

**A Curriculum Audit™**  
of the  
**FORT BEND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
Sugar Land, Texas



*Sienna Crossing Elementary 5th grade students observing an animal/plant ecosystem*



**Texas Curriculum Management Audit Center**  
**Texas Association of School Administrators**  
**406 East Eleventh**  
**Austin, Texas 78701**

**July 2013**

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**of the**  
**FORT BEND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Sugar Land, Texas**

**Conducted Under the Auspices of**  
**Texas Curriculum Management Audit Center**  
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**406 East Eleventh**  
**Austin, Texas 78701**

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**Date Audit Presented: July 2013**

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## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TCMAC-CMSI CURRICULUM AUDIT™ TEAM FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE FORT BEND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Based on the three streams of data derived from interviews, documents, and site visits, the TCMAC-CMSi Curriculum Audit™ Team has developed a set of recommendations to address its findings shown under each of the standards of the audit.

In the case of the findings, they have been triangulated, i.e., corroborated with one another. In the case of the recommendations, those put forth in this section are representative of the auditors' best professional judgments regarding how to address the problems that surfaced in the audit.

The recommendations are presented in the order of their criticality for initiating system-wide improvements. The recommendations also recognize and differentiate between the policy and monitoring responsibilities of the board of trustees, and the operational and administrative duties of the superintendent of schools.

Where the TCMAC-CMSi audit team views a problem as wholly or partly a policy and monitoring matter, the recommendations are formulated for the board of trustees. Where the problem is distinctly an operational or administrative matter, the recommendations are directed to the superintendent of schools as the chief executive officer of the school system. In many cases, the TCMAC-CMSi audit team directs recommendations to both the board and the superintendent, because it is clear that policy and operations are related, and both entities are involved in a proposed change. In some cases, there are no recommendations to the superintendent when only policy is involved or none to the board when the recommendations deal only with administration.

Audit recommendations are presented as follows: The overarching goals for the board and/or the superintendent, followed by the specific objectives to carry out the overarching goals. The latter are designated "Governance Functions" and "Administrative Functions."

**Recommendation 1: Adopt policies governing the management of the table of organization and related job descriptions. Revise the table of organization consistent with sound management principles. Reconfigure personnel to ensure that all essential functions are covered—especially those relating to curriculum design, delivery, assessments, data management and analysis, and program evaluation. Revise and adopt a set of quality job descriptions that are linked to appraisal instruments for all personnel.**

The single most critical need in the Fort Bend Independent School District is to bring curriculum development, revision, renewal, professional development, assessment, and the sequencing, pacing, and communication of change under a the direction of a single administrator. As indicated in Finding 1.1, "While there are several competent administrators, with their various 'controls,' performing a variety of curricular and support related functions within the school district, there is no one actually 'in control' of all the functions relating to the total design and delivery of the district's written, taught, and tested curriculum." This circumstance has resulted in fragmentation, compartmentalization, and a lack of clear direction with blurring of the lines of authority and responsibility. High turnover (see Exhibit 1.1.1) in key leadership positions has further exacerbated these problems. The consequence is that the functions of planning, communication, curriculum development, professional development, assessment, and resource allocations are not sufficiently integrated to assure a totally coherent school system. Similarly, a number of key leadership positions have excessive supervisory responsibilities (see Finding 1.4—Span of Control), which make it impossible to provide the essential support to principals and teachers needed to maximize student achievement.

Alignment between job descriptions, day-to-day operations, personnel evaluation, and the table of organization is, in some cases, inconsistent or missing. Auditors found that Fort Bend ISD lacks adequate policies and procedures to effectively manage the table of organization and job descriptions (see Finding 1.4). Numerous job descriptions lack specific responsibilities related to curriculum linkage. Several titles that are included on the table of organization no longer exist or are not supported by accurately aligned job descriptions. Numerous job descriptions do not clearly define the roles or include excessive, generic lists of responsibilities. Neither

policies nor regulations require specific procedures to update job descriptions and keep them aligned with the table of organization and with the district mission.

The arrival of a new superintendent provides an optimum opportunity to realign administrative personnel and their related responsibilities (clarified in up-to-date job descriptions) to ensure that the functions of planning, communication, curriculum development, professional development, assessment, and resource allocations are integrated into a coherent system that maximizes cooperation among and between departments and the schools that they serve.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District’s Board of Trustees.

