalized manual should be presented to the staff that manage activity accounts. A principal, with the

assistance of the secretaries, should be responsible for training all campus activity account sponsors in the processes and procedures included in the manual. Every June, principals and secretaries should meet with the Business Manager to revise the manual for the coming school year. Prior to the start of each school year, the finalized manual should be presented as continued training for existing staff. New staff with activity accounting responsibilities should be trained on the activity accounting process and procedures.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **OVERSIGHT OF ACTIVITY ACCOUNTS (REC. 25)**

The district has minimal administrative oversight of activity accounts.

Secretaries at the campuses operate the activity account system independently with little oversight from the business

office. During review team interviews, the Business Manager stated that the activity accounts operations were not audited. For example, the crediting of funds and the debiting of expenses in the school administrative software is not monitored to ensure the transactions are recorded and each account is balanced. The Business Manager indicated that the district's financial auditor recorded the activity accounts in the annual audit, but did not audit the transactions. The only oversight activity occurring is the monthly bank reconciliation process by the Business Manager. The campus principals also have limited oversight of the activity accounts.

Without oversight of the activity accounts, the district could be at risk of theft and fraud. Students and their advisors conduct fundraising activities, handle cash, and are responsible to account for and report financial transactions. In many districts, activity accounts are the subject of auditor findings, as well as the source of disciplinary action against school administrators in cases where funds have been misused. The recordkeeping and cash management at the sponsor and campus level is a particular area of risk. Normally, fundraising activities result in merchandise or services being sold to community patrons by teachers or student club members. This exchange requires due diligence to ensure that all products and funds are processed with adequate documentation. Without proper documentation, there is the possibility of products being lost or sold without the funds being properly handled and deposited by the sponsor. This lack of oversight could leave the district vulnerable to profiteering by club members or sponsors.

Taft ISD conducts a periodic review of student activity accounts to compensate for internal control weaknesses inherent in monitoring and safeguarding the accounts. The district's accounts payable clerk performs random reviews of each school activity fund at least once per semester. During the review, the clerk uses a form to record the campus name, the check register range, and receipt numbers. The clerk verifies each disbursement for a completed check request, a principal's signature, a requestor's signature, an original receipt or invoice, and paid sales tax. The clerk also notes exceptions, and submits the review form to the assistant superintendent for business. The assistant superintendent reviews and approves the form and sends the campus an email of the review findings. If exceptions were noted, the assistant superintendent communicates these to the campus for follow-up and appropriate action.

RISD should establish a process for auditing all activity account transactions. The process should include a review of

fundraising activities that sell merchandise and match revenues from those activities to the merchandise received by the sponsor. The review should determine whether each transaction has a completed check request, a principal's signature, a requestor's signature, an original receipt or invoice, and paid sales tax. The process should monitor the secretary's accounting to ensure that transactions are recorded correctly for each activity account. This process can be accomplished by the business office staff randomly during the year.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 4: ASSET AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

| <b>RECOMMENDATION</b>   | <b>2013-14</b> | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>5-YEAR<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> | <b>ONE TIME<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|---|
| 22 Establish a process to routinely calculate revenue from the Foundation School Program and estimate Chapter 41 cost of recapture. | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| 23 Develop written cash handling procedures and train all individuals who handle funds in the proper use of those procedures.       | (\$250)        | (\$250)        | (\$250)        | (\$250)        | (\$250)        | (\$1,250)                                       | \$0                                     |
| 24 Develop a comprehensive manual for activity accounting, and establish a training program for new and existing staff.             | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| 25 Establish a process for auditing all activity account transactions.  | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| <b>CHAPTER 4-TOTALS</b>   | <b>(\$250)</b> | <b>(\$250)</b> | <b>(\$250)</b> | <b>(\$250)</b> | <b>(\$250)</b> | <b>(\$1,250)</b>                                | <b>\$0</b>                              |



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# **CHAPTER 5**

## **FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION, USE, AND MANAGEMENT**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 5. FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION, USE, AND MANAGEMENT

An independent school district's facilities program is responsible for providing safe, and clean learning environments. A school district's facilities include campuses, buildings, grounds, athletic facilities, portable buildings, and supplement facilities (e.g., storage, warehouses, etc.). Facilities management includes planning for facilities use, construction of projects, and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g., electrical, plumbing, irrigation, heating and cooling, etc).

Managing facilities is dependent on a district's organizational structure. Larger districts typically have staff dedicated to support facilities management, while smaller districts may have staff with dual roles. For example, staff may be responsible for custodial and groundskeeping tasks. Facilities planning establishes district priorities, allocates resources and funds, and identifies milestones. Planning is based on student enrollment, campus and building capacity, condition of facilities, curriculum needs, and state regulations. Management of construction and maintenance projects should include contract management, cost control, and a project schedule with defined milestones. Facilities maintenance requires a program for planned maintenance of facilities and equipment, and routine cleaning of facilities to ensure a safe environment for students and staff.

Refugio Independent School District serves students in pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) to grade 12. Refugio ISD is a Class 2-A school district with an average enrollment of 731 students in school year 2012–13. The district consists of three campuses: Refugio Elementary School, Refugio Junior High School, and Refugio High School. Enrollment data reports 413 students in pre-K to grade 6, 107 students in grades 7 and 8, and 211 students in grades 9 to 12.

The district is involved in ongoing litigation related to construction issues with its elementary school building. In 2012, the district reached a settlement related to construction of its junior high school building. Both buildings had developed structural issues shortly after the initial construction projects were completed.

In 2005, the Board of Trustees contracted with the Texas Association of School Administrators for a Facilities and Projected Needs study. The facilities study reported that the majority of the district's classroom buildings were built

between 1930 and 1965. The report's primary recommendation was to first replace the 1933 middle school building and second, to replace the 1960 Stricklin campus (the old elementary school). The high school and other facilities were listed as the third priority. After receiving the study, the board determined that funding would be needed from a bond issue using Interest and Sinking voter approved funds. In August 2005, the board called for a November 2005 bond election to construct two school buildings with a principal amount of \$5.5 million based on recommendations in the facility study. Construction would include a new junior high school campus (replacing the middle school) and a first phase for the elementary school building. Review team interviews indicated that the board's plan was to add other classrooms to the elementary school at a later date, and phase out the existing elementary campus. A November 2005 bond election was held, and the canvassed vote total was 140 votes for and 101 against. The district issued 10-year bonds in February 2006 with a 3.75 percent interest rate. The total principal and interest expenditure will be \$6.7 million. Three years of payments will remain on the bond note once the 2013 payment is completed.

**Figure 5–1** shows the district's bond series for years 2006 to 2016.

In November 2005, the board approved contracting with an architectural firm and presented preliminary designs and sites for the two schools. The district used a construction manager model for the project's oversight and construction. The architectural firm and construction manager work together during the design and construction process. The construction manager gives the client a guaranteed maximum price, and coordinates all subcontract work.

During the December 2005 Board of Trustees meeting, the construction manager estimated a preliminary cost of \$1.75 million for the junior high campus, and \$4.7 million for the elementary school building. In January 2006, the board received revised plans and cost estimates totaling \$6.3 million for both projects, which included all building project costs and all fees (e.g., architects, builders, etc.). During the September 2006 board meeting, the board approved a revised construction contract of approximately \$6.7 million, which was approximately \$1.2 million more than the bond issue's

**FIGURE 5-1  
REFUGIO ISD BOND SERIES  
2006 TO 2016**

| DATE         | PRINCIPAL (P)     | INTEREST (I) PAID  | TOTAL PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 2006         | \$0               | \$0                | \$0                          |
| 2007         | \$ 200,000        | \$284,427          | \$484,427                    |
| 2008         | \$505,000         | \$189,281          | \$694,281                    |
| 2009         | \$525,000         | \$169,969          | \$694,969                    |
| 2010         | \$545,000         | \$149,906          | \$694,906                    |
| 2011         | \$565,000         | \$129,094          | \$694,094                    |
| 2012         | \$585,000         | \$107,531          | \$692,531                    |
| 2013         | \$610,000         | \$85,125           | \$695,125                    |
| 2014         | \$630,000         | \$61,875           | \$691,975                    |
| 2015         | \$655,000         | \$37,781           | \$692,781                    |
| 2016         | \$680,000         | \$12,700           | \$692,750                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>\$5,500,00</b> | <b>\$1,227,689</b> | <b>\$6,727,740</b>           |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, 2006 Series Unlimited Tax School Building Bonds Documents, (Lawrence Finance Consulting LLC), February 2013.

\$5.5 million. The district used its general fund balance to supplement the additional cost of the construction projects.

The junior high school and elementary school building were completed and opened in August 2008 for school year 2008–09. Interior floor and wall cracks developed in the junior high school building during the first year of its use. Students and staff were vacated from the building in school year 2009–10, so the district could correct the issues. The interior building, including the concrete slab, was demolished and re-constructed. The Board of Trustees filed a lawsuit against the construction manager and all of the construction-related vendors. The lawsuit was mediated and a settlement reached in 2012. During school year 2009–10, the elementary school developed interior floor and wall cracks similar to the junior high school building. As of March 2013, litigation has been filed by the district’s legal counsel against the construction manager and construction-related vendors.

Refugio Independent School District’s oldest facilities are the high school and central administration office. The junior high school campus is located on a corner of the high school campus. The junior high building uses 15,483 square feet to house administrative offices and 10 classrooms. The high school and the junior high campus share the use of the library, cafeteria, band hall, vocational, and physical education/athletic spaces. The elementary school has one newer building constructed in 2008 and eight cluster

buildings that were built in 1960. The 2008 building is called Refugio Elementary and the eight cluster buildings are referred to as Stricklin Primary. The district’s facilities also include a transportation/maintenance service center, bus parking building, one portable building, field house, football stadium, and a multi-purpose building. Each property is located on the same city block as the high school campus.

**Figure 5–2** shows the district’s building and facility inventory, including each building, year constructed, square footage, and total building value.

The district does not have a dedicated facilities department. The facilities function is managed by the maintenance and custodial department, which is led by the maintenance supervisor. This position reports to the Superintendent and is responsible for supervising all maintenance and custodial areas. The district employs five full-time and one half-time maintenance staff and seven full-time and one half-time custodial staff.

**Figure 5–3** shows the number of custodians per building/facility.

**Figure 5–4** shows survey data from campus staff and parents regarding their perceptions of the school facilities cleanliness and maintenance.

**FIGURE 5–2**  
**REFUGIO ISD BUILDING INVENTORY**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| BUILDING  | YEAR CONSTRUCTED | SQUARE FOOTAGE | TOTAL VALUE         |
|---|------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| High School   | N/A              | 105,105        | \$14,540,695        |
| • Central Office Building   | 1954             | 4,814          | \$651,950           |
| • Main Building (includes auditorium, classrooms, offices, band hall and large gym) | 1954             | 56,848         | \$8,246,463         |
| • Library   | 1954             | 4,425          | \$589,377           |
| • Science Classrooms  | 1965             | 6,160          | \$953,306           |
| • Cafeteria/ Vocational Classrooms  | 1960             | 10,708         | \$1,337,423         |
| • Auto Shop   | 1954             | 4,900          | \$ 518,608          |
| • Gymnasium   | 1997             | 17,250         | \$2,243,568         |
| Junior High School  | 2010             | 15,483         | \$3,059,023         |
| Elementary School   | N/A              | 62,395         | \$10,479,433        |
| • Main Building (includes offices, library, and cafeteria)                          | 2008             | 31,682         | \$6,127,559         |
| • Stricklin Primary Original Campus Administration                                  | 1960             | 3,012          | \$438,385           |
| • Stricklin Primary Cafeteria (now Pre-K Room)                                      | 1960             | 3,621          | \$458,234           |
| • Stricklin Primary Gym   | 1960             | 3,853          | \$590,889           |
| • Stricklin Primary Classrooms #1-22  | 1960             | 20,227         | \$2,864,366         |
| Transportation/ Maintenance Service Center  | 1954             | 7,395          | \$617,725           |
| Bus Parking Metal Shed  | N/A              | 3,800          | \$38,000            |
| Maintenance Service Center/ Storage   | N/A              | N/A            | \$18,330            |
| Portable Building   | N/A              | N/A            | \$48,000            |
| Football Stadium  | 1954             | N/A            | \$568,108           |
| Field House   | NA               | N/A            | \$96,900            |
| Tennis Courts   | 2008             | N/A            | \$30,500            |
| Multi-Purpose Athletic Facility   | 2008             | 22,500         | \$1,125,000         |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>N/A</b>       | <b>216,678</b> | <b>\$30,621,714</b> |

NOTE: Not Available (N/A).

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, 2012 Insurance Renewal Document, February 2013.

**FIGURE 5–3**  
**REFUGIO ISD NUMBER OF CUSTODIANS PER BUILDING**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| REFUGIO ISD BUILDING  | CUSTODIANS PER BUILDING | TOTAL BUILDING SQUARE FOOTAGE | AVERAGE SQUARE FOOTAGE CLEANED PER CUSTODIAN |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Elementary School   | 3.0                     | 62,395                        | 20,798                                       |
| Junior High School  | 1.0                     | 15,483                        | 15,483                                       |
| High School, Multi-Purpose Facility and Administration Building | 3.5                     | 127,605                       | 36,459*                                      |

\*Staff indicated that the actual high school square footage cleaned per custodian is less than 36,459 and is similar to the other two campuses. High school custodians are assigned large spaces such as the indoor practice area, career and technology shops, and two gym floors which do not have to be cleaned on a daily basis. Therefore, their day-to-day square footage to be cleaned is very similar to the work load of other campus custodians.

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Custodial Data, February 2013.

**FIGURE 5-4  
REFUGIO ISD CAMPUS STAFF AND PARENT SURVEY  
FACILITIES USE AND MANAGEMENT  
FEBRUARY 2013**

**STATEMENT: THE SCHOOLS ARE CLEAN AND BUILDINGS ARE PROPERLY MAINTAINED.**

| RESPONSE          | CAMPUS STAFF | PARENT |
|-------------------|--------------|--------|
| Strongly Agree    | 15.8%        | 33.3%  |
| Agree             | 38.2%        | 60.0%  |
| No Opinion        | 40.8%        | 6.7%   |
| Disagree          | 7.9%         | 0.0%   |
| Strongly Disagree | 0.0%         | 0.0%   |

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, Campus Staff and Parent Survey Data, February 2013.

**FINDINGS**

- ◆ The district lacks a protocol to evaluate facilities initiatives and a process for engaging stakeholders in facilities planning.
- ◆ The district has not completed the process for resolving facilities issues with the elementary school campus.
- ◆ The district does not have a process for determining needed repairs and maintenance issues in the district.
- ◆ The district has not implemented an energy management strategy.
- ◆ The district does not have secure storage for its vehicles.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ◆ **Recommendation 26: Develop a comprehensive long-range facility master plan and establish a**

**committee of stakeholders to identify long-range needs.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 27: Develop a written plan to monitor, evaluate, and make decisions about the elementary school building.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 28: Develop and implement a comprehensive prioritized preventive maintenance schedule and budget.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 29: Develop an energy management strategy to conserve energy and reduce costs.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 30: Improve vehicle storage by adding additional security measures and storage space.**

**DETAILED FINDINGS**

**FACILITY PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT (REC. 26)**

Refugio Independent School District (RISD) lacks a protocol to evaluate facilities initiatives and a process for engaging stakeholders in facilities planning.

In 2005, RISD had a facility study completed by the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA). The study found that most of the district’s schools were nearing the end of their useful lives and were expected to become obsolete within the next 20 years.

Figure 5-5 shows selected recommendations as provided in the facility study of RISD.

The recommendations of the facility study provided the impetus for the 2005 bond election to replace the middle school and add a building for the elementary school’s Stricklin campus. Overall, the study recommended that the

**FIGURE 5-5  
FACILITY STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFUGIO ISD  
2005**

**SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS**

Adopt new planning policies/criteria or confirm existing planning policies/criteria regarding school organization, school size, student busing, and others as appropriate.

Establish a long-range facilities plan for the district that addresses school organization and size, and others and, more specifically, as it relates to long-term organization for grades EE-12 and alternative education programs

Take steps to provide temporary solutions, as needed for existing overcrowding at Stricklin Primary School for the next three to four years in order to effectively evaluate and plan appropriate responses to the district’s needs

Consider consolidating into two campuses, elementary and secondary, assuming the forecast of declining county population and school district enrollment is probable

SOURCE: Texas Association of School Administrators, Facilities Evaluation and Projected Needs, March 2005.

district develop a master plan for the use of all sites (existing and acquired) before committing to specific construction solutions.

To develop a master plan, the Board of Trustees and district administration identified priorities to address some of the issues listed in the facility study. The board determined that a new campus was needed to replace the middle school and a first phase elementary building for the Stricklin Primary School. In October 2005, the board called for a bond election for the construction of the two facilities. The board also contracted with an architect to begin preliminary design work for the two schools and determined that the new junior high school facility would be placed on the high school campus. The decision was made to share common areas such as the cafeteria, library, music areas, shop areas, gymnasiums, and athletic facilities. The bond election was held in November 2005 with voter approval for the board to pursue issuing bonds for the construction of the two schools.

In November 2005, with the Superintendent's recommendation, the board approved the use of a construction manager model for the project. The board selected a construction management firm, which had provided earlier work in remodeling the high school auditorium, to construct the two buildings without using a process to determine if this firm was the best fit for the district. For example, review team interviews indicate that during the board's construction management selection process, a senior administrative staff, who had previously worked for the district and was serving in an interim capacity, also worked part-time for the firm. Staff indicated that it was common knowledge that the interim administration staff worked for the firm as a consultant and was providing selection input to the board. However, board minutes do not disclose this information, or that the board deliberated about the senior administrative staff's conflict of interest. The staff has since voluntarily separated from the district. The district did not have representation during the construction process, other than the construction management firm, design architect, and design engineer.

During the process, board minutes and review team interviews indicate that the district did not use a committee of community, students, and staff stakeholders to assist in facility planning. For example, the district did not provide information that it conducted a formal feedback process involving district stakeholders concerning the design and construction process. Instead, the Superintendent and board made most of decisions related to the design and construction.

Staff indicated there were several issues related to the process used by the board and Superintendent to arrive at the current situation.

While the district used the facility study to assist with planning for the 2005 bond, RISD did not take action on an overall facility study recommendation to develop a facilities master plan. Further, the district has not engaged in a process to evaluate and plan for facilities initiatives. Without a facilities evaluation and planning process, the district may risk making uninformed decisions related to facilities projects.

A long-range facility planning process determines both current and future district facility needs. The planning process evaluates the effectiveness of facilities in supporting a district's priorities. Each school district has specific needs such as enrollment, changing instructional needs, and grade-level configurations. Best practices state that planning for facility needs is an active process that should engage a cross section of all district stakeholders. Facilities should be assessed to identify physical condition, educational suitability, and technical deficiencies. Stakeholders are essential to the planning process, and provide a broader perspective to the district's facility needs.

An August 2009 *American School & University* article, states that a long-range facilities plan evaluates how facilities support programs and the educational needs of students, staff, and the community. An education institution should launch a long-range facilities plan concurrently with its educational strategic plan. In this way, the long-range facilities plan supports goals, objectives and action items identified in the strategic plan. Stakeholder buy-in and making facilities decisions by consensus is critical.

To obtain stakeholder input and get buy-in, the Arlington ISD has a 15-member advisory council on school facilities and capital programs. The council assists the Board of Trustees in the continuous, systematic review of school facilities and the annual and long-range capital improvement plan (CIP). The council offers recommendations and suggestions to the board on the annual school facilities and student accommodation plan, which includes the six-year CIP, and funding for school facilities. The 15-member council is appointed to two-year staggered terms.

RISD should develop a comprehensive long-range facility master plan and establish a committee of stakeholders to identify long-range needs. In developing the plan, the district should refer to 2005 facility study recommendations and

consider actions taken since the 2005 bond issuance. The committee of stakeholders should include representatives from the board, district administration, staff, and community.

The comprehensive long-range facility master plan should address the following tasks:

- establish facility goals and objectives;
- develop specifications that will meet instructional and service area needs of the district;
- conduct a facilities assessment for current and projected long-range needs;
- assess the life cycle of the district's facilities with a comparison of costs to maintain current facilities to the cost of replacement of facilities;
- survey the community and students to determine their needs and support for district facilities; and
- develop an implementation plan and method to assess if the plan is meeting the instructional and service area needs.

The district's long-range facility plan should include three components, with the first being the identification of current needs in a one- to three-year facility plan. The second component is a five-year facility plan, and the last component is a 10-year facility plan. Timelines should be included in the plan which identify when the district should modernize, replace, renovate, or construct facilities. In addition, the district should develop a preliminary budget estimate that considers the district's budget.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FACILITIES ISSUES (REC. 27)**

The district has not completed the process for resolving facilities issues with the elementary school campus.

In February 2013, staff indicated that the elementary campus was experiencing several structural issues that include:

- foundation movement and cracking;
- floor tiles cracking and buckling;
- interior and exterior walls cracking;
- wall separations; and
- doors not opening properly.

As an example, review team observations indicate that the elementary school is showing signs of interior wall movement in several areas of the building. Cracks in some of the elementary school walls are now large enough to see light through the wall from the next room, and other cracks are larger than the width of an index finger. Flooring in the cafeteria is cracking and buckling in some areas, especially through the middle of the room. Wall cracks have occurred in the center of the middle wall in a direct line with the floor issues. In February 2013, the suspended ceiling grid in the school had not fallen as staff reported happened in some junior high school classrooms. Review team observations indicate the entire elementary school building has experienced foundation and wall issues, with one academic wing appearing to have the greatest number of issues in need of repair.

Staff indicated that the district has taken some action on issues related to the elementary school building. However, the district has not developed or implemented a plan for how to resolve the ongoing issues. For example, review team interviews indicate that the engineering firms conducting the schools' forensic analysis have verbally informed school administrators and staff that the building is safe to occupy. While a verbal confirmation of the building's safety is helpful given the building's structural issues, the district has not acquired a written certification that the building is safe for occupancy.

Additionally, the district has authorized and completed an engineering analysis of the building. The analysis was completed in April 2013; but the district has not received a copy of the report. Without the report, the district cannot determine the best approach to repair the building.

Further, the district does not have a cost estimate for demolition and re-construction of the elementary school building. Review team interviews indicate that the Board of Trustees had three engineering firms submit information regarding their services for the elementary school building. The board selected a firm, and has paid \$11,000 for the initial building analysis. In addition, the board has authorized the district's legal counsel to begin litigation proceedings against the construction management firm and construction vendors. Although the district has taken initial steps to resolve problems with the elementary school building, it does not have a plan to address the ongoing issues.

The district should develop a written plan to monitor, evaluate, and make decisions about the elementary school building. The plan should include establishing a committee of district stakeholders to assist in determining the best solutions for the elementary campus facilities initiatives and existing issues. This committee should include the same stakeholders as the long-range planning committee in recommended elsewhere in this report. The committee must consider the budgetary and educational impacts of repairing the building and providing occupancy of the site during construction. Additionally, the district should conduct frequent meetings to engage and inform the community regarding its decisions.

As part of the plan, the district should consider and prioritize the following actions:

- acquire a written certification from a qualified engineer that the building is safe for occupancy—a written certification would help identify the steps necessary to ensure the safest facility placement for students and staff;
- use and incorporate the engineering analysis of the building—an engineering analysis would provide repair options and include information related to student occupancy of the site during construction; and
- develop occupancy plans for the elementary school building—foundation and wall repairs may require that staff and students vacate the building for safety and re-construction.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the district completes the recommended plan. As a component of this plan, the district should develop budget estimates for the tasks necessary to resolve the ongoing structural issues.

### **PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE (REC. 28)**

The district does not have a process for determining needed repairs and maintenance issues in the district.

The district has not developed or implemented a schedule to ensure staff perform routine work on the facilities. The maintenance area has one supervisor and five full-time and one half-time maintenance positions. Staff indicated that maintenance staff function in a reactive rather than proactive manner. Most of the day-to-day maintenance staff work assignments are generated through work orders and phone calls for repairs. The only exception mentioned was that

limited painting does occur during the summer months. Additionally, the Superintendent, campus principals, and maintenance supervisor do not conduct scheduled walk-throughs of the facilities to determine maintenance priorities.

Review team observations and interviews indicate that preventive maintenance is not occurring on a scheduled and planned basis. A sample maintenance listing from observations includes the following issues:

- large gym floor is warping and has not received sanding and refinishing;
- ceiling tiles are stained and have not been replaced when leaks have been repaired;
- covered walk ways show rust spots and have not been painted;
- interior painting at the high school and elementary school has not been performed;
- exterior painting at the high school, elementary school, and stadium has not been performed;
- fencing around the stadium has not been repaired or replaced;
- HVAC units in the high school and elementary school are aging;
- landscaping at the high school and elementary school has not been updated; and
- the high school courtyard is prone to flooding during rainstorms.

The maintenance list presented is not intended to be all inclusive, but rather representative of the various maintenance issues that exist within the district.

Further, the district's budget does not include a preventive maintenance line item. The 2011–12 check register listed maintenance items which may be classified as either emergency or routine maintenance items. **Figure 5–6** shows a sample selection of maintenance-related purchases.

