



LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

Big Spring Independent School District

Management and Performance Review

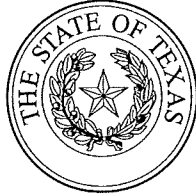
LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD STAFF
PRISMATIC SERVICES, INC.

SEPTEMBER 2015

Big Spring Independent School District Management and Performance Review

**Legislative Budget Board Staff
Prismatic Services, Inc.**

September 2015



LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD

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September 28, 2015

Mr. Chris Wigington
Superintendent
Big Spring Independent School District

Dear Mr. Wigington:

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

The report's recommendations will help Big Spring 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 Big Spring 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 Prismatic Services, 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 "Ursula Parks", written over the typed name.

Ursula Parks
Director
Legislative Budget Board

/js

cc: Chad Wash
Jeff Borman
Julie Harris
Fabian Serrano

Tony Kennedy
Maria Padilla
Irene Rodriguez

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Texas Legislature established the Texas School Performance Review (SPR) in 1990 to periodically review the effectiveness and efficiency of the budgets and operations of school districts, as stated in the Texas Government Code, Section 322.016. The Legislative Budget Board's (LBB) 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 on the analysis of data and onsite study of each district's operations. A comprehensive review examines 12 functional areas and recommends ways to cut costs, increase revenues, reduce overhead, streamline operations, and improve the delivery of educational, financial, and operational services. School districts are typically selected for management and performance reviews based on a risk analysis of multiple educational and financial indicators.

To gain an understanding of the school district's operations prior to conducting the onsite review, the LBB review team requests data from both the district and multiple state agencies, including the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Department of Agriculture, and the Texas School Safety Center. In addition, LBB staff may implement other methods for obtaining feedback on district operations, including surveys of parents, community members, and district and campus staff. While onsite in the district, information is gathered through multiple interviews and focus groups with district and campus administrators, staff, and board members.

Big Spring Independent School District (ISD) is located in Howard County in Big Spring, which is midway between Dallas and El Paso. The district is served by Regional Education Service Center XVIII (Region 18), located in Midland. The state legislators for the district are Senator Kel Seliger and Representative Drew Darby.

The district has eight instructional campuses, including Big Spring High School, Big Spring Junior High School, Big Spring Intermediate School, four elementary schools (Goliad, Marcy, Moss, and Washington), and the Kentwood Early Childhood Center. In school year 2013–14, approximately 65.2 percent of students were identified as economically disadvantaged (slightly more than the state average of 60.2

percent); 2.1 percent were identified as English Language Learners (ELL) (less than the state average of 17.5 percent); and 50 percent of students were identified as at risk (slightly more than the state average of 49.9 percent).

EDUCATIONAL OVERVIEW

Big Spring ISD has a history of variable academic achievement. Under the state accountability system, the district was rated Improvement Required for school years 2012–13 and 2013–14. While there were no state accountability ratings in school year 2011–12, Big Spring ISD was rated Academically Unacceptable in school year 2010–11 and Academically Acceptable in school year 2009–10. All campuses have a history of variable accountability ratings as well. **Figure 1** shows state ratings for the past five years for the district and the individual campuses under the previous accountability system (Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, or Academically Unacceptable) and the revised system implemented in school year 2012–13 (Met Standard, Improvement Required, or Not Rated).

Figure 2 shows a comparison of various academic measures for Big Spring ISD to the average of other school districts in Region 18 and the state. Big Spring ISD's academic performance is lower than regional and state averages in every area listed, with the exception of the average ACT scores of students who graduated in 2013.

At the time of the onsite review, Big Spring ISD had an accreditation rating of Accredited–Warned. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) issued this rating to the district based on two consecutive years of poor academic performance. In school years 2010–11 and 2012–13, Big Spring ISD earned Academically Unacceptable and Improvement Required accountability ratings. These years are counted as consecutive years for state accountability, as no state accountability ratings were given to districts in school year 2011–12. Since the onsite review, TEA issued Big Spring ISD an Improvement Required accountability rating for school year 2013–14 with an accreditation rating of Accredited–Probation. A status of Accredited–Probation means that the district exhibits deficiencies in performance that, if not addressed, will lead to Big Spring ISD being assigned an accreditation status of Not Accredited–Revoked. A Not Accredited–Revoked status means that the TEA no longer recognizes the district as a Texas public school.

FIGURE 1
BIG SPRING ISD STATE ACCOUNTABILITY RATINGS
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14

CAMPUS	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Districtwide	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
High School	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Met Standard	Met Standard
Junior High School	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Met Standard
Goliad Intermediate (1)	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	N/A	N/A
Goliad Elementary (2)	N/A	N/A	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
Marcy Elementary	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
Moss Elementary	Recognized	Academically Acceptable	None	Improvement Required	Met Standard
Washington Elementary (3)	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
Bauer Elementary (4)	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	N/A	N/A

NOTES:

- (1) Goliad Intermediate School was not open in school years 2012–13 or 2013–14. This campus reopened in school year 2014–15 with the name Big Spring Intermediate School.
- (2) Goliad Elementary School's first year of existence was school year 2012–13.
- (3) Kentwood Early Childhood Center does not receive individual ratings and is included in the ratings for Washington Elementary School.
- (4) Bauer Elementary School no longer existed after school year 2011–12.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Accountability Ratings, school years 2009–10 to 2013–14.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In school year 2013–14, Big Spring ISD's certified property wealth per student was \$387,215. This district property wealth is less than and thus not subject to the state's primary equalized wealth level (EWL) of \$476,500. When a district's property wealth level is more than the EWL, the state "recaptures" a portion of wealthy school districts' local tax revenue to assist in financing public education in other districts. This primary EWL applies to a district's tax rates up to \$1.00 per \$100 of valuation. The state's school finance system has a secondary EWL that applies to certain enrichment tax effort of more than \$1.00.

In fiscal year 2013, Big Spring ISD's total actual expenditures were approximately \$44 million. Big Spring ISD's per pupil actual operating expenditures in school year 2012–13 were \$8,147, compared to the state average of \$8,327. In fiscal year 2013, Big Spring ISD spent approximately 50.1 percent of total actual operating expenditures on instruction, compared to the state average of approximately 57.2 percent. The instructional expenditures percentage was calculated

using the district's total actual operating expenditures that funded direct instructional activities, including 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).

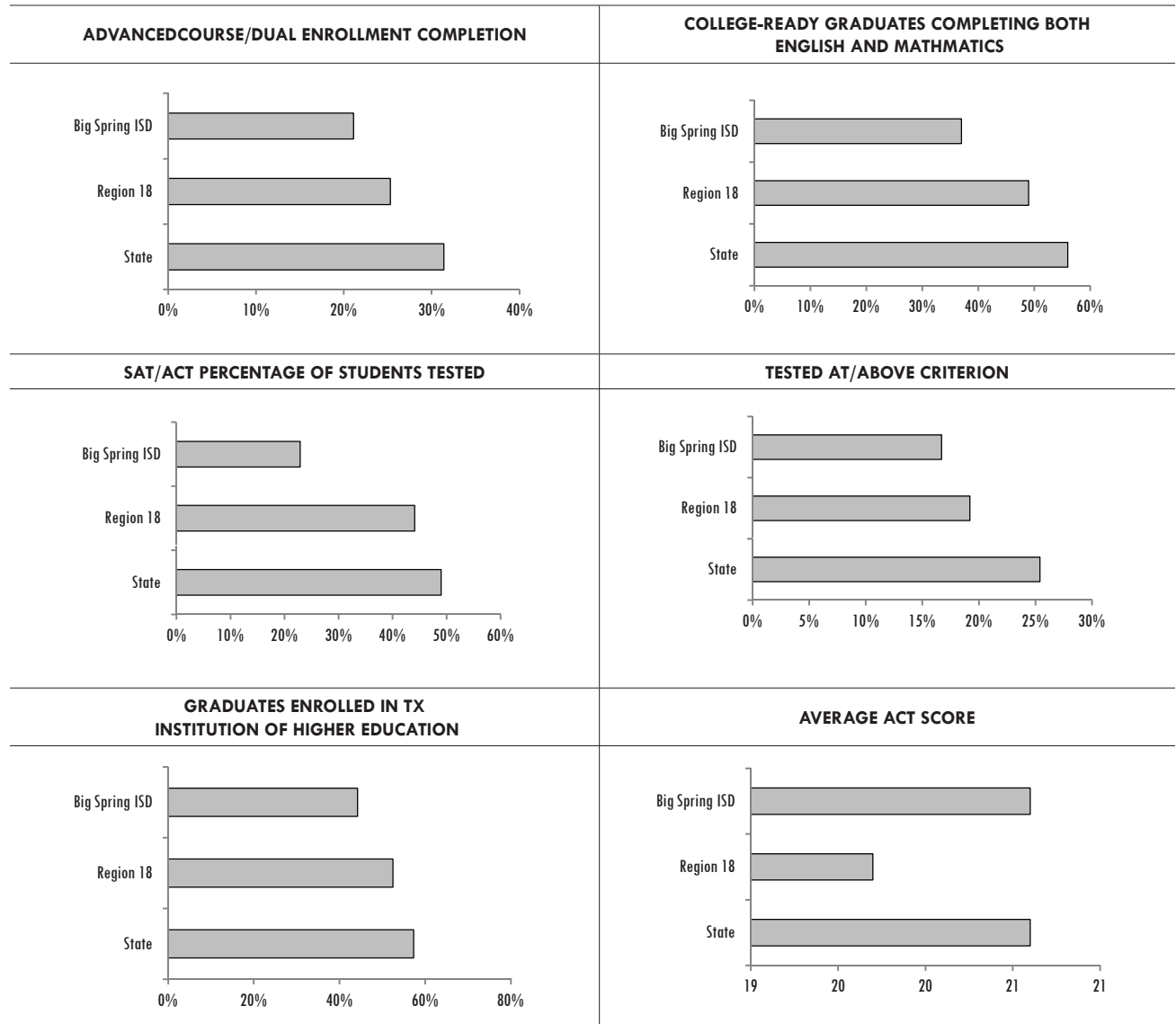
ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The LBB's school performance review team identified noteworthy accomplishments during its onsite review, based on the district's best practices.

IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Big Spring ISD has made a long-term commitment to a districtwide school improvement model and has continued to support and sustain the initiative. Big Spring ISD administrators initiated the Lead Your School Program at the junior high school in school year 2011–12. The program's goal is to provide administrators and teachers with the tools and training to develop an instructional system that boosts student performance through the use of proven teaching

FIGURE 2
BIG SPRING ISD
DISTRICT STUDENT ACADEMIC MEASURES COMPARED TO REGION 18 AND STATE
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14



NOTES:

- (1) To be considered college-ready, a graduate must have met or exceeded the college-ready criteria on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exit-level tests, or the SAT or ACT tests.
- (2) Criterion refers to the scores on the SAT and ACT college admissions tests. For college admissions tests, the criterion scores are at least 24 on the ACT (composite) and at least 1110 on the SAT (total).

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–14.

strategies. The district adopted the program for implementation districtwide in school year 2013–14. The district’s decision to continue this initiative demonstrates a commitment to a focused, consistent approach to school improvement. As part of the program, principals conduct weekly classroom walkthroughs, intended to reinforce the

teachers’ implementation of the program’s fundamental instructional strategies.

In focus groups, principals and teachers commented on the value of the classroom walkthroughs in helping maintain instructional focus. Teachers stated that the walkthroughs

and follow-up feedback increased their intentional and conscious use of the focus strategies. Principals indicated the walkthroughs increased their awareness and understanding of what was happening in the classroom and improved the quality of conversations about teaching and learning. Both principals and teachers commented on the value of the district's efforts to continue this initiative during the past two years. The district's sustained commitment provides stability and focus to district academic improvement efforts. Before the implementation of this model, district approaches to improvement frequently changed, and a new initiative was typically introduced each year.

WATCH D.O.G.S.

Big Spring ISD has instituted a program to increase the number of community volunteers at its campuses. With leadership from the coordinator of community relations, Big Spring ISD's elementary schools have implemented a family volunteer program called Watch D.O.G.S., or "dads of great students," a national program from the National Center for Fathering. The program encourages fathers, grandfathers, step-fathers, uncles, and other individuals to volunteer to serve at least one day a year in a variety of school activities as assigned by the school principal or other administrators. The program's purpose is "to provide positive male role models for the students, demonstrating by their presence that education is important, and to provide extra sets of eyes and ears to enhance school security and reduce bullying."

Big Spring ISD elementary principals laud the success of the program. As of the time of the review, more than 300 individuals had volunteered at the four elementary campuses as part of the Watch D.O.G.S. program. The district anticipates that each Watch D.O.G.S. volunteer will invest one day on a campus per school year. This total would be 2,114 volunteer hours (302 volunteers x 7 hours per 1 day) resulting from this program.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The LBB's school performance review team identified significant findings and recommendations based on the analysis of data and onsite review 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.

ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

Big Spring ISD does not have an effective or efficient organizational structure relative to reporting responsibilities and the superintendent's span of control. Within Big Spring ISD's organizational structure, the superintendent is at risk of spending a significant amount of time managing staff, which diminishes the amount of time available for district planning. This structure can also limit effective decision making, which can affect staff morale.

Big Spring ISD's superintendent supervises and evaluates 16 direct reports. The superintendent supervises seven different functional areas of operation, including educational service delivery, community relations, transportation, maintenance, athletics, business operations, and technology. Given the breadth of the responsibilities of this position, it is challenging for the superintendent to effectively supervise all direct reports. Daily operational reporting requirements are likely significant with this reporting structure. Although an effective span of control or the number of staff a supervisor can effectively manage varies by organization, a typical number for an executive is six to eight directly reporting positions.

In addition, Big Spring ISD's instructional organization does not provide unified management of the district's educational services. The curriculum and related assessment areas are not consolidated, and these areas report independently to the superintendent. This includes the director of curriculum and instruction, special education director, the director of federal and special programs, and the director of school improvement.

The maintenance and transportation director oversees both the Transportation and Maintenance Departments. This position has responsibilities for three of the most labor-intensive functions in the district, which are facilities management, custodial services, and pupil transportation. This breadth of responsibilities does not provide enough time for effective planning or organization of either the Transportation or Maintenance Departments.

Big Spring ISD also does not have a safety and security organizational structure that monitors, directs, and mitigates all facets of safety and security for the district. The district does not have a department or individual responsible for districtwide organization and management of safety and security. Responsibility for managing onsite campus- and district-related safety and security is distributed among several individuals. This fragmented organizational structure

has resulted in several important safety and security planning, monitoring and oversight tasks not being completed.

Other points of confusion with the organizational structure relate to decision making and the defined areas of responsibility. Some department heads and principals struggle to understand how and who makes the decisions that directly affect their span of control and their perceived areas of responsibility. For example, in focus group discussions with the review team, campus administrators stated that if they need a decision on an issue, they will first ask for guidance from the central office administrator that they either work with the most or feel most comfortable with. However, if this central administrator's decision is not what department heads or principals hoped for in addressing their situations, they take the questions or issues to another central administrator, from whom, in many instances, they receive a different response. The department heads and principals act on the central administrator's decision that they feel best addresses their issues or problems.

Recommendations to assist organizational alignment include:

- develop and implement an organizational structure that specifies clear lines of authority and reasonable spans of control for district administrators to provide efficient and effective operation of the district;
- consolidate all of the positions responsible for providing curriculum and instructional support to district staff under a new position, assistant superintendent for instruction;
- eliminate the maintenance and transportation director position and separate transportation and facilities and maintenance duties between two new director positions, the transportation director and the director of facilities and maintenance; and
- establish a Safety and Security Department to more effectively align and integrate safety and security oversight and management.

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

The district lacks a long-range strategic planning process that integrates district, campus, and departmental planning to provide focus and direction to the district.

Numerous plans are developed each year throughout the district, including the district targeted improvement plan;

district improvement plan; campus improvement plans; campus targeted improvement plans; technology plan; facility plan; safety and security plan; and transportation plan.

Big Spring ISD has no process, however, for coordinating and integrating these academic and operational systems into one, cohesive, long-term strategic plan. A strategic plan should include all district functions and should be the basis for the district budget and the district and campus improvement planning process. Without a comprehensive strategic planning process, a district cannot ensure agreement regarding its needs, use of resources, or stakeholder goals. Together, the plans do not always lead the district in the same direction. In Big Spring ISD, no coordination of the objectives/strategies and resource allocations is listed in the various district plans, and expenditures are not consistently aligned to the plans. The district also does not have a way to measure overall effectiveness that encompasses all departments, not just the academic measures of student performance.

For example, Big Spring ISD's Board of Trustees has not adopted a long-range facilities master plan. Onsite interviews conducted by the review team found that maintenance staff members were not aware of a formal facilities review process or an evaluation of future facility needs.

The district's long-range technology plan does not adequately address district needs and is not linked to the District Improvement Plan (DIP). Big Spring ISD's technology director finished the school year 2014–15 technology plan during the time of the onsite review and provided it to the review team. Neither the superintendent nor the Board of Trustees had reviewed this plan, and it was not available on the district website. The plan shows no evidence that it was developed or evaluated by a formal staff committee. The school year 2014–15 technology plan notes that it was based on information in the DIP, but the review team found that no significant efforts had been made to tie the plans together or to ensure that the plans complemented each other.

In addition, the district lacks a comprehensive process and coordinated approach to assessing safety and security procedures and needs. For example, without consistent visitor management and control processes, the district risks not keeping its students safe while on school property. The district also does not have in place a system for consistently conducting safety inspections.

Additionally, Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department lacks an effective process to manage district vehicles, resulting in a vehicle fleet that exceeds the district's needs. The district had 19 buses in use daily for school year 2014–15 home-to-school routes. However, the district has 39 school buses that are titled, maintained, repaired, and insured by the district. This fleet size translates into a spare-to-active ratio of 52 percent, compared to the industry standard of 10 percent to 15 percent.

Recommendations to assist the district's long-range planning process include:

- develop and implement a three- to five-year comprehensive strategic plan with measurable objectives to ensure accountability and evaluate the district's effectiveness in meeting its students' needs;
- establish a facilities master plan with five-year and 10-year timelines and update the plan annually or as needed;
- develop a process to regularly prepare and maintain an up-to-date technology plan aligned with identified district needs and goals;
- develop and implement a districtwide access control and visitor management system;
- adopt a plan and process to complete periodic safety inspections and correct any deficiencies noted; and
- reduce the size of the district's school bus fleet by surplus older and seldom-used vehicles and no longer assigning its newest buses to serve only extracurricular activities.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Big Spring ISD does not provide clear direction for developing, managing, and evaluating curriculum and instruction.

Big Spring ISD's 2014–15 District Improvement Plan lists the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills Resource System (TRS) as the official district curriculum. However, teachers are not required to use TRS, and as a result, curriculum across campuses is not uniform. During onsite interviews, Big Spring ISD staff said it is common for teachers to develop their own curricula outside of TRS. There are two main forms of curriculum alignment. A vertically aligned curriculum is tiered so that the information that students learn in a lower grade or a previous course prepares them for

more advanced grades and more challenging work. A curriculum that is horizontally aligned means that the same material is being taught across different classrooms in a given grade level, and that the material being taught is in alignment with the learning standards and assessments established by the district or state. Big Spring ISD has not aligned curricula or skills evaluated in state testing horizontally within grade levels or vertically between grade levels.

The district also does not use a consistent process by which all teachers have access to information about available instructional materials and other supplemental resources needed for their classrooms, nor does the district provide adequate opportunities for curriculum planning. While some campuses indicated that there were pacing schedules for teachers based around monthly benchmark tests, the review team found little evidence of any consistent districtwide attempts to use student performance data to modify instruction, address areas of weaknesses in performance, or consider additional interventions as needed.

Without a process that requires a periodic and thorough curriculum review, with input from key stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, the board, and the community, Big Spring ISD will continue to have an instructional program that lacks vertical and horizontal alignment. Teachers will continue to use instructional materials that have not been reviewed for alignment to TEKS, and instruction will be inconsistent. Aligning curriculum, instruction, and professional development fosters consistent instruction between subject, grades, and campuses.

To improve the curriculum and instruction process, the district should review all areas of curriculum, instruction, instructional resources, and assessment to horizontally and vertically align these components to provide a framework for a coordinated system of curriculum development and instruction. To implement this recommendation, the district should establish a committee that includes a board member, the superintendent, principals, the curriculum director, a master teacher, if available, and members of the community to study school district policies related to curriculum development and instruction, and to recommend policy changes for board approval. In addition, Big Spring ISD should study resources available for curriculum improvement, teacher effectiveness, and for students with special needs.

RECRUITMENT, HIRING, AND RETENTION

Big Spring ISD does not have a comprehensive plan to attract and retain qualified teachers. The district does not have a process to address its high rate of teacher turnover. In school year 2013—14, Big Spring ISD’s teacher turnover rate was 28.8 percent. This rate was significantly higher than the state average (16.2 percent), Region 18 (20.5 percent), and all of its peer districts (14.8 percent). Peer districts are districts similar to Big Spring that are used for comparison purposes in the report. The district hired 70 new teachers in school year 2014–15.

Big Spring ISD also has difficulty retaining tenured teachers. In school year 2013–14, 13.2 percent of the teachers in the district were first-year teachers, and 30.8 percent of the district’s teachers had one to five years of experience. These percentages were both significantly higher than the averages of peer districts, Region 18, and the state. Likewise, Big Spring ISD’s proportion of teachers with more than 20 years of experience was lower than any other comparison group.

The district’s inability to retain teachers could be a result of Big Spring ISD lacking a systematic, districtwide professional development plan for instructional staff. During onsite interviews, staff indicated that district campuses offer some instruction-oriented professional development, but published professional development plans for each campus are not typically prepared. In focus groups, teachers responded negatively overall regarding the professional development they receive. Some characterized it as “whole group instruction” when more targeted assistance is needed. Teachers also noted that sometimes what they heard in one training conflicted with what they heard in another training.

During onsite interviews, staff reported that the primary tool the district uses to recruit new teachers is participating in regional job fairs. In addition, for school year 2014–15, new teacher candidates were offered a “relocation incentive” if they agreed to move to Big Spring ISD to teach. The incentive provides that the district will pay these teachers an additional \$2,000 per year for three years if they remain employed in Big Spring ISD.

The district is not conducting exit interviews with outgoing teachers to identify and address the causes of high teacher turnover. Staff indicated that mentors are not trained on how to be mentors and that they do not provide support such as classroom observations or meaningful guidance.

To assist the teacher recruitment, hiring, and retention process, the district should:

- form a teacher turnover-reduction committee to identify and implement strategies for attracting teachers to the district and lowering teacher attrition rates; and
- develop and implement a coordinated, districtwide professional development process that ensures that all teachers receive specific training focused on key district goals.

BUDGET PROCESS

Big Spring ISD’s budget process does not include involvement from campus and community stakeholders, and the budget document is not effectively communicated to the public. The budget is developed by the chief financial officer (CFO) and superintendent with minimal input from other district or campus staff. The CFO uses the previous year’s budgeted and expended data and makes additions or deductions to develop the budget. The only budget involvement that campus staff have is to distribute an allotment for supplies and materials that campuses manage. The public is not provided a method to be involved in the budget development process, and meetings are not held to obtain involvement from principals and department heads.

Principals and department heads receive budgeting guidelines and instructions for each year’s budget. However, these guidelines and instructions only pertain to how and when the campuses and departments allocate funds after the budget is developed.

The lack of input from campus and community stakeholders in budget development does not ensure alignment of the district’s spending with the needs of campus staff. Despite the district’s poor academic achievement, Big Spring ISD has not aligned instructional spending to meet academic needs. Without adequate input from campus staff and the community, the district’s budget does not reflect the district’s needs for better educating students. Big Spring ISD’s spending on instruction has fallen in recent years, despite greater need for a focus on academic performance. The percentage of general funds expended on instruction decreased from 56.1 percent to 53.3 percent from 2010–11 to 2013–14, a decrease of 2.8 percentage points and the largest decrease of any function.

In addition, Big Spring ISD’s school year 2014–15 budget document provides financial information, but it contains no explanatory narrative, charts, or graphs to communicate goals or priorities to the public. The budget is not useful as a

communication tool and does not highlight important initiatives, communicate district goals, or provide insight into the district's operation. The district's budget as presented to the public is essentially nine pages of numbers. One page shows estimated revenues and expenditures by fund, and the remaining eight pages show expenditure amounts by fund, function, and object. The budget does not include any narrative to explain the numbers.

To assist the budget development and management process, the district should:

- establish a budget development process that seeks input from the public and staff and publish a budget calendar to communicate the process to stakeholders; and
- develop an informative budget document and post it on the district website to provide the public and interested parties with information pertaining to the district's financial operations.

FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT

Big Spring ISD lacks an effective and efficient financial oversight process. For example, the district's investment in fixed assets is not being managed appropriately. The district uses multiple incompatible systems to manage inventory, which results in duplicated staff effort and leads to inconsistencies in asset reporting. Additionally, the district has no control of the deletion of items, and inventory that cannot be accounted for is deleted without any approval required. Big Spring ISD maintains two different inventory systems for all fixed assets that have a value of \$500 or more. The Business Office attempts to keep the two systems in balance, but reports from both systems did not balance during the onsite review in January 2015, when listings were prepared for the review team from each system for capitalized assets. One system showed nearly 4,000 items valued at \$10.1 million, while the other system showed more than 5,000 items valued at \$11.1 million. The district does not reconcile the two systems to identify inaccuracies.

In addition, personnel costs are the district's largest expenditure, and Big Spring ISD has not effectively monitored the staffing structures in several departments. For example, the district's Food Service Department is not adequately managing its staffing and has not established standards to guide allocation of labor hours by kitchen. Compared to national standards, productivity in all of Big Spring ISD's kitchens falls below those standards. The Food

Service Department's assignment of labor hours is not aligned with the number of meals served.

Big Spring ISD also has not established standards or methods to determine custodial staffing levels, and the district does not use a staffing formula to calculate the number of custodians needed at each campus. A lack of custodial staffing standards or formulas results in inequitable custodial workloads from one campus to the next. Compared to the industry standard of 19,000 adjusted square feet per custodian, with adjusted square footage at 95 percent of actual square-foot area, custodians in Big Spring ISD may be responsible for cleaning as few as 12,347 square feet per day or as many as 40,438 square feet. In addition, compared to the industry standard, the number of custodians is consistent at some campuses and is inconsistent at other campuses. Overall, the district employs about seven fewer custodians than the standard suggests. In response, the district allows the 28 custodians who work the evening shift at all campuses to work nine-hour shifts on Monday through Thursday and an eight-hour shift on Friday. The four hours in excess of a normal 40-hour workweek are paid as overtime. With more than \$70,000 annually spent on overtime, this is not a cost-effective method of managing the custodial operations.

In addition, Big Spring ISD's lack of financial oversight has resulted in the Food Service Department spending more than \$35,000 annually on its practice of providing free meals to staff, including, for example, teachers and custodians, that assist during meal service. An additional \$4,000 annually is used to purchase snacks for students during testing periods. Neither of these practices is consistent with the state and federal food service program regulations, and these practices negatively affect the financial status of the department.

To assist the financial oversight process, the district should:

- improve management of the district's investment in fixed assets by developing and implementing a comprehensive fixed-asset plan and conducting annual physical inventories;
- establish a staffing formula based on industry standards and individual operational needs for the Food Service Department and establish a substitute pool to ensure all tasks are completed in the event of an absence;
- develop and implement a staffing model to better manage the distribution of work among custodians

and reassess the policy of scheduling some custodians to work four hours of overtime per week; and

- discontinue the practice of requiring the Food Service Department to subsidize free meals for adults and snacks for campuses.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Big Spring ISD does not effectively monitor its contracted services. Performance of contracted services is not centrally monitored, and some services are not properly performed or documented. The district does not have formal procedures guiding contract management.

Contracted services are managed by the campus or department that initiated the contract. Although there is no central verification of services, the campus or department confirms to the director of business services that all contract provisions have been completed before payments can be made. From fiscal years 2009–10 to 2013–14, Big Spring ISD's spending on contracted services increased by \$786,328, or 26.6 percent.

The review team identified a lack of oversight on several of the district's contracts. The Big Spring ISD Board of Trustees' legal services contract is dated January 29, 2004, and, according to the CFO, it has not been reviewed or updated in at least five years. The contract includes a \$200 monthly retainer, but it lacks any limits or a defined hourly rate for performed services. It states that "services outside the retainer are charged based on our hourly rates" but does not quantify the rate.

The district also maintains contracts for fire alarm tests and inspections, annual inspection of fire extinguishers, and annual inspection of kitchen fire suppression systems. However, the district has no process in place to ensure that required inspections are conducted. The review team consistently found that fire extinguishers throughout the

district were not properly inspected, and many either did not have a maintenance tag, or had an out-of-date maintenance tag.

Big Spring ISD contracts for kitchen fire suppression systems, but the system in the south kitchen of the intermediate school's cafeteria has not been inspected or maintained since 1999. Although the district no longer uses this room for cooking, the fire suppression system is still installed and is therefore required to be maintained in an operative condition or removed.

When district staff do not monitor vendor performance, the district cannot assure the board and other stakeholders that it is wisely and efficiently expending district resources. The district is further exposed to waste and loss by allowing the approval of payments for contracted services without ensuring that these services are performed effectively.

To assist the contract management process, the district should develop and implement a formal contract management process with written procedures and practices to identify all district contracts, centrally capture and monitor contract requirements, and evaluate vendor performance.

The chapters that follow contain a summary of the district's accomplishments, findings, and numbered recommendations. Detailed explanations 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 2015–16 to 2019–20.

The following figure summarizes the fiscal impact of all 57 recommendations included in the report. It shows a breakdown of how much the implementation of the recommendations will cost or save during the following five years. It also shows the combined total spent or saved.

FISCAL IMPACT

	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
Gross Savings	\$286,283	\$286,283	\$286,283	\$286,283	\$286,283	\$1,431,415	\$31,500
Gross Costs	(\$192,486)	(\$192,486)	(\$192,486)	(\$192,486)	(\$192,486)	(\$962,430)	(\$125,000)
Total	\$93,797	\$93,797	\$93,797	\$93,797	\$93,797	\$468,985	(\$93,500)

CHAPTER 1. DISTRICT LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATION, AND GOVERNANCE

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 (board). The board focuses on decision-making, 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 staffing levels, and allocating the resources to implement district priorities. The board and superintendent collaborate as a leadership team to meet district stakeholder needs.

Big Spring Independent School District (ISD), established in 1901, is located in Howard County in Big Spring which is midway between Dallas and El Paso. Big Spring is a city of 27,282 residents according to the 2010 U.S. Census Report. From the 1950 to the 1960 census, the population of Big Spring increased 80 percent, to 31,000 residents. This increase, due to local growth in the oil industry, had a tremendous impact on the district. The accuracy of Big Spring ISD's enrollment projections can fluctuate from year to year. This fluctuation is the result of the dynamic market variations common to the oil industry, which can influence significant shifts in the local population in short amounts of time.

Another major part of Big Spring's economy and life during the 1950s through the 1970s that influenced school district enrollment and demographics was Webb Air Force Base. The base was active until 1977, when the base facilities were deeded to the city.

The Federal Bureau of Prisons opened a minimum security federal corrections facility in 1979 in Big Spring. This facility houses an inmate population of approximately 1,800. In addition, four privately owned prisons operate near Big Spring. While the impact of the prison system on the district has not been systematically quantified, many Big Spring ISD staff members attribute the high student mobility rate (19.2 percent) to families of inmates and prison staff moving in and out of the district. However, the mobility rate is only 1.3 percentage points higher than the state average.

CURRENT PERSPECTIVE

Big Spring ISD has experienced fluctuation in student achievement as measured by state assessments and the state accountability system. The district faces academic challenges due to its 2014 state accountability rating of Improvement Required. This rating comes as a result of the district's failure to meet the standard on the index that measures the district's success in closing the achievement gap. This index examines the academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students and the two lowest performing racial/ethnic student groups within the district.

School year 2013–14 data shows that Big Spring ISD's student population was 62.1 percent Hispanic, 28.8 percent White, and 6.0 percent African American, with the remaining 3.1 percent students classified as Native American, Asian, or more than one race. Of this student population, 65.2 percent were classified as economically disadvantaged, 2.1 percent as English Language Learners, and 9.8 percent receive special education services.

BOARD GOVERNANCE

Big Spring ISD's board, as the policy making body authorized by law to govern the district, is responsible for the following duties:

- adopting goals and objectives for the district;
- reviewing and acting on policies;
- adopting an annual budget and setting the tax rate; and
- approving school personnel as recommended by the superintendent.

The board consists of seven members elected through seven single-member districts, each serving staggered three-year terms, which are set up to expire so that the continuity of the board is maintained. Elections are held in May, in conjunction with city elections. **Figure 1–1** shows the current members of Big Spring ISD board.

To provide a framework for the district, the board has adopted vision and a set of core principles. The vision and core principles cited in the District Improvement Plan read:

**FIGURE 1–1
BIG SPRING ISD BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

MEMBER	ROLE	FIRST ELECTED/ APPOINTED	EXPERIENCE (YEARS)
Chad Wash	President	2010 (Elected)	3
Tony Kennedy	Vice President	2003 (Elected)	10
Jeff Brorman	Secretary	2007 (Elected)	6
Pat DeAnda	Member	2012 (Elected)(1)	1
Ken McIntosh	Member	2011 (Appointed)(2)	2
Irene Rodriguez	Member	1994 (Appointed)(3)	19
Fabian Serrano	Member	2014 (Appointed)(3)	<1

NOTES:

- (1) Maria Padilla replaced Pat DeAnda in 2015 and was elected.
- (2) Julie Harris was appointed in 2015 to replace Ken McIntosh.
- (3) Board members were eventually elected.

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

“The Vision of Big Spring ISD is to instill respect and pride in all by empowering our community of learners – staff and students – to unite and commit to educational excellence.

The Core Principles that will guide the decisions of the school system are to:

- recruit and retain highly qualified staff;
- maintain integrity and professionalism at all times;
- provide a caring and safe environment;
- ensure instructional time is valued;
- provide ongoing meaningful professional development; and
- design and deliver relevant and engaging instruction.”

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

In addition to the superintendent, the central office staff includes an assistant superintendent, chief financial officer, and 10 department directors. **Figure 1–2** shows the organization of the district.

Big Spring ISD has four elementary schools and an early childhood center. Secondary schools include an intermediate school (grades 5–6), junior high (grades 7–8) and the high school (9–12). In school year 2013–14 total enrollment was 4,134 students.

Two elementary schools have a principal and two assistant principal. Goliad and Washington Elementary Schools have a principal and two assistant principals, and the early childhood center has only a principal. At the secondary level, the intermediate school administration includes a principal, assistant principal, and an associate principal. The junior high school has a principal and two assistant principals, and the high school has a principal and an assistant principal.

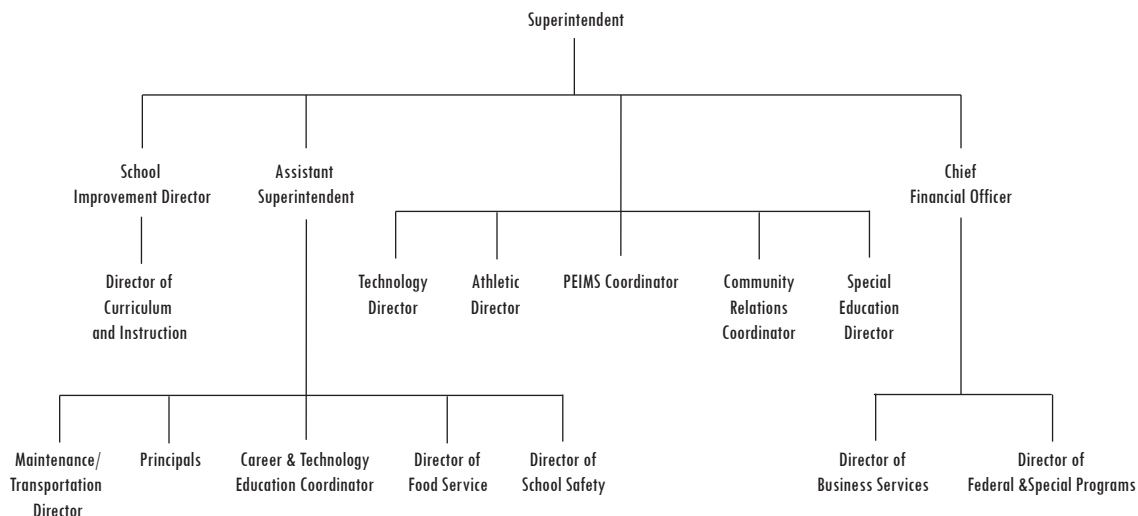
ACCOMPLISHMENT

- ◆ Big Spring ISD has made a long-term commitment to a districtwide school improvement model and has continued to support and sustain the initiative.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks an approach to institutional effectiveness that strategically integrates district, campus, and departmental planning to provide focus and direction to the district.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s organizational structure lacks clarity and does not provide a functional reporting system that promotes effective and efficient operations.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not have defined administrative procedures for managing legal services and controlling legal expenses.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks a process to regularly review and update board policies.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks policies and procedures for addressing the appointment of individuals to fill board vacancies.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s local orientation training for new board members is not consistent with state law.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks a clearly defined process for board evaluation of the superintendent.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD policies and procedures do not effectively address board member use of personal electronics for board related communication.

FIGURE 1–2
BIG SPRING ISD'S ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 1:** Develop and implement a three- to five-year comprehensive strategic plan with measureable objectives to ensure accountability and evaluate the district's effectiveness in meeting the needs of its students.
- ◆ **Recommendation 2:** Develop and implement an organizational structure that specifies clear lines of authority and reasonable spans of control for district administrators to provide efficient and effective operation of the district.
- ◆ **Recommendation 3:** Develop and implement policies and procedures for engaging and managing legal services.
- ◆ **Recommendation 4:** Develop and implement procedures that will create a timeline and framework for systematically reviewing and updating all board policies.
- ◆ **Recommendation 5:** Revise the board operating procedures manual and develop local policy to specifically address board processes for appointing individuals to fill mid-term school board vacancies.

- ◆ **Recommendation 6:** Implement a new board member local training program consistent with state law that prepares new members to understand the overall operations of the district.
- ◆ **Recommendation 7:** Develop and implement a comprehensive superintendent evaluation process that is based on measurable performance goals and clearly established expectations.
- ◆ **Recommendation 8:** Revise its policies and procedures to effectively address board members' electronic communication using personal devices.

DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENT

IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Big Spring ISD has made a long-term commitment to a districtwide school improvement model and has continued to support and sustain the initiative.

Big Spring ISD administrators initiated the Lead Your School Program at the junior high school in school year 2011–12. Created by a Houston-based consulting firm, the program's goal is to provide administrators and teachers with the tools and training to develop an instructional system that boosts

student performance through the use of proven teaching strategies. The district adopted the program for implementation districtwide in school year 2013–14. The district’s decision to continue this initiative demonstrates a commitment to a focused, consistent approach to school improvement. All principals and teachers received program training, which includes a “classroom walkthrough” component, referred to as PowerWalks, intended to reinforce the teachers’ implementation of five fundamental instructional strategies. These five strategies are: Frame the Lesson, Frequent Small Group Purposeful Talk, Work in the Power Zone, Recognize and Reinforce, and Write Critically. The emphasis on classroom walkthroughs enhances principal leadership skills in the supervision of classroom instruction and provides timely feedback to teachers.

According to principals, classroom walkthroughs are scheduled regularly to ensure that every teacher has an observation at least once each week. In interviews with the review team, the junior high principal described how a matrix format is used to schedule the classroom walkthrough so that the process is part of the administrators’ daily routine and a priority.

Since all teachers and administrators have participated in ongoing training focused on the five instructional strategies, a common language for discussing teaching and learning exists across the district. The review team noted that the improvement initiative was mentioned by staff at every campus.

In focus groups, principals and teachers commented on the value of the classroom walkthroughs in helping maintain instructional focus. Teachers stated that the walkthroughs and follow-up feedback increased their intentional and conscious use of the focus strategies. Principals indicated the walkthroughs increased their awareness and understanding of what was happening in the classroom and improved the quality of conversations about teaching and learning.

Both principals and teachers commented on the value of the district’s efforts to continue this initiative over the past two years. The district’s sustained commitment provides stability and focus to district academic improvement efforts. Before the implementation of this model, district approaches to improvement frequently changed, and a new initiative was typically introduced each year. The superintendent stated that it is important for the district to remain with the Lead your School Program initiative to provide a consistent focus.

The article Professional Development Analysis written by McREL International in 2006 states that

“changes in instructional practice that impact student achievement depend on sustained and targeted professional development focused on particular content knowledge. Professional development that positively affects learning is of considerable duration, focused on specific content, characterized by collective participation, coherent, and infused with active learning.”

These research-based practices are evident in the classroom “walk-through” model used by Big Spring ISD. As instructional leaders, principals have had comprehensive training in effective instructional strategies and observation feedback skills to increase the impact on student achievement at all levels. A program of this nature provides all administrators with a common language for talking about curriculum and instruction and for observing classroom instruction. The training has provided district administrators with a set of skills that target the analysis of teaching, data gathering, and curriculum analysis.

Big Spring ISD used district data to identify the improvement initiative that best addressed its needs. In committing to this approach, the superintendent and staff recognized that the district would need to remain focused on that initiative for three to five years to institutionalize it. A part of the district’s strategic approach was to develop and require long-term professional development for teachers, principals, and central office administrators. Board members have been involved to the point of understanding the initiative and the need to allow sufficient time for proper implementation.

DETAILED FINDINGS

STRATEGIC PLANNING (REC. 1)

Big Spring ISD lacks an approach to institutional effectiveness that strategically integrates district, campus, and departmental planning to provide focus and direction to the district.

There are numerous plans developed each year throughout the district. These include:

- district targeted improvement plan;
- district improvement plan;
- campus improvement plans;
- campus targeted improvement plans;

- technology plan;
- facility plan;
- safety and security plan; and
- transportation plan.

All campuses must develop a Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) each year as required by Texas Education Code (TEC) Section 11.253. With the exception of the high school and intermediate school, all other campuses are also required to develop a campus level Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP) because they have been designated as Improvement Required under the state accountability system. Further, the superintendent with the assistance of the district-level planning and site based decision-making committee develops the District Improvement Plan (DIP). The DIP is required by TEC, Section 11.252. Additionally, Big Spring ISD, as a district with an accountability rating of Improvement Required, is required to develop a District Targeted Improvement Plan. This plan is developed under the direction of the director of school improvement.

The CIP is a one-year plan that sets the campuses educational objectives and notes how resources and time will be allocated in the school year to meet the determined objectives. The campus TIP addresses all areas of insufficient performance for those campuses in the improvement process. At the district level, the purpose of the DIP is to guide district and campus staff in the improvement of student performance for all student groups to meet standards for the state student achievement indicators. The district TIP is specifically designed to address areas of low performance identified by the state accountability system. The purpose of the various operational plans (facilities, maintenance, transportation, and safety and security) is to establish a series of goals and strategies to improve the performance of these functions.

Big Spring ISD has no process for coordinating and integrating these academic and operational systems into one cohesive long-term strategic plan. Many of the plans are a result of what is as referred to as compliance planning. Compliance planning is the planning required by, for example, the Texas Education Agency, on a scheduled basis, where the plan is developed by completing a template or chart with items from a checklist. In many instances, this approach does not result in a plan derived from a deliberative process, but rather a document for the purpose of meeting a certain requirement.

Big Spring ISD is required to develop a total of 12 campus-level plans (eight Campus Improvement Plans and four Campus Targeted Improvement Plans), two district-level plans (the DIP and the District Targeted Improvement Plan), and four non-academic department plans. Together, the plans do not always lead the district in the same direction. There is no coordination of the objectives/ strategies and resource allocations listed in the various district plans and expenditures are not consistently aligned to the plans. The district also does not have a way to measure overall effectiveness that encompasses all departments, not just the academic measures of student performance.

Stakeholders affected by the plans are also often not aware of what the plans include. During the onsite review, teachers in focus groups reported that the campus TIPs are usually planned before the CIP, and they are created by two separate faculty teams that rarely communicate with each other. At the district level, the director of school improvement supervises the district TIP, while the other planning falls under the superintendent or various department heads. There is no coordination at the campus or district levels to connect the many required plans and summarize these into any coherent direction. Plans are not intentionally integrated into an articulated approach to school improvement.

The closest the district comes to a districtwide strategic plan is the DIP. However, Big Spring ISD's DIP is not structured to allow for long-range planning. Big Spring ISD's DIP is focused on instruction and includes student achievement, fiscal responsibility, community involvement, and personnel as they relate to the delivery of educational services. The DIP does not address transportation, food service, asset and risk management, and other areas of district operations. As a result, planning for items such as technology, facilities, and risk management are addressed in ancillary documents that are not integrated into a single comprehensive strategic plan. Additionally, Big Spring ISD's DIP does not indicate funding sources to accomplish any goals or strategies nor is there any direct link to the district's budget in this document.

Districts use different strategies to effectively establish a comprehensive strategic planning process. For example, Tatum ISD uses a strategic planning and monitoring process called a Continuous Improvement Cycle that involves iterative and ongoing review and alignment of the district's strategic plan, program plans, and CIPs. All of these plans are developed and reviewed with significant input from all

stakeholders including staff, teachers, parents, and community members. A focus group of principals in this district reported that this cycle is one of the main educational tools discussed in instructional administrative team meetings, and principals must link their CIPs to the DIP so that the focus of the entire organization is consistent. Each January, the superintendent presents a monitoring report to the board showing highlights, issues, and plans for each objective of the strategic plan that has been adopted as the official DIP for that year. Principals also prepare and present CIP reports to the board. Similar reports are created for each goal and objective for the DIP and the district's technology plan.

One approach to strategic planning is referred to as institutional effectiveness. The two general purposes of the institutional effectiveness process are improvement and accountability. This process is a systematic and ongoing process of collecting, analyzing, and acting on data and information relating to goals and outcomes, which are developed in support of the mission and purpose of the district. Institutional effectiveness is a cyclical process. It addresses the continuous improvements and refinements of goals and methods on an ongoing basis. Best practices suggest that institutional effectiveness is an ever changing and evolving process.

Howard College in Big Spring, Texas uses the institutional effectiveness process to systematically review all of the college's programs and services for the purpose of continuous improvement. The approach permeates all facets of the organization. The institutional effectiveness process integrates the planning across the organization and uses an evaluation process to determine the institution's effectiveness in accomplishing its goals and mission.

The cyclical process, as described by Howard College's vice president for academic and student affairs:

- addresses the measures of what the organizational units and program areas are doing;
- analyzes the effectiveness; and
- determines from the analysis what needs to be changed.

Howard College's process for institutional effectiveness is cyclical, cumulative, and hierarchical. Planning and evaluating start in the unit level and integrate through the program area and cross-functional areas, to the institution

level. At each level, planning and assessing align to the big picture goals and mission of the college. The Howard College website (under institutional effectiveness) shows how the process is implemented.

The alignment of resources to the plan is critical for effective planning. Nacogdoches ISD also implemented a strategic review process that ensures expenditures of federal and local funds are linked to strategies outlined in its planning documents. District staff members requesting expenditure of funds are required to write the goal, performance objective, and strategy from the respective plans on the purchase requisition. This process intentionally links the planning with the expenditure of funds and reduces the risk of funds being spent for unnecessary items that do not move the planning objectives forward.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a three- to five-year comprehensive strategic plan with measureable objectives to ensure accountability and evaluate the district's effectiveness in meeting the needs of its students.

The district should begin the process with a shared visioning session with the board and superintendent and expand this traditional planning exercise into a fully engaged, stakeholder-driven strategic planning process. This approach would constructively engage students, parents, teachers, administrators, community members, and business leaders in the process of shaping the vision for the district and establishing strategic priorities aligned with the shared vision. Further, this comprehensive strategic planning process would chart the long-term direction of the district with "buy-in" from stakeholders and ensure that administrative staff, principals, teachers, and other school-based personnel agree with the direction of the district, prioritization of goals, and the allocation of resources for instructional, administrative, and operational areas.

Big Spring ISD should begin the strategic planning process by designating a central administrator to oversee and lead the strategic planning process. The district should also form a diverse planning committee that includes district administrators, community members, business leaders, teachers, and parents. The district should link its current DIP and CIPs with this strategic planning process.

One option the district could use to develop a comprehensive strategic plan is the institutional effectiveness model. There are four phases of the process: exploration, decision making, draft strategic plan, and implementation.

PHASE 1: EXPLORATION

To develop this plan, the superintendent should propose an institutional effectiveness process to the board. The discussion of the concept should address the need and benefit of a process to strategically integrate all the planning and assessing into a coherent focus. Board members familiar with the Howard College model should share their perceptions of how the process might be adapted to a school district. After exploring the idea, the superintendent should contact the vice president for academic and student affairs to set up a presentation for the board.

After the presentation, the superintendent and board should discuss how this might look in a public school setting. A critical component of the discussion is how the approach could be used to build on what the district already has in place. These should be exploratory discussions and not decision-making sessions. It is important that the administrators and department heads be involved in discussions of what the process would look like in the district and how it would impact them.

The superintendent should invite the Howard College vice president back for a sharing session with the board. Particular attention should be given to what the board’s role will potentially be in the process. **Figure 1–3** shows the five key areas of effective organizations, to identify areas where the board might focus.

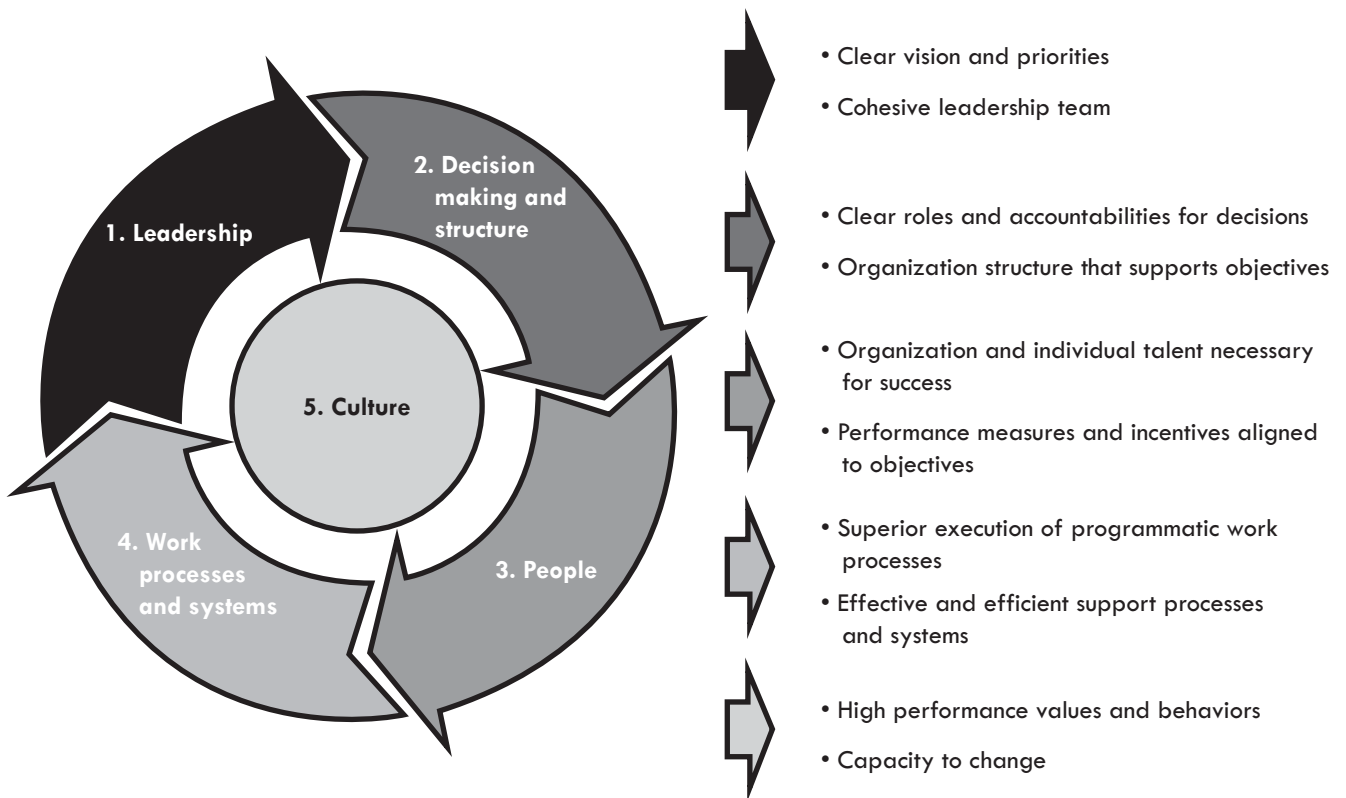
To allow the board and superintendent to fully engage in the content development part of the process, they should consider engaging a professional facilitator to guide the discussions regarding planning integration.

PHASE 2: DECISION-MAKING: HOW WILL THE DISTRICT IMPLEMENT AN INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS PROCESS?

During this phase the superintendent should consider the following:

- schedule the vice president of Howard College to present Howard’s process for institutional effectiveness at the principals/department heads meeting

**FIGURE 1–3
FIVE KEY AREAS OF EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS**



SOURCE: Framework developed by Bain & Company and adapted by Bridgespan, 2013.

- contract with a professional facilitator to guide the principals/department heads through the discussion and creation of the initial framework for the district model. contract with a facilitator to conduct:
 - a two-day retreat that will include principals plus two representatives from the TIP and CIP committees at each site to discuss and determine:
- How can the mandated school-based planning result in an integrated, cohesive school improvement plan for the site that guides the decision-making and resource allocation?
- What processes and structures could be used to integrate the two mandated district plans into a cohesive district plan that aligns to the campus planning?
 - a two-day retreat with representatives from each of the committees planning the DIP and the district TIP to discuss and determine:
- What processes and structures could be used to integrate the two mandated district plans into a cohesive district plan that aligns to the campus planning?

This phase should be concluded with a facilitated work session with the superintendent's cabinet to synthesize the recommendations and ideas from the retreat sessions.

PHASE 3: DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

The superintendent should present the synthesis of the recommendations from the retreats with a draft proposal of the district strategic plan in a facilitated work session with the board. The facilitator should guide:

- the board/superintendent discussion of the plan presented with emphasis on the pro and cons; and
- the discussion of the board's role and responsibilities with respect to vision, mission, district goals and the framework for board support.

The superintendent's cabinet and principals/directors should establish timelines and guidelines for the different stages in the process. Howard College administrators should be used as resources when needed during this discussion.

PHASE 4: IMPLEMENTATION

With board approval of the agreed upon strategic plan, the district should implement the first stage of the process, Year One. While implementing this stage, the focus should be on the integrated planning at the site and district level. The work should continue on refining the process and establishing clear guidelines for subsequent years.

There is no fiscal impact assumed for this recommendation as the district should determine if the development of a long-term strategic plan can be accomplished internally or will require the assistance of an external facilitator.

ORGANIZATION (REC. 2)

Big Spring ISD's organizational structure lacks clarity and does not provide a functional reporting system that promotes effective and efficient operations. In addition, the district organization chart does not clearly reflect reporting relationships.

Upon appointing the new superintendent in February 2014, the board directed him to change the district's organizational structure; which was perceived by the board and many staff as ineffective and disruptive to the functioning of the district. The superintendent stated that he met with the assistant superintendent to consider the design for an alternative approach to organization before presenting it to the board.

The resulting organizational structure, while different from that of the previous administration, still creates confusion. **Figure 1–2** shows Big Spring ISD's new organization chart. The chart shows working relationships (who works with whom), rather than who reports to whom. However, staff use the organization chart to determine reporting relationships and departmental responsibilities because it is the primary resource provided to staff to understand the current organizational structure. While board members state that the new organizational structure has reduced complaints and frustration, the review team found that structure is causing confusion among district staff, and in some instances, impeding the smooth operation of the district. The current organization chart does not accurately reflect the district's new organizational structure.

In focus group discussions with the review team, several directors and principals indicated they do not know to whom they report and some did not know whom they supervise.

For example, the director of federal and special programs position is listed as reporting to the chief financial officer and also appears to supervise part of the Response to Intervention process, which is under the Curriculum and Instruction Department.

While the organization chart shows the superintendent's span of control includes eight direct reports, staff perceived the number of direct reports to be greater. In interviews, 16 staff members indicated that they assume they are evaluated by the superintendent and that he is their direct supervisor. As of the time of the onsite review, none of them had been evaluated since the board appointed the superintendent in February 2014. Principals of the campuses that have been designated as Improvement Required are shown on the organizational chart as reporting to the director of school improvement, but they consider themselves to be direct reports to the superintendent.

In addition, the curriculum and instructional areas are not consolidated, and report independently to the superintendent. This includes the curriculum director position, the director of federal and special programs, the special education director, and the director of school improvement. No position within central administration, however, is responsible for providing districtwide leadership for Big Spring ISD's instructional program. The lack of leadership of the various educational support positions creates a fractured organizational structure and affects the setting of educational priorities for students. In interviews with the review team, campus employees indicated that they were often confused as to whom at the central office they should contact with questions regarding curriculum and instruction guidance and support.

The maintenance and transportation director oversees both the Transportation and Maintenance Departments. This position has responsibilities for three of the most labor intensive functions in the district which are facilities management, custodial services, and pupil transportation. This breadth of responsibilities does not provide enough time for effective planning or organization of either the Transportation or Maintenance Departments.

Other points of confusion with the current organizational structure relate to decision-making and the defined areas of responsibility. Some department heads and principals struggle to understand how and who makes the decisions that directly impact their span of control and their perceived areas of responsibility. For example, in focus group discussions

with the review team, campus administrators stated that if they need a decision on an issue, they will first ask for guidance from the central office administrator that they either work with the most or feel most comfortable with. However, if this central administrator's decision is not what department heads or principals hoped for in addressing their situation, they simply take the question or issue to another central administrator where in many instances they get a different response. The department heads and principals act on the central administrator's decision that they feel best addresses their issue or problem.

Organizational structure is a way to align and relate the parts of an organization to get the most effective performance from all functional areas. The structure defines the way in which subunits or departments are inter-related and grouped. An organizational structure specifies how subordinates report to supervisors to enhance coordination of functions. The organization chart visually describes the relationships and areas of responsibility within the district and provides a written reference to document these relationships.

Given the breadth of the superintendent's responsibilities, it is challenging to effectively supervise all of the direct reports shown in the organization chart. Daily operational reporting requirements for a district of Big Spring ISD's size are likely significant with this reporting structure. While an effective span of control varies by organization, a general rule for an executive position is six to eight direct reports. With Big Spring ISD's current organizational structure, the superintendent is at risk of spending a significant amount of time managing staff, which diminishes the amount of time available for district planning.

In addition, when staff members do not understand the organizational structures and cannot find answers in the organizational chart, they feel confused and frustrated by not knowing to whom they report and who will supervise and evaluate them. Not knowing who one's supervisor is results in a sense of ambiguity that can impact effective communication and performance within the organization.

The district's lack of clarity in the organizational structure results in staff receiving confusing and contradictory messages. This lack of clarity and alignment in the structure is evident when focus group participants described receiving opposite responses and instructions from various supervisors within the district. Focus group participants attributed this inconsistency in responses to different philosophies within

the organization and a lack of clarity about who was responsible for what areas.

Since the onsite review, Big Spring ISD provided the review team with additional organizational charts that elaborate on the districts reporting structure. However, the organizational charts are undated and alternative organization charts were provided to the review team during the onsite review.

The most commonly used organizational structure in public schools is what is referred to as a functional model. In this type of structure, the functions and areas of services and responsibilities are organized into departments. Departmentalization is a way to organize and promote coordination by grouping related functions and responsibilities together. Advantages of this structure are that it encourages communication within functional areas and allows for employee specialization.

Other key components of an effective and efficient organizational structure include chain of command and authority. Chain of command refers to the line of authority within an organization. Authority defines the area and scope of responsibilities and decision-making power of a given supervisor and the reporting structure.

Another component that affects the efficiency of the organization is the span of control. At one time best practice prescribed limits to direct reports to a supervisor; now according to an article in the 2012 Harvard Business Review, "How Many Direct Reports?" the average number of reports to CEOs has doubled from five to ten over the past two decades. No magic number of direct reports exists. The appropriate number of direct reports is a judgment call that depends on factors such as ability and experience of the supervisor, scale and scope of the work, and the amount of time required for collaboration and systems integration. A larger span of control may slow decision-making but speed up communication.

The organizational structure is documented by the organization chart. Best practice suggests that an effective organization chart is a visual representation of the processes undertaken by the organization that illustrates:

- formal reporting relationships;
- level of the hierarchy and span of control;
- departmental grouping in the organization;

- vertical linkages that show control of efficiency and stability; and
- horizontal linkages that indicate coordination and collaboration.