**G.1.1:** Direct the superintendent to prepare for board consideration and adoption a revision of *Policy BAA (Legal): Board Legal Status/Powers and Duties*, which directs the board to “adopt a policy providing for the employment and duties of District Personnel” so that it requires a written job description for each district employee that is periodically reviewed for accuracy, completeness, and consistency with the table of organization. As a minimum, job descriptions should be revised to ensure inclusion of all of the following elements:

- Date written or revised and approved.
- Titles that are descriptive of the duties and competencies associated with the position.
- Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) status—exempt or non-exempt and the physical demands of the position.
- Assignment to a board-adopted salary schedule and the number of days to be worked each year.
- Prioritization of the essential roles and responsibilities for each position in order to clearly communicate to each employee the high priority functions of the position.
- Alignment to staff appraisal instrument to reflect the competencies and responsibilities of the written job description. The appraisal instrument should include the responsibility for the implementation of board policies and district strategic priorities as well as the relationship of the position to professional development (see Recommendation 5) and teaching and learning in the district (see Recommendation 3). In addition, all job descriptions and related appraisal instruments should detail precise duties and expectations against which the employee will be evaluated.
- The criteria included in [Exhibit 1.4.4](#):
  - Qualifications consistent with the duties and responsibilities of the position.
  - Immediate links to the chain of command. A statement identifying the supervisor and a statement identifying all the positions supervised by the employee holding the position or that the employee has no supervisees. No employee should have more than one supervisor to which he or she is accountable.
  - A detailed explanation of the functions, duties, and responsibilities of the position. The range of such responsibilities should not exceed what the employee can rationally accomplish in the allotted time frame.
  - Relationship to the curriculum (where relevant), e.g., expectations regarding design, delivery and/ or evaluation of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

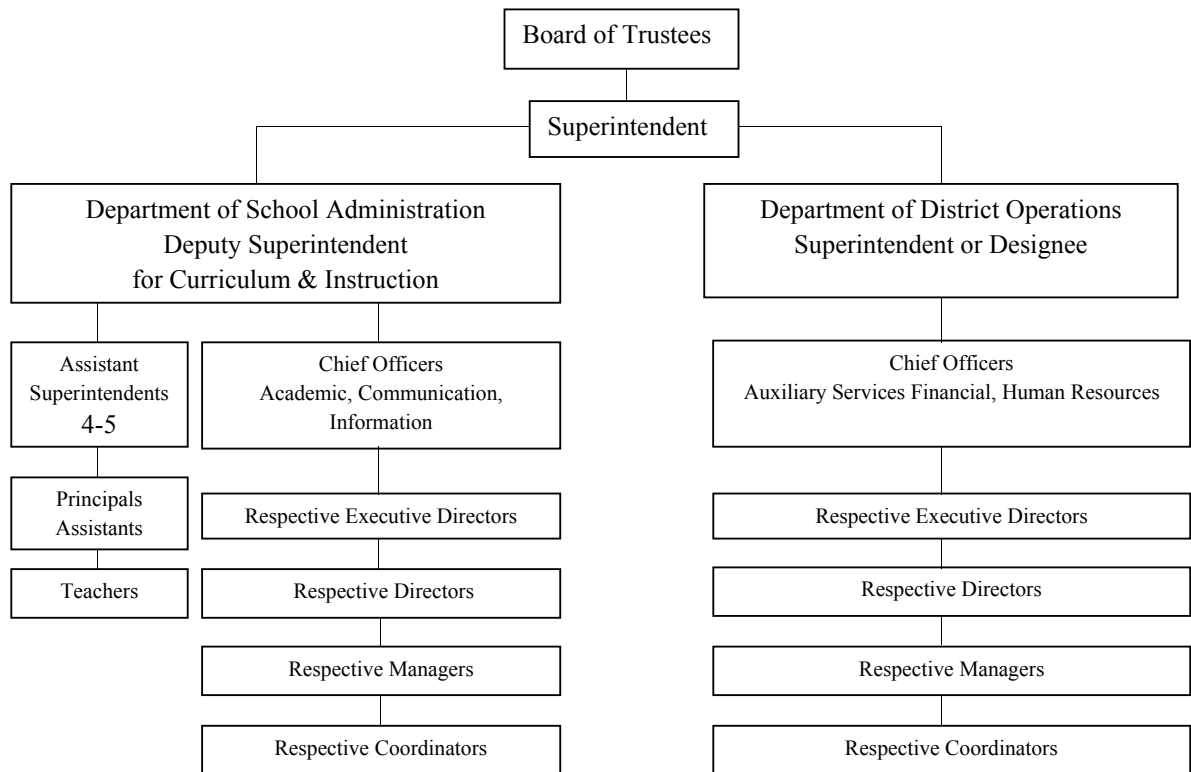
**G.1.2:** Direct the superintendent to ensure there are written job descriptions and related appraisal instruments for all employees consistent with the requirements in **G.1.1**; establish and maintain an up-to-date inventory of these documents; and submit them to the board for approval to be effective no later than the beginning of the 2013-14 school year.

