

OSPR Audit Protocols

Chapter 1

District Organization, Management, and Personnel

The District Organization, Management, and Personnel chapter evaluates the leadership of the district and how effectively it puts in place systems that ensure that the district is well managed, connected to the community, and academically successful.

I. Governance

School districts in Oklahoma are governed by elected Boards of Education. Boards should focus on the decision making process, planning, and providing resources for goal achievement. To a great extent, the ability of the board to perform these duties effectively is determined by their knowledge and recognition of the separation of their role from that of the superintendent. The superintendent serves as the administrative leader responsible for policy implementation and day to day operations. An effective superintendent supports the board's responsibility as policy maker. It is important that the superintendent work to help board members fulfil their duties by providing training opportunities and instituting procedures that facilitate effective board meetings, open communications and timely transfer of information.

Data Needs

- Board meeting schedule, agendas and past minutes (including Executive)
- Numbers and dates of opportunities for public input other than board meetings for prior three months
- Minutes and audio and videotapes of board meetings, if available for prior three months
- List of any board committees and their memberships
- District policy and procedure manuals
- List of languages other than English and the percentages of each as reflected in home language survey
- Board members' resumes and training records
- Internal audit reports for prior 3 years
- List of people requested under Community Involvement/Public Input

- Copies of district publications as requested under Community Involvement/Public Input

People to Interview

Board members

Superintendent

Central Office administration

Principals

Representatives of parent teacher associations, teacher organizations, campus improvement committees, district improvement committees, business community, non profit organizations with child related focus, leaders of minority communities, and attorney for the district

I.A. Board Meetings

Activities to Perform

- I.A.1 Attend one or more board meetings and observe board conduct, examine and evaluate the board packet, examine and evaluate the minutes, compare the posted agenda to the meeting format, and evaluate the quality and quantity of public input.

Questions to Ask:

Are board meetings well organized? Are board meetings conducted according to established procedures and Robert’s Rules of Order? Is there a provision for adequate public input through a formal agenda item or other means for citizen comment? How is information recorded and distributed for review?

Is the board agenda and supporting information packet that is prepared by the superintendent, disseminated within a time frame mutually agreed upon by the board and superintendent? Does the board packet contain comprehensive background information that allows the board to make well-informed decisions? Are board packets and other informational items made available on the Internet to board members? to the public?

Is there an established criterion for placing an item on the agenda (including items requested by the board or citizens)? Are executive sessions conducted in accordance with State law?

Are all meetings of the board posted in compliance with state law? How does the district use the local newspaper, a district website and public libraries to keep the community informed of board meetings, agendas, decisions and other district news?

How are minutes of the board meetings prepared and who is responsible for preparing them? Are minutes prepared in a timely manner? Are minutes complete and do they contain sufficient detail to be useful in documenting the decisions of the board? Does the district record board meetings in audio or video format? Does the district televise board meetings to the community? Does the administration use these tapes to determine follow-up actions needed to carry out board policy? Are tapes used to plan future meetings? Does the public and community have access to these tapes?

I.B. Board Governance

Activities to Perform

- I.B. Prepare a chart showing each board member, any offices held on the board, year elected, term of office, the length of service and the board member's profession and place of business.
- I.B. Review affidavits of conflict of interest and verify compliance with conflict of interest statute.
- 2
- I.B. Interview all board members and the superintendent. Examine public input regarding the board and the board's relationship with the superintendent. Prepare a summary of individual interviews and compare results with the public perceptions and note any similarities or differences.
- 3
- I.B. Examine the training records of board members and list the type and number of hours of training attended by each board member. Specifically identify orientation and training for newly elected board members, training on the board's role in budget, personnel matters, etc., seminars and workshops sponsored by regional, state, and national organizations, and special training based on identified needs of board members in addition to basic state requirements. Compare the results to the state's guidelines and note any discrepancies.
- 4
- I.B. Diagram the organization of the board, including any advisory, ad hoc, or standing committees of the board such as standing and/or ad hoc committees for finance, facility/building, personnel, instruction and/or other special purposes. Delineate the specific purposes of each committee, the makeup and membership of the committees, the process used to ensure fair and equal representation in the selection of committee members and any specific time limits imposed on the life of the committee.
- 5
- I.B. Chart the path of a complaint received by a board member from a parent, district employee or other community member.
- 6
- I.B. Prepare a list of all district provided training for board candidates and board members for the last three years.
- 7

Questions to Ask

How does the board fulfill its responsibility to represent and communicate with all citizens of the district? Are board member elections held in accordance with state laws? Are board member terms set so that a majority of experienced board members hold office at all times? Are district elections, including bond elections, held at locations and set on dates that will result in the greatest voter turnout?

Does the district conduct information sessions for candidates running for the board? What type of formal orientation sessions are provided to new board members to define the role and responsibilities of a board member?

What process is used by the board to hold one another accountable for unethical or self interested behavior?

Do board members understand their roles in the district's governance and exhibit that understanding by allowing the superintendent to manage the district's operations within the constraints set by the board? Does the board interfere in personnel decisions outside of voting on the superintendent's recommendations? How does the board work constructively with the superintendent to resolve issues and concerns?

How do committees of the board function? Do committees contribute to an overall sense of open-government in the district? Have committees been useful in establishing trust among board members? Between the board and the administration?

Has the superintendent established an effective communication process with board members? Is there a full or part-time staff person within the administration that supports the needs of the board? How does the superintendent notify board members of serious or newsworthy events between board meetings? Do the superintendent and board members have fax and/or email access so that they can receive information quickly and in a format that is easy to review?

How does the district work with the board to ensure timely responses to concerns brought to the board by parents, employees and the community?

