

Effectiveness

& EFFICIENCY

School Reviews

Executive Summary

Prepared for the
Board of Education
Wakeeney Unified School District
USD #208
February 11, 2013



Center for Innovative School Leadership

Emporia State University • Fort Hays State University • Pittsburg State University

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The function of the Center for Innovative School Leadership (CISL) is to conduct school efficiency reviews for school districts on a voluntary basis to help them realize greater efficiency and effectiveness. CISL was created through Kansas Senate Bill No. 304 in the 2004 legislative session as a cooperative endeavor between Emporia State University, Fort Hays State University, and Pittsburg State University.

The review process used by CISL is modeled after successful programs conducted in Arizona, Texas, and Virginia. The goal of CISL is to identify best practices, cost savings, and potential efficiency and effectiveness strategies for school districts in the areas of leadership, teaching and learning, facilities management, and human resources. CISL will identify good practices to be shared with other school districts and provide insight for school districts to realize greater efficiency in overall school operations.

The studies are not a review of classroom instruction or teaching strategies. The information provided by CISL can, however, assist with student achievement to help the district reach the ultimate goal: producing an environment for students to learn at higher levels.

Highlights found through the review process are provided here, including:

- **an overview of Wakeeney School District #208**
- **a comparison of Wakeeney to peer and region schools**
- **highlights from reports written by team members who interviewed school district personnel**
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency School Review survey results**

A full report will be issued following the presentation of the executive summary. All reports are public documents.

WAKEENEY SCHOOL DISTRICT #208

The Wakeeney School District is one of several school districts volunteering to participate in the school efficiency review process. We thank them for their willingness to be involved with this project.

The review of Wakeeney's school district was initiated in September 2012 and concluded in February 2013. This report will identify best practices of the Wakeeney school district and provide suggestions on ways to further improve the district's operation efficiencies.

School district profile information:

- The Wakeeney school district is located in Trego County in Northwest Kansas. Wakeeney is the only school district located in the county.
- The 2011 U.S. Census data reports Trego county had an estimated population of 2,930. In 2000, the census reported an estimated 3,319 resided in the county. This is a 13% decline in the county's population.
- The racial makeup of the school district is over 94% Caucasian; this figure has been relatively steady over the years. This compares to a 90% average in the region schools, a 93% average among peer schools, and a statewide average of 67%.
- The school district consists of 707 square miles compared to the state average of 286.8 square miles per school district.
- Wakeeney school district currently employs 70 employees, including 41.5 certified teaching and administrative staff.
- The 2011-2012 budgeted general fund and supplemental general fund was \$3,940,665.
- In 2011-2012 the average teacher's salary was \$49,673. This compares to an average of \$45,698 in region schools, \$47,713 among peer schools, and a statewide average of \$48,956.
- In 2011-2012 the average administrator's salary was \$67,258. This compares to an average of \$77,382 in region schools, \$75,647 among peer schools, and a statewide average of \$85,539.
- In 2011-2012, the 20-year salary trend for teachers was ranked 126th in the state. The region average was 189th, and the peer average was 173rd.
- In 2011-2012 the pupil-teacher ratio was 11.6:1. This compares to an average of 10.9:1 in region schools, 11.7:1 among peer schools, and a statewide average of 15.1:1.

COMPARISONS TO PEER AND REGION SCHOOLS

CISL has established peer and region schools to support comparability of selected criteria. There were four peer schools selected and 15 region schools to which Wakeeney was compared. The peer schools were selected based on similar size, similar socio-economical status, and performance based on state test results. The region schools were selected based on school districts that are in contiguous counties which include Ellis, Gove, Graham, Ness, Rooks, Rush, and Sheridan counties. The peer schools selected are Clifton-Clyde #224, North Lyon County #251, St. Francis #297, and Valley Falls #338. Comparisons between Wakeeney and these peer schools are explored in further detail in the complete report; the full report also includes all school survey results, and the full findings by the Wakeeney review team.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM REPORTS

Team members were selected to evaluate the school district in the areas of leadership, teaching and learning, facilities management, and human resources. Each team member submitted reports with findings, commendations, recommendations, and impacts. An extended report will be submitted in the future with the full findings. Included here are highlights from the commendations, recommendations, and projected impacts.

COMMENDATIONS:

Facilities Management

Energy Management

1. The district has undertaken HVAC operations set-backs and temperature settings to control utility costs and pay-off a performance contract for recent HVAC and lighting improvements.

Custodial and Maintenance Services

1. Facilities and sites are neat, orderly, clean and well maintained.

Organization and Management

1. The district has recently refinanced outstanding bond indebtedness to reduce overall cost for district taxpayers.

Safety and Security

1. Facilities show no evidence of vandalism or damages reflecting positively on the administration, teaching and classified staff, students, and patrons. It is evident the community as a whole takes pride in the conditions of the buildings and sites.