The National Center for Education Statistics *Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities* states the following:

Under the guise of “saving money,” many school districts (and other organizations for that matter) practice what is known as “breakdown maintenance”—a maintenance program in which nothing is done to a piece of equipment until it breaks down. And then, after the



**FIGURE 5-6**  
**REFUGIO ISD SAMPLE LISTING OF MAINTENANCE PURCHASES AND REPAIRS**

| DATE     | ITEM DESCRIPTION  | CHECK NUMBER | CHECK AMOUNT                                       |
|----------|---|--------------|--|
| 9/21/11  | Repair Call System  | 28704        | \$475.00   |
| 9/21/11  | Repair Bell/Call System   | 28788        | \$1,567.50   |
| 9/15/11  | Repair Washer   | 28699        | \$325.90   |
| 10/20/11 | Repair Convection Oven, High School                               | 28938        | \$286.90   |
| 10/20/11 | Miscellaneous Lights Fixtures, Ballast, Bulbs, Breakers, and Wire | 29005        | \$1,800.63<br>(Total for Multiple Items Purchased) |
| 11/17/11 | Paint   | 29161        | \$331.80   |
| 12/14/11 | Repair Convection Oven, Elementary School                         | 29356        | \$896.81   |
| 1/19/12  | Repair Call Buttons/Intercom                                      | 29538        | \$4,120.50   |
| 6/19/12  | Pressure Valve Kitchen  | 30536        | \$6000.00  |
| 7/16/12  | Repair Dishwasher   | 30671        | \$834.70   |
| 8/13/12  | Magazine Holders Playground Shelter - Deposit                     | 30773        | \$74.50  |
| 8/13/12  | Mirrors, Middle School  | 30773        | \$17.91  |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, 2011-12 Check Register, February 2013.

equipment breaks, the least expensive repair option is used to return the equipment to service. While this may sound like a cost-saving approach to maintenance, precisely the opposite is true.

Breakdown maintenance defers repairs and allows damage to accumulate, compounding an organization's problems. On the other hand, regularly scheduled maintenance not only prevents sudden and unexpected equipment failure, but also reduces the overall life-cycle cost of the building. Maintenance entails much more than just fixing broken equipment. In fact, a well-designed facility maintenance system generally encompasses four categories of maintenance: emergency (or response) maintenance, routine maintenance, preventive maintenance, and predictive maintenance.

A good maintenance program is built on a foundation of preventive maintenance. It begins with an audit of the buildings, grounds, and equipment. Once facilities data have been assembled, structural items and pieces of equipment can be selected for preventive maintenance. When designing a preventive maintenance program, heating and cooling systems are always a good place to start, but planners should think creatively because there may be other components that would be good candidates for preventive maintenance.

Figure 5-7 shows a sample preventive maintenance schedule which prioritizes facilities upgrades.

Preventive maintenance scheduling and planning will not prevent all work orders and/or calls, but should reduce the frequency and number submitted. As an example, a district may choose to perform preventive maintenance on their HVAC units on an ongoing basis. Some may replace gaskets every summer on commodes and other plumbing items.

RISD should develop and implement a comprehensive prioritized preventive maintenance schedule and budget. The preventive maintenance schedule and budget should be developed by a committee comprised of the Superintendent, Business Manager, campus principals, and maintenance supervisor. Other key staff and stakeholders should serve as a resource to assist the preventive maintenance development committee. A budget line item should be established to provide funds annually for the implementation of the schedule. Once developed, the preventive maintenance schedule/plan and proposed annual budget should be presented to the Board of Trustees for discussion and approval.

The preventive maintenance committee should review and update the schedule/plan, and budget request on an annual basis. The updated schedule/plan and budget should be submitted annually to the board for their approval.

Additionally, the Superintendent, campus principal, and maintenance supervisor should conduct a scheduled walk-through of each school at least once per semester to assist in determining needed maintenance repairs. The district may use the sample preventive maintenance schedule, as shown in

**FIGURE 5–7**  
**SAMPLE PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM FOR FACILITIES**

| AREA      | COMPONENT                  | INSPECTION AND REPAIR (3–6 MONTH INTERVALS) | INSPECTION AND REPAIR ANNUALLY | INSPECTION AND REPAIR (2–5 YEAR INTERVALS) | INSPECTION AND REPLACEMENT (7–10 YEAR INTERVALS) | INSPECTION AND REPLACEMENT (12–15 YEARS) |
|-----------|----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Exterior  | Roof                       |   | ✓                              | ✓  |  | ✓  |
|           | Roof Drainage              |   | ✓                              | ✓  |  |  |
|           | Windows and Glass          |   | ✓                              | ✓  | ✓  |  |
|           | Masonry                    |   | ✓                              | ✓  |  |  |
|           | Foundations                |   | ✓                              |  |  | ✓  |
|           | Joints and Sealants        |   | ✓                              |  | ✓  |  |
| Equipment | Belts and Filters          | ✓   |                                |  |  |  |
|           | Motors and Fans            | ✓   |                                | ✓  |  | ✓  |
|           | Pipes and Fittings         | ✓   |                                |  | ✓  |  |
|           | Ductwork                   |   | ✓                              |  | ✓  |  |
|           | Electrical Controls        |   | ✓                              |  | ✓  |  |
|           | Heating Equip.             | ✓   |                                |  | ✓  |  |
|           | Air-conditioning Equipment | ✓   |                                |  | ✓  |  |
| Interior  | Doors and Hardware         |   | ✓                              |  |  | ✓  |
|           | Wall Finishes              |   | ✓                              |  |  | ✓  |
|           | Floor Finishes             |   | ✓                              |  | ✓  |  |
| Site      | Parking and Walks          |   | ✓                              | ✓  |  |  |
|           | Drainage                   |   | ✓                              | ✓  |  |  |
|           | Landscaping                | ✓   |                                |  | ✓  |  |
|           | Play Equipment             |   | ✓                              |  | ✓  |  |

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, March 2013.

**Figure 5–7.** The district should have fewer emergency maintenance issues and improved maintenance staff scheduling and utilization as a result of implementing the preventive maintenance plan.

The recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

**ENERGY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (REC. 29)**

RISD has not implemented an energy management strategy.

In January 2010, the Superintendent requested technical assistance from the State Energy Conservation Office (SECO). SECO responded by sending a registered third-

party professional engineering firm to prepare a preliminary report for the school district. The purpose of the report was to assist the district in determining the appropriate path for facility renovation, especially as it pertains to energy consuming systems. The study focused on energy efficiency and systems operations and found the following:

“...estimate that as much as \$44,000 may be saved annually if all recommended projects are implemented. The estimated installed cost of these projects should total approximately \$399,600 yielding an average simple payback of 9 years...”

**FIGURE 5–8**  
**SECO PRELIMINARY EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**  
**JULY 2010**

| SUMMARY               | IMPLEMENTATION COST | ESTIMATED SAVINGS | SIMPLE PAYBACK (YEARS) |
|-----------------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| HVAC ECRM #1          | \$157,000           | \$10,500          | 15                     |
| HVAC ECRM #2          | \$164,000           | \$18,200          | 9                      |
| Lighting ECRM #3a     | \$ 66,000           | \$13,200          | 5                      |
| Lighting ECRM #3b     | \$165,000           | \$13,200          | 12-1/2                 |
| Lighting ECRM #4      | \$12,600            | \$ 2,100          | 6                      |
| <b>Total Projects</b> | <b>\$564,600</b>    | <b>\$57,200</b>   | <b>9 (Average)</b>     |

NOTE: Energy Cost Reduction Measure (ECRM)

SOURCE Refugio ISD: SECO Facility Preliminary Energy Assessments and Recommendations, February 2013.

The SECO recommendations focused primarily on the Stricklin Primary School and high school campuses. Both of these schools are the oldest facilities in the district. **Figure 5–8** shows the SECO preliminary equipment replacement recommendations.

While the district requested the SECO study, document reviews and interviews indicate that the SECO long-range energy plan has not been implemented. During interviews, the Superintendent indicated that with construction debt and litigation expenditures, they did not have the up-front investment required to spend on the upgrades.

As another step towards establishing an energy management program, the district adopted the updated 2011 Board Policy CL (LEGAL) “Buildings, Grounds, and Equipment Management.” The policy mandates that the Board shall establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the district’s annual electric consumption. RISD Board Policy CL (LEGAL) includes the following requirements:

The Board shall establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the district’s annual electric consumption by 5 percent beginning with the 2008 state fiscal year and consume electricity in subsequent fiscal years in accordance with the district’s energy plan. The plan must include:

Strategies for achieving energy efficiency, including facility design and construction, that:

- Result in net savings for the district; or
- Can be achieved without financial cost to the district; and

For each strategy identified above, the initial, short-term capital costs and lifetime costs and savings that may

result from implementation of the strategy should be considered.

In determining whether a strategy may result in financial cost to the district, the Board shall consider the total net costs and savings that may occur over the seven-year period following implementation of the strategy.

The Board may submit the plan to the SECO for the purposes of determining whether funds available through loan programs administered by the office or tax incentives administered by the state or federal government are available to the district. The board may not disallow any proper allocation of incentives.

However, interviews with staff indicated the district has not implemented a comprehensive energy management plan as defined in Board Policy CL (LEGAL). Further, the interviews suggest that the district has not actively managed or evaluated energy costs. Interviews suggest that the district has not developed expectations for staff regarding cost effective use of energy, nor has the district provided professional development for the staff on the energy savings best practices.

**Figure 5–9** shows the district’s utility expenditures and average cost per square foot for fiscal years 2009–10 to 2011–12.

RISD utilities include water, electricity, and gas with a three year average expenditure of \$380,408. **Figure 5–9** indicates that the average utility expenditure per square foot was \$1.76 (\$380,408 divided by 216,678 total square feet). The 38th Annual *Maintenance and Operations Costs Study for Schools*, 2009, by the American School and University Association reported that the average cost per square foot for energy and utility costs is \$1.43. According to average expenditures, the

**FIGURE 5-9  
REFUGIO ISD UTILITY EXPENDITURES  
FISCAL YEARS 2009-10 TO 2011-12**

| UTILITY                     | 2009-10          | 2010-11          | 2011-12          | 3-YEAR AVERAGE   |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Water                       | \$38,832         | \$43,775         | \$44,682         | \$42,430         |
| Electricity                 | \$324,721        | \$345,081        | \$307,333        | \$325,712        |
| Gas                         | \$14,862         | \$11,850         | \$10,089         | \$12,267         |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>\$378,415</b> | <b>\$400,705</b> | <b>\$362,104</b> | <b>\$380,408</b> |
| <b>Cost Per Square Foot</b> | <b>\$1.75</b>    | <b>\$1.85</b>    | <b>\$1.67 *</b>  | <b>\$1.76</b>    |

NOTE: Due to litigation the junior high school used portables and the RISD auditors had the utility bills placed in a different fund code. In 2011-12 RISD used two fund codes and RISD indicated that the actual expenditures were similar to FY 2010-12.

SOURCE: Refugio ISD Utility Data. Amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar.

district’s cost per square foot is greater than the industry standard.

The U.S. Department of Energy (USDOE) – Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewal Energy has published a *Guide of Operating and Maintaining Energy Smart Schools* which provides useful energy management information. Utility costs are a school district’s second highest expenditure after personnel. Additionally, the USDOE encourages school districts to build a program that includes the following components:

- a plan to limit equipment operation to occupied hours;
- a plan for weekend and vacation shutdowns;
- a program for low-cost repairs or improvements performed by in-house staff; and
- a schedule for regular maintenance procedures

USDOE suggests that a model energy management program follow any of four tracks. Schools can follow a combination of tracks to create a program that is affordable and that delivers efficient cost savings. USDOE recommends the utilization of one or more of the following tracks:

- Energy tracking and accounting: collecting and analyzing monthly energy costs in all school facilities pinpoints areas that offer potential for significant savings.
- Voluntary energy awareness: increasing the general energy awareness of staff and students saves energy dollars.
- Performance contracting: specialists help schools generate energy savings through improvements/upgrades to existing energy systems. The energy

savings generated fund the improvements, resulting in minimal impact to the budget.

- Quick and low-cost strategies: facility use plans and maintenance and repair schedules are created to reduce energy consumption.

RISD should develop an energy management strategy to conserve energy and reduce costs. Development of a strategy will involve several steps, including developing an energy management plan, implementing board policy, and determining the efficiency and performance of district buildings. Additionally, RISD should consider implementing the following steps when developing the strategy:

- analyze and determine which of the SECO recommendations should be implemented as provided in the SECO Facility Preliminary Energy Assessments and Recommendations, July 2010 (Long-range facility planning committee with board approval for implementation);
- monitor all utility bills on a monthly basis to assist in reducing wasteful practices or issues (Business Manager);
- educate all building users about ways to save energy. (Superintendent and campus principals);
- provide an incentive program to each school to reward reduction in energy usage. (Developed by Long-range Facility Planning Committee, recommended elsewhere in this report, with board approval for implementation);
- develop standards for temperature control and strategies to enforce standards. (Superintendent, maintenance supervisor, and campus principals); and

- consider funding options with board approval, which are allowed by Texas statute and outlined in Board Policy CL (LOCAL).

The fiscal impact assumes that the district would, at a minimum, implement board policy and reduce utility costs by five percent. By reducing utility costs by five percent, the district could save \$18,105 annually ( $\$362,104 \times 0.05 = \$18,105$ ) based on the district's utility costs for school year 2011–12. This would result in a five-year savings of \$90,525.

### **SECURE VEHICLE STORAGE (REC. 30)**

The district does not have secure storage for its vehicles.

Review team interviews indicate that the district is experiencing vandalism to some of the district's vehicles. The vandalism has occurred after school hours and weekends and is primarily broken vehicle windows. Interviews and facility walk-throughs revealed that the maintenance facility is not large enough to store all of the maintenance fleet. This has resulted in one or two of the pick-up trucks being stored in an open non-fenced graveled area by the building. One of the pickups had been vandalized with broken windows the night before the review team arrived in the district. Staff indicated that, due to vandalism, a maintenance truck could not be driven until replacement windows were installed.

The district's buses and mini-vans are stored in two facilities. Newer fleet buses are stored in a metal storage shed with walls on three sides and a floor to roof chain link gate system which secures the vehicles. According to staff, this design has worked well and these buses have not been vandalized. The remainder of the bus fleet and mini-vans are stored under one side of the district's stadium. The area is gated, but not sufficiently to prevent vandalism.

RISD should improve vehicle storage by adding additional security measures and storage space. The district should consider eight-foot fencing with gates for the graveled area between the maintenance service center and the multi-purpose building. This fencing would provide a secure area for vehicles and an additional benefit of having the above ground fuel storage tanks located within the fenced area. Additionally, the district should consider building another bus storage shed similar to the current facility or improve gated fencing for storage under the stadium. These security measures should minimize vehicle vandalism and increase vehicle availability.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the district determines how to improve its vehicle storage. The district should consider the costs associated with the options and include those costs in the budget development process.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules, or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparison to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 5: FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION, USE, AND MANAGEMENT**

| RECOMMENDATION          |   | 2013-14         | 2014-15         | 2015-16         | 2016-17         | 2017-18         | TOTAL                        | ONE TIME           |
|-------------------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
|                         |   |                 |                 |                 |                 |                 | 5-YEAR<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS | (COSTS)<br>SAVINGS |
| 26                      | Develop a comprehensive long-range facility master plan and establish a committee of stakeholders to identify long-range needs. | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0                          | \$0                |
| 27                      | Develop a written plan to monitor, evaluate, and make decisions about the elementary school building.                           | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0                          | \$0                |
| 28                      | Develop and implement a comprehensive prioritized preventive maintenance schedule and budget.                                   | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0                          | \$0                |
| 29                      | Develop an energy management strategy to conserve energy and reduce costs.  | \$18,105        | \$18,105        | \$18,105        | \$18,105        | \$18,105        | \$90,525                     | \$0                |
| 30                      | Improve vehicle storage by adding additional security measures and storage space.   | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0             | \$0                          | \$0                |
| <b>CHAPTER 5-TOTALS</b> |   | <b>\$18,105</b> | <b>\$18,105</b> | <b>\$18,105</b> | <b>\$18,105</b> | <b>\$18,105</b> | <b>\$90,525</b>              | <b>\$0</b>         |



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# **CHAPTER 6**

# **HUMAN RESOURCES**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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# CHAPTER 6. HUMAN RESOURCES

An independent school district’s human resources function is responsible for the management of staff. This function is critical because compensation and benefits account for approximately 80 percent of the average Texas school district’s total budget. Human resource management is dependent on the organizational structure of the district. Larger districts may have staff dedicated to human resource management, while smaller districts assign staff these responsibilities as a secondary assignment.

Human resource management includes: compensation and benefits; recruiting, hiring, and retention; administrative planning and duties; records management; staff relations and grievances; and staff evaluations. These functions are defined by either compliance-based or strategic-based responsibilities. Compliance-based responsibilities include assuring an organization is following federal, state, and local labor laws in areas such as benefits, compensation and hours worked, records management, mandatory leave, discrimination, medical privacy, safety, termination, and eligibility to work. Strategic-based responsibilities include recruiting and retention, compensation and benefits, and staff relations.

As with many small districts in Texas, Refugio Independent School District does not have a human resources department with staff responsible for all related functions. Instead the district uses an informal structure to serve a staff of approximately 120 staff. Staff includes school-based and central office administrators, professional staff, professional support staff, educational aides, and auxiliary staff.

Refugio ISD uses school administration software for budgeting, salary negotiations, payroll, and other human resource functions. Salary negotiations begin in early spring and continue through the summer. Salaries are adopted by the Board of Trustees during the budget process and then combined with the total district budget. The Superintendent’s administrative assistant maintains the personnel files which are stored in locked cabinets in the central office.

The district’s recruitment and hiring practices reflect a decentralized process. The Superintendent is responsible for recruiting and hiring staff that are direct reports to that position. Principals and individual departments recruit and hire staff reporting to them. The district posts position vacancies on its website and several education association websites.

The review team compared district staffing data to the state average and peer school districts. Peer districts are districts similar to Refugio ISD that are used for comparison purposes. Four school districts were identified for comparison: Banquete ISD, Karnes City ISD, Skidmore-Tynan ISD, and Stratford ISD.

**Figure 6–1** shows student-to-teacher ratios, and compares Refugio ISD to the four peer districts and the state average. Refugio ISD has a lower student-to-teacher ratio than three of its peer districts and the state average.

**Figure 6–2** shows a district comparison of professional staff employed by the districts and the state average. Refugio ISD’s teacher percentage of 53.2 percent is higher than three of the peer districts and the state. Similarly, a comparison of both school leadership and central administration shows the district as higher than the state average and three of the peer districts.

**Figure 6–3** shows teachers by highest degree earned. It shows that the district does not employ any non-degreeed teachers. The percentage of teachers with bachelor degrees is 86.3 percent, which is higher than two of the peer districts and the state average. The percentage of teachers with master’s degrees is 13.7 percent, which is higher than two of the peer districts. The district does not employ teachers with a doctorate degree, which is comparable to the peer districts.

**Figure 6–4** shows percentages of teachers by years of experience. Refugio ISD has the second lowest percentage of beginning teachers compared to the peer districts and the

**FIGURE 6–1  
STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO  
SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

|                       | REFUGIO | BANQUETE | KARNES CITY | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD | STATE |
|-----------------------|---------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------|
| Student/Teacher Ratio | 10.5    | 12.8     | 13.4        | 13.5           | 10.2      | 15.4  |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

**FIGURE 6–2  
PROFESSIONAL STAFF PERCENTAGES  
SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| STAFF                  | REFUGIO | BANQUETE | KARNES CITY | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD | STATE |
|------------------------|---------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------|
| Teachers               | 53.2    | 47.5     | 36.1        | 52.8           | 55.8      | 50.8  |
| Professional Support   | 2.8     | 7.0      | 15.5        | 10.9           | 1.9       | 9.1   |
| School Leadership      | 3.8     | 2.3      | 1.9         | 3.5            | 4.1       | 2.9   |
| Central Administration | 1.6     | 1.5      | 1.5         | 2.6            | 1.0       | 1.0   |
| Educational Aides      | 10.3    | 2.3      | 11.1        | 0.9            | 13.9      | 9.1   |
| Professional Staff     | 61.4    | 58.3     | 55.0        | 69.9           | 62.7      | 63.8  |
| Auxiliary Staff        | 28.4    | 39.4     | 33.8        | 29.2           | 23.4      | 27.0  |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

**FIGURE 6–3  
TEACHERS BY HIGHEST DEGREE HELD  
SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| DEGREE    | REFUGIO | BANQUETE | KARNES CITY | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD | STATE |
|-----------|---------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------|
| No Degree | 0.0%    | 0.0%     | 1.3%        | 0.0%           | 1.0%      | 0.8%  |
| Bachelors | 86.3%   | 92.2%    | 89.8%       | 85.2%          | 79.1%     | 75.9% |
| Masters   | 13.7%   | 7.8%     | 8.9%        | 14.8%          | 19.9%     | 22.8% |
| Doctorate | 0.0%    | 0.0%     | 0.0%        | 0.0%           | 0.0%      | 0.5%  |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

**FIGURE 6–4  
TEACHERS BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE  
SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| YEARS OF EXPERIENCE | REFUGIO | BANQUETE | KARNES CITY | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD | STATE |
|---------------------|---------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------|
| Beginning Teacher   | 1.5%    | 20.7%    | 1.3%        | 10.0%          | 8.0%      | 4.6%  |
| 1 to 5 Years        | 23.2%   | 19.1%    | 24.1%       | 20.0%          | 13.8%     | 28.7% |
| 6 to 10 Years       | 21.9%   | 12.7%    | 10.7%       | 18.4%          | 12.1%     | 22.3% |
| 11 to 20 Years      | 22.2%   | 36.3%    | 39.6%       | 33.4%          | 19.6%     | 26.6% |
| 20+ Years           | 31.2%   | 11.2%    | 24.2%       | 18.2%          | 46.6%     | 17.9% |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

state, and has the second highest percentage of teachers with more than 20 years of experience.

Figure 6–5 shows average salary by years of experience. Refugio ISD pays the lowest teacher salaries among the peer districts and the state average in the following three comparisons: beginning teachers, teachers with 1 to 5 years of experience, and teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience.

Figure 6–6 shows average actual salaries for regular teaching duties by position category. This comparison shows that teachers in Refugio ISD are the second lowest paid among the peer districts. Professional support staff is paid more than three of the peer districts. Campus administrators are also the

second lowest paid among the peer districts. Central administration staff are paid consistent with the peer districts.

**FINDINGS**

- ◆ The district’s human resource function is guided by a set of articulated practices that are applied, but written documents outlining the procedures for implementing the operational functions do not exist.
- ◆ The district lacks a process for annually reviewing, revising, and updating job descriptions.
- ◆ The district does not use a formal staffing process to ensure maximum instructional focus.

**FIGURE 6–5**  
**AVERAGE SALARY BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| YEARS OF EXPERIENCE | REFUGIO  | BANQUETE | KARNES CITY | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD | STATE    |
|---------------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|----------|
| Beginning Teacher   | \$29,820 | \$37,481 | \$38,500    | \$44,229       | \$33,195  | \$40,911 |
| 1 to 5 Years        | \$35,379 | \$38,334 | \$41,286    | \$41,094       | \$38,087  | \$43,669 |
| 6 to 10 Years       | \$42,550 | \$41,987 | \$44,141    | \$43,289       | \$40,176  | \$46,224 |
| 11 to 20 Years      | \$45,380 | \$50,300 | \$48,627    | \$47,244       | \$48,821  | \$50,064 |
| 20+ Years           | \$55,033 | \$53,144 | \$52,603    | \$54,536       | \$52,739  | \$58,031 |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

**FIGURE 6–6**  
**AVERAGE ACTUAL SALARIES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| STAFF                  | REFUGIO  | BANQUETE  | KARNES CITY | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD | STATE    |
|------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|----------|
| Teachers               | \$45,216 | \$44,614  | \$47,197    | \$46,308       | \$46,872  | \$48,375 |
| Professional Support   | \$51,624 | \$47,037  | \$22,841    | \$36,954       | \$52,298  | \$56,219 |
| Campus Administration  | \$64,701 | \$65,586  | \$66,335    | \$77,959       | \$64,330  | \$70,510 |
| Central Administration | \$84,335 | \$113,812 | \$68,214    | \$81,888       | \$91,000  | \$89,811 |

NOTE: Salary includes regular duties only.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 31: Develop written procedures to ensure that the district human resource functions are conducted legally, consistently, and follow best practices.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 32: Develop a process for annual review and modification of employee job descriptions.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 33: Establish a process for annually evaluating the assignment of staff positions, including the athletic-related staff.**

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### PROCEDURES FOR OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS (REC. 31)

Refugio ISD's (RISD) human resource function is guided by a set of articulated practices that are applied, but written documents outlining the procedures for implementing the operational functions do not exist.

Review team interviews indicate that the human resource functions are conducted by numerous staff including the Superintendent, the Superintendent's administrative assistant, and the payroll/PEIMS coordinator in the business office. The Superintendent's administrative assistant is

responsible for conducting criminal history checks, distributing applications, posting applications online, printing completed applications, and distributing them to the staff responsible for hiring that specific position. The person responsible for hiring an individual position is responsible for screening applications, setting up interviews, checking references, and making a recommendation to the Superintendent. The Superintendent has authority to hire auxiliary employees and taking final recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The Superintendent's administrative assistant, in collaboration with the Superintendent, enters all benefit and payroll information into the school administration software and forwards that information to the business office for the payroll. In addition, the Superintendent's administrative assistant prepares contracts as appropriate for the Superintendent's approval as well as staff personnel files, including placing all necessary documents in the folders. All personnel files are paper-based records.

**Figure 6–7** shows human resources practices of RISD staff by assigned position, and a comparison of these practices to best practices.