How does the board oversee the district's financial resources? How does the board direct staff regarding the information and materials the board needs to understand and consider issues with significant financial implications? What processes allow board members to review significant financial issues identified in internal audits, external audits, management evaluations, and performance reviews? What kind of training does the board receive to improve oversight of district financial resources? What mechanisms are in place to provide the board a better understanding of the long and short-range financial impact of their decisions on the fund balance?

How is academic performance data used by the board in order to determine the appropriate alignment of resources on all campuses?

How does the board solicit feedback from the public, district campus administrators and teachers when considering issues with significant financial implications?

I.C. Board Policies

Activities to Perform:

- I.C.1 Prepare a list of the locations throughout the district where district policy manuals are available. Examine the board policy manual and a representative sample of policy manuals distributed throughout the district. Determine the oldest, latest and median date of updates. Document the last update and the policy area(s) of the last 10 updates. Compare a sample of policies with recent law changes and note any discrepancies. Compare the sample of manuals housed on campuses with the master copy of the manual and note any inconsistencies in the versions.
- I.C.2 Prepare a diagram of the process used by the district to update district policies. Note if a policy service is being used, describe the services provided and show the cost of this service.

Questions to Ask

Are policies clear, concise and in compliance with state law? Are policies regularly reviewed and updated? Are new or revised policies disseminated in a timely manner to each board member and all other designated staff? Where are policies made available at the administration office and campus locations for use by employees and/or the public? Are policies available to staff and community members on-line? How is compliance with policy routinely monitored to ensure staff compliance? How many hard copies of policies exist in the district and how many times are they updated annually?

What policies exist that specifically pertain to the roles, responsibilities and actions of board members? Does the district have conflict of interest policies for board members?

Are there nepotism policies in place for employees and board members? Are there policies regarding public input at board meetings? How do these policies encourage open communication with the public? Who ensures that the board is in compliance with these policies? How are exceptions handled?

I.D. District-Community Partnerships

Activities to Perform

I.D.1 Interview staff and prepare a list of formal and informal partnerships, interlocal agreements, collaboratives, special committees, etc. that work with the board or the administration and in one or two sentences describes the nature of the partnership.

Questions to Ask

What policy and procedures address the use of district facilities by the community? Do these policies or procedures allow all taxpayers to benefit from their investment in the district? How does the board ensure that the district reaches a diverse community of business leaders, religious leaders, civic organizations, parents, and community leaders?

Does the district regularly seek innovative ways to:

- build relationships within the business community and other community groups in order to gain financial or "in kind" donations?
- conduct cooperative projects with other governmental bodies, educational institutions, and community or business organizations?
- establish partnerships with other school districts to accomplish mutual goals?

When building partnerships, does the district use memoranda of understanding and/or interlocal agreements to ensure clear understanding and agreement among parties involved?

II. District Management

While the board sets policy, the superintendent is responsible for carrying out that policy and managing the district in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible. The goal of administration must always be to facilitate and support the instruction of students by ensuring that every possible dollar and resource is directed to the classroom.

Data Needs

- Superintendent's contract, resume and last three evaluations
- District history
- District directory and district and departmental organizational charts
- District budgets for current and preceding year including updates

- Campus Report Cards
- List of contracted, cooperative and partnership services
- OCAS Budgeted Expenditure Report
- Legal contracts, procedures and expenditures for current and prior year
- A list of any grievances filed with OSDE, the Secretary of State, law enforcement agencies or the courts against the district, the board or individual board members in the prior three years
- Copy of legal liability insurance policy
- Campus budgets

People to Interview

Board members

Superintendent

Central Office administration

Principals

Representatives of teacher organizations, campus improvement committees and district improvement committees

II.A. Superintendent Hiring, Contracting and Evaluation

Activities to Perform

- II.A. Examine the superintendent's contract and outline the terms and conditions of the contract including a history
1 of renewals. Outline all performance components and terms that might protect the district from the necessity of "buying" out the contract if either the district or the superintendent wants to separate?
- II.A. If a recent superintendent search or hiring process was conducted in the district, outline the process used by the
2 district and evaluate the effectiveness of the process.
- II.A. Examine the last three board evaluations of the superintendent and assess whether expectations defined clear
3 and measurable goals and objectives, and whether the superintendent was given honest and meaningful feedback based upon progress toward expectations.
- II.A. Chart the support services and other resources provided by the district to support board duties. Identify the
4 staff and number of hours worked a week for board or individual members.

Questions to Ask

Does the superintendent acknowledge his position as chief executive officer for the district by:

- Making recommendations for all personnel actions based on input from campus administrators or other appropriate staff?
- Making other recommendations to the board regarding operation of the district including an annual budget?
- Attending all meetings of the board?

- Recommending policies to the board?
- Implementing adopted board policies?
- Establishing a process to communicate regularly with the board to keep them informed of district activities?
- Delegating authority when appropriate?
- Coordinating the implementation of procedures regarding district operations?

Does the superintendent actively participating in local, regional and national school administration associations?

Does the superintendent provide necessary support for the board to perform its function by:

- Providing staff to record meetings and minutes, schedule appointments and maintain files?
- Assigning appropriate staff to research and respond to information requests from the board?
- Providing budgetary resources for participation in training and professional development seminars including travel and tuition costs?

II.B. Central Office Organizational Structure

Activities to Perform

- II.B. Review organizational chart(s) and interview staff to determine if the organizational structure depicted on the chart(s) reflects the actual organization of the district, and document if it has been changed one or more times in the recent past or if change is anticipated in the near future and why.
- II.B. Based upon the district's actual central office organizational structure and staffing, including support staff, prepare a written evaluation demonstrating whether the structure ensures:
 - Appropriate spans of controls?
 - Clearly defined units and lines of authority that are reflected in both the district's organizational charts and job descriptions?
 - Minimal management layers that encourage communication and decision-making
 - Direct and accessible support for all campuses and auxiliary programs
 - Accountability at all levels within the organization

Questions to Ask

Does the district conduct periodic reviews to minimize administrative layers and processes?