Human Resources

Evaluation and Supervision

1. Walk-throughs are utilized by administrators.

Organization and Management

1. The superintendent keeps administrators up-to-date on policies and procedures. Communication among administrators/directors is effective. The twice a month administrator meetings allow a positive flow of communication.

Personnel Policies and Procedures

1. Ongoing professional development is available for those who request it, based on availability of funds.

Salary, Wages, and Benefits

1. Bus driver pay has increased to \$11.99 per hour, in an effort to attract more bus drivers.
2. A benefit package exists for licensed staff.

Leadership

Administrative Team

1. The principals and superintendent use McREL's walk-through protocol when visiting classrooms.

Board of Education

1. Board meetings are well focused and normally are conducted in 150 minutes or less.

Parent/Patron Organizations

1. The schools have active and supportive parent groups.

Teaching & Learning

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

1. Patrons feel teachers are doing their very best and students are safe at school.

Staff Development

1. The superintendent guides and directs staff development needs in a professional manner with consideration given to the professional development needs of teachers.

Support Services

1. The community is supportive of the district teachers and feels that most teachers work to their full potential to support student learning needs.

Technology

1. The district technology plan is complete and provides a guide for improved technology over the next few years, if budget authority remains in place for this expenditure.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Facilities Management

Organization and Management

1. It is recommended the district review and re-emphasizes competitive solicitation for the purchase of products and services for all of the operations areas: maintenance, custodial, food service, and transportation. Interviews and discussions produced a mixed bag of understandings of the USD 208 Purchasing Guidelines.

Impact: This would enhance cost savings. A 5% to 10% reduction of would result in a net saving in the range of \$17,000 to \$33,000 based on the noted 2012-2013 budget line items.

2. It is recommended the district review and enforce (as necessary) an annual inventory of the district's equipment. Individual buildings retain responsibility for the annual review, and Board of Education policy dictates annual updates be completed and turned into the district office prior to the last contract day.

Impact: This would ensure property is being properly managed and appropriate insurance coverage is being maintained.

Safety and Security

1. It is recommended custodial staff be trained and regularly drilled on how to locate and cut off major utility services such as electrical mains and disconnects, natural gas valves, water service valves, etc. Interviews indicated custodial staff do not know where or how to cut off all utility services should an emergency occur.

Impact: This would help prevent unnecessary risks to building occupants, and prevent unneeded damages should an emergency situation occur.

Transportation

1. It is recommended the district review and evaluate options to attract and maintain qualified bus drivers. Possible options noted by members of the CISL review team included:
 - guaranteed 4 hour minimum per day compensation
 - increased per hour, or per trip compensation
 - additional employee benefits offerings such as health insurance participation
 - incentives for other district staff to drive busses
 - the establishment of combined full time job offerings such as custodian/bus driver position; mechanic/bus driver position; food service/bus driver position, etc.

Impact: This would reduce bus driver turn-over and provide adequate staffing for both regular route and activities bus driver positions.

Human Resources

Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

1. It is recommended exit interviews be conducted on all exiting employees, regardless of their reason for leaving employment with the district.

- Impact:** Conducting exit interviews with all employees can ascertain why employees are leaving the district and what can be done to improve working conditions in that job. This information can be used to make plans for the future and to ensure that once quality applicants are obtained, they are retained.
2. It is recommended the district develop a comprehensive plan for advertising jobs to prospective employees. This plan should include "thinking outside the box" in order to attract applicants. Ideas of what might be included (these are just a few of the many that could be utilized):
- When a classified job is advertised list all benefits of the job such as: family working atmosphere, ability to re-arrange schedule to occasionally attend a child's school function, KPERS (and what that means), being able to be on the same schedule as your child, etc.
 - Put a "Help Wanted - Bus Drivers" banner on a bus and sit it on school grounds that lists benefits of being a bus driver, including providing training and paying for a CDL, while parents are attending a school function.
 - Posting fliers in high traffic areas of businesses in town. Even having a "help wanted" sign in the window of the district office and buildings might be needed.
 - Engaging PTO and Site Council members to help campaign for applicants.
 - Providing options for bus drivers such as allowing them to be a Para in between routes, if they are in need of a full-time job.
 - Offering to split routes with teachers (perhaps five different teachers each drive a morning or evening route one day a week). Some teachers may like having this "part-time" job in order to pick up some extra money. Offering to train and pay for the CDL would be helpful.
- Anything that is tried needs to be something that would benefit the district. Therefore, it might be helpful to run some of these ideas by patrons, via a survey, to determine what they feel would make a job more attractive.
- Impact:** This would attract applicants to jobs. Thought should be given as to how to communicate these vacancies with their benefits to prospective applicants.