RISD subscribes to the Texas Association of School Board (TASB) Policies On-Line and posts these policies on the district website. In addition, an employee handbook is posted on the website to guide the implementation of the policies.

**FIGURE 6–7**  
**REFUGIO ISD HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTIONS AND PRACTICES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTION | REFUGIO ISD POSITION RESPONSIBLE   | DISTRICT PRACTICE   | BEST PRACTICE   |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|
| Recruitment             | Administrative Assistant   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not formally recruit beyond advertising for specific positions.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post job openings on district, service center and professional websites.</li> <li>Develop recruitment strategy and goals based on district needs.</li> <li>Attend job fairs.</li> </ul>  |
| Job Posting             | Administrative Assistant   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post position applications on website and in local newspaper.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post on organization’s website.</li> <li>Post on generic HR websites, i.e. Monster. Com.</li> </ul>  |
| Review Job Applications | Administrative Assistant<br>Various Positions  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct criminal history checks, and distribute applications to position responsible for reviewing process.</li> <li>Screen applications, set up interviews, check references, and make recommendation for hiring.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screen job descriptions for requirements and provide hiring position with applications that satisfy the job posting (human resources personnel).</li> <li>Screen applications and identify a pool of 3 to 5 for interviews (hiring employee).</li> <li>Check references (human resources personnel or hiring employee).</li> <li>Identify an interview team, generate interview questions, and schedule interviews.</li> <li>Make recommendation for hiring (Hiring Authority).</li> </ul>   |
| Job Descriptions        | Administrative Assistant   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Copy the appropriate Texas Association of School Board (TASB) model policy and request the employee sign and date the job description.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop original job description or modify a job description from professional organization’s bank of job descriptions.</li> </ul>   |
| Payroll Set-Up          | Administrative Assistant/<br>Superintendent  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter payroll information into financial and human resources administrative software system.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter payroll information into financial and human resources administrative software system.</li> </ul>  |
| Employee Benefits       | Administrative Assistant/<br>Superintendent  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter benefit information into financial and human resources administrative software system.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter benefit information into financial and human resources administrative software system.</li> </ul>  |
| New Teacher Orientation | Director of Elementary and Secondary Education<br>Superintendent<br>Administrative Assistant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend an all-day district orientation the day before all staff return for the new school year.</li> <li>Conduct an orientation. Topics include business office procedures, review of job description, budget overview, technology overview, teacher evaluation overview, and a review of campus services including nurses, librarian, transportation and use of substitutes.</li> <li>Require new teachers to attend a week of in-service with experienced teachers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attend a two day orientation with the first day focused on district and the second day on campus orientation.</li> <li>Conduct a district orientation which typically includes welcome and overview of district, presentation of mission, beliefs, and direction, new employee paperwork, bus tour of community, technology orientation and review of district strategic plan.</li> <li>Conduct campus orientations which include a building tour, building procedures, access to resources, student discipline, curriculum, accountability for student learning, organizing the classroom, personal and professional decisions and procedures, and a review of the campus plan.</li> <li>Assign mentors to new teachers and meet individually with teacher mentor.</li> </ul> |

**FIGURE 6–7 (CONTINUED)**  
**REFUGIO ISD HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTIONS AND PRACTICES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| HUMAN RESOURCE FUNCTION  | REFUGIO ISD POSITION RESPONSIBLE | DISTRICT PRACTICE  | BEST PRACTICE  |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Training and Development | Administrative Assistant         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor TASB and ESC 3 HR training offerings and attends as appropriate.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain a master list of human resource trainings and links to training opportunities appropriate to all levels of employees on organization's intranet.</li> </ul>  |
|                          | Administrators                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor human resource trainings of professional organizations and attends as appropriate.</li> </ul>   |  |
| Employee Records         | Administrative Assistant         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain all personnel files from employment through exiting the district.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and maintain all personnel records from employment through exiting the organization.</li> <li>Digitize records after the employee exits the organization and maintain according to current Schedule for Human Resource Records.</li> </ul>  |
| Substitutes              | Administrative Assistant         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire substitutes based on qualifications and receive orientation from campus principal on first day service.</li> <li>Contact substitutes via phone for placement and complete paper work for payroll.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hire substitutes based on qualifications.</li> <li>Conduct a formal district substitute training session prior to the beginning of each school year.</li> <li>Use an electronic substitute placement system to allow teachers to post an absence from duty date with a prescribed time frame and request a specific substitute, if the teacher does not select a specific substitute members of the substitute cohort can select an opening.</li> <li>Contact the principal or designee in the case of an emergency absence.</li> </ul> |
|                          | Superintendent                   |  |  |
|                          | Campus Principal                 |  |  |
|                          | Campus Secretary                 |  |  |

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, February 2013; Texas Association of School Boards, Human Resource, Human Resource Services, accessed April 2013.

The handbook includes specific human resources information, aligned with district policies, as follows:

- district information;
- employment;
- compensation and benefits;
- leaves and absences;
- complaints and grievances; and
- employee conduct and welfare.

While the policies for staff are comprehensive and transparent, there are no documents outlining the procedures for implementing the operational functions. The lack of written human resource procedures creates an environment for inconsistent and potentially illegal practices. In addition, without identified operational procedures, the district could experience hardships when staff changes occur.

Policies and procedures are the link between a district's vision and its day-to-day operations. Written policies and procedures allow staff to understand their roles and responsibilities and allow management to guide operations without constant management intervention. A policy is a predetermined course of action, which provides a guide for strategies and objectives. The goal of an operational procedure is to provide staff with actions necessary to implement a policy. Procedures allow managers to control events in advance, and prevent the district from making potentially costly or illegal mistakes. Differences between policies and procedures are shown in **Figure 6–8**.

Both policies and procedures are required to ensure consistency in a district's operations and to provide clarity to staff. Effective district have developed procedures for every process in the district. Human resource operational functions are often standardized and used for training all appropriate staff involved in these functions.

**FIGURE 6–8  
POLICIES VERSUS PROCEDURES**

| POLICIES   | PROCEDURES                                   |
|--|--|
| Are general in nature  | Identify specific actions                    |
| Identify district rules                                      | Explain when to take actions                 |
| Explain why they exist                                       | Describe alternatives                        |
| Tell when the rule applies                                   | Show emergency procedures                    |
| Describe who it covers                                       | Give examples                                |
| Show how the rule is enforced                                | Show how to complete forms                   |
| Describe the consequences                                    | Are normally written using an outline format |
| Are normally described using simple sentences and paragraphs | Identify specific actions                    |

SOURCE: Why are policies & procedures so important?, Tom Bartridge, March 2005, available at [www.ameinfo.com](http://www.ameinfo.com).

RISD should develop written procedures to ensure that the district human resource functions are conducted legally, consistently, and follow best practices. The Superintendent should form a team of staff currently implementing the human resource functions. This team includes the Superintendent’s administrative assistant, the payroll/PEIMS coordinator, and the principals. The team should meet to complete the following activities:

- review each human resource policy;
- identify current practices related to the implementation of each policy;
- determine whether the practice is appropriate for the policy; and
- record that practice in the form of a written standardized procedure.

Each procedure should be coded to match the appropriate policy. The Superintendent should ensure that the procedures are included with the *Refugio ISD Employment Policies* document available to staff. The Superintendent should determine if legal review is required, and contract for that service before distributing the final document to staff.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources, as no fiscal impact is assumed for the legal review. If the district determines that a legal review is required, any additional costs should be considered in the budget.

**JOB DESCRIPTIONS (REC. 32)**

The district lacks a process for annually reviewing, revising, and updating job descriptions.

The district uses model job description from TASB that includes over 140 positions common to school districts. These descriptions are intended to be revised to accurately reflect district job assignments, qualifications, and working conditions. As a part of the hiring process, the Superintendent’s administrative assistant copies the appropriate model job description, and requests the employee sign and date the record before placing it in the newly created personnel file. Staff stated that the district conducted an internal review of files to ensure job descriptions existed approximately 10 years ago.

A review of personnel records by the review team found numerous types of documents in employee files. Documents included applications, resumes, transcripts, job descriptions, appraisal documentation, certificates, evidence of physical examinations, oaths of office, contracts, and leave requests as far back as 1985. The documents did not appear to be filed in order of importance, and only one record reviewed had a checklist stapled to the folder listing the types of documents contained in the folder. Of the 12 records reviewed, all but two contained job descriptions that appeared to have been developed and filed when the employee was originally hired. Although some staff had worked for the district as long as 23 years, there was no evidence that the job descriptions had been reviewed during that time to ensure the original responsibilities listed on the job descriptions were still applicable to the current position. In addition, there was no evidence that most of the model job descriptions had been edited and/or revised to accurately reflect the local job assignment, qualifications, or working conditions of the district. With two exceptions, the job descriptions were marked Model, as is consistent with the TASB model job descriptions. One record examined was for a coach/teacher and contained separate job descriptions for teaching and

coaching as opposed to a single job description that aligned both sets of duties in a single document. The Superintendent's file contained a copy of Board Policy BJA (LOCAL), Superintendent Qualifications and Duties, but there was no evidence that the board and Superintendent had reviewed and prioritized the duties, and developed a collaborative job description to guide the priority for the Superintendent's daily responsibilities. Additionally, review of bus driver job descriptions indicated that two of the bus drivers had a job description for their daily assignment, but not for the bus driving responsibilities. None of the bus drivers had a single job description detailing all of their responsibilities.

Lack of current and accurate job descriptions can prohibit staff from fully understanding their role in the district. In addition, inaccurate or missing job descriptions potentially eliminate a necessary tool for supervisors to use when evaluating the effectiveness of staff or counseling them when setting goals. Accurate job description can provide the metrics used for staff evaluation and are essential in the hiring process to ensure that position description reflects the requirements of the job. In the hiring of a superintendent, board members can use a job description to emphasize the priorities of the district, as well as specific job responsibilities.

Job descriptions are used for different purposes by staff and the human resources department. A human resources department uses job descriptions for the following purposes:

- define of the functions and responsibilities of a job;
- recruit staff;
- train and develop staff;
- plan for succession and organizational development;
- establish legal defensibility;
- assign jobs; and
- benchmark the organization's positions against those described by descriptors in salary surveys.

An applicant or staff uses job descriptions for the following purposes:

- match a job to an applicant's skill set;
- identify position tasks and responsibilities;
- guide goal setting; and
- guide professional development.

Preparing job descriptions that accurately reflect job responsibilities is the first step. However, job duties change over time and an outdated job description may be of little benefit or could even be a detriment. Best practices suggest job descriptions remain current and accurate through the following steps:

- include the effective date on every job description and ensure that the date is revised when changes are made;
- confirm that the job description is up-to-date before posting any open position;
- confirm that the job description is up-to-date as part of the performance review process; and
- review all job descriptions on a set schedule.

RISD should develop a process for annual review, revision, and updating of staff job descriptions. During the performance appraisal process, each supervisor should review job descriptions with the staff being appraised. If revisions are needed, they should be noted and submitted to the Superintendent. During the summer, job descriptions should be revised and updated. Supervisors should meet with staff, discuss revisions, and have the employee date and sign the updated job description. Updated job descriptions should be submitted to the Superintendent's office for filing.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

### **STAFFING (REC. 33)**

The district does not use a formal staffing process to ensure maximum instructional focus.

In the summer prior to school year 2011–12, RISD conducted an informal staffing analysis to reduce payroll expenditures by reducing staff. As a result of this analysis, the district reduced staff from 134.5 positions to 120 positions, a reduction of 14.5 positions. The change in staffing decreased personnel expenditures from \$5.9 million to \$5.1 million, from 73.2 percent to 63.5 percent of the total district budget.

Review team interviews indicate the decrease in personnel expenditures was realized through a combination of the following:

- resignations of personnel whose positions were eliminated;
- retirement of personnel whose positions were not filled;



- terminations of probationary contracts; and
- one non-renewal of a contract due to a program change.

Specific positions included a reduction of 10 classroom teachers, one counselor, and one assistant principal. In addition 5.5 at-will positions were eliminated through attrition. Of these 17.5 positions, three (all classroom teachers) were later rehired due to late summer resignations. Ultimately the district reduced its personnel expenditures by 14.5 positions by the beginning of school year 2011–12.

Staff stated that the change in staffing was collaborative through discussions with central office regarding the change in state funding and the impact of that change on the district’s budget. Staff also indicated that terminations and non-renewals were based on district priorities, certification areas held by staff, contract types (probationary versus lifetime), and opportunities to have staff fill dual roles across campuses. During interviews, central office staff and principals indicated that the typical staffing analysis occurs when a position becomes available for hiring on a case-by-case-basis.

As shown in **Figure 6–1**, the district has the second lowest student teacher ratio among peer districts, and is significantly lower than the state average of 15.4 even after school year 2010–11 change in staff.

**Figure 6–9** shows RISD’s school year 2011–12 class size averages in elementary and secondary classrooms in comparison to the peer districts and the state average. RISD and all four peer districts had lower class size averages than the state average at all levels. In addition, the district is significantly below the state required 22 students to 1 teacher ratio in grades K–4.

At the secondary level RISD had lower class size averages than all of the districts in mathematics and foreign languages, and lower than three of the comparison districts in science. In English and social studies, two of the peer districts had higher class size averages and two of the districts had lower class size averages.

Athletic-related positions and salaries also impact a district’s staffing decisions. While Texas Education Agency’s Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) does not provide salary comparison data for athletic-related staff, **Figure 6–10** provides a comparison of total athletic expenditures per student for RISD, the peer districts, and the state. These expenditures include athletic salaries. RISD spends \$501 more per student than the state average and \$137 more per student than the closest peer district.

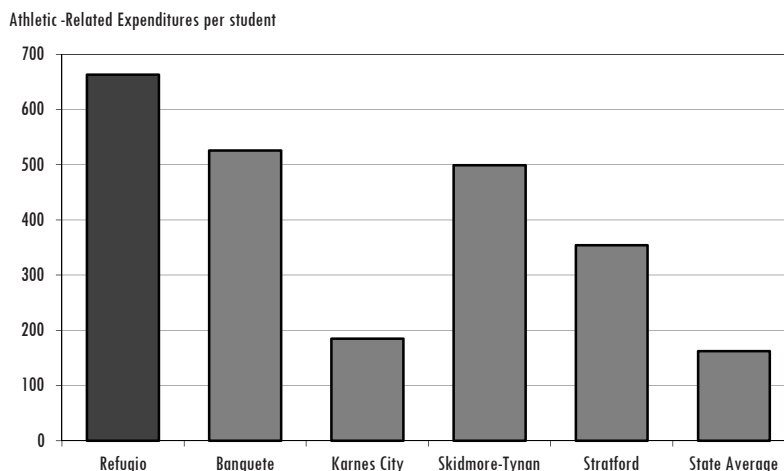
Review of athletic staffing expenditures for school year 2012–13 indicates that 34.2 percent of teachers in grades 7 to 12 are identified as coaches and paid additional coaching

**FIGURE 6–9  
CLASS-SIZE AVERAGES BY ELEMENTARY GRADE AND SECONDARY SUBJECT  
SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

| GRADE LEVEL       | REFUGIO | BANQUETE | KARNES CITY | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD | STATE |
|-------------------|---------|----------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------|
| K                 | 16.5    | 17.0     | 16.4        | N/A            | 14.1      | 19.4  |
| 1                 | 14.7    | 15.9     | 20.8        | 18.7           | 14.3      | 19.4  |
| 2                 | 18.5    | 19.8     | 17.0        | 14.4           | 14.3      | 19.3  |
| 3                 | 18.5    | 17.3     | 15.8        | 17.4           | 15.9      | 19.4  |
| 4                 | 17.1    | 18.1     | 15.9        | 15.7           | 12.1      | 19.6  |
| 5                 | 15.7    | 20.4     | 18.0        | 15.2           | 12.3      | 21.8  |
| 6                 | 15.9    | 15.1     | 16.1        | 21.9           | 12.8      | 21.0  |
| <b>Secondary</b>  |         |          |             |                |           |       |
| English/LA        | 12.8    | 12.1     | 14.4        | 16.1           | 11.3      | 17.3  |
| Foreign Languages | 9.9     | 11.2     | 16.8        | 18.7           | 14.0      | 19.0  |
| Mathematics       | 9.5     | 11.1     | 14.0        | 14.1           | 10.9      | 17.8  |
| Science           | 12.9    | 11.8     | 15.3        | 15.6           | 13.4      | 19.0  |
| Social Studies    | 13.8    | 13.7     | 17.0        | 15.1           | 13.4      | 19.5  |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

**FIGURE 6–10**  
**ATHLETIC-RELATED EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**



SOURCE: Texas Education Agency; 2011–12 Academic Excellence Indicator System report, February 2013.

stipends and compensation for extra days. In addition to teacher salaries for the coaching staff, the district pays \$59,454 for extra days and \$129,500 for coaching stipends. The estimated cost for extra days and stipends is \$188,954 for school year 2012–13, the equivalent of 3.7 teacher positions.

As in most school districts in Texas, the majority of Refugio's district's budget is used to pay staff salaries. With the potential for changes in funding at both the state and federal levels, all school districts carefully monitor spending, particularly staffing costs, to ensure maximum efficiency of funds.

Bracket ISD, a district of 598 students with 107 staff members in school year 2011–12, contracted with a consultant to conduct a staffing study in February 2013. The consultant reviewed staff positions and did not make recommendations on staff qualifications. The consultants understood that the district preferred to maintain a low student-to-teacher ratio. Consultants had access to all budget, payroll, and staffing data, and met with staff to determine allocation of staff and potential areas of improvement. The final report provided potential savings options using both fewest reductions in staff of approximately \$850,000, and highest reductions in staff of approximately \$1.7 million.

RISD should establish a process for annually evaluating the assignment of staff positions, including the athletic-related staff. Given the size of the district and the limited number of

central office staff, the district should consider obtaining additional external assistance to conduct the initial staff analysis. The assistance should include developing a process for an annual analysis of district staffing needs. After the initial staff analysis, the district should annually analyze staffing needs and adjust positions as needed to ensure efficiency in both instructional and budgetary functions during the budgeting process.

The fiscal impact of this recommendation assumes the district would contract with an experienced provider to conduct the staff analysis. Based on Bracket ISD's review, a staff analysis of a district the size of RISD would cost between \$6,500 and \$8,000. Based on the average cost, the fiscal impact of the recommendation assumes a one-time cost of \$7,250.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 6: HUMAN RESOURCES**

| <b>RECOMMENDATION</b>   |   | <b>2013-14</b> | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>5-YEAR<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> | <b>ONE TIME<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> |
|-------------------------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|---|
| 31                      | Develop written procedures to ensure that the district human resource functions are conducted legally, consistently, and follow best practices. | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| 32                      | Develop a process for annual review and modification of employee job descriptions.  | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| 33                      | Establish a process for annually evaluating the assignment of staff positions, including the athletic-related staff.                            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | (\$7,250)                               |
| <b>CHAPTER 6-TOTALS</b> |   | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>                                      | <b>(\$7,250)</b>                        |

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# **CHAPTER 7**

# **TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 7. TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT

An independent school district's technology management affects the operational, instructional and financial functions of a school district. Technology management requires planning and budgeting, inventory control, technical infrastructures, application support, and purchasing. Managing technology is dependent on a district's organizational structure. Larger districts typically have staff dedicated to administrative or instructional technology responsibilities, while smaller districts may have staff responsible for both functions.

Administrative technology includes systems that support a district's operational, instructional, and financial functions (e.g., financial management, human resources, payroll, student attendance, grades, and Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) reporting, etc.). Administrative technology improves a district's operational efficiency through faster processing, increased access to information, integrated systems, and communication networks. Instructional technology includes the use of technology as a part of the teaching and learning process (e.g. integration of technology in the classroom, virtual learning, electronic instructional materials, etc.). Instructional technology supports curriculum delivery, classroom instruction, and student learning.

Texas state law requires school districts to prepare improvement plans that include the integration of technology with instructional and administrative programs. A plan defines goals, objectives and actions for technology projects; assigns responsibility for implementation steps; and establishes deadlines. The Texas Education Agency provides a tool for planning and assessing school technology and readiness, which identifies performance measures for teaching and learning; educator preparedness and development; leadership, administration, and instructional support; and infrastructure for technology.

Refugio Independent School District does not have a technology department. There are two individuals, an instructional technologist and an informational technology specialist, who support electronic communication, network, and software systems. Each position reports to the Superintendent. The specialist supports the district's computer resources and electronic communication system, and the instructional technologist supports all instructional

and administrative staff with their technology software related needs. Primary responsibilities of the specialist include the acquisition, inventory, maintenance, and repair of computers, servers, and peripheral equipment for the district. The instructional technologist supports instructional, student management, and student assessment applications for the district. The district also employs a payroll/PEIMS coordinator who reports to the Superintendent and the Business Manager.

### FINDINGS

- ◆ The district lacks the bandwidth to effectively support a dynamic technology environment for students and staff.
- ◆ The district does not prioritize or budget for computer replacement.
- ◆ The district lacks a process to identify technology priorities and plan for their implementation.
- ◆ The district's organizational structure for technology services is ineffective.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 34: Upgrade the bandwidth capacity and give priority to staff access.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 35: Include the upgrade or replacement of outdated equipment and related budgetary requirements in the district's Long-Range Plan for Technology.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 36: Further develop, revise and maintain the Long-Range Plan for Technology and use it as a guiding document for implementation of technology strategies.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 37: Define an organizational structure to coordinate and enhance technology services.**

**DETAILED FINDINGS**

**BANDWIDTH CAPACITY (REC. 34)**

Refugio ISD (RISD) lacks the bandwidth to effectively support a dynamic technology environment for students and staff.

The district’s technology network consists of three T1 lines to support all technology functions of the district. A T1 line is a specific type of copper or fiber optic telephone line that can carry data. The three T1 lines support all administrative, business, and instructional functions of the district. The district leases its three T1 telephone lines through Regional Education Service Center III (Region 3).

The district has almost 1000 users—including students, teachers, administrators, and staff. There are no designated priorities for programs, campuses, or administration in allocating secure network access. According to the information technology (IT) specialist, network access is on demand. Internet bandwidth is quickly depleted, and the three T1 lines get congested by daily demand. The demand stalls access and compromises organizational quality and effectiveness. The more users attempting to access the telephone lines at once, the more the speed of the system decreases. Staff reported through interviews that the network does not provide adequate, reliable, and quality access. Internet access is too slow, the quality of video to support instructional lessons is poor, and access to critical operational applications is unavailable during peak use.

Teachers, administrators, the instructional technologist, and the IT specialist all expressed frustration regarding limited access to the Internet during the school day. Interviews indicated that during lunch periods it is difficult to access the Internet because personal, mobile devices consume the available service. As one teacher stated, “I have to do my lesson planning at home. I integrate materials and activities available online into my CSCOPE lesson. When I’m actually teaching the lesson, I am unable to get a connection to access the video or the student activities planned. I have to abandon my lesson or resort to more traditional activities.” Even when access is available, the service is slow, unstable, and struggles to produce clear images. Teachers, students, and administrators abandon technology too often because of its poor quality and unreliability.

Teachers use computers and the Internet for many instructional-related functions. Teachers use software applications for curriculum implementation (CSCOPE), data disaggregation (DMAC), and school administration

functions (Skyward). CSCOPE is a K–12 curriculum model designed to align the written, taught, and tested curriculum, and is heavily dependent on teacher and student access to internet broadband. DMAC offers web-based software to help districts with data disaggregation, benchmarking, assessment, student achievement progress monitoring, curriculum planning and more. The district also uses Skyward, a product line for management of finance, human resources, and student information. Staff complained about the lack of access to school administrative software throughout the day for managing instructional and management functions of the district. Teachers and campus administrators use the software for managing student information about attendance, grades, curriculum mapping, discipline, scheduling, report cards, transcripts, and as a response to intervention tool.

Operational program staff also compete for internet access with educators. For example, cafeteria cashiers indicated that the district network is problematic, does not work properly, or is slow when they use the student meal purchasing system during the lunch periods. The network problem results in slow processing of student purchases and occasionally stops working. When the network is not working; cashiers must manually log each purchase and enter the student purchase information into the school administrative software later.

RISD provides staff with a variety of technology tools. Smart boards, projectors, document cameras, printers, and networked desktop computers for student use are available in all classrooms. Computer labs are available at all campuses, and one high school math teacher is piloting a class that uses tablets connected to a large screen LCD smart board.

Figure 7–1 shows a summary of technology equipment in the RISD inventory designated for instructional use.

**FIGURE 7–1  
REFUGIO ISD TECHNOLOGY INVENTORY  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| EQUIPMENT TYPE   | TOTAL | ASSIGNED | AVAILABLE |
|------------------|-------|----------|-----------|
| Dell Computers   | 649   | 569      | 80        |
| Tablets          | 49    | 34       | 15        |
| Neo2-Kb          | 180   | 180      | 0         |
| Lenovo           | 65    | 2        | 63        |
| Document Cameras | 66    | 59       | 7         |
| Projectors       | 72    | 62       | 10        |
| Smart Boards     | 32    | 32       | 0         |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Technology Inventory, February 2013.

RISD has purchased technology equipment and curriculum and instructional tools for enhancing the teaching and learning process, but the district has not provided an adequate technology network that allows educators to use those tools effectively. Teachers' inability to access technology resources during the day inhibits teacher integration of web-based resources into their lessons. For students, the district's inaccessible and unreliable technology network limits their ability to do research and online project development through the district's curriculum.