Has the district clearly assigned authority to campus administrators for the effective and efficient supervision of instruction, instructional support, and other assigned responsibilities, including consideration of site-based decision making and other

organizational alternatives? Does the district's central administration support and facilitate the work of teachers and campus administrators?

II.C. Procedures

Activity to Perform

- II.C. Review the administrative procedures manual or departmental procedure manuals and by functional area
 - 1 prepare a chart showing whether the procedures are: complete, up-to-date, and reflect or are linked to board policy.
- II.C. Prepare a diagram of the process used by the district to implement and update district procedures including
 - 2 staff responsible for each step along the way. Include a list of locations where procedure manuals are available.

Questions to Ask

How does management ensure that policies are translated into operating procedures and are adhered to? Do administrators review and update procedures annually or on some other cycle? Who is responsible for ensuring that each department or operating unit develops procedures?

Is formal staff training provided on district procedures?

Is there a process for procedure revision that is clearly defined and allows for staff input?
How are revised policies incorporated into operating procedures?

II.D. Legal Services

Activity to Perform

- II.D. Examine the actual expenditures, current year's budget and invoices for legal services for the last 1-2 years, as available, and create a chart that shows the name of the in-house attorney or external law firm that represent the district, the nature of the work done by each firm, and the amount paid to each firm.
- II.D. Create a list of major lawsuits, judgements or litigation and show the associated costs and current status.
 - 2
- II.D. Determine the terms and conditions of any existing legal liability insurance contracts.
 - 3

Questions to Ask

Does the district use cost-efficient legal services to keep abreast of changes in the law, review policy, provide representation in legal actions and reduce the risk of lawsuits? Does the district employ an attorney (either in-house, on a retainer, or in a cooperative arrangement with another district) with the primary responsibility of advising the board, reviewing policy and reducing the risk of lawsuits? Is legal counsel available to the board in a timely manner?

Does the district use an organized evaluation process to determine the circumstances under which outside counsel should be used with cost effectiveness as a consideration? Has the district established a system to review legal costs to determine whether it is more cost-efficient and practical to have a staff attorney or to contract out for legal services on an as-needed basis?

Does the district use a tracking system that alerts of pending deadlines, produces reports for the board and categorizes types of legal actions?

Is the district paying for legal liability insurance that protects itself from catastrophic litigation costs? Does the district routinely request cost proposals for legal services? Is the district paying a fair market rate for legal services? Who is responsible for monitoring legal bills using billing rates, number of hours billed, nature of work performed and the individual performing the service?

II.E. Campus Administration

Activity to perform

II.E.1 Examine the following:

- Effective campus and school district planning for the purpose of improved student performance?
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities?
- Community and parental involvement in the school improvement process?
- Clearly established accountability parameters for student performance?
- Improved communication and information flow?
- Consensus-based, decision making?
- Pervasive and long-range commitment to implementation?
- Flexibility at the campus level in the allocation and use of both human and fiscal resources?

II.E.2 Prepare a chart by campus showing the number of principals, assistant principals, counselors, secretaries, clerks and other campus administrative staff. Compare the staffing levels by campus and grade level with staffing standards and districtwide allocation formulas and note discrepancies.

Questions to Ask

Does the district provide extensive and continuous training before and during implementation of programs or major changes within the school district? What type of training is provided?

Is an extensive amount of time spent changing role definitions, training school district staff, educating the community, establishing objectives, developing and implementing programs and monitoring program success? Do campuses have access to accurate information so that they can establish objectives and develop and implement programs to meet those objectives?

Are goals determined on a campus level from a campus needs assessment and outcome data?

Are activities based on goals and are they initiated and directed by the campus staff with measurable outcomes? To what extent is budget development and allocation of resources campus-controlled?

Are staff selection criteria guided by standards developed by a campus within the context of state and district guidelines? Is the campus organization structure arranged functionally to encourage and facilitate shared decision-making and input?

III. Planning and Evaluation

State law requires districts to insure that careful planning and evaluation occur at the campus and district level. A district with a strategic plan that has received broad-based input and has well defined goals will be better able to attain state standards in respect to academic excellence indicators. Evaluation of a district's programs allows the board and administrators to gauge the success of each program by determining if key objectives and results were obtained and if the benefits merit the costs. Planned programmatic changes can then be made based on those results.

Data Needs

- District mission, strategic plan and goals
- Description of the strategic planning process
- Copies of all planning documents including the Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP), district owned sites, growth projections specific to each attendance area in the district, and any Technology Plans (TP) as requested under Computers and Information Technology
- Program evaluation schedule
- Copies of all external audits, reviews, reports, surveys and survey results submitted by outside consultants in the past three to five years.

People to Interview

Board members

Superintendent

Central Office administration

Principals

Representatives of parent teacher associations, teacher organizations, campus improvement committees, district improvement committees, business community, child related non-profit organizations

Members of Facilities committee if one exists

III.A. Planning

Activities to Perform

- III Using copies of all district planning documents including CLEP, Strategic Plans, Facility Master Plans,
 - .A. Technology Plans and the like determine the nature and scope of each plan, the time frame of the plan, and the process by which the plan was developed.
- 1
- III Using the compiled planning documents, create a chart to show whether each plan contains board approved
 - .A. goals, objectives, implementation strategies, assignments of responsibilities, links to the annual budget, annual monitoring activities, and the like. In addition, evaluate how the goals, objectives and strategies of each plan are linked to each other and the budget, the assignment of responsibility for implementation, and the process by which the plan's implementation is monitored.
- 2
- III Conduct a comparative analysis of campus performance data to the district's allocation of resources in order to
 - .A. determine if academic performance data is being used to determine the appropriate alignment of resources on

- 3 all campuses? Compare findings to that of comparable districts.

