

Introduction

When a superintendent or a Board needs basic information about the district or a ready source of baseline data on which to base their decisions, too often there is no single source available. A single source for these data is especially helpful when a new superintendent or new Board member need a quick orientation to the district. This single source is also beneficial to the Board when setting district priorities or answering questions from patrons.

The attached questionnaire was developed to gather data for compilation into an annual State-of-the-District report. When used properly and updated annually this report can be an invaluable tool for charting trends, highlighting needs, setting priorities, and otherwise keeping key decision makers informed. For the information to be most helpful, it must be pertinent, factual, concise, and it must address each of the functional areas of the district. Having such information readily available should improve both the speed and quality of Board and administration decision-making.

Please keep in mind these are only sample questions. You will want to delete some, modify others and add new questions so the final questionnaire meets the specific needs of your district.

One final note: This document was generated by Dr. Bob Thompson at ESC Region 13 in Austin, Texas. It is offered as a free service to schools and is not copyrighted. Please feel free to reproduce and/or modify these materials to best serve the needs of your district.

Instructions

The Board and superintendent should work together in identifying questions they wish to be in the questionnaire. This is usually best accomplished if the superintendent develops a basic set of questions for the board to modify and/or approve. This process is most effective if the Board schedules a Saturday work session to provide ample time to discuss and “fine tune” the questionnaire.

Once the questionnaire is approved by the board, the superintendent can then assign responsibility for answering the questions to the appropriate district personnel. The data (answers to the questions), should be returned to the superintendent to collate into a summary State-of-the-District report for the board. The report should be the basis for one or more additional work sessions where the board will review the report and develop priorities for the coming year. Each year thereafter the process goes much more quickly because it will only be necessary to update the data before developing the annual State-of-the-District report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Mission Statement, Vision, Board Goals, etc.
- II. District Organization Chart
- III. Curriculum
- IV. Media Centers
- V. Instruction
- VI. Guidance Services
- VII. Health Services
- VIII. Student Performance
- IX. Staffing
- X. Staff Development
- XI. Enrollment and Attendance
- XII. Community/Adult Education
- XIII. Finance
- XIV. Transportation
- XV. Facilities, Construction, and Grounds
- XVI. Food Service
- XVII. School-Community Relations
- XVIII. Board/Superintendent Relations
- XIX. Personnel Management
- XX. Short and Long Range Planning
- XXI. Glossary of Terms

I. MISSION STATEMENT

(Attach a copy of Vision, Mission statement, Board Goals, District Goals and Campus Goals)

II. ORGANIZATION CHART

(Attach District Organization Chart)

III. CURRICULUM

1. For each school level (primary, elementary, intermediate, middle school, high school, ,etc.) describe the curriculum offerings in the following areas:
 - a. Academic

- b. CTE
 - c. Clubs and organizations
 - d. Physical education/athletics
 - e. Fine arts
 - f. Technology
 - g. Other
2. What are the state and/or local requirements for curriculum guides? (i.e. Standards and Benchmarks)
 3. Describe how we do (or do not) comply with these requirements.
 4. How is this information distributed? (i.e. on-line)
 5. How often is curriculum updated and by what process is it updated?
 6. What process is used to ensure that there is vertical and horizontal alignment from one grade level to the next? How effective has this articulation process been and how do we know that?
 7. Describe district efforts in vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment?

IV. MEDIA CENTERS

1. Develop a chart that lists each library or resource center and:
 - a. Number of students in the school
 - b. State and/or other local standards for the number of publications(and/or other performance standards) per student.
 - c. Number of publications per student in each of our libraries.
 - d. Number of students served by each of our libraries.
 - e. Student capacity of the library at any given time.
 - f. Utilization level of the library (average number of times each student uses the library each year and which services they utilize the most.)
 - g. Staffing level of each library.
 - h. Non-printed learning aids available (e.g. tapes, microfilm, on-line databases, CD-ROM discs, video, etc.)
 - i. Number of books checked out.
 - j. Number of accelerated reader points earned.
2. Technology
 - a. Number of computers/school/student
 - b. Age of computers.
 - c. Access to LAN.
 - d. Access to WAN.
 - e. Access to Distance Learning.
 - f. Internet access.
 - g. Number of stations.

- h. Technology replacement schedule
- i. Copy of Acceptable Use Policy
- j. Cell Phone/PDA Use Policy

V. INSTRUCTION

1. What are the state and/or local requirements for evaluation of instruction?
2. Describe how we do (or do not) comply with these requirements.
3. Develop a chart that lists each school building and:
 - a. Staffing levels (teacher/pupil/ration) by grade level
 - b. Areas of supplemental and/or remedial instruction available to students e.g. reading, math, etc.
 - c. Gifted education
 - d. Bilingual education
4. What is the teacher/pupil ratio by campus, by grade level/subjects? (chart)
5. What supplemental instruction do we offer at each campus? (chart)
6. Attach copies of master schedules
7. What instructional audit process is used?
 - a. External or internal?
 - b. Campus level or classroom level?

VI. GUIDANCE SERVICES

1. List the counselor by name and by campus and show: (chart)
 - a. Certified as school counselor (yes/no)
 - b. Counselor/student ratio
 - c. Grade level assignment
2. Compare the time (percentage of day, month, or year) recommended by TEA to the time spent by district counselors in the following areas:
 - a. Guidance curricula
 - b. Responsive services
 - c. Individual planning
 - d. System support
 - e. Activities not related to guidance

Some Definitions Useful in Assessing Guidance Programs:

Guidance Curricula

The guidance curriculum provides students information and instruction related to skills needed in everyday life. Areas addressed in the curriculum include self-esteem development, problem solving skills, and communication skills.

Responsive Services

Responsive services address immediate academic and relationship concerns of students, as well as student misbehavior and dropout prevention.

Individual Planning

The individual planning system helps students monitor and understand their own development and to plan and set goals.

System Support

System support includes guidance program development and counselor professional development, consultation with teachers and administrators, parent education, and school improvement planning, and scheduling.