**G.1.3:** Direct the superintendent to revise the table of organization based upon sound management principles (see [Exhibit 1.4.2](#)). Include a formula or ratio regarding the maximum span of control for personnel filling

supervisory roles. If a maximum span of control of 12 is not financially feasible, the board should establish and communicate a number that approximates that ratio as closely as possible, support it financially, and direct the superintendent to apply it consistently. Likewise, line relationships should be clearly delineated similar to that shown in Exhibit R.1.1.

**Exhibit R.1.1**

**Recommended Table of Organization of Line Officers  
Fort Bend Independent School District  
March 2013**



**G.1.4:** Direct the superintendent to include in both the table of organization and associated job descriptions the following functions:

- Specific responsibility to coordinate and clear, for board approval, all district planning, including the adoption of building-level and system-wide goals that are specific, measurable, and time-bound (see Findings 1.3, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, and 5.1 and Recommendation 3).
- Specific responsibility to coordinate and evaluate against intended outcomes (see goals in above bullet) all programs and interventions to determine their effectiveness (see Finding 4.4). This is a critical step prior to reauthorizing funding (see Finding 5.1 and Recommendations 4 and 6).
- Specific responsibility to coordinate and ensure efficacy of all professional development activities (see Finding 3.3 and Recommendation 5).
- Specific responsibility to ensure that grants are aligned to mission and system objectives and to evaluate them against intended outcomes.
- Specific responsibility to coordinate data management, interpretation, and usage (see Standard 4 Findings and Recommendation 5). It is through the effective use of data that the system will be able to determine its progress towards meeting established benchmarks and goals and to evaluate the efficacy of the written, taught, and tested curriculum (see Findings 2.4 and 4.4).

**G.1.5:** To accomplish the above responsibilities as well as other curriculum priorities identified in the recommendations of this audit, it is recommended that the board appoint a Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction (with sufficient authority to successfully accomplish assigned responsibilities), one to two additional assistant superintendents (to better balance the workload of the DOSAs), and then provide the necessary subordinates to adequately complete the priorities assigned to this office. These appointments are critical to the successful work of the district and may require the use of the district's growing fund balance and/or the reallocation of existing staff rather than hiring new employees (see [Findings 1.1](#) and [5.1](#)). A sample of minimum qualifications, duties, and skills for the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction are shown below:

- **Minimum Qualifications:** The Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction should possess experience in successfully designing and implementing all facets of the design and delivery of curriculum in a large educational system (i.e., large school systems, state or regional educational agencies), which is functioning within or responsive to high-stakes testing and accountability systems. This leader should possess working competencies in key curriculum management skills such as deep alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum, psychometric knowledge (of tests, assessments, and data analysis and management), experience in designing highly successful staff development programs, and management of change. The person will have graduated from a recognized program of advanced studies in educational leadership, curriculum and instruction, and/or test/assessment construction, program analysis, and evaluation with a minimum of a master's degree and preferably a doctorate.
- **Essential Duties** include the following:
  - Develops annual curriculum management plan in which central curricular functions are integrated and focused with staff development and assessments;
  - Ensures that curriculum change follows a timetable of logical and timely development, sequenced so as not to overload teachers and principals with unrealistic implementation responsibilities;
  - Coordinates all district-wide staff development, embedding timeliness, relevancy, and usability to ensure staff participation and acceptance;
  - Ensures that high quality curriculum documents and supporting instructional resources are consistently available, accessible, and user friendly;
  - Prior to final adoptions, arranges pilot programs for written curriculum and related instructional resources;
  - Oversees instructional technology, including acquisition of hardware and software, classroom implementation, and technology program planning and evaluation (see [Finding 5.2](#));
  - Coordinates district-level communications to schools to ensure thoroughness without unnecessary or conflicting overlaps;
  - Arranges for systematic evaluation (see [Finding 4.4](#) and [Recommendation 5](#)) of all curriculum, programs, and instructional materials to verify continuation, continuation with modifications, or termination.
- **Required Skill Sets** include the following:
  - Knows how to design and implement deep curriculum alignment based on test item deconstruction and other forms of reliable feedback;
  - Understands how to design curriculum, instruction, and assessment to support the concept of teaching to and learning for mastery. This includes building sufficient precision about objectives and their prerequisites into the written curriculum, making available targeted formative assessments to use during initial teaching, and building structures and supports for reteaching until mastery is demonstrated (see [Findings 1.3](#), [2.3](#), and [4.4](#));