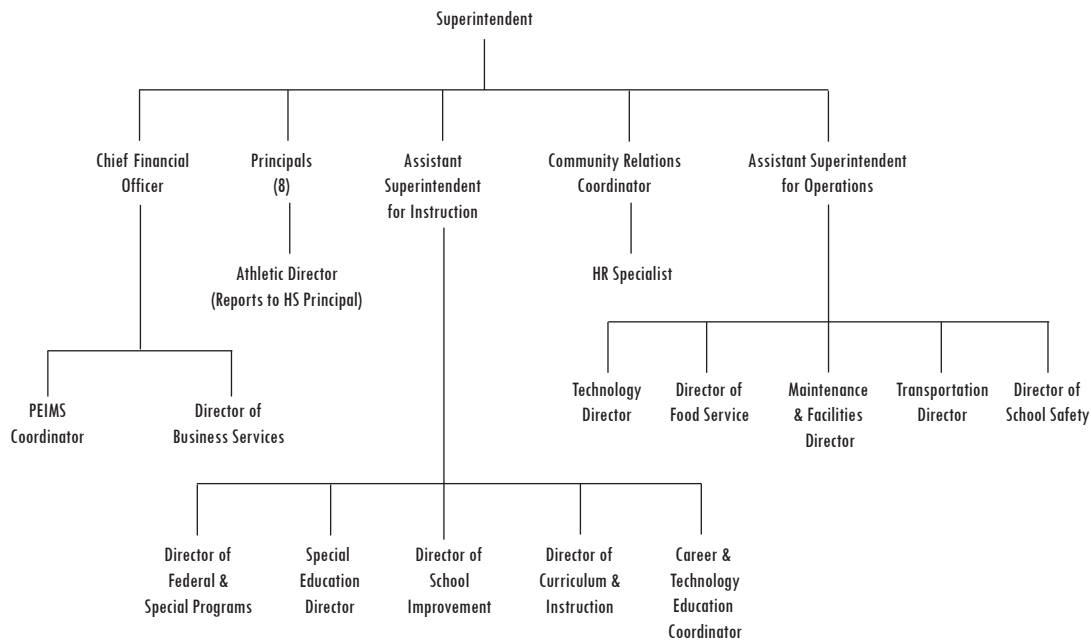
Big Spring ISD should develop and implement an organizational structure that specifies clear lines of authority and reasonable spans of control for district administrators to provide efficient and effective operation of the district.

To create a more effective and efficient organization, the district should eliminate the assistant superintendent position. The superintendent should then realign support service responsibilities that relate directly to instruction under a new assistant superintendent for instruction position. This recommendation is described further in the Educational Service Delivery chapter of this report.

Due to the nature of the position, the director of school improvement should report to the assistant superintendent for instruction in a coordination-consultation relationship. This position was created in response to TEA's recommendations to enhance support to campuses that have not met state accountability requirements; it may be abolished when school accountability ratings meet the desired standards. Therefore, the director of school improvement position should continue with no direct supervision responsibility.

To better organize and coordinate the areas of operations, the district should create an assistant superintendent for operations position to supervise the directors for technology, facilities, food service, transportation, and safety. As part of this redesign, the superintendent should eliminate the maintenance and transportation director position and create two director-level positions: maintenance and facilities director, and transportation director. In addition, the Maintenance and Transportation Departments currently also has an assistant director of maintenance and transportation. This position should also be eliminated as it would no longer be necessary as the separation of transportation and facilities and maintenance duties would now be divided between two directors. These two directors would manage the responsibilities the assistant director currently performs for each function. This recommendation is described further in the Transportation and Facilities chapters of this report. **Figure 1-4** shows the recommended changes in the organizational structure.

**FIGURE 1–4
PROPOSED REORGANIZATION**



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

This structure would reduce the direct reports to the superintendent from 16 to 12. As part of this recommended reporting structure, the eight principals would report to the superintendent, which will reduce the ambiguity that currently exists regarding who the principals report to. The CFO would continue to report to the superintendent, as would the community relations coordinator. The federal and special programs director would report to the new assistant superintendent for instruction position.

The superintendent should present the proposed organizational structure to staff for input and refinement if needed. The superintendent should present the new organizational structure to the board for approval. Once the board approves it, the superintendent should communicate directly with all staff about how the district is reorganized. This should include the creation of a new organization chart that would be distributed to all staff and placed on the district website. The superintendent should also meet with central administration staff, principals, and department heads to discuss the new organization chart specifically clarifying the chain of command, supervisory relationships, collaborative connections, and the centralized/decentralized continuum of decision-making. It should be up to the principals and

department heads to explain to campus and departmental staff the information the superintendent relayed to them.

This creation of an assistant superintendent for operations position would require a salary and benefits of approximately \$100,000 per year. This amount is based on salaries of other directors and the assistant superintendent in Big Spring ISD. The fiscal impact of eliminating the maintenance and transportation director would save the district \$89,500 in salary and benefits, and the fiscal impact of eliminating the assistant director of maintenance and transportation would save the district \$82,229 in salary and benefits. The cost of creating the transportation director and facilities management director positions is provided in the Transportation and Facilities chapters of this report. The fiscal impact of eliminating the assistant superintendent position and creating the assistant superintendent for instruction is provided in the Educational Service Delivery chapter of this report.

The total fiscal impact of this recommendation is an annual savings of \$71,729. This amount is the net of the cost of creating the assistant superintendent for operations position (\$100,000) and the savings from eliminating the maintenance and transportation director position (\$89,500) and the

assistant director of maintenance and transportation (\$82,229).

LEGAL SERVICES (REC. 3)

Big Spring ISD does not have defined administrative procedures for managing legal services and controlling legal expenses.

Big Spring ISD’s board has a contract with an Amarillo law firm to represent the district. This firm has represented the district since January 29, 2004. According to the CFO, the contract has not been reviewed or updated in at least five years, which would be 2010. The contract includes a \$200 monthly retainer but lacks any limits or a defined hourly rate for services performed.

Based on interviews with the superintendent and CFO and a review of policy and the legal contract, it is not clear who is authorized to contact the attorney. Board Policy BDD (LOCAL) states that individual board members shall channel legal inquiries through the superintendent, board president, or board designee. In interviews with the review team, the CFO stated that the superintendent, assistant superintendent, CFO, and the board president contact the attorney as needed. The contract for legal services states that the firm will communicate only with the superintendent, the board president, or other district representatives authorized by the superintendent and board president.

A review of invoices for legal services from January 2014 to January 2015 found information about legal services provided, but no details as to the charges for the time billed or who engaged the services. For example, an October 2014 invoice had a cover letter stating that multiple related calls had been allocated to the retainer file for a cost of over \$700. However, there were no details to support those allocations. Monthly invoices denote the cost of the retainer, a list of services with no billing details to support total general legal

fees, and a list of fees related to any special legal matter or litigation.

The CFO approves the payment of the invoices without supporting documentation for the cost of itemized services. In August 2014, the CFO presented a report to the board on expenditures over \$50,000, which referenced a \$60,000 payment for legal services on a specific case. Figure 1–5 shows Big Spring ISD’s legal expenditures for school years 2009–10 to 2013–14 compared to peer districts. All the expenditures were accrued from the Amarillo law firm.

Figure 1–5 shows that Big Spring ISD has spent more on legal expenditures than any of its peers. Peer districts are districts similar to Big Spring ISD that are used for comparison purposes. Moreover, the district’s legal costs have increased by 414 percent since school year 2009–10.

The lack of defined administrative procedures for managing legal services has resulted in the district having a contract that is more than 10 years old and contains no cost limits or hourly billing rates. Without a process to periodically review, update, or rebid contracts, the district may remain engaged in contracts that are no longer cost efficient.

Lack of administrative procedures for the approval and payment of legal invoices has led to the district paying invoices not supported by documentation of itemized billing hours and cost. The invoices do not provide sufficient detail for the district to verify that the billed cost is correct. Invoices are not reviewed or approved by the superintendent, which leaves the CFO with the responsibility for paying expenditures without detailed information.

Without a clear understanding of who is authorized to contact the attorney, it is difficult to monitor whether the attorney is being contacted for services that may not be necessary. A lack of a detailed invoice from the law firm

**FIGURE 1–5
LEGAL SERVICES ACTUAL EXPENDITURES
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14**

DISTRICT	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	CHANGE
Big Spring ISD	\$22,517	\$68,357	\$60,940	\$42,590	\$115,670	414%
Andrews ISD	\$8,834	\$2,624	\$17,341	\$16,088	\$21,971	149%
Dumas ISD	\$2,433	\$61,585	\$16,640	\$12,902	\$13,712	464%
El Campo ISD	\$21,870	\$21,776	\$10,391	\$12,871	\$24,466	12%
Snyder ISD	\$93,207	\$60,248	\$41,988	\$48,074	\$48,360	-48%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System Reports, school year 2009–10 to 2013–14.

makes it difficult to monitor service delivery as well as identify district staff that made requests of the attorney.

The 2014 Hanover Research Report surveyed trends in Texas, Georgia, and Alabama regarding the methods districts used in procuring legal services. The survey showed that many school districts reported using the one attorney/firm method of providing legal services, as does Big Spring ISD. The advantage of this approach as referenced in the report includes a quick response time, the attorney knows the district and its history, and a trusting two-way communication develops over time.

However, the report cautions that this approach can lead to public criticism for not bidding out the contract on a frequent basis. Because legal services are defined as professional services, districts are not required to go through a bidding process when selecting a company. However, in managing legal services, districts often reassess this approach periodically to determine if it still provides the best value to them and addresses the unique needs of the district and community.

Specific points of best practices in managing legal services are stated in an article, "Managing Your District's Legal Costs," published by the New Jersey School Board Association in its 2013 School Leader Newsletter. The article referenced what are considered sound contractual and billing practices. With respect to contractual conditions, best practices recommend that the contract defines the scope of services to be provided through the retainer arrangement and the hourly contract work. Sound contracts for legal services clearly specify the hourly rate and explain how the rate is determined. The rates specified should remain intact through the course of the contract unless changed through written mutual consent.

The article also suggested that billing practices include detailed invoices that are submitted monthly to the district. Invoices should itemize the service provided, date of each service, the time spent on the task, attorney who performed service, hourly rate, and total charge for each task. Block billing, whereby items are clumped together in one entry, is not recommended.

Sound practices for reducing legal costs include a system that restricts access and monitors contact with the attorney. Such a system would include restricting the number of administrators and board members allowed to contact the attorney, establishing criteria to determine whether a situation warrants legal advice, requiring that requests for legal service be put in writing, and setting up a contact log to

record the nature and duration of the contact. For best practices to be maintained in managing legal services, a district's monitoring strategies are critical in avoiding unnecessary legal costs.

Snyder ISD's management of their legal services provides an example of the implementation of best practices. The district has a legal service contract with a law firm in Austin, which provides the district with access to lawyers of different expertise to address the varying needs of the district. The contract was renegotiated in 2012, at which time they established a retainer contract, which has a 4 percent increase built in each year, and is paid on a monthly basis. All charges are billed against the retainer fee unless it is a major litigation case, which is billed at the hourly rate specified in the contract. All invoices are detailed with the service, time, rate, and attorney even if it is covered by the retainer. The superintendent reviews the invoice every month, approves it, and then forwards it to the finance office for payment. The contract is reviewed annually, and either party can cancel the contract at any time.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement policies and procedures for engaging and managing legal services.

The board president should schedule a work session for the board members and superintendent to review and study the existing contract for legal services. In considering the contract, the board should first determine if it would be advisable to change their legal services provider, since the district has been represented by the same law firm for at least 10 years. As part of this process, the district should do a comparative analysis of Big Spring ISD with peer districts. The board should contact other districts to obtain contract details, average cost per year, and the billing procedures.

If the board decides to retain the current firm, the existing contract should be updated and renegotiated with the firm. Revisions should include:

- specified hourly billing rates in the contract;
- detailed guidelines for invoicing that include itemized services, time spent on the task, rate of billing hours, the total cost of the task, attorney billing for the task, and person requesting the service; and
- established monthly cost limits above the retainer with a clause stating that costs above the limit should be preapproved by the board.

The board should coordinate with the superintendent to develop specific administrative procedures for engaging and managing legal services. These procedures should include:

- an established timeline for contract review and revision;
- clear delineation of who is authorized to contact the attorney;
- a process for monitoring invoices established through the CFO to determine if anyone other than those authorized are responsible for billed services;
- monthly review of invoices to study the nature of the itemized services with billing time to determine if costs can be reduced;
- a timeline for rebidding the legal service contract to ensure the district has representation that meets its changing needs and financial considerations; and
- methods for invoice approval that provide review of monthly costs and verifiable charges.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

REVIEW OF POLICY (REC. 4)

Big Spring ISD lacks a process to regularly review and update board policies.

There are two types of policies that a school district's board operates under. Legal policies refer to policies that are based on Texas Education Agency rules, federal and state legislation, and case law. Legal policies are reviewed by the board before being adopted. Local policies reflect local board positions and are often unique to the district. Local policy will usually expand on or qualify directives or options provided by law. Local policy is adopted by the board.

Big Spring ISD, in an effort to revise and update board policy, subscribes to the policy service provided by the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). This service provides the district with at least quarterly updates of recommended legal policy changes based on changes in law and regulations. In some instances, these also include unique local policy recommendations. The TASB legal policy changes are submitted to the board, in most instances, at the next board meeting after they are issued by TASB. The legal policy changes are reviewed as presented and any related local policies are approved.

The secretary to the board updates the online policy manual and distributes copies of the new policy to those it is determined are directly impacted by the changes. TASB policy updates are usually reviewed by the assistant superintendent for local policy implications. A review of board meeting minutes showed that the board considered the TASB legal and local policy recommendations in at least four board meetings during school year 2013–14. In interviews with the review team, the superintendent stated that the district has no set procedures to review policy on a regular basis to ensure that new policies are developed as needed and local policies are written to address the legal policies. Of the 22 policies specifically examined by the review team in the local governance section of Big Spring ISD's board policies, eight legal policies did not have a supporting policy.

According to the TASB policy service consultant assigned to Big Spring ISD, the district participated in a Policy Review Session (PRS) in 2010. The PRS provides a consultant to work with the board and the superintendent to evaluate and revise the entire policy manual. This process provides policy recommendations for the board to consider and approve, which will result in a newly updated policy manual. TASB recommends that districts participate in a PRS every five to eight years or when there has been a change in the superintendent or significant turnover in board membership.

Big Spring ISD does not have an internal process to review and update board policy. A review of the district policy manual identified some policies that were not updated during the PRS and some that have not been updated since the PRS. Examples of critical policies not recently updated include:

- Board Policy DNB (LEGAL) addresses the administrator appraisal process and establishing performance criteria was established in 2014, while the corresponding Board Policy DNB (LOCAL) has not been updated since 1996.
- Board Policy CAA (LOCAL) has not been revised since 2005. This policy addresses fraud investigations and the responsive actions to be taken by the board and superintendent. It is important that this policy be reviewed and updated to ensure a district response to fraud aligns to current procedures and legal guidelines.
- Board Policy BJCD (LEGAL) establishes the appraisal process options for the annual evaluation of the superintendent. It also specifies that the annual

performance review shall be a primary consideration in evaluating the superintendent. Board Policy BJCD (LOCAL), last revised in 2006, establishes that the superintendent evaluation shall be based on the superintendent's job description and performance goals adopted by the board. No reference is made in this policy to the annual superintendent performance review. The discrepancy in legal and local policies creates confusion and potential legal issues in the evaluation of the superintendent.

Without a systematic policy review process, it is difficult for a district to maintain coherence and focus. As the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction in Washington state study, *Characteristics of Improved School Districts*, points out, effective districts create policy to reinforce and support improving teaching and learning. Research on improving schools emphasizes the importance of aligning policies, programs, and practices to address district goals. Even though the district used the TASB policy service for reviewing and updating policy, outdated policies still exist. As a result, these omissions or gaps in policy create confusion in focus and program implementation.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement procedures that will create a timeline and framework for systematically reviewing and updating all board policies.

The board and the superintendent should discuss the current status of policy review with their TASB policy service consultant. As a first step, the district should schedule a PRS with TASB since it has been five years from their last session, and there have been changes in the superintendent and composition of the board. This would provide a starting point for a systematic process for internal policy review.

In the PRS, the TASB policy service consultant will work with the superintendent and board to review, evaluate, and revise the entire district policy manual. As outcomes of this process, the district superintendent and board will have:

- examined and updated policy;
- been trained on best policymaking practices; and
- deepened their understanding of the district.

After the board reviews policy recommendations from the PRS and approves those considered appropriate, a revised policy manual will be developed by TASB. To maintain this level of review in the future, the district should budget for a

PRS every five years with an internal review process between the PRS sessions.

With the PRS policy work and revised manual completed, the district should work with the TASB policy service consultant to develop an internal review system to maintain and revise policy as needed. Once a method of review has been established, the superintendent and board should identify which staff members will be responsible for maintaining the review schedule. Policies can be divided by topic or category and delegated to staff or board members who have an understanding of the policy area. Some policies may warrant feedback and consultation with a stakeholder group.

As part of the systematic review, policies should be revised and other new policies developed. Through the TASB service, the district submits a revised or new policy to TASB. The policy will be reviewed by TASB with feedback to the district. Once the policy is ready for submission to the manual, TASB will insert the policy into the district manual at a charge of \$30 per page. This service provides the district a means of adding or revising policy to the existing district manual at a minimal cost.

The TASB policy service consultant assigned to Big Spring ISD estimated the total cost of a PRS at \$5,000. This includes an estimated \$2,000 for the PRS session; \$1,200 for travel, lodging, and meals for the TASB facilitators assisting with the PRS process while in the district; and \$1,800 for a revised policy manual that will result from the PRS.

PROCEDURE FOR BOARD APPOINTMENTS (REC. 5)

Big Spring ISD lacks policies and procedures for addressing the appointment of individuals to fill board vacancies.

While the district has a broad policy governing filling board vacancies, the board does not have a local policy detailing when the board may appoint a member, how the appointment process should work, or what qualifications the appointed member should have. This lack of procedures has resulted in inconsistent board practice in filling vacant positions. Currently, three of Big Spring ISD's seven board members were appointed.

Board vacancies can occur for a number of reasons: resignations for personal reasons; illness; residency change; involuntary removal; and military duty which results in temporary replacement. Big Spring ISD Board Policy BBC (LEGAL) specifies that the board may fill the vacancy until the next board member election by appointment or special

election. If more than one year remains on the term, the vacancy should be filled no later than the 180th day after the date vacancy occurs.

According to board members, the board has historically appointed persons to fill board vacancies. Interviews with Big Spring board members and staff indicated that the board has not established criteria for evaluating persons it appoints to fill vacancies. While inconsistent practice is an issue with respect to equity and access, there is a risk with the lack of a selection procedure that would require all board members to be involved in the review of credentials and interview of prospective appointees. For example, one appointed board member was recruited by a colleague at work and was appointed without an interview by the board or superintendent. Another appointed board member was sought out by a friend and encouraged to submit an application letter. This person stated that he was interviewed by the superintendent and was told he was selected.

Board Policy BBC (LEGAL), which is not supported by a local policy, specifies certain conditions if the appointment method is used to fill vacancies. These conditions are that if the candidate meets the qualifications set forth in election code, an appointment to the board may be made with the “intent to ensure that the Board is representative of the constituency served by the board.” However, Board Policy BBC (LEGAL) further states, “A board that chooses this option shall adopt procedures for its implementation.” However, Big Spring ISD has no locally adopted procedures to guide board members in appointing individuals to fill board vacancies.

Without a local policy or procedures regarding board member appointments, the board could face credibility and potential liability issues. The board is responsible to the constituents of the vacant position and obligated to conduct a rigorous selection process that results in the best possible appointee. Since the appointee typically runs for the board slot unopposed at the next election, the board is often speaking on behalf of its constituents. Without a clear procedure for selecting the appointee, the board is at risk of not adequately fulfilling its responsibility to constituents.

As board members play a vital role in the success of the district, the standards for filling a vacancy are comparable to those for staff selection. Best practices for an employee selection process entails notification or advertising, reviewing, screening, interviewing, and verifying eligibility and references prior to employment. Board appointment

procedures warrant the same level of selection rigor. If a quality selection procedure is committed to and used each time a board appointment is made, the community will come to view the process as open, consistent, and accessible to anyone that is eligible.

Big Spring ISD should revise the board operating procedures manual and develop local policy to specifically address board processes for appointing individuals to fill mid-term school board vacancies.

The board should first review Board Policy BBC (LEGAL) which specifies certain conditions if the appointment method is used to fill vacancies to determine what procedures must be used to establish qualifications. These procedures should address how to verify U.S. citizenship, age, qualified voter status, registered voter status, 12-month state residency requirement, and six-month residency in the specified geographic area to be represented. The board should develop an application that addresses the qualifications that must be verified, as well as questions relating to other areas of qualification. The human resources department should review the application to ensure that all the questions meet legal requirements. The application should be designed to be submitted by prospective appointees with a cover letter and resume.

Procedures for the actual selection of the board member should mirror sound employment practice. To develop these selection procedures, the board should collaborate with the human resources department. These selection procedures should address:

- What is the timeline for the advertising and deadline for applications?
- How will the board notify the community of the vacancy?
- What should the information flyer/posting look like and where should it be distributed or published?
- What kind of job description could be developed that conveys an understanding of the opportunity to the community?
- Where will board members present this opportunity to the community? What will the active recruitment of viable candidates look like?
- Where will an application packet be found and where should it be returned?

- As the board enters the application screening phase of the selection process, confidentiality as stringent as the one imposed for executive sessions should be provided for in the procedure. This level of confidentiality should be maintained throughout the remaining phases of the process. The screening procedures should address:
- What will be the criteria for screening applicants? Are there any screening criteria beyond the eligibility qualifications? Who will screen the applicant? The board as a whole or a subcommittee of the board?
- How and who will verify the required qualifications? How will background checks be conducted and who will check references?
- How and who will notify those candidates selected for interviews?

Due to the importance of an appointment to fill a vacancy, it is recommended that the board as a whole interview each of the identified candidates during a designated executive session and that this is specified in procedure. Interview procedures should address:

- What questions should be asked? Who should ask which question?
- Who will facilitate the interview so it flows smoothly?
- How much time will be allowed for the interview?
- What will be the norms for discussing and selecting the appointee?
- Who and/or how will the appointee be notified?
- Who and/or how will those not selected be informed?

Once a draft procedure is completed and reviewed by human resources staff the document should be submitted to legal counsel for final review. A further step should be to develop Board Policy BBC (LOCAL) that aligns to the newly published procedure.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

LOCAL ORIENTATION TRAINING (REC. 6)

Big Spring ISD's local orientation training for new board members is not consistent with state law.

Effective governance of local school districts is the result of well-prepared board members. To accomplish this, the state of Texas emphasizes the initial training and continuing education of school board members. The Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Section 61.1, requires that the local district orientation for first year board members include at least three hours of training. The purpose of the local orientation is to familiarize new board members with local board policies and procedures, as well as district goals and priorities. The Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 11.159, specifies that the orientation should be within 60 days of the board member's election or appointment.

The TAC specifies a local orientation that addresses local district practices as well as a prescribed list of topics that include:

- curriculum and instruction;
- business and finance operations;
- district operations;
- superintendent evaluation; and
- board member roles and responsibilities.

The local training for new Big Spring ISD board members, as described by various board members, does not comply with state requirements and local board procedures.

The board operating procedures manual, which was developed and updated by TASB in school year 2013–14, provides a detailed orientation training plan for new board members that aligns with TEC requirements and Board Policy BBD (LEGAL). The board procedure requires the orientation occur within two weeks of the new board member taking the oath and be conducted by the superintendent and at least two incumbent members of the board. The orientation includes the list of required topics in addition to sections on general district information and team operations, including:

- Overview of District Programs
- District vision, mission and goals
- District Planning and Evaluation
- Most recent state achievement reports
- District Budget overview
- Overview of District Curriculum

- Personnel Hiring Practice and Salary
- Team Operations
- Board Member Roles and Responsibilities
- Required training
- Team improvement goals
- Agenda, calendars, and events
- Team Operating Procedures

However, individuals who have become board members in the last five years described a brief local training that was said to be about an hour and primarily focused on the board’s role and responsibility. In one instance, the board member stated the training was conducted by the superintendent. Others described the training as being conducted by the superintendent and president of the board. One hour of orientation is not consistent with the training outlined in the board operating procedure manual. In discussions with newer board members, they were not able to describe the superintendent evaluation or budget planning processes. **Figure 1–6** shows the state requirements for local district orientation for new board members and compares these to Big Spring ISD’s local orientation process.

Without a substantive orientation, new board members are at a disadvantage. They do not have a familiarity with many of the issues they will face. In interviews with the review

team, the new board members acknowledged limited understanding of some required training topics. A lack of understanding of key policies, as well as processes such as the evaluation of the superintendent and budget planning, can make it more difficult for new board members to fully participate in board deliberations.

The Big Spring ISD board should implement a new board member local training program consistent with state law that prepares new members to understand the overall operations of the district.

The superintendent and board should review its existing plan for new board member orientation as outlined in detail in the board operating procedure manual. The outline itself aligns to the components specified by the TEC. As a first step, the board, working with the superintendent, should use the existing plan to design a local training program.

In designing the program, the board should consider that the TEC, Section 11.159, requires at least three hours of training to be provided within 60 days, while board procedure requires it within two weeks of taking the oath. This requirement does not limit training to three hours, and with the extensive training outlined by the board, it would be difficult to effectively deliver the content in three hours. So the first point of consideration would be how to organize the training components over time to adequately address the content and increase meaningful learning.

**FIGURE 1–6
BOARD MEMBER LOCAL ORIENTATION TRAINING**

STATE REQUIREMENTS	BIG SPRING ISD PRACTICE
A local district orientation session must be held within 60 days before or after the election or appointment of a new board member.	Big Spring does hold orientations within 60 days of being elected or appointed.
The local district orientation shall address local district practices in the following, in addition to topics chosen by the local district: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) curriculum and instruction; (ii) business and finance operations; (iii) district operations; (iv) superintendent evaluation; and (v) board member roles and responsibilities. 	The orientation is primarily focused on board member roles and responsibilities. In discussions with newer board members, they were not able to describe the superintendent evaluation or budget planning processes.
The local district orientation shall be at least three hours in length for each new board member.	The orientation is approximately an hour in length.

SOURCES: Texas Administrative Code, Section 61.1; Texas Education Code, Section 11.159.

Through the process of designing the orientation program, the board and superintendent should address discussion points such as:

- What critical learning components should be included in the initial training component?
- What should a new board member know and be able to do as a result of this training?
- How can the training components be organized and scheduled to maximize learning?
- Who should be involved in presenting the training?
- How can the concept of mentorship be implemented in preparing the new board members?

Since the board operating procedures manual specifies that the superintendent and at least two incumbent board members will participate in the training, decisions should be made as to which incumbents will be involved and what role each will play in the training.

Since the time of the onsite review, Big Spring ISD reports that they have created a new board member orientation manual and that all new board members are required to sign a document indicating they have received the required 3 hours of local orientation training in the various areas outlined by state guidelines.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

SUPERINTENDENT EVALUATION (REC. 7)

Big Spring ISD lacks a clearly defined process for evaluating the superintendent.

The Texas Education Code, Section 39.054, requires the results of the district's annual performance report from the state accountability system to be a primary consideration in the board's evaluation of the superintendent. However, Big Spring ISD's current process for the evaluation of the superintendent is vague, ambiguous, and does not establish measurable performance goals. The superintendent's contract states there will be an evaluation every 15 months, while Board Policy BJCD (LOCAL) indicates the board will prepare a written evaluation of the superintendent annually or at more frequent intervals. The current superintendent's contract describes terms and conditions of employment, but sets no performance objectives.

Board Policy BJCD (LOCAL) states the board will strive to accomplish a set of five objectives:

- clarify to the superintendent's role as seen by the board;
- clarify to board members the superintendent's role, according to the board's written criteria as expressed in the superintendent's job description and the district's goal and objectives;
- foster an early understanding among new board members of the evaluation process and the superintendent's current performance objectives and priorities;
- develop and sustain a harmonious working relationship between the board and the superintendent; and
- ensure administrative leadership for excellence in the district.

The evaluation process, as set forth in this policy, is non-specific and no reference is made to establishing measurable performance objectives or evaluation criteria.

The exhibit attached to Board Policy BJCD (LOCAL), titled "Procedures for Appraisal of Superintendent Recommended by the Commissioner" was issued by the TASB policy service in 2010 and outlines a set of procedures created by the Commissioner of Education that may be used in evaluating superintendents. However, the exhibit states that the procedures for evaluation discussed within it are not required but may be used in part or whole. Board Policy BJCD (LOCAL) references the Texas Administration Code, Section 150.1022(e), which states that student performance shall be a part of the locally developed appraisal instrument for superintendents.

In interviews with the review team, the board's secretary reported that there is an appraisal form for the superintendent's evaluation, although at the time of the onsite review it was not available for the review team to assess. The current superintendent was hired in February 2014 and has not yet had a performance review. District staff was able to provide one evaluation of a previous superintendent. This appraisal had no date or signatures, but was likely from school year 2010–11. This previous evaluation does not contain measures related to student performance as required.

Neither Big Spring ISD's board policy nor the board procedure manual outlines what aspects of the Commissioner of Education's recommendations, if any, are used by the

board in the evaluation process for the superintendent. The board policy and the board procedures manual also do not contain an appraisal form.

In interviews with the review team, board members stated with general unanimity that there were broad expectations discussed with the current superintendent at the time of employment. These included such things as increased visibility in the community with improved relations, a positive change in accountability ratings, a restructuring of the district organization, and addressing reading achievement by a return to a phonics-based curriculum. One board member had the understanding that these expectations had been turned into written measurable outcomes provided to the superintendent. However, the superintendent said that there were no written goals provided by the board but rather informal expectations discussed at the time of employment.

The superintendent indicated that his evaluation has not been discussed specifically since he assumed the position, and he was not aware of the format or criteria for an evaluation. However, based on observations of the previous superintendent's evaluation, the process appeared to be driven by the superintendent with the superintendent preparing and taking a packet to the board. One board member stated that the superintendent provides the form to the board, and another stated the superintendent assembles the approach to be used for the evaluation.

The lack of a defined evaluation process with measurable performance objectives results in confusion for the superintendent and board members, and a lack of focus for the district. In addition, the lack of a defined evaluation process does not allow the district to hold the superintendent accountable for his job performance. As emphasized by the National Association of School Boards (NASB) in its July 2014 report, *A Case for Improving Superintendent Evaluation*, superintendents and boards play key roles in the performance and outcomes of school systems. Fair, valid, and objective-driven evaluation of a superintendent's performance is critical to the work of the superintendent and the district. Without an effective performance-based evaluation process for the superintendent, it is difficult to align and focus board and superintendent leadership for significant improvement of the district.

In addition, TEC, Section 21.354 (d), states "Funds of a school district may not be used to pay an administrator who has not been appraised under this section in the preceding 15 months." If the current superintendent is not evaluated by

the end of school year 2014–15, the district would be in violation of state law.

TASB provides direction to boards in developing effective superintendent evaluation processes with measurable performance goals. TASB provides a framework for connecting the superintendent's performance goals with those of the board. Examples are offered of how to make these connections. TASB also states that goals should contain criteria for what will demonstrate successful performance on the goal.

The sample procedures document provided by TASB references the use of performance goals at several points in the evaluation process. TASB suggests that the board identify the performance goal areas at the conclusion of the evaluation, and develop specific performance goals within a month after the summative evaluation. At a posted meeting within six weeks after the summative, TASB recommends that the board and superintendent meet to discuss the goals and set the target results for the next summative evaluation. This establishes a process by which reviewing and setting of performance goals is an integral part of the superintendent's evaluation.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a comprehensive superintendent evaluation process that is based on measurable performance goals and clearly established expectations.

As board policy and the board procedures manual do not describe the existing step-by-step procedure for the superintendent evaluation, the board members should meet in a series of work sessions to clarify what they consider to be their existing practice. Once the board has identified and clarified what is considered current procedures for the superintendent evaluation, the members should compare these to the sample procedures and goal setting documents from TASB and the recommendations from the Commissioner of Education to begin to formulate a clearly articulated procedure.

The first step to implementing suggested procedures should be a determination of how annual student performance will be used in the evaluation. While the specific superintendent evaluation process in general is not prescribed in code or regulations, TEC, Section 39.054, requires the results of the annual performance report to be a primary consideration in the board's evaluation of the superintendent. The Commissioner of Education provides a worksheet form to assist in developing this domain which can be found in

superintendent evaluation resources on the TASB website. Boards must use the data from the 2014 form in their appraisal of the superintendent or adopt an alternate method for considering student performance, developed in consultation with site-based advisory teams.

Once the method for assessment of the student performance is in place, the board should determine how other measurable performance goals will be developed. TASB suggests that superintendent performance goals be related and derived from district goals. If district goals are not clearly articulated, then the board must consider the areas for superintendent goals, how should goals be developed, and what will be the role of the superintendent in developing the goals. Goal setting can be incorporated into the summative evaluation cycle as suggested by the TASB sample procedure document. Regardless of how the goals are developed, there must be criteria for what will be considered successful performance.

With the process for establishing the school performance goal and other superintendent goals identified, the board should collaborate with the superintendent to get feedback and refine the goal setting process as needed. Then, with the core of the evaluation system determined, the board should continue to work collaboratively with the superintendent to develop the step-by-step procedure for the evaluation system. The TASB sample procedures document can be used as a framework and customized as is suggested. Finally, the board should review the appraisal form related to changes in goal setting processes and specific procedures to ensure overall alignment of the tool with the process.

Once the superintendent evaluation system has been revised to include measurable performance goals and step by step procedures, a draft document should be reviewed by legal counsel through TASB or by the district's attorney. Upon feedback from the legal review, the document should be developed into a policy that will replace existing policy. The appraisal form should be included as an exhibit attached to the policy. The policy and appraisal form should then be submitted to the board for approval.

The board should revise the board procedures manual to incorporate the approved superintendent evaluation system. As new board members are elected, the evaluation system should be included with specificity in the local training program. All board members and the superintendent should have a clear understanding of the superintendent evaluation system, which would include how performance goals and effectiveness criteria are set, procedural steps, the roles of the

board and superintendent in the process, and the use of the appraisal instrument.

With the finalized process in place, the board should immediately proceed to implement the process by working with the superintendent to set or revise measurable performance goals with clear criteria for accomplishment. The language in the superintendent's contract should be revised to align to the evaluation system. After the completion of the first cycle of use, the board and the superintendent should collaborate to review the process and the appraisal tool and revise the system as needed.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

BOARD COMMUNICATION (REC. 8)

Big Spring ISD policies and procedures do not effectively address board member use of personal electronics for board-related communication.

Big Spring ISD's board has an operating procedures manual that was developed by TASB and revised in school year 2013–14 that includes guidance on board behavior and actions. This manual addresses general procedures that align to policy. A review of the document reveals some omissions in areas that affect board member communication using personal electronic devices.

In interviews with the review team, board members commented that communication has improved both among board members and between the board and the superintendent. Board members agreed using electronic communication was valuable to them and stated that they use personal cell phones and personal email accounts to conduct district business. They receive texts and emails from the superintendent with information updates and alerts.

While the use of personal cell phones and personal email accounts by board members is allowable, the procedures manual does not delineate parameters and guidelines for their use. The 2014 Public Information Handbook, published by the Texas Office of the Attorney General, states that under the Public Information Act if information is made, transmitted, maintained, or received in connection with a governmental body's official business, the mere fact that the governmental body does not possess the information does not take the information outside the scope of the Act. As a result, an open records request made to Big Spring ISD could involve board members having their personal emails and cell phone becoming a part of such a request.

Big Spring ISD's board operating procedure manual does not describe factors considered when the district determined board members could use personal email addresses and cell phones. No language exists in the procedures manual or policy to show that intentional deliberation was given to the management of board-related business records on personal electronic devices.

Although the Board Policy BBI (LOCAL), Technology Resources and Electronic Communications, issued in 2011, creates a framework for the board to use district email and other technology resources, there is no reference in procedures as to the legal, logistical, or personal advantages or disadvantages of using personal communication devices or how communication records will be maintained. The policy also contains a section that states: "A Board member shall retain electronic records, whether created or maintained using the District's technology resources or using personal technology resources, in accordance with the District's record management program." There is no detailed district management of board members' communications.

Use of personal accounts instead of district accounts presents potential legal liability for board members as well as potential open records and open meeting issues for the board. Without clear parameters for the use of personal communication devices and maintenance of business-related records, a board member could be liable for accidentally destroying or mismanaging business records. An accidental act of this nature would fall under Chapter 37 of the Texas Penal Code, which could result in serious personal liability issues for a board member.

Another issue could be open meeting requirements. The Texas Government Code, Chapter 552, established the Open Meetings Act which requires meetings of governmental bodies to be open to the public, except for expressly authorized closed sessions. As part of the Open Meetings Act, individuals have the right to access government records through an open records request. All government information is presumed to be available to the public and governmental bodies shall promptly release requested information that is not confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision, or information for which an exception to disclosure has not been sought. This act extends to school boards and school board meetings. The Texas Government Code, Section 552.002, defines "public information" to specifically include: "any electronic communication created, transmitted, received, or maintained on any device if the communication is in connection with the transaction of

official business." "Official business" is defined as "created by, transmitted to, received by, or maintained by an officer or employee of the governmental body in the officer's or employee's official capacity." This would apply to board members' emails. When this email is located in a personal email account it can make the open records request more difficult to comply with and expose personal communication to legal review for potential disclosure.

In three of four peer districts surveyed, board members have a district email address, and that email address is posted on the district website. In response to questions from the review team, administrators in peer districts said the decision to use a district email address was primarily to ensure the board members had an active, viable email address and to increase access for communication.

All peer districts have the same TASB-generated policy regarding electronic communication that provides general direction. Except for Dumas ISD, none of the peer district administrators discussed a specific system to manage district business conducted using district or personal electronic devices. Dumas ISD does not sort through emails to determine business records, instead the district decided to solve the problem by archiving all district emails.

Tyler ISD board members use a district email addresses and have an electronic communications policy. Tyler ISD board members use personal cell phones and some choose to provide the local media with personal cell phone numbers. While effective communication has been the focus underlying the decisions with respect to use of emails and cell phones, the records management issues have been addressed by the Tyler ISD board through board policy. The Tyler ISD board has expanded their Board Policy BBE (LOCAL), Board Members Authority, to include additional components on constituent services. One of these components specifically states "the board and superintendent shall work together to put in place a system for tracking and responding to constituent inquiries." In addition to this expanded policy, the Tyler ISD board has created a Constituent Services Flow Chart that illustrates a system for managing and recording one component of board use of district email and personal cell phones.

Big Spring ISD should revise its policies and procedures to effectively address board members' electronic communication using personal devices.

The board should review existing policies and related law regarding the use of district versus personal email addresses

and cell phones, and the management of electronic communications records. This should include a review of:

- local policies BBI, CPS, and BBE
- 2014 Public Information Handbook published by the Texas Office of the Attorney General.
- policies from other districts that go beyond the TASB-generated policies to address the local board issues
- peer district practices related to the issues
- Tyler ISD's expanded Board Policy BBE (LOCAL) Board Member Authority and the BBE .

With an understanding of the issues regarding public information, official business, and open meeting guidelines, the board should discuss the pros and cons of personal versus district communication devices (email and cell phones). The board should decide whether to retain the use of personal email addresses and cell phones or other alternatives.

Once the board has decided on a policy for the use of personal email addresses and cell phones, the board should collaborate with the superintendent in devising a method for how board electronic communication records will be effectively managed and monitored. Board Policy BBI (LOCAL) regarding board members' responsibility to retain electronic records should be central to this discussion. The board should expand Board Policy BBA (LOCAL) to include communication with constituents and the related management system.

Once records retention and management are clearly articulated in appropriate policy revisions, the board should develop another procedure for the operating procedures manual. The procedure should specify the parameters as to board members' use of district or personal devices in conducting district business and responsibility in contributing to the records management and monitoring system. The procedure should provide detailed "how to" action steps for board members to:

- effectively use electronic devices, be they district or personal, for district business;
- successfully retain electronic records in accordance with the district management system; and
- consistently contribute electronic records to the district's management system.

The board should meet with the superintendent and any person designated to assist with records management to

discuss the draft documents and then revise as needed. This revised draft of policy revisions should be submitted to TASB for review, and the draft procedures document should be referred to the district's legal counsel for review under the retainer agreement fee. Once revised, the manual should be distributed to the superintendent and appropriate administrators.

This recommendation could be implemented with 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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 1: DISTRICT LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATION, AND GOVERNANCE							
1. Develop and implement a three- to five year comprehensive strategic plan with measureable objectives to ensure accountability and evaluate the district's effectiveness in meeting the needs of its students.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$0)
2. Develop and implement an organizational structure that specifies clear lines of authority and reasonable spans of control for district administrators to provide efficient and effective operation of the district.	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$358,645	\$0
3. Develop and implement policies and procedures for engaging and managing legal services.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
4. Develop and implement procedures that will create a timeline and framework for systematically reviewing and updating all board policies.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$5,000)
5. Revise the board operating procedures manual and develop local policy to specifically address board processes for appointing individuals to fill mid-term school board vacancies.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
6. Implement a new board member local training program consistent with state law that prepares new members to understand the overall operations of the district.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
7. Develop and implement a comprehensive superintendent evaluation process that is based on measurable performance goals and clearly established expectations.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
8. Revise its policies and procedures to effectively address board members' electronic communication using personal devices.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$71,729	\$358,645	(\$5,000)

CHAPTER 2. EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

An independent school district's educational service 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 education-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.

Big Spring Independent School District (ISD) has eight campuses, including Big Spring High School, Big Spring Junior High School, Big Spring Intermediate School, four elementary schools (Goliad, Marcy, Moss, and Washington), and the Kentwood Early Childhood Center. Big Spring ISD's

enrollment in school year 2013–14 was 4,134 students.

Figure 2–1 shows the demographics of students at Big Spring ISD compared to peer districts, the average of the other districts served by the Regional Education Service Center XVIII (Region 18), and the state. Peer district are districts similar to Big Spring ISD used for comparison purposes.

As **Figure 2–1** shows, 62.1 percent of students at Big Spring ISD are Hispanic, 28.8 percent are White, and 6.0 percent are African-American. Also, 65.2 percent of Big Spring ISD students are economically disadvantaged, which is higher than all peer districts except for Dumas ISD, and is higher than the region and state averages. Conversely, 50.0 percent of Big Spring ISD's students are at-risk, which is lower than all peer districts except Andrews ISD, and is lower than the region average, and about the same as the state average.

Figure 2–2 shows student attendance, dropout, graduation, and college preparation and readiness rates for Big Spring ISD, peer districts, Region 18, and the state.

As **Figure 2–2** shows, Big Spring ISD has lower rates of college ready students and students that took the SAT/ACT tests than peer districts, the districts in Region 18, and the state. Big Spring ISD has a higher participation rate for advanced courses/dual enrollment than three of its peers. However, the district's advanced courses/dual enrollment participation rate (21.1 percent) is well below the state average.

FIGURE 2–1
DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENTS IN BIG SPRING ISD, PEER DISTRICTS, REGION 18, AND THE STATE
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14

STUDENTS	BIG SPRING	ANDREWS	DUMAS	EL CAMPO	SNYDER	REGION 18	STATE
African-American	6.0%	1.4%	0.8%	11.7%	2.2%	4.5%	12.7%
Hispanic	62.1%	66.3%	69.6%	60.7%	60.2%	66.7%	51.8%
White	28.8%	30.0%	19.4%	26.3%	34.8%	26.3%	29.4%
American Indian	0.2%	0.3%	0.5%	0.1%	0.8%	0.3%	0.4%
Asian	0.6%	0.3%	8.4%	0.2%	0.7%	1.0%	3.7%
Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	2.3%	1.6%	1.4%	1.0%	1.3%	1.1%	1.9%
Economically Disadvantaged	65.2%	42.0%	68.7%	65.1%	56.9%	50.7%	60.2%
English Language Learners	2.1%	11.8%	28.4%	10.8%	9.4%	4.1%	17.5%
At-Risk	50.0%	42.4%	58.1%	50.4%	52.4%	56.0%	49.9%

NOTE: Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–14.

**FIGURE 2–2
STUDENT ATTENDANCE, DROPOUT, GRADUATION, AND COLLEGE PREPARATION AND READINESS RATES IN
BIG SPRING ISD, PEER DISTRICTS, REGION 18, AND THE STATE
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

CRITERION	BIG SPRING	ANDREWS	DUMAS	EL CAMPO	SNYDER	REGION 18	STATE
Attendance Rate	94.4%	95.7%	96.0%	95.0%	96.0%	94.5%	95.8%
Longitudinal Dropout Rate (Class of 2013)	7.3%	6.3%	0.4%	3.3%	5.6%	13.4%	6.6%
Graduation Rate (Class of 2013)	91.9%	92.2%	96.6%	95.3%	93.8%	80.1%	88.0%
Advanced Courses/Dual Enrollment	21.1%	21.7%	17.8%	19.3%	18.2%	25.3%	31.4%
College-Ready Students - Both English Language Arts & Math	37.0%	41.0%	52.0%	50.0%	56.0%	49.0%	56.0%
SAT/ACT Tested	22.9%	43.5%	36.3%	48.6%	35.2%	44.1%	49.0%
Tested At/Above Criterion	16.7%	15.6%	18.1%	17.3%	17.2%	19.2%	25.4%
Graduates Enrolled in TX Institution of Higher Education (Class of 2012)	44.2%	36.7%	50.2%	56.6%	51.5%	52.5%	57.3%
Completing One Year Without Remediation (Class of 2012)	61.3%	74.4%	71.1%	69.0%	62.7%	66.9%	69.0%

Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–14.

Big Spring ISD has a history of variable academic achievement. Under the state accountability system, the district was rated Improvement Required for school years 2012–13 and 2013–14. While there were no state accountability ratings in school year 2011–12, Big Spring ISD was rated Academically Unacceptable in school year 2010–11 and Academically Acceptable in school year 2009–10. All campuses have a history of variable accountability ratings as well. **Figure 2–3** shows the state accountability ratings for Big Spring ISD and its campuses from school years 2009–10 to 2013–14.

During the onsite review, Big Spring ISD had an accreditation rating of Accredited-Warning. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) issued this rating to the district based on two consecutive years of poor academic performance. In school years 2010–11 and 2012–13, Big Spring ISD earned Academically Unacceptable and Improvement Required accountability ratings. These years are counted as consecutive years in terms of state accountability, as no state accountability ratings were given to districts in school year 2011–12. Since the onsite review, TEA issued Big Spring ISD an Improvement Required accountability rating for school year 2013–14 with an accreditation rating of Accredited-Probation. A status of Accredited-Probation means that a district exhibits deficiencies in performance that, if not addressed, will lead to

Big Spring ISD being assigned an accreditation status of Not Accredited-Revoked. A Not Accredited-Revoked status means that the TEA no longer recognizes the district as a Texas public school.

In March 2014, the new Big Spring ISD superintendent created the position of director of curriculum and instruction and filled it with one of the district’s elementary school assistant principals. The new appointee was charged with structuring a formal organization responsible for curriculum and instruction, since such a department did not previously exist. In July 2014, four positions were created and filled: one instructional support content specialist each for PreK–12 reading and mathematics and two instructional support specialists for elementary reading. All four of these positions work directly with principals and staff assisting with implementing strategies for improving reading and math instruction. Some of these strategies include lesson planning, lesson modeling, classroom management, transition management, peer/community/student communications and relationships, data analysis, team building, and mentoring of teachers. The testing coordinator is also assigned to the Curriculum and Instruction Department. **Figure 2–4** shows the current organization of the Curriculum and Instruction Department.

FIGURE 2–3
BIG SPRING ISD STATE ACCOUNTABILITY RATINGS
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14

CAMPUS	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Districtwide	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
High School	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Met Standard	Met Standard
Junior High School	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Met Standard
Goliad Intermediate	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	N/A	N/A
Goliad Elementary(1)	N/A	N/A	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
Marcy Elementary	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
Moss Elementary	Recognized	Academically Acceptable	None	Improvement Required	Met Standard
Washington Elementary	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	Improvement Required	Improvement Required
Bauer Elementary(2)	Academically Acceptable	Academically Unacceptable	None	N/A	N/A

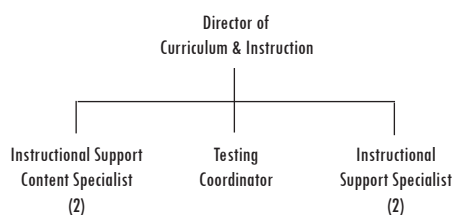
NOTES:

(1) Goliad Elementary's first year of existence was school year 2012–13.

(2) Bauer Elementary no longer existed after school year 2011–12.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Academic Accountability Ratings, school years 2009–10 to 2013–14.

FIGURE 2–4
BIG SPRING ISD CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

Big Spring ISD also has a director of school improvement position. The Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 39.106, stipulates that districts with low performing schools designate a central administration position to lead campus intervention teams (CITs) to ensure all relevant staff participate in the Texas Accountability Intervention System's continuous improvement process. The position was filled in February 2014. This position reports directly to the superintendent. Because of the district's poor academic accountability ratings, the district also works with professional service providers (PSPs). These individuals are experienced educators, former

principals, superintendents, and district administrators who provide technical assistance to campuses that receive an accountability rating of Improvement Required. Big Spring ISD PSPs serve as members of the CITs and work closely with the principals and the director of school improvement. Other positions typically associated with curriculum and instruction are not housed in the Curriculum and Instruction Department. These include the director of federal and special programs and the special education director.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD's instructional organization does not provide unified management of the district's educational services.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks an effective curriculum management system.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks a systematic, districtwide professional development plan for instructional staff.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not have an instructional delivery model that meets the needs of students identified as English Language Learners.

- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not offer a comprehensive program to meet the instructional needs of students who have been identified as gifted and talented.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD's library program has inadequate staffing, an insufficient number of books at some campuses, and a collection of books that is largely out of date.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 9: Consolidate all of the positions responsible for providing curriculum and instructional support to district staff under a new assistant superintendent of instruction position.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 10: Review all areas of curriculum, instruction, instructional resources, and assessment to align these components to provide a framework for a coordinated system of curriculum development and instruction.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 11: Develop and implement a coordinated, districtwide professional development process that ensures that all teachers receive specific training focused on key district goals.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 12: Develop and implement a process for continuous evaluation of the bilingual/ESL program to ensure that the instructional delivery model effectively meets student needs.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 13: Develop and implement a comprehensive gifted and talented program to meet the instructional needs of identified students.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 14: Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the district's library services to ensure that its library staffing, collection, and associated budget are consistent with state standards across campuses.**

DETAILED FINDINGS

ALIGNMENT AND COOPERATION (REC. 9)

Big Spring ISD's instructional organization does not provide unified management of the district's educational services.

The district has several positions that are responsible for overseeing and providing support for the district's various instructional and educational services. No position, however,

is responsible for providing districtwide leadership for Big Spring ISD's instructional program. The district has an assistant superintendent position, assists the superintendent with all the district's programs, but the position's purpose is not specific to an academic role. Within the district's central administration, several instructional support positions report directly to the superintendent, including the director of curriculum and instruction, special education director, the director of federal and special programs, and the director of school improvement. In addition, the district has an instructional technology specialist who reports to the technology director and a career and technology education coordinator who reports to the assistant superintendent. **Figure 2–5** shows the instructional support positions and their responsibilities in Big Spring ISD.

While all of the positions in **Figure 2–5** have varying instructional support responsibilities, the district has no process in place to ensure they are coordinating to provide campuses and teachers with a unified set of instructional goals and strategies.

In Big Spring ISD's instructional organization, the positions responsible for mainstream curriculum development, special population instructional programs, and integration of classroom technology report separately to the superintendent, the director of curriculum and instruction, the assistant superintendent, or the technology director. **Figure 2–6** shows the current district organization chart for instructional support.

The district organization chart lacks clarity and many positions responsible for providing instructional support and guidance to district staff are not sure whom they report to and whom they supervise. For example, the organization chart indicates that the director of curriculum and instruction reports to the director of school improvement, however interviews with staff onsite indicated that these two positions each independently report to the superintendent. In addition, the instructional technology specialist is not included in the organization chart given to central administration staff.

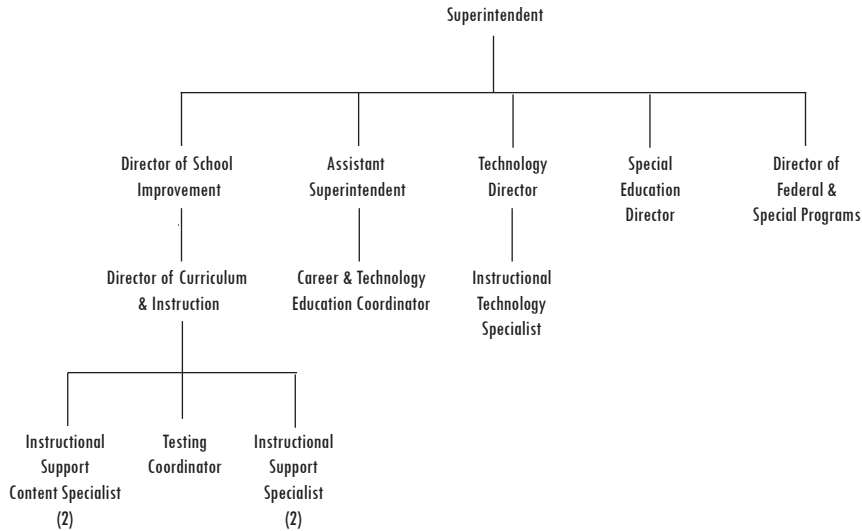
The lack of a coordinated reporting structure among the various educational support positions creates a fractured organizational structure and affects the setting of educational priorities for Big Spring ISD students. For example, in the district's most recent technology plan, the first goal states that Big Spring ISD will "Utilize technology as a tool to foster improvement in academic achievement, curriculum integration, and increased accessibility and innovation." The

FIGURE 2–5
BIG SPRING ISD INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT POSITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15

POSITION	RESPONSIBILITIES	REPORTS TO
Director of School Improvement	<p>Ensure that low performing campuses are provided operational flexibility</p> <p>Ensure effective implementation of all components of the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process</p> <p>Monitor the progress of targeted improvement plans</p> <p>Provide leadership in the disaggregation of data, data analysis, and process monitoring</p> <p>Assist principals by actively problem-solving</p> <p>Assist in the replacement of ineffective staff and the recruitment and retention of effective staff</p>	Superintendent
Director of Curriculum and Instruction	<p>Oversee the curriculum and instructional services provided to students</p> <p>Plan, implement, and evaluate instructional programs with teachers and principals</p>	Superintendent
Director of Federal and Special Programs	<p>Oversee programs related to students identified as at-risk, gifted and talented, or bilingual/English language learners</p> <p>Evaluate programs to ensure that students' needs are properly identified</p> <p>Serve as district 504 Coordinator</p>	Superintendent
Special Education Director	<p>Direct special education services to meet students' needs.</p> <p>Ensure that student progress is evaluated on a regular, systematic basis, and the findings are used to make the special education program more effective</p> <p>Facilitate the use of technology in the teaching-learning process</p> <p>Encourage and support the development of innovative instructional programs, helping teachers to pilot such efforts when appropriate</p> <p>Plan the necessary time, resources, and materials to support subordinates in accomplishing educational goals</p> <p>Serve as resource person for admission, review, and dismissal committees, as needed</p>	Superintendent
Career and Technology Education (CATE) Coordinator	<p>Receive requests from students for new CATE courses/programs of study</p> <p>Schedule CATE courses and students into the courses</p> <p>Ensure courses and teachers meet state requirements</p>	Assistant Superintendent
Instructional Technology Specialist	<p>Provide leadership and technical expertise to principals and other district personnel in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective instructional technology throughout the district</p> <p>Coordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive staff development plan for the use of instructional technology</p> <p>Coordinate the writing of curriculum for technology programs and monitor the instructional process in all content areas using technology</p>	Technology Director
Instructional Support Content Specialists & Instructional Specialists	<p>Provide curriculum leadership and instructional support to classroom teachers (PreK–12) and ensure an aligned and articulated instructional program in the subject area assigned</p> <p>Provide support to teachers and staff, including lesson planning, lesson modeling, classroom management, transition management, peer/community/student communications and relationships, data analysis, team building, and mentoring teachers</p>	Director of Curriculum and Instruction

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

FIGURE 2–6
BIG SPRING ISD ORGANIZATION CHART FOR INSTRUCTION SUPPORT
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



Sources: Legislative Budget Board, School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

district has an instructional technology specialist who is responsible for assisting teachers and principals with integrating technology into the classroom. In Big Spring ISD’s organizational structure, the instructional technology specialist is located in the Technology Department and reports to the technology director. However, the technology director does not coordinate the activities of the department with other instructional support staff. As a result, the instructional technology specialist estimates she spends 70 percent of her time responding to the Technology Department’s help desk tickets instead of assisting staff in integrating technology into the classroom and curriculum.

Furthermore, the instructional responsibilities assigned to each district-level department are not clearly defined and communicated to campus staff. In interviews with the review team, campus employees indicated that they were often confused as to whom at the central office they should contact with questions regarding curriculum and instruction. This confusion leads to a lack of consistency across campuses concerning curriculum implementation. Several principals indicated that they would contact one of the directors regarding instructional questions and, if that individual did not give them the response they wanted, they would call another director until they got their desired answer. One example described in interviews concerned math instruction. The district has struggled on state accountability tests with math at the elementary level. Elementary principals are

confused regarding how much daily instructional time teachers are required to spend teaching mathematics. When principals asked the director of curriculum and instruction how long math instruction should be, they would get one answer, and they would get another when they asked the director of school improvement. In interviews with the review team, principals indicated that they would simply plan their campus’ math instruction according to whichever director’s answer they agreed with.

In addition, there is no collaboration between the various instructional support positions with regards to establishing district and campus plans and objectives. For example, Goliad Elementary, Marcy Elementary, and Washington Elementary are designated as Improvement Required. The Improvement Required campus accountability rating is a direct result of poor state testing results. Each public school district in Texas that has been rated as Improvement Required in the state accountability system becomes engaged in the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS). The TAIS is a continuous improvement process driven by TEA’s ongoing collection and analysis of data. Those campuses engaged in TAIS are required to:

- collect and analyze data;
- determine factors contributing to low performance;

- develop an improvement plan that addresses all areas not meeting the required standard; and
- monitor the implementation of the targeted improvement plan (TIP). The district and/or campus produce TIPs, which provide strategies and goals for improving the district's or campus' state academic ratings.

In developing the required TIPs, the three elementary schools relied on a small group of their own teachers, a professional service provider, and the director of school improvement to develop strategies. The vast majority of these strategies are geared toward improving academics at their individual campuses. However, no member of the Curriculum and Instruction Department was a part of the development of these strategies. There was no effort to incorporate the goals and strategies in the campus TIPs into the Curriculum and Instruction Department's activities.

Big Spring ISD's instructional organization results in the inability of central and campus administrators:

- to set cohesive educational priorities;
- to maintain an effective instructional environment for all district students; and
- to take advantage of operational efficiencies in implementing strategies developed to meet the district's student achievement goals and objectives.

Emphasis on student achievement that involves all stakeholders is evident whenever a district's organizational structure places departments responsible for teaching and learning under one leadership position. For example, the Department of Teaching and Learning in Brazosport ISD works with all campus principals in the areas of curriculum and instruction, as well as the district's school improvement coordinators, facilitators and coaches, to coordinate and implement programs and practices to enhance student achievement at all Brazosport ISD campuses. The Brazosport ISD Teaching and Learning Department coordinates, supervises, and interacts with principals in regard to:

- curriculum;
- school improvement;
- federal and early childhood programs;
- career and technical education;
- special education;

- language acquisition;
- assessment and accountability;
- general education support;
- media and digital learning; and
- professional learning.

Big Spring ISD should consolidate all of the positions responsible for providing curriculum and instructional support to district staff under a new assistant superintendent for instruction position.

Big Spring ISD's current assistant superintendent position should be eliminated and a new position titled assistant superintendent for instruction should be created to oversee all of the positions responsible for providing curriculum and instructional support to district staff. The assistant superintendent should supervise all positions currently in the Curriculum and Instruction Department, the special education director, the director of federal and special programs, the CATE coordinator, and the director of school improvement. The instructional technology specialist should be moved from the Technology Department and placed in the Curriculum and Instruction Department. **Figure 2–7** shows the recommended organization chart for instructional support positions.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation. The fiscal impact assumes that the savings from the salary and benefits for eliminating the assistant superintendent position would equal the costs for the salary and benefits for the new assistant superintendent for instruction position.