Questions to Ask

Are the goals of peripheral plans compatible with the Strategic Plan? Does the Budget reflect Goals, Strategic Plan, Facility Plan, Technology Plan, etc.?

Does the board establish annual goals and undertake a formal planning process? Does the board and superintendent conduct annual goal setting and planning sessions? Is the board involved in adopting annual goals to improve the district's programs and operations?

How are district plans and goals publicized? Is the district reviewing progress of goal achievement regularly, or at least once a year? Is a priority placed on instructional program goals and student achievement goals? Are essential resources dedicated for goal achievement?

Are the Board of Education, superintendent and other administrative staff involved in developing a multi-year strategic plan for the district? Does strategic planning include these components: general administration, education (including instruction), evaluation and student services, business operations, personnel operations, communications and parent and community involvement?

Are demographic projections collected from verifiable sources? Do plans include full disclosure of the fiscal impact of policy or programmatic changes? Has the district done a future needs analysis and an evaluation of future capability in each functional area? Is there a documented process for measuring progress toward its goals? Are there direct ties to annual budgets? Does the system of annual reviews and updates keep pace with ever changing needs? Has the district developed a technology plan that realistically meets the projected demographic needs and academic goals of the district within budget constraints and policy guidelines?

Has the district allocated adequate resources to develop and implement a realistic long-range master plan for educational facilities? Will the plan meet the projected needs of the district as anticipated through demographic study? Was a standing committee comprised of a broad base of school district employees and community members involved in the planning process?

Does the district use a system to select and acquire proper school sites in a timely manner using school site selection criteria to ensure schools are located to serve the proposed attendance area economically, with maximum convenience and safety? Is there a system to assess sites that also evaluates fair market value? Is there a process to systematically determine the student capacity and educational adequacy of existing facilities and evaluates alternatives to new construction? Does the district seek donated land from developers?

III.B. Program and Service Evaluations

Activities to Perform

- III Examine any formal or informal program or services evaluation processes. Determine what staff perform
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- .B. specific evaluations, whether the evaluations are required by state or federal law, whether evaluation activities are prioritized, and if so, by what methodology (e.g., board policy, student needs, etc.)

Questions to Ask

Does the district regularly review and use evaluation results to improve the performance and cost efficiency of its major educational and operational programs? Are these evaluations used when deciding to keep or replace educational programs?

How are non-educational programs evaluated? Does the board conduct an annual self-evaluation? Does the district regularly evaluate the food service program based on established benchmarks and implement improvements to increase revenue and reduce costs? Does the district regularly monitor and evaluate its self-insurance program to ensure the feasibility of its self-insured coverage?

Do locally developed board policies require district management to conduct periodic program evaluations? Is a program evaluation schedule presented annually to the Board of Education?

Are long-range plans for program evaluation reviewed and revised annually?

Is there a periodic review of all district programs? Are procedures for review and evaluation of district programs and services published and disseminated? Are evaluations of program and services reviewed with staff before the next year's planning process? Are program and services evaluation results shared with the Board of Education, and where appropriate, advisory committees? Is cost data reviewed and compared with program and service objectives and results?

How does the board and administration review Oklahoma Office of Accountability, Oklahoma State Department of Education, and Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education data, evaluations, and monitoring initiatives? What is the decision making process regarding the types and number of internal/external special audits completed each year? How does the board and administration ensure that they receive an annual external audit and use the audit to improve operations?

What reports have been prepared by external groups? How are the results tracked and reported?

Has the district established an internal audit function that:

- Provides assurances that the internal control processes in the organization are adequately designed and functioning effectively?
- Offers recommendations and counsel to management that improve process performance?
- Reports directly to the board and is independent of influence by district administration?

What staff and procedures are in place that encourage and facilitate the evaluation of potential cost savings alternatives such as outside contracting and privatization?

Does the district make itself accountable to parents and other taxpayers by:

- Having clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for its major educational and operational programs?
- Using appropriate performance and measures to evaluate its major educational and operational programs and using these in management decision-making?
- Setting performance benchmarks for its major educational and operational programs that may include appropriate standards from comparable school districts, government agencies, and private industry?
- Reporting on the performance and cost efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers?

Has the district established and implemented strategies to continually assess the reliability of its data?

Are customer satisfaction (internal and external) surveys conducted by the district?

IV. Organization and Management of Personnel Function

Elementary and secondary education is a labor-intensive undertaking: personnel costs consume approximately 80-85 percent of the average school district budget. The Oklahoma School Performance Review therefore places a major emphasis on personnel management.

Effective personnel management requires compliance with equal employment opportunity statutes and other applicable federal and state laws. Establishing fair and workable policies, procedures, and training programs are important to recruiting and retaining competent staff.

A well-organized personnel department can help a district meet the needs of its employees and the data needs of district administration. By assigning clear responsibilities to staff in the division, the district can effectively and efficiently deliver the services the district needs to ensure the sound management of human resources.

Data Needs

- Personnel organization chart
- Staffing of personnel function
- Job descriptions of personnel staff
- Strategic plan

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent
Personnel director
Director of Information technology
All personnel function employees
Payroll, benefits, and staff development employees

IV.A. Organization Structure of Personnel Function

Activities to Perform

- IV Examine the organization and staffing charts and job descriptions for personnel and interview staff to determine
 - .A reporting arrangements, determine whether the organizational structure depicted on the chart reflects the actual organization of the department, and document if it has been changed recently or repeatedly in the recent past or is anticipated to change in the near future and explain the reasons for changes.
- IV Examine the staffing and budgets of personnel and personnel-related functions such as recruiting, payroll and
 - .A benefits management functions and determine the ratio of total staff to staffing within the personnel function.
 - .2 Compare the budget and staffing levels to industry standards?
- IV Obtain information on qualifications of key personnel through résumés or interviews to determine
 - .A qualifications.
 - .3

Questions to Ask

Who heads the personnel division? Are functions that relate to personnel such as payroll and benefits efficiently aligned within the overall district organization? What is the staffing pattern of the personnel division? What are the functions supported by the personnel division? How are related functions coordinated within the district?