The U.S. Department of Education in its National Educational Technology Plan 2010 outlines critical elements of a technology infrastructure. The infrastructure should:

- support simultaneous use by all students and educators anywhere in the building and the surrounding campus to use the Internet, multi-media resources, and collaboration software;
- significantly improve learner access to broad-band enabled learning experiences;
- integrate computer hardware, data and networks, information resources, interoperable software, middleware services tools and devices; and
- connect and support teams of professionals responsible for its use in transformative approaches to teaching and learning.

The district should upgrade the bandwidth capacity and give priority to staff access. While the district has engaged in preliminary requests for increased Internet bandwidth, no commitment has been made to any vendor. District leaders should be clear about its infrastructure capacity needs prior to any agreement with a vendor to ensure the alignment between instructional need and the system capacity. A multi-year commitment requires that the district identify its current bandwidth needs, and project those needs to provide adequate support for district users. This approach will enable the district to make an effective and cost efficient decision. Securing a guaranteed rate for technology network services over a three- or five-year period generally provides a significant cost savings for an organization.

The district should determine options for increasing bandwidth and include these in the district's Long Range-Plan for Technology. One option the district has considered was partnering with Regional Education Service Center III (Region 3) for upgraded bandwidth. The Business Manager requested a quote for increasing the district's network

capacity for 2013–14 from three T1 lines to fiber optic. The Region 3 quote for a fiber point to point connection (one gigabyte per second) is \$3,895 per month. E-Rate is a federal program that provides school districts affordable access to advanced telecommunications services. RISD's E-Rate discount eligibility is 80 percent for all web-hosting fees, internet service, and long-distance and local phone, reducing the district share to 20 percent of monthly costs.

Figure 7–2 shows the upgraded network option.

**FIGURE 7–2**  
**REFUGIO ISD CURRENT NETWORK AND UPGRADED NETWORK OPTION**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

|                         | <b>CURRENT NETWORK</b>     | <b>UPGRADED NETWORK</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Type                    | 3 T1 Lines                 | Fiber Optic Ethernet    |
| Bandwidth               | 1.544 megabytes per second | 1 gigabyte per second   |
| Cost per Month          | \$1745                     | \$3,895                 |
| E-Rate Discount         | 80%                        | 80%                     |
| Discounted Monthly Cost | \$349                      |                         |
| 36-month lease          |                            | \$818                   |
| 60-month lease          |                            | \$786                   |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD; Business Office, February 2013.

Fiber optic Ethernet technology is the highest speed available in the district's area. The district has received confirmation from their telephone service provider that there will be no additional charges for the fiber optic line connection to any of the district's building, no installation or supplies fees, and no additional charges to the district's monthly bill for converting from analog to digital service. The elementary school and junior high school buildings have 148 drops and two fiber runs. Any cabling required for the other district buildings can be managed by district staff at a minimal cost to the district.

If the district chooses this option, its monthly fee for upgraded network service would increase the district's cost by \$469 monthly for a 36-month contract, or \$437 per month for a 60-month contract.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the district determines options for increasing bandwidth and the cost associated with those options (e.g., costs per month, impact of E-Rate discount, etc.). Once an option is approved,



the district must include it in the technology plan and include associated costs in the budget.

**TECHNOLOGY EQUIPMENT PLANNING (REC. 35)**

The district does not prioritize or budget for computer replacement.

RISD does not have a budget for technology management and support services and has not had a technology budget since school year 2009–10. All leadership, planning, purchasing, and management supports for technology are the responsibility of the Superintendent who collaborates with the Business Manager regarding the availability of funds to support all areas of the district, including technology.

District-level and campus-level technology inventory is between three and five years old. Equipment issued to teachers and teacher assistants is three to five years old, and computer labs at the campuses have older technology as well. Administrative and operational management equipment is also three to five years old. However, the district has not evaluated the impact and value of the outdated technology to the curriculum, instruction, assessment, and administrative needs of the district.

The district has not identified strategies to upgrade its technology or acquire new technology. The district has not determined if there is appropriate and sufficient technology equipment and capacity to effectively support instructional, administrative, and operational functions. Further, the district has not developed guidelines for selecting and acquiring high-cost items like tablets and computers. For example, the district does not consider alignment between the requested item and the intended use, the long-term capacity and value of the acquisition, the scalability, and the cost-effectiveness of the equipment.

The district has limited inventory available to meet replacement and repair needs. For example, disposed items are not being replaced. In school year 2012–13, 16 computers, 11 projectors, 35 printers, and 4 document cameras are on the disposed list. Additionally, the computer for managing the district's network and telephone system is six years old. However, the district has not planned for equipment to replace disposed items. Only a minimal inventory is available to adequately meet accelerating replacement and repair needs. The district is reaching a critical decision regarding its electronic communication system and network system due to the age of its technology equipment.

Without planning and budgeting for equipment replacement, the district may incur a significant fiscal burden, and the quality of service to students, parents, and staff will be diminished. A significant issue that the district has not addressed is its network system. The system provider went bankrupt in 2011, and its patents were sold to different global enterprises, creating challenges for the district in acquiring replacement equipment. The district has not addressed equipment replacement and budgeting in its Long-Range Plan for Technology.

RISD should include the upgrade or replacement of outdated equipment and related budgetary requirements in the Long-Range Plan for Technology. The district must upgrade its technology to meet the learning, administrative, and leadership needs. Research on best practices provides models that the district can use to define finance parameters and categories of technology equipment. The district should use data to assess and upgrade technology equipment and infrastructure. The district should identify metrics to address availability, capabilities, connectivity of technology equipment and infrastructure, and district requirements to meet instructional, administrative, and operational needs. The district should develop implementation steps and a schedule for acquisition of computer equipment based on its instructional and administrative priorities and the availability of fiscal resources. This implementation steps and schedule should become part of the district's overall technology plan.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**LONG-RANGE TECHNOLOGY PLANNING (REC. 36)**

The district lacks a process to identify technology priorities and plan for their implementation.

While the district is in compliance with state requirements regarding an approved technology plan, review team interviews indicate the district's plan has minimal relevance and relationship to the day to day technology operations and decision-making processes of the district. The district's Long-Range Plan for Technology (LRPT) 2010–2014 was developed by the former Instructional Technology Coordinator, whose position is now vacant. IT staff did not have a copy of the plan available, and the review team found no evidence that the goals and activities of the LRPT influence operations of technology staff, administration, or the campuses.

Technology staff were asked to discuss the district's technology priorities for the next three to five years, and no significant response was provided. The district lacks processes to identify and prioritize technology expenditures for addressing current and future needs. There is no plan for technology procurements. While the district discussed an option to expand the network's capacity, this option surfaced from the staff's frustration with Internet availability and response over an extended period. However, the district has not determined the immediate and long-term technology supports needed by students and staff. There are no processes in place to engage stakeholders in reviewing and revising the district's priorities for technology services and supports.

The district approaches equipment acquisition and infrastructure expansion in an unorganized manner. For example, staff may present an idea after attending a conference or present ideas based on staff research. District administrators and IT staff discussed an initiative that would allow students and staff to bring their personal digital mobile devices to school for instruction. The Superintendent had learned of the idea at a conference, discussed the idea with central office and campus administrators, and assigned the IT staff to research the model. However, the LRPT was not amended to include these costs and resources required for this initiative.

The district collects required technology needs-assessment data, but does not use the data to define teacher and campus needs. RISD campuses complete the Texas School Technology and Readiness (STaR) Chart annually to gauge their progress in integrating technology in the schools, with assistance from the district's instructional technologist. The STaR chart provides an annual profile of organizational progress towards attainment of the goals on the district's LRPT. Campus STaR Chart data are the composite of teacher responses in four areas: Teaching and Learning (TL), Educator Preparation and Development (EPD), Leadership, Administration, and

Instructional Support (LAI), and Infrastructure for Technology (INF). The teacher ratings place each campus at one of four Levels of Progress: 1-Early Tech; 2-Developing Tech; 3-Advanced Tech; and, 4-Target Tech. The minimum score a key area may receive is Level 1- Early Tech, and the highest score is equivalent to Level 4- Target Tech.

**Figure 7-3** shows the school year 2012-13 STaR Chart results for the district: Refugio Elementary School, Refugio Junior High, and Refugio High School.

The district's assessment of its integration of technology is consistent with state averages. The IT staff have not used these results to identify strategies for organizational improvement and have not incorporated these strategies in the LRPT. In its current state, the LRPT is a compliance document with no significant value to the district.

Districts can develop a plan to enhance technology integration in teaching and learning and improve technology supports throughout its campuses. A plan identifies the availability of resources and funding, and requires stakeholder engagement. Staff and other stakeholders must be informed of all resource and budgetary constraints, and be engaged in all phases of the planning process. A plan should also include milestones, availability of resources, and methods to determine the effectiveness of implemented strategies.

**Figure 7-4** shows the U.S. Department of Education's National Educational Technology Plan 2010, which provides a checklist of seven major strategies and recommendations to guide implementation and support of a comprehensive plan that effectively uses technology to improve achievement.

The district should further develop, revise and maintain the LRPT and use it as a guiding document for implementation of technology strategies. The revised LRPT should become the LRPT 2014-2019, which the district should develop during school year 2013-14. The district should engage in

**FIGURE 7-3**  
**REFUGIO CAMPUS STAR CHARTS**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012-13**

| CAMPUS/DISTRICT         | TEACHING AND LEARNING (TL) | EDUCATOR PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT (EPD) | LEADERSHIP, ADMINISTRATION, AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT (LAI) | INFRASTRUCTURE FOR TECHNOLOGY (INF) |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Elementary School       | 2                          | 2  | 2   | 3                                   |
| Junior High School      | 3                          | 2  | 3   | 3                                   |
| High School             | 2                          | 2  | 3   | 3                                   |
| <b>District Average</b> | <b>2</b>                   | <b>2</b>                                   | <b>3</b>  | <b>3</b>                            |

NOTE: Levels of Progress: 1-Early Tech; 2-Developing Tech; 3-Advanced Tech; and, 4-Target Tech.  
SOURCE: Texas Education Agency Campus, STaR Charts Summary, 2012-13.

**FIGURE 7–4  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY PLAN  
2010**

| STRATEGY                               | RECOMMENDATION  |
|--|---|
| Strengthen Leadership                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• invest in leadership development;</li> <li>• develop partnerships with higher-education and the community;</li> <li>• encourage creative technology partnerships with the business community;and</li> <li>• empower staff and student participation in the planning process.</li> </ul>  |
| Consider Innovative Budgeting          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• determine costs for desired technology as a percentage of total spending;</li> <li>• consider a systemic restructuring of budgets to realize efficiencies, cost savings, and reallocation (may include reallocations in expenditures on textbooks, instructional supplies, space, and computer labs);</li> <li>• consider leasing with a 3–5 year refresh cycle; and</li> <li>• create a technology innovation fund to carry funds over yearly budget cycles.</li> </ul>   |
| Improve Teacher Training               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve the preparation of new teachers in the use of technology;</li> <li>• ensure that every teacher has the opportunity to take online learning courses;</li> <li>• improve the quality and consistency of teacher education through measurement, accountability, and increased technology resources; and</li> <li>• drive daily decisions and instructional intervention to customize instruction for every student's unique needs.</li> </ul>   |
| Support e-Learning and Virtual Schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide every student access to e-learning;</li> <li>• enable every teacher to participate in e-learning training;</li> <li>• encourage the use of e-learning options to meet NCLB requirement for highly qualified teachers, supplemental services, and parental choice;</li> <li>• explore creative ways to fund e-learning opportunities; and</li> <li>• develop quality measures and accreditation standards for e-learning that mirror those required for course credit.</li> </ul>   |
| Encourage Broadband Access             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• evaluate existing technology infrastructure and access to broadband to determine current capabilities and explore ways to ensure its reliability;</li> <li>• encourage that broadband is available all the way to the end-user for data management, online and technology-based assessments, e-learning, and accessing high-quality digital content; and</li> <li>• encourage the availability of adequate technical support to manage and maintain computer networks, maximize educational uptime and plan for future needs.</li> </ul>   |
| Move towards Digital Content           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that teachers and students are adequately trained in the use of online content;</li> <li>• encourage ubiquitous access to computers and connectivity for each student; and</li> <li>• consider the costs and benefits of online content, aligned with rigorous state academic standards, as part of a systemic approach to creating resources for students to customize learning to their individual needs.</li> </ul>  |
| Integrate Data Systems                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish a plan to integrate data systems so that administrators and educators have the information they need to increase efficiency and improve student learning;</li> <li>• use data from both administrative and instructional systems to understand relationships between decisions, allocation of resources and student achievement;</li> <li>• ensure interoperability- For example, consider School Interoperability Framework Compliance Certification as a requirement of RFPs and purchasing decisions; and</li> <li>• use assessment results to inform and differentiate instruction for every child.</li> </ul> |

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Educational Technology Plan 2010.

this process with a cross-section of stakeholders, and define resource and budgetary constraints. The plan should identify strategies for the district's technology program over the next five years, identify resources and budgetary constraints, develop priorities for hardware and software acquisition, and establish a schedule for full implementation. The process should also include a method for gathering stakeholder input

and support of the revised plan through some form of public notification.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**TECHNOLOGY OVERSIGHT AND MANAGEMENT (REC. 37)**

The district’s organizational structure for technology services is ineffective.

Review team interviews indicate the district’s technology services are poorly organized and do not provide oversight and leadership for technology integration. The district does not plan or implement technology-based educator training, or manage software applications for curriculum implementation, data disaggregation, and school administration functions.

The district has not had a technology department supervisor since the former IT coordinator, who hired and trained the instructional technologist and IT specialist. Technology staff knowledge of the district’s electronic communications system and technology network are primarily self-taught. When the district acquires new hardware and software applications, staff train themselves in using the equipment and software in order to provide technical support to the users. If district administrators request information for inclusion in a grant application or for equipment purchase, the technology staff research the topic and submit information to the administrator.

Figure 7–5 shows the duties for the technology staff as provided during review team interviews.

Technology staff work well together and are cross-trained in each other’s duties. That level of redundancy is important in a small district like RISD. The technology staff prioritize instructional support for teachers, students, and administrators and ensure that one person is always available to support the Help Desk. The instructional technologist’s

primary role is to support teachers, campus administrators, and central office administration with student support software: CSCOPE, DMAC, and Skyward. The IT specialist’s role is primary management of network and electronic communication systems, including on-line service and software programs to support those systems.

The technology staff report to the Superintendent. While the Superintendent meets with campus principals and central office administrators, technology staff are not included. Technology staff are not included in meetings for planning, problem-solving, or decision-making about technology. Technology staff define their work schedules, establish hierarchy and distribution of work, and set strategic direction for technology-related issues in isolation from district leaders. The district lacks systematic structures to bring key decision-makers together to define technology expectations, to monitor implementation, or anticipate teacher, staff, and administrator technology needs. Communication between technology staff and district leaders is mostly one-on-one, informal, and reactive. The district does not use its Long Range Plan for Technology (LRPT) to define priorities and actions for technology staff, or provide staff with any written direction regarding technology initiatives. The district provides few opportunities for technology staff to work together to integrate ideas districtwide. Instead, technology initiatives are pursued by individuals with specific needs rather than through stakeholder consensus. For example, the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education and the district librarian were successful in securing an Early Literacy Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The original grant amount for school year 2012–13 provided significant equipment funding for the district, the community Head

**FIGURE 7–5  
REFUGIO ISD TECHNOLOGY STAFF DUTIES  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| IT SPECIALIST  | INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIST  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manage the district’s network;</li> <li>• order and tag all technology equipment;</li> <li>• maintain a district inventory of hardware and software;</li> <li>• maintain, repair, and upkeep all equipment;</li> <li>• manage the district’s website; and</li> <li>• conduct research as directed by the Superintendent and Business Manager – regarding infrastructure, funding, emerging ideas, etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support instructional software applications at the classroom and campus level;</li> <li>• support teachers and campuses with STaR Chart completion and submission;</li> <li>• assist with maintaining district inventory of hardware and software;</li> <li>• assist campus administrators with website updates;</li> <li>• monitor utilization of hardware and software usage and troubleshoot any problems;</li> <li>• remove equipment not working and replace with working inventory for teachers; and</li> <li>• conduct research as requested by teachers, principals, and central office administrators.</li> </ul> |

SOURCE Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, Technology Staff Interviews, February 2013.

Start program, and the local Boys and Girls Club. However, the technology staffs' role in this project was minimal.

A district's technology staff often play an integral part of the decision-making process. Technology support is defined and strategic direction is provided to guide technology initiatives. Communication and feedback structures are essential to assess the amount, quality, cost, or level of user satisfaction of technology services. Staff responsible for technology functions are identified in the district's organization chart and provided opportunities to work with other departments to address technology issues.

Huffman ISD, a 3A district, established an Instructional Technology department with one central office specialist and designated teacher and staff from the campuses based on their level of technical proficiency. The district's instructional leadership team defined a set of department priorities:

- establish groups of faculty and staff to review, design, and develop instructional materials using a variety of technological tools;
- identify and model innovative uses of technology to support high-quality instruction;
- examine emerging technologies;
- collaborate with campus and district administrators to assess the users' levels of technology integration proficiency and to offer relevant training to upgrade proficiency;
- promote understanding and use of technology through demonstrations and modeling; and
- prepare and present status reports to administration, staff, parents, and community.

RISD should define an organizational structure to coordinate and enhance technology services. The district should restructure the two technology positions into a technology department reporting to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education. The district should update job descriptions to show specific roles and responsibilities for the instructional technologist and the IT specialist. The payroll/PEIMS coordinator also reports directly to the Superintendent, but workload management and supervision would be more effectively provided by the Business Manager.

Assigning the technology staff to the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education is an effective reporting structure because the most significant role of technology service at the

district level is to support instructional technology integration. Reporting to the director would increase focus on the integration of technology in the instructional process, provide better access to campus administrators, and increase accountability for technology staff. Funding available from the U.S. Department of Education is almost exclusively targeted at improving student achievement through the use of technology in elementary and secondary schools. The district can maximize its efforts in securing supplemental funding from government, business, and foundations if the Director of Elementary and Secondary Education has staff with expertise in technology to support district efforts in grant writing. This structure would enhance the status of the technology staff and improve its communication and relationships with campus staff.

In establishing the department, the district should define clear roles and responsibilities, set strategic direction, and develop efficiency and effectiveness measures. After establishing the department, the district may determine that additional staff are needed.

RISD could use the Huffman ISD model to begin structuring an organizational design that best fits the district. The first step is for stakeholders to understand the state of technology operations, identify technology priorities, and to establish strategies based on resource and budget constraints.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 7: TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT**

| <b>RECOMMENDATION</b>   |   | <b>2013–14</b> | <b>2014–15</b> | <b>2015–16</b> | <b>2016–17</b> | <b>2017–18</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>ONE TIME</b> |
|-------------------------|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
|                         |   |                |                |                |                |                | <b>5-YEAR</b>  | <b>(COSTS)</b>  |
|                         |   |                |                |                |                |                | <b>SAVINGS</b> | <b>SAVINGS</b>  |
| 34                      | Upgrade the bandwidth capacity and give priority to staff access.   | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0             |
| 35                      | Include the upgrade or replacement of outdated equipment and related budgetary requirements in the district's Long-Range Plan for Technology.         | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0             |
| 36                      | Further develop, revise and maintain the Long-Range Plan for Technology and use it as a guiding document for implementation of technology strategies. | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0             |
| 37                      | Define an organizational structure to coordinate and enhance technology services.   | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0             |
| <b>CHAPTER 7–TOTALS</b> |   | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>      |



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# **CHAPTER 8**

## **FOOD SERVICE**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 8. FOOD SERVICE

An independent school district's food service operation provides meals to its students and staff. The district may provide meals through the federally funded Child Nutrition Programs, which include the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. The School Breakfast Program is a federal entitlement program administered at the state level by the Texas Department of Agriculture. Participating schools receive cash assistance for breakfasts served that comply with program requirements. Districts receive different amounts of reimbursement based on the number of breakfasts served in each of the benefit categories: free, reduced-price, and paid. Texas state law requires that a school must participate in the breakfast program if at least 10 percent of their students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals. The National School Lunch Program serves low-cost or free lunches to students. Like the breakfast program, lunches must comply with federal nutrition guidelines, and are reimbursable to schools based on number of meals served within the benefit categories. A district's food service operations may also offer catering services as a way to supplement the food services budget or provide training for students interested in pursuing a career in the food service industry.

Food service operation is dependent on the organizational structure of the district. The three primary models of organizing food service operations are self-management, contracted management, and contracted consulting. Using the self-management model, a district operates its food service department without assistance from an outside entity. Using a contracted management model, a district contracts with a food service management company to manage either all or a portion of its operations. In this arrangement, a district may rely on the company to provide all or some staff, or may use district staff for its operations. Using a consulting model, a district contracts with a food service consulting company to provide guidance on food service operations (e.g., menus, sales and marketing plans, and ordering processes based on industry standards, etc.). In this arrangement, district staff would operate the food service department.

Refugio Independent School District provides breakfast and lunch to students through the federally funded Child Nutrition Programs. The goal of these programs is to provide participants with wholesome, nutritious meals that are in

compliance with all local, state, and federal regulations. These programs have the additional goal of being fiscally self-sustaining.

In school year 2009–10, the district contracted with Walker Quality Services, a food service consulting company, to support the day-to-day food service operations. The district competitively bid the service and Walker Quality Services was the only company to respond. The district has since renewed the contract each subsequent year. The cost of the service has remained the same since the contract was initiated; \$2,300 per month or \$27,600 annually.

The district participates in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. The district does not participate in the Afterschool Snack Program, or the Summer Feeding Program. The Superintendent indicated that the district has an exemption from providing the Summer Feeding Program even though the district exceeds the 50 percent mandated participation threshold, a requirement if 50 percent of the students are eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals.

The district has three schools; two of which have cafeterias. The junior high school students use the high school cafeteria. The elementary school and the high school have cafeterias, which include an onsite preparation kitchen and a dining room. Each kitchen is staffed with a full-time supervisor (head cook). The high school cafeteria has two additional full-time staff, while the elementary school cafeteria has three part-time staff who have custodial responsibilities. All cafeteria staff are employees of the district. A consultant from the food service consulting company visits each of the cafeterias at least once a week, or more often as needed.

The average daily participation for the district during the review month, November 2012 was 479, or 65 percent, in the National School Lunch Program, and 229, or 31 percent, in the School Breakfast Program. Districtwide, the percentage of students approved for free and reduced-price meals was 63 percent, with 54 percent receiving free meal benefits and 9 percent receiving reduced-price meal benefits. Both campuses are closed, meaning that students may not leave the campus, with the exception of grade 12 students who may leave the campus during the lunch period.

The food service operations are funded by federal reimbursement for free, reduced-price, and full-price meals; state matching funds; and local revenues from the sale of meals and a la carte foods. As of August 31, 2012, the district's financial statements show \$363,124 in revenue and \$362,075 in expenditures for the Child Nutrition Program.

## FINDINGS

- ◆ The district does not have a process to monitor the food service operations to ensure compliance with all state and federal regulations.
- ◆ The district does not itemize expenditures for food, labor, and non-food, or monitor expenditures to ensure that the food service operations remain within budgeted amounts.
- ◆ The district does not have a strategy to increase meal participation.
- ◆ The district's meal pricing methodology does not cover the cost of producing and serving the meals.
- ◆ The district does not have a process to ensure that all meals served and claimed for reimbursement comply with meal pattern requirements.
- ◆ The district does not have a process to maintain the procedures manual for the food service operations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 38: Develop a comprehensive oversight plan to remain directly involved in, and to closely monitor food service operations.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 39: Conduct a cost benefit analysis of the district's food service operations and services received from the food service consulting company to determine how to best operate within budgeted amounts.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 40: Develop strategies for increasing student participation in the School Breakfast and the National School Lunch Programs.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 41: Establish a meal pricing structure to ensure that the revenue generated is sufficient to cover the cost of preparing and serving the full-price meals.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 42: Monitor food service operations and maintain sufficient kitchen documentation to ensure that the breakfast and lunch menus comply with United States Department of Agriculture meal pattern requirements.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 43: Develop a process to annually review and update the food service operations manual as needed.**

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### OVERSIGHT OF FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS (REC. 38)

The district does not have a process to monitor the food service operations to ensure compliance with all state and federal regulations.

Since school year 2009–10, the district has contracted with Walker Quality Services, a food service consulting company (FSCC), to support the day-to-day food service operations. **Figure 8–1** shows the terms and conditions of the agreement between the district and the consulting company for school year 2012–13, as they relate to program operations and the responsibilities of each entity.

Review team interviews indicate that the district places significant reliance on the FSCC to oversee all aspects of its operations. The district does not monitor food service operations. For example, the district does not have a director of food service to coordinate operations of the two cafeterias. Instead, the district employs supervisors for each cafeteria who communicate weekly with a consultant from the FSCC. A district employee has not been assigned to make periodic visits to the school cafeterias to monitor for compliance with federal and state regulations. Further, on the organization chart provided to the review team, the only reference to the food service department is the direct link from the Superintendent to the FSCC. The food service supervisors and staff are not represented on the organization chart, inferring that they are receiving their direction from the consulting company. Consulting companies (FSCCs) are allowed to provide information, make suggestions, provide training, and similar consulting services. An FSCC is not allowed to manage or direct a food service program's activities.