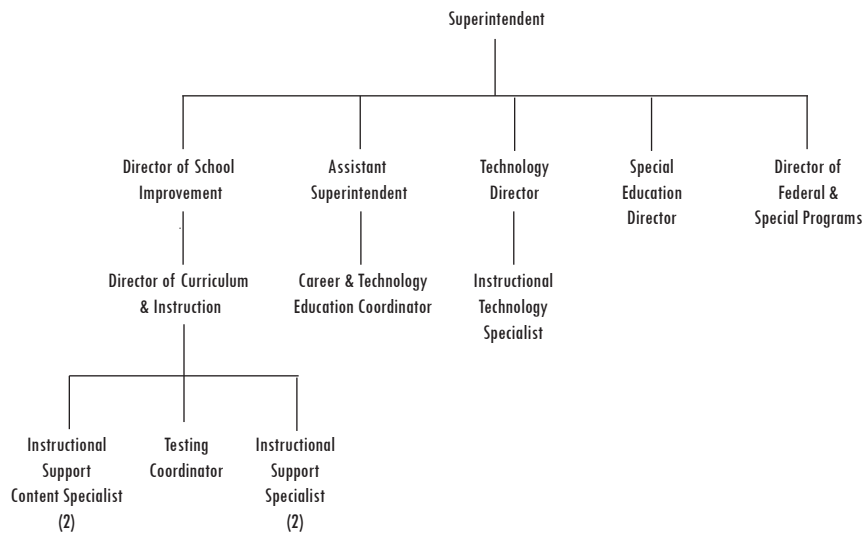
CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT (REC. 10)

Big Spring ISD lacks an effective curriculum management system.

Prior to school year 2014–15, the district used CSCOPE, a curriculum management system produced by a consortium of regional education service centers. CSCOPE included lesson plans and a scope and sequence that provided a schedule specifying when during the school year teachers should provide instruction on specific Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). It also included documents to assist districts with curriculum alignment, instruction, and assessment.

Big Spring ISD's 2014–15 District Improvement Plan (DIP) lists the TEKS Resource System (TRS) as the official district

**FIGURE 2-7
PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT POSITIONS**



SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, School Review Team, January 2015.

curriculum. The Texas Curriculum Management Program Cooperative produces the TRS. The TRS is comparable to CSCOPE in its support documents and schedule, but does not provide the accompanying lesson plans that CSCOPE included. However, teachers are not required to use the TRS, and as a result, curriculum across campuses is not uniform. During onsite interviews, Big Spring ISD staff said it is common for teachers to create their own curriculum outside of the TRS, and the district has not aligned curricula or skills evaluated in state testing vertically between campuses or horizontally within grade levels.

As a companion to the TRS, the elementary schools rely heavily on a web-based software program to assist with data disaggregation, benchmarking, assessment, student achievement, progress monitoring, curriculum, and planning. From a bank of test items provided by the Data Management for Assessment and Curriculum (DMAC) system, the Curriculum and Instruction Department produces benchmark tests for elementary students at various checkpoints during the school year. These checkpoints ensure that instruction aligns to TEKS standards and on track with upcoming standardized TEKS assessments.

The Curriculum and Instruction Department works with the four elementary schools to align the curriculum and instructional efforts, as does the director of school improvement. However, the intermediate school, the junior high, and the high school each operate independently of the

Curriculum and Instruction Department, the director of school improvement, and each other when it comes to curriculum development and instructional planning. While the department has instructional content specialists, who are responsible for assisting all grades throughout the district, staff indicated that they have very limited requests for assistance from non-elementary campuses.

Teachers also have to rely on informal opportunities to discuss what works in the classroom and which resources are most effective. Some teachers use their own resources without a thorough vetting for alignment with the TEKS. The district does not use a consistent process by which all teachers have access to information about available instructional materials and other supplemental resources needed for their classrooms, nor does the district provide adequate opportunities for horizontal and vertical alignment planning. While some campuses did indicate that there were pacing schedules for teachers based around monthly benchmark tests, the review team found little evidence of any consistent districtwide attempts to use student performance data to modify instruction, address areas of weaknesses in performance, and consider additional interventions as needed. Staff do not receive training on how to use student performance data effectively, a key component for modifying the curriculum to meet student needs.

Without a process that requires a periodic and thorough curriculum review, with input from key stakeholders,

including teachers, administrators, the board of trustees, and the community, Big Spring ISD will continue to have an instructional program that lacks vertical and horizontal alignment. In addition, teachers will continue to use instructional materials that have not been reviewed for alignment to the TEKS and instruction will be inconsistent.

Corpus Christi ISD's Board Policy EG, Curriculum Development (LOCAL) is an example of a school district local policy that establishes the vision for the district and defines its curriculum and instructional framework. The policy also outlines the responsibilities of the board, the superintendent, central administration staff, principals, and teachers, and stresses the importance of coordinating curriculum, instruction, assessment, professional development, and educational resources. The policy reflects the mission that the board and administration sets for the district to ensure that all instructional efforts and resources are aligned with state curriculum and assessment standards, and that district personnel are working toward the goal of maximizing opportunities for student achievement.

Big Spring ISD should review all areas of curriculum, instruction, instructional resources, and assessment to horizontally and vertically align these components to provide a framework for a coordinated system of curriculum development and instruction.

The district should solicit input from teachers, administrators, the board of trustees, and stakeholders in the community regarding the most viable approaches to aligning these components and improving student performance. The superintendent, with board members, should appoint a committee that includes a board member, the superintendent, principals, the director of curriculum and instruction, the director of school improvement, a master teacher, if available, and members of the community to make recommend policy changes for board approval. The committee should focus its work to include policies and procedures that are specific to Big Spring ISD. The committee should also develop procedures that provide direction for curriculum design, management, evaluation, and professional development. The committee should then develop a blueprint, based on new board policies, to align the district's curriculum and instruction functions and present the plan to the board for approval. The superintendent and the committee should establish a schedule to review the revised procedures on a six-month basis and make the necessary adjustments based on feedback from teachers and principals.

The director of curriculum and instruction should also study a range of resources available for curriculum improvement, teacher effectiveness, and students' with special needs, including online resources such as Project Share, the Best Practices Clearinghouse, and the What Works Clearinghouse, listed on the TEA website.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT (REC. 11)

Big Spring ISD lacks a systematic, districtwide professional development plan for instructional staff.

In the absence of a district-level professional development process, responsibility for ongoing training for teachers and other employees in Big Spring ISD is vested in principals and departmental managers. One of the goals listed in Big Spring ISD's DIP is to "Provide quality staff development that is aligned with campus and district goals." This responsibility is assigned to the Curriculum and Instruction Department. However, during the onsite review, the director of curriculum and instruction had not fully assumed responsibility for this goal beyond providing specialist assistance to teachers in reading and mathematics.

Training common to all Big Spring ISD instructional staff at all campuses includes orientation and use of the TEKS Resource System, the scope and sequence model for curriculum and instruction. Also, all new staff members receive training and/or orientation on blood-borne pathogens, childhood diabetes management, and emergency treatment.

The Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) for each Big Spring ISD school lists the district's vision and core principles, including to "Provide ongoing meaningful professional development." Principals, working with their site-based decision making teams and the district's director of school improvement, have the responsibility to determine annual training needs based on the disaggregation of student performance data.

During onsite interviews, staff indicated that district campuses do offer some instruction-oriented professional development, but published professional development plans for each campus are not generally prepared. At the time of the onsite review, the district indicated that the Curriculum and Instruction Department was responsible for scheduling, collecting, monitoring, recording, and evaluating all training. However, they had not yet fully assumed these responsibilities.

The district as a result lacks the ability to affirm that required trainings are actually occurring.

The district requires no formal accountability or notification to central administration that training occurred and who attended. For example, the CIP for Big Spring High School lists two strategies pertaining to teacher training:

- provide quality staff development that is aligned with campus and district goals; and
- provide opportunities for core content teachers to receive continuing education from local experts.

However, the content of this planned training, when it will be given or available, how it will be delivered, who will participate, and how the training will be implemented and evaluated for effectiveness was not available or shared with the review team. The same situation exists among other campuses. Strategies listed in the CIP show training will be provided, but descriptions and details of the delivery of that training are not included. There has been minimal coordination, accountability, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the training or assessment of impacts. In addition, the campuses do not keep ongoing logs to show that the training took place, the number attendees, and an overall rating or evaluation of the quality of the delivery of the training. The specific details of plans for training are also not shared with the Curriculum and Instruction Department.

Different academic programs, such as special education or bilingual/English as a second language, coordinate their own professional development without communication with other departments and campuses even when topics overlap. As a result, in addition to a lack of efficiency, there are concerns that not all staff members receive the same information. Training may be effective at some campuses and ineffective at other campuses.

In focus groups, teachers were generally negative regarding the professional development they receive. Some characterized it as “whole group instruction” when more targeted assistance is needed. Teachers also noted “cognitive dissonance” among the various trainings—sometimes what they heard in one training conflicted with what they heard in another.

Generally, the curriculum and instruction leaders in the central offices of school districts assume responsibility for scheduling districtwide professional development. Student performance needs, as determined by student evaluation, direct this professional development. The practices at Texarkana ISD exemplify an effective district-level

professional development operation. The district’s administrative leaders believe that a comprehensive professional development plan that promotes continuous learning and growth for every staff member is the key factor in improving the academic performance of all students. All training is coordinated centrally and training records on all individual employees are kept. Professional development in Texarkana ISD is designed to be:

- research-based;
- data driven;
- job-embedded with opportunities for follow-up;
- TEKS standards-based;
- learning process oriented; and
- continuously evaluated for effectiveness.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a coordinated, districtwide professional development process that ensures that all teachers receive specific training focused on key district goals.

The district should implement a systematic and strategic districtwide professional development plan for all instructional staff that provides differentiated learning opportunities based on staff needs and student performance data. Responsibility for coordinating development of the plan should be assigned to the director of curriculum and instruction. The director should oversee the district’s professional development functions. To begin, the director of curriculum and instruction should facilitate the creation of a needs assessment. As part of this assessment, the director of curriculum and instruction should review all the improvement plans in the district to compile a list of all planned professional development and professional development objectives. The director should then work with the principals to administer a questionnaire to teachers that identifies how targeted professional development can best be provided to teachers based on their identified needs. The district should also consult with teachers and other instructional support staff to ensure that the professional development plan meets the needs of the district.

Any professional development plan should be made available to all staff on the district’s website and the director of curriculum and instruction should coordinate with principals to ensure that staff are adequately informed about the professional development plan. Finally, the director should

annually assess the impact of professional development on district objectives; if, upon evaluation, a particular set of professional development trainings are not found to have a demonstrable impact, they should be replaced the following year.

Since the onsite review, the district reported that they created a draft Professional Development Playbook for school year 2014–15 and they plan to fully implement it for school year 2015–16. The playbook is to serve as the district plan for ensuring the effectiveness of its professional development efforts.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION/ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (REC. 12)

Big Spring ISD does not have an instructional delivery model that meets the needs of students identified as English Language Learners.

At the end of school year 2013–14, 86 (2.1 percent) of Big Spring ISD students were identified as English Language Learners (ELL). The total number of students who were identified ELL over the course of the 2013-14 school year is 103. This number includes ESL students who had enrolled, been identified as LEP/ELL, were served in Big Spring, and withdrew prior to the end of the school year. The number “86” refers to the total of ESL students who were enrolled in the district at the end of the school year. According to staff, most of the students are second and third generation residents of the area, predominantly with Spanish as a first language. The district identifies students through a home language survey as they enter the district. The students are then tested if the survey results indicate it is necessary. The district currently operates an English as a Second Language (ESL) program, but will begin implementing a bilingual program next year at the Pre-K level. This implementation was triggered in school year 2014–15, because grade four has more than 20 ELL students. The Texas Administrative Code, Section 89.1205, states that “Each school district that has an enrollment of 20 or more English language learners in any language classification in the same grade level districtwide shall offer a bilingual education program...for the English language learners in prekindergarten through the elementary grades who speak that language.”

The district provides limited services for ELL students. The director of federal and special programs oversees the ESL

program for ELL students. In interviews, the ESL program at Big Spring ISD was described as primarily content-based. In content-based ESL, lessons are given on grade-level material while providing background knowledge and vocabulary that many ELL students lack. Students are supposed to learn the mainstream curriculum, read authentic texts (as opposed to simplified ESL texts) and be provided with a purposeful context for their learning. However, the district was unable to provide examples of how Big Spring ISD implements its content-based ESL program. In addition, teachers do not have to document ESL instruction in their lesson plans.

According to the Texas Academic Performance Reports, the district reported they have had no full-time teachers certified in ESL in school years 2012–13 and 2013–14. Districts that are unable to provide ESL-certified teachers to implement the ESL program must request from the commissioner of education a waiver of the certification requirements for teachers who will provide ESL instruction. Big Spring has applied for and secured ESL Waivers from TEA for the past two years: 2013–14 for 40 teachers and 2014–15 for 29 teachers. Since the onsite review, the district reported that they have 55 teachers who have successfully passed the ESL 154 Supplemental Exam. This exam qualifies teachers to work with ESL students.

The performance of ELL students at Big Spring ISD is lower than the overall student enrollment of the district. **Figure 2–8** shows school year 2013–14 test performance results of ELL students compared to Big Spring ISD’s overall student population.

Figure 2–8 shows ELL students are also less likely to test at a satisfactory level in any subject and less likely to have met or exceeded progress in reading or math.

Figure 2–9 shows the student attendance, dropout, graduation, and college preparation and readiness rates of Big Spring ISD’s ELL students compared to the general student population of the district.

Figure 2–9 shows ELL students are less likely to graduate or complete advanced coursework and are more likely to dropout, even though they have a slightly higher attendance rate than the student population as a whole.

The district purchased software licenses for a language learning program in response to low test scores among ELL students. The program was purchased to support ESL instruction, but there are no explicit expectations for when

**FIGURE 2–8
BIG SPRING ISD STATE OF TEXAS ASSESSMENTS OF
ACADEMIC READINESS TEST PERFORMANCE
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

METRIC	ALL BIG SPRING ISD STUDENTS	ELL STUDENTS
Percent Satisfactory or Above, All Subjects	55%	29%
Percent Satisfactory or Above, Reading	57%	33%
Percent Satisfactory or Above, Mathematics	52%	30%
Percent Met or Exceeded Progress, Reading	62%	57%
Percent Met or Exceeded Progress, Mathematics	59%	43%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–14.

**FIGURE 2–9
BIG SPRING ISD STUDENT ATTENDANCE, DROPOUT,
GRADUATION, AND COLLEGE PREPARATION AND
READINESS RATES
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

METRIC	ALL BIG SPRING ISD STUDENTS	ELL STUDENTS
Attendance Rate	94.4%	95.8%
Dropout Rate	7.3%	20.0%
Graduation Rate	91.9%	60.0%
Advanced Courses/Dual Enrollment Completion	21.1%	11.1%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, 2013–14.

the program is to be used, how long each student should use it each week, or specifically how the program is expected to improve student achievement. The district has no plans for evaluating the impact of the program on student achievement.

The high school has few bilingual resources, and there is no inventory of what bilingual resources are available at the campus-level. When the review team sought assistance in identifying bilingual resources, staff could only identify lower-level foreign language books written for English-speaking students learning a foreign language.

The Office for Improving Second Language Achievement,

a research program at Texas A&M Corpus Christi, provides various resources for teachers and administrators administering ESL and Bilingual programs. One of its 2006 publications is entitled Best Practices for English Language Learners. This resource profiles programs, policies, and instructional practices of schools in Texas that have demonstrated success with ELLs based on state and/or national assessments. The report examines how programs, practices, and policies contributed to the academic success of ELLs participating in bilingual education and dual language programs in selected districts.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a process for continuous evaluation of the bilingual/ESL program to ensure that the instructional delivery model effectively meets student needs.

The director of federal and special programs should convene a committee comprised of senior teachers from each of the elementary schools. The committee should develop guidance on how the available ELL resources should be used, including the appropriate use of the language learning program the district purchased, likely as an ancillary program rather than a primary resource. The committee should review all bilingual resources in the elementary schools and develop a plan for increasing resources. Once this process has been completed at the elementary level, the director should repeat the process at the secondary level, with senior secondary teachers.

Finally, the director of special and federal programs should reach out to community agencies and the local college to develop courses to support English language acquisition among parents. To help non-English-speaking parents overcome natural anxieties about interacting with schools, the director should seek to host these classes in Big Spring ISD elementary schools, with perhaps GED classes held at the high school.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

ADVANCED ACADEMICS (REC. 13)

Big Spring ISD does not offer a comprehensive program to meet the instructional needs of students who have been identified as gifted and talented (G/T).

Figure 2–10 shows the number of student identified as G/T in Big Spring ISD for school years 2009–10 to 2013–14.

Figure 2–10 shows that over the past five years, the rate of identification for gifted and talented students in Big Spring ISD has been approximately half that of the state as a whole.

FIGURE 2–10
BIG SPRING ISD STUDENTS IDENTIFIED FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14

SCHOOL YEAR	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS	GIFTED AND TALENTED PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLMENT	PERCENTAGE OF STATE GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS
2009–10	3,869	168	4.3%	7.6%
2010–11	3,909	155	3.9%	7.7%
2011–12	3,896	152	3.9%	7.7%
2012–13	4,180	150	3.6%	7.7%
2013–14	4,134	160	3.8%	7.6%

SOURCES: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, 2012–13 and 2013–14; Academic Excellence Indicator System Reports 2009–10 to 2011–12.

No federal agency collects data on the number of gifted and talented students identified; however, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) notes that between five and seven percent of a district's students are generally identified. By this measure, the district's identification of G/T students is also low.

The district has little in the way of a G/T program for its elementary students. One of the elementary teachers in a focus group noted that if teachers believe a student could be identified as G/T, they typically send out letters to parents before the winter break to see if they would agree to have their child tested. Elementary campuses do not provide services for gifted students. The district has no pull-out classes for gifted students and reported to PEIMS that they have no teachers on staff with certification to teach G/T students. However, the district indicated to the review team that they have 39 teachers on staff who have completed the 30 hours of initial G/T training and 6 hour yearly update trainings required to work with G/T students.

The G/T program is not coordinated at the district level. As noted by the director of federal and special programs, teachers are given the freedom to work with students however they see fit.

The high school offers its G/T students options for Advanced Placement (AP), dual credit, and online coursework. The high school principal noted that the high school used to have an independent study class for gifted students but it was discontinued in school year 2013–14. There are no services provided for gifted students at the intermediate and junior high schools.

When asked about supplemental programs in the district, central administration staff who responded to a survey conducted by the review team was negative regarding the

G/T program at Big Spring ISD. Nearly half, 47 percent, disagreed or strongly disagreed that the district has an effective G/T program. While a majority of campus staff respondents indicated that the district has an effective G/T program, 23 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of the 13 programs campus staff was asked to evaluate, the G/T program received the most negative response.

Big Spring ISD has adopted two board policies related to G/T students. The first, Board Policy EHBB (LEGAL) defines how the district will identify gifted students. According to the policy, the district takes nominations for possible G/T students until November each school year. Once nominated, the students are given an assessment test to determine if they are identified as G/T. The board policy further notes that G/T students will be provided "an array of learning opportunities" from kindergarten through grade 12. The second one, Board Policy EHBB (LOCAL) requires the district to annually evaluate the effectiveness of the G/T program, and parents are to be included in the evaluation process. District staff was unaware of any recent evaluations of the G/T program; a search of board agendas and minutes found no references to a G/T program evaluation.

Figure 2–11 shows advanced academic indicators for Big Spring ISD students compared to students in Region 18 and statewide.

With few exceptions, Big Spring ISD students perform below state and regional averages for college readiness indicators.

NAGC has developed a guide for PreK–12 G/T programming standards in six areas: learning and development, assessment, curriculum and instruction, learning environments, programming, and professional development. In the area of curriculum and instruction, the guide states that teachers

**FIGURE 2–11
BIG SPRING ISD ADVANCED ACADEMIC INDICATORS BY STATE, REGION, AND DISTRICT
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

	STATE	REGION 18	BIG SPRING ISD
STAAR Percent at Postsecondary Readiness Standard	41%	26%	17%
STAAR Percent at Advanced Standard	15%	8%	5%
Recommended High School Program/ Distinguished Achievement Program Graduates (Annual Rate)	81.6%	79.4%	82.2%
Advanced Course/Dual Enrollment Completion	31.4%	25.3%	21.1%
College-Ready Graduates (Both English and Math)	56%	49%	37%
Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) – Students Tested	22.1%	12.8%	16.1%
Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) –The percentage of examinees with at least one AP or IB score at or above the criterion score	50.9%	32.8%	10.5%
SAT/ACT – Students Tested	63.8%	44.1%	22.9%
SAT/ACT - This shows the percent of examinees who scored at or above the criterion score on either test	25.4%	19.2%	16.7%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report, school year 2013–14.

should “apply the theory and research-based models of curriculum and instruction related to students with gifts and talents and respond to their needs by planning, selecting, adapting, and creating culturally relevant curriculum.”

Killeen ISD operates a commendable G/T program. G/T students at the elementary level are served in “cluster classes” that allow for accelerated instruction in areas of talent. The district also provides Gifted Resource Rooms for enrichment and independent study. G/T students at the middle school level are served through course offerings in the core areas of English, math, science and social studies. Teaching strategies and the pace and complexity of the course materials distinguishes these gifted and talented courses from regular course offerings. High school students are offered special humanities courses in English and social studies in addition to AP coursework.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a comprehensive gifted and talented program to meet the instructional needs of identified students.

The district should use the NAGC’s gifted programming standards guide as a starting point for seeking to improve their G/T programs. NAGC has developed a snapshot survey of G/T programming effectiveness factors that districts can use for self-assessment. The director of federal and special programs, with the director of special education, should begin with these standards and complete an internal analysis, focusing first on the elementary level. The following activities should be completed:

- review the standards and resources developed by the NAGC;
- develop a G/T program model for the district, including program standards, objectives, assessment and screening procedures, a plan for professional development, and an evaluation plan;
- solicit stakeholder input on the model;
- revise the model based on stakeholder input;
- submit the plan to the board for adoption;
- implement the model;
- evaluate implementation;
- revise the model based on evaluation; and
- monitor and revise as needed.

The district should develop recommendations for implementing intentional academic and enrichment experiences for G/T elementary students.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

LIBRARY STAFFING AND HOLDINGS (REC. 14)

Big Spring ISD’s library program has inadequate staffing, an insufficient number of books at some campuses, and a collection of books that is largely out of date.

Big Spring ISD allocates one librarian and one library aide at each of the junior high and high school campuses. One library aide is allocated to each of the elementary campuses. These staffing levels have remained unchanged for at least the past 10 years. Only the high school librarian has a degree in library science. The high school librarian is tasked with supporting the elementary campuses, but reports this typically only happens when there is a new library aide to train or the elementary school requests help with a problem. The elementary library aides check books in and out, reshelved books, and supervise students in the library. Some of the elementary schools have every student visit the library from one to three times a week, which leaves only about one hour per day when the library does not have students. In other elementary schools, students only visit the library once every two weeks, but library aides also serve as substitute teachers in classrooms, sometimes every day of the week.

The number of books per student varies substantially by campus. This variation ranges from a low of 5.1 books per student at the intermediate school to 40.1 books per student at Goliad Elementary School. **Figure 2–12** shows the number of books per student at each campus.

On average, the district provided 19.7 books per student in its libraries. The distribution of books is not equitable throughout the district. The Goliad Elementary School library has 40.1 books per student while no other library has more than 20.8. The intermediate school opened at the start of school year 2014–15, which partially accounts for its much lower number of books per student. No established national or state standards exist with regards to books per students. A 2009 national school library survey conducted by the American Library Association, however, found that

school libraries had an average 27 books per pupil for elementary schools, 19 books per pupil for middle/junior high schools, and 16 books per pupil for (senior) high schools. Based on these results, three of the four elementary schools are below, while the junior high and high school are meeting or exceeding these averages. Interviews with staff indicate that the district has not significantly enhanced students' access to additional materials through electronic or online resources, such as eReaders.

The district's libraries do not appear to be updated regularly. While some library materials are classics, such as Shakespeare's works, and an older publication date would be acceptable as long as the book itself is in good shape, other materials appear dated. In reviewing materials in the high school library, the review team found a number of dated materials, including a 1970 manual on becoming a secretary that included no mention of technology skills. These dated materials may be deterring student use of the libraries, as the review team observed no students selecting books from among the high school stacks in five separate visits to the library. Students were only observed working on computers within the library.

The high school librarian works with the elementary aides to update holdings each year, using the funds provided. This process is focused on weeding and updating the non-fiction materials. Weeding is the removal of materials from a library collection in a systematic and deliberate way. Teacher input is also solicited for non-fiction updates. When the new elementary schools were built, each library was allocated \$15,000 for books. Teachers supplied lists of fiction and non-fiction preferences. According to the high school

FIGURE 2–12
BIG SPRING ISD LIBRARY BOOKS PER STUDENT BY CAMPUS
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15

SCHOOL	ENROLLMENT	TOTAL BOOKS	BOOKS PER STUDENT
Goliad Elementary	529	21,212	40.1
Marcy Elementary	555	8,172	14.7
Moss Elementary	488	8,924	18.3
Washington Elementary	569	9,987	17.6
Intermediate School	333	1,708	5.1
Junior High School	649	13,490	20.8
High School	989	17,619	17.8
TOTAL	4,112	81,112	19.7

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

librarian, the elementary aides typically make all decisions on weeding and updating fiction books.

The average collection age in each Big Spring ISD library ranges from 16 years to 32 years. **Figure 2–13** shows the average age of Big Spring ISD’s library holdings.

Overall, the average age of Big Spring ISD’s collection is 23.6 years. In addition, a high percentage of Big Spring ISD’s library collection, 56 percent, is older than 15 years.

In school year 2014–15, Big Spring ISD budgeted less than \$28,000 overall for the purchase of new library materials. **Figure 2-14** shows the breakdown of amounts budgeted for library materials by campus.

Figure 2–14 shows that on average, campuses were allocated \$6.80 per student, with a range from \$5.05 to \$8.80. This is generally insufficient to purchase adequate new titles and replace worn-out materials, as it is below the average cost for a replacement book of \$12.40, according to the School Library Journal.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) provides standards for Texas school libraries in its School Library Program: Guidelines and Standards. These standards classify libraries into one of four categories ranging from exemplary to below standard, along a variety of dimensions, including staffing, number of holdings, age of holdings, and budgeting for library materials. **Figure 2–15** shows the standards for each classification in various areas. In determining whether a campus has a library collection of adequate size, TSLAC requires the higher of the total number

of items or the number of items per student. For example, an elementary school with 20 library items per student but only 8,000 total items would be considered below standard.

Figure 2–16 shows a comparison of Big Spring ISD’s current libraries to the state standards.

As shown, all Big Spring ISD elementary schools and the intermediate school are below standard in campus certified librarian staffing. Three schools, Marcy Elementary, Moss Elementary, and the intermediate school have collections that are below standard. All Big Spring ISD schools have collections that are below standard for average age. All Big Spring ISD schools also have library budgets that are below standard.

Without sufficient libraries, Big Spring ISD teachers and students lack an important educational support. The American Library Association has compiled a number of studies demonstrating a positive correlation between certified librarian staffing and student achievement, including a 2012 study that correlated higher Colorado reading scores in grades 3 to 10 with greater certified librarian staffing. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Big Spring ISD is currently below the national average of 25.7 library items (books and audio-visual materials) for rural school libraries.

Big Spring ISD should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the district’s library services to ensure that its library staffing, collection, and associated budget are consistent with state standards across campuses.

**FIGURE 2–13
AVERAGE AGE OF BIG SPRING ISD LIBRARY HOLDINGS
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

SCHOOL	AVERAGE AGE OF LIBRARY COLLECTION (YEAR)	AVERAGE AGE OF COLLECTION (IN YEARS)	NUMBER OF BOOKS 15+ YEARS OF AGE	% COLLECTION 15 YEARS+
Goliad Elementary	1993	22	10,225	48%
Marcy Elementary	1995	20	3,228	40%
Moss Elementary	1997	18	4,116	46%
Washington Elementary	1989	26	5,279	53%
Intermediate School	1999	16	1,022	60%
Junior High School	1995	20	7,481	55%
High School	1983	32	14,199	81%
TOTAL	1991	23.6	45,550	56%

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

FIGURE 2–14
AMOUNTS BUDGETED FOR LIBRARY MATERIALS AT BIG SPRING ISD
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15

SCHOOL	ENROLLMENT	LIBRARY BUDGET	BUDGET PER STUDENT
Goliad Elementary	529	\$3,000	\$5.67
Marcy Elementary	555	\$2,800	\$5.05
Moss Elementary	488	\$3,500	\$7.17
Washington Elementary	569	\$3,500	\$6.15
Intermediate School	333	\$2,930	\$8.80
Junior High School	649	\$5,470	\$8.43
High School	989	\$6,750	\$6.83
TOTAL	4,112	\$27,950	\$6.80

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

FIGURE 2–15
TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

AREA	EXEMPLARY	RECOGNIZED	ACCEPTABLE	BELOW STANDARD
Campus Certified Librarian Staffing				
0 to 500 ADA	1.5+	1.0	1.0	<1.0
501 to 1,000 ADA	2.0+	1.5	1.0	<1.0
1,001 to 2,000 ADA	3.0+	2.0	1.0	<1.0
Campus Paraprofessional Staffing				
0 to 500 ADA	1.5+	1.0	0.5	0.5
501 to 1,000 ADA	2.0+	1.5	1.0	<1.0
1,001 to 2,000 ADA	3.0+	2.0	1.5	<1.5
Size of collection, items per student(1)				
Elementary	20+	18+	16+	<16
Middle	18+	16+	14+	<14
High	16+	14+	12+	<12
Size of collection, items per campus	12,000+	10,800+	9,000+	<9,000
Average Age of Collection	<11 years	< 13 years	< 15 years	15+ years
Annual budget	Enrollment x 1.50 x average replacement cost per book	Enrollment x 1.25 x average replacement cost per book	Enrollment x 1.00 x average replacement cost per book	Enrollment x <1.00 x average replacement cost per book

NOTE:

(1) Items include books, audiovisual software, and multimedia.

SOURCE: School Library Programs: Standards and Guidelines for Texas. The Texas State Library and Archives Commission, May 2005.

**FIGURE 2–16
COMPARISON OF BIG SPRING ISD LIBRARIES AND TEXAS STATE LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES STANDARDS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

CAMPUS	CAMPUS CERTIFIED LIBRARIAN STAFFING	CAMPUS PARAPROFESSIONAL STAFFING	SIZE OF COLLECTION	AVERAGE AGE OF COLLECTION	ANNUAL BUDGET
Goliad	Below Standard	Acceptable	Exemplary	Below Standard	Below Standard
Marcy	Below Standard	Acceptable	Below Standard	Below Standard	Below Standard
Moss	Below Standard	Recognized	Below Standard	Below Standard	Below Standard
Washington	Below Standard	Acceptable	Acceptable	Below Standard	Below Standard
Intermediate	Below Standard	Recognized	Below Standard	Below Standard	Below Standard
Junior High School	Acceptable	Acceptable	Exemplary	Below Standard	Below Standard
High School	Acceptable	Acceptable	Exemplary	Below Standard	Below Standard

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD and School Library Programs: Standards and Guidelines for Texas. Texas Administrative Code. 16 May 2005.

The high school librarian should initiate an assessment of the district’s library services related to staff levels, the library budget, and the age of its collection to ensure that its library staffing, collection and associated budget are consistent with state standards across campuses. The district should work toward at least the acceptable level on the TSLAC standards for all of these areas. The district should also address the problem of inequity in book-to-student ratios. One method the district could use is the practice of weeding. The American Library Association guidelines describe weeding in relation to records management in two ways:

- discarding individual items that have become worn, outdated, or no longer appropriate to curriculum or student interests; or,
- systematically evaluating collections as a whole to keep them responsive to readers’ needs.

In the first year of implementation, the district should budget for library materials at twice the acceptable level of TSLAC standards, to improve the currency of the collection. In the second year and beyond, the district should budget for library materials at the acceptable level of TSLAC standards.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation as the district should first conduct an assessment and develop a plan for the operation of the district’s libraries before a cost can be determined. The following is an example of a possible library staffing plan and corresponding budget changes.

Figure 2–17 shows an example of a possible plan for library staffing. The cost to the district for one certified librarian is \$40,399 annually, including salary and benefits. The addition

of five certified librarians will result in an annual cost of \$201,995.

**FIGURE 2–17
RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN LIBRARY STAFFING FOR BIG SPRING ISD**

SCHOOL	CERTIFIED LIBRARIAN STAFFING	SALARY AND BENEFITS
Goliad Elementary	+1.0 FTE	\$40,399
Marcy Elementary	+1.0 FTE	\$40,399
Moss Elementary	+1.0 FTE	\$40,399
Washington Elementary	+1.0 FTE	\$40,399
Intermediate School	+1.0 FTE	\$40,399
Junior High School	-	-
High School	-	-
TOTAL	+5.0 FTE	\$201,995

SOURCES: Big Spring ISD, January 2015; Texas State Library and Archives Commission standards.

The School Library Journal publishes the average price of children’s and young adult titles each year. For 2014, the average children’s title costs \$11.38 while the average young adult title costs \$13.42 (computed as an average of the hard cover, trade paperback, and mass-market paperback figures). TSLAC recommends that library budgets be determined by school enrollment, average book cost, and a factor of 1.0 to be acceptable. Figure 2–18 shows proposed changes to Big Spring ISD’s library budget. Based on this formula, the district needs to budget an additional \$22,186 annually for library books and materials.

The total annual cost of implementing this option would be \$224,181 (\$201,995 salary and benefits costs for hiring five librarians + \$22,186 in increased library budget costs) and a five-year cost of \$1,120,905.

**FIGURE 2–18
RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN LIBRARY BUDGETING**

SCHOOL	2014–15 LIBRARY BUDGET	2014–15 ENROLLMENT	AVERAGE BOOK COST	BUDGET NEEDED FOR TSLAC ACCEPTABLE LEVEL	ADDITIONAL ANNUAL LIBRARY BUDGET
Goliad Elementary	\$3,000	529	\$11.38	\$6,020	\$3,020
Marcy Elementary	\$2,800	555	\$11.38	\$6,316	\$3,516
Moss Elementary	\$3,500	488	\$11.38	\$5,553	\$2,053
Washington Elementary	\$3,500	569	\$11.38	\$6,475	\$2,975
Big Spring Intermediate	\$2,930	333	\$11.38	\$3,790	\$860
Junior High	\$5,470	649	\$13.42	\$8,710	\$3,240
High School	\$6,750	989	\$13.42	\$13,272	\$6,522
TOTAL	\$27,950	4,112		\$50,136	\$22,186

SOURCES: Big Spring ISD, January 2015; Texas State Library and Archives Commission standards; School Library Journal, 2014.

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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 2: EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY							
9. Consolidate all of the positions responsible for providing curriculum and instructional support to district staff under the assistant superintendent of instruction.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
10. Review all areas of curriculum, instruction, instructional resources, and assessment to align these components to provide a framework for a coordinated system of curriculum development and instruction.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
11. Develop and implement a coordinated, districtwide professional development process that ensures that all teachers receive specific training focused on key district goals.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
12. Develop and implement a process for continuous evaluation of the bilingual/ESL program to ensure that the instructional delivery model effectively meets student needs.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
13. Develop and implement a comprehensive gifted and talented program to meet the instructional needs of identified students.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
14. Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the district's library services to ensure that its library staffing, collection, and associated budget are consistent with state standards across campuses.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

CHAPTER 3. BUSINESS SERVICES

An independent school district's business services functions include financial management, asset and risk management, and purchasing. Financial management involves administering the district's financial resources, budgeting, and planning for its priorities. Asset and risk management functions control costs by ensuring that the district is adequately protected against significant losses at the lowest possible cost. An independent school district's purchasing function is responsible for providing quality materials, supplies and equipment in a timely, cost-effective manner.

Financial management is dependent on a district's organizational structure. Larger districts typically have staff specifically dedicated to financial functions, while smaller districts have staff with multiple responsibilities. Budget preparation and administration are financial management functions that are critical to overall district operations. These functions include budget development and adoption; oversight of expenditure of funds; and involvement of campus and community stakeholders in the budget process. Managing accounting and payroll includes developing internal controls and safeguards; reporting 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.

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 include 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 involves identifying a district's property (e.g., buildings, vehicles, equipment, etc.) and protecting it from theft and obsolescence. Insurance programs cover employees' health, workers' compensation, and district liability.

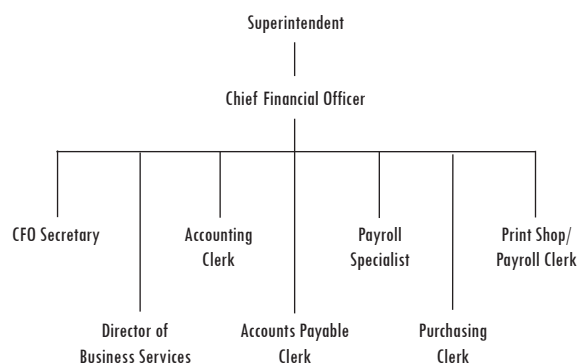
School districts in Texas are required to follow federal and state laws and procedures applicable to purchasing. The purpose of competitive bidding requirements in the Texas Education Code, Section 44.031, is to stimulate competition, prevent favoritism, and secure the best goods and services needed for district operations at the lowest possible price. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) developed a

comprehensive purchasing module in the Financial Accountability System Resource Guide (FASRG), which is available as a resource for district purchasing.

The chief financial officer (CFO) manages business services for Big Spring Independent School District (ISD) subject to the direct supervision of the superintendent. The CFO has a staff of seven that assists with financial responsibilities in the Business Office; these responsibilities include general accounting and reporting, budgeting, asset and risk management, and purchasing. General accounting duties include accounts payable, payroll, and fixed assets.

Figure 3–1 shows the organizational structure for the Business Office.

FIGURE 3–1
BIG SPRING ISD BUSINESS OFFICE ORGANIZATION



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The review team selected four school districts—Andrews ISD, Dumas ISD, El Campo ISD, and Snyder ISD—as peer districts for Big Spring ISD. Peer districts are districts similar to Big Spring ISD that are used for comparison purposes. **Figure 3–2** shows Big Spring ISD's percentage of total revenues by source compared to peer districts for fiscal year 2012–13. Big Spring ISD had the second lowest percentage of total revenue provided by local taxes; only El Campo ISD had a lower percentage. State revenue for Big Spring ISD was the second highest, with only El Campo ISD receiving a higher percentage.

**FIGURE 3–2
PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS’ ALL FUNDS REVENUES
BY SOURCE
FISCAL YEAR 2012–13**

DISTRICT	LOCAL TAX	OTHER LOCAL AND INTERMEDIATE	STATE	FEDERAL
Andrews	85.9%	2.9%	5.4%	5.7%
Big Spring	48.7%	2.8%	36.1%	12.4%
Dumas	54.1%	2.2%	33.7%	10.0%
El Campo	38.8%	6.8%	42.1%	12.3%
Snyder	71.8%	5.0%	10.6%	12.7%

NOTE: Percentages may not sum due to rounding.
SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Actual Financial Data, fiscal year 2012–13.

Figure 3–3 shows the percentage of Big Spring ISD’s expenditures by object in the district’s General Fund compared to peer percentages for fiscal year 2012–13. Big Spring ISD’s percentage of General Fund expenditures for payroll of 78.7 percent was in the middle of the range of the peer districts examined. Big Spring ISD’s percentage of expenditures classified as other operating (20.1 percent) was also in the middle of peer district percentages.

**FIGURE 3–3
PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS’ GENERAL FUND
EXPENDITURES BY OBJECT
FISCAL YEAR 2012–13**

DISTRICT	PAYROLL	OTHER OPERATING	DEBT SERVICE	CAPITAL OUTLAY
Andrews	85.9%	13.5%	0.0%	0.5%
Big Spring	78.7%	20.1%	0.0%	1.2%
Dumas	85.0%	13.5%	0.0%	1.6%
El Campo	73.0%	21.6%	3.7%	1.7%
Snyder	69.0%	15.9%	1.9%	13.2%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Actual Financial Data, January 2015.

District revenue for all funds by source for the last five years is shown in Figure 3–4. Total revenue for Big Spring ISD increased \$4.3 million from fiscal years 2008–09 to 2012–13. Although the trend during the last five years has not been steady between each year, local tax revenue has been increasing and state revenue decreasing. The amount of local taxes to support district operations increased \$6.0 million from fiscal years 2008–09 to 2012–13, a 41.1 percent increase, while state revenue has decreased \$2.6 million, a 14.6 percent decrease.

Figure 3–5 shows a comparison of total district expenditures from all funds by object from fiscal years 2008–09 to 2012–13. Payroll expenditures increased by \$1.9 million, representing 8.0 percent, while other operating expenditures increased by \$1.3 million, representing 17.8 percent. Capital outlay for fiscal years 2010–11, 2011–12, and 2012–13 includes the expenditures related to the fiscal years 2009–10 and 2010–11 bonds that provided funding for the four new elementary schools and renovations at other schools. Debt service expenditures reflect the increased construction payments related to the fiscal years 2009–10 and 2010–11 bonds.

Figure 3–6 shows the percentage of General Fund expenditures by object for fiscal years 2008–09 to 2012–13. From fiscal years 2008–09 to 2012–13, the percentages spent on payroll and other operating categories increased, while the percentages spent on debt service and capital outlay decreased.

The Big Spring ISD financial audit reports for the last five years show no instances of noncompliance and contain no management level comments pertaining to internal controls or other weaknesses. The external auditor issued unqualified opinions, which means that the reports contain accurate information and are presented in an acceptable manner.

During school years 2009–10 and 2010–11, the district issued \$57.7 million in bonds for the construction, renovation, and equipment of elementary school buildings and the renovation, equipment and additions to the existing junior high school and senior high school buildings. On July 15, 2010, the district issued \$51.0 million in unlimited tax school building bonds with stated interest rates from 2.0 percent to 5.0 percent. On February 10, 2011, the district issued an additional \$6.7 million in unlimited tax school building bonds with stated interest rates from 1.3 percent to 3.6 percent.

The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA) produces a performance rating for each school district. The Financial Allocation Study for Texas (FAST) takes into consideration both financial and academic performance and reports the results using a rating from one to five stars. Five stars is the highest score, and a score of one star is the lowest. A district’s rating of one to five stars indicates its success in combining cost effective spending with the achievement of academic progress. Figure 3–7 shows the FAST ratings of Big Spring ISD for 2010 to 2014.

FIGURE 3-4
BIG SPRING ISD ALL FUNDS REVENUE BY SOURCE
FISCAL YEARS 2008-09 TO 2012-13

FISCAL YEAR	LOCAL TAX	OTHER LOCAL AND INTERMEDIATE	STATE	FEDERAL	TOTAL
2012-13	\$20,750,225	\$1,168,692	\$15,366,412	\$5,288,266	\$42,573,595
2011-12	\$17,063,650	\$833,751	\$16,599,936	\$6,035,578	\$40,532,915
2010-11	\$14,525,537	\$873,893	\$19,905,823	\$5,854,829	\$41,160,082
2009-10	\$11,588,080	\$959,949	\$17,030,900	\$5,757,559	\$35,336,488
2008-09	\$14,702,776	\$848,057	\$17,993,785	\$4,726,336	\$38,270,954

NOTE: Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Actual Financial Data, January 2015.

FIGURE 3-5
ALL FUNDS EXPENDITURES BY OBJECT
FISCAL YEARS 2008-09 TO 2012-13

FISCAL YEAR	PAYROLL	OTHER OPERATING	DEBT SERVICE	CAPITAL OUTLAY	TOTAL
2012-13	\$25,721,336	\$8,334,781	\$4,100,980	\$6,047,581	\$44,204,678
2011-12	\$24,403,046	\$8,944,857	\$4,083,770	\$46,513,637	\$83,945,310
2010-11	\$26,628,839	\$8,053,574	\$3,618,445	\$9,689,313	\$47,990,171
2009-10	\$25,629,871	\$7,976,646	\$2,025,712	\$1,467,954	\$37,100,183
2008-09	\$23,825,419	\$7,072,887	\$1,296,257	\$1,426,748	\$33,621,311

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Actual Financial Data, January 2015.

FIGURE 3-6
GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES BY OBJECT
FISCAL YEARS 2008-09 TO 2012-13

FISCAL YEAR	PAYROLL	OTHER OPERATING	DEBT SERVICE	CAPITAL OUTLAY
2012-13	78.7%	20.1%	0.0%	1.2%
2011-12	73.2%	21.8%	0.0%	4.9%
2010-11	77.5%	18.9%	0.0%	3.6%
2009-10	75.0%	18.7%	1.4%	4.9%
2008-09	76.5%	16.6%	1.6%	5.3%

NOTE: Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Actual Financial Data, January 2015.

FIGURE 3-7
BIG SPRING ISD FINANCIAL ALLOCATION STUDY FOR TEXAS RATINGS
FISCAL YEARS 2010 TO 2014

YEAR	SPENDING INDEX	ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY RATING	FAST RATING
2014	High	Needs Improvement	1.5
2013	High	Needs Improvement	1.5
2012	High	Academically Unacceptable	1.5
2011	High	Academically Unacceptable	1.5
2010	High	Academically Acceptable	1.5

NOTE: Spending index is the ranking of cost-adjusted operating expenditures relative to select schools that were determined to be in Big Spring ISD's fiscal peer group.

SOURCE: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Financial Allocation Study for Texas, 2010-2014.

Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) School Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas (FIRST) also provides financial accountability ratings for all Texas school districts. FIRST uses a rating system that takes into account 20 indicators in five areas that include critical indicators, fiscal responsibility, and indicators for budgeting, staff, and cash management. The system produces a score for each district and translates the score into four ratings. As shown in **Figure 3–8**, Big Spring ISD received Superior Achievement ratings in all five years between school years 2009–10 through 2013–14.

FIGURE 3–8
BIG SPRING ISD’S FINANCIAL INTEGRITY RATING SYSTEM
OF TEXAS RATINGS
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14

YEAR	RATING
2013–14	Superior Achievement
2012–13	Superior Achievement
2011–12	Superior Achievement
2010–11	Superior Achievement
2009–10	Superior Achievement

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Financial Integrity Rating System of Texas, January 2015.

The CFO and the director of business services share duties pertaining to cash management. Staff follow written procedures pertaining to cash received and how it is to be handled. The Business Office monitors cash balances in bank accounts on a weekly basis and makes transfers as necessary.

Although the district does not have formal policies for cash management, staff in the Business Office monitor cash balances regularly. The Business Office ensures that funds stay in interest-bearing accounts as long as possible before paying district expenditures. Funds are kept in investment accounts until the day needed for payrolls. Payroll staff provide the director of business services with the amount needed to finance payroll costs, and funds are transferred to the payroll clearing account right before direct deposit reports are sent to the bank.

The district reviews its investment policy each year in compliance with Board Policy CDA—Other Revenue: Investments (LEGAL). The policy states that in compliance with the Public Funds Investment Act (The Texas Government Code, Chapter 2256, Subchapter A), the board shall annually adopt a written instrument stating that it has reviewed the investment policy and investment strategies. The Business Office typically submits the policy to the board in December each year. The last two reviews were approved December 11,

2014, and December 12, 2013. Investment reports are presented to the board each month as well as a final annual report.

The district provides insurance coverage for vehicles and property through the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) Risk Management Fund. The district maintains automobile liability and auto property damage coverage at an annual cost of \$26,538. In addition, non-automobile school liability insurance has an annual cost of \$9,747, and property damage has an annual cost of \$73,561. Staff indicated that TASB reviews the amount of coverage every two to three years to help ensure it is at proper levels. The district also participates in a self-insured risk pool for worker’s compensation claims, and the pool is protected against unanticipated catastrophic loss by having stop-loss coverage.

Big Spring ISD has a decentralized purchasing program wherein campuses and departments have been delegated authority to make procurement transactions. Campus and department staff initiate the purchasing process by completing purchase requisitions for needed supplies, materials, and services. These purchase requisitions contain all the necessary information to complete the purchase, including what items are to be purchased, the price that will be paid for the items, and from what vendor the items will be purchased.

The district uses an automated purchasing program provided in its Texas Enterprise Information System (TxEIS) financial management system. Campus and department staff enter purchase requisitions into the TxEIS purchasing module, which routes them through an electronic approval process. The purchase requisitions are electronically forwarded to the Business Office to review, approve, and convert them to purchase orders, which are then sent to the identified vendor. All purchases require purchase orders. The district’s warehouse receives the purchased items and transmits documentation to the Business Office to make payments to vendors.

The CFO oversees the district’s purchasing function with assistance from the director of business services and the purchasing clerk. Purchasing procedures are included in the Business Office Procedures manual that are provided on the Business Office’s website. Along with the procedures, the website also provides approved vendor lists and purchasing cooperative information for the schools and departments to use.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD's budget document provides financial information but it contains no explanatory narrative, charts, or graphs to communicate goals or priorities to the public.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD's budget process does not include involvement from campus and community stakeholders.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD has not maximized its opportunity for efficiency by offering direct deposit payroll to all of its employees.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD's payroll process is inefficient and lacks controls.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks consistent and comprehensive procedures for the management of textbooks and instructional materials.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks an effective process to manage nonfunctioning and surplus property.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not effectively inform or train campus staff regarding the district's purchasing procedures.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not effectively monitor its contracted services.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD's investment in fixed assets is not being managed appropriately.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 15: Develop an informative budget document and post it on the district website to provide the public and interested parties with information pertaining to the district's financial operations.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 16: Establish a budget development process that seeks input from the public and staff and publish a budget calendar to communicate the process to stakeholders.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 17: Provide direct deposit for employees paid semi-monthly and encourage those employees paid monthly who do not have their pay deposited directly to participate.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 18: Improve controls of processing payrolls to improve efficiency, reduce**

risk of error, and ensure that confidential data is protected.

- ◆ **Recommendation 19: Develop a board policy and formal procedures for management of textbooks and instructional materials using the district's textbook software.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 20: Develop and implement procedures for operating the district's central warehouse, including inventorying and storing items and disposing of surplus equipment and obsolete items.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 21: Develop and implement a process to periodically review and update the purchasing guidelines in the district's Business Office Procedures manual and ensure that campus staff are adequately trained on these guidelines.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 22: Develop and implement a formal contract management process with written procedures and practices to identify all district contracts, centrally capture and monitor contract requirements, and evaluate vendor performance.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 23: Improve management of the district's investment in fixed assets by developing and implementing a comprehensive fixed-asset plan and conducting annual physical inventories.**

DETAILED FINDINGS

BUDGET DOCUMENT (REC. 15)

Big Spring ISD's budget document provides financial information, but it contains no explanatory narrative, charts, or graphs to communicate goals or priorities to the public.

Big Spring ISD's fiscal year 2014–15 budget meets minimum requirements, but it does not provide explanation or meaningful narrative to make the budget understandable to the general public. The budget is not useful as a communication tool and does not highlight important initiatives, communicate district goals, or provide insight into the district's operation.

The public can access Big Spring ISD's annual budget in two ways: the summary of the proposed budget is posted on the district website, and the draft budget is accessible when it is presented to the board.

The Texas Education Code, Section 44.0041, requires a district to:

- post a summary of its proposed budget on the school district’s website;
- include in the budget summary the aggregate spending on instruction, instructional support, central administration, district operations, debt service, and any other category designated by the commissioner; and
- include a comparison to the previous year’s actual spending.

The district’s budget as presented to the board for approval is essentially nine pages of numbers. One page shows estimated revenues and expenditures by fund. The remaining eight pages show expenditure amounts by fund, function, and object. The budget does not include any narrative to explain the numbers. **Figure 3–9** shows an example of the fiscal year 2014–15 budget submitted to the board for review and approval.

Although the financial data is useful, there is no narrative to explain the numbers. Examples of informative narrative include an executive summary; discussion of the budget process; definitions of funds, revenues, expenditures, and functions; key issues; and changes in priorities or service levels.

Figure 3–10 shows results from a parent survey administered by the Legislative Budget Board (LBB) school performance review team.

As shown in **Figure 3–10**, 21.2 percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the financial reports are easy to read, and 19.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that these reports are readily available to the public. Additionally, 52.5 percent had no opinion on the first statement and 48.9 percent had no opinion on the second, which suggests a potential disconnect between parents and the district regarding the financial reports.

The budget document presented to the board does not include any discussion of budget goals, priorities, or objectives. Also, there are no explanatory narratives, charts,

**FIGURE 3–9
BIG SPRING ISD BUDGET SAMPLE
FISCAL YEAR 2014–15**

Date Run: 08-20-2014 10:45 AM		Budget Board Summary By Fund/Function						Program: BUD2250	
Cnty Dist: 114-901		BIG SPRING ISD						Page: 8 of 14	
		Expenditure Report By Function / Major Object						File ID: N	
		Using NY Approved							
Func. Description	Payroll Costs 6100	Contracted Services 6200	Supplies & Materials 6300	Other Oper Expenses 6400	Debt Service 6500	Capital Outlay 6600	Other Uses 8900	Total	
199/5 GENERAL FUND									
11 INSTRUCTION	15,820,886	564,120	785,596	18,690	0	0	0	17,189,292	
12 INSTR. RESOURCES	352,930	57,000	37,250	1,600	0	0	0	448,780	
13 CURRICULUM &	291,708	390,000	11,200	86,790	0	0	0	779,698	
21 INSTRUCTIONAL	532,219	3,380	9,400	4,350	0	0	0	549,349	
23 SCHOOL	2,571,529	18,200	17,465	15,361	0	0	0	2,622,555	
31 GUIDANCE,	937,740	9,100	23,850	9,300	0	0	0	979,990	
32 SOCIAL WORK	96,808	2,450	2,000	4,400	0	0	0	105,658	
33 HEALTH SERVICES	332,483	11,900	7,600	6,000	0	0	0	357,983	
34 STUDENT (PUPIL)	566,954	26,000	300,815	-76,000	0	100,000	0	917,769	
41 GENERAL	815,432	489,400	36,800	91,400	0	0	0	1,433,032	
51 PLANT	2,615,383	1,488,850	632,000	121,000	0	45,000	0	4,902,233	
52 SECURITY &	0	24,000	0	0	0	0	0	24,000	
53 DATA PROCESSING	598,332	192,215	114,925	16,820	0	0	0	922,292	
Totals 199/5	25,532,404	3,276,615	1,978,901	299,711	0	145,000	0	31,232,631	

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

FIGURE 3–10
BIG SPRING ISD PARENT SURVEY
JANUARY 2015

QUESTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
The district's financial reports are easy to read and understand.	6.0%	20.4%	52.5%	15.9%	5.3%
The district's financial reports are readily available to parents and community members.	5.7%	26.1%	48.9%	14.0%	5.3%

NOTES: Percentages may not sum due to rounding. Survey respondents included 267 parents.
SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, School Performance Review Parent Survey, December 2014.

or graphs to highlight important information and numerical relationships. In its current form, Big Spring ISD's budget does not provide insight into the district's operations and future initiatives. Consequently, Big Spring ISD is missing an opportunity to enhance its image in the community by demonstrating a commitment to financial accountability, transparency, and stewardship.

A budget document has three major purposes: as a communications device, a policy document, and a financial plan. Deficiencies in the budget document limit the budget's usefulness in these key areas. A budget document that includes only a limited amount of revenue and expenditure data without any narrative that explains the numbers makes it difficult for the public to have a reasonable understanding of where the district is spending funds from collected taxes. A budget document that does not include summary comparative information by departments and schools, summary comparative information for positions, and other useful information interferes with the ability of the school board and the community to understand how these funds are being used in educating the district's students.

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO) are two national organizations that promote excellence in the form, content, and presentation of budget documents. These organizations establish criteria for exemplary budget documents and provide certification awards to governmental entities that meet the criteria. Many school districts across the country use the criteria to apply for the awards, but some use it merely to improve their budget document's content, format, and presentation. **Figure 3–11** shows selected samples of criteria from ASBO's meritorious budget awards program compared to what is included in Big Spring ISD's budget document.

No standard regulates the data that districts should include in their budget document. The actual data that districts include in budget documents can cover many topics that are not necessarily financial data. Presenting detailed budget narrative provides the public with information that helps readers understand where funds for district education are expended.

Big Spring ISD should develop an informative budget document and post it on the district website to provide the public and interested parties with information pertaining to the district's financial operations.

Improving the district's budget document to include summary comparative information by departments and schools, summary comparative information for positions, and other useful information would enable the board and the community to better understand how funds are being used to educate students.

Business Office staff should discuss with board members, Big Spring ISD management staff (including the superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of business services, and select principals and department heads), and representatives of the public to get their recommendations on what data would be useful to include in a budget document. Business Office staff should research other school districts' budget documents to become familiar with the types of data that are included and decide what is available for inclusion in a budget document for Big Spring ISD. Business Office staff should also use the ASBO and GFOA criteria as a guide to enhance the content, format, and presentation of Big Spring ISD's budget document. Financial data should be clarified using charts, tables, larger fonts, written analyses, and executive-level summaries.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

**FIGURE 3–11
COMPARISON OF ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS MERITORIOUS BUDGET AWARDS PROGRAM CRITERIA TO
BIG SPRING ISD’S BUDGET DOCUMENT**

BEST PRACTICE	BIG SPRING ISD
<p>Introductory Section</p> <p>Contains an Executive Summary that tells the budget story in narrative, numeric, and graphic form.</p>	<p>Does not contain an Executive Summary that tells the budget story in narrative, numeric, and graphic form.</p>
<p>Includes a listing of board members and first-level administrative staff.</p>	<p>Does not include a listing of board members and first-level administrative staff.</p>
<p>Organization Section</p> <p>Provides detailed demographic information about the district including level of education provided, geographic area served, and number of schools and students.</p> <p>Presents an organizational chart, mission statement, and goals and objectives.</p> <p>Provides a discussion of forces that drive the budget process, such as policies and regulations.</p>	<p>Does not provide detailed demographic information about the district including level of education provided, geographic area served, and number of schools and students.</p> <p>Does not present an organizational chart, mission statement, and goals and objectives.</p> <p>Does not provide a discussion of forces that drive the budget process, such as policies and regulations.</p>
<p>Financial Section</p> <p>Describes extent to which capital spending affects current and future operating budgets.</p> <p>Includes data on current debt obligations and describes the relationship between current debt levels and legal debt limits.</p>	<p>Does not describe extent to which capital spending affects current and future operating budgets.</p> <p>Does not include data on current debt obligations and describes the relationship between current debt levels and legal debt limits.</p>
<p>Information Section</p> <p>Explains underlying assumptions for each major revenue estimate.</p> <p>Discusses significant trends in major revenue categories.</p> <p>Presents assessed and market property values.</p> <p>Presents property tax and collection rates.</p> <p>Provides performance measures for three years.</p> <p>Presents student enrollment and staff information.</p>	<p>Does not explain underlying assumptions for each major revenue estimate.</p> <p>Does not discuss significant trends in major revenue categories.</p> <p>Does not present assessed and market property values.</p> <p>Does not present property tax and collection rates.</p> <p>Does not provide performance measures for three years.</p> <p>Does not present student enrollment and staff information.</p>

SOURCE: Association of School Business Officials Meritorious Budget Awards Program Criteria Location Checklist, February 2013.

BUDGET PROCESS (REC. 16)

Big Spring ISD’s budget process does not include involvement from campus and community stakeholders.

The budget is developed by the CFO and superintendent with minimal input from other district or campus staff. The CFO uses the previous year’s budgeted and expended data and makes additions or deductions to develop the budget. The only budget involvement that campus staff have is to distribute an allotment for supplies and materials that schools manage. The public is not provided a method to be involved in the budget development process, and meetings are not

held to obtain involvement from principals and department heads.

Budget calendars establish a framework for the entire budget development process and make stakeholders aware of opportunities for involvement. The district produces two budget-related calendars that identify due dates, but neither includes any mention of public or staff involvement. The calendars are not published on the district website. Board members receive the calendar pertaining to the board’s involvement, and district staff receive a calendar as part of the budgeting guidelines.

Principals and department heads receive budgeting guidelines and instructions for each year's budget. However, these guidelines and instructions only pertain to how and when the campuses and departments allocate funds after the budget is developed.

The lack of input from campus and community stakeholders in budget development does not ensure alignment of the district's spending with the needs of campus staff. Despite the district's poor academic achievement, Big Spring ISD has not aligned instructional spending to meet academic needs. Without adequate input from campus staff and the community, the district's budget does not reflect the district's needs for better educating students. Big Spring ISD's spending on instruction has fallen in recent years, despite greater need for a focus on academic performance. **Figure 3–12** shows the percentage of General Funds expended by function for fiscal years 2008–09 through 2012–13. The breakdown of expenditures during the last five years indicates that the district is not effectively evaluating and prioritizing its expenditures in terms of the proportion of total expenditures being spent on programs outside the classroom.