What training do staff in the personnel division receive to better understand current and emerging developments in the personnel function? How do personnel staff serve as resources to other administrators in personnel matters? Are employees in the division cross-trained? To what extent do personnel staff participate in workshops, conferences, seminars, read professional literature and interact with personnel administrators in both public and private sectors to improve job performance?

IV.B. Management of the Personnel Function

Activities to Perform

- IV Examine any administrative procedure manuals, departmental budgets, strategic planning documents, mission statements and performance measures to determine their adequacy and how they are tied to the district's
 - 1 policies and strategic plan.
- IV Evaluate the computer system used by the personnel unit as well as the connectivity between this system and
 - .B. related systems such as finance, payroll, and other systems used for district operations. Evaluate use of
 - 2 computer systems to analyze staff development patterns within campuses, across campuses and alignment with special population priorities.

Questions to Ask

Does the district/personnel division have a mission statement relating to personnel? Goals? Performance measures? How is the personnel function treated in the district's

strategic plan? Who are the division's customers? How does the division know it is meeting its customers' needs? How does the division measure and monitor success?

How are departmental expenditures controlled?

What computer systems support the personnel functional area? Does the district's personnel software tie together staffing, payroll and leave data? Is the district's personnel software capable of providing data on the number of positions and teachers in each certification area?

Is it capable of providing data on staff characteristics such as race, sex, age, experience, and certification?

Does the district maintain employee records electronically? How does the district assure personnel records are safeguarded against loss or damage? How does the district regulate access to personnel records? How does the district coordinate record requests from employees or the public under the Open Records Act?

Is staffing information used to project staffing for budgetary purposes? Does the district provide breakdowns by staff-to-student ratios? Does the district have a system for position control that is automated and integrated with budgeting, personnel, and payroll to ensure effective position control?

IV.C. Contracting for Personnel-related Functions

Activity to Perform

- IV. If the personnel function or any parts of the personnel function are contracted for, obtain copies of and examine
- C.1 all service contracts, status reports on services performed, feasibility studies, cost benefit analyses, performance data, copies of any memorandum of understanding (MOUs) or interlocal agreements.

Questions to Ask

Does the district use contracts for any aspect of personnel services (e.g., recordkeeping, microfilming, job searches)? Does the district routinely examine options for contracting personnel services?

If any services are performed or contracted for through private companies or interlocal agreements: Was a cost benefit analysis and feasibility study performed prior to bidding the service and entering into the contract? What competitive procurement process was used? Did the bid process comply with state law? Did face-to-face negotiation occur? Were all stakeholders in the service represented in the negotiation and in the evaluation? Did vendor due diligence occur as part of the evaluation process? How were bid proposals evaluated? Were vendor references checked? Were quantitative and qualitative measures used in evaluating each proposal?

Did vendor presentations or interviews take place and how was this information used in the bid process? Did staff document the evaluation process and make written recommendations?

During contract negotiation, was a contract awarded to the lowest viable vendor? Was the contract written by the district, the vendor or in collaboration? Were the terms and conditions negotiated? Were the purchasing and finance divisions involved in the evaluation? Did a district-employed or district-hired attorney draft or review the final contract before signature? Were all relevant documents referenced in the contract for future reference? Is the contract written?

What are the basic terms and conditions of the contract? Did both the district and the vendor sign the contract? Does the district have a way to shift services back in-house should in-house operations prove the most efficient way to do things? Are escalator clauses tied directly to changes in the market that affects the vendors' costs? Are increases in contract costs tied directly to rising labor or supply costs? Are terms of the contract favorable in comparison to market rates for services? Are cost controls part of the contract and are costs monitored for changes?

Are there options to renew or renegotiate the contract as the result of the period of performance ending? Are there options to renegotiate the contract in response to changes in district needs or market conditions?

Are contractors required to report regularly to the board? To the administration? If so, how do they report? If so, are they reporting as required? Does the contract include a contract change mechanism?

Did the contract include all relevant terms and conditions required by board policy, local, state and federal law and the uniform commercial code? Are specific steps outlined in the contract for dispute resolution? What is the district's liability and what is the vendor's liability? When does the contract expire?

Has the district dedicated correct and sufficient contract management resources to manage the contract? Who manages the contract in the district? Does this person have the authority to enforce or change the contract? Does the contract include the name of the contract manager and who represents the district as the final authority for contract disputes?

What reports must the vendor provide the district and when do they have to be provided? What mechanisms are in the contract for providing the vendor with feedback on performance?

Does the vendor have to account for any cost changes to the district? Does the district require the vendor to notify the district in the event the vendor changes suppliers for items included in the service agreement?

Does the contract outline how the district can terminate the contract for poor performance or failure to perform without liability to the district? How are risks to the district managed by the contract?

Is a specific individual responsible for reviewing and documenting vendor performance? Does the contract specifically outline minimum and preferred performance standards?

Can the standards be measured objectively by the district? Does the contract describe each service to be performed in sufficient detail?

Does the contract describe specific levels of performance the vendor must meet in performing the service? Are these performance measures tracked by the district or by the vendor? How is performance measured relative to payment?

Does the contract include remedies in the event the vendor fails to perform the contract or fails to perform acceptably? What types of options does the district have in remedying poor performance or terminating the contract? Is payment tied to performance?

Are performance measures related to quality and quantity of activities performed by the vendor? Does the contract include specific periods in which the service must be performed?