Since the onsite review, the district administration indicated that the junior high school principal will be the director/manager of food service beginning in school year 2013–14. The junior high school principal will attend training during

**FIGURE 8–1  
REFUGIO ISD AND FOOD SERVICE CONSULTING COMPANY AGREEMENT  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| RESPONSIBILITY  | REFUGIO ISD | FOOD SERVICE<br>CONSULTING<br>COMPANY |
|---|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>SCOPE AND PURPOSE</b>  |             |                                       |
| Provides consulting for the district's "Food Service" program (e.g., food and beverage facilities including the preparation, service and sale of food, beverages, goods, merchandise, and other items).   |             | X                                     |
| Retains FSCC as its exclusive agent to consult for RISD's food service operations.  | X           |                                       |
| Provides one off-site Food Service Consultant to make recommendations in the operation of the food service operations.  |             | X                                     |
| Compensates all Food Service employees including one on-site Food Service Director.   | X           |                                       |
| Purchases food and supplies and shall process and pay the related invoices directly.  | X           |                                       |
| Supervises and controls the daily operation of the food service operations with respect to all matters (including working conditions for the food service employees and the safety, sanitation, and maintenance of the food service facilities) in accordance with recommendations made by the FSCC and as agreed to with RISD. | X           |                                       |
| Controls the quality, extent, and general nature of the food service operations and the prices to be charged.   | X           |                                       |
| Makes available marketing materials, signature programs, safety programs, and related materials during the term of this Agreement. The use of such materials shall not create right, title, interest or copyright in such materials, and shall not be used beyond the termination of the Agreement.                             |             | X                                     |
| Receives all revenue from the food service operations.  | X           |                                       |
| Supervise food service operations in such manner as will ensure compliance with the rules and regulations of the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) and the USDA regarding the Child Nutrition Program, and shall be legally responsible for the conduct of the food service program.  | X           |                                       |
| Complies with the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education and the USDA and any additions or amendments thereto.   |             | X                                     |
| Provides training and staff development programs and events for food service staff.   |             | X                                     |
| Pays all approved expenses incurred during food service training and staff development that are a direct cost of operation including travel related expenses.   | X           |                                       |
| <b>Free and Reduced-Price Meal Policy</b>   |             |                                       |
| Makes appropriate and adequate financial arrangements for funds to defray the necessary costs of the service of free or reduced price meals to eligible children.   | X           |                                       |
| Maintains the approval and verification of free and reduced meal applications; and participation records used in submitting the claim for reimbursement.  | X           |                                       |
| <b>Menus</b>  |             |                                       |
| Develop menus using a licensed version of "Nutri-Kids Menu System" in conformance with the TDA and USDA's requirements.   | X           |                                       |
| Assists in writing menus.   |             | X                                     |
| Ensures that meals are prepared, served, and claimed for reimbursement complies with federal and state requirements.  | X           |                                       |
| NOTE: There is no director of food service; each kitchen has a head cook (supervisor).<br>SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Central Office, Refugio ISD and Walker Quality Services Consulting Agreement, February 2013.   |             |                                       |

summer 2013 in preparation to oversee food service operations and staff.

The district does not monitor the contract with the FSCC to ensure it receives appropriate service delivery. Staff indicated

that the district does not evaluate the services of the FSCC. Instead, the Business Manager reviews the company's compliance with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) regulations and end-of-year financial statements. However, staff did not mention a specific process used to

evaluate and monitor the FSCC or food service operations, nor which staff was involved in that process.

Consequently, the review team observed that the district's reliance on the FSCC may have led to disparities between regulatory requirements and the district's actions. A review of documents suggests that the district may be using the services of the FSCC to provide management of food service operations. For example, in the agreement between the district and the consulting company, menu planning is assigned to the director of food service (an RISD employee). However, review team interviews indicate that the consulting company was responsible for menu planning in the district, as the district does not have a director of food service position. Additionally, a review of Board of Trustee meeting minutes found the board had approved the district to "...authorize soliciting bids for food service management for the 2009–2010 school year..." on May 21, 2009. Moreover, the legal notice for soliciting bids for the food service consulting states "Refugio Independent School District will be accepting proposals for food service management for the 2009–10 school year." The resulting contract between the district and the FSCC was initiated and authorized by the district, but was not the contract template required by TDA for a food service management company (FSMC).

Food service management involves the day-to-day operation of the food services with the contractual responsibility of daily oversight and management of the program. Many school districts contract with FSMCs to perform these duties. However, based on their current contract with the district, the FSCC is consulting with RISD and is not supposed to be performing the duties of a FSMC. Consulting is specifically focused in areas, such as training or procurement, where the consultant works with district staff in designated areas, but does not oversee daily operation of the food service operations. Districts typically use consulting agreements for one area of food service operations to ensure that the district maintains responsibility of all other operations. Time spent onsite does not determine the type of service provided. A consultant may be in the district daily for an extended period. The key criterion is whether the day-to-day food service operations are under the management of the district or the consultant.

If RISD does not provide oversight of the food service operations, the district may be cited for violations of state and federal regulations governing the programs during the course of a Coordinated Review Effort (CRE). A CRE is a standardized review process developed by the U.S.

Department of Agriculture (USDA) that includes a comprehensive on-site evaluation of districts participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP). The review includes both critical and general areas of review, as well as areas TDA deems as important. USDA provides specific guidance and instructions for the review process so that all districts nationwide are evaluated in the same manner. The TDA may establish an overclaim of federal reimbursement, depending on the longevity and severity of the violation.

Texas school districts operating federally funded Child Nutrition Programs, such as the NSLP and SBP, contract with TDA, which administers these programs for the state. If a district does not plan for and monitor services being provided through its CNP, it risks the potential for being out of compliance with federal and state regulations and the possibility of being sanctioned.

The district should develop a comprehensive oversight plan to remain directly involved in, and to closely monitor food service operations. To accomplish this, the district should first identify a district staff who will provide oversight of food service to ensure that the best interests of the district are served. This oversight includes financial, regulatory, and operations. Additionally, RISD should also contact TDA for a ruling as to whether the FSCC is operating as a consulting service or a FSMC. If the district does not contact TDA, it is at risk for being cited for non-compliance with state and federal procurement standards. The district may return reimbursement funds to the TDA based on the longevity and severity of the violation.

If TDA decides that the company is providing the FSMC services, RISD should change the terms of the contract with the consulting company to operate as a FSMC instead. USDA requirements are addressed in *Contracting with Food Service Management Companies: Guidance for School Food Authorities* (April 2009) and is available at [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov).

The district should also develop a checklist with a schedule indicating monitoring tasks. District staff should use the checklist to guide the activities of the consulting company, cafeteria supervisors, and cafeteria staff. Suggested activities may include:

- survey student likes and dislikes, routinely monitor tray waste, and adjust the menus accordingly;
- train participating staff and provide written procedures for recognizing a reimbursable breakfast

and lunch under Offer versus Serve (OVS) to ensure students are not being required to select more than necessary;

- ensure that OVS is implemented properly at both breakfast and lunch;
- perform onsite reviews according to regulations; and
- validate all invoices against bid pricing to ensure the district is not being overcharged, or undercharged.

TDA has outlined a self-assessment tool found in the *Administrator’s Reference Manual* (July 2009) available at [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org). This document provides suggestions for additional activities to be included in monitoring processes.

The district can implement this recommendation with its existing resources.

**BUDGETING AND ITEMIZING OF FOOD SERVICE EXPENDITURES (REC. 39)**

The district does not itemize expenditures for food, labor, and non-food, or monitor expenditures to ensure that the food service operations remain within budgeted amounts.

RISD subsidizes its food service operations annually using local funds. In order to offset actual expenditures, the district transferred \$65,000 in school year 2007–08 and \$120,000 in school year 2008–09 from the general fund to food service operations. This transfer indicates that the department was operating at a loss for these two school years. The district first contracted with a food service consulting company (FSCC) in school year 2009–10. The consulting agreement states that the district shall make appropriate and adequate financial arrangements for funds to defray the necessary costs of the service of free or reduced-price meals to eligible children.

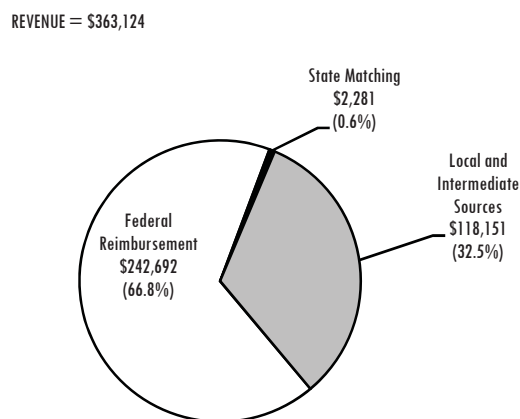
**Figure 8–2** shows the funding sources for the district’s food service operations.

The total food service operation expenditures for school year 2011–12 were \$362,075 resulting in a balance of \$1,049. The district could not provide itemized expenditures for food, labor, and non-food.

According to the Business Manager, by using the FSCC, the fiscal status of the food service operations has improved and fund balance has increased as shown in **Figure 8–3**.

Review team interviews indicate that the district does not calculate the total value of food service operations

**FIGURE 8–2  
FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS YEAR-END BALANCE BY SOURCE  
AUGUST 31, 2012**



SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Combined Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balances, April 2013.

**FIGURE 8–3  
REFUGIO ISD FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS  
FUND BALANCE  
SCHOOL YEARS 2008–09 TO 2012–13**

| SCHOOL YEAR | BEGINNING BALANCE | ENDING BALANCE | NET BALANCE |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------|
| 2008–09     | \$9,211           | \$15,090       | \$5,879     |
| 2009–10     | \$15,090          | \$18,387       | \$3,297     |
| 2010–11     | \$18,387          | \$42,270       | \$23,883    |
| 2011–12     | \$42,270          | \$43,319       | \$1,049     |
| 2012–13     | \$43,319          | \$52,422*      | \$9,103     |

\* Ending balance and net balance for school year 2012–13 is the balance as of April 2013, not the end-of-the-year.

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Manager, April 18, 2013.

expenditures paid through the general fund. While the district maintains profit and loss statements, staff indicated that they do not itemize expenditures to show categories such as food, labor, and non-food. For example, costs related to food service utilities, maintenance, custodial services, and technology equipment, software, and support are excluded, and as a result, may not be funded through revenue generated by the food service operations. The district did not include these costs in the profit and loss statements for its food service operations and may be funding these expenditures with general revenue. By funding these expenditures with general revenue, the full cost to operate the food service program is not included in the food service financial records,

and therefore, does not show if the district can sustain its operations within a budget. Further, the district is unable to show whether the FSCC has improved operations.

In recent years, school food service administrators have faced increasing demands to operate food service departments as self-supporting, while maintaining quality food and service, as well as nutritional integrity. The ability of the school food service administrator to manage financial resources is critical to success in meeting customer needs, improving program quality, and maintaining a fiscally sound program. When districts supplement food service operations that exceed budgeted amounts, fewer funds are available for other areas of district operations. The district may be required to use funds from other account balances to supplement operations, which would limit funding for other initiatives.

Best practices dictate that whenever possible, food service operations should be fiscally self-sustaining. Whether or not a specific district can achieve this goal is dependent on a number of factors including, but not limited to: students approved for free and reduced-price meals; closed or open high school campuses; student participation in federal breakfast and lunch programs; cost of food, labor, and non-food supplies; control of tray waste; meal pricing; and the contracted value of any management fees for districts using the services of a FSMC.

RISD should conduct a cost benefit analysis of the district's food service operations and services received from the FSCC to determine how to best operate within budgeted amounts. As part of this effort, the district should itemize expenditures by category (food, labor, and non-food) and monitor compliance with those standards. The district should identify strategies for reducing costs, increasing revenue, and value of services provided by the FSCC. The district should use the result of this analysis to determine whether the consulting company has improved operations.

The district should include in its profit and loss statements all food service expenditures paid through the district's general fund, in addition to all other costs paid directly from the food service revenue. Staff should review every expenditure to determine whether it contributes to the quality of the programs as defined by the district. The district should then plan to ensure food service operations remain within its planned budget for school year 2013–14. The following steps could be included in the plan:

- set district-specific goals for food, labor, and non-food supply expenditures as a percentage of revenue—for

example, 45 percent food, 45 percent labor, 5 percent non-food supplies, and 5 percent profit;

- monitor categories of expenditures monthly and adjust spending as necessary to meet the district's established standards;
- enlist the support of the food service staff members and community for increasing revenue;
- consider offering new services such as breakfast-in-the classroom, and adding catered events to the work schedules of existing employees;
- set participation and sales goals for each cafeteria; and
- encourage marketing and merchandising efforts.

If the district does not monitor food service operations, the district may continue to supplement operations with general revenue.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **MEAL PARTICIPATION (REC. 40)**

The district does not have a strategy to increase meal participation.

In school year 2012–13, 63 percent of the district's enrollment qualified to receive free and reduced-price meals, however the participation was low. **Figure 8–4** shows a summary of average daily participation (ADP) for each of the programs by school.

As shown in **Figure 8–4**, the School Breakfast Program (SBP) ADP for all students is 31 percent, with a high of 60 percent at the junior high school and a low of 14 percent at the high school. The total National School Lunch Program (NSLP) ADP for all students is 65 percent, with a high of 77 percent at the elementary school and a low of 39 percent at the high school.

The high school campus is open for grade 12 students during the lunch period. Students may leave the campus for 50 minutes to go home, or purchase food from local restaurants or grocery stores. This policy may contribute to the high school's low participation in the NSLP.

Although 31 percent of eligible students eating breakfast and 65 percent of the eligible students eating lunch are close to the state averages, the district has not maximized participation in either of the programs. Without increasing participation

**FIGURE 8–4**  
**REFUGIO ISD BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PARTICIPATION PERCENTAGES BY CATEGORY**  
**NOVEMBER 2012**

| SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM      |                 | HIGH SCHOOL | JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL | ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | TOTAL      |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Free                          | Eligible        | 86          | 66                 | 240               | <b>392</b> |
|                               | ADP             | 20          | 43                 | 107               | <b>170</b> |
|                               | % ADP           | 23%         | 65%                | 45%               | <b>43%</b> |
| Reduced-Price                 | Eligible        | 15          | 9                  | 41                | <b>65</b>  |
|                               | ADP             | 4           | 8                  | 10                | <b>22</b>  |
|                               | % ADP           | 27%         | 89%                | 24%               | <b>33%</b> |
| Full-Price                    | Eligible        | 112         | 33                 | 131               | <b>276</b> |
|                               | ADP             | 5           | 14                 | 18                | <b>37</b>  |
|                               | % ADP           | 4%          | 42%                | 14%               | <b>13%</b> |
| Total                         | Eligible        | 213         | 108                | 412               | <b>733</b> |
|                               | ADP             | 29          | 65                 | 135               | <b>229</b> |
|                               | % ADP           | 14%         | 60%                | 33%               | <b>31%</b> |
| NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM |                 | HIGH SCHOOL | JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL | ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | TOTAL      |
| Free                          | Eligible        | 86          | 66                 | 240               | <b>392</b> |
|                               | ADP             | 50          | 53                 | 206               | <b>309</b> |
|                               | % ADP           | 58%         | 80%                | 86%               | <b>79%</b> |
| Reduced-Price                 | Eligible        | 15          | 9                  | 41                | <b>65</b>  |
|                               | ADP             | 7           | 6                  | 33                | <b>46</b>  |
|                               | % ADP           | 47%         | 67%                | 80%               | <b>71%</b> |
| Full-Price                    | Eligible        | 112         | 33                 | 135               | <b>280</b> |
|                               | ADP             | 26          | 19                 | 79                | <b>124</b> |
|                               | % ADP           | 23%         | 58%                | 60%               | <b>45%</b> |
| <b>Total</b>                  | <b>Eligible</b> | <b>213</b>  | <b>108</b>         | <b>412</b>        | <b>733</b> |
|                               | ADP             | 83          | 78                 | 318               | <b>479</b> |
|                               | % ADP           | 39%         | 72%                | 77%               | <b>65%</b> |

NOTE: Average Daily Participation (ADP).

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Daily Records of Meals Served, April 2013.

in the Child Nutrition Programs, the district reduces the opportunity to receive federal and state revenue to support the operation of its food service operations.

**Figure 8–5** shows the amount of the lost opportunity for the breakfast program revenue. It shows the current versus projected revenue for breakfast when ADP is increased to 50 percent for breakfast at the high school; 70 percent for breakfast at the junior high school; and 80 percent for breakfast at the elementary school.

If the district increased breakfast participation rates to the levels shown in **Figure 8–5**, breakfast revenue would increase

by \$86,146 annually, excluding overhead costs. Using November 2012 ADP rates, total district breakfast revenue is \$411.44 daily. Based on increasing total district breakfast participation rates by 124 percent, district breakfast revenue would be \$890.03 daily, an increase of \$478.59 daily.

**Figure 8–6** shows the amount of the lost opportunity for the lunch program revenue. It shows the current versus projected revenue for lunch when ADP is increased to 80 percent for lunch at the high school; 80 percent for lunch at the junior high school; and 90 percent for lunch at the elementary school.



**FIGURE 8–5  
REFUGIO ISD CURRENT VERSUS PROJECTED REVENUE FOR BREAKFAST  
NOVEMBER 2012**

| <b>HIGH SCHOOL</b>        |  |            |                 |                 |  |            |                 |                 |                   |                        |
|---------------------------|--|------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------------|
|                           | <b>CURRENT AT 14 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                 | <b>PROJECTED AT 50 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                 | <b>DIFFERENCE</b> |                        |
|                           | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>  | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>  | <b>INCREASE</b>   | <b>ANNUAL INCREASE</b> |
| Free                      | 86   | 20         | \$1.85          | \$37.00         | 86   | 43         | \$1.85          | \$79.55         | \$42.55           |                        |
| Reduced-Price             | 15   | 4          | \$1.85          | \$7.40          | 15   | 8          | \$1.85          | \$14.80         | \$7.40            |                        |
| Full-Price                | 112  | 5          | \$1.52          | \$7.60          | 112  | 56         | \$1.52          | \$85.12         | \$77.52           |                        |
| <b>School Totals</b>      | <b>213</b>   | <b>29</b>  |                 | <b>\$52.00</b>  | <b>213</b>   | <b>107</b> |                 | <b>\$179.47</b> | <b>\$127.47</b>   | <b>\$22,945</b>        |
| <b>JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL</b> |  |            |                 |                 |  |            |                 |                 |                   |                        |
|                           | <b>CURRENT AT 60 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                 | <b>PROJECTED AT 70 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                 | <b>DIFFERENCE</b> |                        |
|                           | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>  | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>  | <b>INCREASE</b>   | <b>ANNUAL INCREASE</b> |
| Free                      | 66   | 43         | \$1.85          | \$79.55         | 66   | 46         | \$1.85          | \$85.10         | \$5.55            |                        |
| Reduced-Price             | 9  | 8          | \$1.85          | \$14.80         | 9  | 8          | \$1.85          | \$14.80         | \$0.00            |                        |
| Full-Price                | 33   | 14         | \$1.52          | \$21.28         | 33   | 23         | \$1.52          | \$34.11         | \$13.68           |                        |
| <b>School Totals</b>      | <b>108</b>   | <b>65</b>  |                 | <b>\$115.63</b> | <b>108</b>   | <b>76</b>  |                 | <b>\$135.38</b> | <b>\$19.75</b>    | <b>\$3,555</b>         |
| <b>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>  |  |            |                 |                 |  |            |                 |                 |                   |                        |
|                           | <b>CURRENT AT 33 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                 | <b>PROJECTED AT 80 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                 | <b>DIFFERENCE</b> |                        |
|                           | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>  | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>  | <b>INCREASE</b>   | <b>ANNUAL INCREASE</b> |
| Free                      | 240  | 107        | \$1.85          | \$197.95        | 240  | 192        | \$1.85          | \$355.20        | \$157.25          |                        |
| Reduced-Price             | 41   | 10         | \$1.85          | \$18.50         | 41   | 33         | \$1.85          | \$61.05         | \$42.55           |                        |
| Full-Price                | 131  | 18         | \$1.52          | \$27.36         | 131  | 105        | \$1.52          | \$159.60        | \$132.24          |                        |
| <b>School Totals</b>      | <b>412</b>   | <b>135</b> |                 | <b>\$243.81</b> | <b>412</b>   | <b>330</b> |                 | <b>\$575.18</b> | <b>\$331.37</b>   | <b>\$59,646</b>        |
| <b>District Totals</b>    | <b>734</b>   | <b>229</b> |                 | <b>\$411.44</b> | <b>734</b>   | <b>513</b> |                 | <b>\$890.03</b> | <b>\$478.59</b>   | <b>\$86,146</b>        |

NOTE: Revenue does not include any associated overhead costs resulting from increased participation.  
SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Daily Record of Meals Served, Individual Schools, April 2013.

If the district increased lunch participation rates to the levels shown in **Figure 8–6**, lunch revenue would increase by \$49,284 annually, excluding overhead costs. Using November 2012 ADP rates, total district lunch revenue is \$1,353.44 daily. Based on increasing total district lunch participation rates by 22 percent, district lunch revenue would be \$1,627.23 daily, an increase of \$273.79 daily. The total revenue for breakfast and lunch, if participation rates increase, is \$135,430, excluding overhead costs.

The projected rates in **Figures 8–5** and **8–6** are high; however, many Texas districts have participation rates at those levels or higher. Typically, districts with high rates have innovative styles of service and high quality popular menu items. During school year 2011–12, Waco ISD piloted

breakfast-in-the-classroom in four elementary campuses. The average participation rate for these four campuses was approximately 95 percent, compared to a 52 percent participation rate for students in all the other elementary schools.

RISD should develop strategies for increasing student participation in the SBP and the NSLP. The Superintendent, Business Manager, principals, and food service staff should discuss methods of increasing participation and establish strategies for implementation in school year 2013–14. The following best practice strategies may be helpful in determining a plan for the district.

**FIGURE 8–6**  
**REFUGIO ISD CURRENT VERSUS PROJECTED REVENUE FOR LUNCH**  
**NOVEMBER 2012**

| <b>REFUGIO HIGH SCHOOL</b>                            |  |            |                 |                   |  |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
|---|--|------------|-----------------|-------------------|--|------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
|   | <b>CURRENT AT 39 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                   | <b>PROJECTED AT 80 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                   | <b>DIFFERENCE</b> |                        |
|   | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>    | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>    | <b>INCREASE</b>   | <b>ANNUAL INCREASE</b> |
| Free  | 86   | 50         | \$2.9425        | \$147.13          | 86   | 52         | \$2.9425        | \$153.01          | \$4.71            |                        |
| Reduced-Price   | 15   | 7          | \$2.9425        | \$20.60           | 15   | 9          | \$2.9425        | \$26.48           | \$5.88            |                        |
| Full-Price  | 112  | 26         | \$2.5225        | \$65.59           | 112  | 67         | \$2.5225        | \$169.01          | \$103.93          |                        |
| <b>School Totals</b>                                  | <b>213</b>   | <b>83</b>  |                 | <b>\$233.32</b>   | <b>213</b>   | <b>128</b> |                 | <b>\$347.83</b>   | <b>\$114.52</b>   | <b>\$20,614</b>        |
| <b>REFUGIO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL</b>                     |  |            |                 |                   |  |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
|   | <b>CURRENT AT 39 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                   | <b>PROJECTED AT 80 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                   | <b>DIFFERENCE</b> |                        |
|   | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>    | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>    | <b>INCREASE</b>   | <b>ANNUAL INCREASE</b> |
| Free  | 66   | 53         | \$2.9425        | \$155.95          | 66   | 53         | \$2.9425        | \$155.95          | \$0.00            |                        |
| Reduced-Price   | 9  | 6          | \$2.9425        | \$17.66           | 9  | 7          | \$2.9425        | \$20.60           | \$3.53            |                        |
| Full-Price  | 33   | 19         | \$2.5225        | \$47.93           | 33   | 26         | \$2.5225        | \$66.59           | \$18.67           |                        |
| <b>School Totals</b>                                  | <b>108</b>   | <b>78</b>  |                 | <b>\$221.54</b>   | <b>108</b>   | <b>87</b>  |                 | <b>\$243.73</b>   | <b>\$22.20</b>    | <b>\$3,996</b>         |
| <b>REFUGIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</b>                      |  |            |                 |                   |  |            |                 |                   |                   |                        |
|   | <b>CURRENT AT 39 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                   | <b>PROJECTED AT 80 PERCENT AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION (ADP)</b> |            |                 |                   | <b>DIFFERENCE</b> |                        |
|   | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>    | <b>ELIGIBLE</b>  | <b>ADP</b> | <b>PER MEAL</b> | <b>REVENUE</b>    | <b>INCREASE</b>   | <b>ANNUAL INCREASE</b> |
| Free  | 240  | 206        | \$2.9425        | \$606.16          | 240  | 216        | \$2.9425        | \$635.58          | \$29.43           |                        |
| Reduced-Price   | 41   | 33         | \$2.9425        | \$97.10           | 41   | 37         | \$2.9425        | \$108.87          | \$11.48           |                        |
| Full-Price  | 131  | 79         | \$2.4725        | \$195.33          | 131  | 118        | \$2.4725        | \$291.51          | \$96.18           |                        |
| <b>School Totals</b>                                  | <b>412</b>   | <b>318</b> |                 | <b>\$898.59</b>   | <b>412</b>   | <b>371</b> |                 | <b>\$1,035.67</b> | <b>\$137.09</b>   | <b>\$24,675</b>        |
| <b>District Totals</b>                                | <b>734</b>   | <b>479</b> |                 | <b>\$1,353.44</b> | <b>734</b>   | <b>586</b> |                 | <b>\$1,627.23</b> | <b>\$273.79</b>   | <b>\$49,284</b>        |
| <b>ANNUAL INCREASE IN BREAKFAST AND LUNCH REVENUE</b> |  |            |                 |                   |  |            |                 |                   |                   | <b>\$135,430</b>       |

NOTE: Revenue does not include any associated overhead costs resulting from increased participation.  
Source: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Daily Record of Meals Served, Individual Schools, April 2013.