VII. HEALTH SERVICES

1. List the nurses/health care assistants, their certification level and their campus assignments. (chart)
2. What percentage of nurses' time is spent
 - o Teaching?
 - o Working with teachers?
 - o Caring for students?
 - o Recordkeeping?
 - o Other?
3. Does the district have a wellness program? Describe.
4. List the members of the School Health Advisory Council (SHAC). Include by-laws if applicable.
5. Describe the district's Coordinated School Health Program

VIII. STUDENT PERFORMANCE

1. Standardized tests:
 - a. What national standardized tests are students required to take and what grade levels and on what date?

- b. How do our students achieve on these test in comparison to other students for the last five years:
 - Nationwide?
 - State wide?
 - Within the country and/or district?
2. Advanced study:
- a. What number and percent of graduates enroll in additional education or training programs of any type within four months of graduation?
 - b. What number and percentage of graduates who go on for advanced study complete their study or are still enrolled 12 months after entering?
 - c. What percentage of graduated seniors who enroll in post-high school educational programs complete the programs within a reasonable period of time?
 - d. Number of AP classes available
 - e. Number of students taking AP classes by school
 - f. Number of IB classes
 - g. Number of students taking IB classes
 - h. Numbers of students enrolled in dual enrollment/concurring enrollment classes
 - i. What percentage of students are taking
 - Dual credit
 - Advanced placement
 - Tech prep
3. Pupil progress:
- a. What percentage of students (K-12) fail to master one or more academic courses, subjects or grade level at one time or another during the year?
 - b. What percentage of students (K-12) fail to master an academic course or subject during a given grading period?
 - c. What percentage of students (K-12) (other than those who move out of the area) drop out before graduation?
 - d. What are the identifiable reasons for students dropping out of school?
 - e. What percentage of students in each grade level were retained in grade this past year?
 - f. What courses are being offered via distance learning?

IX. STAFFING

1. Identify the various groups of professional staff (teachers, librarians, administrators, counselors etc.) in the school and show the following:

- a. Identify by subject, grade level, position, etc., how many professional and support staff are not certified by the Texas Education Agency or other appropriate agency to hold their present position?
 - b. How many professional staff members in each group hold a bachelor's degree?
 - c. How many professional staff members in each group hold a master's degree?
 - d. How many professional staff members in each group hold a doctorate?
 - e. Within each group what is the average number of years of experience:
 - In the profession?
 - In the district?
 - f. How many athletic coaches are there in the district?
2. Identify the various groups of support staff (custodians, bus drivers, food service, maintenance, etc.) and show:
 - a. How many support staff hold a certificate, degree, or have had specialized training in their area of responsibility?
 - b. What is the average workload (number of students, square feet of floor space, etc.) per staff member in each of the professional and support areas?
 3. How do the average salaries of staff in each of the professional and support areas compare with similar districts: (chart) (attach salary/pay schedule)
 - a. In the area?
 - b. In the state?
 4. How do professional and support staffing levels in this district compare:
 - a. Among campuses within the district?
 - b. With similar districts?
 - c. State average for all districts?
 5. How many staff are in each staffing category (teachers, secretaries, principals, cooks, etc.) and what is the ethnic ratio by category and by building?

X. STAFFING DEVELOPMENT

1. What training does the district require of/and provide to employees to insure that they stay abreast of their profession or craft?
2. How many staff members in each of the professional and support areas have attended staff development programs at district expense?
 - a. Offered inside the district?
 - b. Offered outside the district?
3. How many staff members in each of the professional and support areas have attended staff development programs at district expense?
4. How much money has the district spent on staff development for: (Identify funding source and or budget areas: local or federal)

- a. Professional staff?
- b. Support staff?
5. How many professional staff are actively pursuing: Masters Degree? Doctorate? Other Advanced degree?
6. Does the district have a waiver on file w/ TEA to enable the district to participate in additional days of staff development? How many?
7. What areas are being targeted in staff development?
8. How is staff development evaluated?
9. Are staff development plans approved by district and campus improvement teams?

XI. ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

1. What is the average daily enrollment (membership) by grade for each of the past 5 years?
2. What is the average daily attendance by grade for each of the past 5 years?
3. What percentage of annual growth has the district experienced in the last five years?
4. What is the projected average daily enrollment by grade for each of the next 5 years?
5. How do the current and projected enrollments compare with our current and projected classroom and support space?
6. For each building give the year it was constructed, the design capacity (number of students), and the present enrollment.
7. What is the number of students in each building?
8. What grade level does each building house?

XII. COMMUNITY/ADULT EDUCATION

1. What community/adult education programs: (chart)
 - a. Do we offer?
 - b. Enrollment in each program over the past 5 years.
 - c. When taught?
 - d. Where taught?
 - e. Who teaches?
 - f. Distance learning utilized?

XIII. FINANCE

1. What have been the total operating costs (other than capital outlay and debt service) for each of the past 10 years?
2. What have been the per pupil operating costs during each of the past 10 years?
3. What has been the tax rate (maintenance rate, I & S rate, and total rate) and assessed valuation for the district for the past 10 years?
4. What has been the fund balance for each of the past 10 budget years?
 - a. General
 - b. Designated
5. Over the past 10 years, what percent/amount of the total budget has come from:
 - a. Local taxes?
 - b. State aid?
 - c. Federal aid?
 - d. Tuition?
 - e. Proceeds from endowments?
 - f. Unrestricted gifts?
 - g. Restricted gifts?
 - h. Other sources (please list)
6. Given our projected enrollment for the next five years, salaries and other state mandated increases in spending, a 5% cost of living increase, building expansion or other such unique expenses, estimate the district's budget needs over the next five years.
7. Given the current state aid formula and any foreseeable changes in assessed valuation, project the local tax rate that will be necessary to fund the estimated budgets for the next 5 years.
8. FIRST state financial rating for past 10 years.

XIV. TRANSPORTATION

1. Buses:
 - a. How many buses does the district own for:
 - Daily transportation of non-handicapped students?
 - Back-up or other buses not used on a daily basis?
 - Specially equipped buses for handicapped students?
 - b. What is the mileage on each?
 - c. What is the condition on each?
2. Other vehicles:
 - a. How many of what type of special purpose vehicles (maintenance, transportation of staff, etc.) does the district own?