V. Districtwide Employee Management

Data Needs

- Personnel Policy manual
- Appraisal policies
- Sample employee performance appraisal forms
- Job descriptions
- Turnover statistics
- Employee complaints
- Grievance records
- Training records
- Training opportunity brochures
- Training announcements

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent

Personnel director

Selected management staff

Director or Personnel

Employee liaison

District ombudsman

Staff attorney

Staff development specialist
Employees

V.A. Employee Evaluations

Activities to Perform

- V. Examine a sample of employee performance appraisal forms for teachers, administrators, and support staff.
- A. Evaluate them for timeliness, thoroughness, effectiveness, and compliance with state guidelines and local
1 policies and procedures.

Questions to Ask

Does the district have a formal performance evaluation program documented in board policy or administrative procedures? How often are appraisals given to employees (evaluation cycle)? Is performance measured against pre-established standards? Is the superintendent and district management evaluated following the cycle prescribed in law, and when evaluations are not timely, is pay withheld?

Do managerial and supervisory appraisals allow for subordinate or self-ratings? How do appraisals tie weaknesses or strengths to recommended actions for future performance? What is the evaluation hierarchy (What level does which evaluations)? What feedback is allowed by the person being evaluated?

Does the district tie performance to student achievement for teachers? Does the district tie performance to student achievement for other employees such as administrators and principals?

Does the district have a performance-based system for compensation? If not, has the district considered such a system?

V.B. Staff Development

Activities to Perform

- V. Determine how the district tracks professional development by employee and examine the system to determine
B. whether records are kept for all employees, whether records are current, and whether goals and guidelines for
1 professional development are being met.
- V. Prepare a chart of major staff development performed in the last year and show the training audience, number
B. attending and examine a sample of any evaluations of the training to determine staff response.
2
- V. Diagram the staff development delivery system showing the role of the central office, campuses and other
B. support staff in the process. Interview staff on their ease of accessing professional development and its
3 relevance to their jobs.

Questions to Ask

Is the responsibility for coordination of staff development centralized? Does the district set minimum continuing education or training hours for staff? Does the personnel division collect feedback from trainees on training received? Does the personnel division use this feedback to develop and refine training? Does the district evaluate the usefulness of training periodically?

Is training scheduled to be least disruptive to an employee's job schedule? What training is offered to substitute teachers? Does the district provide incentives for training outside regular hours? How does the district use training offered by the State Agencies?

What training opportunities are provided in summer months?

Does the district have a partnership with a nearby community college or university for training? Does the district pay any of the costs for the pursuit of additional certification or degrees? Does the pursuit of additional certification or degrees qualify for mandatory staff development hours?

Are staff development goals linked to districtwide goals? How many days for staff development are allowed by the district?

VI. Community Involvement

Local school districts were established to be responsive to the needs of their community, which includes students, parents, non-parent residents, taxpayers, businesses, other political subdivisions and special interest groups. By the same token, if the community is to respond appropriately to the district's needs and concerns, it must be well informed about issues facing the district. For this reason, districts need mechanisms to disseminate information and to gather feedback from community members. Effective two-way communication enables school districts to win the confidence, support and involvement of their local communities. Similarly, school districts need the support of local organizations and businesses to enhance educational programs. A good partnership and outreach program needs to be in place; one that fosters the district's relationship with the community and supports school activities.

Oklahoma school districts use a variety of methods to generate community involvement. Some school districts have departments dedicated to this function, while smaller districts must rely on a handful of people who perform a variety of community relations functions. Boards of Education can also play an important role in community involvement. Boards perceived as accessible and sensitive to citizens' concerns are less likely to be seen as insulated from the community.

Data Needs

- Organization and staffing charts for all communications, community and parental involvement functions, and external liaison positions including open records personnel
- Mission statement, strategic plan and goals relating to community and business involvement
- Job descriptions of personnel that have outreach responsibilities
- Budget

- Copies of internal procedure and policies
- Contracts and agreements (as they apply)
- Grants, donations and other external funding sources

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent with assigned responsibility
 Board members (as appropriate)
 Assistant superintendent with assigned responsibility
 Administrative staff with assigned responsibility (directors, coordinators, etc.)
 Principals
 School counselors
 Community and business sector representatives
 Chamber of commerce
 Civic organizations
 Local colleges and universities

VI.A. General Organization

Activities to Perform

- VI Compile organization and staffing charts for all community involvement activities, ombudsman or other
 .A external liaison positions including open records management functions and interview staff to determine if the
 .1 organizational structure depicted on the chart(s) reflects the actual organization of the district, and document if it has been changed recently or repeatedly in the recent past or is anticipated to change in the near future and explain why changes are being made.
- VI Obtain copies of job descriptions, and based upon the organizational structure and staffing, including support
 .A staff, prepare a written evaluation demonstrating whether the structure ensures:
 .2
- Clearly defined units and lines of authority that are reflected in both the district's organizational charts and job descriptions?
 - Minimal duplication of effort
 - Direct and accessible support for all campuses and auxiliary programs
- VI Compile a list of the district's various committees, whose makeup includes external stakeholders, and
 .A determine if committee representatives reflect the demographics of the district and the community and if
 .3 members have appropriate representation.

Questions to Ask

Does the district conduct periodic reviews to ensure that functions are properly aligned to reduce any overlap of duties? Does the organizational structure encourage community involvement? Is there a single point of contact for people to call to get information about the district? What mechanisms are in place to educate the community about who to call if they have a question?

How do central office staff support campus-level community involvement initiations?
 How are campus-level staff supported in their effort to involve community members? Do staff members involved in community involvement have other responsibilities?