During fiscal year 2008–09, the district expended General Funds totaling \$13.9 million on instruction compared to expenditures for fiscal year 2012–13 of \$15.2 million, an increase of 8.7 percent. However, total General Fund expenditures increased from \$24.9 million to \$28.4 million, an increase of 14.4 percent. As shown in **Figure 3–12**, the percentage of General Funds expended on instruction decreased from 56.1 percent to 53.3 percent during these years, a decrease of 2.8 percentage points and the largest decrease of any function. While the percentage of General Fund expenditures for instruction decreased, the percentages expended on curriculum/staff development, school leadership, plant maintenance/operations, and data processing services increased.

Figure 3–13 shows the percentage of the General Fund expended on instruction among Big Spring ISD's peer districts for fiscal year 2012–13.

Figure 3–13 shows that the percentage of funds Big Spring ISD expended on instruction from the General Fund and all funds was lower than any of its peer districts. General Fund expenditures on instruction for the district were 6.0

FIGURE 3–12
BIG SPRING ISD GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES
FISCAL YEARS 2008–09 TO 2012–13

FUNCTION	2008–09	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	PERCENTAGE CHANGE BETWEEN 2008–09 AND 2012–13
Instruction	56.1%	54.9%	56.0%	56.4%	53.3%	(2.8%)
Instructional Media	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	1.6%	(0.1%)
Curriculum/Staff Development	0.5%	1.1%	0.9%	1.0%	1.6%	1.1%
Instructional Leadership	1.5%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	1.1%	(0.3%)
School Leadership	6.5%	6.6%	6.2%	5.1%	7.6%	1.2%
Guidance Counseling Services	3.1%	2.8%	2.2%	2.5%	2.9%	(0.2%)
Social Work Services	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Health Services	1.3%	1.3%	1.3%	1.2%	1.1%	(0.1%)
Transportation	2.6%	2.9%	3.2%	2.5%	2.4%	(0.2%)
Food	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Co-curricular	4.5%	4.4%	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%	(0.2%)
General Administration	4.2%	3.6%	4.5%	4.5%	4.2%	0.0%
Plant Maintenance and Operation	15.9%	17.3%	15.8%	16.4%	16.1%	0.3%
Security/Monitoring	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Data Processing Services	2.0%	2.1%	2.7%	3.2%	3.3%	1.3%

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Texas Education Agency, Actual Financial Data.

**FIGURE 3–13
PERCENTAGE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT FUNDS EXPENDED ON
INSTRUCTION
FISCAL YEAR 2012–13**

DISTRICT	GENERAL FUND	ALL FUNDS
Andrews	60.6%	58.7%
Big Spring	53.3%	50.1%
Dumas	62.1%	59.4%
El Campo	57.8%	57.2%
Snyder	56.8%	57.4%
Peer Average	59.3%	58.2%
State Average	N/A	57.2%

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, January 2015; Texas Education Agency, Actual Financial Data.

percentage points lower than the peer average, and the percentage of all funds expended on instruction was 8.1 percentage points lower than the average.

The district does not analyze the percentage of its funds expended for instruction. The superintendent was unaware that the percentage expended on instruction was lower than the state average, and no documents related to the budget included data reflecting the percentages spent by function.

Without input from the public and staff, the district may lack community support and commitment for the budget. The lack of a comprehensive calendar that details what steps are to be followed and when involvement of all parties is to occur results in the district not allowing for input from the parties and not encouraging support for district initiatives. A budget developed in isolation may have less support from these stakeholders.

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

Big Spring ISD should establish a budget development process that seeks input from the public and staff and publish a budget calendar to communicate the process to stakeholders. The process should begin early enough in the year to allow sufficient time for involvement of all parties.

To help ensure all parties are informed of when their feedback is to be provided, the CFO should review the two existing budget calendars and include a specified time for input from district and community stakeholders. The board should adopt and publish the annual budget calendar on the district’s website, along with a summary of the budgetary process and timeline.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

DIRECT DEPOSIT (REC. 17)

Big Spring ISD has not maximized its opportunity for efficiency by offering direct deposit payroll to all of its employees.

The payroll specialist reported that the district has approximately 770 employees on its payroll, including contracted services. Of these, approximately 635 employees are paid a monthly salary, while the remaining 135 are hourly employees paid semi-monthly. All but 25 of the salaried employees are enrolled in direct deposit; however, none of the hourly employees are enrolled, representing a district enrollment rate of just 79.2 percent for direct deposit.

The 25 employees who do not participate in direct deposit require the Business Office to print a paper check. On payday, the payroll specialist personally hands these employees their checks in the Business Office. While the district periodically has issued direct deposit forms to these 25 employees, none have enrolled.

The 135 hourly employees are not offered direct deposit. The print shop/payroll clerk indicated that the district has discussed providing direct deposit for these employees but has not implemented it.

Direct deposit of an employee’s paycheck is a benefit to the employee and the employer. Employees benefit from direct deposit because it saves time and eliminates trips to the bank, check fraud, and check cashing fees. Payroll deposits are made even if an employee is absent from work. Many organizations use payroll direct deposit as a means to reduce costs, expedite the payroll process, and provide a convenience to staff.

Direct deposit reduces the possibility of error and of fraud. Maximizing direct deposit among employees translates to cost savings by eliminating postal costs for mailing checks during the summer months, the cost of maintaining check paper stock, and the cost incurred to stop payment on lost checks. Most importantly, direct deposit increases the efficiency of the Business Office because it no longer occupies the payroll clerk's time in the sorting and distribution of the payroll checks.

Trinity ISD implemented several initiatives to encourage its employees to use direct deposit, including contributions to campus activity funds and cash incentives. As a result of the initiatives, the number of employees using direct deposit increased, and direct deposit is now mandatory for all new employees.

Big Spring ISD should provide direct deposit for employees paid semi-monthly and encourage those employees paid monthly who do not have their pay deposited directly to participate.

The CFO should work with the print shop/payroll clerk and the Technology Department to expand the district's direct-deposit program to include employees paid on semi-monthly payrolls. The payroll specialist should assist in training the print-shop/payroll clerk on the steps to follow when completing the direct-deposit process in TxEIS and coordinating with the bank.

The CFO, payroll specialist, and print shop/payroll clerk should discuss what initiatives the district could use to encourage all employees to enroll in direct deposit. The district should consider using paycheck stuffers, campus fliers, and discussions of the benefits of direct deposit during in-service meetings and new employee orientation.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

PAYROLL CONTROLS (REC. 18)

Big Spring ISD's payroll process is inefficient and lacks controls.

The payroll specialist and the print shop/payroll clerk process monthly and bimonthly payrolls with limited involvement and oversight from other staff. There is no separation of duties between these two positions, as all payroll information is entered directly into the TxEIS payroll module by both of these employees. Additionally, the district uses multiple

software systems that are not compatible, so payroll staff spend significant time entering payroll data manually.

Payrolls for employees paid monthly are processed by the payroll specialist. Big Spring ISD's payroll module in TxEIS does not interface with the district's human resources system, SearchSoft. The district has not evaluated the use of the TxEIS human resources (HR) module. The HR specialist enters employee information into the HR system when employees are hired, and payroll staff update the information when changes to employee information are necessary.

The payroll specialist has access to SearchSoft that enables her to print documents containing data needed for payroll processing. When an employee is hired, HR emails the payroll specialist to inform her of the new hire and that documents are ready in SearchSoft. The payroll specialist or the print shop/payroll clerk then manually enters employee data into the payroll system. Documents produced from the SearchSoft system provide data for direct deposit, withholding information, and any information pertaining to previous teacher retirement. A report generated by SearchSoft titled "request to hire" provides most of the data needed for payroll, including:

- Social Security number;
- name;
- funding source;
- effective date of employment;
- number of contract days;
- pay grade/step;
- annual salary and daily rate; and
- prorated salary if employment duration is less than a full year.

Big Spring ISD also lacks a districtwide system that electronically records the amount of time employees are working, when they are absent, or when they take leave. The district uses multiple software programs to record employee attendance, resulting in inefficient payroll and recordkeeping processes that require a large amount of manual entry.

The payroll specialist uses leave and time data from Aesop, the district's leave accounting software. Each month, the payroll specialist uses information from manual time sheets and the leave accounting software system to update leave

balances in the TxEIS payroll module. Once all data has been entered into the payroll module, the payroll specialist runs a transmittal report. The transmittal report is used to help verify that all data, including leave information, has been entered correctly. The payroll specialist then generates a live payroll, in which direct deposit information is produced and checks are printed for employees not using direct deposit.

The print shop/payroll clerk processes semi-monthly payrolls for employees paid at hourly rates in the maintenance and child nutrition departments. Hourly maintenance and custodial employees complete paper time sheets, and the maintenance secretary inputs their leaves and absences in Aesop. Every two weeks, the maintenance secretary sends the time sheets to payroll, where a clerk then manually enters the work time into the TxEIS payroll module.

Hourly food service employees record their work times online by using a food service software module. Every two weeks, the food service secretary generates a timekeeping report, records the hours, and sends it to the payroll clerk, who manually enters the information for each employee in TxEIS. The food service secretary maintains the records of leaves and absences on leave forms, and then gives the payroll clerk a transmittal sheet showing these absences.

Although the print shop/payroll clerk has access to the SearchSoft system and uses available data for most payroll information, hourly pay rates for employees are provided by department supervisors. The print shop/payroll clerk prints checks for semi-monthly payrolls, and departments pick up the checks for their employees and distribute them.

Internal controls are weakened when each of the two employees who process payrolls do so with little, if any, oversight. Each has the ability to make changes directly in the TxEIS payroll module affecting employee pay. Although no improprieties have been noted, either of the employees could change an employee's amount of pay inappropriately, and it could go unnoticed indefinitely.

Additional control weaknesses occur when payrolls are not reviewed before final payrolls are processed and checks printed or amounts directly deposited. The payroll specialist and print shop/payroll clerk enter all payroll data, and the data that have been entered are not reviewed. Also, when hourly pay rate amounts provided by department staff for the semi-monthly payrolls are used instead of amounts provided by HR through the SearchSoft system, the risk for error is greater.

Internal controls in payroll processing are further weakened from a confidentiality perspective. The CFO, director of business services, payroll specialist, print shop/payroll, and accounting clerk all have the ability to access and make changes to the payroll system. Certain payroll information is confidential and must be protected from unauthorized access and distribution. Proper internal controls require that access to critical payroll data be restricted to only authorized individuals. Payrolls are calculated each month using data maintained in the TxEIS payroll module, and changes to the data must be restricted to ensure accurate payrolls are processed for district employees. The ability to access and make changes to the data by unauthorized individuals can cause errors in employee payrolls.

When payrolls are processed without a separation of duties and without a review of employee pay data entries, staff are able to make unauthorized changes and the changes possibly may go unnoticed for an extended period. Allowing employees to make unauthorized changes to employee records places the district in a potential liability position and severely risks the security of employee personnel and payroll data, leaving the district exposed to theft and loss.

Because the district use multiple systems that are not compatible, manual data entry in payroll is required. The payroll specialist reported that reconciling Aesop, TxEIS, and other downloaded reports took up the largest portion of her day. With manual data entry, the potential for errors is increased, more work time is required, and costs of paper used for printing the data from one program to be input into another is increased. This system often relies on self-reporting; therefore, accuracy of reporting rests on the honesty of the employees.

Payroll systems that have strong internal controls normally have HR staff establish positions within the system, enter data pertaining to new employees, change data for existing employees, and enter information when employees terminate. The HR system then electronically sends data to the payroll system. Hard copies, with all required approvals, of entries made into the system by HR staff are forwarded to payroll staff, who check data entries for accuracy.

HR and payroll systems that contain proper security and internal controls provide a partition between the two systems. Only information needed to process employee payrolls is passed from the HR system to the payroll system. Access to data contained in either system is restricted to only staff that has a specific need to access the data. Certain employee

information contained in HR and payroll systems is confidential and must be protected from unauthorized access and distribution. Proper internal controls require that accessibility to critical HR and payroll data be restricted to only authorized individuals. Payrolls are calculated each month using data maintained in the payroll module, and changes to these data must be restricted to ensure accurate payrolls are processed for district employees.

Big Spring ISD should improve controls of processing payrolls to improve efficiency, reduce risk of error, and ensure that confidential data is protected.

The CFO should review the need for employees to have access to the payroll system and limit the access to only authorized staff that has specific needs to complete job duties. Employees who only need to access payroll data for information purposes should be restricted from having the ability to make changes to data in the system. The CFO should also require that hourly salary rates established by HR in SearchSoft be used for processing semi-monthly payrolls.

The CFO should work with the HR specialist and director of technology to determine if SearchSoft and TxEIS can be integrated. The CFO should also work with the HR specialist to review the TxEIS HR module to determine if it could be used by the district.

Until changes can be made to the HR SearchSoft system to enable it to interface with the TxEIS payroll module, internal controls should be improved by requiring either the CFO or director of business services to review changes made to employee salaries and leave transactions before the final monthly and semi-monthly payrolls are processed.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

TEXTBOOKS AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (REC. 19)

Big Spring ISD lacks consistent and comprehensive procedures for the management of textbooks and instructional materials.

The district does not have districtwide procedures for the management of textbooks and has not provided standard guidelines for how campuses should control textbook inventory. No districtwide tracking of textbooks is conducted, and no policy is in place regarding lost or damaged textbooks. Although the current process usually ensures that campuses have adequate textbook inventories, no districtwide oversight

is in place to ensure that one campus is not ordering textbooks for purchase that another campus has in surplus.

The assistant principal at each campus manages textbooks with the assistance of principals and secretaries. Specific procedures for textbook management vary by campus across the district. Campuses are not given a budget for textbooks. The assistant principals either use an electronic system provided by the district to inventory textbooks, or they conduct a manual inventory at the end of the year, estimate the number needed for the next year, and provide a request to the textbook coordinator. The district spent \$777,165 on textbooks and instructional materials for school years 2012–13 to 2014–15.

Four individuals have served as a textbook coordinator since school year 2008–09. The district recently named the director of curriculum and instruction to be the textbook coordinator. The textbook coordinator receives purchase requests for textbooks from each campus and orders the textbooks.

Big Spring ISD purchased TIPWeb in September 2011, which is software that allows the district to use bar coding to manage and track the location of textbook inventory. The district paid \$29,985 for the software and pays \$5,724 annually for its maintenance. Campus staff were originally trained in the use of the software and instructed to use it to manage their textbooks, but no formal procedures guiding textbook management were put into place. Due to turnover in staff and a lack of consistent centralized oversight, only the junior high school and high school campuses still use the software.

Other campuses manually inventory textbooks at the end of the school year and provide an estimate of those needed for the next school year to the textbook coordinator. The textbook coordinator orders the textbooks and distributes them to the campuses.

The district does not have a formal process to surplus old textbooks. For many years, unused textbooks were stored in the decommissioned Anderson Elementary School; staff reported that they were not aware how long the textbooks had been accumulating. At the end of school year 2013–14, at the direction of district management, the previous textbook coordinator requested that a textbook company collect and remove about 45 pallets of textbooks without any compensation to the district. The district did not have an inventory of the books to know if they had any value.

Figure 3–14 shows a comparison of recommended textbook management procedures to Big Spring ISD’s current districtwide procedures.

**FIGURE 3–14
RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES COMPARED
TO BIG SPRING ISD’S TEXTBOOK MANAGEMENT
PROCEDURES**

RECOMMENDATION	BIG SPRING ISD
Board policies related to textbooks	No
Defined role of the textbook coordinator	No
Textbook selection committee guidelines and procedures	Yes
Textbook number and stamping procedures	No
Textbook requisition procedures	No
Textbook shipment verification requirements	Partial (no specific requirements other than what is required for payment of invoices)
Shipping error procedures	No
Guidelines for bookrooms, including environment, security, and stacking of textbooks	No
Information on book covers	No
Transferring textbooks from one school to another	No
Distribution of textbooks in the schools	No
Responsibilities for textbooks	No
Lost or damaged textbook procedures	No
Year-end physical inventory procedures	No
Out-of-adoption textbook procedures	No
How to handle excess textbooks	No
Approvals needed for deleting textbooks from the system	No

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD Business Office Procedures, January 2015.

Without an effective textbook management system or formal procedures for textbook management, the district cannot ensure that textbooks are efficiently managed and properly safeguarded from loss. Because the district lacks central inventorying of textbooks, principals and school secretaries have to contact other campuses to coordinate textbook responsibilities, which is time-consuming and susceptible to inaccuracy. With no centralized system in the district, a

campus may purchase textbooks that another campus in the district has in surplus.

Principals are implementing campus procedures that vary across the district because the district lacks a standard procedure for managing its investment in textbooks. The district has purchased and pays annual maintenance fees on textbook management software; however, only two of the district’s seven instructional campuses make use of this software. Paying for this software but not using it on all campuses is an inefficient use of software that could help the district to monitor and track textbook inventory.

Additionally, a lack of central oversight or formal textbook procedures has contributed to issues with district textbook inventorying. By disposing of textbooks without payment or having an inventory describing which books were taken, the district may have removed textbooks that were still useful or may have foregone sale revenue for books that had value; proper textbook inventory policies and procedures would have ensured that the district managed these textbooks in a careful and efficient manner.

Kennedy ISD’s assistant superintendent for instruction is the textbook coordinator and handles textbook orders. The district has a policy that details the responsibilities governing textbooks. For example, the policy states how to calculate enrollment numbers for ordering textbooks and where the results of the annual inventory of textbooks are kept.

The Chesterfield school division in Virginia acquired and implemented a textbook management system using TIPWeb software. Before acquiring and implementing TIPWeb, the division had no central management of textbooks. Each school managed its textbooks. Without a centralized inventory, the district could not provide a complete listing of what textbooks each campus owned. The district now has a consolidated inventory of all textbooks, enabling better management of its investment in textbooks. The automated textbook management system enables the central textbook coordinator to track all textbooks at each school and to locate excess books that can be transferred to a school needing a certain textbook instead of incurring the cost of purchasing additional books. The system can also provide information to identify schools that are losing textbooks at a higher than acceptable rate. This loss indicates they may not be performing their responsibilities associated with the safekeeping of textbooks, and the district is able to hold them accountable.

Big Spring ISD should develop a board policy and formal procedures for management of textbooks and instructional materials using the district's textbook software.

The textbook coordinator should, with the assistance of the previous textbook coordinator (who is now the district's safety director) draft policy for the management of district textbooks and submit it to the board for approval. The textbook coordinator should compile a list of processes that need to be implemented for the district to properly manage its investment in textbooks. Finally, the textbook coordinator should develop a comprehensive textbook procedures manual based on board policy that includes all processes associated with textbook management.

The textbook policy should require all campuses to use the textbook management software program that the district already owns and is paying annually to maintain. After the textbook procedures manual has been completed, the textbook coordinator should provide it to all school personnel involved in textbook management and should train staff on the new procedures.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

CENTRAL WAREHOUSING (REC. 20)

Big Spring ISD lacks an effective process to manage nonfunctioning and surplus property.

Big Spring ISD stores surplus equipment and supplies at two locations—the central warehouse and the decommissioned Anderson Elementary School. The district's policy regarding surplus disposal, Board Policy CI (LOCAL), authorizes the superintendent or a designee to declare items, including materials, equipment, and supplies, to be surplus. The policy further authorizes district staff to dispose of surplus at fair market value.

However, the district has no written procedures in place to guide the storage, organization, or disposition of these assets. Without procedures guiding the management of surplus property, the district is unable to verify that it is complying with the board policy.

Surplus property at the central warehouse and the former Anderson Elementary School is poorly organized and not inventoried, leading to redundant purchases and storage of obsolete equipment.

The primary purpose of the district's central warehouse is to store maintenance and construction supplies. These supplies are typically for specific maintenance jobs or capital improvement projects, such as parts for equipment repairs or supplies for a fencing project. School and office supplies are not stored in the warehouse but are instead delivered directly to campuses or departments. The only exception is bulk paper, which is stored in the warehouse and delivered to each campus as needed.

However, the central warehouse also stores surplus or nonfunctioning electronics, furniture, and other items taken from campuses and buildings throughout the district. These items are not inventoried nor tested for usability. The warehouse supervisor estimates that about half of the space available at the warehouse is occupied by surplus or nonfunctioning items. Maintenance staff are expected to check the warehouse for supplies before purchasing new supplies; however, due to the disorganization of the warehouse, staff have difficulty determining what supplies are available. Staff reported that this difficulty has resulted in situations in which maintenance staff have ignored the warehouse as a source for parts and instead purchased parts that are available in the warehouse from local hardware dealers.

The district has made an effort to auction or donate surplus materials stored in the warehouse, but many items remain that are no longer usable by the district that take up warehouse space. Interviews with district staff indicated that the district at one time hired an auction house to dispose of unwanted property. At the conclusion, the auction house charged the district for having to dispose of items the district provided for auction that ended up not being sold. To avoid this charge, the district is not working with an auction company to continue disposal of items.

Anderson Elementary School, which has intermittently closed and reopened since 1977, has been used for storage since 2009. The campus contains many items of furniture and equipment discarded in 2012, when the old elementary schools were demolished and the new elementary schools were equipped with new furnishings, fixtures, and equipment.

The central warehouse is operating inefficiently by housing unneeded inventory that covers approximately half of its floor area. In addition to being an inefficient use of district property, district funds are spent to purchase duplicate supplies because of disorganization in the central warehouse.

Brownsville ISD's fixed assets manual details the process for disposal of obsolete fixed assets in the district either through public auction or other means. Surplus items are collected by the Warehouse/Textbooks/Fixed Assets Department and held for quarterly auctions. The items to be disposed of are compiled into an agenda item for board approval, and the board approves of the disposition of the assets. Auction proceeds are deposited to the appropriate fund (Food Service Fund, General Fund, or other fund as determined by the school district) at the auction's completion.

The purchasing manual of the Palm Beach County School District in Florida offers a detailed best practice titled *Disposition of Surplus*. The manual includes district procedures for the following:

- transfer of property for re-use/disposal;
- trade-in;
- cannibalization (recycling usable parts);
- donation;
- hazardous materials;
- allocation of proceeds;
- sales to employees;
- security of property;
- documentation;
- disposal of grant-funded equipment; and
- excess, obsolescence, and scrap policy.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement procedures for operating the district's central warehouse, including inventorying and storing items and disposing of surplus equipment and obsolete items.

The director of business services and the maintenance and transportation director should jointly draft detailed procedures for superintendent review. These procedures should provide guidance to identify, collect, and dispose of surplus equipment and obsolete warehouse items, including those stored in Anderson Elementary School. Procedures should also guide warehouse staff in inventorying and storing useable supplies in the warehouse. Procedures should emphasize use of current supplies to avoid redundant purchases and the recovery of salvage value through auction

sales to maximize income from the disposal. The director of business services and the maintenance and transportation director should direct warehouse staff to identify and eliminate obsolete inventory. The maintenance and transportation director should prepare training materials and conduct training for maintenance, warehouse, and campus personnel involved in asset management. This process will ensure that personnel understand the procedures to identify and handle surplus property and keep the central warehouse free of obsolete items.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources. The district may realize some income from the proper disposition of surplus property from the warehouse and other district facilities, but any potential revenue cannot be estimated.

PURCHASING PROCEDURES AND TRAINING (REC. 21)

Big Spring ISD does not effectively inform or train campus staff regarding the district's purchasing procedures.

A manual titled *Business Office Procedures* is available to staff on the Business Office's website. The manual contains useful procedures, including providing guidance on purchase requisitions and purchase orders, travel, fixed assets, procedures for handling cash, and budget code account numbers. However, staff interviews indicated that some procedures are either lacking or are not detailed enough to ensure that work processes are consistent, and that the manual does not include instructions on such items as fuel invoice processing. Business Office staff stated that the manual is reviewed and revised when needed, but the manual did not have a date indicating when it was last updated. The district does not have a formal process to periodically update and revise the manual.

School staff received training at the beginning of school year 2013–14 to conduct purchase requisitions. This training included copies of computer screen printouts and a discussion on how to process a requisition in the TxEIS financial management system. However, the Business Office does not provide routine training on purchasing processes and procedures. Staff reported that they receive too little training, and the training they received consisted mostly of pamphlets and screenshots. Staff also indicated that not all employees who are new to their positions, such as school secretaries and assistant principals, receive training. Some staff stated they received one-on-one training from Business Office staff, but only when they first began work in their positions.

Campus staff must follow specific processes to ensure that materials and services are ordered and received when needed and that vendors are paid timely and accurately. Specific procedures include identifying approved vendors, using the correct funds for a given purchase, and handling errors or shipments that do not meet specifications. Without proper training or written instructions, these procedures can also be difficult for staff members who are new to the district or who do not perform those functions on a consistent basis.

TEA's FASRG, Section 3.2.1, states that every school district, large and small, should have a written manual describing its purchasing policies and procedures. The manual should be designed to assist campus- and department-level personnel in purchasing of supplies and services. Rules and guidelines for those purchases consistent with relevant statutes, regulations, and board policies are a vital part of the manual. **Figure 3–15** shows purchasing manual guidelines identified in the FASRG and identifies whether they are included in Big Spring ISD's Business Office procedures manual.

The Business Office Procedures manual lacks sufficient procedures to guide purchasing. Without comprehensive purchasing procedures, school and department staff do not have a resource to use when they encounter an unfamiliar task. Additionally, training for new employees is inconsistent, and staff reported that they would benefit from more training. Employees who do not receive sufficient training on their assigned duties struggle to complete them. New employees often call or email staff on other campuses that have similar duties to help them understand how and when to complete tasks, which is time-consuming and inefficient. Lack of training can also lead to inconsistency and errors and may contribute to the district's high staff turnover.

A comprehensive and easily understood reference manual for financial and other administrative duties and processes reduces errors and reduces the amount of time required asking and answering questions. Lyford ISD maintains a comprehensive operating procedures manual. The manual contains operating procedures for 70 areas of district operations, including budget development, fixed-asset inventory, maintenance requests, and University Interscholastic League activities. This manual serves as an excellent training guide for new employees and as a reference tool for all employees. The manual is centrally maintained to ensure that all procedures are coordinated and updated.

McAllen ISD also has a well-developed purchasing manual that includes board policies and competitive purchasing

FIGURE 3–15
FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM RESOURCE GUIDE
PURCHASING MANUAL GUIDELINES COMPARED TO BIG
SPRING ISD'S PURCHASING PROCEDURES

GUIDELINES	BIG SPRING ISD
Purchasing goals and objectives	No
Statutes, regulations and board policies applicable to purchasing	Partial: Board Policies CH (LEGAL) and CH (LOCAL) are referenced and briefly discussed
Purchasing authority	Partial: not specific but implied that campus principals and department directors have authority because they approve purchase orders
Requisition and purchase order processing	Yes
Competitive procurement requirements and procedures	Yes
Vendor selection and relations	No
Receiving	Yes
Distribution	Yes
Disposal of obsolete and surplus property	No
Request for payment vouchers and repair and service of equipment	No
Bid or proposal form	Yes
Purchase order form	Yes
Purchase requisition form	Yes
Receiving report	Yes
Vendor performance evaluation form	No
Request for payment voucher	No

SOURCES: Texas Education Agency, Financial Accountability System Resource Guide; Big Spring ISD Business Office Procedures, January 2015.

guidelines. The manual is provided to all campuses and departments and is available online along with forms; a comprehensive listing, by category, of awarded vendors; the request for proposal or bid number; the bid description; and other information. The manual includes approved vendors for campus activity fund purchases. The purchasing manual provides step-by-step instructions with process flows and screen shots of how to process purchase orders, bid procedures, payments, return of merchandise, capital outlay requests, vendor relations, donations, and deadlines. The Purchasing Department also provides comprehensive training each year to all campuses and departments.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a process to periodically review and update the purchasing guidelines in the Business Office Procedures manual and ensure that campus staff are adequately trained on these guidelines.

Big Spring ISD should develop comprehensive purchasing procedures using FASRG's purchasing manual guidelines and include these procedures in the Business Office Procedures manual. The manual should continue to be made available on the district's website and reviewed on an annual basis with a date added to the manual to indicate the updated version. The updated manual should not only provide detailed steps on how to complete a particular process, but also include policies such as delegated purchasing and the associated penalties for not following the policies. The CFO should obtain copies of other districts' purchasing manuals and use FASRG for guidance. At a minimum, Big Spring ISD's purchasing guidelines in the Business Office Procedures manual should include:

- board policies;
- competitive purchasing thresholds;
- all forms and completed samples;
- details of all purchasing processes and when each one applies;
- request for prices and bids process and forms;
- instructions for purchasing through approved purchasing cooperatives; and
- a complete, approved purchasing cooperative and vendor list.

The CFO should meet with campus staff who have purchasing responsibilities to discuss improving instructions. The group should also discuss training needs and when training should be provided. The Business Office should develop training materials. The group should establish an ongoing plan to ensure that training for new staff and any necessary recurring training is conducted.

The CFO should identify and ensure that the staff involved in business and financial processes are also trained as needed. Training sessions should be provided to all new employees who have duties covered by the manual and routinely offered for all staff where processes covered in the manual are discussed and questions answered. The training should include sufficient written documentation for future use by the participants.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT (REC. 22)

Big Spring ISD does not effectively monitor its contracted services.

Performance of contracted services is not centrally monitored, and some services are not properly performed or documented. The district does not have formal procedures guiding contract management.

Contracted services are managed by the campus or department that initiated the contract. Although there is no central verification of services, the campus or department confirms to the director of business services that all contract provisions have been completed before payments can be made.

The director of business services processes requests for proposal (RFP) for contracted services, and works with campus and department staff to develop the specifications for RFPs. The director of business services also approves all service contracts and renewals, and reviews payments before final processing. **Figure 3-16** shows a comparison of expenditures on professional and contracted services by Big Spring ISD and peer districts from fiscal years 2009-10 to 2013-14. Big Spring ISD's spending on contracted services increased by \$786,328 during this time, an increase of 26.6 percent. This represents the largest total increase of any of Big Spring ISD's peers, and the second-largest increase in percentage after Andrews ISD.

The review team identified a lack of oversight on several of the district's contracts. The Big Spring ISD board has a contract with a Lubbock law firm to represent the district. The legal services contract is dated January 29, 2004, and, according to the CFO, has not been reviewed or updated in at least five years. The contract includes a \$200 monthly retainer, but it lacks any limits or a defined hourly rate for performed services. It states that "services outside the retainer are charged based on our hourly rates" but does not quantify the rate. Additional details on this contract are included in the District Leadership, Organization, and Governance chapter of this review.

The district also maintains contracts for fire alarm tests and inspections, annual inspection of fire extinguishers, and annual inspection of kitchen fire suppression systems. However, the district has no process in place to ensure that required inspections are conducted. The review team

FIGURE 3–16
SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL AND CONTRACTED SERVICES EXPENDITURES
FISCAL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14

DISTRICT	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM FISCAL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14
Andrews	\$1,833,466	\$1,877,408	\$1,728,920	\$1,593,545	\$2,384,551	30.1%
Big Spring	\$2,952,616	\$2,988,849	\$3,250,104	\$3,440,033	\$3,738,944	26.6%
Snyder	\$3,203,680	\$3,659,378	\$3,981,009	\$3,523,623	\$3,698,129	15.4%
El Campo	\$5,268,738	\$4,690,195	\$5,133,353	\$5,479,786	\$5,882,096	11.6%
Dumas	\$2,105,631	\$2,710,627	\$2,165,369	\$2,035,078	\$1,939,571	-8.6%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Public Education Information Management System, April 2015.

consistently found that fire extinguishers throughout the district are not properly inspected. Fire extinguishers with no maintenance tag, or with out-of-date maintenance tags, were found in the high school, junior high school, Moss Elementary School, Marcy Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, Kentwood Early Childhood Center, and the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) campus.

Big Spring ISD contracts for kitchen fire suppression systems, but the system in the south kitchen of the Intermediate School's cafeteria has not been inspected or maintained since 1999. Although the district no longer uses this room for cooking, the fire suppression system is still installed and is therefore required to be maintained in an operative condition or removed.

When district staff do not monitor vendor performance, the district cannot assure the board and other stakeholders that it is wisely and efficiently expending district resources. The district is further exposed to waste and loss by allowing the approval of payments for contracted services without ensuring that these services are performed effectively. The FASRG recommends keeping an open and professional, yet independent and objective, relationship with vendors. The FASRG also recommends that districts evaluate all vendor services to ensure that vendors meet the terms and conditions of the contracts. It suggests that districts consider the following during a contract term and especially when closing a contract:

- timeliness of deliveries;
- service availability;

- completeness and accuracy of order; and
- quality of products or services received.

The FASRG provides guidance in the event of issues or conflicts with vendors regarding the services provided. It suggests the following:

- Document the problem in writing, noting the date and an accurate description of the problem.
- Contact the vendor and communicate how the district wants the problem resolved.
- If the problem persists, contact the vendor in writing, restating the problem and solution desired and informing the vendor that failure to adequately respond will be considered a breach of the contract and may lead to cancellation.
- Consult with legal counsel if the problem is not solved.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a formal contract management process with written procedures and practices to identify all district contracts, centrally capture and monitor contract requirements, and evaluate vendor performance.

To accomplish this, contract details—including effective and expiration dates, parties to the agreement, and vendor and district covenants—should be captured and actively managed to ensure compliance and mitigate the district's exposure to risk. When vendor performance is unsatisfactory, the district should fully document the problem in writing, contact the vendor regarding the conflict and document this contact, and consult with legal counsel if the problem is not resolved.

The Business Office should incorporate the procedures in the Business Office Procedures manual, and provide regular training to staff responsible for soliciting and monitoring contracted services.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FIXED ASSETS (REC. 23)

Big Spring ISD’s investment in fixed assets is not being managed appropriately.

The district uses multiple incompatible systems to manage inventory, which results in duplicated staff effort and leads to inconsistencies in asset reporting. Additionally, the district has no control of the deletion of items, and inventory that cannot be accounted for is deleted without any approval required.

The district has two fixed-asset classifications. Capitalized assets are those with a value of \$5,000 or more. These items are capitalized and depreciated to meet financial reporting requirements. The other inventory is for controlled items, which are items valued between \$500 and \$4,999. TEA’s FASRG requires assets costing \$5,000 or more to be recorded in the fixed-asset group of accounts in the district’s annual financial report. Items costing less than \$5,000 are recorded as operating expenses of the appropriate fund in accordance

with TEA guidelines. **Figure 3–17** shows the fixed assets valued at more than \$5,000 and accumulated depreciation for these assets included in Big Spring ISD’s fiscal year 2013–14 comprehensive annual financial report. Additions refer to items added; retirements refer to items removed; and transfers refer to items moved from one category to another.

Big Spring ISD does not have sufficient board policies to guide the management of its investment in fixed assets, and the Business Office Procedures manual provides limited guidance on fixed assets and controlled items. Two policies, Board Policy CI (LOCAL—School Properties Disposal) and Board Policy CFB (LOCAL—Accounting Inventories), posted on the district website, provide guidance on fixed assets. Board Policy CI (LOCAL) provides general guidance on the disposal of unneeded materials, equipment, and supplies. Board Policy CFB (LOCAL) established the threshold for capitalizing equipment at \$5,000. No policies or procedures guide the conducting of physical inventories, approval procedures for deleting items from the inventory, or holding staff accountable for missing items. At a given time, the district does not definitively know what inventory it has in possession or the condition of the items.

The accounting clerk reviews purchase orders before submission to vendors to determine if items are being purchased that meet the criteria for a capitalized asset or

**FIGURE 3–17
BIG SPRING ISD CAPITALIZED ASSETS
FISCAL YEAR 2013–14**

CATEGORY	BALANCES SEPTEMBER 1, 2013	ADDITIONS	RETIREMENTS	TRANSFERS	BALANCES AUGUST 31, 2014
Capital Assets:					
Land	\$2,562,824	\$0	\$3,935	\$0	\$2,558,889
Building	\$113,352,096	\$557,310	\$	\$1,051,673	\$114,961,079
Equipment/Vehicles	\$6,593,168	\$414,253	\$691,056	\$91,510	\$6,407,875
Construction Work in Progress	\$844,280	\$298,903	\$0	(\$1,143,183)	\$0
Total Capital Assets	\$123,352,368	\$1,270,466	\$694,991	\$0	\$123,927,843
Depreciation:					
Buildings	(\$42,230,453)	(\$2,514,570)	\$0	\$0	(\$44,745,023)
Equipment/Vehicles	(\$3,898,511)	(\$601,569)	(\$670,237)	\$0	(\$3,829,843)
Total Accumulated Depreciation	(\$46,128,964)	(\$3,116,139)	(\$670,237)	\$0	(\$48,574,866)
Total Net Value of Capital Assets	\$77,223,404	(\$1,845,673)	\$24,754	\$0	\$75,352,977

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD Comprehensive Financial Report, Fiscal Year 2013–14.

controlled item. If items are included on the purchase order that should be placed on the inventory listings as a capitalized or controlled item, a fixed-asset receiving form is prepared. The accounting clerk adds certain data to the purchase order, including vendor number, purchase order number, manufacturer, description, and school year of purchase. The purchase order is then sent to the warehouse with the warehouse's copy of the purchase order. When items are received in the warehouse, other fields on the fixed-asset receiving form are completed, including the location where the item is first delivered, barcode number, and serial number. Warehouse staff apply a barcode tag to each item before delivering to schools or departments.

The purchase order is then sent back to the accounting clerk, who enters the data into two different inventory systems for all fixed assets that have a value of \$500 or more. For one system, the district contracted with Records Consultants, Inc. (RCI), a private inventorying vendor. RCI initially inventoried the district's capitalized assets for a cost of \$16,000, and the district paid \$6,450 for inventorying services for fiscal year 2013–14. The other is the TxEIS fixed asset module. The accounting clerk annually prepares a listing from the vendor's software for items valued at more than \$5,000 that is used by representatives of the vendor to conduct an annual physical inventory. The Business Office uses this listing for annual financial reporting purposes. Items valued at more than \$5,000 are capitalized and depreciated to comply with the federal Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement 34 reporting requirements. The district does not conduct physical inventories for items costing less than \$5,000.

District staff reported that the RCI system cannot produce reports with all the information needed to properly manage fixed assets, and the TxEIS fixed asset module cannot provide depreciation schedules for capitalized items for reporting purposes. However, according to the features listed for TxEIS's fixed asset module, it has the capability of providing a capitalized-asset depreciation schedule.

The Business Office attempts to keep the two systems in balance, but reports from both systems did not balance in January 2015, when listings were prepared for the review team from each system for capitalized assets. The RCI system showed 3,891 items valued at \$10.1 million, while the TxEIS system showed 5,176 items valued at \$11.1 million. The accounting clerk does not reconcile the two systems to identify inaccuracies.

The Technology Department also maintains an inventory of all technology items without specific cost criteria using TIPWeb software. This inventory was established due to the frequent movement of technology equipment between locations. The Technology Department conducts and controls relocating technology equipment. The Technology Department adds items to the inventory after items are received in the warehouse. The warehouse staff places a barcode tag on items if they have received a fixed-asset receiving form, but if not, the Technology Department places the barcode tag on the item. The Technology Department obtains barcode tags from the warehouse staff.

The district has no control of items deleted from the RCI system, TxEIS, or TIPWeb. The Business Office procedures do not contain any guidance to campuses and departments on deleting controlled items or fixed assets. The accounting clerk deletes items from the inventories when notified by campuses, without any approval required. After the vendor conducts a physical inventory of the fixed-asset items costing more than \$5,000, the accounting clerk also deletes items from the inventories that cannot be located, without any approval required. Staff described an incident in November 2014 when a packet shaper that was purchased in 2004 for approximately \$13,000 could not be accounted for and was deleted from the inventories.

Without a comprehensive set of board policies to direct fixed-asset management, the district cannot properly manage its investment in fixed assets. Procedures hold staff accountable for items lost or damaged due to negligence, and without such policies, principals and department heads cannot properly protect the school system's investments. In addition, without taking physical inventories of items costing less than \$5,000, the district cannot ensure that the items included on the fixed-asset listing are still located on district property and cannot track if or when items are lost or stolen. In the event of theft and waste, without proper documentation of inventory, the district is unaware of which staff are responsible and when and where the loss occurred. This lack of documentation may present additional risks if the district lacks the complete information required to file an insurance claim for lost or damaged property. By using multiple incompatible systems to manage inventory, Big Spring ISD is requiring duplicate staff effort, which also leads to inconsistencies in asset reporting.

To protect their investments in fixed assets, school districts track their assets and have formal policies that provide direction to manage assets.

Karnack ISD keeps a comprehensive list of assets and performs annual physical inventories to help ensure accountability for district property. By keeping an up-to-date and accurate listing of assets owned by the district, Karnack ISD can ensure it has adequate insurance coverage, has complete information necessary to file a claim in the event of a loss, and provides an internal control mechanism to reduce the risk of loss. The district uses \$5,000 as the threshold for capitalization of fixed assets. The district uses \$500 as the threshold for other assets to be included in the inventory, except for technology equipment that is included regardless of cost.

To assist local governments with managing fixed assets, the CPA established fixed-asset best practices. In a document titled *Getting a Fix on Fixed Assets*, a number of suggested steps were identified to help local governments develop and maintain an effective fixed-assets management system. **Figure 3–18** shows these steps.

Big Spring ISD should improve management of the district’s investment in fixed assets by developing and implementing a comprehensive fixed-asset plan and conducting annual physical inventories.

**FIGURE 3–18
STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A FIXED-ASSETS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

Preliminary Step	Identify individuals in the district who will have key fixed-asset responsibilities and establish the nature of such responsibilities.
	Devise policies and procedures governing capitalization thresholds, inventory, accounting, employee accountability, transfers, disposals, surplus and obsolescence, and asset sale and disposition.
	Determine district fixed-asset information needs and constraints.
	Determine the hardware and software necessary to effectively manage the system.
Creating the Fixed-Asset Management System	Adopt a proposal setting up the fixed-asset system, including adoption of formal policies and procedures.
	Establish positions and job descriptions for staff with fixed-asset responsibilities.
	Determine the design of the fixed-asset inventory database and develop standard forms to match the format of computerized records.
	Provide training as necessary.
	Identify specific assets below the capitalization threshold that should be tracked for information purposes and safeguarding.
	Budget the amount necessary to operate the fixed-assets management system adequately.
Implementing the Fixed-Asset Management System	Inform all departments of the requirements, policies, and procedures of the fixed-assets system.
	Ensure that assets to be tracked on the system have been identified and tagged.
	Enter information into the fixed-assets database.
	Assign appropriate values to the assets in the database.
Maintaining the Fixed-Asset Management System	Establish location codes and custodial responsibility for fixed assets.
	Enter all inventory information into the automated fixed-asset system as fixed assets are received. Assign tag numbers, location codes, and responsibility to assets as they are received.
	Monitor the movement of all fixed assets using appropriate forms approved by designated district personnel.
	Conduct periodic inventories and determine the condition of all assets. Generate appropriate reports noting any change in status of assets, including changes in condition, location, and deletions.
	Reconcile the physical inventory to the accounting records, account for discrepancies, and adjust inventory records.
	Use information from the system to support insurance coverage, budget requests, and asset replacements and upgrades.

SOURCE: Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, 1999.

The Business Office should develop a set of comprehensive fixed-asset policies for board approval. The policies should cover all aspects of managing the district's investment in fixed assets.

The Business Office should also decide which inventory system it is going to use to eliminate the duplicate recording that exists with using both the TxEIS and RCI systems for the same items. One possibility that should be considered is to use the TxEIS system for controlled items costing between \$500 and \$4,999 and to continue using the RCI system for capitalized items costing more than \$5,000. Continuing to use the TxEIS system for controlled items will allow the district to run the desired reports, and using the vendor's system for capitalized items will enable depreciation to be calculated for financial reporting requirements.

After the items in the inventory systems have been revised to meet district needs, the CFO should develop a plan to complete a full physical inventory of all capitalized and controlled items. This inventory process will include running reports for each district location and physically inventorying items in each room. The CFO should develop inventorying instructions to provide direction of how the physical inventory should be conducted, including how to handle items that cannot be found at the location, items that are found at the location that are not on the inventory, and how to reconcile those types of items.

In addition, the district should develop an understanding of how the inventory of technology equipment will be handled in relation to the formal inventory records maintained in the Business Office. The district should also consider establishing unique expenditure codes for controlled items so that the purchase of those items can be reconciled back to inventory records on a monthly basis to help ensure all items purchased are added to the inventory in a timely manner.

This recommendation could be implemented with 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.

RECOMMENDATION.	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 3: BUSINESS SERVICES							
15. Develop an informative budget document and post it on the district website to provide the public and interested parties with information pertaining to the district's financial operations.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
16. Establish a budget development process that seeks input from the public and staff and publish a budget calendar to communicate the process to stakeholders.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
17. Provide direct deposit for employees paid semi-monthly and encourage those employees paid monthly who do not have their pay deposited directly to participate.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
18. Improve controls of processing payrolls to improve efficiency, reduce risk of error, and ensure that confidential data is protected.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
19. Develop a board policy and formal procedures for management of textbooks and instructional materials using the district's textbook software.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
20. Develop and implement procedures for operating the district's central warehouse including inventorying and storing items and disposing of surplus equipment and obsolete items.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
21. Develop and implement a process to periodically review and update the purchasing guidelines in the district's Business Office Procedures manual and ensure that campus staff are adequately trained on these guidelines.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
22. Develop and implement a formal contract management process with written procedures and practices to identify all district contracts, centrally capture and monitor contract requirements, and evaluate vendor performance.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
23. Improve management of the district's investment in fixed assets by developing and implementing a comprehensive fixed-asset plan and conducting annual physical inventories.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

CHAPTER 4. FACILITIES 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). Facilities management includes planning for facilities use, construction of projects, and maintenance of infrastructure (e.g., electrical, plumbing, irrigation, heating and cooling).

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.

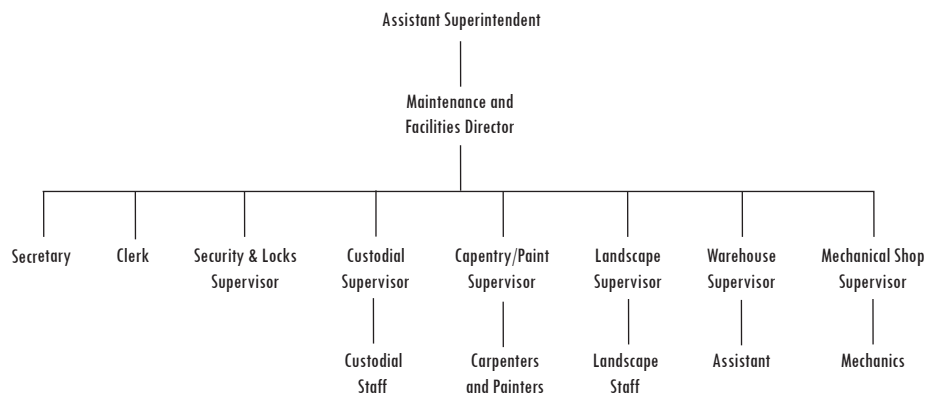
Figure 4–1 shows Big Spring Independent School District's (ISD) facilities and maintenance organization.

The maintenance and transportation director oversees facilities, maintenance, and transportation services. The director reports to the assistant superintendent. An assistant director reports to the director on issues of maintenance as well as transportation. However, the assistant director spends the majority of his time on transportation services. Other positions that report directly to the director are one secretary, one clerk, and six supervisors in charge of maintenance-related functions: security and locks supervisor, custodial supervisor, carpentry/paint supervisor, landscape supervisor, warehouse supervisor, and mechanical shop supervisor.

The major school facilities serving Big Spring ISD's 4,134 students consist of one high school, one junior high school, four elementary schools, and one early childhood center. An intermediate school facility was recently re-opened in the former Goliad Intermediate School to house grade six. Grade seven is scheduled to be added in school year 2015–16 to reduce overpopulation in the junior high school.

Figure 4–2 shows areas and values of the district's buildings and facilities. This figure shows the buildings and ancillary facilities the district uses daily. The figure also shows facilities used as storage and others that have been decommissioned. The actively used facilities include a total floor area of 985,978 square feet, with current replacement values for the buildings exceeding \$145.5 million, building contents replacement of nearly \$10.0 million, and land/infrastructure

FIGURE 4–1
BIG SPRING ISD FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

**FIGURE 4–2
BIG SPRING ISD FACILITY FLOOR AREAS AND REPLACEMENT VALUES
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

FACILITIES	YEARS OF CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION	GROSS SQUARE FEET	INSURED VALUE OF BUILDING	INSURED VALUE OF CONTENTS	INSURED VALUE OF SITE IMPROVEMENTS
In Active Use					
Administration Building and Annex	1954, 2009	12,347	\$1,511,799	\$263,153	\$0
Marcy Elementary	2012	70,000	\$13,005,600	\$0	\$0
Washington Elementary	2012	70,000	\$13,005,600	\$0	\$0
Goliad Elementary	2012	70,000	\$13,005,600	\$0	\$0
Moss Elementary	2012	70,000	\$13,005,600	\$0	\$0
High School	1952, 1960, 1999	363,940	\$52,727,906	\$5,799,972	\$191,000
Junior High School	1999	151,812	\$19,731,797	\$2,015,974	\$88,000
Big Spring Intermediate	1957, 1960, 1990	78,421	\$10,418,449	\$942,204	\$50,000
Kentwood Early Childhood Center	1962, 1995, 1996	24,760	\$3,364,434	\$440,234	\$92,000
Steer Park Baseball Facility	1948, 1960, 1964, 1990	10,335	\$519,616	\$6,072	\$614,000
Football Field	1958, 1980	8,057	\$2,361,796	\$76,914	\$201,000
Tennis Center	2000	3,782	\$172,509	\$4,048	\$243,000
Softball Field	1999	1,362	\$167,280	\$6,072	\$175,000
Maintenance Office/Bus Garage	1940–1995	51,162	\$2,487,257	\$402,791	\$65,000
Total Facilities in Active Use		985,978	\$145,485,243	\$9,957,434	\$1,719,000
Repurposed or Decommissioned Buildings					
Anderson Elementary (now records storage)	1951	18,718	\$2,820,769	\$171,035	\$36,000
Lakeview Elementary (formerly Head Start)	1954, 1990	36,094	\$3,913,322	\$694,256	\$91,000
Old Marcy Elementary site (demolished)		0	\$0	\$0	\$84,000
Old Washington Elementary site (demolished)		0	\$0	\$0	\$44,000
Total Facilities Repurposed or Decommissioned		54,812	\$6,734,091	\$865,291	\$255,000
Total of all Big Spring ISD Facilities		1,040,790	\$152,219,334	\$10,822,725	\$1,974,000

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

improvements totaling more than \$1.7 million. The decommissioned or otherwise unused or repurposed buildings and grounds increase the total floor area to nearly 1,041,000 square feet. Replacement values that include these unused and repurposed buildings increase the values to more than \$152.2 million, \$10.8 million for building contents, and \$2.0 million for land/infrastructure improvements.

Big Spring ISD does not maintain a dedicated in-house staff to manage major new construction, addition, or renovation projects. Big Spring ISD previously used a team consisting of the assistant superintendent, the chief financial officer (CFO), and the maintenance and transportation director to administer and oversee such construction contracts. This team oversaw contracts during the largest new construction

effort, which occurred from 2011 to 2013. During this time, the district constructed four identical elementary campuses to replace four old elementary campuses that would have been more expensive to renovate. Major renovations to the high school, and an expansion of the junior high school also occurred. The district closed and repurposed two additional old elementary schools.

The facilities construction contracts Big Spring ISD most recently administered typically follow a “design-bid-build” model. In this model, the architect acts on behalf of the owner in securing the lowest bid from a qualified, pre-screened vendor. This procedure serves as an avenue for the district’s hiring of professional design and construction firms. The district’s CFO, along with the assistant superintendent, previously formulated the contractual arrangements to procure design services. The district’s Board of Trustees policies specify these methods of contracting.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Maintenance Department lacks the organizational structure to ensure a standard level of operational function.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not have a process to determine the extent of its facilities’ deferred maintenance needs and corresponding potential costs.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not proactively manage short-term changes in its school population or use enrollment projections to plan for future facility needs.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not adequately plan for facilities management and future facilities needs.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD has not established standards or methods to determine custodial staffing levels, and the district does not use a staffing formula to calculate the number of custodians needed at each campus.
- ◆ Although energy costs are reasonable for its size, Big Spring ISD lacks a process to manage, measure, and monitor its energy use and ensure energy costs stay reasonable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 24: Modify the Maintenance Department’s organizational structure by establishing a maintenance and facilities director position.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 25: Contract for a comprehensive facilities condition assessment, and develop and implement a preventive maintenance program.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 26: Annually forecast student enrollment and engage in a capacity management planning process that includes input from relevant stakeholders.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 27: Establish a facilities master plan with five-year and 10-year timelines and update the plan annually or as needed.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 28: Develop and implement a staffing model to better manage the distribution of work among custodians and reassess the policy of scheduling some custodians to work four hours of overtime per week.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 29: Develop and implement an energy management plan to conserve energy and reduce energy costs.**

DETAILED FINDINGS

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (REC. 24)

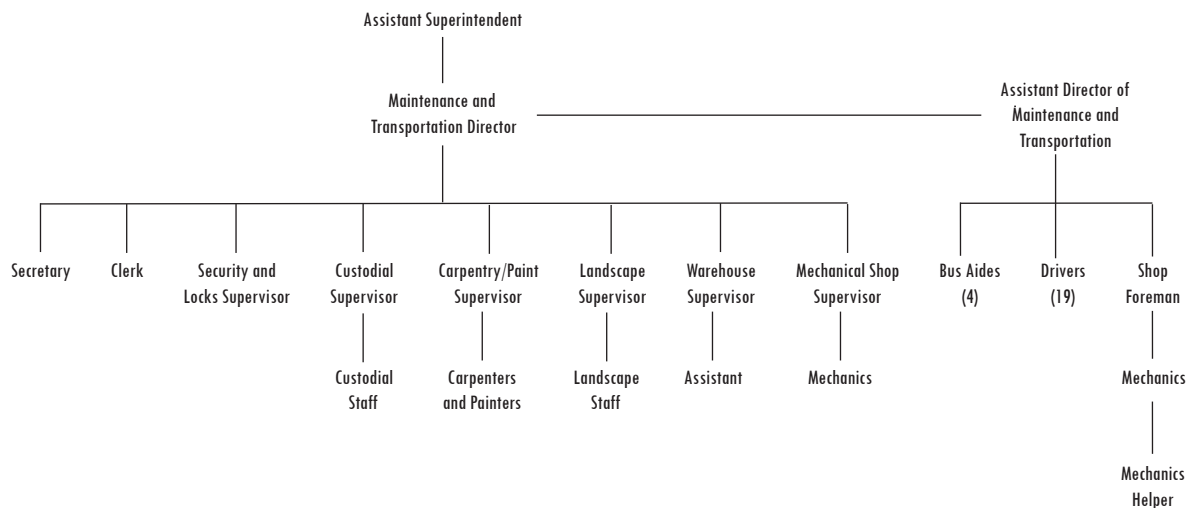
Big Spring ISD’s Maintenance Department lacks the organizational structure to ensure a standard level of operational function.

Big Spring ISD’s Maintenance Department is overseen by the maintenance and transportation director, who also serves as the supervisor for transportation services. The director has responsibilities for three of the most labor-intensive functions in the district, which are facilities management, custodial services, and student transportation. Within the maintenance function, the director oversees staffing, maintenance, training, developing the department’s budget, productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the department. The director is responsible for 95 employees. **Figure 4-3** shows the Maintenance and Transportation Department organizational structure.

In comparison, three of the four peer districts—Dumas ISD, Andrews ISD, and El Campo ISD—have separate positions for transportation director and maintenance and facilities director. Only Snyder ISD combines these two positions. Peer districts are school districts similar to Big Spring ISD used for comparison purposes in this report.

The review team found that the maintenance and transportation director does not have enough time for

FIGURE 4–3
BIG SPRING ISD MAINTENANCE AND TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

effective facilities planning or organization, given the breadth of responsibilities that are included in this position. According to district staff, Big Spring ISD does not engage in any of these standard facilities management practices:

- periodic building condition assessments;
- facilities master planning, including short- and long-term responses to enrollment fluctuations;
- calculations of the percentage of deferred maintenance, and taking steps to mitigate excess amounts;
- maintenance funding targeted as a percentage of current replacement value;
- analyses of the amount spent by the district on maintenance as a comparison with other districts; or
- routine performance of thorough and all-encompassing preventive maintenance.

Big Spring ISD does not have policies and procedures to determine the amount of acceptable deferred maintenance, preventive maintenance guidelines, or the minimum acceptable building condition index. These metrics are best practices used to govern a facilities management function in a district.

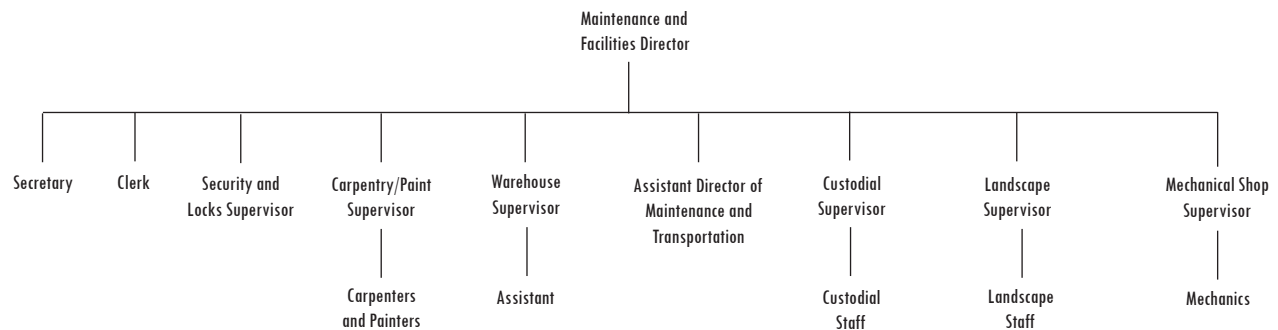
Big Spring ISD should modify the Maintenance Department’s organizational structure by establishing a maintenance and facilities director position.

The District Organization and Management chapter of this report includes a recommendation that Big Spring ISD eliminate the maintenance and transportation director position and the assistant director of maintenance and transportation position. Big Spring ISD should establish a new maintenance and facilities director position. Establishing a new maintenance and facilities director will allow the primary focus of this position to be on maintenance and facilities services. The maintenance and facilities director would assume the existing maintenance and facilities duties of the assistant director of maintenance and transportation, while the assistant director will focus on transportation.

The secretary and auxiliary clerk positions should continue to be shared with the Transportation Department. In reorganizing the structure of the Maintenance Department, Big Spring ISD should also ensure that supervisory roles and reporting assignments are aligned correctly. **Figure 4–4** shows the recommended organizational chart.

Big Spring ISD’s human resources staff should develop a job description for the position of maintenance and facilities director and post it on the district website. The district should organize a selection committee to fill the position. The selection committee should consist of the assistant superintendent, CFO, and the community relations coordinator. Qualified Big Spring ISD employees should be encouraged to apply, along with respondents from outside

FIGURE 4–4
RECOMMENDED MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION



SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015.

the district. Common qualifications and essential knowledge for an effective maintenance and facilities director include:

- three to five years of facilities management experience;
- experience supervising maintenance personnel;
- background working with outside vendors and contractors; and
- working knowledge of all applicable federal and state regulations that apply to the Facilities and Maintenance Department of a school district.

Big Spring ISD should provide continuous professional development opportunities to the maintenance and facilities director. The training received would increase the director's knowledge base, allowing the director to conduct annual in-service training to maintenance supervisors.

Since the time of the onsite review, the district has restructured the Maintenance and Transportation Department. The assistant maintenance and transportation director position has been changed to transportation supervisor.

The fiscal impact assumes the salary of the new maintenance and facilities director is \$67,758. This total is based on the 2010–11 Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) survey of salaries and wages in Texas public schools for the average salary of a maintenance and facilities director in districts with similar student enrollment to Big Springs ISD. The fiscal impact assumes \$67,758 for the salary, and, including the district's 20 percent benefit rate, the total fiscal impact assumed is an annual cost of \$81,310 (\$67,758 in salary plus \$13,552 in benefits).

FACILITIES CONDITION (REC. 25)

Big Spring ISD does not have a process to determine the extent of its facilities' deferred maintenance needs and corresponding potential costs.

Deferred maintenance is the practice of postponing needed maintenance activities such as repairs on both real property (i.e. infrastructure) and personal property (i.e. machinery). While deferring maintenance can save an organization costs in the short term, the long-term effects of deferred maintenance can be extremely costly. Deferring maintenance can lead to facilities and equipment deteriorating prematurely and needing repairs that cost more and are more time-consuming than would otherwise have been necessary. Beyond costs, if maintenance is continually deferred, the results can range from simple poor building aesthetics to the forced renovation or demolition of an entire structure.