- b. What is the mileage on each?
 - c. What is the condition of each?
3. Pupil transported on daily runs:
 - a. How many non-handicapped students are transported on a daily basis over how many routes?
 - b. How many handicapped students are transported on a daily basis over how many routes?
 - c. How many total miles are traveled on daily routes for handicapped and non-handicapped students?
 - d. Other specialized routes (i.e. vocational, dual credit, half-day PK or other alternate programs.)
4. Pupils transported on co-curricular field trips:
 - a. How many students are transported (average) per month on field trips?
 - b. How many field trips (average) are taken each month?
 - c. What is the average number of miles traveled:
 - per field trip?
 - per month?
5. Pupils transported to extracurricular activities that are not a part of the regular curriculum:
 - a. How many students are transported (average) per month on field trips?
 - b. How many field trips (average) are taken each month?
 - c. What is the average number of miles traveled?
 - per field trip
 - per month?
6. What is our annual budget for transportation:
 - a. To and from schools?
 - b. Co-curricular trips?
 - c. Extracurricular trips not a part of the regular curriculum?
7. What portion of the total transportation budget comes from:
 - a. State aid?
 - b. Local taxes?
 - c. Other sources? (please identify)
8. What are our projected transportation needs (buses, facilities, drivers, etc.) for each of the next 5 years?
9. List each campus and the time buses are scheduled to:
 - a. Deliver students in the morning.
 - b. Pick up students in the afternoon.
10. Criminal history checks are conducted on all bus drivers?
11. Required drug tests are current for all drivers and substitutes.

XV. FACILITIES, CONSTRUCTION, AND GROUNDS

1. List each building giving:
 - a. Date constructed
 - b. Total square feet
 - c. Current use: Number of students in building, grade levels (check TASBO site)
 - d. Recommended number of square feet per custodian
 - e. Recommended number of custodians assigned
 - f. Actual number of custodians assigned
 - g. Average annual utility cost per 1000 square feet
 - h. Average maintenance cost (excluding custodial) per 1000 square feet
 - i. Total cost of maintenance last year
 - j. Total cost of vandalism last year
 - k. General condition
 - l. Appropriateness of use (i.e. does the design facilitate the activity?)
2. List the classroom giving: a) room number, b) room purpose(e.g. science, general instruction, PE, etc.), and c) room capacity:
 - a. Elementary campuses
 - b. Intermediate/junior high campus
 - c. High school campuses
3. How many acres of grounds are on each campus and who has responsibility for grounds maintenance (e.g. building custodian, grounds keeper, etc.).
4. Long Range Facility Planning
 - a. List the major construction and/or renovation projections now in progress and the percentage of completion.
 - b. Project the major construction work projected for the next five years.
 - c. New construction planned and/or needed.
 - d. Renovation projects planned and/or needed.
 - e. Buildings to be demolished or moved.
5. TEA Required Energy Reduction Plan
6. Number of students in the building
7. Grade levels in the building

XVI. FOOD SERVICE

1. What federal and/or state subsidized food service programs do we operate?

2. On the average, how many students participate in each subsidized program each day – free or reduced price? Regular pay?
3. What do we charge for meals?
4. What food service programs do we operate that are not subsidized and, on the average, how many students participate in each?
5. How many cafeterias do we operate?
6. How many people do we employ in our food service program?
7. Has it been necessary to subsidize the food service program during any part of the past three years? If so, by what amount?
8. Any special services being offered.

XVII. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

1. List the formal systems (school newsletter, newspaper reports, school “open houses”, etc.), used to inform the community about the school.
2. List the systems the district has for getting regular feedback from the community?
3. How much money is budgeted this year for school-community relation’s activities this past year?
4. List the formal programs in which faculty and staff were involved in school-community relation’s activities this past year.
5. How many faculty and staff were involved in formal school-community relation’s activities during the past year?
6. Describe the process the Board and/or individual board members use to build good relations with the public. What indicators are there that the Board’s public relations process has been (or not been) successful?
7. Media coverage/phone numbers
 - a. Paper
 - b. TV
 - c. Radio

XVIII. BOARD/SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONS

1. How many board members were called during the past year?
2. How many times did the superintendent communicate with the board members?
3. Date of last board self-evaluation.
4. Date of last board meeting to set goals

XIX. PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

1. How many times was the superintendent formally evaluated during the past year?
 - a. Formative evaluations
 - b. Summative evaluations
2. Were all categories of personnel evaluated?
3. Are there job descriptions for every position?
 - a. For every position?
 - b. If so, when were they last revised?
4. Is the evaluation system for administration
 - a. Based on the job description?
 - b. Is it performance-based?
5. Is there documentation in every employee's folder regarding the employee's performance?
6. What is the process we use to audit and/or evaluate academic, vocational, extra-curriculum, and support programs to determine their effectiveness?

XX. SHORT AND LONG RANGE PLANNING

1. What process is used to develop and/or update individual campus plans?
2. What process is used to develop and/or update long range academic plans for the district?
3. What steps are taken by the superintendent and the Board to develop and follow a long-range budget plan that corresponds with the long-range academic plan?

XXI. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Note: The definitions below are relevant to Texas Public Schools. Administrators from other states will want to adjust the definitions accordingly.

Account

A descriptive heading under which are recorded financial transactions that are similar in terms of given frame of reference, such as purpose, object, or source.

Accountability

The notion that people (e.g., students or teachers) or an organization (e.g., a school, school district, or state department of education) should be held responsible for improving student achievement, financial stewardship, community and student engagement, and should be rewarded or sanctioned for their success or lack of success in doing so. (Ed Source)

Accounting

The procedure of maintaining systematic records of events relating to persons, objects, or money and summarizing, analyzing, and interpreting the results of such records.

Accounting Period

A period at the end of which and for which financial statements are prepared; for example July 12 to June 30. (see also fiscal year)

Accounting System

The total mechanism of records and procedure of recording, retrieving, and reporting information on the financial position and operations of a governmental unit or any classifying of its funds, balanced account groups, and organizational components.

Accreditation

A process in which a certification of competency, authority or credibility is presented.