VI.B. Planning, Policies and Procedures

Activity to Perform

- VI Compile all planning documents, policies and procedures as they deal with communications, community and .B. parental involvement, and open records management functions. Identify how these documents are linked, if 1 there are conflicts, and whether there are existing gaps?
- VI Diagram the open records process and compile a list of recent open records requests. Examine the .B. documentation to determine whether the system adequately captures all requests, including those made to 2 campuses and individual departments, whether the requests are handled within stipulated time frames, and whether appropriate, but not excessive, fees are collected to recover expenses related to filling the request.

Questions to Ask

Is the communication or community involvement plan tied to the district's strategic plan or board goals and objectives? How are these planning documents linked to improving education?

Do plans contain strategies for maximizing parent, community, business, alumni and foundation involvement in schools?

Do the department procedures or plans identify the district's stakeholders and customers? How does the department or function measure success?

Who tracks open records requests and insures that the district remains in compliance with the law? How are legal questions addressed and monitored? Does the district's legal counsel become involved in the open records process? What charges are associated with legal advice on open records issues?

What mechanisms are in place to ensure that campus staff are complying with open records laws? How are alleged complaints regarding open records resolved?

How are procedures for dealing with the media, handling of controversial issues, handling parent complaints, handling of crisis communications and the like communicated to campus staff? What formal training on these issues is available specifically for principals and department heads?

VI.C. District/Community/Business Partnerships

Activities to Perform

- VI. Interview staff and create a matrix of formal and informal partnerships, interlocal agreements, collaboratives, C.1 special committees, foundations, colleges, local military bases, Rotary Club, local affiliates of the Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts of America, Optimists Clubs, Endowment Funds and other local foundations, and alumni etc. that work with the board, administration, schools, principals or teachers, and in one or two sentences describe the nature of the partnership.
- VI. Examine policies and procedures that pertain to or impact community involvement, and determine how each of C.2 these policies is encouraging or discouraging community or parental involvement.

Questions to Ask

Does the district use advisory committees as appropriate for input and comment in any area required by law, for example, Gifted and Talented, or Title I?

How does the district solicit input from the community relating to special programs, bond issues and goals of the district? Does the board support community input by holding public forums, hearing, rotating board meeting locations, and the like? Does the district survey its stakeholders (i.e., community leaders, business leaders, civic leaders, etc.)?

Are there partnerships with local foundations, as well as national foundations that fund educational initiatives?

What policy and procedures address the use of district facilities by the community? Do these policies or procedures allow all taxpayers to benefit from their investment in the district? How does the board ensure that the district reaches a diverse community of business leaders, religious leaders, civic organizations, and community leaders?

Does the district regularly seek innovative ways to:

- build relationships within the business community and other community groups in order to gain financial or "in kind" donations?
- conduct cooperative projects with other governmental bodies, educational institutions and community or business organizations?
- establish partnerships with other school districts to accomplish mutual goals?

When building partnerships, does the district use memoranda of understanding and/or interlocal agreements to ensure clear understanding and agreement among parties involved?

What are examples of community involvement in the schools (Career Day speakers, etc)? Is there a uniform policy for screening volunteers to determine the best role for each volunteer (particular skills and backgrounds)? Is there a system for tracking the contribution of volunteers? Is there a directed focus on obtaining additional resources such as tutors in at-risk schools? Are there ways to involve alumni in school activities?

Does the district have volunteer and partnership recognition programs such as volunteer/partner of the year and service awards? Is there adequate funding for volunteer recognition and awards programs? Does the district provide structured volunteer training? Do the schools have a lounge or designated rooms for volunteers to use and/or work from?

How does this department advertise or solicit business or community partners? How does the district ensure that businesses and community organizations are not approached multiple times by various groups within the district?

Who is responsible for fostering business partnerships and collaborating with nonprofit agencies? Who has the responsibility for the creation and nurturing of collaborative partnerships?

How are local affiliates of nonprofit organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, Young Men's Christian Association, Boy/Girl Scouts of America and Communities in Schools used in the schools?

Is a community outreach plan part of the annual planning process? Are there strategies for providing feedback to citizens who voice concerns and share ideas?

Does the staff provide a regular liaison to school/community organizations? What administrator is assigned to work as liaison with organizations in the district?

Does the district identify and maintain a list of community resources?

Does the district have a memorandum of understanding or interlocal agreement for providing any partnership services?

How are business and community partners involved in fund-raising for scholarships or to supplement the educational or special programs, such as dropout prevention initiatives, mentoring programs and after school programs for parents? Does the district have special initiatives to foster foundations that offer scholarship programs in inner city schools and campuses with high numbers of low income students?

How does the district promote a positive relationship with non-parent community members? Are there programs in place to encourage retired citizens to become involved in the schools? Are discount cards or special privileges granted to retired citizen's to encourage them to attend school events such as sporting activities, theatrical presentations and concerts?

VII. Communications/Public Relations

Honest and timely communication with parents and the community is critical if a district is to maintain the trust and confidence of the community.

Data Needs

- District publications (internal and external)
- Student/parent handbooks
- Newspaper clippings
- Examples of media releases
- Parent survey instruments
- Newsletters and calendars

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent with assigned responsibility
Staff as assigned

Local media
Parents
Parent organizations (booster clubs, PTAs, PTOs)

VII.A. Printed and Electronic Communication

Activities to Perform

- VII. Compile a list of all district publications including both external publications and internal newsletters. Prepare
 - A.1 a chart showing the frequency of the publication, the target audience, the number of copies distributed and the approximate costs for publishing, printing and mailing each item.
- VII. Examine the district's electronic communication network including television or radio broadcasts, any
 - A.2 Websites created and maintained by the district or at individual campuses and email correspondence. Prepare a chart showing each medium's purpose and use, target audience, frequency of use or frequency of updates and the approximate cost for each medium.

Questions to Ask

Does the district maintain a district speakers bureau and furnish community organizations a list of speakers and topics? Are staff given training in public speaking?