Salary, Wages, and Benefits

1. It is recommended the district develop classified salary schedules and increase pay to a level competitive with area jobs. Furthermore, it is recommended this same thought be given to substitute teachers in order to have enough quality substitutes in the district. Information as to what to consider when developing classified salary schedules can be found in the Human Resources Resource list found in the back of this document.
- Impact:** This would attract and retain the best employees. Care must be given to increase pay to a competitive level. Long-term employees also should be receiving competitive pay for their work.

2. It is recommended the district develop a benefit package for classified staff, similar to one available to licensed staff.

Impact: This would be a benefit for working in a job. Because some classified positions are very difficult to fill, having the benefit of health insurance might make the job more appealing. If the district feels it cannot afford to pay an entire single policy, perhaps it could apply some money towards a policy. At the very least, health insurance should be available to any employee who would like to purchase it. Additionally, longevity pay/early retirement should also be looked at for classified staff.

Leadership

Administrative Team

1. The administration should engage the staff in the development of the new teacher evaluation instrument. After development the administrative staff development should put into operation training activities to improve their teacher evaluation skills. The training should be based on current best practice. The superintendent and administrators should work together to practice and calibrate their skills.

Impact: Teacher evaluation to improve student learning is the primary duty of the administration. A comprehensive structured process that aligns with the instructional vision of the district and the teachers stated job description will improve the knowledge and skill of the instructional staff and ultimately improve student learning.

Board of Education

1. It is recommended the district develop a set of group norms to govern their activities. The Board of Education should gain a common understanding of their role in policy making which will allow them to stay away from school administration issues. The Board should focus on:
 - What they want in regard to school district policy.
 - Why they want the school district policy.
 - If time sensitive, when they want the district policy.

The school administration should always be left to address:

- How the school district policy is implemented.
- Where the school district policy is implemented.
- If not time sensitive, when the district policy is implemented.

The Board should also adhere to a procedure of; we review, discuss and dialog as much as necessary to insure that everyone understands the issue and has had an opportunity to provide input on the issue. We vote, and no matter how the vote turns out, we support the majority 100%.

Impact: This would eliminate the-type of turmoil caused by changing an athletic league affiliation.

District Planning and Goal Setting

1. It is recommended the district develop a long range (3-5 years) strategic plan. The plan should be created by the Board of Educations and Superintendent with input from patrons, parents, staff, students and administrators. It is also recommended a facilitator/consultant guide this process. If

the Board of Education plans to include non-traditional strategic planning, they may wish to look into the process of Scenario Building. Dr. Mike Cook, ESSDACK Executive Director, 1500 E. 11th Ave. #200, Hutchinson, KS 67501 620-663-9566 would be a good person to contact in regard to this process.

Impact: This would create a plan to serve as a road map for the district to make progress on achieving the mission of the district. The strategic plan would provide a way to measure that progress through benchmarks and assess the district's effectiveness in reaching their goals.

2. It is recommended, with the continued rural enrollment decreases and state reduced funding, the districts look to cooperate to the fullest extent possible. The board should establish quarterly meetings with neighboring school district representatives to review current cooperative ventures and explore additional ways to cooperate. The superintendent should be requested to meet at least once a month with neighboring superintendents to communicate on current issues. These meetings would also be used to develop agendas for the quarterly meetings. The superintendent should report to the board the agendas and results of these activities.

Impact: These meetings would form the basis for improved communication and cooperation with neighboring districts. All entities can help each other to meet the challenges they face. The strategic plan study might be enhanced through exploring ways contiguous districts can cooperate in regard to the facility, technology, virtual school, and staffing challenges the districts are facing.

Parent/Patron Organizations

1. It is recommended the district convene a task force consisting of teachers, parents and community representatives to better understand why Site Councils are so weak within the district. The task force should include individuals from each of the schools in the district. The district might consider how to join the efforts of the active school/parent/patron organizations in the district with the function of the Site Councils.

Impact: This would create Site Councils that are having more impact and fulfilling their purpose. Site Councils can be an effective means to not only share information with patrons, community members and parents about the school district but also a process by which Site Council members can inform district personnel of ideas to improve the learning environments in the schools. Effective and efficient site councils would support and enhance the school improvement process. Members who are knowledgeable about the function of their role in an organization can become supportive of new initiatives. When initiatives create conflict it becomes very important for people to understand their role and to have the information that would benefit other.

Teaching & Learning

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

1. It is recommended a formal process be established to make sure curriculum guides are **used**, and instruction and instructional assessments are aligned with the Common Core State Standards. The use of a walk-through process, coaching, and clinical supervision would assist with monitoring the use of aligned curriculum guides and instructional assessments.