Accrual Basis

The basis or accounting under which revenues are recorded when earned or when levies are made, and expenditures are recorded as soon as they result in liabilities, regardless of when the revenue is actually received or the payments is actually made.

ACT Assessment®

The ACT Assessment® is designed by ACT Inc. (formerly American College Test), to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. Participation is voluntary. The test is generally administered six times a year. Students can choose to take the test multiple times. The examination covers four academic skill areas: English, Mathematics, Reading, and Science Reasoning. The scores for each section range from 1 to 36.

Activity Funds

Often referred to as activity funds; not included in the official school budget. Funds raised by district approved fundraising efforts or donations, not generated by Ad Valorem tax collections.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

An individual state's measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. Adequate yearly progress is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools must achieve each year, according to federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. This progress is determined by a collection of performance measures that a state, its school districts, and subpopulations of students within its schools are supposed to meet if the state receives Title I federal funding.

Adjusted Basic Allotment (ABA)

Calculation by the State using formulas which will determine monies entitled to the district. ABA multiplied by ADA will give the amount the district is to receive. (This adjustment to the basic allotment is an adjustment for varying cost of living across the state. School districts in higher cost of living areas will receive slightly more funds per ADA than districts in lower cost of living areas.

Adopted Budget

A budget that has been approved by the school board and community. It becomes the legal budget document of the school or campus. In Texas the deadline for adopting a district budget for the following year's budget is August 31.

Advanced Placement Program

The Advanced Placement Program® is a cooperative educational endeavor between secondary schools and colleges and universities. It provides motivated high school students with the opportunity to take college-level courses in a high school setting. Students who participate in the Program not only gain college-level skills, but in many cases they also earn college credit while they are still in high school. Typically, courses and examinations are taken by 11th and 12th grade students.

Ad Valorem Tax

Taxes levied on the assessed value of taxable property within district boundaries.

Alignment

The degree to which assessments, curriculum, instruction, textbooks and other instructional materials, teacher preparation and professional development, and systems of accountability all reflect and reinforce the educational program's objectives and standards. (Ed Source)

Appraisal District

The governmental body responsible for locating and appraising property, generally boundaries contiguous to counties. School districts must participate in the appraisal district.

Appraisal Review Board

The body appointed by the board of trustees of the appraisal district to review the appraisal roll to ensure that all property is on record and to equalize values of all types of property.

Appraised Value

The evaluation placed on property at 100 percent of fair market value.

Appropriation

This is a budgeting term used to describe the practice of setting aside (budgeting) money for a particular category of anticipated expenses such as salaries or teacher supplies. (See expenditure)

Assessment

The process of determining whether something has been accomplished and/or meets expectations. (See **Student Assessment** and **Teacher Assessment**)

Assessed Value

The value used by the taxing authority as a basis for levying taxes, e.g., the appraised value less the residence homestead exemption.

Assessed Valuation

The valuation of all property in the district as determined by the appraisal district. This is the property on which the district may levy taxes to raise money to support the school. (see tax rate)

Assets

Funds that can be applied to cover liabilities.

At Risk

A term applied to students who have not been adequately served by social service or educational systems and who are at risk of educational failure due to lack of services, negative life events, or physical or mental challenges, among others.

Available School Fund (ASF)

Each Texas school district and charter school is entitled, under Texas Constitution, to receive payments from the ASF for each eligible student enrolled. The ASF is primarily made up of revenue generated by the state's fuel tax and by the Permanent School Fund.

Average Daily Attendance (ADA)

Average Daily Attendance is based on the number of days of instruction in the school year. The aggregate day's attendance is divided by the number of day's instruction to compute the Average Daily Attendance.

Benchmark

Statement that provides a description of student knowledge expected at specific grades, ages, or developmental levels. Benchmarks often are used in conjunction with standards.

Bilingual/ESL allotment

Additional funds available to school districts dependent upon the number of students in ADA which require instruction in bilingual education or English as a second language.

Bilingual Services

The goal of bilingual education programs shall be to enable English language learners to become competent in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, in English language through the development of literacy and academic skills in the primary language and English.

Block Grant

State or federal aid given to a district according to statutory formula and can be used at the recipient's discretion on a variety of activities within a broad functional area. Federal Title I monies to provide a variety of programs for low-income children (see Socio-Economic Status) is an example of a Block Grant.

Bonded Indebtedness

Debt incurred by a district for which bonds were sold to borrow the money. Bonded debt is most often incurred when the district needs to finance facilities and/or purchase equipment.

CAD

County Appraisal District see also Appraisal District

Capital Outlay (Capital Expenditures)

An expenditure that results in the acquisition of fixed assets or addition to fixed assets. Expenditures for land, building construction or additions, improvements of grounds, equipment, etc. are capital outlay Expenditures.

Carl Perkins Funds

Career and technology education federal funds.

Categorical Aid

Money provided by the state or federal government for a specific use. (e.g. special education, transportation, etc.) (see General Aid)

Certification

A legal document that validates a person has completed a prescribed program of education and/or training and is approved to perform certain services. (e.g. teaching, nurse, etc.)

Certified Tax Roll

The tax roll that is adopted (certified) by Appraisal District Board as being the official or set values for a district (or county or other entity) for that tax year. Once the tax roll is certified, the district can use those appraised values as the basis for developing a budget and setting the tax rate.

Chapter 41

A school district that is property wealthy and subject to recapture.

Chapter 42

Below equalization standards, not subject to recapture.

Charter Schools

Publicly funded schools that are exempt from many state laws and regulations for school districts. They are run by groups of teachers, parents, and/or foundations. (Ed-data and SARC glossary)

Class Action Suit

Suit filed on behalf of a group of people who together are alleged to be victims of the same act or circumstances.

Class Size Reduction

A state mandate for kindergarten through fourth grade classes to ensure that there are no more than 20 students per teacher.

Classified Employees

School employees who are not required to hold teaching credentials, such as bus drivers, secretaries, custodians, instructional aides, and some management personnel. (Ed-data, Ed Source)

Closed Campus

This usually indicates that the school has one point of entry and a sign-in procedure as safety measures. It also refers to a high school that does not allow students to leave the campus for lunch or does not allow students to come and go without permission during the school day.