Does the district have a user-friendly telephone system? Are district staff trained in telephone courtesy? When callers do not know the name of a person or department, how are inquiries handled?

How does communication flow from the central office to the campuses? Has the district established a procedure for regular communication with employees? Who is responsible for providing information regarding action taken by the board to employees in a timely manner? Does the district have an ombudsman, who reports to the superintendent, who helps employees, parents and community members negotiate the communication structure?

How does the district develop and distribute its annual report card on student and district performance? Is an individual and/or office assigned responsibility for developing the formal report on district activities and accomplishments for the year? Is distribution of the report accomplished through board meetings, service clubs, realtors, chambers of commerce or direct mail?

How is information regarding district operations, activities of various district committees, district and/or school honors disseminated to the community? Does the district maintain a hotline or informational website where parents or community members can obtain information regarding school closures or other emergencies?

Does the district periodically review and evaluate the public relations program? Has the district developed an annual plan for a Community/Public Relations program containing goals and objectives for improved community relations and are resources assigned for effective implementation?

Has the communications office assessed the public's knowledge and attitudes about the district through periodic surveys? What does the district do with survey results and other input/suggestions from the community?

Where/how are board meeting notices posted?

VII.B. Media Contacts

Activity to Perform

- VII. Diagram the process used to communicate with the media showing how inquiries are handled when directed to campus-level staff or to district administrators, and where possible, show the elapsed time between media inquiries and district responses. Also show how media releases are originated from the central office or administrative levels, and show any board involvement in the process.

Questions to Ask

Who reviews, edits, and distributes media releases regarding district operations or activities? Who coordinates campus-level media releases?

Who is the spokesperson for the district? Who handles media contacts if the spokesperson is unavailable? Is there a chain-of-command or a reporting mechanism to alert the communications office when a media inquiry has been received?

Are formal policies or procedures in place regarding employee contacts with the media? What processes or procedures exist for working with the media in the event of crisis, emergencies, school closures and the like?

Are campus-level staff authorized to speak to the media? Who trains staff to work with the media? Who assists in assuring that media-related communication plans and skills exist in each school and department?

What is the district's relationship with the local media? How are relationships with regularly assigned education reporters nurtured? Does the district have established communication with the local media that includes:

- Personal meetings with local editor(s), reporters or media staff?
- Press conferences or news releases for major events and/or activities?
- Advance copies of all board meeting agendas with backup material provided upon request?

VIII. Parental Involvement

Teachers and administrators alike agree that involvement of parents in the education of their child is one of the primary keys to the child's educational success.

Data Needs

- Parent handbooks

- Lists of parental involvement initiatives
- Title I program materials; list of Title I
- Parental involvement agreement(s)
- Documentation on parent resource centers or family centers
- Grants and other external funding sources
- Incentive programs (for parents)

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent/assistant superintendent with responsibility

Staff assigned to parental involvement activities

PTO/PTA leaders

Teachers, principals and counselors

VIII.A. Parental Initiatives

Activities to Perform

- VIII By campus, prepare a list of major parental involvement programs (including Title I programs) or activities
- .A.1 including Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) or Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), booster clubs, as well as any programs that encourage volunteerism, educate parents or encourage parents to be involved in their child's education.
- VIII Tour parent or family centers; talk to parents to gauge their perceptions about the services provided to families
- .A.2 and students, and determine if the district's outreach efforts are successful, and if parents feel welcome in schools. Does the district sponsor Internet sites that list homework assignment by teacher?

Questions to Ask

Are there forums where principals and PTO/PTA leaders can share ideas? What opportunities exist for PTO/PTA leaders from various campuses to exchange information and ideas? Are district or campus staff assigned to work with parent organizations, booster clubs and other organizations?

Is there a plan to aid in identifying parent concerns and issues? Does the parent handbook contain information on how parents should approach complaint resolution? What board-approved recourse does a parent have when concerns or issues cannot be resolved at the campus level? At the central office level? How do board members handle parental complaints that have not been heard at the campus or central office level?

How do teachers encourage parental involvement? Have teachers identified specific tasks and opportunities for parental volunteers? Have campus-level administrators identified specific tasks and opportunities for parental volunteers? How are parents notified of needs for volunteers at the campuses? Are teachers properly trained to know how to manage activities of parent volunteers in the classroom?

Are some campuses more successful at recruiting parent and community volunteers than others? What techniques do these successful campuses use to encourage participation? Are these techniques replicable? What opportunities exist for campus administrators and teachers to share ideas and experiences for increasing parental involvement?

What obstacles exist to parental involvement? Is there a central point (parent and/or family center or room) at each campus where parents can come to volunteer?

How are minority groups, religious organizations and other citizen groups asked for input regarding ways to involve parents? What strategies are used to encourage minority and economically disadvantaged parents to become involved in the education of their children? Are interpreters provided at parent meetings to encourage participation by non-English speaking or hearing-impaired parents?

Are there opportunities for parents to meet and build rapport in order to stay connected to one another and to the schools? Does the district offer parenting classes or any other parent education/training programs?

What are the district's efforts in fulfilling parents' rights according to state law? For example, is there access to student records; state assessments tools; teaching materials, including textbooks and tests; board meetings; full information about their child(ren); school districts' public records; and a grievance process for any violation of their rights?

How do parents access specific information about their children and the district?

IX. Review and Evaluation of Contracting Process

District management functions such as staff development and legal services can be purchased or contracted for through private companies or interlocal agreements with neighboring districts or other governmental entities. It is important to regularly evaluate whether there are goods or services that can be obtained from the private sector at a lower cost, higher quality or both. It is equally important to continually evaluate existing contracts to determine if the district is getting the best value possible through the contracting arrangement. In other words, do the district's management functions and services meet industry standards?