Big Spring ISD does not have an assessment of the amount of its deferred maintenance because it has not conducted a facilities condition assessment since 2007. A facilities condition assessment is a periodic procedure conducted typically by architects or engineers to determine the condition of all elements of a building. The purpose of a facilities condition assessment is to identify, in detail, deferred maintenance in building components that should be better maintained, repaired, or replaced, and any other needed maintenance actions.

However, even without a recent facilities condition assessment, two indicators suggest that Big Spring ISD may have excessive deferred maintenance.

First, the district performs negligible amounts of preventive maintenance to control maintenance costs and ensure that district buildings are properly maintained.

Big Spring ISD manages the majority of its day-to-day maintenance operations through work orders that are entered by staff into an electronic work order system. A district staff member also might contact the Maintenance Department outside of the work order system via phone call or text. These requests are added to the work order management software. The maintenance and transportation secretary assigns the work orders to the appropriate staff.

According to Big Spring ISD maintenance staff, the majority of the maintenance performed in the district is of a reactive nature: When equipment malfunctions or breaks, it is repaired or replaced as quickly as possible. The district performs negligible amounts of preventive maintenance. The district does not perform preventive maintenance on the heating/ventilation/air conditioning (HVAC) units, plumbing or electrical systems, nor on the interior finishes, building structures, or roofing. The maintenance and custodial staff replaces light bulbs. The district outsources filter replacement services.

By relying on reactive maintenance rather than preventive maintenance, the district incurs significantly higher maintenance costs than the cost of performing primarily preventive maintenance and the scheduled replacement of equipment when its life expectancy has been reached. Moreover, some premature and unexpected malfunctions and failures caused by a lack of preventive maintenance can cause disruptions to schools' daily schedules. For example, during the onsite review, the review team observed electrical malfunctions and plumbing leaks.

The second indicator that Big Spring ISD may have excessive deferred maintenance is shown in the results from the previous two facilities condition assessments the district conducted in 2006 and 2007. The Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) completed a Facilities Evaluation and Projected Needs study in August 2006. In addition to a facilities condition assessment, it also included population projections and information regarding the existing capacity of the district's facilities. The consulting firm Parkhill, Smith & Cooper, Inc. (PSC), completed another facilities assessment in October 2007. This facilities condition assessment included Big Spring High School; Goliad Intermediate School (now Big Spring Intermediate School); Bauer Magnet School; Kentwood (now Kentwood Early childhood Center), Marcy, Moss and Washington elementary schools; and the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP), which was housed at the former Anderson Elementary campus at that time. The poor

conditions of the facilities found in these studies indicated that the district has not performed sufficient preventive maintenance practices.

Figure 4–5 shows the results of the 2006 TASA study. This study recommended that the district renovate, replace, or conduct substantial repairs on all of the campuses, except the junior high school campus.

FIGURE 4–5
TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
FACILITY STUDY OF BIG SPRING ISD
AUGUST 2006

FACILITY	RECOMMENDATION
Bauer Magnet	abandon or replace
Kentwood Elementary(1)	substantial/major rehabilitation
Marcy Elementary	renovation/replacement
Moss Elementary	substantial/major rehabilitation
Washington Elementary	abandon or replace
Goliad Intermediate(2)	renovation/replacement
Junior High School	serves needs well
High School	renovation/replacement
Disciplinary Alternative Education Program/Anderson Elementary	substantial/major rehabilitation

NOTES:
 (1) Kentwood Elementary is now Kentwood Early Childhood center.
 (2) Goliad Intermediate is now Big Spring Intermediate.
 SOURCES: Texas Association of School Administrators, Big Spring ISD Facilities Evaluation and Projected Needs, 2006.

Figure 4–6 shows the result of the 2007 PSC facilities condition assessment. Based on this assessment, PSC determined the Facilities Condition Index (FCI) for each facility. The FCI is the ratio of current-year maintenance, repair and replacement cost to the replacement cost of the building. An FCI of 0 to 10 percent is considered good; 11 to 30 percent is considered fair to poor; 31 to 50 percent is poor; and at greater than 50 percent, the facility should be replaced. Of the nine facilities that were included, only Kentwood Elementary School (now Early Childhood Center) was rated as good.

Based on the facilities condition assessments, the district decided to demolish four of the elementary campuses—Moss, Marcy, Goliad and Washington—and build new structures on those sites. The district's voters approved the bond measure to fund these construction projects, and the schools were built in 2012.

FIGURE 4–6
PSC'S FACILITY ASSESSMENT SCORES FOR BIG SPRING ISD
OCTOBER 2007

FACILITY	FACILITIES CONDITION INDEX (%)
Bauer Magnet	0.30—fair
Kentwood Elementary(1)	0.08—good
Marcy Elementary	0.23—fair
Moss Elementary	0.12—fair
Washington Elementary	0.38—poor
Goliad Intermediate(2)	0.13—fair
High School	0.16—fair
Disciplinary Alternative Education Program/Anderson Elementary	0.43—poor

NOTES:
(1) Kentwood Elementary is now Kentwood Early Childhood center.
(2) Goliad Intermediate is now Big Spring Intermediate.
SOURCE: Parkhill, Smith & Cooper, Inc., Facilities Condition Assessment of Big Spring ISD, 2007.

However, even after the district obtained the poor results from the two facilities conditions assessments, the district did not establish a preventive maintenance policy. Therefore, it is likely that the conditions of district buildings have become worse since the last facilities condition assessment. This includes the four recently built elementary schools.

Big Spring ISD should contract for a comprehensive facilities condition assessment, and develop and implement a preventive maintenance program.

Using its established procedures and processes to procure professional consulting services, the district should issue a request for qualifications no later than December of school year 2015–16 for firms to be considered for selection as the contractors for a comprehensive facilities condition assessment of the district facilities inventory.

The district should initiate the comprehensive facilities condition assessment no later than the end of school year 2015–16 to permit facilities access during the summer months. A complete and final facilities condition assessment report should be submitted to the district no later than December of school year 2016–17.

An update of this initial facilities condition assessment should be budgeted and performed every five years to monitor the level of deferred maintenance and inform the budgeting process. After receiving the results of the initial facilities condition assessment, the maintenance and

transportation director should prioritize the tasks that should be conducted to remedy the identified deferred maintenance. The director should request additional funds if needed during the district's budgeting process. If, after two successive five-year updates, an acceptably low level of deferred maintenance has been consistently achieved, the district may opt to schedule a future update in 10 years. If, after the 10-year update, deferred maintenance has increased to unacceptable levels, the district should revert to five-year updates.

The maintenance and transportation director should establish a team of employees to perform preventive-maintenance tasks. As the district increases the amount of preventive maintenance it performs, the amount of reactive maintenance that is necessary will decrease, so no additional staff members should be necessary. The team should include a team leader, preferably with extensive experience in the district. Three additional team members who have a variety of expertise should be assigned to the team. The director should determine if the maintenance staff has the skills to address all of the preventive maintenance necessary. If not, the district may have to use contractua l services to conduct some tasks.

The maintenance and transportation director should use the work order management software to generate work orders for preventive-maintenance tasks that need to be completed periodically. Many standard, prototype work order lists are available from the Council of Educational Facility Planners International, APPA: Leadership in Educational Facilities, the International Facility Management Association, and other facilities management professional associations. The prototype work order lists show the preventive-maintenance tasks necessary for typical facilities equipment and systems and the frequency with which the maintenance should occur. Manufacturers of items requiring preventive maintenance can usually provide the maintenance protocol and intervals recommended for their products. The maintenance and transportation director should use these resources to develop a standard set of preventive maintenance protocols for Big Spring ISD.

Typical school facilities condition assessments cost from \$100,000 to \$150,000 for the initial work, and about two-thirds of that initial cost for periodic updates. The scope of a facilities condition assessment normally includes the following areas of investigation:

- document review: drawings, specifications, reports, and records;
- preliminary review and onsite observations;

- civil/site development and amenities: pavements, entrances, and sidewalks;
- building and grounds security;
- fire protection and life safety regulation compliance;
- Americans with Disabilities Act and Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation compliance;
- roofs;
- mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems;
- structure, foundation, and exterior wall systems;
- building interior elements; and
- elevators.

Based on the relatively small size of the district, the fiscal impact assumes the cost of the initial facilities condition assessment would be a one-time cost of approximately \$120,000. The fiscal impact does not assume any costs for the five-year facilities condition assessment update, which would occur outside of the five-year range of this report.

CAPACITY MANAGEMENT (REC. 26)

Big Spring ISD does not proactively manage short-term changes in its school population or use enrollment projections to plan for future facility needs.

Every year, new students enter school, and other students leave. Planning for fluctuations in student enrollment is an important school district activity, because accurate student forecasts drive long-term school facility decisions, such as opening, expanding, or closing schools and moving academic programs. Enrollment forecasts are used, in part, to determine whether the district will need to add or modify facility space to meet school program or configuration needs. Student enrollment forecasts, combined with a methodology for determining student capacity in each school and a strategic plan for increasing student achievement, provide a framework for facility needs. As such, student enrollment forecasts make up an important component of a district's facility planning.

Big Spring ISD, however, does not regularly forecast its student enrollment in either the short term (one to two years) or the long term (five to 10 years). The district has not forecasted its student population since 2006. Several staff members said that the reason the district does not forecast enrollment is that the region experiences unpredictable population fluctuations because the local economy is driven

by the oil industry. Big Spring ISD's lack of student enrollment forecasting leaves the district vulnerable to making reactive facilities decisions that could negatively affect the district's financial and educational operations. For example, the district constructed four elementary schools in 2011 and initiated their use in 2012. By the end of 2014, three of the four schools were at capacity, and the fourth was at approximately 70 percent capacity.

The junior high school exceeded capacity in school year 2013–14 and, as a result, grade six was moved to a previously unused intermediate school at the beginning of school year 2014–15. Staff was still being shifted from the junior high school to the intermediate school as late as December of school year 2014–15, causing confusion for both staff and students. Grade seven is planned to move to the same middle school in school year 2015–16.

Without forecasting student enrollment, Big Spring ISD is unable to adequately manage how the district responds to growth in student enrollment. The size of the recently built elementary campuses were not sufficient to keep pace with the increasing student population, leading to the campuses being full or almost full only a few years after they were built. Additionally, the district has to rely on relocating grades to other campuses on a reactionary basis when a campus is too full. This reactionary practice leaves the district without time to assess all possible actions that could be taken (for example, deciding which campuses students should be moved to, or deciding to install portables) or to gather stakeholder feedback to decide which option would be the most cost-effective and least disruptive for the students.

Effective school districts develop both short-and long-term enrollment projections. Short-term enrollment projections are used to make staffing and building use decisions in the next one to two years. The projections are categorized by grade and campus to allow administrators to respond to individual enrollment fluctuations, which may affect one grade or campus and not others.

If a student enrollment projection indicates the possibility of overcrowding or underutilization at a campus or within the district, the district is able to make a plan to mitigate the problem. Seattle Public Schools in Washington developed sound methodologies to establish short-term, predictive, school-capacity management plans. Seattle previously had a large inventory of unused schools located mostly in its core urban area. An influx of new population in the city resulted in a rapid demand for school space.

The approach to capacity management by Seattle Public Schools consists of a four-point initiative:

- establishment of a Facilities and Capacity Management Advisory Committee (FACMAC);
- annual short-term capacity management plan;
- public consultation; and
- long-term facilities plan.

A FACMAC includes a volunteer group of community members representing all regions of the city and representatives from diverse specialties and interests in educational programs, special education, demographics, and urban geography. The committee meets as needed, but not less than monthly.

The FACMAC developed a short-term plan and gathered public input to fine-tune it and to provide ideas for long-term planning. Community meetings were held in three locations within the district, and an email address was provided for the submission of comments and ideas.

Big Spring ISD should annually forecast student enrollment and engage in a capacity management planning process that includes input from relevant stakeholders.

To forecast student enrollment annually, it is likely that the district will need the services of a consultant or demographer. The consultant would assess the best method to predict enrollment in the district. The city of Big Spring or Howard County may already be working with such individuals to determine population estimates for financial and infrastructure planning. Big Spring ISD should contact the city of Big Spring and Howard County officials to determine if a cooperative agreement could be reached to lessen the financial impact that hiring consultants or demographers would have on the district.

If needed based on the enrollment prediction, the maintenance and transportation director should draft a short-term capacity management plan one year before it is scheduled for implementation. To get feedback from relevant stakeholders, the maintenance and transportation director could convene an advisory committee to assist with the development of the short-term plan.

The capacity management plan should detail two to four options for the preparation of school buildings and other facilities to meet the expected enrollment changes. This draft plan should then be provided internally to affected principals

and published externally via newspapers and broadcast media, including the Big Spring ISD website. One or more public meetings should be held at convenient locations and times to obtain public input. The district should also use means of securing public input, such as a web-based survey. Once public input has been obtained, Big Spring ISD administration and the advisory committee, if one has been established, should review the draft plan. At that point, the final plan should be prepared, and the selected option should be implemented as soon as necessary.

The following are some options the district might include in its first capacity management plan:

- expand each of the elementary schools by four classrooms, using the prototype expansion plan designed for the schools; install one or two portable classroom buildings at some or each of the four elementary schools as needed to absorb excess enrollment; remove these portables immediately after the school additions have been completed and put into use;
- renovate the former Goliad Intermediate School to serve permanently as the intermediate school for grades six and seven; house grades six and seven temporarily in the high school;
- place grades six and seven permanently in a dedicated facility at the high school; the excess capacity at the high school could accommodate these grades.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FACILITIES PLANNING (REC. 27)

Big Spring ISD does not adequately plan for facilities management and future facilities needs.

Big Spring ISD's board has not adopted a long-range facilities master plan. A long-range facility master plan provides a roadmap for future construction and renovation programs.

A comprehensive school facility master plan can include the following:

- an extensive evaluation of the condition and educational functionality of existing buildings and sites;
- a capacity analysis of all district education facilities, reflecting the district's instructional program;

- an evaluation of each campus and facility to determine its best use, considering local programs and state staffing and space requirements;
- a determination of technology capabilities within existing facilities;
- information relative to school facilities conformance to state and federal mandates;
- a series of recommendations and options available to the district to meet current and projected facility needs; and
- a 10-year enrollment forecast by grade and by campus for the entire district.

Onsite interviews conducted by the review team found that maintenance staff members were not aware of a formal facilities review process or an evaluation of future facility needs.

District staff reported that five-year and 10-year facilities plans previously were established, but fluctuations in student population and funding led to those plans not being fulfilled. The district's most recent plan was a five-year management plan for 2002 to 2007. The plan included a list of needed capital projects and their estimated costs, including some projects developed to ensure that the district complied with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, the plan was inadequate because it was not based on a facilities condition assessment, and it did not contain an implementation strategy. The district did not complete all the tasks listed in the 2002 to 2007 facilities management plan. Facilities condition assessments that were conducted in 2006 and 2007 noted many of the same ADA compliance tasks that were listed in the management plan.

Big Spring ISD facilities planning activities do not provide adequate direction and rationale for future actions in facilities planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance. The district's lack of a long-range facilities master plan has also resulted in district properties remaining unused and potentially decreasing in value. For example, Anderson Elementary School was closed and used for storage purposes in 2009. The scope of the storage function includes records, surplus furniture, obsolete equipment, and an assortment of building materials, including ceiling tiles, floor tiles, and sheet flooring for the actively used elementary schools. Anderson Elementary School shows no outward evidence of roof leaks, vermin, mold, or other infestations, and could perhaps be reused or repurposed again. The district, however,

has no plans for the facility other than continuing to use it for storage. Likewise, Lakeview Elementary School was closed in 2014, and the district has no plans for the building or the property. During the onsite review, staff indicated that they were discussing using this building for storage. Without a long-term plan for these facilities, they will eventually fall into disrepair. By not repurposing, selling, or maintaining these buildings at current structural integrity, Big Spring ISD is at risk of decreasing the value of these properties.

Having a long-term facilities master plan helps ensure that building projects are prioritized, begun, and completed according to a studied, developed, and logical process. Additionally, it ensures that the district is planning appropriately for the population it will serve in the future. As board and district leadership changes, having a long-term facilities master plan adds stability and cohesiveness to the district's construction, use, and management of facilities. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides districts with a recommended planning model for facilities. **Figure 4–7** shows TEA's recommended program elements for districts to develop a well-documented and comprehensive master planning approach to facilities.

San Angelo ISD officials, in conjunction with the board of trustees and the district Facility Advisory Committee, developed a long-term facilities plan to address the district's current and future facility needs. In keeping with school board policy, the plan addresses the district's anticipated school facilities needs and priorities. San Angelo ISD's long-range facilities master plan is posted online at www.saisd.org.

Big Spring ISD should establish a facilities master plan with five-year and 10-year timelines and update the plan annually or as needed.

The Big Spring ISD superintendent should designate and establish a facilities master planning team. The team should be chaired by the assistant superintendent and have among its ex officio members the maintenance and transportation director and the district CFO. The team may include Big Spring ISD employees, consultants, and community-based experts. Initially, team meetings should be conducted no less frequently than every two weeks. This meeting schedule would speed the process and focus the membership on those issues that are being researched, developed, or contemplated. As the process becomes routine, the meetings may occur monthly or as needed.

FIGURE 4–7
SAMPLE LONG-RANGE FACILITY MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS

PROGRAM ELEMENT	MISSION	RESPONSIBILITIES	PLAN ELEMENTS
Planning	Needs Assessment	Identify current and future needs	Demographics, facilities survey, boundary, funding, education program, market, staff capability, transportation analysis
	Scope	Outline required building areas; develop schedules and costs	Programming, cost estimating, scheduling, cost analysis
	Strategy	Identify structure	Facilities project list, master schedule, budget plan, organizational plan, community involvement plan
	Public Approval	Implement public relations campaign	Public and media relations
Approach	Management Plan	Detail roles, responsibilities, and procedures	Program management plan and systems
	Program Strategy	Review and refine details	Detailed delivery strategy
	Program Guidelines		Educational specifications, design guidelines, computer-aided design standards

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Recommended Planning Model for Facilities and Planning, 2003.

The five-year facilities master plan should include a continuous process that guides facilities planning, design, and construction for Big Spring ISD and should:

- transcend as much as possible changes brought about by changes in elected and appointed positions, and allow constancy to bridge the disruptions of change;
- mandate ongoing, close cooperation between Big Spring ISD administrators and the board;
- require all process participants to recognize, and work within, policy requirements and best practice parameters of funding preventive maintenance activities for school facilities; and
- empower the maintenance and transportation director to develop protocols for preventive maintenance, capital improvement programs, and related documentation for submission, adoption, and funding by the board.

The five-year facilities master plan should address the following:

- the strategy required to meet the need for facility maintenance and improvement, and for the capital investments necessary to support the district's existing and projected educational needs;

- the educational goals of Big Spring ISD to satisfy the needs of students, parents, educators, administrative staff and the community;
- realistic plans to help Big Spring ISD provide for its short- and long-range facility needs;
- realistic spending plans on maintenance amounting to a minimum of 2.0 percent of current replacement value of all Big Spring ISD facilities; and
- recommendations for the proper disposition of the district's unused properties such as Anderson and Lakeview elementary schools.

The five-year facilities master planning process should begin in school year 2015–16 so that the facilities master plan can be ready for implementation at the start of school year 2016–17. It should contain an immediate funding request, divided among the first five years, for any new construction, renovation, additions, or other capital improvement projects that are outlined in the plan. The funding request should also contain a forecast of potential needs for the remaining 10-year period. Each year, the plan should be revised and updated to respond to changes in the district.

Community input is essential in any five-year facilities master planning process. The planning team should conduct a series of “open forum” meetings around the city and county,

encouraging community participation. Initially, at least three rounds of meetings should be offered in strategic locations and at times that maximize the potential for community involvement.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

CUSTODIAL STAFFING (REC. 28)

Big Spring ISD has not established standards or methods to determine custodial staffing levels, and the district does not use a staffing formula to calculate the number of custodians needed at each campus.

Big Spring ISD employs 34 custodians and seven head custodians who are assigned to specific campuses. On all the campuses except the administration building, the maintenance building, and the early childhood center, the custodial staff reports to a head custodian. The 28 custodians who work the evening shift work nine-hour shifts on Monday through Thursday and an eight-hour shift on Friday. The four hours in excess of a normal 40-hour workweek are paid as overtime. The seven head custodians and daytime custodians are not paid for any regularly scheduled overtime. With 28 custodial positions receiving scheduled overtime, this schedule totals 112 hours of overtime per week. According to staff, the practice of assigned and scheduled

overtime is a tradition in the district and predates the custodial supervisor by several decades. The custodial supervisor has designated two full-time custodians as floaters. This designation means they are not assigned to a specific campus but are assigned as needed to substitute for absent staff or to contribute to additional workload, such as setting up for an event. These floaters are not regularly scheduled for overtime.

A lack of custodial staffing standards or formulas may result in inequitable custodial workloads from one campus to the next. TASB recommends staffing at 19,000 adjusted square feet per custodian, calculating adjusted square footage at 95 percent of actual square-foot area. Custodians in Big Spring ISD may be responsible for cleaning as few as 12,347 square feet per day or as many as 40,438 square feet.

Figure 4–8 shows the floor area cleaned per custodian per day.

Among the schools, the high school has the lowest staffing level based on floor area; the elementary schools have the highest staffing levels. The administration complex, with one custodian that is assigned to this facility full-time and is responsible for cleaning 12,347 square feet per day, has the highest level of staffing among all the buildings. The two floaters are not included in the figure because they do not have their own assignments.

**FIGURE 4–8
BIG SPRING ISD CUSTODIAL STAFF HOURS AND SQUARE FOOTAGE OF FACILITIES
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

CAMPUS/FACILITY	CUSTODIANS	SQUARE FOOTAGE	SQUARE FOOTAGE CLEANED PER CUSTODIAN PER DAY
Administration	1	12,347	12,347
Marcy Elementary	5	70,000	14,000
Moss Elementary	4	70,000	17,500
Goliad Elementary	4	70,000	17,500
Washington Elementary	4	70,000	17,500
High School	9	363,940	40,438
Junior High School	7	151,812	21,687
Big Spring Intermediate	4	78,421	19,605
Kentwood Early Childhood Center	1	24,760	24,760 (1)
Maintenance Office/Bus Garage	2	51,162	25,581 (2)
Total Actively Cleaned Floor Area	41	962,442	N/A
Average	N/A	N/A	23,474

NOTES:

(1) About 70 percent occupied.

(2) One of the custodians listed is the custodial supervisor; much of the space is shop space and is cleaned by its own staff.

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

Figure 4–9 shows the number of custodians assigned to each campus and the number of custodians that would be assigned to each campus based on the TASB standard. For the majority of the campuses, the number of custodians assigned is in line with the industry standard. However, the number of custodians working at the high school is not consistent with the applied industry standard. Overall, the district employs about seven fewer custodians than the TASB standard suggests.

It is typically assumed that newer buildings are easier to clean, because they will have newer finishes. The Big Spring ISD custodial staffing pattern does not appear to consider this factor, because custodians at the high school, one of the oldest buildings in use, are responsible for cleaning the largest number of square feet per day. The high number of square feet the high school custodians are responsible for cleaning may require overtime to complete. However, because staffing levels at the other campuses align with industry standards, the overtime practice is likely not necessary or cost-effective.

Overtime work is typically approved by case when special situations or conditions arise that require some full-time staff to spend extra time beyond the 40-hour workweek, after hours, or on weekends or holidays. However, the extra hours per week are assigned to Big Spring ISD custodians regularly.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a staffing model to better manage the distribution of work among

custodians and reassess the policy of scheduling some custodians to work four hours of overtime per week.

The custodial supervisor should make a proposal to adjust the number of custodians at each school based on the TASB formula and his knowledge of the conditions at each campus. The high school assignments are the furthest from the standard for custodians, so the custodial supervisor should consider moving custodians from campuses that have more custodians than the standard suggests, such as the elementary schools, to the high school. He may also consider assigning the floaters to work at the high school permanently and have them work at other campuses only when multiple absences occur. The custodial supervisor should discuss the proposal with the maintenance and transportation director, and they should decide on appropriate staffing levels. In addition, the custodial supervisor and the maintenance and transportation director should reexamine the practice of scheduling custodians to work four hours of overtime weekly.

The fiscal impact assumes savings from discontinuing the practice of 28 evening custodians working four hours of overtime per week. The district would save \$70,580 per year (28 custodians x 4 hours of overtime x (\$11.67 median wage x 1.5 hourly wage adjustment for overtime) x 36 school weeks per year.) These savings could be used to fund additional custodial staff if needed based on the new staffing model developed by the district.

FIGURE 4–9
BIG SPRING ISD CUSTODIAL STAFFING COMPARED TO TASB STANDARDS
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15

CAMPUS/FACILITY	CUSTODIANS	SQUARE FOOTAGE	ADJUSTED SQUARE FOOTAGE (1)	CUSTODIANS BASED ON INDUSTRY STANDARD (1)
Administration	1	12,347	11,730	0.6
Marcy Elementary	5	70,000	66,500	3.5
Moss Elementary	4	70,000	66,500	3.5
Goliad Elementary	4	70,000	66,500	3.5
Washington Elementary	4	70,000	66,500	3.5
High School	9	363,940	345,743	18.2
Junior High School	7	151,812	144,221	7.6
Big Spring Intermediate	4	78,421	74,500	3.9
Kentwood Early Childhood Center	1	24,760	23,522	1.2
Maintenance Office/Bus Garage	2	51,162	48,604	2.6
Total Actively Cleaned Floor Area	41	962,442	914,320	48.1

NOTE: The Texas Association of School Boards recommends staffing at 19,000 adjusted square feet per custodian, calculating adjusted square footage at 95 percent of actual square-foot area.

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015; Texas Association of School Boards, 2011.

ENERGY MANAGEMENT (REC. 29)

Although energy costs are reasonable for its size, Big Spring ISD lacks a process to manage, measure, and monitor its energy use and ensure energy costs stay reasonable.

The district has no evident or active energy conservation projects or programs. The district adopted some green building practices in the design of the elementary schools, including use of daylight as a supplement to electric light and the heating system. The buildings comply with the 2009 Texas Energy Code; however, they were not Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified, and they do not appear to have been designed with considerations of any other energy conservation criteria. LEED certification is a widely recognized certification that is granted to facilities that meet certain standards for environmental consideration. During interviews, several staff members recalled the district’s use of a program to encourage energy conservation behavior, but the program has been discontinued. The district does not employ either behavioral or technical energy conservation practices.

In November 2013, the Big Spring ISD board issued an energy conservation policy, which reads, in part:

The Board shall establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the District’s annual electric consumption by five 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: 1. Strategies for achieving energy efficiency, including facility design and construction, that: a. Result in net savings for the District; or b. Can be achieved without financial cost to the District; and 2. For each strategy identified above, the initial, short-term capital costs and lifetime costs and savings that may result from implementation of the strategy.

The Texas Education Code, Section 44.902, requires school districts to establish a long-range energy plan to reduce the district’s annual electric consumption by 5.0 percent

beginning with the 2008 state fiscal year and consume electricity in subsequent fiscal years in accordance with the district’s energy plan. Big Spring ISD’s board issued the policy, but the district has not implemented a long-range energy plan.

The district currently pays the Direct Energy utility service for electricity and the Atmos Energy distributor for natural gas. In school year 2012–13, Big Spring ISD paid \$797,888 for electricity, and \$61,277 for natural gas.

The Council of Great City Schools, which includes 67 school districts nationwide, developed key performance indicators in a variety of operational areas within a school district. In the area of energy management, the Council identified several indicators:

- utility costs per square foot;
- electricity usage per square foot; and
- heating fuel usage per square foot.

Figure 4–10 shows the first quartile, median, and third quartile figures reported by member school districts for fiscal year 2012–13 in comparison to Big Spring ISD. As shown, Big Spring ISD compares favorably to the Council of the Great City Schools indicators. Total electricity usage per square foot is within the first quartile. Heating fuel usage (natural gas) is in the median range.

Although these results are commendable, they do not justify energy conservation inaction. Big Spring ISD cannot ensure that the rate of energy consumption will continue to be low without having a plan in place.

The following best practice documents are among many from governments and private industry that support the importance of districts consciously planning ways to reduce energy consumption:

- U.S. Green Building Council, Power Down: A Toolkit for Behavior-Based Energy Conservation in K–12 Schools, 2013.

**FIGURE 4–10
ENERGY MANAGEMENT KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FROM COUNCIL OF GREAT CITY SCHOOLS IN COMPARISON TO BIG SPRING ISD, FISCAL YEAR 2012–13**

INDICATOR	FIRST QUARTILE	MEDIAN	THIRD QUARTILE	BIG SPRING ISD
Electricity Usage per Square Foot (kWh)	7.1	9.4	11.7	6.35
Heating Fuel Usage per Square Foot (kBtu)	0.6	10.2	42.8	8.77

SOURCES: Council of Great City Schools, Managing for Results, October 2014; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

- Environmental Protection Agency, ENERGY STAR Building Upgrade Manual, Chapter 10. Facility Type: K–12 Schools, 2008 Edition.
- Alliance to Save Energy, School Operations and Maintenance: Best Practices for Controlling Energy Costs, a Guidebook for K–12 School System Business Officers and Facilities Managers, August 2004.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement an energy management plan to conserve energy and reduce energy costs.

Big Spring ISD should implement a behavior modification approach to teach all building users behavior that will reduce energy usage. The maintenance and transportation director should conduct an audit of the facilities to identify energy waste. Some examples might include non-LED light bulbs, loose seals around windows, and doors left open unnecessarily.

The State Energy Conservation Office (SECO) provides free support to schools in the following areas:

- energy accounting;
- energy-efficient facility operation and maintenance;
- indoor air quality;
- water conservation; and
- comprehensive energy planning

SECO can also provide a Preliminary Energy Assessment to the district at no cost. The Preliminary Energy Assessment includes:

- analysis of utility bills and other building information to determine energy and cost utilization indices of facilities;
- recommended maintenance procedures and capital energy retrofits;
- design and monitoring of customized procedures to control the run times of energy-using systems;
- informal onsite training for building operators and maintenance staff;
- follow-up visits to assist with the implementation of the recommendations and to determine savings associated with the project;
- development of an overall Energy Management Policy;

- assistance with the development of guidelines for efficiency levels of future equipment purchases; and
- facility benchmarking using Energy Star Portfolio Manager.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources. Any savings would depend on the energy-saving measures the district chooses to utilize.

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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL	
						5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 4. FACILITIES MANAGEMENT							
24. Modify the Maintenance Department's organizational structure by establishing a maintenance and facilities director position.	(\$81,310)	(\$81,310)	(\$81,310)	(\$81,310)	(\$81,310)	(\$406,550)	\$0
25. Contract for a comprehensive facilities condition assessment, and develop and implement a preventive maintenance program.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	(\$120,000)
26. Annually forecast student enrollment and engage in a capacity management planning process that includes input from relevant stakeholders.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
27. Establish a facilities master plan with five-year and 10-year timelines and update the plan annually or as needed.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
28. Develop and implement a staffing model to better manage the distribution of work among custodians and reassess the policy of scheduling some custodians to work four hours of overtime per week.	\$70,580	\$70,580	\$70,580	\$70,580	\$70,580	\$352,900	\$0
29. Develop and implement an energy management plan to conserve energy and reduce energy costs.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	(\$10,730)	(\$10,730)	(\$10,730)	(\$10,730)	(\$10,730)	(\$53,650)	(\$120,000)

CHAPTER 5. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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; recruitment, 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.

Since July 2014, supervision of Big Spring Independent School District's (ISD) Human Resource (HR) operations has been shared by the district's community relations coordinator and the assistant superintendent. These responsibilities include shared supervision of the only employee solely dedicated to performing HR duties, the HR specialist. During the time of the onsite review, responsibility for decision making and supervision of the specialist shifted entirely to the community relations coordinator. Before that time, the assistant superintendent determined the schedule for teacher recruiting trips and approved salary assignment of new employees. **Figure 5–1** shows the organization chart for HR operations at the time of the review.

FIGURE 5–1
BIG SPRING ISD HUMAN RESOURCES ORGANIZATION



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board, School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The payroll specialist in the Business Office manages the district's employee database and manually inputs employee information into the district's financial management system called Texas Educational Information System (TxEIS). The Chief Financial Officer's (CFO) secretary provides benefits information to employees. Personnel, payroll, and employee benefits data is maintained in TxEIS by Business Office staff.

The responsibilities of the HR specialist position in Big Spring ISD are primarily clerical, with limited operational functions. The majority of the HR specialist's work includes maintaining SearchSoft, the district's online applicant tracking system; filing and maintaining personnel files and folders; meeting with new employees to complete paperwork; and assisting principals and other hiring managers to access online applications.

Figure 5–2 shows staff by classification from school years 2009–10 to 2013–14.

Big Spring ISD's staffing composition has fluctuated significantly from school years 2009–10 to 2013–14. The percentage of teachers has increased 10.0 percentage points since school year 2009–10. Professional support staff and campus administration increased slightly, and educational aides increased by 4.9 percentage points. Auxiliary staff, however, decreased by 17.9 percentage points.

**FIGURE 5–2
BIG SPRING ISD PERCENTAGE OF STAFF BY CLASSIFICATION
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14**

CLASSIFICATION	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	PERCENTAGE CHANGE
Teachers	43.5%	43.0%	43.9%	44.5%	53.5%	10.0%
Professional Support	8.6%	9.8%	9.1%	9.4%	10.6%	2.0%
Campus Administration	2.8%	2.3%	2.8%	3.2%	3.6%	0.8%
Central Administration	1.1%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	0.2%
Educational Aides	12.5%	11.7%	12.2%	11.2%	17.4%	4.9%
Auxiliary Staff	31.5%	32.1%	30.8%	30.4%	13.6%	(17.9%)

NOTE: Totals may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports, January 2015.

Figure 5–3 shows the total amount of Big Spring ISD’s General Fund and the percentage of the fund spent on payroll from school years 2008–09 to 2012–13. During this period, the percentage of the General Fund spent on payroll increased by 2.2 percent.

**FIGURE 5–3
BIG SPRING ISD GENERAL FUND PAYROLL EXPENDITURES
SCHOOL YEARS 2008–09 TO 2012–13**

YEAR	GENERAL FUND (IN MILLIONS)	PERCENTAGE OF EXPENDITURES ON PAYROLL
2008–09	\$20.4	76.5%
2009–10	\$21.8	75.0%
2010–11	\$22.6	77.5%
2011–12	\$20.5	73.2%
2012–13	\$22.7	78.7%
Change from 2008–09 to 2012–13	11.0%	2.2%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports, January 2015.

Figure 5–4 shows a comparison of the average salaries of school employees between Big Spring ISD, its peer districts, and the state. Peer districts are Texas school districts similar to Big Spring ISD that are used for comparison purposes.

Big Spring ISD’s average salaries for professional support staff and campus administration are consistent with the equivalent peer and state data. Average teacher salaries in Big Spring ISD, however, fall significantly below both the peer and state average. Central administration salaries are in line with the state average but fall below the peer average.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks formal written procedures to guide human resources staff.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not have a comprehensive plan to attract and retain qualified teachers.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not consistently conduct performance evaluations of staff.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not consistently develop or update job descriptions so that workplace responsibilities and expectations are effectively communicated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 30: Develop detailed written procedures for all processes conducted within HR and develop a plan to periodically update these procedures.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 31: Form a teacher turnover-reduction committee to identify and implement strategies for attracting teachers to the district and lowering teacher attrition rates.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 32: Establish a process to conduct annual evaluations of all district staff in accordance with board policy.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 33: Develop and implement procedures to ensure that job descriptions are developed in accordance with board policy and are annually reviewed and updated.**

FIGURE 5–4
BIG SPRING ISD AVERAGE SALARIES BY CLASSIFICATION COMPARED TO PEER DISTRICTS AND THE STATE
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14

ENTITY	TEACHERS	PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT	CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION	CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION
Big Spring	\$43,738	\$56,897	\$76,912	\$92,635
Andrews	\$55,913	\$67,500	\$86,017	\$105,268
Dumas	\$47,666	\$53,323	\$73,537	\$102,206
El Campo	\$48,834	\$55,716	\$70,992	\$114,289
Snyder	\$47,835	\$53,859	\$73,807	\$96,696
Peer Average	\$50,062	\$57,600	\$76,088	\$104,615
State	\$49,692	\$58,551	\$72,764	\$94,630

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports, January 2015.

DETAILED FINDINGS

WRITTEN PROCEDURES (REC. 30)

Big Spring ISD lacks formal written procedures to guide human resources staff.

Big Spring ISD does not have documented written procedures that describe how staff should perform critical HR functions such as recruitment, benefits administration, employee orientations, and maintenance of personnel records. The district has no comprehensive HR procedures manual that defines and outlines the HR processes, functions, responsibilities, or district HR policies. Big Spring ISD has an employee handbook that introduces and summarizes district policies for employees, but it does not provide procedures or instructions that address the role of HR staff in overseeing and carrying out these policies.

At the time of the review, the community relations coordinator and the HR specialist had been in their positions for approximately one year. Before the assignment of the current HR specialist in December 2013, HR activities in Big Spring ISD had been performed for approximately 10 years by a secretary who was supervised by the assistant superintendent. This secretary did not document any procedures for performing HR operations. As a result, the HR staff relies upon the mentorship of an HR professional in a neighboring school district and contracts with the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) for HR services.

In the absence of procedures, HR administration throughout the district is not uniform. No internal control method is used to ensure that principals and department managers are effectively and consistently managing employee relations. The lack of procedures can also result in a communications gap among principals, department managers and other

supervisors, and their employees about the steps to follow in critical situations or events, such as the physical assault of an employee, on-the-job injury, or suspicion of child abuse. A lack of both specificity and consistency of HR practices, especially during personnel changes such as terminations, may increase the district's vulnerability to litigation. For example, a terminated employee could claim discriminatory motives on behalf of the district if fair and consistent termination proceedings were not implemented across the district.

The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM), a national organization that grants certification for HR professionals, provides best practices for essential functions that a single-position HR manager or HR specialist must perform to be effective. **Figure 5–5** shows some of SHRM's best practices compared to Big Spring ISD's HR procedures.

In Hays CISD, administrators, supervisors, and employees have online access to various documents that explain step-by-step HR procedures. Accompanying forms, if required, are also available. The Hays CISD HR Department developed written administrative rules, guidelines, forms, and procedures specific to the HR operation and posted them on the district's website. These procedures are documented, updated, and followed, and they assist in the day-to-day decision-making processes. Online access through the employee portal is immediately accessible. The availability of information for employee-related matters and the ability to electronically interact with HR saves time for employees and HR personnel. Some of the online Hays CISD procedures include:

- changing of name and/or contact information;
- submitting teaching credentials;

**FIGURE 5–5
RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES COMPARED TO BIG SPRING ISD’S HUMAN RESOURCES PROCEDURES**

BEST PRACTICE	BIG SPRING ISD
Develop and administer human resources plans and personnel services procedures for all company or district personnel	HR procedures are being developed and written, but few have been completed
Plan, organize, and control all activities of the department, including the writing of departmental goals, objectives, and systems	No written departmental goals, objectives, or explanation of HR systems
Implement and annually update the compensation program; rewrite job descriptions as necessary; conduct annual salary surveys and market comparisons; advise budget development for compensation; and monitor the performance evaluation program	The district contracted with the Texas Association of School Boards for a compensation study in August 2014. The HR specialist is revising and updating job descriptions, but districtwide performance evaluation is lacking
Develop and maintain affirmative action program; file equal employment opportunity (EEO) reports annually; maintain other records, reports, and logs to conform to EEO regulations	The director of federal and special programs and the assistant superintendent are assigned coordination responsibilities for EEO compliance and reporting
Establish and maintain department records and reports; participate in administrative staff meetings and attend other meetings, such as seminars; maintain company or district organization charts and employee directory	The community relations coordinator oversees participation in staff meetings and maintenance of the district’s organization charts and employee directory
SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; the Society for Human Resources Management; accessed February 2015.	

- accessing personnel records;
- notification of pending vacancy;
- investigating reports of harassment;
- applying for a leave of absence;
- complaints of discrimination; and
- recommendation for reassignment.

Big Spring ISD should develop detailed written procedures for all processes conducted within HR and develop a plan to periodically update these procedures.

The community relations coordinator and the HR specialist should convene a meeting with staff in payroll, accounting, and benefits, representative department managers, and principals to determine which written procedures need to be developed first. Emphasis should be placed on the procedures that require the most interaction with stakeholders. Next, a writing team, including the community relations coordinator and the HR specialist, working with other employees actively involved in a specific HR action, should develop the procedure. For example, changing an employee’s name or contact address requires action from both the HR specialist and the payroll specialist; therefore, both of these positions would be responsible for writing the procedure. Writing procedures to add or remove a dependent from an employee’s

health insurance plan would require interaction between HR and the benefits secretary. As each procedure is completed, it can be uploaded into the HR procedures section of the Big Spring ISD website. The community relations coordinator and the HR specialist should develop a plan to periodically update these procedures.

Since the onsite review, the district has completed a Human Resource Handbook to guide HR functions.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

RECRUITMENT, HIRING, AND RETENTION (REC. 31)

Big Spring ISD does not have a comprehensive plan to attract and retain qualified teachers.

The district does not have a process to address its high rate of teacher turnover. **Figure 5–6** shows Big Spring ISD’s teacher turnover rate and average turnover rates of its peer districts, the Regional Education Service Center XVIII (Region 18), and the state for school year 2013–14.

Big Spring ISD had an average teacher turnover rate significantly higher than the state, Region 18, and all of its peers. In fact, Big Spring ISD turnover was nearly twice the peer average. To fill vacant teaching positions, the district hired 70 new teachers in school year 2014–15.

FIGURE 5–6
BIG SPRING ISD TEACHER TURNOVER RATES COMPARED
TO PEER DISTRICTS, REGION 18, AND THE STATE
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14

ENTITY	RATE
Big Spring	28.8%
Andrews	12.6%
Dumas	19.6%
El Campo	6.2%
Snyder	20.7%
Peer Average	14.8%
Region 18 Average	20.5%
State	16.2%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports, school year 2013–14 District Profiles.

Big Spring ISD also has difficulty retaining long-term teachers. **Figure 5–7** shows a comparison of the experience of Big Spring ISD’s teachers compared to those of the peer districts, Region 18, and the state in school year 2013–14.

Big Spring ISD has a higher rate of beginner teachers and teachers with one to five years of experience than all peers, Region 18, and the state. Likewise, Big Spring ISD’s proportion of teachers with more than 20 years experience was lower than any other comparison group. For teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience, Big Spring ISD’s rate falls below Region 18, the state, and all peers except Dumas ISD and Snyder ISD. **Figure 5–8** shows the experience of Big Spring ISD’s teachers from school years 2009–10 to 2013–14. During this period, the proportion of beginning teachers

in the district has increased, while the proportion of teachers with more than 20 years of experience has decreased.

Big Spring ISD Board Policy DC (LOCAL) states that an exit interview shall be conducted, if possible, and an exit report shall be prepared for every employee who leaves employment with the district. However, during onsite interviews, district administrators acknowledged that the district is not conducting exit interviews with outgoing teachers. By failing to reach out to teachers who leave employment in the district, Big Spring ISD is missing an opportunity to identify and address the causes of high teacher turnover.

Many factors may affect teacher turnover. Big Spring ISD is located in a region of the state where one of the primary sources of employment is the oil and gas industry. Big Spring ISD staff reported in interviews that many oil and gas workers live in Big Spring and often make considerably higher incomes than teachers, which contributes to inflated housing costs and housing shortages. In some instances, teachers have left their jobs to work in the oil fields.

Staff also reported that in nearby school districts, such as Midland and Odessa, teacher pay is significantly higher, and Big Spring ISD finds it difficult to compete against these districts to attract teachers. In response to a survey conducted by the review team, 52 percent of campus staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “District salaries are competitive with similar positions in the job market.”

The only reference to addressing the high rate of teacher turnover in the district’s Targeted Improvement Plan (TIP) is the problem statement that “Teacher turnover rate in the

FIGURE 5–7
BIG SPRING ISD YEARS OF TEACHER EXPERIENCE COMPARED TO PEER DISTRICTS, REGION 18 AND THE STATE
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14

ENTITY	BEGINNING TEACHERS	1 TO 5 YEARS	6 TO 10 YEARS	11 TO 20 YEARS	MORE THAN 20 YEARS
Big Spring	13.2%	30.8%	19.3%	24.7%	11.9%
Andrews	1.9%	21.8%	20.7%	33.1%	22.5%
Dumas	13.0%	30.6%	18.6%	20.7%	17.1%
El Campo	1.9%	17.6%	22.1%	29.4%	29.0%
Snyder	8.0%	18.5%	22.0%	22.4%	29.1%
Peer Average	6.2%	22.1%	20.9%	26.4%	24.4%
Region 18	10.1%	27.4%	17.9%	27.1%	17.5%
State	8.3%	25.3%	22.8%	27.0%	16.5%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports, school year 2013–14 District Profiles.

FIGURE 5–8
BIG SPRING ISD AVERAGE YEARS OF TEACHER EXPERIENCE BY PERCENTAGE
SCHOOL YEARS 2009–10 TO 2013–14

CLASSIFICATION	2009–10	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	CHANGE
Beginning teachers	10.0%	10.6%	9.9%	15.0%	13.2%	3.2%
1 to 5 years	30.6%	34.3%	36.6%	31.2%	30.8%	0.2%
6 to 10 years	15.5%	14.5%	14.3%	16.4%	19.3%	3.8%
11 to 20 years	24.4%	23.5%	23.8%	23.9%	24.7%	0.3%
More than 20 years	19.5%	17.1%	15.4%	13.5%	11.9%	(7.6%)

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Reports, school years 2009–10 through 2013–14 District Profiles.

district is consistently above the state average.” The district’s TIP does not discuss possible causative factors. During onsite interviews, staff reported that the primary tool the district uses to recruit new teachers is participating in regional job fairs. In addition, for school year 2014–15, new teacher candidates were offered a “relocation incentive” if they agreed to move to Big Spring ISD to teach. The incentive provides that the district will pay these teachers \$2,000 per year for three years if they remain employed in Big Spring ISD. The CFO reported that 39 eligible new teacher hires took advantage of the incentive. To be eligible for the award, a teacher must have resided at least 34 miles outside of Big Spring ISD before accepting a teaching position. No other efforts or strategies are in place to retain teachers once they are hired.

Big Spring ISD has a teacher mentoring program; however, new teachers reported that the program is ineffective. Staff indicated that mentors are not trained on how to be mentors and that they do not provide support such as classroom observations or meaningful guidance.

The National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (NCTAF) suggests a three-step process to address a high teacher turnover problem. These steps include: Measure teacher turnover rate and its costs: The district needs to collect data that track teacher turnover, determine which teachers leave, from which schools, reasons for leaving, and where these teachers are taking jobs. The district should then calculate the costs associated with teachers leaving and the district having to recruit, hire, and train replacements.

Invest in well-prepared teachers and in a comprehensive induction program: Well-prepared teachers, even if they are beginning teachers, have solid content knowledge, understand how students learn, and possess the skills to help students meet high academic standards. Studies have shown that hiring well-prepared teachers reduces first-year attrition

by one-half. Once such teachers are hired, the district needs to provide them with a strong support system to facilitate their success. An effective induction program has four components: (1) building and deepening teacher knowledge; (2) integrating new teachers into the teaching community and developing a school culture that supports continuous professional growth; (3) supporting continuous professional growth of teachers; and (4) encouraging professional dialogue that promotes the goals, values, and best practices of the teaching community. This induction system provides: trained mentors that spend a specified amount of time with new teachers; supportive communications from district and campus administrators; common planning and collaboration time with other teachers; a reduced course load and help from aides; and participation in an external network of teachers.

Transform schools into genuine learning organizations: In a genuine learning organization, teachers share the responsibility for each other’s professional growth and students’ academic success. In such a culture, beginning and experienced teachers work together to promote students’ academic achievement. Moreover, experienced teachers guide the learning paths of the beginning teachers and help them to become rooted in the school culture and their academic areas.

Districts can use a variety of strategies to recruit and retain qualified teachers. Some examples used in school districts and elsewhere include:

- Comal ISD developed strong recruiting relationships with the education departments of selected universities and colleges. District representatives visit these institutions at least once a year to participate in a job fair, conduct interviews, and recruit candidates. The district mails thank-you notes to all candidates interviewed.

- Galena Park ISD (GPISD) hires many new and inexperienced teachers directly from colleges and universities. The district has several new-teacher assistance programs and strategies. GPISD has two district-level teacher mentors who organize workshops, visit and host new teachers, and recruit school-based mentors. The lead teacher mentors receive a stipend and a certificate. GPISD also hosts a new teacher academy. The academy provides information to new teachers about policies, procedures, and school routines; discipline procedures, attendance, classroom management, school goals and objectives, lesson plans, curriculum requirements, instructional expectations, etc.
- Hays CISD (HCISD) has a strong induction and mentoring program for its new teachers. The district trains teachers to be mentors to the new teachers of the district in an effort to build relationships that will last throughout a teacher's career in the district. To ensure a healthy work environment, HCISD uses a district-developed tool similar to an Organizational Health Instrument. After results are calculated, the district as a whole and campuses individually use the data to determine areas of improvement for the district.
- Cedar Hill ISD (CHISD) developed innovative recruitment strategies targeting minority teachers. District administrators participate in recruitment events at selected universities and colleges with a large number of graduating minority teachers. During interviews, CHISD community members host the candidates at their homes. The district, in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, provides an annual welcome luncheon to teacher candidates. These efforts are intended to make the candidates feel comfortable and welcome and to increase the likelihood of their accepting the offers. The district also collaborates with its respective education service center for referrals.

Big Spring ISD should form a teacher turnover-reduction committee to identify and implement strategies for attracting teachers to the district and lowering teacher attrition rates.

Working with principals, the community relations coordinator should form a teacher turnover-reduction committee to thoroughly investigate the reasons teachers are leaving. Fully implementing the requirements of Board

Policy DC (LOCAL) requiring exit interviews to be conducted would facilitate this investigation. Analyzing the reasons given for leaving employment that are written or obtained during exit interviews will assist in developing strategies and retention programs.

Developing a formal beginning teacher mentoring program is another strategy the district could employ to improve teacher retention. The superintendent and his leadership team should appoint a committee consisting of principals, curriculum and instruction personnel, and experienced teachers to develop a plan for a formal teacher mentoring program. The committee should advise the superintendent as to where the mentoring program should reside organizationally. The committee should determine how to develop and launch the program to be used in the district. The superintendent should ask for board approval of the initial planning and implementation.

Another resource available to districts is the Beginning Teacher Induction and Mentoring (BTIM) instituted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA). BTIM is an annual grant program by which a school district may apply for funds to establish or enhance a beginning teacher induction and mentoring program, which is designed to increase the retention of beginning teachers. TEA's website contains BTIM information and requirements for grant funding and utilization.

Since the onsite review, the district has created a teacher turnover-reduction committee to identify and implement strategies for attracting teachers to the district and lowering teacher attrition rates.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT (REC. 32)

Big Spring ISD does not consistently conduct performance evaluations of staff.

The district has a board policy requiring all district staff to have evaluative conferences at least annually. Big Spring ISD Board Policy DN (LOCAL)—Performance Appraisal states that:

- All district employees shall be periodically appraised in the performance of their duties. The district's employee evaluation and appraisal system shall be administered consistent with the general principles set out below.

- The employee's performance of assigned duties and other job-related criteria shall provide the basis for the employee's evaluation and appraisal. Employees shall be informed of the criteria on which they will be evaluated.
- Evaluation and appraisal ratings shall be based on the evaluation instrument and cumulative performance data gathered by supervisors throughout the year. Each employee shall have at least one evaluative conference annually, except as otherwise provided by policy, to discuss the written evaluation and may have as many conferences about performance of duties as the supervisor deems necessary.
- Appraisal records and forms, reports, correspondence, and memoranda may be placed in each employee's personnel records to document performance.
- All employees shall receive a copy of their annual written evaluation.
- Employees may present complaints regarding the evaluation and appraisal process in accordance with the district's complaint policy for employees.

Big Spring ISD has no process in place to ensure that supervisors conference with the employees who report to them or complete annual written performance evaluations of their staff. No process is in place to ensure that evaluations are filed in each employee's records and given to staff, in compliance with board policy.

Interviews with staff indicated that employee evaluations are not conducted for most non-instructional staff. For example, Business Office employees have been evaluated inconsistently, including the CFO and director of business services. Also, evaluations of campus principals are inconsistently conducted or do not occur at all.

TEA provides two systems to evaluate the annual performance of teachers and principals: the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) and the Texas Principal Evaluation System, respectively. The Texas Principal Evaluation System was developed by a steering committee of Texas educators that included school-level and district-level leaders, university leadership-development program directors, and representatives from TEA, in collaboration with McREL International field consultants and research. The system reflects current leadership research aligned to nationally recognized standards and best practices. Most Texas regional

education service centers (ESC) provide workshops for superintendents and other appraisers of principals to facilitate implementing the system. The annual evaluation process focuses on self-assessment, goal setting, professional development planning, and demonstration of performance on specific standards.

Big Spring ISD Board Policy DNB (LEGAL) requires that principals be evaluated annually. In Big Spring ISD, principals have been consistently using the PDAS in documenting teacher performance. However, Big Spring ISD principals reported that their own performance evaluations have been inconsistent. The review team found no evidence of principal appraisal records in personnel folders in the HR office. The Texas Education Code, Section 21.3541(g), states that each school district shall appraise each principal annually. Additionally, Board Policy DNB (LEGAL) states that district funds may not be used to pay an administrator who has not been appraised in the preceding 15 months. In not evaluating principals, the district's practice is not consistent with statute or board policy.

A sound system of performance evaluation can provide well-performing employees with encouragement and poorly performing employees with an opportunity to improve performance; however, when this system is unsound, performance can suffer. An evaluation system must be consistently applied, and the appraisals must be objective and accurate. The absence of consistent performance evaluations of Big Spring ISD staff can result in deficiencies in district performance. In addition, without evaluations, no written documentation is available to support compensation considerations, promotion or demotion actions, or termination decisions. If an employee subsequently files a disparate treatment claim with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Office, the district may find it difficult to defend itself without written evidence of job performance history.

San Antonio ISD has a well-defined appraisal system to evaluate employee job performance and identify areas of strength and concern for district staff. An appraisal system allows this district to account for all completed annual written appraisals. Contract renewals are not issued until each employee's appraisal is verified and filed. San Antonio ISD also tasked its HR staff with the duties of overseeing and monitoring the appraisal system, writing procedures for the employee appraisal system, and establishing timelines to evaluate each employee group annually.

Bastrop ISD has instituted a process to ensure employees are evaluated using performance-based and job-specific job descriptions. Each employee and manager performs a self-evaluation, using the job description form, for presentation to his or her manager. The employee and manager determine the final evaluation score. The manager uses the evaluation to pinpoint areas for improvement and further training and areas in which competency or proficiency has been achieved. The employees have positive opinions about the process.

Big Spring ISD should establish a process to conduct annual evaluations of all district staff in accordance with board policy.

The community relations coordinator should consult Board Policy DNB (LEGAL) to review the requirements for evaluations of staff. He should establish a plan to identify which staff have not been formally evaluated within the past year. Any staff that have not received a formal evaluation in compliance with board policy should be scheduled to be evaluated as soon as possible. This plan should ensure that supervisors complete annual written performance evaluations, that they conference with employees, and that the evaluations are filed in each employee's records and given to staff, in compliance with board policy.

For school year 2015–16, the superintendent should review the information and documents that are available regarding the Texas Principal Evaluation System on the TEA and ESC websites. He should research the availability of orientations and webinars for new superintendents through TEA, ESCs, Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), and TASB. Next, using the seven steps in the Texas Principal Evaluation System as a guide, he should develop the principal appraisal calendar and share with the board. The calendar will be discussed with principals during orientation (step one) which can occur each summer before the beginning of the school year. The superintendent should ensure that goals that are set by the principals are aligned with the priorities being addressed in the district and campus improvement plans.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS (REC. 33)

Big Spring ISD does not consistently develop or update job descriptions so that workplace responsibilities and expectations are effectively communicated.

Big Spring ISD Board Policy DC (LOCAL) states that the superintendent shall define the qualifications, duties, and responsibilities of all positions and ensure that job descriptions are current and accessible to employees and supervisors. However, job descriptions for some positions in Big Spring ISD do not exist, and those that do are neither updated nor specific to job functions. Some job descriptions used by the district come from TASB templates. Some of the TASB job descriptions are in the process of being updated to reflect the expectations of the job as it is performed in Big Spring ISD, but others were still in template form. None of the files for individual employees examined by the review team included a job description.

The district provided the review team with an employee database containing the names and job titles of all current Big Spring ISD employees. This database showed that employees are assigned to 105 jobs with unique titles. However, only 31 of the job titles contained a job description, and only four of the job descriptions had been revised since 2000. **Figure 5–9** shows the job titles provided, whether the job title had a job description, and when that job description was last updated.

With the exception of the CFO and the director of business services, interviews with Business Office staff indicated that none were aware of nor had received job descriptions for their positions. Some employees of the Business Office have lists of their duties, but none had a formal document indicating what duties they were responsible for completing. The district provided a number of job descriptions for business-related positions. In addition, some job descriptions in the HR employee database are for positions that no longer exist in the district, including bookkeeper, business manager, financial clerk, purchasing manager, and comptroller.

Big Spring ISD Board Policy DC (LOCAL) requires the superintendent to ensure that job descriptions are current and accessible to employees and supervisors. By not updating job descriptions and making them available to district staff, the district is not operating consistently with board policy.

A lack of a complete and accurate job description can hinder an employee from fully understanding his or her role in the district and ultimately how that job fits into the district's success. In addition, a job description is a necessary tool for supervisors to use when counseling an employee about job effectiveness or setting individual employee goals for successful performance. The lack of an accurate job description for an employee who is dismissed for poor

**FIGURE 5–9
BIG SPRING ISD COMPARISON OF EMPLOYEE DATABASE AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED TO REVIEW TEAM
JANUARY 2015**

JOB DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED			
TITLE	DESCRIPTION REVISED	TITLE	DESCRIPTION REVISED
Aide—Classroom	11/27/00	Director—Special Education	5/30/01
Aide—Computer Lab	11/27/00	Director—Technology	11/27/00
Aide—Library	11/27/00	Director—Transportation	11/27/00
Aide—Physical Education	11/27/00	Librarian	11/27/00
Assistant Principal	11/27/00	Nurse—Registered	11/27/00
Cashier—Cafeteria	N/A	Principal	11/27/00
Clerk—Accounts Payable	11/27/00	Receptionist	11/27/00
Clerk—Print Shop and Payroll	11/27/00	Secretary—Food Service Director	4/15/04
Coordinator—Intervention	5/23/04	Secretary—Principal	11/27/00
Coordinator—PEIMS	11/27/00	Secretary—Superintendent	11/27/00
Counselor	11/27/00	Superintendent	12/13/13
Diagnostician	11/27/00	Teacher	11/27/00
Director—Athletics	11/27/00	Technician	N/A
Director—Curriculum	11/27/00	Technician—Network	11/27/00
Director—Federal and Special Programs	N/A	Worker—Food Service	N/A
Director—Food Services	11/27/00		
JOB DESCRIPTIONS NOT PROVIDED			
TITLE	TITLE	TITLE	
Accounting Clerk	Custodian—Full Time	Secretary—Assistant Principal	
Aide—Bus	Director—Band	Secretary—Athletics	
Aide—In-School Suspension	Director—Business Services	Secretary—Business Manager	
Aide—Pre-K	Director—Community Relations and Human Resources	Secretary—Campus	
Aide—Special Education	Director—School Improvement	Secretary—Curriculum	
Aide—Title One	Director—School Safety	Secretary—Registrar	
Assistant Director—Auxiliary—Transportation	DMAC—High School	Secretary—Technology	
Assistant Superintendent	Driver—Bus	Specialist—Curriculum Support	
Associate Director—IT	Driver—Bus—Lead	Specialist—Human Resources	
Associate Principal	Elementary Teacher	Supervisor—Carpenter	
Carpenter	Gatekeeper	Supervisor—Custodian	
Chief Financial Officer	Groundskeeper	Teacher—Dyslexia	
Clerk—Attendance	Guard—Crossing	Teacher—Homebound	
Clerk—Computer—Special Education	HVAC/Electrician	Teacher—In-School Suspension	
Clerk—Copy	Liaison—Police	Teacher—PAC—High School	
Clerk—District Testing	Maintenance—Full Time	Teacher—Pre-K	
Clerk—Grades Junior High	Maintenance—Security/Locks	Teacher—Special Education	
Clerk—Library	Manager—Cafeteria	Teacher—Special Education Pre-K	

FIGURE 5–9 (CONTINUED)
BIG SPRING ISD COMPARISON OF EMPLOYEE DATABASE AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED TO REVIEW TEAM
JANUARY 2015

JOB DESCRIPTIONS PROVIDED

TITLE	DESCRIPTION REVISED	TITLE	DESCRIPTION REVISED
Clerk—Payroll	Mechanic	Teacher—Vocational	
Clerk—Purchasing	Nurse—Licensed Vocational	Therapist—Speech	
Clerk—Truancy	Painter	Therapist—Speech—Assistant	
Coordinator—Campus Curriculum Elementary	Psychologist	Tutor	
Coordinator—Campus Curriculum Junior High		Worker—Student	
Coordinator—District Testing	Registrar—District Level	Worker—Warehouse	

NOTES: PEIMS=Public Education Information Management System; DMAC=data management software for assessment and curriculum in Texas schools; IT=information technology; HVAC=heating/ventilation/air conditioning system; PAC=Personalized Achievement Center, an alternative learning and credit recovery program; Pre-K=prekindergarten classes or program.
 SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

performance is detrimental if the district’s decision is challenged in legal proceedings. Additionally, accurate job descriptions are essential in the hiring process to ensure that job postings reflect necessary skills. The essential functions listed in the job description can be used to screen applicants.