Cluster

The practice of placing small groups of students together for instruction.

College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)

CLEP tests are comprehensive examinations that, if taken and passed by students, can result in the student being awarded full university credit for a course without taking the course. Most universities will accept CLEP results in many lower level subject areas.

College Readiness

New set of standards required to determine if students are ready for college.

Collusion

All illegal secret agreement or understanding (usually among suppliers) that defrauds or works to the detriment of the district.

Compensatory Education (Comp. Ed.)

Additional funds given a school district based on pupils who are enrolled in the National lunch program. These monies must be used for the educational needs of these economically deprived students and for students who have been identified as "At Risk."

Competitive Bidding

Getting at least two responsible suppliers, acting independently and without collusion, to compete to sell goods and/or services to the school at the lowest price and under the most favorable conditions to the district.

Community College

A two-year college, also referred to as a junior college. Anyone who is 18 years old or holds a high school diploma (or equivalent) is eligible to attend a community college. Students can transfer from community colleges to a four year college to complete degree.

Community-Based Learning

Students, faculty, administrators, and community members working together to create new learning opportunities within local communities but generally outside traditional learning institutions.

Comparable Growth

Subgroups of students in a school must improve their scores on standardized tests. They are expected to achieve 80 percent of the predominant student group's target, which is known as comparable growth.

Conflict Management

A strategy that schools use to prevent and address behavior problems by using peer counselors, mediators, or a school curriculum or program. It usually includes a set of expectations for behavior.

Content Standards

Standards that describe what students should know and be able to do in core academic subjects at each grade level. (Ed Source)

Cooperative Learning

A teaching method in which students of differing abilities work together on an assignment. Each student has a specific responsibility within the group. Students complete assignments together and receive a common grade.

Core Academics

The required subjects in middle and high schools—usually English (literature), history (social studies), math, and science.

Crisis Management

A self plan to action in the case of crisis that each employee follows. The application of strategies designed to help an organization deal with a sudden and significant negative event.

Criterion-Referenced Assessment:

An assessment that measures what a student understands, knows, or can accomplish in relation to specific performance objectives. It is used to identify a student's specific strengths

and weaknesses in relation to skills defined as the goals of the instruction, but it does not compare students to other students.

Criterion-Referenced Test

A test that measures how well a student has learned a specific body of knowledge and skills. The goal is typically to have every student attain a passing mark, not to compare students to each other. (See norm-referenced assessment). (Ed Source)

Curriculum

The program of sequence courses taught in a school.

Curriculum Guide

A written plan of what is to be mastered by students in a particular course or subject. It contains, among other things, the objectives, student tasks, teacher strategies, resources, etc. A structure document that the components of a specific educational program. A structure document that delineates the components of a specific educational program.

Data-Driven Decision Making:

A process of making decisions about curriculum and instruction based on the analysis of classroom data and standardized test data. Data-driven decision making uses data on function, quantity and quality of inputs, and how students learn to suggest educational solutions. It is based on the assumption that scientific methods used to solve complex problems in industry can effectively evaluate educational policy, programs, and methods.

Debt Service

An amount of money set aside to pay the principal and interest of a debt.

Debt Service Fund

An account for payment of principal and interest on a general obligation debt.

Debt Service Tax (Also known as Interest and Sinking Fund and as I & S tax)

A tax levied to pay off bonded indebtedness.

Delayed Billing

Expenses that are incurred and billed to the district later.

Differentiated Instruction

This is also referred to as "individualized" or "customized" instruction. The curriculum offers several different learning experiences within one lesson to meet students' varied needs or learning styles.

Disaggregated Data

Disaggregated data simply means looking at test scores by specific subgroups of students. Typical ways to disaggregate student data are by gender, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, special education, and English as a Second Language (ESL).

Distance Learning:

Using technology such as two-way, interactive television, teacher and student(s) in different locations may communicate with one another as in a regular classroom setting.

Dropout

A grade seven through twelve student who left school prior to completing the school year and had not returned by Information Day. A student who is enrolled in grades 7-12, does not return to public school following fall, is not expelled, and does not: graduate, receive a GED, continue school outside the public school system, begin college, or die.

Edgewood vs. Kirby

Suit filed in Texas courts citing the system of funding education in violation of "equal protection" clause of the Texas constitution.

Effective Tax Rate

The tax rate that, if applied to the current tax roll, would raise the same amount of revenue as in the previous year. If values rise from the previous year, the effective tax rate would be less than the previous year's rate. If values fall, the effective tax rate would be higher.

Encumber

The process of charging purchase orders, salaries, and other proposed expenditures against an account (appropriation) at the time the purchase is approved rather than wait until the money is actually spent. In effect, an encumbrance reserves (freezes) that amount of money in an account so it cannot be accidentally spent for other purposes before the original item is paid for.

End of Course Exams (EOC)

A state mandated assessment for specific high school courses. Educational opportunities beyond that which is required.

English as a Second Language

Classes or support programs for students whose native language is not English.

Enrichment

Also local enrichment. The use of local tax revenue to purchase goods and services for improving the basic program guaranteed by the state.

Equal Protection Clause

Found in the 14th Amendment and Texas constitution, which grants all citizens of the United States equal protection of the law.

Equity

A concept of fairness and justice. It is most often applied to financial equity between districts and to differing levels of performance between and among ethnic groups.

ESEA

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, A Federal law.

Ethnic Origin (ethnicity)

The students in a district, school program, etc. that are of a particular race or ethnic background (e.g. African-American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, Anglo, etc.).

Evaluation

The process of judging the performance of an employee based on data gathered through an objective observation process. There are two types of evaluation: formative and summative. The Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS) is used for both formative and summative evaluation. (See formative evaluation, summative evaluation).

Exemption

An immunity from taxation as authorized by the Constitution. A partial exemption reduces taxable valuable of property; a total exemption precludes taxation on the property. Some districts adopt a Homestead Exemption, which is a partial exemption.

Expenditure

The actual spending of money from an appropriate account. (See appropriation).

Fine Arts

The courses or subjects in the curriculum that provide for creative expression. These course/subjects include art. Dance, music, drama, etc.