Impact: This change would support higher achievement and mastery of the standards.

Staff Development

1. It is strongly recommended the district leadership increase communication efforts about the directions and goals of instruction and subsequent student learning. The administration has a number of good plans; however, the written plans and communication of how those ideas are to be implemented are not reaching the teaching staff, who will be directly implementing these instructional and curricular decisions.

Impact: This would provide a clearer direction and delivery of goals among the teaching staff and increase the knowledge level of the stakeholders. Direct communication and delivery to the stakeholders is imperative.

Support Services

1. It is recommended the district consider creating more cooperative agreements with neighboring districts to serve the needs of students, especially in areas that have been cut.

Impact: This would allow for financial sharing of expenses and more opportunities for students.

Technology

1. It is recommended the district revisit and design a technology implementation plan that could over time, put more technology into student's hands to increase productivity and creativity.

Impact: This would make the students more fully prepared for the rigorous requirements of 21st Century learning skills.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY SCHOOL REVIEW SURVEY RESULTS

ADMINISTRATORS AND BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS SURVEY RESULTS

Of the administrators and board of education members in the Wakeeney school district, five completed the survey. Of all the statements administrators and board of education members were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Administrators and Board of Education Members:

- All of the responding administrators and board of education members thought the school's support staff (secretary, aides, cafeteria staff, etc.) were effective in supporting the educational program.
- Three out of the five responding administrators and board of education members feel the administrators are providing opportunities for staff development.

Recommendations from Administrators and Board of Education Members:

- The majority of the five responding administrators and board of education members were not satisfied with the advanced placement (high school) in the educational programs and instruction for students in their schools.
- Half of the responding administrators and board of education members are not satisfied with the instructional materials and resources available to support the educational program (such as library materials, science labs, and art and music resources).

CLASSIFIED STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Of all the classified staff in the Wakeeney school district, 19 completed the survey. Of all the statements classified staff were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Classified Staff:

- 13 out of the 19 responding classified staff felt the superintendent is very effective in providing the leadership for the school district.
- The majority of the responding classified staff thought the building principals are effective providing leadership for their schools.
- 14 of the 19 responding classified staff said the schools are clean.
- The majority of the responding classified staff felt the district respond well to repairing and maintaining school facilities.

Recommendations from Classified Staff:

- Half of the responding classified staff were not satisfied with the vocational (career and technology) in the educational programs and instruction for students in their schools.
- Nearly half of the responding classified staff were not satisfied with the opportunities classified staff have in providing suggestions to improve the school.
- 10 of the responding classified staff thought the district salaries were not competitive with similar positions in the job market.

PARENTS' SURVEY RESULTS

Of all the parent/patrons in the Wakeeney school district, 49 completed the survey. Of all the statements parents/patrons were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Parents:

- 44 of the 49 responding parent/patrons thought schools' support staff (secretary, aides, cafeteria staff, etc.) are helpful or very helpful to parents and students.
- The majority of responding parent/patrons felt very satisfied with the counseling program in providing for the social and emotional needs of students.
- The majority of responding parent/patrons thought parents were quickly notified if a child is late or absent from school.

Recommendations from Parents:

- Over half of responding parent/patrons said the Board of Education does not allow sufficient time for public input at meetings.
- A third of responding parent/patrons were not satisfied with the vocational (career and technology) from the educational programs and instruction for students in their district.

STUDENTS' SURVEY RESULTS

Of all the students in the Wakeeney school district, 59 completed the survey. Of all the statements students were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Students:

- The majority of responding students are satisfied with the quality of education they are receiving from the schools.
- Nearly all of responding students said teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.
- The majority of responding students feel safe at school.
- The majority of responding students thought schools are clean.

Recommendations from Students:

- Over half of the responding students said the Board of Education and administration does not listen well to students about improving the school program.
- The majority of the responding students said drugs and alcohol are a problem in this district.

TEACHERS' SURVEY RESULTS

Of all the teachers in the Wakeeney school district, 30 completed the survey. Of all the statements teachers were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Teachers:

- 28 out of the 30 responding teachers found the superintendent effective or very effective in providing leadership for the school district.
- 27 out of the 30 responding teachers said Central office staff is effective or very effective in supporting the educational program.
- 29 of the 30 responding teachers thought students and faculty feel safe or very safe at school.

Recommendations from Teachers:

- Nearly half of the responding teachers said the orientation program for new employees to the district is not effective.
- Half of the responding teachers thought the counseling provided for teachers who perform below the standard of expectation if not timely and appropriate.
- The majority of the responding teachers feel the district does not reward teachers for superior performance well.