The Society of Human Resources Management provides for its members a guide on how to develop a job description. Included in step three of the guide are the components or topics that a job description should contain:

- date: when job description was written or last revision date;
- job status: exempt or nonexempt in accordance with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and whether the job is full-time or part-time;
- position title;
- objective of the position: what the position is supposed to accomplish, how it affects other positions and the organization;
- supervision received: to whom the person in the position reports;
- supervisory responsibilities: direct reports, if any, and the level of supervision;
- job summary: an outline of job responsibilities;
- essential functions: detailed tasks, duties and responsibilities;

- competency or position requirements: knowledge, skills, and abilities;
- quality and quantity standards: minimum levels required to meet the job requirements;
- education and experience: required levels;
- time spent performing tasks: percentages, if used, should be distributed to equal 100 percent;
- physical factors: type of environment associated with job, such as whether it is indoor or outdoor;
- working conditions: shifts, overtime requirements as needed;
- unplanned activities: other duties as assigned;
- disclaimer: statement that indicates that the job description is not designed to cover or contain a comprehensive list of activities, duties, or responsibilities that are required of the employee; and
- signature lines: validates the job description; signature indicates both the manager and employee understand the requirements, essential function, and duties of the position; additional line for highest-ranking administrator.

Some Texas school districts publish job descriptions on their websites to inform the public of the specific duties assigned to a position and as a recruitment tool to provide prospective employees with more detailed information on vacancies. El

Paso ISD provides public access to job descriptions for all the positions the district funds. Not only is the job description available, but the appropriate salary schedule for the position is also posted.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement procedures to ensure that job descriptions are developed in accordance with board policy and are annually reviewed and updated.

The community relations coordinator and HR specialist should determine the format that will become standard for all job descriptions. The HR specialist should catalog, using an online database or a three-ring binder, all the job descriptions in use. Using a database from payroll that shows job position title assigned to Big Spring ISD employees and the department or school where the position is located, the HR specialist should inventory the job descriptions to determine which are missing.

The next step is to write missing job descriptions. The HR specialist should schedule meetings with individuals or small groups who are assigned to the specific position and their supervisors to perform a job analysis—the process of gathering, examining, and interpreting data about the job's tasks. The topics or components of the job description template should serve as a guide to ensure that all elements are covered in the meeting. The results should also be reviewed by the employee and his or her supervisor.

The next step would be to update the remaining job descriptions, using the same procedures. An employee and his or her supervisor should meet in the HR office and discuss the job description and the need to change, revise, or add essential functions to the description.

Each employee in the district should review the job description with his or her supervisor and affix signatures showing understanding of the requirements and functions. After the superintendent has signed all the job descriptions, the originals should be filed in the employees personnel records and copies sent to the employees and their supervisors. Each time a job description is written, rewritten, or revised, the HR specialist should ensure that the standard format is used.

This recommendation could be implemented with 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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 5. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT							
30. Develop detailed written procedures for all processes conducted within HR and develop a plan to periodically update these procedures.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
31. Form a teacher turnover-reduction committee to identify and implement strategies for attracting teachers to the district and lowering teacher attrition rates.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
32. Establish a process to conduct annual evaluations of all district staff in accordance with board policy.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
33. Develop and implement procedures to ensure that job descriptions are developed in accordance with board policy and are annually reviewed and updated.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

CHAPTER 6. 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.

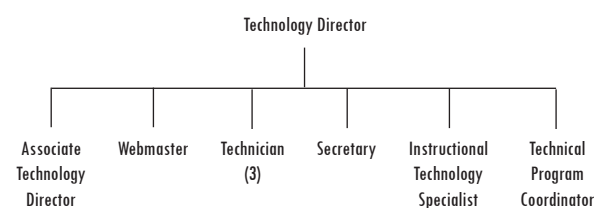
Administrative technology includes systems that support a district's operational, instructional, and financial functions (e.g., financial management, human resources, payroll, student attendance, grades, and Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) reporting). Administrative technology 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, and electronic instructional materials). Instructional technology supports curriculum delivery, classroom instruction, and student learning.

The Texas Education Code, Section 11.252, requires school districts to prepare a district improvement plan that includes the integration of technology with instructional and administrative programs. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) also requires all public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to submit a technology plan. The plan enables districts and charters to maintain eligibility for various state and federal programs. A technology plan defines goals, objectives, and actions for technology projects; assigns responsibility for implementation steps; and establishes deadlines. The state provides a tool for planning and assessing school technology and readiness, which identifies performance measures for teaching and learning, educator preparedness, administration, support services, and infrastructure.

Big Spring Independent School District (ISD)'s Technology Department has nine employees. **Figure 6-1** shows the organization of the department. All staff report to the technology director, and the associate director provides

supervision when the director is unavailable. The technology director reports directly to the superintendent.

FIGURE 6-1
BIG SPRING ISD TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT
ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014-15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The district provides wireless access to the Internet on all campuses. The district has implemented Active Directory, a software product that authenticates and authorizes all users and computers in a Windows domain network, which assigns and enforces security policies for all computers and installs or updates software. The district has also implemented Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which allows the district to make calls over the Internet rather than through the local phone company.

According to the Big Spring ISD's 2014-15 technology plan, the budget for technology is \$1.7 million, or \$403 per student. **Figure 6-2** shows the proposed technology spending based on the 2014-15 technology plan. More than half of the funding, \$898,000, is slated for equipment.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

- ◆ Big Spring ISD has established an effective and efficient process for digitizing student records.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not have a process to ensure that the district's website provides up-to-date, detailed information and complies with state law.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD is not effectively managing its technology help desk to ensure that technology issues are resolved in a timely manner.

**FIGURE 6–2
BIG SPRING ISD TECHNOLOGY BUDGET, ACCORDING TO TECHNOLOGY PLAN
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

BUDGET AREA	COSTS	FUNDING SOURCES
Staff Development	\$70,000	Local
Telecommunications and Internet Access	\$95,000	E-rate (1); Local
Materials and Supplies	\$220,000	Local; Technology allotment
Equipment	\$898,000	E-rate; Title I (2); Texas Permanent School Fund (3)
Maintenance	\$385,000	Title I; Local
Total	\$1,668,000	

NOTES:

- (1) The federally overseen Universal Service Schools and Libraries Program, commonly known as E-rate, provides discounts to help eligible U.S. schools obtain affordable telecommunications and Internet access.
- (2) U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, Part A, grants.
- (3) The Texas Education Code, Chapter 43.

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks clearly defined policies, procedures, and expectations for instructional technology resulting in a lack of coordination and integration of technology into classroom instruction.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s long-range technology plan does not adequately address district needs and is not linked to the District Improvement Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 34: Establish procedures to ensure the information on the district and campus websites is up-to-date, consistent, and in compliance with state law.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 35: Develop key performance indicators with targets to measure technology support effectiveness and maximize the use of the online help desk ticket system.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 36: Develop and implement a process to effectively integrate instructional technology, including explicit expectations for teachers regarding technology use in the classroom.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 37: Develop a process to regularly prepare and maintain an up-to-date technology plan aligned with identified district needs and goals.**

DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENT

STUDENT RECORDS

Big Spring ISD has established an effective and efficient process for digitizing student records.

Student files are stored electronically in an online records storage and management system. In school year 2011–12, the district contracted with a private firm to have all historical transcripts converted to electronic format as well as student records back to a certain point. The only records not scanned are active records of students at the high school. By school year 2018–19, Big Spring ISD expects to have every record scanned into the system.

Staff reports that the digitized records save time because they are easier to retrieve when needed than hard-copy records.

When it is properly backed up, digitization provides a more permanent record than paper-based data. Paper-based data are subject to deterioration. Paper records are not easily used to respond to queries or requests for information, unless they are extensively indexed and that index is regularly updated. Additionally, digital records require substantially less physical space than paper-based records.

DETAILED FINDINGS

DISTRICT WEBSITE (REC. 34)

Big Spring ISD does not have a process to ensure that the district’s website provides up-to-date, detailed information and complies with state law.

In a survey conducted by Big Spring ISD in 2014, 82 percent of the parents who responded indicated they have Internet access at home. When asked how they communicate information to the public, district and campus administrators reported they use the website as their primary form of communication. However, the district's website is not effective as a communication tool. Information and forms on the site are outdated, links are inoperable, and required information is not posted.

The district has a full-time webmaster who reports to the technology director. The position was originally part-time but became full-time several years ago. The same person has held the position for nine years. An external firm is contracted to host the website and provide the template for the website design. The district has contracted with the same firm since 2011–12.

During the onsite review, the review team found numerous instances in which the staff directory obtained from the Big Spring ISD website was not correct or current. Other concerns include:

- Although Board of Trustees members are listed on the website, no contact information is available, such as an email address or phone number.
- The link to volunteer opportunities on the website's main page returns only a listing of campus and district offices with their phone numbers. The district does not have a page describing the kinds of volunteer opportunities available or the process an individual must complete to volunteer.
- The contact link on the main page returns a listing of campus and district offices with physical addresses and phone numbers. It does not include an email address for staff at each location, or a more general email address if the user does not know to whom to send a question.

The webmaster is responsible for maintaining and updating the district website with information received from district staff. The district has not assigned staff with the responsibility of ensuring that the website is updated to comply with state law. In an interview, the webmaster stated she was unaware of the requirements regarding what must be posted on a district website. The technology director is generally aware of the requirements, but does not have a process to regularly review the website to ensure it complies with state law.

Figure 6–3 shows the information that Big Spring ISD is missing from its website.

Various staff from individual campuses update the campus pages, and the pages vary in content. While all have faculty listings, some include office hours, a phone number, and an email address for each faculty member. Others include only an email address. Still others include only a teaching assignment and name, without any contact information. The course listing on the high school page is almost completely empty. A separate link for Advanced Placement courses exists, but it is not clearly identified, named only as “bshs online” from the main high school page. Most of the campus pages do not include information on current events that would be of interest to parents and students. None of the campus pages include a link to the food service menus; these can only be found on the department-level page.

The district stopped monitoring usage statistics on the website when the contracted website host stopped providing this service in 2012. Since then, district staff has not attempted to collect website traffic information through other means. Without this information, the district is unable to assess whether stakeholders are using the website and in what manner.

An outdated website limits the district's potential to engage and inform the community and publicize the district's successes. In addition, a public school website that is noncompliant with statute presents potential risks to the district for not providing full disclosure to the public. A website's homepage is a critical entry point for navigating the entire site. An effective district's homepage directs viewers to sub-level websites such as campuses, departments, and parent portals. The navigation must be consistent on all of the pages and easily understood by viewers. Intuitive navigation makes a website a more effective asset.

One school district that effectively uses its website to engage and inform the community is Canutillo ISD. The district's homepage contains Canutillo ISD news, district announcements, quick links, and district upcoming events. Site visitors can find information about Canutillo ISD, Canutillo ISD's board, bonds, leadership, departments, students, parents, teachers, calendar, and school campuses. The colors are inviting, navigation between pages is easy, state statutory requirements are met, and no orphan pages result (all pages link back to the homepage). The Canutillo ISD website also includes a link to the district's nondiscrimination policy.

FIGURE 6–3
BIG SPRING ISD WEBSITE'S MISSING STATUTORILY REQUIRED DISTRICT INFORMATION
FEBRUARY 2015

CATEGORY	POSTINGS ON DISTRICT'S WEBSITE	STATUTE	NOTES	BIG SPRING ISD
Accountability	Superintendent's Contract	The Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, §109.1005(b)(2)(A)	The school district is to provide a copy of the superintendent's contract EITHER as a disclosure in the financial management report provided to attendees at TEA's School FIRST hearing OR by posting the contract on the district's website.	Not up-to-date. Contract from 2009 with extension through 2012 posted.(1)
Financial	Summary of Proposed Budget	The Texas Education Code, §44.0041		Yes, but little information provided
Financial	Post Adopted Budget	The Texas Education Code, §39.084	Required to maintain the adopted budget on the district's website until the third anniversary of the date the budget was adopted	Yes, but little information provided
Financial	Costs and Metered Amounts for Electricity, Water, and Natural Gas for District	The Texas Government Code, §2265.001(b)		Incomplete. Data for 2011–12 posted. Current costs provided in check registers posted on website, but not metered amounts
Health	Post in English and Spanish: a list of immunization requirements and recommendations, a list of health clinics in the district that offer influenza vaccine, and a link to the Texas Department of State Health Services website providing procedures for claiming an exemption from requirements in the Texas Education Code, §38.001.	The Texas Education Code, §38.019		Incomplete. No listing of health clinics in district that offer influenza vaccine
Purchasing	Reverse Auction Scheduled Internet Location	The Texas Government Code, §2155.062(d)		Incomplete. Mentioned in Business Office Procedures booklet on website, but no scheduled Internet location mentioned
Students	Dates for PSAT/NMSQT and any college advanced-placement tests to be administered and provide instructions for participation by a home-schooled pupil.	The Texas Education Code, §29.916		Not up-to-date
Students	Transition and Employment Guide for Special Education Students	The Texas Education Code, §29.0112	Districts are to post the employment and transition guide developed by TEA in collaboration with HHSC.	Not posted

NOTES: PSAT/NMSQT=Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test; TEA=Texas Education Agency; HHSC=Texas Health and Human Services Commission.

(1) Since the time of the onsite review, Big Spring ISD has posted an updated version of the superintendent's contract to the website.

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Texas Association of School Business Officials, January 2015.

Fabens ISD, Floydada ISD, and Anthony ISD have additional examples of well-structured websites that highlight helpful information and provide district and campus transparency. Examples presented provide a range of page formats, color blending, navigation formats, visual appeal, and visual hierarchy.

The Texas Association of School Business Officials (TASBO) maintains a listing of all the Texas Education Code and other governmental agency requirements regarding information that school districts must post to their websites. This information is available on TASBO's website and is updated regularly.

Big Spring ISD should establish procedures to ensure the information on the district and campus websites is up-to-date, consistent, and in compliance with state law.

The district webmaster along with the technology director should develop and implement procedures for keeping the information on the website up-to-date. This should include establishing regular schedules for ensuring that the information on the website is current. Additionally, the webmaster should work with the principals to determine the information that should be available on the campus pages. Using this information, the webmaster should establish guidelines for the campus pages and train district and campus staff on page content and procedures.

The webmaster should also review TASBO's list of items that districts are required to post on their websites and ensure that the district is meeting all of these requirements. The webmaster should regularly check the TASBO website for updates.

Since the time of the onsite review, Big Spring ISD has revamped their website and has begun to address some of the missing state requirements.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

TECHNOLOGY HELP DESK (REC. 35)

Big Spring ISD is not effectively managing its technology help desk to ensure that technology issues are resolved in a timely manner.

Big Spring ISD uses an online help desk ticket system. Users input a variety of information about their technology problem into an online form on the district website. The Technology Department has developed a multipage guide on

how to properly complete a help desk ticket, which is also available on the district website.

The Technology Department has three full-time technicians who respond to help desk tickets. The technicians are not assigned to a particular campus or cluster of campuses; instead, the technology director or associate director assigns help desk tickets, typically based on the technician's particular areas of expertise. Tickets are assigned as they come in, although the technology director or associate director may choose not to assign the task if they do not believe the issue needs to be addressed. The associate director noted that he typically spends the majority of his work day directly responding to help desk tickets. The district also has an instructional technology specialist who is responsible for assisting teachers and principals with integrating technology into the classroom. However, she spends the majority of her time responding to help desk tickets. The technology director and technical program coordinator handle tickets as needed, particularly if the ticket falls within their areas of expertise.

In a focus group, principals noted that help desk support is typically poor. The principals stated that response time is slow and that they do not receive sufficient status updates on help desk tickets. In general, they feel that users are viewed as an "inconvenience" to help desk staff. Various department directors expressed similar concerns. One staff member reported that the Technology Department told her to simply stop submitting help desk tickets.

During the onsite review, various teachers indicated to the review team that they receive poor service from the help desk. Some noted that they no longer contact the help desk because they do not believe they will receive assistance. Others said that they are afraid to contact the help desk because they do not feel they are treated with respect.

Figure 6–4 shows the number of help desk tickets Technology Department staff responded to from November 2013 to December 2014.

Although there are three technician positions, a staffing change occurred in one of the positions during this period. The three help desk technician positions were each responsible for approximately one-third of the tickets that were completed. Excluding the help desk tickets for technician 3, on average, the department responded to 76 tickets per month. The monthly total ranged from nine in June 2014 to 244 in September 2014. The number of help desk tickets that Big Spring ISD staff submit is likely lower than the

actual need in the district because staff stated they are reluctant to submit tickets.

As shown in **Figure 6–4**, Big Spring ISD does not effectively manage the tickets received by the technology help desk, and the distribution of the tickets among Technology Department staff is not equitable. The instructional technology specialist handled approximately one-third of all the tickets completed during this period, even though responding to tickets is not her primary job duty.

**FIGURE 6–4
BIG SPRING ISD HELP DESK TICKETS
NOVEMBER 2013 TO DECEMBER 2014**

STAFF	TOTAL TICKETS	AVERAGE TICKETS PER MONTH
Technician 1	201	14
Technician 2	103	7
Technician 3 (November 2013 to February 2014)	73	18
Technician 3 (April 2014 to December 2014)	91	10
Instructional Technology Specialist	414	30
Technical Program Coordinator	12	1
Associate Director	279	20
Director	49	4
Total	1,058	76

NOTE: The technician 3 position is excluded from the total because this position was only filled for 12 months.
SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

In addition, the Technology Department does not use any metrics to measure the time it takes for a ticket to be completed, and users are not asked to rate the quality of service once a help desk ticket is closed. The department does not ensure that tickets are resolved quickly or that a timeline for completion is shared with the staff member. This lack of feedback has caused dissatisfaction among staff and has led some staff to stop submitting help desk tickets.

The Technology Department also does not regularly track how long tickets are open. On January 27, 2015, 104 tickets were open, with 29 having been open for more than two weeks. Technology staff indicated that 14 of the 29 long-term tickets do not affect “day-to-day business” and so they likely would remain open until the end of the school year.

Additionally, the Technology Department does not have a systematic method for prioritizing help desk tickets so that those directly affecting instruction are completed first. For example, a number of high school teachers who had at least some nonfunctional classroom equipment stated they had submitted a help desk ticket but received no feedback. During the onsite review, teachers readily pointed to multiple devices that were not working, including interactive whiteboards, laptop computers for student use, and monitors and computers in computer labs.

The Technology Department also lacks procedures for technicians to proactively solicit feedback from staff located near where a ticket is addressed. For example, technicians could ask the teachers on either side of a room where the technician has just completed a ticket if they have any technology concerns that can be quickly addressed.

Keller ISD has established metrics to ensure its help desk is effectively responding to help desk tickets. The district has also set specific goals for these metrics to monitor them. The metrics include:

- incident acknowledgement time;
- incident resolution time;
- workstation request completion time;
- service desk first-contact resolution;
- service desk abandonment rate; and
- service desk speed to answer.

Big Spring ISD should develop key performance indicators with targets to measure technology support effectiveness and maximize the use of the online help desk ticket system.

The technology director should work with the associate director to develop the performance metrics for help desk operations that the existing ticketing system can generate. The metrics should include:

- the average time in hours to initially respond to a help desk ticket;
- average time in hours to close a ticket;
- number of tickets completed by each technician; and
- satisfaction rating by the originator of the ticket.

The associate director should also develop a system to receive feedback from end users who submit tickets to rate their

satisfaction. All of the metrics should be compiled on a daily basis to manage department operations. The technology director should post the monthly compilations on the Technology Department's page and annually submit a report to the superintendent.

The technology director should review the number of tickets handled by all Technology Department staff and take appropriate steps to make it more equitable. The director should begin by looking at the most frequently submitted types of tickets and ensuring that all the technicians have the expertise to fix these issues.

Since the time of the onsite review, the district has adopted a new helpdesk software program.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

TECHNOLOGY IN CLASSROOM (REC. 36)

Big Spring ISD lacks clearly defined policies, procedures, and expectations for instructional technology resulting in a lack of coordination and integration of technology into classroom instruction.

The district makes several types of technology available for teachers to use in their classrooms. At all grade levels, teachers have computers, document cameras, and interactive whiteboards in their classrooms. Classroom response devices and interactive notebooks are also available. At the high school, teachers have access to mobile carts with a class set of laptops.

Big Spring ISD does not have a board policy or any district or campus procedures in place related to the integration of instructional technology into classroom instruction. Neither the district improvement plan nor any of the campus improvement plans contain any goals regarding the enhancement of instructional technology. Additionally, teachers are not aware of any specific expectations for how they should be using technology in their classrooms, other than they "should use what they have." The district's 2014–15 technology plan includes goals and strategies related to the use of instructional technology. Some of these goals and strategies include:

- all teachers will implement technology Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS);
- new teachers will receive six hours of technology training;

- instructional staff will be encouraged to meet the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) standards for technology literacy; and
- administrators will evaluate staff in terms of SBEC technology standards.

However, the district shows no evidence that it is actively pursuing any of these goals and strategies.

No position in the district is responsible for ensuring that technology is integrated into classroom instruction. The district hired a former secondary teacher to serve as an instructional technology specialist to assist teachers with incorporating technology into lesson plans, particularly in the areas of math and science. The specialist initially provided technology training to Big Spring ISD teachers in summer 2013. However, she estimates she spends 70 percent of her time responding to help desk tickets instead of providing assistance in integrating technology into the classroom and curriculum.

Big Spring ISD offers minimal support or training to teachers for using technology. The Technology Department offers training sessions in the summer and during the school year, but attendance is not mandatory. Technology staff reports that attendance is typically low at training events scheduled outside of school hours. The training sessions that have been offered included how to use classroom response devices, how to create lessons with technology, and ways to use presentation software and interactive notebooks in the classroom. New teachers do not receive any introductory training to the technology found in their classrooms.

During the onsite review, the review team observed little use of interactive whiteboards in elementary classrooms. The predominant technology in use in classrooms was the document camera. Some elementary students were observed using classroom computers to access instructional support programs in reading, and math as well as game-based learning programs. Elementary campuses have set schedules when students are to use computer labs. In addition, students who do not need remediation attend the computer lab daily to work on reading and math software and technology TEKS.

During the onsite review, the review team also observed overall low-level usage of interactive whiteboards and document cameras in high school classrooms and no usage of laptop carts. One high school teacher was observed using some of the higher-level features of an interactive whiteboard. The only high school classrooms where students were

observed using technology were in the credit recovery rooms, where all instruction is provided online, and in a business software class, where instruction is self-paced using a computer.

Big Spring ISD has not conducted its Texas School Technology and Readiness (STaR) chart assessment since school year 2009–10. The STaR chart and corresponding ratings were developed to give an indication of how well technology is being used in a district. The assessments were required to be reported to TEA annually, until TEA discontinued this requirement in December 2014. Because the district had not been reporting its STaR chart assessment results and rating or conducting any other evaluation, the district has no evidence of how effective the integration of technology in the classroom has been or of the adequacy of its technology training for teachers in the last five years.

The use of classroom technology enhances the teaching process and helps students to learn course material and how to function in technologically dependent workplaces. A curriculum that incorporates technology improves instructional material and familiarizes students with technology.

The International Society for Technology in Education has defined technology standards for teachers called the ISTE–T. The ISTE–T defines the fundamental concepts, knowledge, skills, and attitudes for applying technology in educational settings. ISTE–T establishes five standards and performance indicators that are designed to be customized to fit state or district guidelines and include specific outcomes to be measured when developing technology assessment tools. These standards for educators include:

- using their knowledge of subject matter, teaching and learning, and technology to facilitate experiences that advance student learning, creativity, and innovation in both face-to-face and virtual environments;
- designing, developing, and evaluating authentic learning experiences and assessment, incorporating contemporary tools and resources to maximize content learning in context and to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes identified for students;
- exhibiting knowledge, skills, and work processes representative of an innovative professional in a global and digital society;

- understanding local and global societal issues and responsibilities in an evolving digital culture and exhibiting legal and ethical behavior in their professional practices; and
- continuously improving their professional practice, modeling lifelong learning, and exhibiting leadership in their school and professional community by promoting and demonstrating the effective use of digital tools and resources.

The SBEC has also developed five standards for teachers:

- use technology-related terms, concepts, data input strategies, and ethical practices to make informed decisions about current technologies and their applications;
- identify task requirements, apply search strategies, and use current technology to efficiently acquire, analyze, and evaluate a variety of electronic information;
- use task-appropriate tools to synthesize knowledge, create and modify solutions, and evaluate results in a way that supports the work of individuals and groups in problem-solving situations;
- communicate information in different formats and for diverse audiences; and
- know how to plan, organize, deliver, and evaluate instruction for all students that incorporate the effective use of current technology for teachers and integrating the Technology Applications TEKS into the curriculum.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a process to effectively integrate instructional technology, including explicit expectations for teachers regarding technology use in the classroom.

The superintendent should review the SBEC and ISTE–T standards and discuss them with teachers and staff in the Curriculum and Instruction Department to determine how to more effectively integrate technology into the classroom. With the available technology in Big Spring ISD campuses, this integration will likely begin with incorporation of higher-level interactive whiteboard functionality and more frequent use of classroom response devices. Together, the superintendent and principals should define a standard to

develop a more technology-infused curriculum and establish expectations for the integration of technology into the classroom. It is also important for the district to have a process to measure whether or not those expectations have been met. The superintendent and principals should then explain the standard and the expectations to teachers and staff, with a timeline for expected implementation. The superintendent should formalize these expectations by writing them into districtwide procedures.

To better assist teachers in fulfilling the expectations for technology integration, the instructional technology specialist's technician duties should be eliminated, and the position should be moved to the Curriculum and Instruction Department. The technology director should reallocate the instructional technology specialist's tasks among the three technicians. The instructional technology specialist should conduct a survey to determine the type of technology training teachers say they need most. The specialist should then develop a training plan to include training during the summer and the school year.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

TECHNOLOGY PLAN (REC. 37)

Big Spring ISD's long-range technology plan does not adequately address district needs and is not linked to the District Improvement Plan.

TEA requires all public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to submit a technology plan. The plan enables districts and charters to maintain eligibility for various state and federal programs. Technology plans assess the technology needs of a district and provide an agenda for how these needs will be fulfilled. According to TEA, a district's long-term technology plan should serve as a reference when the district is:

- evaluating current technology;
- identifying areas of need;
- determining goals, objectives, and strategies to meet those needs; and
- allocating funds to meet goals and objectives.

A team of staff members who have knowledge of how technology is being used in the district typically develops the technology plan. The plan is ideally based on a number of

sources, including feedback from teachers and the district's goals identified in the District Improvement Plan (DIP).

Big Spring ISD's technology director finished the school year 2014–15 technology plan during the time of the onsite review and provided it to the review team. Neither the superintendent nor the Board of Trustees had reviewed this plan, and it was not available on the district website. The plan shows no evidence that it was developed or evaluated by a formal staff committee. Before the school year 2014–15 plan, the last technology plan was implemented during school year 2011–12.

The school year 2014–15 technology plan notes that it was based on information in the DIP, but no evidence within the plan reflects this basis. In interviews, the review team found that no significant efforts had been made to tie the plans together or to ensure that the plans complemented each other.

Typically, districts conduct a formal technology needs assessment to assist in the development of the technology plan. Needs assessments are based on surveys and interviews with students, staff, and community members, and these analyses help to assess the district's technology needs and requirements. While Big Spring ISD's technology plan references a needs assessment, it is not clear whether this needs assessment was conducted. The plan indicates that it was developed using results from a survey of teachers; however, the district was unable to provide a copy of such a survey. The technology plan also notes in the needs assessment section that the STaR chart results were reviewed in developing the needs assessment. However, district staff has not completed STaR charts since school year 2009–10.

The 2014–15 technology plan also does not include funds for a computer replacement plan. In interviews, several staff members in the Technology Department noted the lack of an adopted computer replacement cycle as a concern. In campus observations, several teachers stated to the review team that district laptops were too outdated to be useful in classroom work. The Technology Department has a listing of which administrative computers are to be replaced in which year, but funding in the technology plan does not appear to be allocated for replacement.

A well-written and implemented technology plan provides a framework for effective planning and decision making, and the plan supports the district in achieving its stated goals. Technology plans typically include goals, action plans,

timelines, performance and success measures, designated staff responsible for each step in each action plan, and financial allocations.

The National Center for Technology Planning recommends five phases for an effective planning model:

Recruit and organize the planning team: It is important that the planning team consists of all stakeholder groups, and members should excel in planning and communication skills. Stakeholders may include technology specialists, district leaders, parents, students, community members, and business leaders.

Research: This phase consists of a needs assessment and an effort to identify the technologies that can be applied to those needs and ascertain how they can be applied.

Construct the technology plan: This phase focuses on applying the research to establish the district's vision and mission and to define the goals and objectives that will lead to fulfilling that vision and mission.

Formalize the planning: This phase culminates the district's research and plan into a comprehensive document that analyzes the district's present technology, articulates specific goals and objectives, incorporates clearly defined strategies and budgetary plans to realize the desired level of technology, and includes a process for evaluation.

Continually implement, evaluate, and revise: This phase considers the ongoing implementation, evaluation, and revision of the plan to ensure progress is made.

Other Texas school districts such as Canutillo ISD, Liberty Hill ISD, and Seminole ISD publish their technology plans on their respective district websites and can provide guidance to other districts in conducting needs assessments, budgeting, and technology planning. These districts have produced plans that have the TEA-required components, including an introduction, needs assessment, goals, objectives, strategies, budget, evaluation, and appendix. Katy ISD has formalized its needs assessment process by conducting an extensive technology assessment for each campus and administrative department, using internal and external assessments, and aligning the results to district goals and objectives.

Big Spring ISD should develop a process to regularly prepare and maintain an up-to-date technology plan aligned with identified district needs and goals.

The superintendent should select a range of staff from the central office and campuses to serve on a standing technology advisory committee. The committee should include community members and parents. The superintendent should include staff from the Technology Department, and the technology director should chair the committee. The committee should review and address such issues as:

- the district's visions for use of technology in teaching and learning;
- adoption of a computer replacement cycle into regular budget development;
- how the district will measure use of currently available technologies; for example, whether high school library computers are regularly in use; and
- how the technology plan will support other district plans.

The district should develop a detailed hardware migration and replacement strategy that would become an integral part of the plan. The strategy should include the establishment of hardware and software standards enforced by the Technology Department. Some steps that can be taken to establish the strategy are setting the criteria to be used in determining the hardware to be replaced, locating and tagging the hardware marked for replacement, and developing a timeline and preliminary budget to replace hardware.

The committee should draft a multiyear technology plan with clear milestones, expected achievement dates, and accountability mechanisms. The superintendent should present the plan to the board for review and approval. The superintendent should regularly review the district's progress against the plan with the board.

This recommendation could be implemented with 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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 6. TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT							
34. Establish procedures to ensure the information on the district and campus websites is up-to-date, consistent, and in compliance with state law.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
35. Develop key performance indicators with targets to measure technology support effectiveness and maximize the use of the online help desk ticket system.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
36. Develop and implement a process to effectively integrate instructional technology, including explicit expectations for teachers regarding technology use in the classroom.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
37. Develop a process to regularly prepare and maintain an up-to-date technology plan aligned with identified district needs and goals.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

CHAPTER 7. FOOD SERVICE

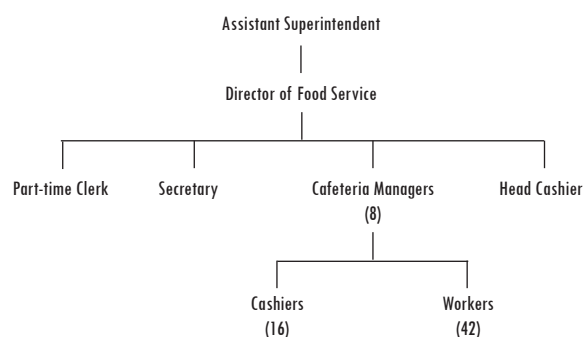
An independent school district's food service operation provides meals to its students and staff. The district may provide meals through the federally funded Child Nutrition Programs, which include the School Breakfast and National School Lunch programs. The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federal entitlement program administered at the state level by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Participating campuses 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 campuses to 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 (NSLP) serves low-cost or free lunches to students. Like the breakfast program, lunches must comply with federal nutrition guidelines and are reimbursable to campuses based on the 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 service budget or to 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 operate the Food Service Department.

Big Spring Independent School District's (ISD) Food Service Department uses the self-managed model. The department is managed by the director of food service, who reports to the

assistant superintendent. Additional food service office staff consists of a head cashier, secretary and a part-time clerk. All eight district campuses have full preparation and serving cafeterias with a manager, one or more cashiers, and several cafeteria workers. A total of 66 staff members work in the school kitchens. **Figure 7–1** shows the organization of the Food Service Department.

FIGURE 7–1
BIG SPRING ISD FOOD SERVICE ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The district participates in the NSLP, the SBP, the Afterschool Snack Program, and the Seamless Summer program. The Food Service Department also has a catering program. Most of the catering orders received by the catering program are for district events, although the catering program also provides services for some outside events. Beginning in school year 2014–15, the catering program has provided breakfast, lunch, and snacks to Howard Cottage, a daycare program at Howard College. All campuses in Big Spring ISD are closed, and students are not allowed to leave campus during the day to buy food elsewhere. Big Spring ISD served 495,849 lunches, 480,437 breakfasts, 15,313 snacks, and 12,580 summer lunches in school year 2013–14. Average daily participation for school year 2014–15 (through December 2014) was 2,913 lunches (68.6 percent of enrollment) and 2,149 breakfasts (50.6 percent of enrollment). Of the 4,232 students enrolled on January 5, 2015, 54.2 percent (2,299) are eligible for free meals, 7.3 percent (308) for reduced-price meals, and 38.5 percent (1,635) for full-price meals.

Big Spring ISD offers free breakfast to all students on all campuses. Food service staff use carts to transport food from the kitchens to hallways outside the classrooms and serve breakfast from the cart. Students then eat their breakfast in their classrooms. All carts in the secondary campuses are equipped with a card reader connected to a tablet computer. Students scan their identification (ID) cards and select components for their meal. At the conclusion of breakfast service, data is uploaded to the kitchen computer from each of the tablets. Students in the elementary campuses present their ID cards to the server before selecting their breakfast items. These cards are returned to the kitchen, where they are scanned into the computer. After they have been scanned, the cards are returned to the classroom teachers to distribute so students can use them at lunch. Lunch is served in the cafeterias in all campuses. Students enter the lines, select their desired meal components, and scan their ID cards at a point-of-service (POS) cashier station. Money is collected from those students who are not free- or reduced-lunch eligible or do not have money preloaded into their account. At the elementary level, if students are not eligible for free lunch and they do not have sufficient money with them or preloaded onto their account, they are allowed to “charge” two meals to their account. After the students exhaust the two meals, they will be given an alternate meal. At the junior high and high schools, no charges are allowed.

Total Food Service Department revenue for school year 2013–14 was \$2,577,790. Of that amount, 76.0 percent came from federal sources, 2.7 percent from state sources, and 21.3 percent from local sources. Expenditures during this same period were \$2,649,877. The district provided a subsidy of \$72,087 to the food service fund. Catering revenue was \$22,550, which is deposited in a separate catering program account.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Food Service Department embraces technology and is fully automated in all processes to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD increased breakfast and lunch participation rates through the use of innovative meal service methods and student involvement in testing and feedback.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Food Service Department is not adequately managing its staffing and has not established standards to guide allocation of labor hours by kitchen.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not effectively monitor campus kitchen operations to ensure consistent food preparation and serving procedures.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Food Service Department is not operating according to standard business practices and is not using financial reports for data analysis.
- ◆ The Food Service Department does not reimburse Big Spring ISD for all its indirect costs.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Food Service Department lacks a process to determine the cost effectiveness of providing free breakfast to all students in the district.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s policy of providing free meals and snacks to some staff and students has negatively impacted the financial status of the Food Service Department.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Food Service Department lacks an effective and consistent process for training kitchen staff in the areas of food preparation and food service.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks an effective process for maintaining or replacing kitchen equipment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 38: Establish a staffing formula based on industry standards and individual operational needs for the Food Service Department and establish a substitute pool to ensure all tasks are completed in the event of an absence.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 39: Establish a program for regular onsite monitoring, oversight, coaching, and sharing of best practices in the campus kitchens.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 40: Develop sound financial reports to enhance financial controls, improve monitoring of operations, and ensure financial stability.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 41: Improve business practices by requiring the Food Service Department to pay for all allowable indirect and direct support costs.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 42: Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of the free breakfast program and explore alternative funding sources.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 43: Discontinue the practice of requiring the Food Service Department to subsidize free meals for adults and snacks for campuses.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 44: Develop a training program that includes orientation for new Food Service Department employees and ongoing training for all department employees.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 45: Develop and implement a preventive maintenance and replacement program for all food service equipment.**

DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Big Spring ISD's Food Service Department embraces technology and is fully automated in all processes to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

The Food Service Department has effectively used technology to automate many of its processes. Several areas where the Big Spring ISD Food Service Department uses technology are less commonly seen in similarly sized school programs.

Food service staff serve free breakfast at all campuses. In the secondary campuses, food service staff carry tablet computers and card readers on their carts. At the end of service, the data is uploaded from the individual tablets to the main terminal in the kitchen.

Food service staff use the kitchen computer to record their hours worked. Staff clock in and out and record their lunch breaks by individually clocking into the program on the computer. At the end of the pay period, the kitchen manager prints time sheets for employees to sign and sends the time sheets to the food service office for compilation in preparation to issue paychecks.

The Food Service Department uses an electronic device to record food temperatures. The device has a probe that is used to record the date, time, and temperature of the food. Using a USB cable, the device is then connected to the computer and the data is uploaded. Temperature data from each

kitchen can then be monitored in the central office. The review team observed the device to be easy to use and understand.

Parents benefit from the district's use of technology in food service in two ways. Parents are able to apply online for meal benefits. Parents can access the free and reduced-price meals application from the district's website, complete the form, and submit it electronically to the food service office, where it is processed in a timely manner. This software also assists in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) required verification process for receiving free and reduced-price meals. Parents are also able to make meal payments online. Parents can put money in their children's accounts, view purchase history, check balances, and receive low-balance warnings by email.

While the use of technology in school food service has become mainstream in large operations, smaller programs such as Big Spring ISD's food service operation have been slower to embrace full automation. This slower conversion is often due to a lack of district technology infrastructure, a lack of skilled labor, or the cost of implementation.

Many parents and students have a keen understanding of technology, use it in their daily lives, and come to expect it when they participate in the school meals program. In a survey conducted by Big Spring ISD in 2014, parents reported a high rate of Internet access and smartphone usage. In the survey, 82 percent of parents in the district reported that they have Internet access at home, while 87 percent have a smartphone. The provision of automated processes for parents such as online payments and meal applications is an effective way to ensure that all eligible students are enrolled in the free and reduced-price meals program and that paying students do not have to bring cash to purchase meals. An online payment system also allows parents to monitor their child's purchases and make payments before a child has to charge a meal. Providing this type of data to parents can help to prevent overcharging and problems in the collection process.

The use of pin pads or bar code readers for students is necessary to keep student participation levels high. Long lines and a slow POS experience can lead to low participation rates and reduced revenue because students may choose not to purchase meals. The district's practice of serving breakfast in the hallways helps increase participation because it is convenient for students, and the automated system creates a fast, smooth process for the customer.

Software programs for school food service have moved beyond POS terminals to an array of programs used to enhance the program's efficiency and accountability. Federal regulations require data such as meal counts, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) temperature recording, and nutritional analysis. A wise use of technology and automated processes ensures that a district is meeting regulations and requirements while doing so in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

HIGH STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Big Spring ISD increased breakfast and lunch participation rates through the use of innovative meal service methods and student involvement in testing and feedback.

An average of 78 percent of students enrolled at Big Spring ISD elementary campuses in school year 2013–14 participated in the NSLP. NSLP participation in the middle school campuses was 79 percent of the enrollment. These participation rates are significantly higher than the national average shown in USDA data. In school year 2013–14, 58 percent of students enrolled in schools nationwide participated in the NSLP.

The rates of enrolled students who participate in the breakfast program are high, with 80 percent in the elementary campuses, 70 percent in the middle school campuses, and 53 percent of enrollment at Kentwood Early Childhood Center (ECC). While no industry standards exist for breakfast participation, the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) School Breakfast Scorecard: 2012–13 School Year states, "For 2012–2013, for every 100 children that participate in the NSLP, 51.9 children participated in the School Breakfast Program, an increase from 50.4 in the 2011–2012 school year." Applying this ratio to Big Spring ISD participation rates, for every 100 Big Spring ISD students who participated in the NSLP, 73.7 students participated in the SBP.

Big Spring ISD serves breakfast free to all students from carts in the hallways just outside the classroom before the first bell. The students then take their breakfast into their classrooms to eat. This practice was started approximately 15 years ago and has resulted in high participation rates. Big Spring ISD's breakfast delivery system is unique because, as the national School Nutrition Association reports in its *Little Big Fact Book: The Essential Guide to School Nutrition*, 2013 edition, 95 percent of campuses still serve breakfast in the cafeteria. Big Spring ISD also offers "Second Chance Breakfast" by allowing students who missed the normal

breakfast service or did not want breakfast at that time the opportunity to have breakfast after second period. Research shows that, with this method of breakfast service, more students eat breakfast at school.

Observations during lunch meal service in the cafeterias showed a low rate of plate waste. There was also a low rate of students who brought meals from home. No vending machines at the campuses provide competition to the school meals program. All campuses are closed, so students cannot leave campus for lunch.

The department uses surveys to collect student feedback. These are distributed at the end of the year in all cafeterias. Some testing has been done in the classroom with new breakfast items. When new menu items are introduced, managers conduct taste tests with students in the cafeteria. The high school has a Health Food Science class. The director of food service tests new food items and recipes with this group to gather feedback. The director of food service also brings the students to attend the annual school food show, where manufacturers provide samples and demonstrations of foods that are available for food service programs to purchase. The students are able to give the director feedback on the items presented by manufacturers.

Programs that serve school breakfast in the classrooms, such as Big Spring ISD's practice of serving breakfast from carts in the hallway, have been proven to increase participation. FRAC states:

Making breakfast a part of the school day dramatically increases participation by making it convenient and accessible to all. Whether breakfast is served in the classroom, from carts in the hallways, or before second period, the flexibility to allow children to eat in the morning during the school day is essential to ensure optimum participation.

When Breakfast in the Classroom is combined with serving breakfast at no charge, breakfast participation increases dramatically. Universal Breakfast in the Classroom increases participation by eliminating some of the barriers attached to a traditional cafeteria-based breakfast, such as social stigma and the requirement to arrive at school early.

A successful food service program uses a variety of methods to collect and analyze data from its customers. School meals programs are no different, even though they have a captive audience. Gathering information directly from students provides the director of food service with feedback as to their needs, wants, opinions, and values. This information can

inform decision making when considering topics such as new food items, recipes, and method of service. Using direct student communication and interaction can ensure elements of the program will meet students' expectations, leading to high participation levels.

DETAILED FINDINGS

STAFFING (REC. 38)

Big Spring ISD's Food Service Department is not adequately managing its staffing and has not established standards to guide allocation of labor hours by kitchen.

Big Spring ISD's assignment of labor hours is not aligned with the number of meals served. All employees work the same number of hours each day; managers are assigned 7.5 hours, and workers are assigned 6.25 hours. The district employs 42 cafeteria workers and eight managers in campus kitchens. All elementary campuses, except Kentwood ECC, have 51.25 assigned labor hours, yet their breakfast and lunch participation rates differ. Kentwood ECC has 13.75 assigned labor hours.

The Big Spring ISD Food Service Department calculates Meals per Labor Hour (MPLH) for each kitchen operation. MPLH is the most common means of measuring employee productivity and assigning labor hours in food service programs. MPLH is calculated by dividing the number of meal equivalents produced and served in one day by the number of labor hours required to produce those meals. A meal equivalent is the rate used to compare the amount of labor needed to prepare one lunch with the labor needed to prepare breakfasts, snacks, or a la carte items. All meals and snacks are converted into meal equivalents. Big Spring ISD uses the following conversions to calculate meal equivalents (snacks are not included in the calculations):

- one lunch equates to one meal equivalent;
- two breakfasts equate to one meal equivalent; and
- a la carte sales of \$2.60 equate to one meal equivalent.

Figure 7–2 shows industry best practice guidelines for MPLH staffing. This figure shows MPLH guidelines for both conventional and convenience systems of food preparation. The review team found that Big Spring ISD largely uses a convenience system of food preparation. In a convenience food system, the food that is used is commercially prepared to optimize ease of preparation. Such food is usually ready to eat without further preparation. It may also be easily portable,

have a long shelf life, or offer a combination of such convenient traits. Convenience foods include ready-to-eat dry goods, frozen foods such as pre-made dinners, shelf-stable foods, prepared mixes such as cake mix, and snack foods.

Big Spring ISD's Food Service program meets the characteristics of a low-productivity system because it prepares food onsite, has multichoice menus, uses older equipment, and uses reusable dishware. The number of hours that are necessary to deliver each campus' daily meal equivalents at a low level of productivity is calculated, and that campus' actual daily labor hours are subtracted from the results to arrive at a labor-hour variance for each campus. **Figure 7–3** shows Big Spring ISD's MPLH by campus compared to the national standards for a low-productivity convenience system.

The labor hour variance indicates the number of excess daily labor hours per school. Productivity in all of Big Spring ISD's kitchens falls below industry standards. Big Spring High School and Big Spring Junior High School are the two campuses that operate furthest from the standard MPLH. Each of these campuses produce approximately 10 fewer MPLH than industry standards. At the high school, this low productivity may be caused by relatively low levels of participation in the meals programs. Thirty-seven percent of students enrolled at the high school participate in the lunch program and 54 percent in the breakfast program. The junior high school kitchen supplies breakfast, lunch, and snacks to Howard Cottage, a daycare program located on the campus of Howard College. These meals do not figure into the campus' MPLH because the meals are not claimed for reimbursement in accordance with the NSLP. However, the labor required to make the meals may be part of the reason the junior high school is producing below the standard MPLH.

In comparison, Kentwood ECC operates fairly closely to the standard as it makes only 1.5 fewer meals than the standard suggests. In total, the district uses 53.3 more daily labor hours than the industry standard.

Big Spring ISD's Food Service Department has not set goals for MPLH, and it does not use industry standards to guide allocation of labor hours for individual kitchens.

Another measure frequently used to determine if labor hours are high is the labor operating ratio. To calculate this measure, total revenue is divided by total costs for labor and benefits. The director of food service has not calculated the labor

**FIGURE 7–2
INDUSTRY STANDARD RECOMMENDED MEALS PER LABOR HOUR**

MEAL EQUIVALENTS	CONVENTIONAL SYSTEM PRODUCTIVITY		CONVENIENCE SYSTEM PRODUCTIVITY	
	LOW	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
1–100	8	10	10	12
101–150	9	11	11	13
151–200	10–11	12	12	14
201–250	12	14	14	15
251–300	13	15	15	16
301–400	14	16	16	18
401–500	14	17	18	19
501–600	15	17	18	19
601–700	16	18	19	20
701–800	17	19	20	22
801–900	18	20	21	23
more than 900	19	21	22	23

NOTE: A meal equivalent is the rate used to compare the amount of labor needed to prepare one lunch with the labor needed to prepare breakfasts, snacks, or a la carte items.

SOURCE: School Food and Nutrition Service Management for the 21st Century, Sixth Edition, 2014.

**FIGURE 7–3
BIG SPRING ISD MEALS PER LABOR HOUR (MPLH) COMPARED TO NATIONAL STANDARDS
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

CAMPUS	MEAL EQUIVALENTS	DAILY LABOR	MPLH	STANDARD MPLH	VARIANCE
High School	976	80.25	12.1	22	9.9
Junior High School	826	75.25	10.8	21	10.2
Intermediate	435	45.0	9.8	18	8.2
Goliad Elementary	688	51.25	13.4	19	5.6
Marcy Elementary	753	51.25	14.7	20	5.3
Moss Elementary	615	51.0	12.0	19	7.0
Washington Elementary	740	51.25	14.4	20	5.6
Kentwood Early Childhood Center	130	13.75	9.5	11	1.5
Total Excess Labor Hours Districtwide					53.3

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, December 2014.

operating ratio for the Food Service Department. Calculations conducted by the review team using the school year 2014–15 budget show the labor operating ratio to be 46.5 percent, which exceeds industry best practices from 40 percent to 45 percent. This higher operating ratio corresponds with the determination that MPLH are lower than industry standards, showing an excess of labor hours.

The department also does not maintain a substitute pool to cover absences. The director of food service stated that she eliminated substitutes several years ago and reduced total staff from 89 to the current level of 66 employees. Kitchen staff is cross-trained to ensure all job duties can be covered in the event of absences. However, when staff are absent, present staff are required to perform the duties of the absent staff in addition to their own workloads. Although they must

perform extra duties, no additional labor hours are allowed. Employees covering for absent staff are permitted to use disposable serveware in lieu of washing trays and silverware. Focus groups with both kitchen managers and workers indicated that food service staff desire to return to the practice of having substitutes available to fill in for absences.

Using MPLH to allocate labor is a common practice in school meals programs. Industry standards shown in **Figure 7-3** have been developed to guide food service operators in assigning staff to kitchens based upon participation levels. When standards and goals are communicated to employees, and they understand the relationship between controlled labor costs and financial stability, their performance becomes tied to higher productivity levels.

Financial Management: A Course for School Nutrition Directors, published by the National Food Service Management Institute (NFSMI), recommends using MPLH as a productivity index to monitor the efficiency of the operation and as a guide to determine staffing. Snacks are included when determining total meal equivalents because labor is used to produce them.

Keys to Excellence, the self-assessment tool of the National School Nutrition Association, notes the following best practices:

- a staffing plan is developed based on factors such as delivery systems, participation, facilities, and services provided; and
- MPLH standards are utilized in staffing assignments.

Big Spring ISD should establish a staffing formula based on industry standards and individual operational needs for the Food Service Department and establish a substitute pool to ensure all tasks are completed in the event of an absence.

An effort should be made to gradually reach industry MPLH standards within three years. The director of food service should set goals for each kitchen and work to adjust labor hours. Replacing staff who retire or resign should be discontinued until the standards are met.

All staff should be introduced to the process of calculating MPLH and meal equivalents at the beginning of school year 2015-16. Staff should be trained on the process of how to improve MPLH, and should be given the assignment to determine how they would work to improve their MPLH to meet the goal that the director has given to them.

The two ways to increase MPLH are:

- decrease the number of labor hours: reduce staff at campuses where staff hours are above national standards, or decrease the number of staff hours worked daily by adjusting work schedules; and
- increase the number of meal equivalents: implement measures to increase participation. Unless the food service program is feeding all of the students, faculty, and staff every day, possibilities to increase participation are available. Every student who is enrolled and every adult who is employed by the school is a potential customer. Opportunity to increase participation is ample at the high school, because participation is relatively low. This implementation may entail changing the times of meal services to better accommodate the students' schedules or revisiting menu choices to ensure they are appealing to students.

Kitchen staff should examine these approaches and determine if one or a combination of both will produce the desired result to ensure that the school is performing at industry standards for MPLH. The goals set for each school should be monitored on a monthly basis and progress noted and acknowledged.

As part of establishing a staffing formula, the use of a substitute pool should be reestablished to ensure absences are covered without increasing the present staff's workload. The director of food service should begin the process of vetting substitutes for a substitute pool for absences to be used beginning in school year 2015-16.

The cost of the excess labor hours is \$125,873 (180 operating days x 53.3 hours x \$13.12 (median hourly rate)). To estimate the cost of hiring substitutes, the formula would include the 42 kitchen workers and the 16 cashiers. Estimating that each of the 58 staff members uses five of his or her 10 available leave days, the total fiscal impact of hiring substitutes would be a cost of approximately \$20,961 (58 staff x 5 leave days = 290 total leave days x 6.5 hours per day = 1,885 total leave hours x \$11.12 (starting substitute rate)).

The total fiscal impact for this recommendation is an estimated savings of \$104,912 (\$125,873 savings from removing excess labor hours - \$20,961 cost of hiring substitutes).

Since the time of the onsite review, the district has reduced the hours for all cafeteria staff to 5.25 hours a day.

MONITORING AND OVERSIGHT (REC. 39)

Big Spring ISD does not effectively monitor campus kitchen operations to ensure consistent food preparation and serving procedures.

During the onsite review, the review team observed a number of inconsistent practices in campus kitchens. On one campus, frozen whole pizzas were put on parchment-lined pans for baking. During lunch, it was observed that the product was difficult to serve due to slices not being crisp and sticking to the parchment. Several slices were discarded, and the overall appearance was not of a good quality. Other campuses sprayed the pans and did not use parchment, resulting in a higher-quality product. The Food Service Department has no system for sharing effective production practices from campus to campus.

At one campus, students were not allowed to take two fruit servings, yet at other campuses they were able to select two fruits and a vegetable serving. At one campus, the only fresh fruit selection was the one on the menu, but at all others a selection of three fresh fruits was offered.

At some campuses, students at the end of the serving period did not have the same choices as those at the beginning due to the practice of making a set number of servings of an item available for each period. At other campuses, staff made an effort to prepare more of an item during a period to ensure all students had the same choices.

Managers meetings occur weekly, but there is no consistent monitoring of campus kitchen operations. The director of food service monitors campus kitchen operations on an irregular schedule. During focus groups, some food service staff said they had a visit in their kitchen from the director of food service once a month, and others said they were visited once or twice a week. The director indicated that she attempts to visit each cafeteria for one lunch service and one breakfast service each week. She also indicated that she does not do preplanned visits in order to better observe normal cafeteria practices.

The lack of regular visits to kitchens by the director of food service has resulted in numerous inconsistencies in preparation and meal service. These inconsistencies have affected students negatively, because some students are not given the same menu choices as students in other campuses. In addition, food quality varies from campus to campus.

Campuses interpret school meals program regulations differently, as demonstrated by the different approaches to

the number of fruit selections students are allowed. The department does not appear to have set standards for production and service.

The lack of regular interaction between kitchen staff and central office staff results in a missed opportunity to compliment and recognize staff members who do an excellent job. In addition, no time is spent coaching staff in areas needing improvement.

Supervisors in Beaumont ISD conduct regular audits of cafeterias to ensure staff is following procedures and regulations. They use a Child Nutrition Self Audit packet that contains 128 specific questions related to a variety of subject areas. Results are discussed with managers and are used for follow-up training.

In its Keys to Excellence self-assessment tool, the School Nutrition Association states the best practice in the area of program accountability is that a system for internal audits and reviews is established to evaluate the performance of the school nutrition program and identify and control problems.

Big Spring ISD should establish a program for regular onsite monitoring, oversight, coaching, and sharing of best practices in the campus kitchens.

The program could be developed for implementation beginning with school year 2015–16. The director of food service should present the program and its details to all staff at the beginning of school year meeting.

One component of this program should be a detailed checklist, to be used twice a year, to evaluate kitchen operations. Areas to be assessed should include:

- food preparation methods and quality;
- HACCP procedures, food safety and sanitation;
- cleanliness of kitchen and storeroom;
- proper use of equipment;
- meal service procedures (breakfast and lunch), portions, menu selections, plate waste;
- cashiering, POS procedures, money counting;
- preparation of reports, ordering, and inventory;
- customer service;
- condition of equipment and physical facility; and
- chemical usage and storage.

The checklist should include a section to note any corrective action needed. After the evaluation, the checklist should be discussed with the manager, and a plan should be developed to address any areas needing follow-up. A second component of the kitchen monitoring program should include a weekly visit to all kitchens to observe meal production and service and to provide coaching and training on procedures and best practices.

The findings from the kitchen visits should be used to determine areas needing further staff training, development of standards, or changes in procedures.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

BUSINESS PRACTICES (REC. 40)

Big Spring ISD's Food Service Department is not operating according to standard business practices and is not using financial reports for data analysis.

The district has not developed financial reports typically used to monitor and analyze food service operations. The financial reports that are available are not designed in a standard accounting format that includes revenue and expenditure data. For the catering program, revenues are recorded, but expenditures are not.

The monthly Food Service Department expenditure account report, developed by the Business Office, is not in a format suitable for data analysis. Data is not presented as an aggregate. For example, the report does not contain one line item for total food cost, one for total labor cost, or one for total supplies cost. It lists all expenditures for all kitchens, and the central office, as separate line items, resulting in a document that contains 165 line items. The report lists each line item with a year-to-date expenditure amount rather than monthly activity. The report does not include comparisons to the previous month. Revenue data is not contained in the report, so it cannot be used as a statement of revenue and expenditures (profit and loss statement). The director of food service stated that she gets too much data from the report, and it would be easier to interpret if it was a summary by category.

The Food Service Department also does not produce a report for individual campus kitchens showing their revenue and expenditures by month. The director of food service is not able to determine if individual site operations are financially sound or need improvements. Managers stated in a focus group that they do not know the financial status of their

operations. As a result, they are not engaging in practices to reduce costs or increase revenue.

Budget preparation is a joint effort of the director of food service and the director of business services. The budget lists the same 165 expenditure line items as the monthly expenditure account report, rather than aggregate amounts. The revenue accounts are aggregate rather than individually by campus. This reporting does not allow the director of food service to accurately determine the financial status of each campus' kitchen operations.

Big Spring ISD's Food Service Department develops a monthly MPLH statement by campus, including participation reports showing breakfast and lunch meals served, and ala carte revenue for the month.

Figure 7-4 shows calculations of the district's operating ratios for school year 2013-14. Operating ratios are calculated by dividing each category of expenditures by total revenue for the same period. These data demonstrate that the department is operating at a financial loss, as the total is greater than 100 percent.

FIGURE 7-4
BIG SPRING ISD FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT OPERATING RATIOS
SCHOOL YEAR 2013-14

CATEGORY	EXPENDITURES DIVIDED BY REVENUE
Labor/Benefits	46.0%
Food/Commodities	54.0%
Supplies	2.0%
Maintenance/Repairs	0.8%
Equipment	0.2%
Overhead	0.5%
Total	103.5%

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

Before school year 2012-13, the Food Service Department operated at an annual loss of approximately \$400,000 to \$500,000. During the past two years, the loss was reduced to approximately \$75,000 per year. The district has been subsidizing the department to cover the shortfall of the Food Service Department. The director of food service stated that she wants to run the department like a business and is working hard to reduce the loss. The chief financial officer (CFO) commented that the director of food service is doing an excellent job of working to reduce the district subsidy.

The director of food service does not receive an end-of-year statement to show how the department has performed financially. The Business Office develops the report, but it is not shared unless the director of food service requests it.

The Food Service Department also does not conduct any analysis of the financial data, because it is not provided in a format that is useful for analysis and comparison. No analysis of expenditure data occurs to determine if any expenditure categories are higher than industry standards. Industry best practices recommend no more than 80 percent to 85 percent of total revenue should be spent on food and labor. However, review team calculations determined that food and labor costs were extremely high in Big Spring ISD's Food Service Department. The department spent 100 percent of total revenue on food and labor costs.

Standard business practice dictates the development of a well-defined set of reports that can be used for data analysis and program improvement. School Food & Nutrition Service Management for the 21st Century, sixth edition, states the following regarding school food service programs operating as an enterprise system:

The school food and nutrition service fund is one of the most challenging school district accounts to manage because of the many variables. A good accounting system is essential. It should follow generally accepted governmental accounting principles. The school food and nutrition service fund is an enterprise fund. An "enterprise fund" generates its own income and is different from a "budgetary fund." The program fund parallels an enterprise account in that it produces goods, provides services, and charges for those goods and services. A valuable source of financial guidance is the U.S. Department of Education's Financial Accounting for Local and State School Systems publication.