Fiscal

Of or relating to financial matters.

Fiscal Capacity

A quantitative measure reflecting the resources that a taxing jurisdiction is taxing, or could tax, (usually defined the assessed valuation multiplier by the maximum tax rate allowed by law) to raise revenue for public purposes.

Fiscal Year

A period of 12 consecutive months established by the state for developing a budget. In Texas the fiscal year for school district is September 1 and August 31. The fiscal year id designated by the Calendar year in which it ends (e.g. a fiscal year of September 1, 1998 – August 1, 1999 would be designated the 1999 fiscal year.)

Fixed Assets

Assets of a long term nature (land, buildings, furniture, machinery, etc) with a value of \$5,000 or more and may be controlled by a physical inventory system.

Formative Evaluation

An evaluation procedure designed for the express purpose of improving (forming) an employee so he/she is more productive. The role of the formative evaluator is to make a judgment on the areas in which the employee needs to improve his/her performance. The formative evaluator makes no judgment as to the value of the employee to the district e.g. whether the evaluator should be promoted, fired, etc. (See evaluation Summative evaluation).

Foundation School Program

A state funding formula that guarantees a minimum educational program, for all pupils in Texas. The money to support this program comes from the Permanent School Fund, and local ad valorem taxes. (Formally called the Minimum Foundation Program.)

Fraud

Intentional perversion of the truth in order to induce another to part with something of value or to surrender a legal right.

Free/Reduced-Price Meals

A federal program that provides food for students from low-income families. (Ed-data)

Function Code

A two digit accounting code used in a school budget to identify the purpose of the transaction (e.g. counseling). (Also see "Object Code").

Function /Object Budgeting Concept

Very popular method of budgeting. Function represent activities for which there are expenditures. (e.g. counseling). Objects are those specific services or commodities for which expenditures are made. (e.g. computer). There are main and sub accounts. Coded accounts can be provided even for individual schools in a district.

Fund Code

A three digit accounting code used in a school budget to identify how and when an expenditure is financed.

GED Test

A test administered by General Educational Development and generally accepted as a high school equivalency credential for those who never successfully completed the requirements for a high school diploma.

General Aid

State or Federal aid given to a school district with few or no strings attached as long as it is spent on education. (See Categorical Aid)

Gifted and Talented Grant (GT Grant)

A grant providing additional funds for pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented. These funds are to be used in the operation of the district's Gifted/Talented Program.

Gold Performance Acknowledgements

Recognition for high standards or comparable improvement compared to like districts.

Guidance Services (Counseling)

The assistance provided to students, parents and teachers by the school counselor. Academic counseling refers to assisting students with planning their class schedule, selecting a college or career, etc. Personal counseling refers to activities related to the student's personal and professional development and may encompass working with the child's teacher or parents.

Higher-Order Questions:

Questions that require thinking and reflection rather than single-solution responses.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills:

Understanding complex concepts and applying sometimes conflicting information to solve a problem, which may have more than one correct answer.

Highly Qualified Teacher

According to NCLB, a teacher who has obtained full state teacher certification or has passed the state teacher licensing examination and holds a license to teach in the state; holds a minimum of a bachelor's degree; and has demonstrated subject area competence in each of the academic subjects in which the teacher teaches. (Ed Source)

Immersion Education

A program that teaches children to speak, read, and write in a second language by surrounding them with conversation and instruction in that language. Note that English immersion may differ from other immersion programs.

Inclusion

The practice of placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms. Also known as mainstreaming. (Ed Source)

Independent Study

Specially designed instruction in courses taught through a variety of delivery methods that complement traditional high school curricula and provide an accredited diploma.

Individual Education Program (IEP)

A written plan created for a student with learning disabilities by the student's teachers, parents or guardians, the school administrator, and other interested parties. The plan is tailored to the student's specific needs and abilities, and outlines goals for the student to reach. The IEP should be reviewed at least once a year.

Incremental Budget

A budgeting process where each year's projected expenditures are based on the previous year's expenditures. (See "Zero-Based Budget").

Instruction

Any and all strategies a teacher employs to teach the curriculum.

Integrated Curriculum

Refers to the practice of using a single theme to teach a variety of subjects. It also refers to a interdisciplinary curriculum, which combines several school subjects into one project.

International Baccalaureate

The International Baccalaureate Organization's Diploma Program was created in 1968 and provides a demanding pre-university course of study that leads to examinations that are recognized in over 100 countries around the world. It is designed for highly motivated secondary school students in their junior/senior years. Schools wishing to offer IB courses must go through an application process and be approved by IBO.

Intervention

The term refers to funds that schools get for students who are not learning at grade level. They can be used to fund before-school or afterschool programs or to pay for materials and instructors.

Job Shadowing

A program that takes students into the workplace to learn about careers through one-day orientations or more extensive internships to see how the skills learned in school relate to the workplace.

Learner-Centered Classroom:

Classroom in which students are encouraged to choose their own learning goals and projects. This approach is based on the belief that students have a natural inclination to learn, learn better when they work on real or authentic tasks, benefit from interacting with diverse groups of people, and learn best when teachers understand and value the difference in how each student learns.

Liability

Amount owed or to be paid out; a debt.

Levy

To impose tax or special assessments. Also the total taxes or special assessments imposed by a governmental unit.

Local Revenue

Monies raised by a school district through local ad valorem (property) taxes.

Magnet School

A school that focuses on a particular discipline, such as science, mathematics, arts, or computer science. It is designed to recruit students from other parts of the school district.

Maintenance and Operation (M&O) Tax

The local district tax for operating schools. This does not include funds for capital outlay of debt retirement.

Mainstreaming

The practice of placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms; also known as inclusion. (Ed Source)

Manipulatives

Three-dimensional teaching aids and visuals that teachers use to help students with math concepts. Typical tools include counting beads or bars, base ten blocks, shapes, fraction parts, and rulers.

Market Value (MV)

Sometimes called fair market value. The price that a piece of property will bring on the open market between a willing buyer and a willing seller.

National Blue Ribbon Award

This award honors public and private K–12 schools that are academically superior or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement.