Some strategies that might increase SBP participation include:

- adjusting bus schedules to ensure students arrive at school with time to eat breakfast before their classes start; and piloting breakfast-in-the-classroom.

Strategies to increase NSLP participation include:

- surveying students' preferences, monitoring tray waste, and making the appropriate menu adjustments;
- leveraging the skills and knowledge of the food service consulting company to market the programs;

- decorating the cafeterias according to the particular school's age group; and
- installing video displays in the high school cafeteria and planning events during the breakfast and lunch periods.

The district could also increase participation rates for lunch at the high school by closing the campus. This policy could allow for the reduction of the lunch period to 30 minutes, leaving 20 minutes that could be used in the morning to provide the SBP using a delayed breakfast or a mid-morning nutrition break. Cafeteria service may be from the serving line, or from "grab and go" stations.

No fiscal impact is assumed for the recommendation until the district develops a strategy to increase participation in the SBP and NSLP. If the district achieved participation rates shown in **Figures 8–5** and **8–6**, the total revenue would increase by \$135,430 annually, excluding overhead costs. Increased participation would also increase food costs. Other costs the district would incur include \$60,944 in additional food costs, or 45 percent of revenue; \$6,771 in additional non-food costs, or 5 percent of revenue. The district may also incur costs related to additional labor, capital equipment, and services. Considering the additional costs for food and non-food, the district could realize an annual increase of \$67,715. (\$135,430 increased revenue – [\$60,944 food cost plus \$6,771 non-food cost] = \$67,715).

**STUDENT AND ADULT FULL-PRICE MEALS (REC. 41)**

The district’s meal pricing methodology does not cover the cost of producing and serving the meals.

The price of adult and student full-price meals does not cover the cost of producing and serving the meals. **Figure 8–7** shows the school year 2012–13 pricing as compared to the revenue generated by a free breakfast and lunch.

Pursuant to the federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, Section 201, an additional reimbursement of \$0.06 per lunch is available for districts certified to be in compliance with the new school meal pattern. On January 2, 2013, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service issued Memo SP 19 - 2013: SUBJECT: Paid Lunch Equity: School Year 2013–14 Calculations. This memo states the following:

The interim rule entitled, “National School Lunch Program: School Food Service Account Revenue Amendments Related to the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010” requires school food authorities (districts) participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) to ensure sufficient funds are provided to the nonprofit school food service account for meals served to students not eligible for free or reduced-price meals. There are two ways to meet this requirement: either through the prices charged for “paid” meals or through other non-Federal sources provided to the nonprofit school food service account.

To ensure compliance with the paid lunch equity requirement, districts must review paid lunch revenue annually. If the average price of a paid lunch is less than the difference between the free and paid federal reimbursement rates, a

**FIGURE 8–7  
REFUGIO ISD STUDENT AND ADULT MEAL PRICES COMPARED TO TOTAL REVENUE GENERATED BY A FREE STUDENT  
BREAKFAST AND LUNCH  
SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| CATEGORY OF MEAL BENEFITS | PRICE PAID | REIMBURSEMENT | SEVERE NEED AND 60 PERCENT OR MORE | \$0.06 CERTIFIED | USDA FOODS VALUE | TOTAL PER MEAL REVENUE | DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FREE REIMBURSEMENT AND STUDENT AND ADULT PAID |
|---------------------------|------------|---------------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|--|
| <b>Breakfast</b>          |            |               |                                    |                  |                  |                        |  |
| Free                      | \$0.00     | \$1.55        | \$0.30                             | N/A              | N/A              | \$1.85                 | \$0.00   |
| Reduced-Price             | \$0.30     | \$1.25        | \$0.30                             | N/A              | N/A              | \$1.85                 | \$0.00   |
| Full-Price Elementary     | \$1.25     | \$0.27        | \$0.00                             | N/A              | N/A              | \$1.52                 | (\$0.33)   |
| Full-Price Secondary      | \$1.25     | \$0.27        | \$0.00                             | N/A              | N/A              | \$1.52                 | (\$0.33)   |
| Adult                     | \$1.65     | \$0.00        | \$0.00                             | N/A              | N/A              | \$1.65                 | (\$0.20)   |
| <b>Lunch</b>              |            |               |                                    |                  |                  |                        |  |
| Free                      | \$0.00     | \$2.86        | \$0.02                             | \$0.06           | \$0.2275         | \$3.17                 | \$0.00   |
| Reduced-Price             | \$0.40     | \$2.46        | \$0.02                             | \$0.06           | \$0.2275         | \$3.17                 | \$0.00   |
| Full-Price Elementary     | \$2.35     | \$0.27        | \$0.02                             | \$0.06           | \$0.2275         | \$2.70                 | (\$0.47)   |
| Full-Price Secondary      | \$2.40     | \$0.27        | \$0.02                             | \$0.06           | \$0.2275         | \$2.75                 | (\$0.42)   |
| Adult                     | \$3.30     | \$0.00        | \$0.00                             | \$0.00           | N/A              | \$3.30                 | N/A  |

NOTES: Schools where at least 60 percent of the lunches served during the second preceding school year were free or reduced-price qualify for additional “severe need” school breakfast reimbursement.

SOURCES: Refugio ISD, Business Office, District meal prices, April 2013; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Reimbursement and Food Rates, April 2013.

district must determine how it will meet the requirement—by either increasing the average price of a paid lunch or allocating funds from non-federal sources. The average price of a paid lunch is calculated using the combined prices of a district’s full-price meals (e.g., full-price elementary, full-price secondary, and adult price.)

Districts that choose to increase the average price of a paid lunch must increase the average price of a paid lunch by a factor of two percent plus the annual inflation rate. The inflation factor is based on the percentage change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The reimbursement rates are adjusted using the CPI for the 12-month period beginning in May. For school year 2013–14, districts must use school year 2012–13 federal reimbursement rates and the related inflation factor when calculating paid lunch requirements. As an example, a district that charged less than an average of \$2.59 for paid lunches in school year 2012–13 must adjust their average price or allocate additional non-federal funds for school year 2013–14. The district would calculate the increased per-meal amount by using a rate of 4.93 percent (2 percent + 2.93 percent inflation rate).

The district allocates funds from its general fund to support its food service operations. Districts with self-supporting food service operations fund the departments by using revenue generated from their operations. Typically, these districts use meal pricing structures that consider the cost of producing and serving the meals. Adult meals are not eligible for federal cash reimbursement. These districts ensure that adult meals (i.e., those served to teachers, administrators, custodians, and others) are priced so that the adult payment in combination with any other revenues covers the overall cost of the meal. If cost information is not available, a district must ensure the minimum adult payment includes the cost of the student full-price meal, the current value of federal reimbursement, and the current value of USDA Foods for a

meal. If meals are included as a fringe benefit or offered as part of the salary arrangement for non-food service staff, the district must allocate enough from non-food service operation funds to the food service account to pay the cost of these adult meals.

The district should establish a meal pricing structure to ensure that the revenue generated is sufficient to cover the cost of preparing and serving the full-price meals. A district is not required to raise the cost of a child’s meal more than 10 cents during a single year, and may choose to spread a single year’s increase over two years. A district may also chose to provide non-federal food program funds in place of the amount of funds that would be raised by increasing meal prices.

**Figure 8–8** shows the recommended price for student and adult full-price meals if the district chooses to increase the cost of the meals in a single year. If the district selects this option, then it should increase these prices by at least 4.93 percent.

**Figure 8–9** shows the additional daily revenue as a result of increasing full-price student and adult meals.

The fiscal impact assumes increasing the price of student and adult full-price meals in a single year. This increase would provide \$3,078 (\$17.10 daily increase x 180 days) in additional annual revenue. This increase in full-price meals could assist the food service operations in becoming self-supporting.

#### **DOCUMENTATION OF MEAL PATTERNS (REC. 42)**

RISD does not have a process to ensure that all meals served and claimed for reimbursement comply with meal pattern requirements.

**FIGURE 8–8**  
**REFUGIO ISD RECOMMENDED FULL-PRICE MEAL MINIMUM INCREASES**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

| CATEGORY OF MEAL BENEFITS | PRICE CURRENTLY PAID | REQUIRED PERCENTAGE OF INCREASE 2013–14 | MINIMUM PRICE INCREASE | MINIMUM PRICE FOR 2013–14 SCHOOL YEAR |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Student Breakfast         | \$1.25               | 4.93%                                   | \$0.06                 | \$1.31                                |
| Elementary Lunch          | \$2.35               | 4.93%                                   | \$0.12                 | \$2.47                                |
| Secondary Lunch           | \$2.40               | 4.93%                                   | \$0.12                 | \$2.52                                |
| Adult Breakfast           | \$1.65               | 4.93%                                   | \$0.08                 | \$1.73                                |
| Adult Lunch               | \$3.30               | 4.93%                                   | \$0.16                 | \$3.46                                |

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, April 2013; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service Memo SP 19 - 2013: Subject: Paid Lunch Equity: School Year 2013–14 Calculations, January 2013.

**FIGURE 8–9  
DAILY ADDITIONAL REVENUE AS A RESULT OF INCREASING STUDENT AND ADULT FULL- PRICE MEALS  
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

| SCHOOL                         | BREAKFAST                              |                                |                           | LUNCH                                  |                                |                           | TOTAL               |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
|                                | FULL PRICE AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION | DIFFERENCE IN PER MEAL REVENUE | DAILY INCREASE IN REVENUE | FULL PRICE AVERAGE DAILY PARTICIPATION | DIFFERENCE IN PER-MEAL REVENUE | DAILY INCREASE IN REVENUE | INCREASE IN REVENUE |
| High School                    | 5                                      | \$0.06                         | \$0.30                    | 26                                     | \$0.12                         | \$3.12                    |                     |
| Junior High School             | 14                                     | \$0.06                         | \$0.84                    | 19                                     | \$0.12                         | \$2.28                    |                     |
| Elementary School              | 18                                     | \$0.06                         | \$1.08                    | 79                                     | \$0.12                         | \$9.48                    |                     |
| Daily Revenue Increase         |  |                                | \$2.22                    |  |                                | \$14.88                   | \$17.10             |
| <b>Annual Revenue Increase</b> |  |                                |                           |  |                                |                           | <b>\$3,078</b>      |

NOTE: Average Daily Participation (ADP) in November 2012.  
SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Monthly Record of Meals Claimed, April 2013.

Review team interviews indicate that food service staff are not consistently following standardized recipes; maintaining complete and accurate food production records, and retaining a complete file of Child Nutrition (CN) labels and product analysis sheets as documentation. In addition, the district did not provide sufficient documentation that all meals served and claimed for reimbursement comply with meal pattern requirements.

The district lacks a standardized recipe for every item prepared. The food service consulting company’s (FSCC) recipes are electronically available to each kitchen. However staff does not first review each recipe to ensure that the recipe contains the desired ingredient quantities before accepting it for district use. For example, the district did not compare quantities of ingredients in the recipes to the yield tables in the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG) to ensure each ingredient contributes to the USDA meal pattern requirements.

Further, food service operation staff do not consistently complete all information required in the food production records. Staff did not routinely project the number of adult servings needed with the assigned portion size. Random reviews indicate that staff did not always list the quantity of food prepared in purchase units per the FBG. A district must record the total weight or volume of each food ingredient in a recipe (e.g., 9.5 pounds of ground beef, three #10 cans of peaches, and five pounds of lettuce) to count it as a component of the meal pattern.

Staff did not consistently record the meal component on production records. Although it is not required information, the food production records are challenging to monitor because the menu planner does not name the component in

this column, and does not include the quantity to be credited for each menu item. Without this information, it may be difficult for the cashiers to determine if a student has selected a reimbursable meal. As an example, one lunch food production record indicated that one five-pound tub of peanut butter was used to prepare 131 two-ounce (4 tablespoons) servings of peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. According to the FBG, 4 tablespoons weigh approximately 2.2 ounces. (5 lb x 16 oz = 80 oz of peanut butter divided by 2.2 oz = 36 portions.) The recipe for peanut butter sandwiches was not found. **Figure 8–10** shows inconsistencies noted in a review of the FSCC recipes and district production records.

Additionally, food service staff does not retain a complete file of Child Nutrition (CN) labels or product analysis sheets as documentation for federal reimbursement. The district was unable to provide documentation for many purchased-prepared entrees contributing to the meat/meat alternate component of the meal. Staff provided documentation for only a few products, such as sausage links, fajita chicken thigh strips, chicken tenders, and chicken nuggets.

Effective districts maintain complete and accurate food production records for all meals claimed for reimbursement. Food production records demonstrate how the food items offered contribute to the required components of the meal patterns for grade. Food production records and standardized recipes are both based on the FBG. In an effective food production operation, a district integrates food production records and recipes to plan, prepare, serve, and document the ingredients of the meals served.

Districts have the option of structuring their own food production records or using the TDA’s food production records, which is available at [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org). If the

**FIGURE 8–10  
REFUGIO ISD RECIPE AND FOOD PRODUCTION INCONSISTENCIES  
FEBRUARY 2013**

| <b>FSCC RECIPE ITEM AND NUMBER</b>  | <b>INCONSISTENCIES WITH FSCC RECIPE AND FOOD BUYING GUIDE</b>   |
|---|---|
| Hamburger Salad (900247)  | Recipe does not provide portion volume measure of shredded lettuce, and does not provide yield.   |
| Lettuce and Tomato Salad (900559)   | Recipe states "measure with 1 c measuring cup to equal 1/2 cup fruit/vegetable"; later, the recipe states serving is 1/2 c of mixture; it is unclear as to the portion size or the contribution of the fruit/vegetable.   |
| Chilled Pears (000110)  | Recipe requires 2 #10 cans to provide 50 1/2 cup portions. Food Buying Guide (FBG) requires 2.2 # 10 cans to provide 50 1/2 cup portions. If the district's actual yield is greater than that indicated in the FBG, the district should conduct a can cutting and document in writing the actual yield of the brand the district is using.                                      |
| Fruit Cocktail (900411)   | Recipe yield is 100 1/2 cup servings using 2.25 - #10 cans. FBG states 4.4 - #10 can yield 100 1/2 cup servings.  |
| Sloppy Joe (000114)   | Recipe calls for 8 pounds of ground beef to make 50 2-ounce meat/meat alternate servings. FBG indicates that 8.7 pounds of ground beef is needed to make 50 2-ounce meat/meat alternate servings.   |
| Potato Rounds Baked (900579)  | Recipe yields 100 1/2 cup portions using 12.5 pounds potatoes. FBG states 7.9 lbs provides 50 1/2 cup servings; 15.8 lbs provides 100 1/2 cup servings. The recipe should be revised to use sufficient product; or the district should document in writing the actual yield of the specific product the district is using.  |
| Fresh Banana (900383)   | Recipe calls for dwarf banana, 1=1/2 cup V/F; FBG states 1 petite banana contributes about 3/8 cup. Contribution of dwarf banana should be documented or lowered to 3/8 c on recipe.  |
| <b>FSCC RECIPE ITEM AND NUMBER</b>  | <b>INCONSISTENCIES WITH FSCC RECIPE AND FOOD PRODUCTION RECORD</b>  |
| Nachos - Ground Beef and Cheese (500127)  | The recipe calls for 3 lb 2 oz cheese x 3 = 9 lb 6 oz cheese needed for 150 servings, but no cheese was recorded on the food production record. No credit is given for contributing ingredients if they are not listed on the food production record. The food production record for this menu does not document sufficient meat/meat alternate component to meet requirements. |
| Soft Beef Taco (900717)   | No cheese was recorded on food production record, causing this menu to provide insufficient meat/meat alternate component.  |
| Corn on the Cob (90338)   | The recipe indicates one serving equals 1/4 cup fruit/vegetable contribution. The food production record indicates one serving equals 1/2 cup fruit/vegetable contribution. The food production record should agree with the recipe.  |
| Garden Salad (000168)   | The recipe indicates 66 1/2 cup servings contributing 1/4 cup fruit/vegetable contribution each. The food production record indicates 66 1/2 cup servings contributing 1/2 cup fruit/vegetable each.  |
| NOTE: Inconsistencies noted are not inclusive of all possible inconsistencies between the food service consulting company (FSCC) recipes and Food Buying Guide (FBG) standards.   |   |
| SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, April 2013; Food Service Consulting Company Recipes, Business Office, April 2013; Refugio ISD, Business Office, Food Production Records, April 2013; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Buying Guide, 2001. |   |

district structures its own production record, it must contain all categories (e.g., food item, age group, meal contribution, etc.) included on the TDA production records. Districts have the option to maintain electronic or paper-based records. Districts must have the ability to provide the completed production records to TDA upon request.

CN labels and product analysis sheets verify the contribution of purchased-prepared foods such as beef patties, pizza, and chicken nuggets. These are manufactured products that must have supporting documentation to determine their contribution to the meal patterns in that they are not kitchen-made and their ingredients are unknown to the staff.

A CN label provides a USDA warranty against audit claims if the product is used according to the manufacturer's directions. While some products do not carry a CN label, a district can still determine their contribution by using a product analysis sheet prepared, signed, and dated by a high ranking official of the manufacturer. This sheet must list the creditable meat/meat alternate products contained in the food item, including weights of each, and a certification statement as to what one portion of the product contributes to the meal pattern. A district must be able to use the documentation and the FBG to verify the crediting on the product with the yield tables. A sample product analysis sheet is available at [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org).

If the district does not ensure that menus are planned, executed, and documented in a manner that demonstrates that the meals served and claimed comply with meal pattern requirements, reimbursement funds may be at risk. The CRE reviewer may determine that lunches claimed for reimbursement within the district contain food items/components as required by program regulations. Specific areas that are examined for Performance Standard 2 (Meal Components and Quantities) are as follows: day of review menu and review month menus, correct portion sizes for age/grade groups on the food production records, amount of food prepared in purchase units, and CN labels. During a CRE, an overclaim may be assessed if a school's production records for previously served menus indicate meals were missing components, were offered in insufficient portion sizes, or if there is not enough information recorded to make the determination; or meals served do not meet the minimum meal pattern requirements. An overclaim is the portion of a district's claim for reimbursement that exceeds the allowed federal payment.

A CRE Performance Standard 2 (Meal Components and Quantities) violation occurs if 10 percent or more of the total number of lunches observed in a school are missing one or more of the required food items/components. This violation may result in a Follow-Up Review.

As shown in **Figures 8–5** and **8–6**, the total daily revenue is \$411.44 for breakfast and \$1,353.44 for lunch. **Figure 8–2** shows that 67 percent food service operations revenue is federal reimbursement. Errors in menu planning, food production and/or service and in recordkeeping could cost the district up to \$1,182.47 per day if noted during a CRE review. TDA may reclaim reimbursement based on the longevity and severity of the violation.

Best practices dictate that the district maintains sufficient documentation to demonstrate that the meals served and claimed for reimbursement comply with meal pattern requirements. To receive reimbursement, the district must provide the following documentation:

- a tested recipe for every preparation, which its ingredient quantities are verified according to the FBG yield tables;
- a complete and accurate food production record that identifies the menu, portion sizes by grade, the number planned, the quantity prepared in purchase units, the number served, and the amount of food leftover; and

- a CN label or product analysis sheet documenting the ingredient quantities of each purchased-prepared item contributing to the meat/meat alternate component of the reimbursable meal.

The district should monitor food service operations and maintain sufficient kitchen documentation to ensure that the breakfast and lunch menus comply with USDA meal pattern requirements.

To monitor operations, the cafeteria supervisors should develop menu cycles including menu items and portion sizes by grade. Supervisors should then use the FBG to develop a recipe for each menu item. The recipes ensure food production staff have valid instructions for preparing a meal that is consistent with FBG requirements. Additionally, supervisors should develop food production record templates with available menu information (e.g., menu items, portion sizes by grade level, purchased-prepared brand and product code or recipe number; and weight or volume of the ingredient quantities of each menu item to the meal patterns) prior to distributing the templates to the kitchens. During food preparation, staff would complete the templates and save the records in a central location. Additionally, supervisors may require staff to routinely tape a CN label of any purchased-prepared entree item to the back of the daily food production record.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **PROCEDURES MANUAL (REC. 43)**

The district does not have a process to maintain the procedures manual for the food service operations.

In February 2013, RISD was using an outdated food service operations manual. A manual provides information regarding a district's food service operations. The review team noted that the district's manual contained incorrect information and had policy statements that had not been updated since 1998.

**Figure 8–11** shows an analysis of the manual's outdated or missing information.

The manual does not reflect the food service staff or operating structure used by the district. For example, a section in the manual discussing applications refers to the food service director; however, the district does not have a food service director position. Also, the manual does not mention the district's contract with the food service consulting company

**FIGURE 8–11**  
**ANALYSIS OF REFUGIO ISD FOOD SERVICE MANUAL**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| PAGE   | OUTDATED OR MISSING INFORMATION  |
|--------|--|
| 4      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C-6 Applications: refers to the Food Service Directors office; the district has no food service director.</li> <li>• C-7 Point of Service: there is no longer the Traditional Food Based Menu Planning System.</li> <li>• The information regarding Offer versus Serve (OVS) is no longer correct. "All students eating from the cafeteria must have a reimbursable tray before the point of service." is not correct. The cashier can encourage a student to take sufficient offerings to comprise a reimbursable meal, but under OVS a student cannot be forced to select foods he/she does not intend to eat.</li> </ul>   |
| 5      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional Food Based Menu Planning: All information is incorrect.</li> <li>• C-8 Procedures: All information is incorrect.</li> </ul>   |
| 6      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page missing.</li> </ul>  |
| 7–8    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information is not current.</li> </ul>  |
| 9      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C-11: Competitive foods have changed. Refer to the Administrator's Reference Manual (ARM) for federal and state regulations.</li> </ul>   |
| 10     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C-13 Special Dietary Needs/Handicapped: the last paragraph refers to the Director of Food Service responsible for making each POS aware of the student and his/her restrictions. This duty has not been reassigned.</li> </ul>  |
| 11–end | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C-15 Agreement/Policy Statement . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exhibit A: Count Sheets no longer used.</li> <li>Exhibit B: Daily Charge Lists no longer used.</li> <li>Exhibit C: Letter regarding ticket replacement no longer needed.</li> <li>Exhibit D: Sample Tickets no longer used.</li> <li>Exhibit E: Traditional Breakfast Pattern will be outdated in school year 2013–14.</li> <li>Exhibit F: Traditional Lunch Pattern, outdated, no longer valid.</li> <li>Exhibit G: Grains/Bread Instruction, outdated, replace with same instruction from current Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs.</li> <li>Exhibit H: Daily Record, currently generated electronically.</li> <li>Exhibit I: Daily Record of Income, currently generated electronically.</li> <li>Exhibit J: Charge Accounts, currently maintained electronically.</li> <li>Exhibit K: Notice to parents regarding charges. Review and evaluate.</li> <li>Exhibit L: Policy Statement for Free and Reduced-Price Meals, is not current and has not been submitted to TDA for approval.</li> <li>Exhibit M: Cafeteria Information, may not be current practice.</li> <li>Exhibit N: Civil Rights Assurance, new poster can be found at <a href="http://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/justice.htm">http://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/justice.htm</a>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• C-17 Glossary, has outdated entries; has not been evaluated for additional terms that are lacking.</li> </ul> |

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, April 2013.

(FSCC) or responsibilities associated with this arrangement. Finally, several of the manual attachments are outdated or maintained electronically.

The purpose of a manual is to standardize procedures throughout a district. A manual provides a written description of how the program should operate including the distribution of free and reduced-price applications, the collection procedures, charging meals, verification procedures, and other program related matters. It is also a resource for new or temporary cafeteria staff, and can inform district stakeholders who may request information regarding food service operations. Without an updated manual, the district may not comply with TDA's requirements related to approving, updating, and filing of federal child nutrition program records. Without a Free and Reduced-Price Meals Policy

Statement in the manual and on file, the district may be cited during a CRE. Best practices dictate that a district maintain current child nutrition operating procedures and update the information annually, or as needed, for the current school year.

The district should develop a process to annually review and update the food service operations manual as needed. To assist in the review and update, the district should refer to the current Free and Reduced-Price Meals Policy Statement information which is available at [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org). The information in **Figure 8–11** will also help the district review and update the manual. Additional support can be obtained by contacting the CNP specialists at the Regional Education Service Center III (Region 3), or TDA. Following the update,



the district should provide copies of the manual to all food service staff and train them on the updated material.

Since the onsite review, district administration indicated that the junior high school principal, who will be the director/manager of food service beginning in school year 2013–14,

will work with the district’s FSCC and cafeteria staff to update the district’s food service operations manual.