Managing Child Nutrition Programs: Leadership for Excellence, second edition, edited by Josephine Martin and Charlotte Beckett Oakley, states that one of the most important aspects of financial management involves the preparation of financial statements that can be used to analyze program operations.

NFSMI's Financial Management: A Course for School Nutrition Directors states that "Another important measurement of program efficiency is the analysis of operational cost percentages (expenditures) to total revenue, sometimes called operating ratios. The agency also

recommends setting goals for each expenditure category and notes that industry standards recommend no more than 80 percent to 85 percent is spent on food and labor.

Figure 7–5 shows the reports used in Comal ISD to monitor its child nutrition operation. Uses for each report are indicated, how often the district prepares the report, and the designated responsibility for the development of each.

Big Spring ISD should develop sound financial reports to enhance financial controls, improve monitoring of operations, and ensure financial stability.

The director of food service and CFO should discuss the reports that are needed for program analysis, how to collect the data needed for these reports, and the format necessary to present the data so it can be used for evaluation and analysis.

A statement of revenue and expenditures should be developed for the Food Service Department and for each campus operation. Data should be presented showing revenues by source and expenditures by category. This data should be presented as aggregate totals for each revenue source and expenditure category. The report should show current month activity, previous month, net gain or loss for the period, and year-to-date information.

A statement of net position (balance sheet) should be developed monthly for the department. This report would provide data on assets, liabilities, and the fund balance. This report will be useful to understand the financial position of the food service operation.

The budget should be developed showing aggregate totals by line item (a line item for total food purchases at all campuses combined). The director of food service should prepare the budget after receiving data regarding benefits and salaries from the business office. The budget should be monitored monthly.

The director of food service should establish goals for operating ratios that do not total more than 100 percent, so that the district will no longer be providing a subsidy to the Food Service Department. Expenditure data should be analyzed monthly to monitor overspending in any category and to make changes as needed.

These procedures should be implemented at the beginning of school year 2015–16.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FIGURE 7–5
COMAL ISD FOOD SERVICE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORTS, SCHOOL YEAR 2006–07

REPORT	USES	FREQUENCY	SOURCE
Budget	forecasts for the next year by using historical, economic, and demographic data; projected enrollment; menu changes; and changes in operational procedures. Enables informed decisions and financial Enables a forecast of financial performance for the next year. Provides data for comparisons of actual and forecasted performance.	Annual with monthly monitoring	Child Nutrition Department collaborates with the Finance Department
Menu Costing	Enables informed decision making for purchases and the continuation of products' costs.	Daily	Annual bids and the Food Buying Guide (1)
Daily Revenue Received from Lunch and Breakfast	Enables the identification of major sources of revenue such as daily deposits, free, reduced-price, paid reimbursements, a la carte, catering, or other.	Daily	Child Nutrition point of sale (POS) system and Finance Department
Balance Sheet	Enables a comparison of current balances with balances at the end of the month of the previous year.	Monthly	Finance Department
Profit and Loss Statement	Enables identification and analysis of increases or decreases in participation or expenses. Enables identification of campuses making a profit or experiencing a loss. Enables administrators to decide where key issues or problems exist.	Monthly	Child Nutrition Department
Key Operating Percentages	Enables management and staff to measure expenses, including: Food cost percentage Labor cost percentage Other cost percentage Break-even point Inventory turnover Participation rates Average daily labor costs Average hourly labor costs	Monthly or annually	Child Nutrition POS system and Finance Department
Meals Per Labor Hour	Enables analysis of staffing patterns by campus Enables reduction of single-hour increments based on difficulty of menu preparation	Weekly and monthly	Child Nutrition POS system and Finance Department payroll records

NOTE:

(1) Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs, U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, revised January 2008.

SOURCE: Financial reports from Comal ISD Child Nutrition Department, June 2007.

INDIRECT COSTS (REC. 41)

The Food Service Department does not reimburse Big Spring ISD for all its indirect costs.

The Food Service Department is not paying for utilities used in operating the campus kitchens. The district has not developed a system to determine utility usage by the Food Service Department and assess the department an equitable charge.

The Food Service Department is also not paying for the cost of Maintenance Department labor or custodial services used to perform repairs on kitchen equipment. Big Spring ISD’s maintenance staff is assigned to a block of campuses and makes repairs on all equipment, including kitchen equipment in their assigned campuses. The Maintenance Department charges food service for the cost of parts but not for actual labor hours used for the repair work. The School Dude software that the district uses to manage maintenance work orders has the capability to track labor hours spent on repairs, and at the request of the review team, the Maintenance Department used it to produce a report of all kitchen repairs for school year 2013–14 by location. **Figure 7–6** shows these labor hour costs.

**FIGURE 7–6
BIG SPRING ISD MAINTENANCE COSTS AT CAMPUS
KITCHENS
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14**

CAMPUS	LABOR HOURS	COST
High School	68	\$1,646
Junior High School	66	\$1,358
Intermediate	2	\$30
Goliad Elementary	28	\$701
Marcy Elementary	9	\$138
Moss Elementary	16	\$236
Washington Elementary	9	\$144
Kentwood Early Childhood Center	57.5	\$1,211
Total	255.5	\$5,464

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

Overall, the Maintenance Department spent a total of 255.5 hours servicing the campus kitchens at a total cost of \$5,465. The majority of the maintenance labor hours were spent at the older campuses: Big Spring High School, Big Spring Junior High School, and Kentwood ECC.

Big Spring ISD should improve business practices by requiring the Food Service Department to pay for all allowable indirect and direct support costs.

The district should determine a method to charge the Food Service Department for utility costs. The most common methods are to install meters in the kitchens or assess charges based on square footage. The Maintenance Department should develop an invoice system for repairs made to kitchen equipment using its work order software. Data should include school, equipment, maintenance performed, labor hours, and total cost, including a separation for parts and labor. The invoice would be presented to the director of food service who would approve that the information presented is accurate. These invoices would be provided to the Food Service Department, which would reimburse maintenance for parts and labor. The Food Service Department should input this repair information into a database that would be used for planning and budgeting of equipment replacement. This process should start with the beginning of school year 2015–16.

These steps can be conducted before school year 2015–16 so their implementation can occur at the beginning of the school year.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation. Requiring the Food Service Department to pay for its utilities and maintenance costs would result in a gain to the district’s General Fund and a cost to the food service fund. However, both funds are a part of the district’s overall financial operations.

FREE BREAKFAST (REC. 42)

Big Spring ISD’s Food Service Department lacks a process to determine the cost effectiveness of providing free breakfast to all students in the district.

Big Spring ISD offers a free breakfast to all students. This offering is a positive step to promote participation in the SBP, which has beneficial effects on students’ nutrition, learning, and behavior. FRAC has found that participation in the SBP may lead to higher math and reading scores and improved memory. Evidence also suggests that students who eat breakfast at school consume more fruits, vegetables, and milk than students who do not eat breakfast or eat breakfast at home. Additionally, students who eat school breakfast have been found to be less likely to be overweight and have better nutrition than students who do not eat breakfast or eat breakfast at home. School districts that provide breakfast in

the classroom have reported decreases in discipline problems, visits to school nurses, and tardiness, and increases in student attentiveness.

While providing free breakfast to all students has many benefits, it places a financial burden on the Food Service Department, because a source of revenue is eliminated but the associated costs are not. Students are qualified for either free, reduced-price, or full-price meals based on an application process that determines their eligibility. In most school districts, payment is collected from those students not eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Federal guidelines limit the amount that can be charged to students eligible for reduced-price meals—a maximum of \$0.30 for breakfast and \$0.40 for lunch. The price charged for full-price meals is determined by the district by following federal guidelines for setting meal prices. The federal government reimburses school districts for part of the cost of all school breakfasts, regardless of whether or not the student is eligible for free or reduced-price meals. The rate of reimbursement is higher for students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals and lower for students who are not.

The Food Service Department is expected to absorb the total costs of these meals, but it does not receive full payment from students or the district. It receives federal reimbursement through the standard claims process, but it does not receive payment for the amount the student would normally pay. The director of food service discussed various options with Regional Education Service Center XVIII (Region 18) to finance the district's free breakfast program; but the analysis led to the determination that it would not be financially feasible for Big Spring ISD to implement any of the available options. However, beginning in school year 2014–15, the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) became available to all schools nationwide. This program gives districts the option to offer free school meals to all students without collecting applications. To be eligible for the program, districts must meet certain criteria for the percentage of students who qualify for free school meals without an application, due to their enrollment in designated government assistance programs. Big Spring ISD is not participating in CEP. TDA maintains an annual report of campuses eligible to receive CEP funding. This report is provided to districts to assess their eligibility. It lists campuses, by district, who are either eligible or near eligible to participate in the CEP program. The following Big Spring ISD campuses are listed:

- Junior high school: near eligible;

- Goliad Elementary: eligible;
- Kentwood ECC: eligible;
- Marcy Elementary: eligible;
- Moss Elementary: near eligible; and
- Washington Elementary: eligible.

TDA reports show that Big Spring ISD served 42,064 breakfasts to students who qualify for reduced-price meals and 147,988 breakfasts to students who did not qualify for free or reduced-price meals in school year 2013–14. If the department charged for these meals using typical rates of \$0.30 for students eligible for reduced-price meals and \$1.50 for students who were not eligible for free or reduced-price meals, revenue would have been \$234,601 $((42,064 \times \$0.30) + (147,988 \times \$1.50))$. For this calculation, the price of breakfast for students who are not eligible for free or reduced-price meals is based on the amount charged by a peer district. Peer districts are districts similar to Big Spring ISD that are used for comparison purposes. The department was able to claim these meals for federal reimbursement at the rate of \$1.63 for reduced-price meals and \$0.28 for paid meals. This reimbursement resulted in actual revenue of \$110,001 $((42,064 \times \$1.63) + (147,988 \times \$0.28))$. For school year 2013–14, Big Spring ISD lost \$124,600 in revenue by maintaining a universal free breakfast program. However, it is possible that if the district did not offer a free breakfast to all students, participation rates would be lower, and the Food Service Department would not have realized as much reimbursement.

Big Spring ISD should conduct a cost/benefit analysis of the free breakfast program and explore alternative funding sources.

The director of food service should work with the director of business services to conduct a cost/benefit analysis of the free breakfast program operation. The director of food service should also review the possibility of applying for the CEP program to finance free breakfast in the district.

The director of food service should contact Region 18 or TDA to assist in an evaluation of the financial ramifications of putting these campuses on the CEP program. If it is determined that revenue would increase, the department should complete the requirements to have these campuses designated as CEP and notify the community and parents specifically regarding any changes that may affect them. The

evaluation process should take place as soon as possible and be implemented in the earliest school year possible.

Since the time of the onsite review, the district has reviewed the requirements for the CEP program and determined that the district would not benefit from its use.

District administrators should also discuss the possibility of a cost-sharing arrangement between the Food Service Department and the district for the costs of breakfasts provided free to any student not eligible for a free breakfast. This cost sharing should begin in school year 2015–16.

It is difficult to assess the amount of increased revenue to the Food Service Department from student breakfasts because it is unknown if the CEP would be implemented and how that would affect federal reimbursement. As a result, no fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation

SUBSIDIES (REC. 43)

Big Spring ISD's policy of providing free meals and snacks to some staff and students has negatively impacted the financial status of the Food Service Department.

Big Spring ISD has a district practice to allow some staff members to receive free meals. During the onsite review, staff was observed receiving free meals at all campuses. The director of food service stated that adults who provide any type of assistance during a meal service are eligible to receive that meal at no cost. This eligibility includes custodians who clean the cafeteria during lunch service; monitors and aides who supervise students in the lunchroom during meal service, some of whom clean the tables; and all teachers at breakfast because they monitor students who eat the meal in their classrooms.

The Food Service Department also provides free snacks to students in the high school during state testing. The high school principal said from 300 to 400 students receive free snacks three times a year for four days at a time, a total of 3,600 to 4,800 snacks annually.

This practice is not consistent with the federal and state regulations regarding free adult meals.

TDA's 2014–15 Administrator's Reference Manual, Section 15.11, states:

Contracting entities have the option to charge or not charge nutrition program employees for meals if the employees are directly involved in the operation or administration of meal planning, preparation and

service. This would include SNP supervisors, managers, cooks, and servers. A meal served at no charge to nutrition program employees is considered to be a fringe benefit that can be counted as an allowable program cost... Contracting entities must also ensure that federal reimbursements, students' payments, and other non-designated nutrition program revenues do not subsidize meals served to non-program employees—teachers, administrators, custodians, or other adults.

This policy is aligned with federal directives on this topic.

The adults in the district who receive free meals are not directly involved in the operation or administration of the program and, thus, are considered non-program employees.

Data received from the Food Service Department showed 18,589 free adult lunch meals recorded for school year 2013–14. All 66 staff working in the kitchens are entitled to a free meal. Assuming that a free lunch was recorded for all kitchen staff, 11,880 (66 x 180 operating days) free meals were served to food service program staff. The difference (6,709) is the number of free lunches served to adults that are not program staff (18,589 - 11,880). The price for an adult lunch is \$3.25, so the lost revenue for these free lunches was \$21,804.

The district did not have data available showing the number of free adult breakfasts recorded. For purposes of determining approximate costs of the meals, the same number of free non-program adults was used. The price for an adult breakfast is \$2.00, so the lost revenue for these free breakfasts was \$13,418 (6,709 x \$2.00).

To determine the amount of subsidy for the high school snacks provided, the prices the Food Service Department charges for a snack bag (\$0.40) and juice (\$0.40) were used. Using an estimate of 400 students participating last year, the total was 4,800 free snacks provided to the high school students (400 x 4 days x 3 times per year). This calculation results in \$3,840 in lost revenue to the food service program.

Big Spring ISD should discontinue the practice of requiring the Food Service Department to subsidize free meals for adults and snacks for campuses.

The practice of food service covering the costs of free meals for adults should be discontinued beginning in school year 2015–16. The district should decide whether to continue the practice of offering free meals to adults or not. If it continues, a system to record these adult meals should be developed. The Food Service Department should bill the district

monthly for all non-program adult meals served at the adult meal price. A journal entry should indicate the transfer of funds, and the purpose, to provide accountability that program funds are not being misused.

The practice of food service subsidizing any food for campuses, such as snacks, should be discontinued beginning in school year 2015–16. The superintendent should provide campuses with a written policy statement of this change.

Assuming the district continues to provide similar levels of adult meals and student snacks during testing but charges for them, the food service program will realize additional annual revenue of \$39,062 (\$35,222 for the adult meals + \$3,840 for the snacks).

The district has indicated that it will discontinue free meals for staff members beginning in August 2015.

TRAINING PROGRAM (REC. 44)

Big Spring ISD's Food Service Department lacks an effective and consistent process for training kitchen staff in the areas of food preparation and food service.

The Food Service Department does not have a training program for new workers. New hires are placed into school kitchens, and the kitchen managers are expected to train them on all aspects of food preparation and service. The Food Service Department does not provide new hires with initial classroom orientation to give them an overview of the program and its regulations and procedures. Managers are not provided with materials to use in their on-the-job instruction for new hires to ensure that trainings are consistent and accurate. Each manager decides how he or she will perform the training. The Food Service Department does not conduct follow-up observation to evaluate the success of the training and determine if all areas have been covered.

Working in the kitchens preparing and serving school meals is challenging for several reasons. School kitchens contain institutional equipment that is unfamiliar to most new hires, and misuse can lead to accidents. Because the Food Service Department operates USDA programs, the department must comply with all regulations at the federal and state levels, which are unfamiliar to most new employees. The task of cooking for hundreds of students on a short schedule as opposed to preparing home meals requires specialized training. The USDA programs are subject to internal and external audits, and failure to comply with federal, state, and

local regulations can result in financial penalties to the district.

Managers are expected to conduct monthly training for all employees regarding HACCP. All managers use HACCP standard operating procedures materials from NFSMI, but the managers determine which topic they will cover each month for their kitchen staff. Managers are not trained on how to cover the materials. HACCP training does not occur at the same time on each campus; some kitchen managers do it during the unpaid lunchtime, and others do it at the end of the day.

No training is provided when new products or recipes are placed on the menus. During focus groups, staff and managers said they do not receive instructions on preparing and serving new items and are not introduced to the items before the items are placed on the menu. Managers also noted the need for improved training for cashiers.

All managers and some workers have been trained in ServSafe, a food safety training program developed by the National Restaurant Association that is widely used in school food-service operations and approved by local health departments. Some of the topics the ServSafe training covers are: the importance of food safety, time and temperature control, preventing cross-contamination, safe food preparation, receiving and storing food, HACCP, and methods of thawing, cooking, cooling, and reheating food.

The cashiers receive initial training by the head cashier on their job duties, but they receive little follow-up evaluation or coaching. Some cashiers expressed dissatisfaction with the scarcity of training for their positions, and the kitchen managers reported a high turnover rate of cashiers.

Research shows that an effective orientation for new hires and ongoing training for existing staff reduces staff turnover, increases productivity, and boosts morale. The School Nutrition Association's Keys to Excellence self-assessment program notes as a best practice that orientation and training that enhances learning and improves job skills should be available to all school nutrition personnel.

In its Human Resource module, NFSMI states the following regarding training and professional development:

School nutrition directors have the responsibility of continuous learning for themselves and their staff. They should engage in continuing education and participate in professional organizations to expand their knowledge. Directors must assess employee skills and needs and use

the results to develop and implement personal development plans and training programs. Training and professional development is a continuous and never-ending process.

Big Spring ISD should develop a training program that includes orientation for new Food Service Department employees and ongoing training for all department employees.

The director of food service should develop an orientation program for new employees to include classroom training and on-the-job training. Drafts of the training materials should be given to a select team of kitchen managers and workers for feedback and suggestions. The classroom portion should include topics that the new employee should know in advance of entering a school kitchen for on-the-job training. Topics should include:

- department vision, mission, and goals;
- history of school meals and general overview of the USDA program;
- facts about Big Spring ISD and the district's school meals programs;
- types of school meals and service, such as breakfast in the classroom;
- menus, meal patterns, components, portions, delivery (offer vs. serve);
- sanitation, food safety, HACCP;
- kitchen equipment, large and small;
- customer service;
- job requirements; and
- a test at the end of the training to evaluate the knowledge gained.

The second part of developing the orientation program should be the development of a checklist of topics that managers should cover in their on-the-job training of new employees. All managers should be trained in a kitchen, by the director, on how to present the training and should be given additional resources to use as reference materials. The third part of the orientation program should be an evaluation component conducted by the director of food service in the kitchen to assess how the new employee is performing.

Development of this orientation program should be completed in time for introduction at the beginning of school year 2015–16. The orientation could take place right before school starts for the new employees.

The director of food service and kitchen managers should determine the best time of the day for the monthly HACCP training to ensure that all staff are paid for this instruction. At one of the weekly managers meetings, the director of food service and managers should determine which topic to cover for that month, and the director of food service or the head cashier should present tips on how to teach the material. This preparation will ensure consistent and accurate HACCP training in all campuses.

During visits to the campus kitchens, the director of food service should note any areas in which staff needs more training as a result of observing improper procedures or an apparent lack of knowledge. Staff should receive immediate feedback and coaching. Managers meetings could be used to solicit feedback from managers regarding staff training needs, and this information could be used to develop department training goals.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

KITCHEN EQUIPMENT (REC. 45)

Big Spring ISD lacks an effective process for maintaining or replacing kitchen equipment.

Big Spring ISD has an inventory of kitchen equipment by individual campus, but the inventory does not include the age of the equipment or its repair frequency. Staff estimated that older campuses have equipment original to the construction of the building and, thus, in use beyond the manufacturer-rated life. These items have been fully depreciated. For example, some equipment has been in operation since the 1960s, which amounts over 40 years of continuous use.

The Food Service Department practices reactive maintenance, a maintenance program in which equipment is not investigated for needed repairs until it breaks down. The director of food service is aware that many pieces of equipment are old and that it takes a long time to receive parts to perform repairs. Kitchen managers and staff in focus groups indicated that repairs on old equipment can take up to 20 days until a part is located or manufactured because a manufacturer is no longer stocking parts for the old equipment. For example, Kentwood ECC has a freezer that

is propped up on one side with wooden blocks, presenting a significant safety issue as it is being used. The campus also has a refrigerator that has not worked since September 2014 due to an internal fire. The director of food service made a request for removal of both pieces of equipment to the Maintenance Department.

The district posted a bid for labor and contracted services for kitchen equipment repair. However, this external labor is used only when the Maintenance Department is unable to repair the piece of equipment and for specialized functions, such as hood cleaning. The Food Service Department funds these external contracted services, but they are used very infrequently.

The Food Service Department has no defined preventive maintenance program for the kitchen equipment. Maintenance personnel perform a minimal amount of maintenance on a piece of equipment when performing repairs, but it is not part of an overall preventive maintenance program.

Because repairs and breakdowns are not recorded, no data is available to guide long-term equipment purchasing when preparing the annual budget. Within the Food Service Department, the budget for large equipment was \$11,200 in school year 2012–13 and increased to \$50,000 in school year 2013–14. The director of food service stated that she felt comfortable increasing spending because the subsidy the Food Service Department receives from the district increased drastically. A total of \$50,000 was budgeted for 2014–15, which is 1.9 percent of the projected food service revenue. These amounts were not targeted to purchase replacement equipment for a specific school kitchen.

The practice of not replacing aged kitchen equipment has resulted in a lack of efficiency in food preparation and meal service because staff is unable to use equipment while awaiting parts and repair. Some parts incur a higher cost because they have to be manufactured specifically for the individual piece of equipment. Older equipment is not as energy efficient, resulting in increased energy and utility costs.

The lack of a database for equipment age and repairs has resulted in poor planning and budgeting. An insufficient amount has been budgeted for capital replacement, thus the department is not adequately prepared in the event that many pieces of equipment break down in one year. The Maintenance Department is not receiving allowable revenue

from the Food Service Department because it is not utilizing its tracking software for maintenance and repairs to kitchen equipment. The Food Service Department is not able to maintain accurate records regarding total costs of the operation without including costs for equipment maintenance.

The lack of a preventive maintenance program has the potential to lead to bigger and more frequent repairs. Equipment does not run as efficiently when cleaning, filter replacement, and maintenance is delayed. The lack of preventive maintenance could also lead to a shorter life for the piece of equipment.

Preventive maintenance is recommended by equipment manufacturers to extend the life of the equipment, prevent problems, increase the operating efficiency, and prevent inefficient food production when service has to continue even though a piece of equipment is inoperable.

A report published by inTEAM associates, *Cost Control for School Foodservices*, suggests budgeting 2.6 percent of revenue on large equipment. In “School Food and Nutrition Service Management”, Dorothy Pannell-Martin and Julie A. Boettger recommend 3.8 percent. In an article in *Dietary Manager*, Diane K. Schweitzer, a food service equipment and design specialist, discusses the various considerations related to decisions about equipment purchases in institutional kitchens. The list includes repair history, energy efficiency, and frequent repairs that exceed the cost of replacing the piece of equipment. She states, “The foodservice director or manager must consider many facts that surround decisions related to new equipment purchases, or replacing equipment that may have exceeded its useful life.”

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a preventive maintenance and replacement program for all food service equipment.

Big Spring ISD’s Food Service Department should develop a database of kitchen equipment by directing kitchen managers to inventory all equipment in their kitchens. Using this data, the district should perform an audit of the working condition and estimated repair history of the equipment. This audit should be conducted jointly with assigned maintenance personnel. Such an audit of condition and serviceability would significantly improve the overall picture of the health of each kitchen regarding its ability to conduct expanded cooking operations. This process should be completed by the beginning of school year 2015–16.

Maintenance should work with the director of food service to develop a list of preventive maintenance by type of equipment in the campus kitchens. This preventive maintenance could be performed by the maintenance staff in their assigned block of campuses during the summer, when the kitchens are typically not in use. A checklist should be used to ensure all items are completed. This process should be completed annually.

The director of food service should budget 2.6 percent of projected revenue for the replacement of large equipment in the 2015–16 budget. Strategic planning should include development of a priority list of pieces of equipment by school to be replaced, based on frequency of repair and estimated age. Equipment should then be purchased, as allowed by the budget, installed, and the old equipment removed and disposed of in a timely manner.

Developing a database, performing an equipment audit, and developing a preventive maintenance program could all be implemented using existing resources. Based on revenue projected in the 2014–15 budget, a 2.6 percent cost for the replacement of large equipment would be \$68,397, which is more than the current budgeted line item of \$50,000. This difference is an annual cost to the district of \$18,397.

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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 7. FOOD SERVICE							
38. Establish a staffing formula based on industry standards and individual operational needs for the Food Service Department and establish a substitute pool to ensure all tasks are completed in the event of an absence.	\$104,912	\$104,912	\$104,912	\$104,912	\$104,912	\$524,560	\$0
39. Establish a program for regular onsite monitoring, oversight, coaching, and sharing of best practices in the campus kitchens.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
40. Develop sound financial reports to enhance financial controls, improve monitoring of operations, and ensure financial stability.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
41. Improve business practices by requiring the Food Service Department to pay for all allowable indirect and direct support costs.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
42. Conduct a cost/benefit analysis of the free breakfast program and explore alternative funding sources.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
43. Discontinue the practice of requiring the Food Service Department to subsidize free meals for adults and snacks for campuses.	\$39,062	\$39,062	\$39,062	\$39,062	\$39,062	\$195,310	\$0
44. Develop a training program that includes orientation for new Food Service Department employees and ongoing training for all department employees.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
45. Develop and implement a preventive maintenance and replacement program for all food service equipment.	(\$18,397)	(\$18,397)	(\$18,397)	(\$18,397)	(\$18,397)	(\$91,985)	\$0
TOTAL	\$125,577	\$125,577	\$125,577	\$125,577	\$125,577	\$627,885	\$0

CHAPTER 8. 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 (TEA), which is determined by a formula that includes the number and type of students transported.

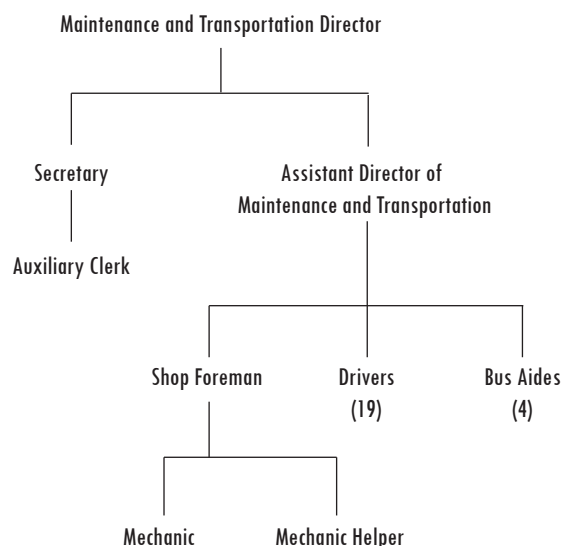
Big Spring Independent School District (ISD) provided transportation services to approximately 1,033 students in school year 2014–15 throughout the city of Big Spring and Howard County. These services include transportation to and from all district campuses—an early childhood learning center, four elementary schools, an intermediate school, a junior high school, and a high school. Of these 1,033 students, 56 are special education students.

The transportation function is self-managed, and all supervisory, drivers, monitors, and fleet maintenance personnel are direct employees of Big Spring ISD. In addition to the daily home-school-home service, the Transportation Department coordinates and provides transportation for activity and athletic trips, both during the school year and for summer programs. The district's bus parking and maintenance facility is located in the east side of Big Spring,

approximately 2.5 miles from Big Spring High School. The facility has a fully equipped maintenance garage, and mechanics on staff perform general maintenance on all district vehicles.

The Transportation Department is managed by the maintenance and transportation director. This position is responsible for overseeing both transportation services and facilities and maintenance. The Transportation Department is staffed by a secretary, auxiliary clerk, assistant director of maintenance and transportation, shop foreman, mechanic, mechanic's helper, 19 school bus drivers, and four bus aides. **Figure 8–1** shows the Transportation Department's organization.

FIGURE 8–1
BIG SPRING ISD TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January, 2015.

The key measures of cost effectiveness for a student transportation system include the annual cost per transported student and the annual cost per bus. It is also useful to convert the annual cost per bus to a daily cost. This metric allows for the comparison of district costs to the typical industry standard used to price contracted services.

Figure 8–2 shows key measures of transportation services.

FIGURE 8–2
BIG SPRING ISD KEY MEASURES OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
SCHOOL YEAR 2013–14

Total Costs	\$788,380
Total Student Riders	1,096
Annual Cost Per Transported Student	\$719
Annual Cost Per Bus Based on Total Buses	\$23,890
Daily Cost Per Active Route Bus	\$133
Buses Per 100 Students Transported	3.016
Average Students Per Bus	33.21

Source: Texas Education Agency, Student Transportation Operation and School Transportation Route Services reports, 2013–14.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department successfully applied for and receives Medicaid reimbursement.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department has developed and implemented an innovative process to improve communication between mechanics and bus drivers.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department lacks an organizational structure that ensures a standard level of operational function and the provision of effective transportation services for students and staff.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks formal procedures regarding the use of unassigned district vehicles.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department does not have a process to effectively and efficiently collect and review the data required for state funding purposes or organize and schedule bus routes.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department lacks clearly defined procedures for conducting preventive maintenance and maintaining accurate maintenance histories for vehicles in its fleet.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department lacks an effective process to manage district vehicles, resulting in a vehicle fleet that exceeds the district’s needs.

- ◆ Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department lacks a process for maintaining an accurate inventory and sufficient records to identify missing items.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 46: Modify the Transportation Department’s organizational structure by establishing a transportation director position and establishing clear roles and responsibilities for Transportation Department staff.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 47: Develop written procedures regarding staff use of the district’s white fleet vehicles.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 48: Implement a routing and scheduling software system, establish a position devoted to routing and scheduling, eliminate a bus driver position, and implement a quality review process on all data collected for state reporting.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 49: Develop a process to capture all repairs and maintenance performed on district vehicles.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 50: Reduce the size of the district’s school bus fleet by surplusing its older and seldom-used vehicles and no longer assigning its newest buses to serve only extracurricular activities.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 51: Develop and implement a regular inventory process by conducting an inventory of the spare parts room and using the totals as a baseline for monitoring the parts inventory.**

DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

MEDICAID REIMBURSEMENTS

Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department successfully applied for and receives Medicaid reimbursement for providing transportation services to Medicaid-eligible students. These services are categorized as School Health and Related Services (SHARS). SHARS permits a district to obtain reimbursement for certain health-related services (such as physical, occupational, speech, or psychological therapy) that are documented in a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department collaborated with the Special Education Department for Medicaid reimbursement. The funds are reimbursed to the district's General Fund for transportation services provided by the district. Seeking Medicaid reimbursement for eligible transportation services is a best practice.

Reimbursement is provided to qualifying districts that complete the required documentation. The bus aide is required to document the day of the week, the morning and afternoon ridership, number of one-way trips, and type of Medicaid-covered services to claim transportation costs. While the effort to prepare this documentation is labor intensive for Big Spring ISD staff, the district realizes a return for its effort. Big Spring ISD received more than \$127,000 in school year 2013–14 in Medicaid reimbursement for transportation services. As of December 2014, the district received more than \$53,000 for school year 2014–15.

STREAMLINED WORK ORDER FORM

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department has developed and implemented an innovative process to improve communication between mechanics and bus drivers.

Previously, the Transportation Department lacked a method to track and provide feedback to the bus drivers regarding the repairs made on a bus. The drivers had no way of knowing what problems were found and corrected. This lack of feedback had been a source of irritation to the bus drivers operating older buses. Bus drivers often did not believe the reported maintenance concerns had been addressed satisfactorily.

In response to this problem, two transportation employees developed a 3-part form to document the work performed. Mechanics document vehicle repair work on the form. Mechanics then give a copy of the form to the bus drivers so they can validate that a repair was performed.

The bus drivers are charged with the safe and timely transport of students from home to school and return. A well-maintained school bus is paramount in that mission. When school bus drivers discover maintenance challenges that could potentially compromise safety, they complete bus repair orders and drive the bus to the maintenance garage. Once repairs are completed, the bus drivers review the form and check the work performed. If the bus drivers are satisfied, the buses are returned to service. This initiative fosters teamwork and effective communication within the department.

DETAILED FINDINGS

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (REC. 46)

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department lacks an organizational structure that ensures a standard level of operational function and the provision of effective transportation services for students and staff.

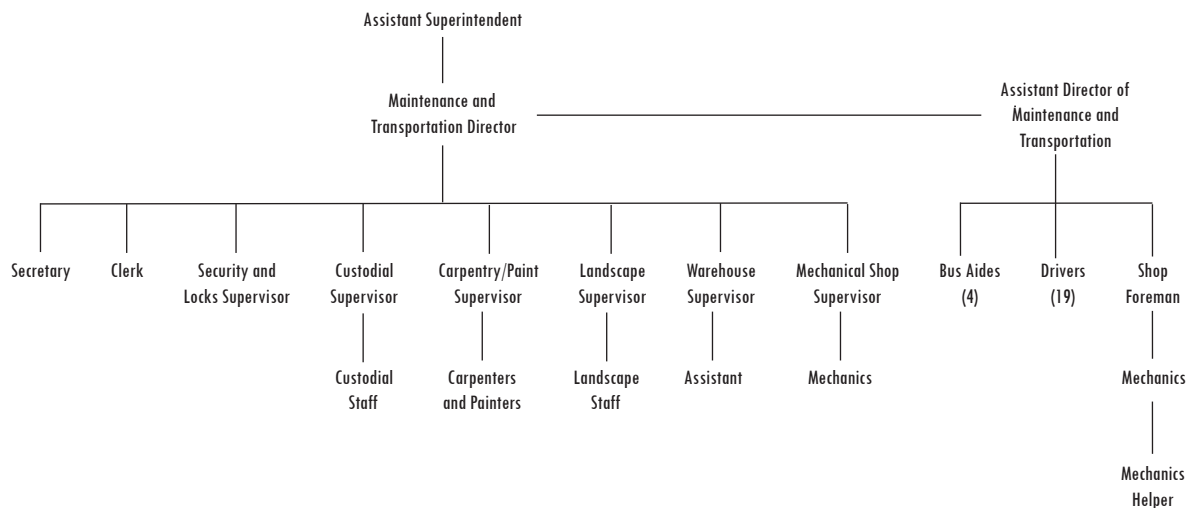
Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department employees are unclear as to who supervises them and supervisors are unclear as to who they evaluate. The Transportation Department does not have a published organization chart to define reporting relationships. The lack of a documented and approved organization chart perpetuates a lack of knowledge of who is a direct report to whom.

The Transportation Department is overseen by the maintenance and transportation director, who also serves as the supervisor for facility maintenance. The director has responsibilities for three of the most labor-intensive functions in the district, which are facilities management, custodial services, and student transportation. Within the transportation function, the director oversees staffing, maintenance, training, developing the budget, productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of the department. **Figure 8–3** shows the organization of the Maintenance and Transportation Departments.

The assistant director of maintenance and transportation is responsible for the day-to-day operations of student transportation, and exercises control of school buses, district vehicles, and bus drivers. Traditionally, this position is responsible for and exercises authority of the status of the assets within the department. Due to the uncertainty of the reporting structure within the Transportation Department, however, district assets are sometimes used by employees without the knowledge of the assistant director. For example, during an onsite interview with the review team, it was mentioned that the shop supervisor had loaned a bus to another school district when its school bus broke down within Big Spring ISD's district limits.

The action by the shop supervisor is a standard practice among school districts; however, transportation leadership was not immediately made aware. This lack of communication and clearly established responsibilities leaves the Transportation Department unable to effectively track district assets or provide the most effective transportation services for students and staff.

FIGURE 8–3
BIG SPRING ISD TRANSPORTATION AND MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENTS ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The lead driver currently evaluates bus drivers; however, her job description does not explicitly confer this authority or responsibility.

None of the transportation leaders (director, assistant director, or lead driver) has received extensive professional development training related to student transportation.

The district’s allocation of resources and assignment of duties do not provide enough time for effective transportation planning or organization. The dual responsibilities of the maintenance and transportation director position do not provide the position enough time to effectively manage both transportation and facilities services. For example, the department does not have a methodology to assess the number of mechanic positions typically needed or the number needed given that mechanics often must also work as substitute bus drivers. Instead of managing the chronic shortage of bus drivers in a strategic way, the maintenance and transportation director often works as a substitute driver, three to four hours per day.

The lack of clearly defined supervisory roles also limits the department’s ability to ensure operations are managed in a cohesive, coordinated manner. When employees are not sure who to report to or who they should have reporting to them, it is difficult to establish clear workplace expectations and responsibilities. A lack of formally defined job roles within a

department can lead to confusion, ineffective performance, and morale issues.

The current Transportation Department’s organizational structure has resulted in a general lack of oversight and accountability. Overall, at the time of the onsite review, Big Spring ISD’s Transportation Department had not completed a number of key activities, including:

- monitoring pre-and post-trip inspections;
- updating the transportation handbook;
- selecting appropriate topics and conducting in-service training;
- planning, coordinating, and executing the emergency evacuation exercises;
- budget preparation and expenditure monitoring;
- developing a bus replacement schedule and reviewing the Request For Qualifications specifications;
- ensuring the development and monitoring of preventive maintenance inspections;
- attending Individualized Education Program meetings;
- conducting compliance inspections;

- completing mandatory drug and alcohol testing for safety sensitive positions;
- reporting required data accurately to TEA;
- updating job descriptions;
- updating policy and procedures manual;
- handling employee disciplinary concerns;
- developing performance metrics and assessing departmental performance against them;
- reviewing route designs;
- strategic planning and developing/updating the organization chart;
- developing options for a multi-tiered transportation schedule;
- designing a new maintenance four-bay maintenance facility; and
- training for driver safety and inclement weather operations.

While not solely responsible, the organizational structure of Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department has greatly contributed to the department's struggles in completing the preceding activities.

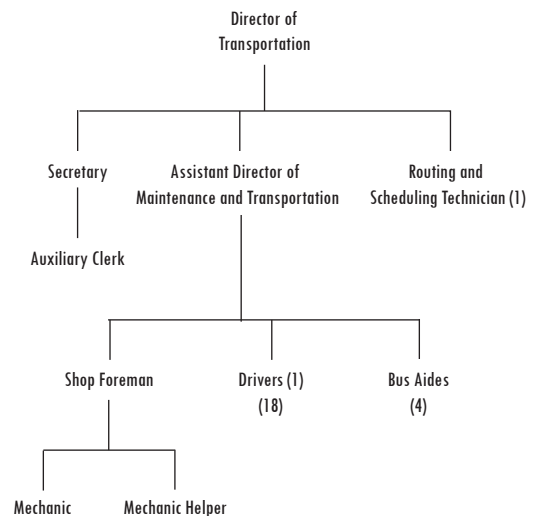
Big Spring ISD should modify the Transportation Department's organizational structure by establishing a transportation director position and establishing clear roles and responsibilities for Transportation Department staff.

The District Leadership, Organization, and Governance chapter includes a recommendation that Big Spring ISD eliminate the maintenance and transportation director position and the assistant director of maintenance and transportation position. Big Spring ISD should establish a new transportation director position. Establishing a transportation director will allow the primary focus of this position to be on student transportation services. The transportation director will assume the existing transportation duties of the assistant director of maintenance and transportation.

The secretary and auxiliary clerk positions should continue to be shared with the Maintenance and Facilities Department. In restructuring the Transportation Department, Big Spring ISD

should also ensure that supervisory roles and reporting assignments are aligned correctly, and that all positions have clearly defined responsibilities. **Figure 8–4** shows the recommended organization chart.

**FIGURE 8–4
RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
ORGANIZATION**



NOTE: This chart shows the elimination of one bus driver position and the establishment of a routing and scheduling technician. These changes are discussed in this chapter (Recommendation 49).

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

Big Spring ISD should use a selection committee to select the transportation director. The assistant superintendent and chief financial officer, along with the community relations coordinator or a designee, should constitute the selection committee. Big Spring ISD employees who match the position qualifications should be encouraged to apply, along with outside respondents. A list of common qualifications and essential knowledge for an effective transportation director include:

- minimum of five years supervisory experience and at least three years of experience in the pupil transportation field;
- evidence of a high level of skills as an effective administrator;
- experience in transportation services including experience in the development and coordination of bus routes in-service training and schedules;

- knowledge of the safety precautions relating to transportation of students and of occupational hazards;
- knowledge of local, state and federal laws and regulations affecting maintenance standards for vehicles owned by the school districts;
- knowledge of Microsoft Office products such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint;
- knowledge of regulations regarding the transportation of students with disabilities such as Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Section 504 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA);
- experience in overseeing a comprehensive program for vehicle maintenance;
- experience in transportation budget planning and management; and
- experience in school district in boundary planning and use of demographics to forecast transportation needs.

Since the onsite review, the district has restructured the Maintenance and Transportation Department. Big Spring ISD has changed the assistant maintenance and transportation director's position to transportation supervisor.

Big Spring ISD should also provide continuous professional development opportunities to the transportation director, assistant director, and lead driver. Training would increase their expertise, allowing them to conduct in-service training to the bus drivers and the bus aides annually.

The fiscal impact assumes the salary of the transportation director is \$58,399. This amount is based on the 2010–11 Texas Association of School Boards survey of salaries and wages in Texas public schools, for the average salary of a transportation director in districts with student enrollment comparable to that of Big Spring ISD. The fiscal impact assumes \$58,399 for salary, and adding the district's 20 percent benefit rate, the total fiscal impact is an annual cost of \$70,079 (\$58,399 salary + \$11,680 benefits). Big Spring ISD should conduct its own salary study of districts in its region to determine if this salary should be adjusted.

Big Spring ISD should also budget \$2,700 annually for professional development for Transportation Department leaders. This cost is for one employee and would include yearly participation in the Texas Association for Pupil

Transportation conference, which would cost an estimated \$1,050 for hotel costs (\$600), conference registration fee (\$100), per diem (\$250), and travel (\$100). It also includes annual participation in the National Association for Pupil Transportation conference, which would cost an estimated \$1,650 for hotel costs (\$700), conference registration fee (\$200), per diem (\$250), and airfare (\$500). This training totals \$2,700 (\$1,050 for state conference + \$1,650 for national conference). It is recommended that the district rotate which staff members attend the conference each year.

The total fiscal impact of implementing this recommendation would be \$72,779 annually. This total includes \$70,079 for the salary and benefits of the transportation director and \$2,700 for the annual professional development training.

DISTRICT VEHICLES (REC. 47)

Big Spring ISD lacks formal procedures regarding the use of unassigned district vehicles.

A district's "white fleet" is the district-owned vehicles that are not buses. Big Spring ISD has a white fleet of 49 vehicles for use by district staff for various routine job requirements. For example, Maintenance Department staff is assigned vans with equipment and tools in them to travel between campuses to perform maintenance tasks. Big Spring ISD also has vans that Technology Department staff use for technology assignments at the district's campuses. The 49 vehicles in the white fleet include 33 trucks, seven sport utility vehicles (SUV), six vans, and three automobiles.

The Transportation Department reserves six of the 49 vehicles for staff travel. The subset of six vehicles is composed of one sedan and five large SUVs. The five SUVs include four 2009 vehicles and one 2010 vehicle. **Figure 8–5** shows the mileage for the five SUVs.

**FIGURE 8–5
BIG SPRING ISD'S WHITE FLEET SUVS
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

VEHICLE NUMBER	YEAR	MILEAGE
5	2009	112,898
6	2009	117,785
8	2009	109,675
9	2009	103,298
22	2010	82,337

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The SUVs, while unassigned by name, are stored at the school bus depot and maintained by the shop foreman. In order for district staff member to be approved to use an SUV, staff must complete a request for a pool vehicle in the district's operation management software program, and the request must be approved by the appropriate campus administrator. The transportation secretary and the shop foreman receive the request and check the driving record of the requestor. The Transportation Department assigns a vehicle for use and reserves the vehicle for the particular event. The shop foreman then issues staff the key to the vehicle and a fuel card.

At the time of the onsite review, the district did not have written procedures or a Board of Trustee policy regarding the use of these vehicles. This includes no written guidelines for whom, when, and why an unassigned SUV may be used. Currently, the SUVs are primarily used by staff for off-campus professional development training and out of town athletic events.

Without written procedures, the district has no assurances that employees are not using vehicles for nonschool-related uses. Also, if staff has no clear expectations of when it is appropriate to use the SUVs, they might be using these vehicles instead of using another type of vehicle, such as the sedan, that may be more effective and cost-efficient. Moreover, the district is maintaining the availability of vehicles for staff travel without an analysis of district vehicle ownership versus providing employees with mileage reimbursement for using their own vehicles.

Big Spring ISD should develop written procedures regarding staff use of the district's white fleet vehicles.

The maintenance and transportation director should draft detailed procedures for using district vehicles for approved district purposes for the superintendent's review and

approval. Once approved, the Transportation Department should distribute these guidelines to all Big Spring ISD staff members. As part of these procedures, the district should consider using the sedan for out-of-town travel, because it records better gas mileage than the SUVs. Staff selected and approved for out-of-town training can use their own vehicles and be reimbursed using the Internal Revenue Service-recommended reimbursement rate, if the district's sedan is not available. In addition, the district should conduct a cost/benefit analysis to determine if it should keep the five SUVs or sell some or all of them.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

ROUTING AND SCHEDULING (REC. 48)

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department does not have a process to effectively and efficiently collect and review the data required for state funding purposes or organize and schedule bus routes.

To receive state funding for transportation services, Big Spring ISD must submit two reports to TEA. The Student Transportation Operations Report, due December 1, establishes a cost-per-mile for reimbursement in the fiscal year following the report. The other report, the School Transportation Route Services Report is due July 1. This report includes information on ridership and mileage for regular, special, and career and technology programs. **Figure 8–6** shows Big Spring ISD's transportation routing and state funding data for the past four years.

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department conducts data collection and submission for both of these state reports manually. According to the assistant director for maintenance and transportation, the bus drivers document the required information and supply it to the department secretary. The

FIGURE 8–6
BIG SPRING ISD'S TRANSPORTATION ROUTING AND STATE FUNDING DATA
SCHOOL YEARS 2011–12 TO 2014–15

CATEGORY	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14	2014–15
Average Daily Ridership—Total Students	919	774	1,096	1,033
Total Annual Mileage from Two or More Miles Service—Regular Program	150,675	111,687	93,800	96,338
Linear Density(1)	1.10	1.25	2.10	1.93
Total Annual Allotment	\$192,968	\$138,611	\$156,352	N/A(2)

NOTES:

(1) Linear density=the ratio of the average number of regular education students transported daily to the number of miles traveled daily for those students.

(2) No total annual allotment is shown for school year 2014–15 because the year was not complete at the time of the review.

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Big Spring ISD School Transportation Route Services Report, school years 2011–12 to 2014–15.

secretary compiles the information during a two-day period once a year and inputs the information into a spreadsheet. No position is responsible for verifying the information before the secretary submits it to TEA. Inadequate review of the data submitted can lead to inaccurate reporting which could adversely affect the transportation funding the school district receives. The assistant director for maintenance and transportation said that, during a January 2012 TEA audit, the district was informed it was overpaid by approximately \$100,000, due to incorrect data submissions. He explained that the district did not maintain official ridership rosters for regular and special programs for school years 2008–09 and 2009–10.

A large amount of data is needed for these reports, including miles traveled, deadhead miles, and number of students transported. The information is gathered from data collected on daily bus routes and schedules.

The size and structure of Big Spring ISD's transportation services makes data collection challenging. Big Spring ISD is approximately 92.1 square miles, with eight schools on a single tier. A single tier means that a bus is used to make only one run each morning and afternoon, picking up students along a route and bringing them to schools. In addition, the size of Big Spring ISD's student population fluctuates, and students tend to move frequently within the district. As shown in **Figure 8–6**, neither the average number of students using Big Spring ISD transportation services daily nor the annual miles traveled during bus routes has remained constant. Each year, the Transportation Department must evaluate its routing structure to determine whether more tiering or different routes would provide cost savings.

The geographic size and student demographics of Big Spring ISD makes effectively planning bus routes and schedules a time consuming and labor intensive process. Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department completes routing, scheduling and bus driver assignment processes manually. The Transportation Department previously used an automated routing system that would have been able to generate the data needed for state reports and assist in developing bus routes and schedules. The department discontinued its use because the staff assigned to perform the routing function did not maintain their expertise with the software, and this lack of use resulted in a skills gap.

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department lacks a full-time router position. A router establishes the route design for the new school year, refines routes for efficiency, assigns

students on bus routing lists, tracks mileage for the state reports, assists in redistricting activities, submits ad hoc reports requested by leadership, makes field trip assignments, and schedules safe bus stops for afterschool enrichment programs. The duties normally performed by a router are split between the lead driver and the department secretary. The department secretary, in addition to assisting with routing and collecting state required data, also performs dispatcher functions. During onsite interviews, staff indicated that another reason the district stopped using the automated routing software was because the district does not have a full time router position to maintain the information in the system.

The processes that Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department uses to collect state required data and schedule bus routes for students is labor-intensive and inefficient. Big Spring ISD's manual entry system has resulted in excessive time being spent by staff to enter information into spreadsheets or word processing documents. These types of documents are often not secure, and their use increases the likelihood of Big Spring ISD reporting incorrect data to TEA.

State funding for transportation is determined through the linear density system, which is the ratio of the average number of regular education students transported daily to the number of miles traveled daily for those students. Inefficient routes can reduce a district's reimbursement, because TEA uses this system to allocate state reimbursements per mile. To increase linear density, a district must reduce its route mileage or increase the number of student riders. Other aspects to consider include the number of students to be transported, their places of residence, and the number of schools served. Districts also consider the number of buses and drivers available to run the various routes. In addition, bus routes affect the overall spending for transportation operations in a district because they lead to the establishment of driver positions, staff levels for vehicle maintenance, new bus purchases, and other office staff. Each year, districts make changes to their bus routes and schedules as students transition from school to school. This process is difficult and extensive, and if not done correctly, it can directly affect a district's transportation funding. The process is made even more difficult when all the information needed to complete this process is done manually, and the duties are shared among individuals who also have other primary duties assigned to them, as is the case in Big Spring ISD.

Several districts have successfully implemented automated routing systems to reduce labor-hours spent planning and to consolidate data needed to schedule efficient routes. Routing and scheduling software containing all transportation data can enable districts to become more efficient in their daily operations by performing routine data collection functions. Ideally, transportation data are collected from routing systems on a monthly basis and validated by drivers. The monthly collections help establish a baseline to review; when data appear incorrect, drivers can review them to provide corrections or explanations. Districts that use an automated bus routing and scheduling software system have been successful in reducing the transportation operating costs by reducing the number of bus routes required to serve students, which reduces the number of required drivers, buses, and mechanics. Implementing this type of system also helps districts design more efficient bus routes that can increase the linear density and maximize state transportation funding. Systems are available through various vendors that are capable of housing all of the data necessary to plan bus routes effectively and efficiently. Automated bus routing and scheduling software systems can allow districts to:

- manage bus routes, students and drivers;
- develop and review “what/if” scenarios;
- run reports;
- visualize stops/routes and students;
- manage redistricting issues; and
- design routes with an integrated mapping system.

These systems are usually easy to use, configure, and maintain. Many systems can be integrated with other district systems and customized to the needs of each district.

During school year 2003–04, Alvin ISD began using an automated routing system that enabled the district to combine routes and eliminate approximately 5 percent of the routes, and the district anticipated realizing additional efficiencies in subsequent school years. Since summer 2000, Killeen ISD has used an automated system and has saved hours of administrative time. With the previous manual system, district staff had to estimate the number of eligible students at a given stop, distribute paper copies of the routes to campuses, and answer numerous calls and complaints from parents and district personnel. School and parent phone calls dropped by about 50 percent to 60 percent since the implementation of the system. Killeen ISD added a

component to the program that allows parents and guardians to type in their addresses and then view a map that shows bus stops near their location. The district reported that this system is faster, less costly, and more efficient than the previous manual system.

Big Spring ISD should implement a routing and scheduling software system, establish a position devoted to routing and scheduling, eliminate a bus driver position, and implement a quality review process on all data collected for state reporting.

The district could implement this recommendation by resuming use of the routing software it already owns or, if it is too out-of-date to obtain an upgrade from the same vendor inexpensively, the district should seek to purchase another routing system. This purchase would require issuing a request for proposal and seeking bids, due to the dollar amount of the purchase.

The use of automated routing software yields efficiencies by reducing the number of buses and drivers needed. As a result, the district could eliminate a bus driver position and establish a routing technician position responsible for developing and scheduling bus routes for regular, special education, and field trip routing.

The routing technician should also assist the Transportation Department as a relief dispatcher when the department secretary, the primary point of contact, is away from the radio. The district can use the router in a myriad of roles to include all routing (summer school, after-school enrichment programs, field trips, midday programs, homeless transportation, interdistrict support, district rezoning, IEP meetings for special education transportation, data collection, and data entry for the state report), among other assigned duties. Human resources staff should assist in developing a job description and hiring to fill the position. Once a routing system is implemented, the maintenance and transportation director should schedule training for the routing technician.

Big Spring ISD should also develop a protocol for data documentation by the drivers, verification by the auxiliary services clerk, data entry by the department secretary, and a quality control check by the director or the assistant director. The auxiliary services clerk should be tasked with establishing the protocol for the collection and review of state report data. Once the auxiliary services clerk is satisfied with the data, she should approve the data and forward the information to the secretary to download it into the state report.

This four-component check of the data helps ensure the accuracy of the information. The auxiliary services clerk becomes the critical onsite auditor of raw data returned by the drivers. The drivers need to understand the effects of inaccurate data in the state report. Drivers should be trained in a brief session and have the opportunity to ask questions on the data collection and state reporting processes. The extra step of adding the auxiliary services clerk in the review process helps ensure data accuracy and provides an opportunity for the director to check progress before the official submission of the state report.

If the existing routing software cannot be renewed and updated, the review team estimates a one-time cost of \$30,000 for a new system. The division formerly paid an annual maintenance fee of \$3,600 a year for the Transfinder Routing and Scheduling Software System; thus, the annual maintenance fees would likely be similar for another routing software. The initial annual maintenance fee (\$3,600) is usually included in the first year of the contract. This system would result in a total cost of \$48,000 during five years. This cost is not assumed for the fiscal impact, because the existing routing software may still be useable.

The fiscal impact assumes that the salary and benefits for a routing and scheduling technician position would be approximately \$33,000. The fiscal impact also assumes that the savings from eliminating an existing bus driver position would be \$13,000. The net fiscal impact would be an additional \$20,000 annual cost, or \$100,000 for five years.

MAINTENANCE TRACKING (REC. 49)

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department lacks clearly defined procedures for conducting preventive maintenance and maintaining accurate maintenance histories for vehicles in its fleet. The Transportation Department does not have procedures to schedule preventive maintenance services for vehicles, and the department does not have a manual detailing the policies and procedures for maintenance operations. The district does not have forms or systems to record transactions or methods to establish order or reorder points for repair parts and supplies.

Maintenance operates from 6:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. daily. The district has three mechanics responsible for the preventive maintenance, reactive maintenance (repair), and general maintenance of the bus fleet, white fleet, and the mower equipment. Each bus driver performs a pre-trip inspection that notes any items requiring repair on the bus every day before beginning their routes. These pre-trip inspections are

conducted with a checklist that includes checking under the bus for fluid leaks; the front of the bus for lights and mirrors; the interior for the windshield wiper and washer, turn signal, and steering; and the exterior of the bus for tail and stop lights, wheel hubs and tires.

If any problems are found during the pre-trip inspections, the maintenance team is alerted. Maintenance team members can conduct minor repairs such as replacing a light bulb or other minor tasks before the bus leaves the garage. For a larger problem, the maintenance team will take the bus into the garage area, and the driver will be issued a spare bus. The shop foreman assigns the spare buses; however this is not recorded anywhere. After bus drivers complete their routes, they also perform post-trip inspections. During the post-trip inspection, the same process occurs, and maintenance discrepancies are repaired before the driver makes the afternoon bus run or, again, a spare bus is issued.

In addition to the pre-trip and post-trip inspections, the maintenance team conducts weekly preventive maintenance inspections (PMI) every Wednesday that include checking fluids, making visual observations of components, and checking tire pressure. However, the maintenance team does not refer to any procedures or guidelines for completing PMIs of school buses. The shop foreman conducts PMIs on white fleet vehicles.

The review team did not observe the maintenance staff documenting maintenance issues. No method to document maintenance failures discovered during the weekly PMIs is in place. The PMIs take place before the bus drivers take their assigned vehicles out on the first run of the morning. Given the activity in the garage and the lack of standard procedure, it is possible for minor repairs to go undocumented.

The maintenance team conducts general maintenance in a three-bay garage. Vehicles requiring repair are brought into the garage and checked. After the bus is checked, the repair work is started by documenting the faults and commencing the repair/replace process. Spare parts needed to complete a repair are secured from the parts room, documented on the repair form, and installed on the vehicle. When repairs are completed, the vehicle is road tested. If no other faults are found, the shop foreman places the vehicle back into service. The corresponding repair documentation is then filed in the maintenance filing cabinet by vehicle number in the shop foreman's office.

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department does not track maintenance data associated with each district vehicle. The

Transportation Department does not record fuel consumption, fuel costs, total operational costs, parts usage, maintenance performed, dates inspected, and the annual mileage of the vehicles within its fleet. The cost of repair parts and the associated direct labor for repairs are also not tracked by vehicle number and type of vehicle. As a result, the department cannot analyze trends or identify drivers of costs in vehicle maintenance.

The absence of a well-defined, documented, and monitored preventive maintenance program can affect costs and service levels. Without an effective preventive maintenance program, more expensive repairs may be required to replace defective components and other components within the vehicle's system that may have become compromised. The timely correction of minor defects reduces the costs of major repairs and the risk of vehicle failure while providing services to students. Tracking a vehicle's maintenance history also supports district risk-management practices and improves the district's ability to respond to inquiries in the event of an accident or incident. An incomplete maintenance history prevents the district from demonstrating that it has acted prudently in maintaining its vehicles.

Districts that develop preventive maintenance programs and establish reactive maintenance procedures are best able to support efficient transportation operations. An effective preventive maintenance program supports the fundamental objective of preventing equipment failure by identifying and correcting equipment defects at the earliest stage of failure or on a predetermined replacement schedule. The Council of the Great City Schools, which includes 67 school districts around the country, has developed key performance indicators in a variety of operational areas within a school district. In the area of transportation, the Council has identified several key performance indicators that rely on the ability of a transportation department to determine per-bus costs for repairs and per-bus maintenance hours.

Austin ISD uses an automated fleet maintenance software package to track costs on a per vehicle level. This allows district leaders to obtain a clear picture of tasks completed by mechanics and total cost drivers in the department.

Big Spring ISD should develop a process to capture all repairs and maintenance performed on district vehicles.

A separate software package is not necessary for a fleet the size of Big Spring ISD's; a spreadsheet would serve the same purpose. The district can standardize reporting by using a spreadsheet to track and report fleet maintenance operations,

and this report would provide documentation for any warranty-related action.

The director and the assistant director of maintenance and transportation should develop a spreadsheet to track all costs associated with fleet maintenance. The director should request the assistance of the Technology Department in developing a spreadsheet that would compile data for trend analyses. The spreadsheet should include information such as type of preventive maintenance inspections performed, cost to repair, work order number, and the next scheduled inspection. Once the spreadsheet is complete, the maintenance and transportation director should develop and implement procedures for its use and maintenance. The maintenance and transportation director should determine the expectations for this new maintenance process. Those expectations should, at a minimum, include:

- the ability to track and schedule preventive maintenance activities;
- tracking (by vehicle) of all labor, parts, and supplies for each repair for the life of the vehicle; and
- the ability to generate reports to understand costs and performance, or at the least the ability to extract data for reporting or analysis.

The spreadsheet should provide the district with the data needed to assess the efficiency of the work performed by the maintenance team. The director should monitor the spreadsheet and report trends affecting the budget to district leadership.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

FLEET MANAGEMENT (REC. 50)

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department lacks an effective process to manage district vehicles, resulting in a vehicle fleet that exceeds the district's needs.

During onsite interviews, district staff indicated that Big Spring ISD does not have any fleet management standards. The district has 19 buses in use daily for school year 2014–15 home-to-school routes. However, the district has 39 school buses that are titled, maintained, repaired, and insured by the district. This fleet size translates into a spare-to-active ratio of 52 percent, compared to the industry standard developed by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation of 10 percent to 15 percent.