NCLB (No Child Left Behind)

Signed into law by President Bush in 2002, No Child Left Behind sets performance guidelines for all schools and also stipulates what must be included in accountability reports to parents. It mandates annual student testing, includes guidelines for underperforming schools, and requires states to train all teachers and assistants to be "highly qualified".

Norm-Referenced Assessment

An assessment in which an individual or group's performance is compared with a larger group. Usually the larger group is representative of a cross-section of all US students. (Ed Source)

Object Code

A four digit accounting code used in a school budget to indicate what is purchased (e.g. computer). (Also see "Function Code")

Observation

The process of observing an employee to gather and record objective data on the employee's performance for the purpose of conducting an evaluation.

Outcome-based Education

An integrated system of educational programs that aligns specific student outcomes, instructional methods, and assessment.

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

A national organization of parents, teachers, and other interested persons that has chapters in schools. They rely entirely on voluntary participation and offer assistance to schools in many different areas. (See also PTO)

Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)

Independent non-profit organization formed by parents, teachers and school staff to support their local school. PTOs can apply for tax-exempt status from the IRS to aid in their mission of supporting their local school. Generally are not part of a national network and therefore, do not pay dues to a national office. (See also PTA)

Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR)

A program that encourages designated consulting teachers to assist other teachers who need help in developing their subject matter knowledge, teaching strategies, or both. They also help teachers to meet the standards for proficient teaching.

Peer Resource Program

A program that trains students to provide their peers with counseling, education, and support on issues such as prejudice, drugs, violence, child abuse, dropping out, AIDS, and peer pressure. Students are also trained to provide tutoring and conflict mediation.

Per Capita

Funds distributed to school districts on the basis of the number of students in attendance.

Permanent School Fund (PSF)

A perpetual trust fund established to hold and distribute funds from the sale of state lands and minerals dedicated to education. Earnings from the PSF are apportioned to districts annually on ADA basis.

Physical Education (PE)

Activities focused on developing physical and motor fitness; fundamental motor skills and patterns; and skills in aquatics, dance, individual and group games, and sports (including

intramural and lifetime sports). The term includes special PE, adaptive PE, movement education, and motor development.

Plan

A set of strategies designed to achieve a goal, i.e. to influence the outcome of future events to our advantage.

Portfolio

A collection of various samples of a student's work throughout the school year that can include writing samples, examples of math problems, and results of science experiments. (Ed Source)

Primary Language

A student's first language or the language spoken at home.

Professional Development

Programs that allow teachers or administrators to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs successfully. (Ed Source)

Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS)

Proficiency

Mastery or ability to do something at grade level. California students receive scores on the California Standards Tests (CST) that range from "far below basic" to "advanced." The state goal is for all students to score at "proficient" or "advanced." (Ed Source)

Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS)

The system used by the Texas Education Agency to gather uniform, accurate data on student performance, finance, and personnel of public schools.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

The total student enrollment divided by the number of full-time equivalent teachers. The pupil-teacher ratio is the most common statistic for comparing data across states; it is usually smaller than average class size because some teachers work outside the classroom. (Ed-data)

Professional Staff

An employee holding a position for which the Texas Education Agency requires the employee to hold a certificate issued by TEA. (See certification, support staff).

Proration

If state's share of the cost of education exceeds amount appropriated by the legislature, each district's state aid is reduced proportionally. Since the figure may not be known until after the budget is developed, prudent districts develop budgets that allow for state Proration (reduction) of its contribution to districts.

Purchase Order

An order to buy tangible items or services. This is usually preceded by a requisition and must be signed by the building principal and other district business officials.

Reading Proficiency Tests in English (RPTE)

The RPTE are designed to measure annual growth in the English reading proficiency of second language learners, and are used along with English and Spanish TAKS to provide a comprehensive assessment system for limited English proficient (LEP) students. LEP students in Grades 3-12 are required to take the RPTE until they achieve a rating of advanced.

Recapture

Monies that property wealthy districts must return to the state.

Recidivism

Repeated or habitual recurrence of anti-social activity. It is also the term used to describe how often (the rate) students return to the same alternative program or school because of the student's repeated failure to behave appropriately in a regular school setting.

Reconcile

To check a financial account with another for accuracy.

Requisition

A request to purchase an item or service that is submitted for approval and will result in a purchase order being issued.

Resource Specialists

Specially credentialed teachers who work with special education students by assisting them in regular classes or pulling them out of class for extra help.

Resource Teacher

A teacher who instructs children with various learning differences. Most often these teachers use small group and individual instruction. Children are assigned to resource teachers after undergoing testing and receiving an IEP.

Rollback Rate

An annual tax rate which, if exceeded, is subject to voter petition and possibly a vote to have the taxes rolled back to the previous year's level.

Rubric

Refers to a grading or scoring system. A rubric is a scoring tool that lists the criteria to be met in a piece of work. A rubric also describes levels of quality for each of the criteria. These levels of performance may be written as different ratings (e.g., Excellent, Good, Needs Improvement) or as numerical scores (e.g., 4, 3, 2, 1).

SAT (Standardized Achievement Test)

The SAT® (formerly known as the Scholastic Aptitude Test) is developed by the College Board to assess high school students' readiness for college-level work. Taking the test is voluntary but many universities require SAT scores be submitted as a condition of admission review. The examination is generally administered seven times a year. Students can choose to take the test multiple times. The SAT I: Reasoning Test consists of two sections: Verbal and Mathematics. The scores for each section range from 200 to 800. A perfect score is 1600.

School Improvement Program (SIP)

A state-funded program for elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools to improve instruction, services, school environment and organization at school sites according to plans developed by School Site Councils (see School Site Council).

School Site Based

A group of teachers, parents, administrators, and interested community members who work together to develop and monitor a school's improvement plan. It is a legally required decision-making body for any school receiving federal funds (see School Improvement Plan).

Sheltered Instruction

An instructional approach in which classes are composed entirely of students learning English. Students are taught using methods that make academic instruction in English understandable. In some schools, students may be clustered in a mainstream classroom.