The district can implement this recommendation by using its existing resources.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 8: FOOD SERVICE**

| RECOMMENDATION  | 2013–14        | 2014–15        | 2015–16        | 2016–17        | 2017–18        | TOTAL 5–<br>YEAR<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS | ONE<br>TIME<br>(COSTS)<br>SAVINGS |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 38 Develop a comprehensive oversight plan to remain directly involved in, and to closely monitor food service operations.   | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0                                    | \$0                               |
| 39 Conduct a cost benefit analysis of the district’s food service operations and services received from the food service consulting company to determine how to best operate within budgeted amounts. | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0                                    | \$0                               |
| 40 Develop strategies for increasing student participation in the School Breakfast and the National School Lunch Programs.  | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0                                    | \$0                               |
| 41 Establish a meal pricing structure to ensure that the revenue generated is sufficient to cover the cost of preparing and serving the full-price meals.   | \$3,078        | \$3,078        | \$3,078        | \$3,078        | \$3,078        | \$15,390                               | \$0                               |
| 42 Monitor food service operations and maintain sufficient kitchen documentation to ensure that the breakfast and lunch menus comply with USDA meal pattern requirements.                             | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0                                    | \$0                               |
| 43 Develop a process to annually review and update the food service operations manual as needed.  | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0                                    | \$0                               |
| <b>CHAPTER 8–TOTALS</b>   | <b>\$3,078</b> | <b>\$3,078</b> | <b>\$3,078</b> | <b>\$3,078</b> | <b>\$3,078</b> | <b>\$15,390</b>                        | <b>\$0</b>                        |

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# **CHAPTER 9**

# **TRANSPORTATION**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 9. TRANSPORTATION

An independent school district's transportation function transports students to and from school and other school-related activities. This function is regulated by federal and Texas state laws related to funding, vehicle type, driver education, and safety issues. Districts implement these regulations, budget and allocate resources, and establish operational procedures for bell schedules, bus routes, and transportation fleet maintenance.

Managing transportation operations is dependent on the organizational structure of the district. Districts may either contract for or self-manage their transportation departments. Using a contracted management model, districts rely on the company to provide supervision of its transportation department. In this arrangement, a district may rely on the company to provide all or some staff, or may use district staff for its operations. Using the self-management model, a district operates its transportation department without assistance from an outside entity. Managing transportation operations requires planning; state reporting and funding; training and safety; and vehicle maintenance and procurement. Primary transportation expenditures include capital investments in vehicle fleets, and annual costs of maintenance and operations. State transportation funding relies on a district's annual submission of certain transportation reports to the Texas Education Agency, which is determined by a formula that includes the number and type of students transported.

Refugio Independent School District provides transportation services for all regular, special education, extra-curricular,

and co-curricular routes using district-owned buses and vehicles. Students are transported in fleet of 11 buses, three mini-vans, and one sport utility vehicle. The district's school year 2011–12 transportation report indicated that the average ridership was 243 students, with an average 203 miles driven daily for a total of 39,726 miles during the year.

**Figure 9–1** shows the average daily ridership and total annual mileage for two or more mile regular service and hazardous service areas from school years 2009–10 to 2011–12.

The district reported a total of 10 daily student routes—two special services and eight regular routes. The district also provides one to two late bus routes for students who attend after school tutorials. The number of bus routes varies depending on the number of students attending tutorial sessions. Refugio Independent School District reports their routes by number and indicates if the route occurs in either the morning or afternoon. Interviews indicated that the same routes have been utilized for the past several years. The district does not own or utilize routing software for bus route planning.

**Figure 9–2** shows the school year 2012–13 bus routes and school year 2011–12 mileage.

Refugio Independent School District information revealed that co-curricular/extra-curricular bus trips do not occur daily, and are scheduled as needed. Drivers are usually the coach or sponsor of the activity. On some occasions, one staff member from the transportation area, maintenance area, or administration will drive the students to the activity. The use

**FIGURE 9–1  
REFUGIO ISD TRANSPORTED STUDENTS  
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2011–12**

| SCHOOL YEAR | TWO OR MORE MILE        |                      | HAZARDOUS SERVICE       |                      | COMBINED TWO-OR-MORE-MILE AND HAZARDOUS SERVICE |                      |
|-------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---|----------------------|
|             | AVERAGE DAILY RIDERSHIP | TOTAL ANNUAL MILEAGE | AVERAGE DAILY RIDERSHIP | TOTAL ANNUAL MILEAGE | AVERAGE DAILY RIDERSHIP                         | TOTAL ANNUAL MILEAGE |
| 2009–10     | 86                      | 25,996               | 204                     | 12,858               | 290   | 38,854               |
| 2010–11     | 62                      | 24,318               | 158                     | 12,150               | 220   | 36,468               |
| 2011–12     | 73                      | 23,796               | 170                     | 12,816               | 243   | 36,612               |

NOTES:

(1) Regular Service - State of Texas two or more mile transportation funding eligible.

(2) Hazardous Service - up to 10 percent funding eligible.

SOURCES: Refugio ISD Transportation Route Services Worksheet Regular Program – Home-To-School/School-To-Home Subprogram School Years 2009–10, 2010–11, and 2011–12.

**FIGURE 9–2**  
**REFUGIO ISD BUS ROUTES AND MILEAGE**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12, 2012–13 BUS ROUTES AND 2011–12 MILEAGE**

| ROUTE NUMBER | BUS ROUTE TIME OF DAY | ROUTE TYPE             | 2011–12 ANNUAL MILEAGE TWO-OR-MORE MILE SERVICE | TWO-OR-MORE MILE AND HAZARDOUS AREA SERVICE |
|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------|---|---|
| 1            | A.M.                  | Regular                | 0.0   | 5,274                                       |
| 2            | P.M.                  | Regular                | 4,620   | 6,210                                       |
| 3            | A.M.                  | Regular                | 2,160   | 2,988                                       |
| 4            | P.M.                  | Regular                | 4,014   | 5,796                                       |
| 5            | A.M.                  | Regular                | 4,374   | 5,238                                       |
| 6            | P.M.                  | Regular                | 3,276   | 4,392                                       |
| 7            | A.M.                  | Regular                | 3,438   | 4,374                                       |
| 8            | P.M.                  | Regular                | 1,872   | 2,340                                       |
| 9            | A.M.                  | Special Services       | NA  | 1,152                                       |
| 10           | P.M.                  | Special Services       | NA  | 1,962                                       |
| -----        | P.M.                  | After-School Tutorials | NA  | NA  |

NOTE: Special Service Mileage; Not Available (NA).  
 SOURCE: Refugio ISD; Central Office, Bus Route Information, February 2013.

of staff as substitute bus drivers is a common practice utilized by many rural Texas school districts. The district reports that the district usually has two to four co-curricular/extra-curricular trips per week. Refugio Independent School District has difficulty in securing bus drivers due to the jobs available in the area for oil and natural gas exploration in the area.

The transportation area has one supervisor/mechanic who is supervised by the Superintendent. The transportation area’s staff includes one shared mechanic/maintenance staff member, five bus drivers, and one long term substitute driver. The substitute driver is a retired teacher who is filling in until a replacement is hired. Most of the district’s bus drivers have dual roles, and serve as district custodians, maintenance staff, and teachers.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- ◆ The transportation area has implemented a conservative fiscal purchasing/warehouse practice by maintaining a small inventory of routine bus repair parts.
- ◆ The district has standardized bus purchases to a single manufacturer in order to simplify repairs, mechanic repair, maintenance training, and parts inventory.

**FINDINGS**

- ◆ The district has not reviewed components of its transportation service to determine their cost effectiveness.
- ◆ The district does not plan for bus and vehicle replacement.
- ◆ The district does not have a transportation manual that includes procedures for the transportation function or bus driver training.
- ◆ The district has not equipped its vehicles with communication devices.
- ◆ The district has not assessed its ability to provide transportation services to students with special needs.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- ◆ **Recommendation 44: Perform a detailed cost benefit analysis of its transportation services to determine the most efficient and cost effective routes.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 45: Develop and implement a comprehensive vehicle replacement schedule.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 46: Develop a transportation manual for the safe and efficient operation of the transportation program and include bus driver training information.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 47: Formalize implementation of communication devices for all buses to ensure safety of students, bus drivers, and staff operating district vehicles.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 48: Evaluate the requirements of transporting students with special needs and determine how to provide service to these students.**

## DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### **BUS REPAIR PARTS INVENTORY**

Refugio Independent School District (RISD) transportation department has implemented a conservative fiscal purchasing/warehouse practice by maintaining a small inventory of routine bus repair parts.

The district has a one bay repair facility attached to the maintenance service area building. The bus repair building is utilized for routine bus maintenance. Interviews with the transportation supervisor indicated that he and a shared staff member from the maintenance area perform routine maintenance/repairs on the buses and other RISD vehicles. Interviews and an inventory inspection revealed that limited supplies of routine parts are warehoused in the service bay area. The transportation supervisor has been with the district for 25 years and has established a process to ensure that routine service and repair parts are on hand. It was noted that if a vehicle requires major service or repair, the vehicle is sent to a certified repair facility. Neither the transportation supervisor nor part-time maintenance staff member are certified diesel mechanics. Both are qualified to perform routine types of maintenance and/or service.

The transportation area practice does provide readily accessible parts for routine vehicle service and/or repairs. In addition, the practice of limiting repairs and parts inventory to routine maintenance allows the district to keep inventory expense and obsolescence to a minimum.

### **STANDARDIZED BRAND FOR BUS PURCHASES**

The district has standardized bus purchases to a single manufacturer in order to simplify repairs, mechanic repair, maintenance training, and parts inventory.

RISD's transportation fleet currently includes 11 buses. Beginning in 2003, the district has implemented a standardized bus manufacturer purchasing system. RISD has seven buses from the same manufacturer including their newest bus purchased in 2012. The only fleet exceptions are

two early 1990-era spare buses, and two 2003 mini-buses which are from different manufacturers. The majority of Texas school districts purchase buses from a buy board. The establishment of Texas-based buy boards has assisted school districts in securing the best pricing for new buses along with standardization of manufacturer brands. It is noted that not all school districts have chosen to standardize bus manufacturers for their transportation fleets.

Standardized purchasing has enabled RISD to simplify the parts inventory which the district maintains for routine bus service and repairs. In addition, mechanics do not have to be trained in the repair of multiple bus systems and platforms. RISD has established and implemented a standardized bus purchasing practice which appears to provide efficiency for the transportation area.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

### **TRANSPORTATION SERVICE ANALYSIS (REC. 44)**

The district has not reviewed components of its transportation service to determine their cost effectiveness.

The RISD student handbook for school year 2012–13 states that “the district makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted at the school and on the district’s website.” However, review team interviews found that the district’s transportation services are different than as described in the handbook. Although the student handbook states that bus routes and transportation information are posted on the district’s website, the district’s website does not list transportation information, including bus routes. Further, staff indicated that transportation services are provided to all students who attend RISD, even those living inside the two mile radius described in the student handbook.

The same bus routes have been used for the past several years. The district does not own or use routing software for bus route planning. Instead, the district has established a door-to-door transportation system. Students are loaded and unloaded to their homes, rather than at the end of the block or a centralized neighborhood locale. For example, regular education students who live two blocks from the elementary school are provided transportation services. Onsite work by the review team found that several of the student residences are in visual sight of the elementary school and high school campuses. Staff indicated that the district’s practice has evolved over time to provide door-to-door transportation

services for all students, and that RISD was the only area school district which provided transportation for all students.

A review of the district’s routes indicate that over half of the district’s students live on the opposite side of a major four-lane highway or major train track from the high school, elementary school, and junior high school campus. Both are heavily traveled, with the train tracks eventually growing to hourly train traffic once the Corpus Christi ship port is completed. These routes have been declared hazardous and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) has verified that the reports are being filed to receive funding for these routes. Hazardous routes are defined by the state as having a hazardous condition where no walkway is provided and students must walk along or cross a freeway or expressway, an underpass, an overpass or a bridge, an uncontrolled major traffic artery, an industrial or commercial area, or another comparable condition.

The district reports its transportation information to TEA at the completion of each school year through the transportation route services and student transportation operations reports. The route services report shows the eligible service, both mileage and ridership, that the district provided during the school year. This report is the primary source for determining a district’s transportation allotment. The operations report shows all costs and all mileage a district incurred for student transportation, and includes ineligible service such as transportation to and from field trips. However, review team interviews indicate that the district does not analyze its transportation services to determine if the routes used are cost effective or meet stakeholder needs.

State funding reimburses school districts to transport regular, special education and career and technical program students. The Texas Legislature sets state funding rules, and TEA administers the program. School districts receive funds to transport regular education students living two or more miles from the school they attend. However, TEA does not reimburse districts for transporting students living within the

two mile radius of the school unless hazardous walking conditions exist between the student’s home and the school. Further, a district may only receive up to 10 percent of the mileage reimbursement rate for hazardous routes with the TEA’s Commissioner approval. A school district must use local funds to cover actual costs that exceed the state allotment.

**Figure 9–3** shows the amount of transportation costs reimbursed to RISD (state allotment) and the amount that the district funded through general revenue for school year 2009–10 to 2011–12:

A review of peer district transportation expenditures and state allotment amounts shows that RISD has the lowest state reimbursement allotment amount for transportation costs among its peers. Peer districts are districts similar to RISD that are used for comparison purposes. **Figure 9–4** shows district expenditures, state allotments, total expenditures, and percentage reimbursement from state per total expenditures for Refugio and peer districts for school year 2011–12.

A review of peer district policies indicate that the peer districts pick up and unload students at authorized stops and do not provide door-to-door transportation services to all students. Additionally, some peer districts provide specific requirements regarding bus routes locations to student residences. For example, one policy mentioned a maximum 10-minute walk or approximately one-fourth mile to the bus stop. While these policies may contribute to the state allotment received by the peer districts, these policies may not reflect the districts’ actual practices. For example, in its student handbook, RISD indicates that it only provides transportation to students outside a two-mile radius and/or students living in a hazardous service area; however, staff indicated that transportation is provided to all students.

Without a review of its transportation practices, RISD may continue to receive a lower percentage of reimbursement of

**FIGURE 9–3**  
**REFUGIO ISD TRANSPORTATION EXPENDITURES AND STATE ALLOTMENT**  
**SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2011–12**

|  | 2009–10 ACTUAL | 2010–11 ACTUAL | 2011–12 ACTUAL |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Total District Transportation Expenditures                           | (\$238,613)    | (\$158,627)    | (\$173,775)    |
| State Allotment  | \$24,183       | \$24,709       | \$24,042       |
| Net District Transportation Expenditures                             | (\$214,430)    | (\$133,918)    | (\$149,733)    |
| State Allotment as a Percent of District Transportation Expenditures | 10.1%          | 15.6%          | 13.9%          |

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Four Year Transportation Summary, February 2013.

**FIGURE 9–4**  
**REFUGIO ISD AND PEER DISTRICT COMPARISON**  
**TRANSPORTATION EXPENDITURES AND STATE ALLOTMENT**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2011–12**

|   | REFUGIO            | BANQUETE    | SKIDMORE-TYNAN | STRATFORD   |
|---|--------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Total Expenditures                            | <b>(\$173,775)</b> | (\$381,582) | (\$444,881)    | (\$182,118) |
| State Allotment                               | <b>\$24,042</b>    | \$71,109    | \$99,580       | \$50,757    |
| Net District Expenditures                     | <b>(\$149,733)</b> | (\$310,473) | (\$345,301)    | (\$131,361) |
| State Allotment Percent of Total Expenditures | <b>13.9%</b>       | 18.6%       | 22.4%          | 27.9%       |

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, School Transportation Route Services Report and reported 2011–12 Actual Financial Data, February 2013.

state transportation allotment funding based on eligibility of students living in non-reimbursement route areas. A district may use local funds to provide transportation services, to non-eligible students. However, this practice can be costly to the district based on the amount of general revenue funds used for this purpose.

RISD should perform a detailed cost benefit analysis of its transportation services to determine the most efficient and cost effective routes. District staff must consider the current costs associated with providing door-to-door bus service to every student in the district versus re-configuring bus routes based on TEA's definition of reimbursable state allotment specifications.

Variables that RISD should consider related to performing a cost benefit analysis of transportation routes include:

- determine which bus routes are hazardous, such as proximity to the highway or train tracks;
- define and adopt hazardous areas throughout the district that are consistent with the TEA allotment process;
- calculate approximate costs to the various service areas based on number of students residing in those areas, state allotments, and the 10 percent cap related to reimbursements in hazardous areas under two-miles;
- consider alternative service methods (e.g., a centralized location) rather than the current door-to-door service; and
- consider eliminating routes that are less than two miles from a campus and are not in a hazardous area.

Depending on what RISD officials determine based on the evaluation of all variables and funding criteria, the bus routes should be presented for discussion and approved by the RISD Board of Trustees. Additionally, RISD Board Policy CNA (LOCAL) should be amended along with the RISD

student handbooks, and the district website to reflect current bus routing policy and practices.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the completion of the cost benefit analysis is conducted and the bus routes have been presented, evaluated, and approved by the Board of Trustees.

#### **VEHICLE REPLACEMENT (REC. 45)**

The district does not plan for bus and vehicle replacement.

Review team interviews indicate that RISD does not have a written vehicle replacement schedule or plan. Staff indicated that a plan was needed, and that several vehicles were nearing the end of their useful lives and would soon be in need of replacement.

**Figure 9–5** shows the district's transportation fleet for school year 2012–13.

As shown, most of the district's fleet is close to the recommended replacement age. Many of the district's buses used for daily transportation are between eight and 11 years old, and the buses classified as spare are between 20 and 22 years old. The district's mini-vans are between six and 12 years old, and the SUV is two years old. As allowed by the Texas Education Code (TEC), the mini-vans and SUV are used for transportation of less than 10 students.

In a 2010 publication, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discussed the need for replacing old school buses. The publication found that more than half of today's school buses have been in service for over a decade. These older buses lack today's pollution control and safety features; and, emit nearly twice as much pollution per mile as a semi-truck. Older, more polluting school buses can lead to significant health risks for students who typically ride these buses for one-half to two hours a day.



**FIGURE 9–5**  
**REFUGIO ISD TRANSPORTATION FLEET**  
**SCHOOL YEAR 2012–13**

| VEHICLE TYPE                        | MODEL YEAR | AGE   | MANUFACTURER (BRAND) | CURRENT ROUTE USE            | ORIGINAL PURCHASE AMOUNT | ESTIMATED ODOMETER MILEAGE |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) Bus #23                         | 1991       | 22    | International        | Spare                        | \$34,237                 | 209,914                    |
| (2) Bus #24                         | 1992       | 21    | International        | Spare                        | \$35,701                 | 180,558                    |
| (3) Bus W/AC #326                   | 2003       | 10    | Freightliner         | Daily                        | \$50,672                 | 129,925                    |
| (4) Bus W/AC # 327                  | 2003       | 10    | Freightliner         | Daily                        | \$50,672                 | 122,901                    |
| (5) Bus W/AC #532                   | 2004       | 9     | Freightliner         | Daily                        | \$54,035                 |                            |
| (6) Mini-Bus 29 Passenger W/AC #429 | 2003       | 10    | Ford                 | Daily                        | \$43,438                 | 92,053                     |
| (7) Mini-Bus 29 Passenger W/AC #430 | 2003       | 10    | Ford                 | Sports/Field Trips           | \$43,438                 | 107,153                    |
| (8) Bus #431 #428                   | 2005       | 8     | Freightliner         | Daily                        | \$57,305                 | 70,772                     |
| (9) Bus W/AC #431                   | 2005       | 8     | Freightliner         | Daily                        | \$58,104                 | 99,924                     |
| (10) Bus W/AC#109                   | 2009       | 4     | Freightliner         | Daily + Extra Curricular     | \$82,025                 | 37,564                     |
| (11) Bus W/AC #212                  | 2012       | 0     | Freightliner         | Daily + Extra-Curricular     | \$88,999                 | 14,813                     |
| (1A) Mini-Van                       | 2001       | 12    | Ford                 | Teacher Enrichment Trips     | \$19,786                 | 72,200                     |
| (2A) Mini-Van                       | 2006       | 7     | Ford                 | Teacher Enrichment Trips     | \$15,959                 | 159,017                    |
| (3A) Mini-Van                       | 2006       | 7     | Ford                 | Daily                        | \$15,959                 | 55,458                     |
| (4A) Traverse SUV                   | 2011       | 2     | Chevrolet            | Daily                        | \$25,592                 | 21,347                     |
| (1) Small Pickup                    | 1992       | 21    | Isuzu                | Transportation               | \$8,520                  | 129,094                    |
| (2) ¾ Ton Pickup                    | 2001       | 12    | Ford F250            | Maintenance                  | \$16,717                 | 64,589                     |
| (3) ½ Ton Pickup                    | 2002       | 11    | Ford F150            | Maintenance                  | \$13,935                 | 38,659                     |
| (4) ½ Ton Pickup                    | 2006       | 7     | Ford F150            | Maintenance                  | \$14,093                 | 55,957                     |
| (5) ¾ Ton Pickup                    | 2006       | 7     | Chevrolet 2500       | Maintenance & Transportation | \$12,950                 | 129,861                    |
| (1A) Tractor                        | NA         |       | Kubota               | Maintenance                  | \$5,908                  | NA                         |
| <b>Total</b>                        | -----      | ----- | -----                | -----                        | <b>\$747,307</b>         | -----                      |

NOTE: Not Available (NA).

SOURCE: Refugio ISD, Business Office, Fleet Listing, February 2013.

Older buses are excellent candidates for replacement with newer, cleaner vehicles. Replacing the oldest buses will greatly reduce children's exposure to diesel exhaust, and will provide considerable safety improvements.

Further, the EPA provides guidelines regarding bus replacement considerations. According to the publication, replacing pre-1998 school buses first provides the greatest benefit in terms of diesel emission reductions, and is also a cost-effective strategy. Older buses often have increased maintenance concerns, decreased fuel economy benefits, and less stringent safety equipment. If buses built before 1998 are being used regularly for student transport, they should be ranked as a high priority for replacement. Consider using

them on shorter routes to limit student exposure until they can be replaced. If they are used only for special-event trips or are emergency back-up buses, try to limit the amount of time that students spend on them.

A 2002 position paper by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation (NASDPT) recommends a 12 to 15 year guideline for large buses and 8 to 10 years for smaller buses, including mini-vans. Without established guidelines for fleet replacement, the district may have less reliable vehicles and experience increased costs as many of its fleet get older and more costly to operate over the next few years.

RISD should develop and implement a comprehensive vehicle replacement schedule. Using the NASDPT guidelines, the district should establish age and mileage replacement criteria for the district’s vehicle fleet.

**Figure 9–6** shows a possible vehicle replacement plan the district may consider when developing its own.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until completion of the vehicle replacement plan. The district’s development of a plan must include the costs associated with vehicle replacement. This plan may be impacted by decisions made regarding student bus routes. For example, a reduction in bus routes could require fewer bus purchases for the district. Once developed, the district must submit the plan and associated costs to the Board for Trustees for approval.

**TRANSPORTATION MANUAL (REC. 46)**

The district does not have a transportation manual that includes procedures for the transportation function or bus driver training.

RISD does not have written procedures in place related to day-to-day transportation operations. Additionally, review team interviews indicate that RISD lacks written procedures related to bus driver hiring and evaluation procedures, bus safety information, state and federal regulations/guidelines, and other localized district procedures. Further, document reviews revealed that bus driver professional development does not take place on an on-going basis. Overall, the district does not have a structure in place to ensure that transportation program processes are defined and performed in a consistent manner.

The American School Bus Council provides information about the importance of bus driver training and development. The council states that bus drivers are trained professionals with immense responsibility to safely transport children to and from school. It supports practices that allow communities

to hire, retain, and develop drivers that are not only professional drivers, but professional supervisors, educators, and friends.

**Figure 9–7** shows criteria for bus driver hiring and training practices. Before transporting students, all school bus drivers should complete a pre-service training and testing program that includes classroom and on-the-road training, and successfully pass both written and driving performance tests that demonstrate adequate knowledge of policies and traffic laws as well as driving skills.

RISD should develop a transportation manual for the safe and efficient operation of the transportation program and include bus driver training information. The Superintendent, Business Manager, campus principals, transportation supervisor, and transportation staff should work together to develop the handbook by using resources and tools already developed. For example, regional education service centers may offer information regarding transportation services. The district may also access services through the Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO), which offers members access to transportation resources. The Business Manager is a TASBO member and can access those resources. Additionally, information from the American School Bus Council, state and local regulations, and a defined process for bus communications should be included in the handbook.

Once the handbook is developed, the transportation supervisor should provide annual training on the transportation procedures outlined in the manual. This annual training should include an introduction to the district’s transportation operations for staff and continued training for existing staff related to process and procedural changes. Further, the district should consider including the training topics suggested by the American School Bus Council as part of the annual training.

**FIGURE 9–6  
POSSIBLE THREE-YEAR VEHICLE REPLACEMENT PLAN  
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14 TO 2015–16**

| SCHOOL YEAR         | PURCHASE   | PRICE    | ANNUAL EXPENDITURE |
|---------------------|--|----------|--------------------|
| 2013–14             | 1 Bus (76 Passenger with AC)                     | \$90,000 | \$90,000           |
| 2014–15             | 1 Maintenance Truck (¾ ton)                      | \$20,000 | \$20,000           |
| 2015–16             | 1 Mini-van/SUV (similar to a Chevrolet Traverse) | \$26,000 | \$26,000           |
| <b>3-year Total</b> |  |          | <b>\$136,000</b>   |

NOTE: Prices are estimates, and the district will be able to secure exact pricing through a Texas buy board. The plan repeats after the 2015–16 purchase.  
SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, April 2013.

**FIGURE 9–7  
SCHOOL BUS DRIVER HIRING AND TRAINING PRACTICES  
FEBRUARY 2013**

**HIRING**

- development of specific written criteria for hiring and rejecting potential applicants;
- development and use of a written application document;
- a personal interview with each applicant;
- pre-employment and ongoing driving record checks;
- pre-employment and ongoing drug and alcohol screening (federal requirement);
- pre-employment and ongoing physical exams;
- pre-employment and periodic criminal background checks;
- pre-employment road performance testing and annual employee evaluations;
- state-approved training and testing programs;
- periodic evaluation to ensure that drivers' skills meet standards;
- ongoing in-service training and testing to ensure appropriate driver knowledge; and
- demonstrate ability to follow written instructions and record data accurately.