The district provides transportation services within the geographical area to all eligible students. Each school morning, 19 school buses depart from the bus compound to pick up students and deliver them to school. The district has a group of approximately 10 yellow buses and two transit buses that are not assigned for use on regular routes. Called “trip buses” by district staff, these buses have a primary role of supporting nonessential events related to the school district. The trip buses appear to be reserved exclusively for use by the athletic teams. This practice reduces the flexibility of the department to assign buses as needed and contributes to a large fleet. Big Spring ISD also has four buses assigned to special education routes and five buses used as spares.

The average age of the district fleet is 12.3 years. **Figure 8–7** shows Big Spring ISD has 10 buses that are 20 years old or more.

Big Spring ISD also has a white fleet of 49 vehicles for use by district staff for various routine job requirements. A district’s white fleet is the district-owned vehicles that are not buses. Many of these 49 vehicles are used infrequently. **Figure 8–8** shows the vehicles in Big Spring ISD’s fleet that traveled less than 3,000 miles in school year 2013–14, including some of the 49 white fleet vehicles.

Figure 8–8 shows that 23 white fleet vehicles were used for less than 300 miles per month. Some buses appear to have not been used at all in school year 2013–14.

Having excess buses in the fleet adds to the overall cost of fleet maintenance. For example, when compared to the newer 2015 and the 2012 model year school buses, the older buses:

- are not fuel efficient and have a lower expected mileage per gallon of fuel;
- emit a higher level of nitrogen oxide and hydrocarbon emissions;
- are more costly to repair and maintain; and
- add an unnecessary insurance expense to the district.

The best practice for school districts is to have a sufficient number of school buses available for the morning and afternoon bus runs. Neither TEA nor the Texas Association for Pupil Transportation recommends a specific spare factor for Texas school districts. However, districts with a well-defined and fiscally supported fleet replacement plan maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of transportation operations and use a spare factor of 10 percent to 15 percent.

FIGURE 8–7
BIG SPRING ISD TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT
BUS INVENTORY
NOVEMBER 2014

YEAR	AGE	QUANTITY	PRIMARY USE
2015	0	2	Trip
2014	1	0	N/A
2013	2	0	N/A
2012	3	2	Special Education Route
2011	4	4	Trip
2010	5	2	Trip
2009	6	4	Trip
2008	7	2	Regular Education Route
2007	8	1	Trip
2006	9	3	Special Education Route, Regular Education Route, Trip
2005	10	0	N/A
2004	11	0	N/A
2003	12	0	N/A
2002	13	2	Regular Ed Route
2001	14	2	Special Education Route, Spare
2000	15	0	N/A
1999	16	3	Regular Education Route
1998	17	0	N/A
1997	18	2	Regular Education Route
1996	19	2	Regular Education Route
1995	20	0	N/A
1994	21	0	N/A
1993	22	1	Spare
1992	23	3	Regular Education Route
1991	24	0	N/A
1990	25	0	N/A
1989	26	2	Regular Education Route, Spare
1988	27	0	N/A
1987	28	1	Spare
1986	29	1	Spare
Total	481	39	

Average Age of Fleet 12.3 years

NOTE: N/A indicates that the vehicle has no primary use.
 SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

FIGURE 8–8
LOW-MILEAGE VEHICLES IN BIG SPRING ISD FLEET
NOVEMBER 2014

VEHICLE NUMBER	YEAR	VEHICLE	DEPARTMENT	TOTAL MILEAGE 2013–14
23	1986	School Bus	Transportation	767
26	1987	School Bus	Transportation	337
41	1992	School Bus	Transportation	437
42	1992	School Bus	Transportation	324
47	1993	School Bus	Transportation	0
50	1994	Truck	Maintenance	475
53	1994	Van	Maintenance	0
54	1994	Van	Transportation	240
56	1994	Truck	No Department	6
57	1994	Truck	No Department	1,642
65	1997	Van	Transportation	1,008
67	1991	Truck	Transportation	3
68	1998	Truck	No Department	135
70	1989	School Bus	Transportation	306
71	1989	Truck	Maintenance	729
75	1999	Truck	Maintenance	2,417
76	1999	School Bus	Transportation	2,755
79	1999	School Bus	Transportation	87
80	2001	School Bus	Transportation	59
82	2002	Truck	Maintenance	1,968
83	2002	Truck	Maintenance	N/A
88	2004	Truck	Maintenance	1,255
98	2008	Car	Transportation	2,709

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The Council of the Great City Schools developed a key performance indicator that assesses daily buses as a percentage of total buses (the inverse of this measure is the spare factor). In school year 2012–13, the organization reported a median of 87 percent for its member districts, meaning that the median spare factor was 13 percent.

Big Spring ISD should reduce the size of the district's school bus fleet by surplus-ing its older and seldom-used vehicles and no longer assigning its newest buses to serve only extracurricular activities.

The district has 19 school buses to serve its school year 2014–15 routes; having four extra buses would meet the best-practice requirement for spare buses. Taking into account the potential need for spare special education buses and

wheelchair-lift buses and sometimes lengthy extracurricular trips, the maintenance and transportation director should cap the fleet at 24 school buses. This action would save on maintenance, repair, inspection, and insurance costs.

The maintenance and transportation director and shop foreman should identify surplus buses no longer needed by the district. Once identified as surplus, the shop foreman can remove the items unique to the school bus (such as the stop arms, crossing gates, and radios) and contract with an auction service to sell the buses. Upon successful completion of the sale, proceeds should be returned to the transportation budget.

The maintenance and transportation director should also review the usage history of every vehicle in the white fleet

and recommend to the superintendent whether to keep each vehicle. Department heads who have historically used the vehicles should provide input. Vehicles identified for surplus should be inspected by the Transportation Department for road-worthiness and the removal of district-owned equipment. The Transportation Department should then arrange for the auctioning of the surplus vehicles, the surrendering of the titles and licenses, and the removal of the vehicles from the district's insurance policies and asset listings.

The surplus and auctioning of school buses will lower the average age of the fleet and reduce the district's costs for bus maintenance and repair. In May 2013, an auction service in Midland auctioned a 1990 International diesel bus for \$1,750 and a 1994 Ford diesel bus for \$2,500. Based on an average surplus value of \$2,100 per bus, the fiscal impact assumes auctioning 15 surplus school buses would yield a one-time gain of \$31,500 ($\$2,100 \times 15$). No fiscal impact is assumed for the white fleet vehicles because the district should determine which vehicles should be maintained.

INVENTORY CONTROLS (REC. 51)

Big Spring ISD's Transportation Department lacks a process for maintaining an accurate inventory and sufficient records to identify missing items.

The district maintains parts for district vehicles in a garage located at the bus barn area. The shop foreman records some of the usage of parts, but only visually inspects the inventory on the shelves to determine when to reorder particular items. He does not compare usage data to what remains on the shelves. Such a practice would identify missing items. Big Spring ISD maintenance work orders enable the district to log a history of parts used to assist in revising on-hand quantity of spare parts. However, the Transportation Department does not have an inventory system, which would provide a means to track stock balances and notify staff when the stock level hits a reorder point.

The department does not have an automated master listing of its parts inventory or a spare parts locator system for supplies. The shop foreman has knowledge of where items are typically located in the parts room, but this location is not recorded anywhere.

No automated source document lists the quantity and total dollar value of parts on hand. According to the shop foreman, the level of supply and reorder points were established by the previous director. The shop foreman simply maintains the

same quantity of supply that the previous director had established. According to onsite interviews, vendors come into the parts area to check supplies and suggest to the shop foreman what he needs to order. The vendors will ask if the shop foreman needs anything and that becomes the basis for reordering items.

An adequate spare parts inventory is critical to the timely repair of school buses. Effective transportation departments maintain accurate counts of spare parts and appropriate reorder points to ensure sufficient stock is on-hand.

Best practices for inventory management include an annual inventory of the spare parts room and reconciling the amounts against the automated recordkeeping system. Highly pilferable items may be inventoried on a cyclical basis by month. For example:

- January: windshield wipers;
- February: oil filters;
- March: tires;
- April: windshield defroster; and
- May: motor oil.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a regular inventory process by conducting an inventory of the spare parts room and using the totals as a baseline for monitoring the parts inventory.

The maintenance and transportation director, with support from the Technology Department, should develop a spreadsheet for maintaining inventory data. The spreadsheet should be available to district leadership for review at any time. The running parts inventory should be used to determine when to reorder spare parts. The department should, at a minimum, conduct a semiannual inventory of the parts on the shelves and compare it against the electronic inventory to assess whether shrinkage or other problems have occurred.

This recommendation could be implemented with 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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 8. TRANSPORTATION							
46. Modify the Transportation Department's organizational structure by establishing a transportation director position and establishing clear roles and responsibilities for Transportation Department staff.	(\$72,779)	(\$72,779)	(\$72,779)	(\$72,779)	(\$72,779)	(\$363,895)	\$0
47. Develop written procedures regarding staff use of the district's white fleet vehicles.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
48. Implement a routing and scheduling software system, establish a position devoted to routing and scheduling, eliminate a bus driver position, and implement a quality review process on all data collected for state reporting.	(\$20,000)	(\$20,000)	(\$20,000)	(\$20,000)	(\$20,000)	(\$100,000)	\$0
49. Develop a process to capture all repairs and maintenance performed on district vehicles.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
50. Reduce the size of the district's school bus fleet by surplusing its older and seldom-used vehicles and no longer assigning its newest buses to serve only extracurricular activities.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$31,500
51. Develop and implement a regular inventory process by conducting an inventory of the spare parts room and using the totals as a baseline for monitoring the parts inventory.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	(\$92,779)	(\$92,779)	(\$92,779)	(\$92,779)	(\$92,779)	(\$463,895)	\$31,500

CHAPTER 9. 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.

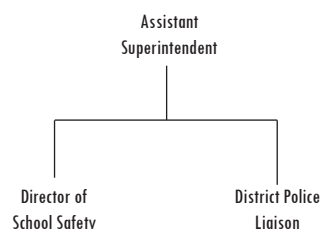
Managing safety and security initiatives is dependent on a district's organizational structure. Larger districts typically have staff dedicated to safety and security, while smaller districts assign staff tasks as a secondary assignment. Safety and security includes ensuring the physical security of 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.

One of the stated objectives of public education listed in the Texas Education Code, Section 4.001, is to "provide safe and disciplined environments conducive to learning." To achieve this objective, safety and security operations go hand-in-hand with education, as districts are responsible for protecting students, teachers, and school property while also providing a positive learning environment. Working together, district leaders, campus principals, facility managers, transportation supervisors, and safety and security staff look at ways to identify risks and develop plans to mitigate threats.

A safe and secure school environment as defined by the U.S. Department of Education, Title IV, Section 401, 21st Century Schools and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, "encompasses: communication systems, fire protection, playground safety, facility safety, environmental regulations, and emergency operation planning."

Big Spring Independent School District's (ISD) safety and security function includes a director of school safety and a district police liaison. **Figure 9-1** shows the district's organization for safety and security.

FIGURE 9-1
BIG SPRING ISD SAFETY AND SECURITY ORGANIZATION
SCHOOL YEAR 2014-15



SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD has improved the district safety and security by standardizing lockdown procedures.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD requires vendors to provide documentation of their safety records when bidding on district contracts.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD's facilities lack effective and consistent visitor management and control processes.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not have a safety and security organizational structure that monitors, directs, and mitigates all facets of safety and security for the district.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD does not consistently conduct safety inspections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 52: Develop and implement a districtwide access control and visitor management system.**

- ◆ **Recommendation 53: Establish a Safety and Security Department to more effectively align and integrate safety and security oversight and management.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 54: Adopt a plan and process to complete periodic safety inspections and correct any deficiencies noted.**

DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENTS

DISTRICT SAFETY

Big Spring ISD has improved the district's safety and security by standardizing lockdown procedures.

In 2012, with the direction of the district police liaison, a committee of school and police department personnel was convened to review the policy and procedures for lockdown and develop consistent policies across all campuses. The district police liaison installed lockdown boxes (known as Knox Boxes) at each campus administration office, which contain a master key to the building and detailed building plans. This installation enables responding city or county officers to be able to move through the campus with full knowledge of the building and with the ability to enter each classroom in the event of an emergency. This process is an improvement from the district's prior practice where all campus lockdown drill procedures were substantially different from each other.

Standardized lockdown procedures on all campuses provide the Big Spring ISD district police liaison, the Big Spring Police Department, and the Big Spring Fire Department with a single response protocol. These procedures save response time and, potentially, lives.

BIDDER SAFETY

Big Spring ISD requires vendors to provide documentation of their safety records when bidding on district contracts.

The Business Office oversees the contracting process for safety and security products and services. The process of bidding for products and services is standardized. Big Spring ISD Board Policy CVA (LOCAL), related to competitive bidding, directs the district to require documentation from vendors bidding on contracts regarding their Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety records for the past three years and other safety documentation. Requests for proposals issued by the Business Office contain the requirement that the company provides this information.

Requiring vendors that bid on contracts to provide documentation of their safety records is a good practice because it encourages responses from companies that have good safety records. In those instances where a vendor provides documentation of lapses of safety during previous contract performance, the district is able to use that information in its deliberations.

DETAILED FINDINGS

ACCESS CONTROL (REC. 52)

Big Spring ISD's facilities lack effective and consistent visitor management and control processes.

The eight campuses in Big Spring ISD have varying levels of safety regarding access control and visitor management. At several campuses, unlocked and unmonitored doors allow individuals free access to district buildings.

Big Spring ISD installed access management software in the administration offices of each campus, with the exception of the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP). A visitor to the campuses with access management software is required to produce a photo identification card, which a campus staff member scans into a software program. The information on the identification card is used by the system to search a sex offender database of all 50 states. When the visitor is cleared, the system prints a visitor badge with a photograph and name as it appeared on the identification card, date and time of clearance, and location in the campus to be visited. This system, however, can be bypassed because some campuses have external doors that are unlocked and unmonitored.

The infrastructure of the high school has changed substantially since the original campus was built in 1966, with additional exterior doors added during expansion projects. Today, there are approximately 29 exterior doors, many of which remain unlocked during normal school hours. Students can use these external doors in the main building to go to the athletic building located behind the main school building, to various athletic fields, and to/from the student parking lots. Because these exterior doors are unlocked, visitors and contractors may enter the main building without being seen. Signs posted at the main entrances state that visitors must check in with the front office; however, there is no physical barrier preventing a visitor from travelling to any area of the building. When entering the high school through the main glass doors, it is possible to enter the library or ascend the stairwell to the second floor without observation. From the

second floor, an individual can travel to any part of the high school without having to go past or into the front office. The district has installed 126 cameras in the high school that can be monitored on any computer via the Internet; however, the cameras are not actively monitored.

The DAEP is located on the second floor of the athletic building to the north of the main high school. The DAEP is accessible by entering the athletic building and going up one of two stairwells. During the day there is no access control as the ground floor doors to the stairwell are left unlocked.

The front doors at the main entrance of the intermediate school are unlocked during school hours, and no interior barrier wall or door requires visitors and contractors to route through the front office. Glass windows in the front office allow staff to view entrants to the building. Staff's vision is limited, however, when sitting at the front desk by a high counter parallel to the windows and between all office desks and the windows. Additionally, office staff is often called into interior offices for administrative and secretarial duties, so visitors to the building could bypass the check-in process in the office. The intermediate school gymnasium and cafeteria are located in a building to the rear of the main school building. The two buildings are connected by a covered walkway. The north door from the intermediate main school building to the gymnasium and cafeteria building is left open so students can travel between the two buildings. A boiler room is located in the basement of the gymnasium and cafeteria building. During the onsite review, the doors to the boiler room were found unlocked.

The junior high school has a highly secure entry point, which requires a visitor to enter a small security room with a receptionist. The visitor is prevented from entering the interior of the building until cleared by the receptionist and the release of an electromagnetic locking device on the interior door. Upon entering the security room, the receptionist asks for the visitor's identification. The identification card is scanned into the access management system. After printing a valid visitor pass, the receptionist allows the visitor to enter the main building. All exterior doors to the building are locked at all times to prevent unauthorized entry. Access through these doors from outside is available to teachers and other district personnel by use of a key pad at each door. Each employee of the district has a unique pin number assigned, which allows them to enter those doors that would be required in the normal course of their duties.

The four elementary schools have the same system of access control as they have identical designs and were built at the same time. A visitor, upon entering the front vestibule, is routed into the front office where office staff greets him/her. Upon clearance, the visitor is allowed to enter the interior of the buildings through an electrical lock, which must be released by the office staff. However, the visitor could walk around the reception counter and continue unhindered down a hall to the offices of the principal, associate principal, and other administrative offices. From this hall, the visitor could enter the building via a staff break room behind the administration office.

The early childhood center (ECC) has a locked front door and a door bell that visitors must ring for access. Either the principal or her secretary must personally unlock the door. No physical barrier prevents a visitor from continuing into the interior of the building; the principal or secretary is the only impediment to continued access. At the rear door to the kitchen there is no "peep" hole. Vendors and district delivery personnel come to the back loading area and knock on the door. Kitchen staff must open the door to see who is there.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) developed a comprehensive set of safety and security inspection guidelines. Applying the access control measures in those guidelines to Big Spring ISD schools, the review team found that none of the schools met all six guidelines. **Figure 9-2** shows a comparison of the guidelines to the access control measures in place at each campus.

The National School Safety and Security Services, a national consulting firm, outlines steps for reducing and controlling campus access. The following are key strategies for preventing unauthorized access to school facilities through process, procedure, and physical security approaches:

- establish a visitor sign-in, sign-out, visitor badge issuance, and escort procedure;
- reduce the number of doors that can be opened from the outside by using doors that cannot be opened from the outside but can be used as exits from the inside in the event of a fire or other emergency;
- reconfigure main entrance designs so that there is a secondary set of secure doors, and all traffic is funneled into the main office before gaining access into the campus; to heighten security further, have the initial exterior door buzzer controlled with a camera and intercom, thereby requiring visitors to be

**FIGURE 9–2
BIG SPRING ISD CAMPUS ACCESS CONTROLS ASSESSMENT
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

ACCESS CONTROL MEASURE	HIGH SCHOOL	JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL	INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL	ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	ECC(1)	DAEP(2)
Is access into the building[s] 100 percent controllable through designated, supervised, or locked entry points, including windows and service entries?	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Is entry granted by supervising staff or through the use of proximity cards, keys, coded entries, or other devices?	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Are there signs, in all relevant languages, directing visitors to designated entrances?	No	No	No	No	No	No
Are all exterior doors designed to prevent unauthorized access and properly maintained?	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Are all exit doors and gates equipped with emergency exit hardware and not locked or secured by any other means?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do exterior doors have features that permit seeing who is on the exterior side (e.g., narrow windows, sidelights, fish-eye viewers, or cameras)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

NOTES:

(1) ECC=Kentwood Early Childhood Center;

(2) DAEP= Disciplinary Alternative Education Program.

SOURCES: Legislative Budget Board School Review Team, January 2015; Federal Emergency Management Agency, January 2015.

buzzed in the first door and granted access through a second door (which could also be buzzer-controlled, if appropriate) before gaining access into the main building;

- consider use of a camera, intercom, and buzzer at main entrances, especially at elementary schools; be sure to have the controls for these doors at the desk of each front office staff member, rather than a single person, and train all main office staff on proper procedures for allowing access;
- secure custodial entrances and delivery doors during and after school hours; have custodial personnel keep a log of deliveries that includes the name of the vendor company, the name of the delivery person, the license plate number of the vehicle, and the date and time of arrival and departure;
- require all school doors to be closed and secured from the outside while cleaning personnel and after-hours staff work inside the building during evening and night hours;
- train all campus staff, including support personnel, to greet and challenge strangers, including training staff to report strangers to the office if they do not feel safe in approaching someone they believe to be an intruder;

- train students not to open doors to strangers, other students, or even adults they may know;
- educate parents about access control strategies and the importance of following procedures;
- establish a routine maintenance and timely repair program for the school doors;
- consider the use of proximity cards for campus staff with card readers at most commonly used doors, such as teachers’ parking lot entrances; main entrances; and doors used for recess, playground activities, and physical education class activities; and
- use magnetic locks on doors so they close more easily.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a districtwide access control and visitor management system.

The district should develop an access management system for all campuses that is commensurate with the levels of control seen at the junior high school.

Big Spring ISD should form access control committees at the high school, intermediate school, elementary schools, ECC and DAEP. These committees should include the principal, the counselor, director of school safety, the police liaison, the maintenance and transportation director, representatives from the Big Spring police and fire departments, and other community representatives. The committees should develop

separate access management plans to better secure each of their campuses. These plans should be approved by the superintendent.

At the high school, Big Spring ISD and the committee should consider:

- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the main entrance that is staffed by a receptionist, similar to the space at the junior high school;
- securing all entrances to the high school and requiring all students to enter and exit via the front door of the school building, which might also include construction of an enclosed walkway from the main building to the athletic building so that students can safely transit between the two buildings; and
- construction of a security fence around the campuses with gated access to and from parking lots.

At the DAEP, Big Spring ISD and the committee should consider:

- securing the north door to the Athletic Department with a release system in the DAEP office; and
- securing the entry door to the north stairwell with a release system in the DAEP office so that visitors can be identified before being allowed to enter the stairwell.

At the intermediate school, Big Spring ISD and the committee should consider:

- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the main entrance, which is staffed by a receptionist, similar to the space at the junior high school; and
- construction of a 12-foot chain-link fence on either side of the walkway from the main building to the gymnasium and cafeteria building so that students can safely transit between the two buildings.
- At the elementary schools, Big Spring ISD and the committee should consider:
- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the main entrance, which is staffed by a receptionist, that would prevent individuals from walking past the receptionist, down the hallway to the principal's and assistant principal's offices.

At the ECC, Big Spring ISD and the committee should consider:

- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the main entrance so that visitors and contractors must be admitted into the inner hall at the top of the entry stairs after checking in with the principal or secretary; and
- installation of a security camera or peephole at the rear of the entrance to the kitchen so that delivery personnel can be identified before being admitted to the kitchen.

No fiscal impact is assumed for this recommendation because the cost of implementing any or all of these steps is dependent on which security measures the district determines it wants to accomplish. However, if the district were to implement the suggestions above, the costs are estimated as follows:

- At the high school, implementing the recommendations would cost approximately \$182,450;
- forming an access control committee could be implemented with existing resources; and
- securing the building would include:
- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the main entrance, which would cost approximately \$12.75 per square foot for an eight-inch block wall, two sides of which would be finished with gypsum plaster. Assuming the wall would stretch across the approximately 40-foot entrance, and with a ceiling height of 10 feet, the total cost for the wall would be approximately \$5,100. A metal, fireproof, single-leaf door that allows access into the main corridor would cost an additional \$1,100;
- securing all doors to the high school and requiring all students to enter and exit via the front door of the school building could be implemented with existing resources;
- construction of an enclosed walkway from the main building to the athletic building so that students can safely transit between the two buildings could be accomplished with a 12-foot chain-link fence installed on both sides of the walkway, at a cost of approximately \$11,250; and

- construction of a security fence around the campus with gated access to and from parking lots would cost approximately \$165,000.
- At the DAEP, implementing the recommendations could be accomplished with existing resources:
- forming an access control committee could be implemented with existing resources; and
- securing the building would include:
- securing the north door to the Athletic Department with a release in the DAEP office could be an in-house installation by the Maintenance Department with existing resources; and
- securing the entry door to the north stairwell with a release system in the DAEP office could be an in-house installation by the Maintenance Department with existing resources.
- At the intermediate school, implementing the recommendations would cost approximately \$10,900:
- forming an access control committee could be implemented with existing resources; and
- securing the building would include:
- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the main entrance, which would cost approximately \$12.75 per square foot for an eight-inch block wall, two sides of which would be finished with gypsum plaster. Assuming the wall would stretch across the approximately 40-foot entrance, and with a ceiling height of 10 feet, the total cost for the wall would be approximately \$5,100. A metal, fireproof, single-leaf door that allows access into the main corridor would cost an additional \$1,100;
- construction of a 12-foot chain-link fence on either side of the walkway from the main building to the gymnasium and cafeteria building would cost approximately \$4,700.

At the elementary schools, implementing the recommendation would cost approximately \$8,992:

- forming an access control committee could be implemented with existing resources; and
- securing the building would include:

- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the entrance to the hallway to the principal's office would cost approximately \$12.75 per square foot for an eight-inch block wall, two sides of which would be finished with gypsum plaster. Assuming the wall would stretch across the approximately 10-foot opening, and with a ceiling height of nine feet, the total cost for the wall would be approximately \$1,148. A metal, fireproof, single-leaf door that allows access into the hallway would cost an additional \$1,100. The design of the four elementary schools is identical, so the cost would be four times the quoted cost, or \$4,592 for the four walls, and \$4,400 for the four doors.

At the ECC, implementing the recommendations would cost approximately \$3,395:

- forming an access control committee could be implemented with existing resources; and
- securing the building which would include:
- construction of an inner wall with a security door at the main entrance would cost approximately \$12.75 per square foot for an eight-inch block wall, two sides of which would be finished with gypsum plaster. Assuming the wall would stretch across the approximately 20-foot entrance, and with a ceiling height of nine feet, the total cost for the wall would be approximately \$2,295. A metal, fireproof, single-leaf door that allows access into the main corridor would be an additional \$1,100; and
- installation of a security camera or peep at the rear of at the entrance to the kitchen should be an in-house installation by the Maintenance Department for little or no cost.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (REC. 53)

Big Spring ISD does not have a safety and security organizational structure that monitors, directs, and mitigates all facets of safety and security for the district.

The district does not have a department or individual responsible for districtwide organization and management of safety and security. Responsibility for managing onsite campus- and district-related safety and security is distributed among several individuals. This fragmented organizational structure has resulted in several important safety and security

planning, monitoring and oversight tasks not being completed

According to Board Policy CK (LOCAL) related to the district's safety program and risk management, the superintendent or a designee is responsible for developing, implementing, and promoting comprehensive safety programs designed to address the safety of students, employees, visitors, and all others with whom the district conducts business.

The district has a director of school safety who is responsible for many of the safety and security duties. **Figure 9–3** shows the specific job duties of the director of school safety, as outlined in his job description:

Big Spring ISD also employs a district police liaison who is responsible for some campus and district level security duties. She serves as a law enforcement officer, and some of her primary duties include:

- addressing crime and disorder problems, gangs, and drug activities occurring in or around the school;
- making arrests and issuing citations on campus;

- taking action against unauthorized persons on school property;
- serving as a truancy enforcer;
- working with campus staff to enhance security measures; and
- serving as liaisons between the school and the police and providing information to students and school personnel about law enforcement matters.

The district police liaison and the director of school safety do not coordinate their efforts. The director of school safety and the district police liaison each report separately to the assistant superintendent. During onsite interviews both positions indicated they have very little contact with each other. This lack of coordination between the two positions results in confusion. Interviews with administration and staff indicate uncertainty regarding who is responsible for the daily oversight of safety and security issues. When asked where staff can report safety and security issues at their respective campuses, respondents indicated that they contact either the district police office or the director of school safety.

FIGURE 9–3
BIG SPRING ISD'S DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL SAFETY JOB DUTIES
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15

DUTIES

- Review reports of injuries, property damage, and workers' compensation claims to identify safety concerns and make recommendations to reduce accidents and claims.
- Investigate and analyze accidents involving employees and students.
- Perform facilities inspections, including district buildings and playgrounds.
- Work cooperatively with department heads to recommend proper safety equipment or procedures needed to provide a hazard-free workplace.
- Provide safety meetings and safety training for all employees and participate in the delivery of new employee orientation where applicable.
- Ensure that the safety program is cost-effective and funds are prudently managed.
- Coordinate the selection and purchase of safety supplies, materials, and training from outside sources as needed.
- Develop and maintain district and department safety manuals.
- Maintain district material safety data sheet manual and provide information to employees and health care professionals as needed.
- Compile, maintain, and file all physical and computerized reports, records, and other documents required, including fire and tornado procedures, Emergency Operation Manual.
- Comply with policies established by federal and state law, State Board of Education rule, and local board policy in the area of safety program management.
- Recommend sound policies to improve the safety program.

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The director of school safety and the police liaison also do not have clearly defined job responsibilities. Both positions can establish districtwide safety and security protocols. For example, the director of school safety is responsible for developing districtwide protocols to ensure that Big Spring ISD is meeting state and federal requirements and board policy. This development includes establishing procedures for campuses to carry out regular safety drills. However, the district police liaison can also establish similar district policy, as she developed a standardized district protocol for campus lockdown drills.

The safety and security function within the district also lacks oversight; neither the director of school safety nor the district police liaison has been evaluated since school year 2011–12. The district lacks a process for ensuring that the district's safety and security activities are effectively implemented.

The review team found several examples of ineffective safety and security practices. The Texas Education Code, Section 37.108, requires each school district to have a multihazard Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The EOP is a detailed plan that contains a hazard assessment, policies, and procedures that outline the appropriate response to emergencies. The Texas Education Code, Section 37.109, requires districts to establish a school safety and security committee to develop and implement the EOP. The director of school safety convened an ad-hoc Emergency Operations Council made up of district and community officials in 2013 to update the district's EOP. The council included the following:

- district representatives: superintendent; assistant superintendent; director of school operations; transportation, communications; district police liaison; chief financial officer; business manager; school health; and
- community representatives: fire department; sheriff's office; Scenic Mountain Medical Center (local acute-care hospital); Red Cross; Salvation Army; City of Big Spring; and City of Big Spring Public Works.

Although the committee updated the EOP, it dissolved shortly afterward and was not involved in implementing of the EOP as required in The Texas Education Code, Section 37.109. Several implementation steps that are laid out in the 2013 EOP have not occurred. For example, the EOP indicates that all staff should receive training on the various safety procedures outlined in the EOP; however, at the time of the review, these trainings have not occurred.

Additionally, the EOP lists the types and frequency of emergency drills the district should be conducting and states that a record of drills and exercises, along with After-Action Reports (AAR) should be maintained, including types of drills and exercises and the number of participants.

Although the campuses are completing required drills, no district administrator is providing oversight to ensure that the correct number and types of drills are being completed at each campus. The AARs are supposed to be developed after an emergency event or exercise to critique the district's response and find deficiencies that could be improved. However, there is no evidence that the AAR process is occurring.

The director of school safety's job description indicates that he is responsible for conducting safety inspections. An inspection occurred in the summer of 2013, but no inspection has been completed since. During the onsite review, the review team found several pieces of safety equipment with maintenance and inspection tags that were not up to date.

Additionally, there is no evidence that the Big Spring ISD Board of Trustees has discussed any information on the safety and security of the district in school year 2014–15. Since July 2014, the board meeting agendas contain no safety-related items aside from the consideration of a contract for student drug testing services in November 2014.

Big Spring ISD should establish a Safety and Security Department to more effectively align and integrate safety and security oversight and management.

The district should realign its organizational reporting so that the district police liaison reports directly to the director of school safety, who will lead the Safety and Security Department. The District Leadership, Organization, and Governance chapter includes a recommendation that the district create an executive director of operations position. The director of school safety should report directly to the executive director of operations. Both the director of school safety and the district police liaison should maintain their current job duties; however, they should ensure that there is no overlap between the two positions.

The director of school safety should also convene a standing safety and security committee. The committee should meet as soon as possible to review the 2013 EOP and update it as needed. The committee should also develop an implementation plan for the new EOP. The implementation plan should include specific tasks that need to be conducted

and assign staff to them. These tasks will include EOP training, oversight of emergency drills and AARs, and any other tasks that will be necessary to fully implement the EOP. The committee should assign deadlines to these duties to ensure they are completed in a timely manner.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

SAFETY INSPECTIONS (REC. 54)

Big Spring ISD does not consistently conduct safety inspections.

During school year 2012–13, the director of school safety developed a semi-annual safety inspection checklist. The director used the checklist to conduct an inspection of all campuses in the summer of 2013. According to the document, inspections were supposed to be conducted twice each calendar year, once before July 30 and again before December 15. However, the inspections have not been conducted since summer 2013.

The inspection that was conducted in summer 2013 was comprehensive and identified several safety and security issues. However, some of these issues were still observed by the onsite review team during the onsite review in January 2015. For example, in the 2013 inspection the director noted that some fire extinguishers had out of date inspection and maintenance tags. During the onsite review, fire extinguishers with no maintenance tag or with outdated maintenance tags were found in the high school, junior high school, Moss Elementary School, Marcy Elementary School, Washington Elementary School, Kentwood ECC, and the DAEP. One outdated tag indicated the extinguisher had not been maintained in five years. The district has had a contract for the maintenance and inspection of fire extinguishers since 2008. However, the outdated fire extinguishers that were observed by the review team were likely not accessible to the service provider because they are located in mechanical and electrical rooms, which the campus custodians cannot access. Additionally, the 2013 inspection found that eyewash stations at some campuses were not being inspected monthly. During the onsite review, the review team noted non-functional eye wash stations. Interviews with district staff indicated that no staff member is currently assigned to ensure eye wash stations and first aid kits are functional.

After completing the safety inspection in 2013, the director of school safety sent copies of the individual campus reports to the assistant principals with an email asking for their

revision and correction. None of the reports had been returned to the director at the time of the onsite review, although one assistant principal provided an annotated copy of the report for her campus to the review team.

Other safety concerns noted by the review team include:

- no records indicate that fire doors are inspected for proper operation;
- all emergency lights and a majority of the exit lights in the ECC have batteries that are fully discharged;
- the fire suppression system in the south kitchen of the intermediate school's cafeteria has not been inspected or maintained since 1999; although the district no longer uses this room for cooking, the fire suppression system is still installed and must be maintained in an operative condition; and
- all of the fire extinguishers in the intermediate school are located inside the classrooms, which was a common placement in the 1960s and 1970s; however, because the classrooms are now always continuously locked, no fire extinguishers are mounted in the hallways, which are the egress paths.

Safety inspections and walkthroughs are an accepted industry practice. Inspections, if used effectively, can provide a snapshot of the school's safety status and identify areas needing improvement. A proactive safety inspection process can help ensure that the district is in compliance with state requirements. Without regular inspections, the district cannot ensure that safety equipment is up to date and safety hazards are fixed in a timely manner. If not corrected, the district risks the possibility that a student, staff member, or visitor might be injured. Additionally, the district is left vulnerable to litigation if such a situation occurs.

The Texas School Safety Center, a statutorily authorized research center at Texas State University, provides a set of recommendations that should shape a district's safety and security processes based on state results of 2008 to 2011 district audit reports. These include:

- ongoing self-assessment: in school districts where a preparedness culture is embraced, attention to safety and security is an ongoing process of self assessment, rather than an annual or once-every-three-years "audit" event;

- team approach: a fundamental component of the audit process includes collaboration with community partners (e.g., Education Service Centers, local shelters, and faith-based organizations) and with first responders (e.g., law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical services, and emergency medical care); additionally, school personnel from all staff levels should be integrated into the audit team;
- increase compliance with the Texas Education Code, Section 37.108: it is not sufficient for a district to adopt an emergency operations plan that only meets state and federal requirements; although the requirements are an essential component of the plan, it is also crucial the district evaluate specific hazards the district may potentially encounter and to plan for them through each of the four phases of emergency management; and
- plan, train, drill, and assess with AARs and audits: appropriate training, drills, and exercises are essential in planning for potential hazards; the audit process ensures that districts are actively participating in drills and exercises and provides an opportunity to address strengths and weaknesses in policies and procedures.

Big Spring ISD should adopt a plan and process to complete periodic safety inspections and correct any deficiencies noted.

To ensure that the district's safety equipment is regularly inspected, the district should implement periodic inspection and maintenance. The director of school safety should begin by conducting an inventory of safety equipment in each facility in the district. The data collected should include the make, model, serial number, date of manufacture, date of installation, and location of every fire extinguisher, emergency exit sign, emergency light, and set of fire doors. The director of school safety should meet with the local fire marshal to discuss the city's fire code and find out how often each piece of fire safety equipment needs to be inspected, tested, and maintained. The district could implement the inspection program in two different ways. First, the director of school safety could use a checklist to inspect fire extinguishers, safety lights, and fire suppression systems based on the city fire codes, saving each checklist as documentation, and correct any problems noted. Alternatively, the director of school safety could use the work order management system to create periodically recurring work orders for the inspection and maintenance of the equipment. These work orders could be incorporated into the normal job duties of the custodians or

maintenance staff as appropriate. After completing the inspection, and making any necessary repairs, the staff responsible could write notes regarding the condition of the equipment or additional needed maintenance and supply these notations to the maintenance and transportation director, who could communicate this information to the director of school safety.

In addition to the periodic inspections of the safety equipment, the district should also conduct more in-depth safety inspections each year. These inspections should include completing any annual maintenance that is required on fire extinguishers. The semiannual safety checklist the director of school safety has developed can be used for this purpose. The director of school safety should conduct the inspection at each campus and district facility in the early part of each new school year. The director of school safety should meet with each campus principal or assistant principal to discuss the results of their campus' inspection, and together they should come up with a plan to fix any safety concerns that have been identified. The plans should designate which staff is responsible for the issue and how long it should take to fix. The principal, assistant principal, and director of school safety may be responsible for some tasks, while other tasks may need to be delegated to the Maintenance Department.

The director of school safety should keep a record of the corrective action taken to fix each safety concern, including the date on which the issue was resolved.

Since the time of the onsite review, Big Spring ISD reports that all fire extinguishers have been inspected and those that needed servicing have been replaced.

This recommendation could be implemented with 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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 9. SAFETY AND SECURITY							
52. Develop and implement a districtwide access control and visitor management system.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
53. Establish a Safety and Security Department to more effectively align and integrate safety and security oversight and management.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
54. Adopt a plan and process to complete periodic safety inspections and correct any deficiencies noted.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

CHAPTER 10. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

An independent school district's community involvement function 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 tools include public meetings, the district's website, campus-to-home communications, extracurricular activities, and local media.

A successful community involvement program addresses both the unique characteristics of the school district and the community. A critical component of school improvement and accountability systems is a high level of community involvement. Community members and volunteers provide valuable resources that can enrich and enhance the educational system. In turn, community members directly benefit because they ultimately supply an informed citizenry, an educated workforce, and future community leaders.

The community relations coordinator administers Big Spring Independent School District's (ISD) community involvement activities. This position was established in July 2014, and the community relations coordinator reports directly to the superintendent. This position is tasked with

- serving as the information liaison between the district and the community;
- serving as the district spokesperson;
- coordinating media coverage; designing, editing, and distributing district publications; and
- serving as the district representative on community committees.

During the past 20 years, the demographics of Big Spring ISD's student population have changed significantly. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) state monitor assisting the district with academic improvement initiatives noted this shift in demographics. The monitor's final report in July 2014 stated:

Community demographics have changed over the last 20 years in Big Spring. Community and staff need to be more informed of actual student/family demographics to have a clear perception of what the district reality is.

Figure 10–1 shows student demographics in school year 1993–94 compared to school year 2013–14.

The White student population in Big Spring ISD has decreased by 20.3 percent during the past 20 years, while the

FIGURE 10–1
BIG SPRING ISD STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS
SCHOOL YEARS 1993–94 AND 2013–14

CATEGORY	1993–94	2013–14
White	49.1%	28.8%
Hispanic	43.9%	62.1%
African American	6.1%	6.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	46.9%	65.2%

SOURCE: Texas Education Agency, Texas Academic Performance Report School Years 1993–94 and 2013–14.

Hispanic student population has increased by 18.2 percent. In addition, the number of economically disadvantaged students has increased by 18.3 percent during this period. This shift in demographics is also reflected in Big Spring's community.

Because of the changing demographics, the district has increased pressure to meet both the learning and cultural needs of its students, and to take new approaches to implement new strategies to increase parental and community involvement.

ACCOMPLISHMENT

- ◆ Big Spring ISD has instituted a program to increase the numbers of community volunteers at its campuses.

FINDINGS

- ◆ Big Spring ISD is not fully complying with the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I or state law for parental involvement and does not have a formal process for evaluating or monitoring parental involvement activities.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks a process to ensure effective and consistent communication with the community.
- ◆ Big Spring ISD lacks a coordinated volunteer involvement program to encourage parents and community members to volunteer for and participate in district activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ **Recommendation 55: Develop and implement a process to maximize parental involvement and ensure consistent compliance with federal and state law requiring parent involvement activities.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 56: Develop and implement districtwide communication procedures to ensure that the district consistently and accurately communicates with the community.**
- ◆ **Recommendation 57: Establish a volunteer involvement program that includes written guidelines for schools and volunteers in addition to recruitment strategies.**

DETAILED ACCOMPLISHMENT

WATCH D.O.G.S.

Big Spring ISD has instituted a program to increase the numbers of community volunteers at its campuses.

With leadership from the coordinator of community relations, Big Spring ISD’s elementary schools have implemented a family volunteer program called Watch D.O.G.S., or “dads of great students,” a national program from the National Center for Fathering. The program encourages fathers, grandfathers, step-fathers, uncles, and other figures who volunteer to serve at least one day a year in a variety of school activities as assigned by the school principal or other administrators. The program’s purpose is “to provide positive male role models for the students, demonstrating by their presence that education is important, and to provide extra sets of eyes and ears to enhance school security and reduce bullying.”

Big Spring ISD elementary principals laud the success of the program. **Figure 10–2** shows the number of Watch D.O.G.S. volunteers at each elementary campus.

**FIGURE 10–2
BIG SPRING ISD WATCH D.O.G.S. VOLUNTEERS
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15**

CAMPUS	VOLUNTEERS
Marcy Elementary	50
Washington Elementary	80
Moss Elementary	85
Goliad Elementary	87
TOTAL	302

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD, January 2015.

The district anticipates that each Watch D.O.G.S. volunteer will invest one day on a campus. This would be 2,114 volunteer hours (302 volunteers x 7 hrs/1 day) resulting from this program.

DETAILED FINDINGS

FEDERAL AND STATE REQUIREMENTS (REC. 55)

Big Spring ISD is not fully complying with the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I, or state law for parental involvement and does not have a formal process for evaluating or monitoring parental involvement activities.

Big Spring ISD is a Title I district, and thus is subject to parental involvement requirements that are part of Title I. Title I, Part A, provides financial assistance to school districts with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families. The goal of the program is to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Part of the requirements for a district to receive Title I funds is that it must develop programs that foster parental improvement, and it must develop them in consultation with parents. This requirement includes developing a written school parental involvement policy (PIP). The purpose of the PIP is to establish the district’s expectations for parental involvement. However, Big Spring ISD has no formal written, coordinated, or Board of Trustees- (board) approved PIP. The closest the district comes to any formal plan is the parental and community involvement goals and strategies set forth in Big Spring ISD’s District Improvement Plan (DIP) and Campus Improvement Plans (CIP).

From school years 2009–10 to 2013–14, Big Spring ISD produced almost identical goals and strategies for parental involvement every year in its DIP. The respective CIPs for each campus have also listed similar parental and community involvement goals and strategies. The review team found little evidence of any districtwide effort to coordinate, evaluate, or monitor Big Spring ISD’s parental involvement activities during this five-year period.

District leadership is aware of the challenges with its parental and community involvement efforts, and in school year 2013–14, the district enacted a series of activities to enhance parental and community involvement. These include:

- hiring a community relations coordinator in spring 2014;
- holding spring and fall family/community forums;
- conducting a parent survey to identify strengths and areas of concern;
- having the superintendent speak at various civic organizations and churches, and conduct radio and TV interviews to connect with the community;
- having the community relations coordinator make a weekly radio appearance to share relevant information to the community; and
- holding campus “Meet the Teacher” and other parent/family nights throughout the school year.

The district also revised its 2014–15 DIP to include seven new strategies. **Figure 10–3** shows the goals and strategies for parental and community involvement in the 2014–15 DIP. The seven new strategies are in italics.

Although the DIP is critical in providing direction for the district, it is not structured to replace a PIP, which allows for long-range planning for community or parental involvement. Many of the activities discussed in the DIP are vague and lack specific details or goals. Also, the district lacks a formal process to monitor or evaluate the parental activities outlined in the DIP.

According to the No Child Left Behind Act, Section 1118(a)(2), a PIP should describe how the district will:

- involve parents in jointly planning, reviewing, and improving of the PIP;

- provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist campuses in planning and implementing effective parental involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance;
- build the campuses’ and parents’ capacity for strong parental involvement; coordinate and integrate parental involvement strategies in accordance with Title I, Part A, with parental involvement strategies in other programs, such as Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, Parents as Teachers, Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters, state-run preschool programs, and the No Child Left Behind Act, Title III, language instructional programs;
- conduct, with the involvement of parents, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the PIP in improving the academic quality of the schools served with Title I, Part A funds, including:
 - identifying barriers to greater participation by parents in parental involvement activities, with particular attention to parents who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background;
 - using the findings of the evaluation to develop strategies for more effective parental involvement;
 - revising, if necessary, the district’s parental involvement policies; and
 - contain a campus–parent compact, a written agreement between the campus and the parents of children participating in Title I, Part A, programs that identifies the activities that the parents, campus staff, and students will undertake to share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement.

Big Spring ISD’s DIP is not consistent with the requirements for a PIP as described above. For example, the district does not conduct an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the DIP, and it contains no campus–parent compacts. Furthermore, the goals set forth in the DIP do not provide the level of depth or guidance necessary to meet these requirements.

FIGURE 10–3
BIG SPRING ISD DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PLAN, GOAL 6
SCHOOL YEAR 2014–15

STRATEGY	RESOURCES	STAFF RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE	FORMATIVE EVALUATION
Use parent/teacher conferences with emphasis on communication with parents throughout the school year with parent mailouts and calls and emails from teachers	Title I, Local	Principals, Teachers, Technology Department	August to May	Parent survey results, Compact, teacher documentation, Blackboard Connect log
Information for parents on school website, Texas connection, marquee on each campus, media announcements, radio, newspaper, TV, Blackboard Connection (text, email, phone); state tests information and training on Student Success Initiative (SSI) provided to parents	Title I, Local	Principals, Assistant Superintendent, Teachers	August to May	Increased number of parent involvement (contact logs to validate involvement)
Parent and community volunteer opportunities will be increased: Partners for Academic Steer Success and HC students, Service Club members; Texas Public School week activities, Relay for Life, family fun events, campus carnivals, parent night at campuses, movie nights, public performances at the theatre, band, choir, athletic events, student reward activities	Title I, Local	Principals, Teachers	August to May	Increased number of parent involvement
Student Health Advisory Council and CATCH program	Title I	Assistant Superintendent, Principals, Lead Nurse, Parents	August to May	Meeting sign-in sheets
Homeless support, science fair, spelling bee, book fairs, holiday shop, mathathon, Jump Rope for Heart, reading and technology night	Title I	Directors, Principals	August to May	Increased parental involvement
"Meet and Greet the Teacher," PTA, PTO, Flip the Classroom, Veterans Day program	Local, Title I	Principals, Teachers	August	Parent sign-in sheets
Campus newsletters, grade-level newsletters, district website	Local, Title I	Principals, Technology Department	August to May	Distribution of newsletter
Encourage businesses to become school partners, local newspaper, radio, community TV channel	Local	School staff	August to May	Increased number of business–school partnerships
Financial aid night with Howard College representatives	Local	High school staff	Spring	Parent sign-in sheets
Watch D.O.G.S. family volunteer program	Local	Elementary campus staff	October to May	Sign-in sheets
Parent literacy and math night	Local	Principals	August to May	Sign-in sheets
Parent/teacher conferences to discuss student progress and pass out report cards	Local	Principals	August to May	Sign-in sheets
Parent surveys	Local	Principals	August to May	Survey results
Community/school forums	Local	Superintendent	August to May	Sign-in sheets
Title I School Compacts	Local	Federal Programs Director	August to May	Sign-in sheets

NOTES: Strategies added to the District Improvement Plan in school year 2014–15 are in italics.

Title I=U.S. Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I.

SOURCE: Big Spring ISD District Improvement Plan, School Year 2014–15.

State law also addresses parental and community involvement. The Texas Education Code, Section 39.0545, states:

For purposes of assigning the performance ratings under Subsection (a), a school district must evaluate community and parental involvement, such as: (i) opportunities for parents to assist students in preparing for assessments under Section 39.023; (ii) tutoring programs that support students taking assessments under Section 39.023; and (iii) opportunities for students to participate in community service projects. This section applies beginning with the 2013–2014 school year.

To comply with the law, Big Spring ISD must conduct an evaluation of its community and parental involvement activities and submit the findings to TEA. The district will then receive a rating of exemplary, recognized, acceptable, or unacceptable, which must be made public. At the time of the onsite review, Big Spring ISD had not conducted this evaluation.

Not only is Big Spring ISD not consistent with federal and state law regarding parental involvement, but the lack of a detailed and effective parental involvement plan hinders the district's overall efforts to increase district buy-in from parents. The main benefit of parental involvement is the improved achievement of the student. The more parents become involved with the teacher, school curriculum, and administration, the better the parents feel about the school. This leads to an increased sense of pride in the school and the community. The more parents learn about the way the school functions, the more the parents will understand the educational process and educational decisions. The parents and the school become allies and are able to be of mutual benefit when it comes to dealing with difficult students and situations. The parents are also more supportive of the school with financial support and support of bond issues. Without a method or strategy for coordinating the district's parental involvement activities, Big Spring ISD runs the risk of creating a sense of disengagement between the school district and the community.

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools developed a toolkit for districts to assist in establishing and implementing a parental involvement plan. In this toolkit, SEDL provides detailed explanations of the Title I, Part A, parental involvement provisions and 33 tools to assist state departments of

education, districts, and schools in meeting these requirements. Both the explanations and the tools are intended to help educators increase parental involvement and provide opportunities for parents to engage in and support their children's academic achievement. This toolkit is a free resource for districts and can be found on the SEDL website.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement a process to maximize parental involvement and ensure consistent compliance with federal and state law requiring parent involvement activities.

The superintendent should oversee a parental involvement committee consisting of the community relations coordinator, principals, teachers, and parents to examine the district's approach toward parental involvement. Using the SEDL toolkit, this committee should begin developing a district PIP. As the committee works on developing the PIP, it can seek guidance and assistance from the Regional Education Service Center XVIII (Region 18).

Big Spring ISD should also work to develop a school–parent compact to align with Title I requirements. The compact should outline how students, parents and staff will share responsibility for improved student achievement and how parents and the school will build and develop partnerships to achieve student achievement. The compact must describe:

- the school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive learning environment;
- parents' responsibility for supporting children's learning, such as monitoring attendance, homework completion, and television watching; volunteering at school; participating in decisions about their children's education, and positive use of time outside of school; and
- the importance of ongoing parent–teacher communication, including elementary schools' plans to offer at least one annual parent–teacher conference to discuss the parent–teacher compact and all schools' plans to report children's progress frequently to parents and communicate how parents can contact staff, volunteer in their children's classrooms, and observe classroom activities.

Additionally, the district should work with campus administrators to develop PIPs for each campus that specify goals for parent involvement and strategies for meeting these

goals. Additional information on developing PIP and school–parent compacts can be found online at www2.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA/Title_I/parinv2.html.

To ensure understanding and compliance with all components of the Texas Education Code, Section 39.0545, the district may want to consider using online resources such as Engage, which is offered by the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB). Engage is an online subscription service that includes the following:

- a guide for compliance with Section 39.0545 with examples;
- a checklist for Section 39.0545;
- choice of one online parent/community survey;
- choice of one online secondary student survey;
- a Section 39.0545 rating scorecard spreadsheet to tabulate overall campus and district ratings;
- a catalog for community engagement programs;
- a toolkit for public relations to aid in survey promotion;
- access for training and webinars;
- a message board for members to share information with colleagues;
- resources of news, articles, and other community engagement resources; and
- email updates occurring semimonthly.

Additionally, Big Spring ISD should revisit the strategies outlined for parental involvement in the DIP, and develop a plan to accomplish them. Many strategies could easily be established and promptly implemented. By implementing the strategies outlined in the DIP, Big Spring ISD can work toward meeting its parental involvement objectives and thereby meet its goal of increasing districtwide parental and community involvement.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

COMMUNICATION (REC. 56)

Big Spring ISD lacks a process to ensure effective and consistent communication with the community.

The district uses print and electronic media to inform the community about the district and district activities. For example, the community relations coordinator shares relevant information to the community during a weekly radio appearance and provides information regarding campus activities to a local newspaper. The superintendent also speaks at various civic organizations and churches. However, the primary way the community learns about what is occurring in the district is through the district’s website and social media.

The district has a full-time webmaster that is responsible for maintaining and updating the district’s webpage. The webmaster works in the Technology Department and reports to the technology director. The community relations coordinator is also responsible for web-based communication with the community as he controls the district’s social media presence. The community relations coordinator works in the central administration office and reports directly to the superintendent.

The district has only recently developed some social media presence beyond the website. The community relations coordinator initiated a Facebook page for the district in September 2014. It is regularly updated with photos and content, and has more than 1,000 likes, which are user acknowledgements. The community relations coordinator is listed as the primary contact for the Facebook page. The district also has a Twitter account, also established in September 2014. The Twitter account has regular updates, but thus far has fewer than 50 followers.

In Big Spring ISD, the assistant principals at seven of eight school campuses maintain the campus Facebook pages. However, the campus pages are not connected to the district’s Facebook page. An update to the district’s Facebook page does not automatically feed the campus pages, so if parents want to stay connected, they need to check multiple websites. The campuses also vary in how often they post to Facebook. For example, the high school Facebook page averaged only three to four posts per month in November 2014 through January 2015, and it reposted nothing from the district at that time.

In addition, the community relations coordinator and the webmaster do not formally coordinate what information is distributed to the community. Big Spring ISD often does not post important district messages to both the district’s website and the district’s Facebook page. For example, during the first two months of 2015, announcements for report cards

being sent home, parent–teacher conference dates, and the deadline to apply to run for the school board election were only posted on Facebook and not on the district website.

The lack of coordination between the webmaster and the community relations coordinator puts the district at risk of not sending out one consistent message to the community. The effect is a lack of continuity in communications. Not everyone in the community is on Facebook, and not everyone checks the website regularly.

Westphalia and Dripping Springs ISDs both have established effective methods to communicate with parents and the community and to encourage involvement in district programs and activities. For example, Westphalia ISD has implemented school activities that involve active community participation, including a kindergarten roundup, a Halloween carnival, a holiday play, a book fair, and an end-of-school honors and awards assembly. The district also invites parents and community members to chaperone field trips and to attend and participate in school-sponsored activities. In addition, the district publishes and distributes a newsletter containing information about class activities and an event schedule, and it sends press releases and articles about district activities to area newspapers. Dripping Springs ISD also employs multiple methods to communicate effectively about district accomplishments and challenges. Techniques include activities from informal superintendent visits with area residents at local coffee shops to a district column published in an area biweekly newspaper.

Big Spring ISD should develop and implement districtwide communication procedures to ensure that the district consistently and accurately communicates with the community.

The community relations coordinator should coordinate with the webmaster to disseminate information on the district’s website and the district’s social media resources to ensure that the community receives consistent and up-to-

date information. The community relations coordinator should lead the development of the communications procedures. The community relations coordinator should coordinate with the webmaster and any other district staff needed to form a work group to develop these procedures. The goal of the communication procedures should be to improve district communication strategies and efforts to build consistent messaging and strengthen community relations. Upon completion, the community relations coordinator should submit its procedures to the superintendent and then to the Board of Trustees for adoption. After board adoption, the work group can provide training to all staff members, reporting regularly to the board.

This recommendation could be implemented with existing resources.

DISTRICT VOLUNTEERS (REC. 57)

Big Spring ISD lacks a coordinated volunteer involvement program to encourage parents and community members to volunteer for and participate in district activities.

Figure 10–4 shows the results of a question from surveys the review team conducted of parents and campus staff regarding parental and community volunteers at Big Spring ISD.

As shown in **Figure 10–4**, nearly 50 percent of parents responded that they disagree or strongly disagree that schools have a sufficient number of volunteers to help with student and school programs. Respondents to the campus staff survey held an even stronger opinion. Only 27.1 percent of campus staff respondents agree or strongly agree that schools have a sufficient number of volunteers; 57.2 percent disagree or strongly disagree that schools have a sufficient number of volunteers.

The only volunteer program that the district has is the Watch D.O.G.S. program. The success of this program indicates that parents and community members are willing to support and assist the district’s efforts if they were approached

FIGURE 10–4
RESULTS FROM SURVEYS OF PARENTS AND CAMPUS STAFF REGARDING VOLUNTEERISM AT BIG SPRING ISD
OCTOBER 2014

Question 8. Schools have a sufficient number of volunteers to help with student and school programs.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
Parents	5.7%	25.0%	19.7%	34.1%	15.5%
Campus Staff	7.1%	20.0%	15.7%	49.3%	7.9%

SOURCE: Legislative Budget Board, School Review Team Survey, October 2014.

effectively. The district has not been able to achieve any level of success with other volunteer programs. During onsite interviews, staff indicated that the Parent Teacher Organizations (PTO) meetings at district campuses were not well-attended. One staff member stated that the PTO at Big Spring ISD was “virtually nonexistent.”

The district does not have a coordinated plan to market any of their volunteer opportunities to parents or community members. Big Spring ISD also lacks an official list of volunteer opportunities available for individuals who may be interested. The district website has a page labeled “Volunteer Opportunities,” but the page contains no text and only the phone number to each of its campuses.

Even for those parents who volunteer at the various campuses, no standard system tracks the volunteer information, such as names, home and email addresses, areas of interest, or the number of volunteer hours accrued per volunteer and campus. Without such information, campuses are challenged to establish a volunteer contact list for events and fundraisers. Without information about the number of hours by volunteer and by campus, the district lacks historical information regarding volunteer interest and participation, especially for events that may be repeated in subsequent years.

With the absence of a comprehensive volunteer program, the district and individual schools are missing an opportunity to build reciprocal trusting relationships among parents, school staff members, and the community. This relationship is not just about what potential volunteers can offer the district or the school, but it is also about what the school can offer volunteers to build trust, skills, and connections that are mutually beneficial. Volunteers can have a tremendous effect on the overall success of the educational system. They can enable teachers and staff to use their time for instruction. They can provide more opportunity for students to have one-on-one learning. Volunteers are essential to enhancing the quality of student instruction and school experiences by:

- supporting the educational process;
- providing students with individual assistance and attention;
- enriching students’ curriculum and broadening their awareness of and experiences with those who share different backgrounds, resources, and talents;
- helping school personnel with instructional tasks and duties;

- providing opportunities for parents, school staff members, and community members to share knowledge, talents, and resources with students; and
- strengthening home–school–community relations.

TEA emphasizes the importance of parent and family involvement in public education. The agency has created the Parent Involvement and Community Empowerment Initiative to address the need for more parent involvement and community participation. TEA has developed a Parent Involvement Manual to assist schools, parent groups, and community volunteers in finding new ways to involve parents and families in the education of their children. School districts can use the manual to enable local schools, parent groups, school districts, and community volunteers to look at new ways to involve parents and families in the education of their children; to help parents feel more comfortable with the school so they will want to become more involved; and to provide an overview of key elements of Texas’ public education program. The manual includes surveys, handouts, activities for meetings, and research on parental involvement.

The National Parent Teachers Association’s Seven Steps to a Successful Volunteer Program provides useful information for developing and maintaining an active school volunteer program. The steps include:

- assessing volunteer needs at school;
- working with and training principals, teachers, and school staff on effectively using and supervising volunteers;
- setting goals and objectives for volunteer assignments;
- recruiting volunteers;
- training and orienting volunteers;
- retaining and recognizing volunteers; and
- evaluating volunteer performance and program success.

The districtwide volunteer program in Denton ISD is one of the responsibilities of its office of communications and community relations. The district actively recruits volunteers who are parents, business leaders, or community members by using its website to provide information about the program, a code of conduct for volunteers, and an online application to apply for volunteering. Bryan ISD runs the “Be the One” Community Volunteer Program whose focus is on academic

achievement. Volunteers in this program assist schools by enhancing reading skills of its students, introducing caring adults into the lives of Bryan ISD students, and strengthening home–school–community partnerships.

Big Spring ISD should establish a volunteer involvement program that includes written guidelines for schools and volunteers in addition to recruitment strategies.

The community relations coordinator should form a committee that includes administrators, teachers, parents, and students from secondary schools to develop a volunteer program that encourages parents and community members to become active participants in the district’s educational process. The committee should use TEA’s Parent Involvement Manual as a guideline. The community relations coordinator should implement this program, including producing news releases to announce the volunteer program and to explain how interested individuals may apply.

This recommendation could be implemented with 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.

RECOMMENDATION	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	TOTAL 5-YEAR (COSTS) OR SAVINGS	ONE-TIME (COSTS) OR SAVINGS
CHAPTER 10. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT							
55. Develop and implement a process to maximize parental involvement and ensure consistent compliance with federal and state law requiring parent involvement activities.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
56. Develop and implement districtwide communication procedures to ensure that the district consistently and accurately communicates with the community.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
57. Establish a volunteer involvement program that includes written guidelines for schools and volunteers in addition to recruitment strategies.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0