Socio-Economically Disadvantaged

Students whose parents do not have a high school diploma or who participate in the federally funded free/reduced price meal program because of low family income. (Ed Source)

Socio-Economic Status (SES)

A classification system for students based on total family income and the number of people in the family. Students classified as "Low SES" fall below one of the levels and thereby qualify for certain types of financial assistance such as a free or reduced price lunch.

Special Education

Special instruction provided for students with educational or physical disabilities, tailored to each student's needs and learning style.

Staff Development Days / Professional Development

Time set aside in the school calendar for staff training. School may or may not be held on these days.

Standardized Tests

Tests developed by professional test makers and given to thousands of students from across the state or nation. Standardized tests are used by school districts to compare the performance of their students with students from other districts, the state, or the nation. The SAT and TAAS tests are examples of standardized tests.

State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA)

The SDAA assesses special education students in Grades 3-8 who are receiving instruction in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) but for whom TAKS is an inappropriate measure of their academic progress. SDAA becomes a part of the school accountability system in the 2002-2003 school year.

State Revenue

Monies raised by the state for education for distribution to local districts through specific formulas.

Student Assessment

In Its simplest terms, a performance assessment is one which requires students to demonstrate that they have mastered specific skills and competencies by performing or producing something. Assessment can be based on teacher exams, writing samples, artwork, homework, standardized tests, and a host of other devices.

STAAR - State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness

TELPAS - Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System.

Summative Evaluation

An evaluation procedure designed to “sum up” the areas of effective and ineffective performance of an employee and determine whether the employee will be promoted or not promoted, retained or dismissed. In short, the role of the summative evaluator is to judge the value of the employee to the district and, that stage, has no responsibility for helping the employee to improve. (see evaluation, formative evaluation).

Support Staff

An employee holding a position that does not require the employee to be certified by the Texas Education Agency. (See certification, professional staff).

Tax Base

Assessed valuation of real estate and other properties that a school district may tax for yearly operation monies and debt service.

Taxing Unit / Entity

County, city, school district, and other governmental agencies that tax citizens.

Tax Levy

The total revenue collected from local taxes.

Tax Rate

The amount of money the board establishes that every property owner must pay for each \$100 of value assessed on the property he/she owns. (See assessed valuation).

Team Teaching / CO Teaching

A teaching method in which two or more teachers teach the same subjects or theme. The teachers may alternate teaching the entire group or divide the group into sections or classes that rotate between the teachers

Tech Prep Programs

These are coordinated programs between high schools and colleges that are designed to provide high school students with a continuing education program that is articulated with a college or university. The program builds on the last two to three years of high school and either the first two or all four years of college. These programs are designed to eliminate duplication of instruction and provide training in a focused curriculum or technical skill area. Students who meet the requirements of the articulation agreements may receive college credit for high school coursework.

TELPAS

Assesses the progress that Limited English Proficient (LEP) students make in learning the English language.

Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR)

The system used by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to rate the academic quality of Texas public schools. The system utilizes test results, dropout rates, and similar factors to arrive at its ratings.

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills(TAKS)

The TAKS measures the statewide curriculum in reading at Grades 3-9; in writing at Grades 4 and 7; in English Language Arts at Grades 10 and 11; in mathematics at Grades 3-11; in science at Grades 5,10, and 11; and social studies at Grades 8, 10, and 11. The Spanish TAKS is administered at Grades 3 through 6. Satisfactory performance on the TAKS at Grade 11 is prerequisite to a high school diploma. Will be phased out with the implementation of STAAR.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)

The THECB was created by the legislature in 1965 to "provide leadership and coordination for the Texas Higher Education System to achieve excellence for the College Education of Texas students."

Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS)

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, comprise the state-mandated curriculum guidelines that establish what every student, from elementary school through high school, should know and be able to do.

Thematic Units

A unit of study that has lessons focused on a specific theme, sometimes covering all core subject areas. It is often used as an alternative approach to teaching history or social studies chronologically.

Tier One of SB 351

Financing for basic program of education that meets accreditation and other legal standards.

Tier Two of SB 351

Guaranteed-yield financing to provide equal access to funds for enrichment programs and qualified facilities.

Title 1

A federal program that provides funds to improve the academic achievement for educationally disadvantaged students who score below the 50th percentile on standardized tests, including the children of migrant workers. (Ed Source)

Tracking

A common instructional practice of organizing student in groups based on their academic skills. Tracking allows a teacher to provide the same level of instruction to the entire group.

Transportation Allotment

An entitlement (categorical aid) to a district to assist in funding the cost of transporting children.

TREX - (Texas Records Exchange)

TREX is a web-based software application designed to facilitate the exchange of student records between districts and universities.

Unit Budgeting

The act of delegating planning decisions in the construction of a budget, devising an accounting system that delegates monitoring functions to the employee in charge of the defined unit.

Valuation per ADA

A commonly used measure of fiscal capacity or wealth that is calculated by dividing the total district's estimated property value by the average daily attendance.

Vocational / Career and Technical Education

Courses and programs in the curriculum that prepare students for employability in an occupation that may require a certificate or two year college degree. These programs are dedicated to preparing young people to manage the dual roles of family member and wage earner. Career and technical programs enable students to gain entry level employment in a high-skill, high wage job.

Waiver Request

Written statement from a school district citing reasons for inability to comply mandate and requesting more time in order to do so.

WADA (Weighted Average Daily Attendance)

Figure used in State funding formulas to calculate the amount of state and local funds a district is entitled to.

Whole Language

A teaching method that focuses on reading for meaning in context.

Wide Area Network (WAN)

Wealth

The relative ability of a school district to raise monies from local property taxes. When measured by the state wealth is usually expressed as "valuation per ADA" or "wealth per student".

Weighted Pupil

A school finance approach where in a certain dollar amount per pupil is allocated per pupil with some students getting a higher amount or "weight" because of the higher cost needs of certain students (e.g. special education students).

Year-Round Education

A modified school calendar that gives students short breaks throughout the year, instead of the traditional three-month summer break. Year-round calendars vary, sometimes within the same school district. Some schools use the staggered schedule to relieve overcrowding, while others believe the summer break allows students to forget much of the material covered in the previous year.

Zero-Based Budget

A budgeting process where each department or cost center must begin at zero and develop a budget based on proven needs. (See "Incremental Budget")