**TRAINING**

- rules and policies for conducting safe and efficient student transportation;
- instruction in operating school bus equipment;
- proper adjustment and use of the school bus mirror system;
- daily pre-trip and post-trip vehicle safety inspections;
- safe driving techniques, including defensive driving skills;
- procedures for loading and unloading passengers;
- appropriate use of electronic communications, which may include wireless communication and GPS;
- proper refueling procedures;
- laws and rules associated with school activity trips;
- reduced engine idling policies;
- effective communications with staff, students and parents;
- procedures for entering and exiting school zones;
- student management;
- accident and emergency procedures, including evacuation and use of emergency equipment;
- basic first-aid procedures;
- safety procedures for railroad crossings;
- guidance in following route instructions and map diagrams;
- proper professional attitude and behavior;
- customer service skills;
- post-trip inspections of the school bus interior to verify that all children have left the bus;
- training on use and securement of passenger safety devices, including safety seats and other equipment; and
- cultural diversity, including effective communication techniques when language barriers exist.

SOURCE: American School Bus Council Article, Drivers Fact: School Bus Drivers Are Tested, Trained, and Re-Tested; [www.americanschoolbuscouncil.org](http://www.americanschoolbuscouncil.org), accessed February 2013.

The district can implement the recommendation by using its existing resources.

**COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM FOR DISTRICT VEHICLES  
(REC. 47)**

The district has not equipped its vehicles with communication devices.

Review team interviews indicated that the buses and other vehicles used to transport students do not have radios or other types of communication devices. The transportation supervisor is furnished a district owned cell phone for district related calls; however, the district lacks a formal process for the use of cell phones as a primary communications system for drivers and other personnel. There is no stated requirement

that bus drivers or staff operating district vehicles have a cell phone and the district has not established a policy to reimburse personnel for use of personal cell phones. Staff indicated that an unofficial practice has evolved and the bus drivers are using their personal cell phones for emergency and other transportation communications.

Interviews indicate that the Superintendent has communicated several times per year to all staff who transport students that cell phone use including texting and calls are not allowed while the vehicle is moving, loading and unloading students, or stopped at traffic lights, railroad crossing, etc. The Texas Transportation Code, Title 7, Chapter 545,425, states the following related to the use of wireless communication devices:

Sec. 545.425 (b-4) (c) An operator may not use a wireless communication device while operating a passenger bus with a minor passenger on the bus unless the passenger bus is stopped.

The 2011 Texas School Bus Specifications list a communication device as an optional item when ordering a school bus. A review of the Texas Education Code, Title 2, and the Texas Transportation Code, Title 7, and School Bus Specifications does not list a requirement for buses to have a communication system installed in buses. The administration has not considered all available options in determining the best communications system that will meet the needs of the district.

RISD should formalize implementation of communication devices for all buses to ensure safety of students, bus drivers, and staff operating district vehicles. The Superintendent, transportation supervisor, transportation staff, and other stakeholders should identify the types of communication available to the district and evaluate them based on established criteria, including reception, network availability, initial and ongoing costs, and safety issues.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the district completes the evaluation and determines the cost. Annual expenditure requirements can only be determined after the evaluation has determined the best course of action and the most appropriate communications method to serve the best interests of the district.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES (REC. 48)**

The district has not assessed its ability to provide transportation services to students with special needs.

Review team interviews indicate that the district uses passenger vehicles to transport students with special needs to and from school. Passenger vehicles are vans that can transport up to 10 students. During school year 2012–13, the district had two passenger vehicles transporting students with special needs. However, the review team noted that the district does not have a bus or passenger vehicle equipped with a lift or other device to assist students with mobility impairments.

The TEC, Chapter 34, authorizes, but does not require, school districts to provide transportation for students in the general population to and from home and school, school, career and technical training locations, and extracurricular activities. TEC also provides guidance about the type of vehicles that may be used to transport students—school

buses for routes with ten or more students and passenger vehicles for routes with fewer than 10 students. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that a school district provide transportation for students with disabilities if the district also provides transportation for students in the general population, or if students with disabilities require transportation to special education services.

As of February 2013, the district has not had a student who requires this type of accommodation. However, in the future, RISD may not have the appropriate vehicles to accommodate wheelchairs if a student requires this type of transportation accommodation.

RISD should evaluate the requirements of transporting students with special needs and determine how to provide service to these students. District and campus staff should meet to determine the requirements that must be met, student needs that are to be addressed, and appropriate action plans that should be put in place in order to ensure that all students are properly served. Potential candidates to involve in evaluation and assessment of alternatives include the Superintendent, parents, transportation supervisor, special education instructors, school principals, and other personnel that may have knowledge relevant to a particular student's needs.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the district determines how to provide services to students with special needs. The district must consider the costs associated with the transportation methods identified.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 9: TRANSPORTATION**

| <b>RECOMMENDATION</b>  | <b>2013-14</b> | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>5-YEAR<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> | <b>ONE-<br/>TIME<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|--|
| 44 Perform a detailed cost benefit analysis of its transportation services to determine the most efficient and cost effective routes.                | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0  |
| 45 Develop and implement a comprehensive vehicle replacement schedule.   | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0  |
| 46 Develop a transportation manual for the safe and efficient operation of the transportation program and include bus driver training information.   | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0  |
| 47 Formalize implementation of communication devices for all buses to ensure safety of students, bus drivers, and staff operating district vehicles. | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0  |
| 48 Evaluate the requirements of transporting students with special needs and determine how to provide service to these students.                     | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0  |
| <b>CHAPTER 9-TOTALS</b>  | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>                                      | <b>\$0</b>                                   |

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# **CHAPTER 10**

## **SAFETY AND SECURITY**

**REFUGIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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## CHAPTER 10. SAFETY AND SECURITY

An independent school district's safety and security function identifies vulnerabilities and includes strategies to minimize risks to ensure a protected learning environment for students and staff. This protection includes a balanced approach of prevention, intervention, enforcement, and recovery. Risks can include environmental disasters, physical hazards, security threats, emergencies, and human-caused crises.

Managing safety and security initiatives is dependent on a district's organizational structure. Larger districts typically have a staff dedicated to safety and security, while smaller districts assign staff tasks as a secondary assignment. Safety and security includes ensuring the physical security of both a school and its occupants. A comprehensive approach to planning for physical security considers school locking systems; monitoring systems; equipment and asset protection; visibility of areas and grounds; police/school resource officers; and emergency operations. Emergency and disaster-related procedures must include fire protection, environmental disasters, communication systems, crisis management, and contingency planning. The identification of physical hazards must consider playground safety, and overall building and grounds safety. Environmental factors, such as indoor air quality, mold, asbestos, water management, and waste management, also affect the safety of school facilities.

Safety and security initiatives at Refugio Independent School District involve activities that involve the entire school district community. Staff responsible for the district's safety and security initiatives include the Superintendent, campus principals, assistant principals, Business Manager, Athletic Director, and maintenance supervisor. The Refugio Police Department has instituted some initiatives, including: active shooter/hostage professional development, increased law enforcement, providing "walk through" visibility for the campuses during school hours and school events, as well as after-hour building security checks. Additionally, the district has initiated several facility related initiatives to improve campus security. For example, the elementary campus is receiving new improved fencing, and the maintenance department has completed adding interior door deadbolts for all classrooms. The area is now designated as the location for students to shelter in place. Interior door deadbolt locks are currently being installed in the Refugio Junior High School and Refugio High School campuses.

Refugio Independent School District has also issued 12 two-way radios to each campus and central office administrator and secretary along with several other faculty members located in remote areas of each campus to improve security-related communications. The Refugio Independent School District Board of Trustees recently closed Refugio High School during lunch periods except for seniors. The action was taken due to safety concerns with the school's close proximity to a major four-lane highway and very busy railroad line. The other two schools already have closed lunch periods in place.

In 2011, Refugio Independent School District had a Safety and Security Audit completed and presented to the Board in accordance with Texas Education Code, Section 37.108(b). The report provides safety information and recommendations for the district and for each school campus. The district has established a formal written Emergency Operations Plan. The district provided all staff an emergency reference guide which has a color-coded system for notification of emergency situations. As an example, a *Code Green* announcement would initiate shelter in place of all students and staff. Fire drill procedures and exit maps are prominently displayed in the classrooms and other parts of each building. Each campus has a current student handbook which was issued to each student. Some of the school safety related topics provided in the handbook include health-related issues, bullying, sexual harassment, school safety, and vandalism. Refugio Independent School District has established a School Health Advisory Council which provides input to the district and Board. Each campus has a fire alarm system with current inspection documentation. All fire extinguishers reviewed were charged and had current inspections.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ District staff received active shooter/hostage scenario training by the Refugio Chief of Police.
- ◆ The district and the Refugio Police and Fire Departments have established an ongoing communication process for daily and emergency situations.



- ◆ The district receives free officer patrols/walk-through visits provided by the Refugio Police Department for each campus during the day and at night.

## FINDINGS

- ◆ The district does not effectively restrict visitor access to campuses.
- ◆ The district's emergency operation team has limited involvement in safety and security initiatives.
- ◆ The district's parking area at the high school may not be safe for students and staff.
- ◆ The district does not ensure routine emergency evacuation procedures are conducted at all campuses.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 49: Implement procedures to secure and restrict access to campuses.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 50: Establish a safety and security committee as required by the Texas Education Code.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 51: Examine parking options at the high school to provide improved safety for students and staff.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 52: Ensure all campuses conduct monthly fire and other safety-related drills.**

## DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### POLICE DEPARTMENT CRISIS TRAINING

Refugio Independent School District (RISD) staff received active shooter and hostage scenario training by the Refugio Chief of Police.

On January 9, 2013, the Refugio police chief provided training for all district staff after the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting had taken place in Newtown, Connecticut. The training addressed how the district, individual campuses, staff, and police department should respond if an active shooter or hostage situation was occurring in the district. The police chief provided information related to different types of scenarios and the appropriate responses. Staff interviews indicated that the training was excellent and timely.

### POLICE AND FIRE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATIONS

RISD and the Refugio Police and Fire Departments have established an ongoing communication process for daily and emergency situations.

Review team interviews indicate that the Superintendent, police chief, and fire chief work well together and are dedicated to providing a safe environment for district students and staff. The fire chief stated that he and most of his department staff were raised in Refugio and attended RISD. He and his department are committed to having an effective working relationship with the district. The police chief shared the same sentiment, and indicated that the district is considering his department's offer to establish a school resource officer (SRO) position for the district. The SRO position was scheduled for consideration during the 2012–13 school year. All three indicated that they have each other's cell phone numbers and are in communication on a frequent and sometimes daily basis.

**Figure 10–1** provides campus staff and parent survey data regarding security personnel and their relationship with RISD principals and teachers.

**FIGURE 10–1**  
**REFUGIO ISD CAMPUS STAFF AND PARENT SURVEY**  
**SAFETY AND SECURITY**  
**FEBRUARY 2013**

**STATEMENT: SECURITY PERSONNEL HAVE A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS.**

| RESPONSE          | CAMPUS STAFF | PARENTS |
|-------------------|--------------|---------|
| Strongly Agree    | 19.7%        | 40.0%   |
| Agree             | 53.4%        | 40.0%   |
| No Opinion        | 34.2%        | 20.0%   |
| Disagree          | 2.6%         | 0.0%    |
| Strongly Disagree | 0.0%         | 0.0%    |

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, Campus Staff and Parent Survey Data, February 2013.

**Figure 10–2** provides campus staff and parent survey data regarding the working relationship of law enforcement and RISD.

Survey data indicated that the majority of campus staff who completed the survey believe there is a positive working relationship between RISD and local law enforcement.

Interviews indicated that communication was vitally important because the high school was on the corner of a major four lane highway and the campus is not far from the

**FIGURE 10–2**  
**REFUGIO ISD CAMPUS STAFF AND PARENT SURVEY**  
**SAFETY AND SECURITY**  
**FEBRUARY 2013**

**STATEMENT: A GOOD WORKING ARRANGEMENT EXISTS BETWEEN LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE DISTRICT.**

| RESPONSE          | CAMPUS STAFF | PARENTS |
|-------------------|--------------|---------|
| Strongly Agree    | 32.9%        | 80.0%   |
| Agree             | 57.9%        | 20.0%   |
| No Opinion        | 9.2%         | 0.0%    |
| Disagree          | 0.0%         | 0.0%    |
| Strongly Disagree | 0.0%         | 0.0%    |

Source: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, Campus Staff and Parent Survey Data, February 2013.

railroad's major line. The fire chief explained that the railroad currently has approximately one train every two hours traveling through Refugio. The railroad has informed him that once the Corpus Christi Seaport is completed, the number of trains will increase to one every hour. The fire chief indicated that due to the Seaport many of the current and future trains carry hazardous materials.

### **POLICE DEPARTMENT PATROLS**

RISD receives free officer patrols/walk-through visits provided by the Refugio Police Department for each campus during the day and at night.

Review team interviews indicate that the Refugio Police Department provides walk-through visits of each campus at least once per day while students are on campus. The police chief indicated that this was as much for community relations with the students as it was for security purposes. He stressed that he wanted RISD students to feel comfortable around his officers and to realize that they were available to assist the students at any time day or night. Additionally, the Police Department walks each campus at night and checks for door and window security. The Police Department provides a police vehicle escort at no charge for team buses and the Sheriff's Department provides one for the band buses. In addition to paid security for home events, the Police Department escorts the gate official with the gate bank deposit to and from the bank for all home game events.

### **DETAILED FINDINGS**

#### **CAMPUS ACCESS (REC. 49)**

The district does not effectively restrict visitor access to campuses.

While onsite, the review team observed that the high school and the elementary school do not have one designated and monitored public access point. One reason for this is that there is not proper fencing around the high school and the elementary school campuses. Inadequate fencing leaves campuses vulnerable to unapproved visitor access and makes it increasingly difficult to direct the public to one accessible entrance. Review team interviews indicate that there was growing concern about the safety risks posed by lack of fencing at both campuses. Since the onsite visit, the Superintendent confirmed that the district has approved the installation of new fencing.

In addition, both the high school and the elementary school do not effectively secure exterior doors during school hours. The high school opens onto a central courtyard with sidewalks and covered walkways extending from building to building. Doors cannot be secured in these areas because students are moving from class to class during the day and their primary access are the covered walkways and external doorways. When campuses have multiple doors that remain unlocked throughout the day, it is increasingly difficult for the district to monitor visitor access and ensure the safety of students and faculty.

While all three campuses do require that visitors sign in and wear a name badge, the district does not have a system in place to scan a visitor's ID and run a background check before allowing a guest onto campus. Further, none of the three campus offices have windows or reception areas located in visual sight of the main entrance. This practice does not allow any of the campuses to effectively monitor who comes in and out of their facilities.

The high school also has a credit union which is open to the public located near the entrance of the school. Staff interviews indicated that the credit union has been at the school for several years and that the main doors to the high school were the primary entrance the public used to access the credit union. The review team noted that these doors were not secured or monitored.

There are many school districts throughout the state that can serve as potential models for effectively limiting access to school facilities. For example, Taft ISD restricts access to the front entrance of the district's elementary school by requiring an employee access card or for the receptionist to electronically unlock the door to visitors. Taft ISD also maintains security cameras to record all employees, students, and visitors entering the front doors to the administration area. A

magnetically locked door and intercom system secures the front doors of the school. Visitors must buzz in using the intercom system to obtain access through the front entrance.

Manor ISD maintains an electronic visitor registration system to record, track, and monitor visitors to school campuses throughout the district. The system enhances school security by reading a visitor driver's license and comparing information to a sex offender database for 48 states including Texas. If there is no match, then a visitor badge is printed that includes the visitor's photo and name, and the time and date of the visit. Manor ISD's Visitor Management Procedural Guide also requires every campus visitor be scanned in to the visitor registration system, including parents, volunteers, vendors, board members, substitute teachers, employees who do not have a badge available and former students.

Keller ISD was the 2010 recipient of the Texas Safe Schools award, given by the Texas School Safety Center at Texas State University-San Marcos to the district with the most comprehensive security plan. Keller ISD was recognized for its access control system, which includes closing and locking all exterior doors during normal school hours and requiring visitors to be buzzed in at one or two locations. School staff may enter buildings by scanning their badges on a control panel, which records the name of the employee, the entrance location, and the time of entry.

RISD should implement procedures to secure and restrict access to campuses. This process should include limiting the number of unlocked entrances at each campus. If feasible, the visitor entrance should be limited to a single designated entrance that is observable from the main office. If the designated entrance is not visible from the main office, RISD should explore the cost of installing windows that would provide a better view. If window installation proves too costly, RISD could consider locating a receptionist/attendance clerk and desk, computer, phone, ID scanner, and badge printer near the main entrance of each school. The primary cost would include installation of computer drops and the necessary wiring needed to provide power to the equipment.

In addition, visitor instructions and direction signs should be posted in clear view on exterior doors. These signs should inform visitors that they must report to the main office and provide directions to the visitor entrance.

RISD should also place adequate fencing around all campuses. Fencing would allow the high school to establish

only one publicly-accessible entrance. Further, the district should consider purchasing an electronic system for registering instructional facility visitors so that unauthorized persons do not have access to school buildings. These systems require all visitors to register at a central location by presenting valid identification to get a visitor's tag, which must be worn while on school grounds. Costs for an electronic visitor registration system are approximately \$1,600 for installation per instructional facility with additional annual renewal fees of approximately \$432 per instructional facility.

Finally, the credit union appears to be in an area which would best serve as the primary administrative office for the high school. The credit union does have visibility to see who is entering and/or leaving the campus. The school administrative offices are around the corner from the main hallway and do not have a clear line of site to the entrance. RISD should either request that the credit union relocate or secure the hallway with glass doors and a receptionist for visitor and attendance check in.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the district determines which strategies it will employ to provide for increased facilities security and the plan has been approved by the Board of Trustees.

#### **SAFETY COMMITTEE (REC. 50)**

The district's emergency operations team has limited involvement in safety and security initiatives.

Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 37.109, requires that every school district establish a school safety and security committee. This committee is responsible for the following:

- review and update all safety and security measures and documentation;
- develop and implement emergency plans consistent with the multi-hazard emergency operation plan; and
- provide support services to the district or its campuses as needed.

Review team interviews indicate that RISD has not established a safety and security committee. Instead, the district has an emergency operations planning team that fulfills some of the responsibilities required of a safety and security committee. The Superintendent serves as the district's emergency management coordinator and leads the emergency operations team. The operations team also includes the business manager, high school principal,

elementary school principal, maintenance supervisor, and transportation supervisor.

The emergency operations planning team is responsible for overall development and completion of the district's emergency operations plan. Staff indicated the plan is updated based on issues identified by the school safety audit, issues identified during actual emergency situations, and changes in the threat hazards, resources, capabilities, or district/structure. Once developed, the plan is presented to the Board of Trustees for approval and adoption. The superintendent is then responsible for implementing the plan in the district.

However, staff indicated that the district's emergency operations team has limited involvement in safety and security initiatives. This lack of involvement may leave the district not prepared for emergency situations. For example, the team does not have a formal schedule for meetings. Instead, the team meets in cases of emergency. Without a group of district stakeholders dedicated to safety and security issues in the district, the district may not be prepared for emergency situations that arise. Further, the district may not be in compliance with state laws related to safety planning.

A safety and security committee prioritizes steps to increase the safety of a district's children and staff. The Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) provides guidelines in its emergency management toolkit related to the duties of a district's safety and security committee. These guidelines include:

- review the Emergency Operations Plan for the district at least annually and provide updated information to ensure the plan reflects specific district, campus, facility and/or support needs;
- provide a comprehensive review of the district's EOP every five years. A comprehensive review entails reviewing the structure and function of the EOP to ensure compatibility and collaboration with local, regional and state emergency responding agencies;
- review district drilling and training activities to ensure that each student and employee has appropriate knowledge of responsibilities and actions to be taken during an emergency;
- assist the district in preparing for and completing facility safety and security audits required by the TEC, Section 37.108;

- review each facility safety and security audit and assist in the presentation of audit findings to the district's Board of Trustees;
- as needed, assist the district in completing the District Audit Report and its timely submission to TxSSC; and
- assist in the development of any report or collection of information as required by the TxSSC and to provide a review of that completed report or information prior to submission to the TxSSC.

The district should establish a safety and security committee as required by the TEC. This committee can be formed by combining the responsibilities of the district's existing emergency operations planning team with the responsibilities required of a safety and security committee. The new committee should include the same members as the emergency operations planning; however, the district can expand the team's membership to include the junior high school principal, police chief, and fire chief.

The Superintendent should establish a regular meeting schedule, use a written meeting agenda, and assign responsibilities for meeting minutes. The committee should address the emergency operations plan, any district safety and security issues, and the 2011 safety and security audit recommendations. Further, the committee should plan to revise its emergency operations plan and conduct the school safety and security audit in school year 2013–14.

The district may contact the school safety specialist at Regional Education Service Center III (Region 3) for technical assistance. Additionally, the TxSSC provides safety and security training and technical assistance to school districts.

The district can implement the recommendation by using its existing resources.

#### **HIGH SCHOOL PARKING (REC. 51)**

The district's parking area at the high school may not be safe for students and staff.

A review team assessment of the parking area at the high school noted that a majority of students and staff park in an area directly behind the high school. Many students must cross this area in order to get from the high school buildings to the athletic facilities and football stadium. This parking area is also used by the bus drivers as a pick-up and drop-off

point for the junior high and high school. The review team noted that this area is often crowded and presents a potential safety hazard with students driving through, students crossing the lot, and buses coming and going during pick-up and drop-off times.

A 2005 Texas Association of School Administrators' Facilities Evaluation and Projected Needs study for the district reported that the district should evaluate ways to improve parking, site access routes, traffic circulation, vehicular queuing lanes and vehicular separation at existing campuses. The report recommended that the district should provide each campus with safe, separated car and bus drop-off and pick-up, separated student ingress/egress and parking, and staff and visitor parking. Student drivers should be provided ingress/egress and parking separate from all other site traffic, if at all possible. Visitor parking should be convenient to the school's primary entrance.

It was noted during the review that there is a large parking lot on the side of the high school next to the theatre that is not being used. Many students and staff drive through this parking area to get to the back lot.

The district should examine parking options at the high school to provide improved safety for students and staff. District administrators should consider alternatives to the current parking situation that exists at the high school. Steps to consider include:

- separating student parking from bus pick up and drop off points;
- assessing the best way to provide for safe vehicle circulation routes around the high school; and
- providing a single entrance and exit to the student parking area to provide increased security.
- using the large vacant parking area as the student parking lot which would allow the district to separate student bus pick up and drop off from the student parking area.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation until the district performs an assessment of parking alternatives, associated costs, and determines how to improve the safety of students and staff.

#### **FIRE AND SAFETY DRILLS (REC. 52)**

The district does not ensure routine emergency evacuation procedures are conducted at all campuses.

Review team interviews indicate that the high school and junior high school campuses have not conducted sufficient fire and other safety related drills during school year 2012–13. Staff indicated that the high school campus and junior high school campus have conducted one fire drill during school years 2011–12 and 2012–13. Additionally, staff indicated that the junior high and high school conducted an emergency shelter in place drill in late February 2013 after the onsite review. Further, the 2011 Safety and Security Audit noted that the secondary school campuses had not conducted sufficient fire and other safety drills. While the secondary campuses have not conducted regular emergency drills, staff indicated that the elementary school has conducted drills on a monthly basis.

Without procedures requiring the campuses to conduct and report routine drills, the district does not guarantee that students and staff understand emergency evacuation procedures. Staff and students may not know which exits to use in emergency situations, alternative routes to use when exits are blocked, or evacuation procedures for non-classroom areas (e.g. the playground, gymnasium, cafeteria, etc.).

The Texas Fire Marshall's Office recommends teaching fire safety skills to all students in Texas. Specifically, districts should conduct fire and/or other emergency drills on a monthly basis while school is in session, and provide all students with developmentally appropriate instruction on fire prevention. These activities may result in a reduction in community fire insurance rates.

RISD should ensure all campuses conduct monthly fire and other safety-related drills. The district should develop procedures to require staff to report the date, time, and duration of all fire drill and other safety-related drills. In addition, each school should practice duck and cover drill (tornado drill) and shelter in place drills. A best practice would be to conduct the duck and cover plus shelter in place drills at least once per semester.

The district can implement the recommendation by using its existing resources.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Some of the recommendations provided in this report are based on state or federal laws, rules or regulations, and should be promptly addressed. Other recommendations are based on comparisons to state or industry standards, or accepted best practices, and should be reviewed to determine the level of priority, appropriate timeline, and method of implementation.

**CHAPTER 10: SAFETY AND SECURITY**

| <b>RECOMMENDATION</b>  | <b>2013-14</b> | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> | <b>2017-18</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>5-YEAR<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> | <b>ONE TIME<br/>(COSTS)<br/>SAVINGS</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|---|
| 49 Implement procedures to secure and restrict access to campuses.                               |                |                |                |                |                |   |   |
| 50 Establish a safety and security committee as required by the Texas Education Code.            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| 51 Examine parking options at the high school to provide improved safety for students and staff. | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| 52 Ensure all campuses conduct monthly fire and other safety-related drills.                     | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0            | \$0   | \$0                                     |
| <b>CHAPTER 10-TOTALS</b>   | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>     | <b>\$0</b>                                      | <b>\$0</b>                              |