- Knows how to successfully direct large scale, successful, curriculum design and delivery programs, which have resulted in improved student learning gains on high-stakes accountability measures;
- Knows various strategies and approaches to successfully implement differentiated instruction within a high stakes accountability system—ensuring that adopted curriculum and related pacing guides are sensitive to students’ developmental readiness; and that the needs of special populations, particularly special education and at risk students, as well as gifted and talent students, are adequately addressed;
- Understands approaches to curriculum design and instructional responsiveness to address the needs of an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse population—in particular, is knowledgeable about structures and strategies to serve the needs of English Language Learners at varying levels of proficiency and from widely divergent language backgrounds (see [Finding 3.1](#));
- Demonstrates the ability to work collaboratively with all divisions and departments of the school district and also the larger FBISD community;
- Demonstrates ability to supervise assigned Chief Officers and Assistant Superintendents;
- Demonstrates the ability to organize and conduct effective staff development based upon the differentiated needs of individual staff members;
- Knows and has implemented one or more classroom walk-through models;
- Knows how to deconstruct and analyze test information and connect it to classroom instruction in order to improve teacher effectiveness—this includes designing and implementing building level data teams so that their work is doable and the data is usable (see [Finding 1.1](#));
- Knows various types of curricular formats, the strengths and weaknesses of each, and what works best in different contexts, ensuring that curriculum documents and resources are user friendly;
- Knows major curriculum trends and the interrelationships of each of the core content areas: language arts, math, science, and social studies.

It is important that the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction maintains a balance between staff functions, such as curriculum development and professional development, and curriculum implementation, which is a line function. This person can only be held accountable if he/she can control the pace of change as it impacts the schools and classrooms. To exert this level of control, the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction’s office must also function as a clearinghouse for all programmatic changes in FBISD. The kind of responsibility intended for this office is not that which is the providence of individual school principals at the site level, but rather it provides district-wide leadership for programmatic changes and/or initiatives relating to curriculum design, delivery (related professional development), assessments, data management and analysis, and program evaluation.

**G.1.6:** Direct the superintendent to provide administrative regulations to implement the recommendations of this audit that are current and can be used as first source documents in providing for appropriate direction and control of the written, taught, tested curriculum.

**G.1.7:** Direct the superintendent to provide an annual status report to the board regarding the alignment of the table of organization, job descriptions and related appraisal instruments, and achievement of the system’s intended outcomes.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District Superintendent of Schools.

**A.1.1:** Prepare for board consideration and adoption a revision of *Policy BAA (Legal): Board Legal Status/Powers and Duties*, which directs the board to “adopt a policy providing for the employment and duties of District Personnel” to meet requirements detailed in **G.1.1**.

**A.1.2:** Prepare a set of written job descriptions and related appraisal instruments for all employees consistent with the requirements in **G.1.1**; establish and maintain an up-to-date inventory of these documents; and submit them to the board for approval to be effective no later than the beginning of the 2013-14 school year.

**A.1.3:** Revise the table of organization based upon sound management principles (see **Exhibit 1.4.2**). Include a formula or ratio regarding the maximum span of control for personnel filling supervisory roles. If a maximum span of control of 12 is not financially feasible, then recommend to the board a number that approximates that ratio as closely as possible. Line and staff relationships should be clearly delineated, similar to that shown in **Exhibit R.1.1**.

**A.1.4:** Include in both the table of organization and associated job descriptions the functions identified in **G.1.4**. These functions are critical to the overall success of the system. Consequently, responsibilities of lesser importance should be delegated or deferred in order to provide key leadership sufficient time to carry out these high priority functions. This is especially critical in the roles of the Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and the additional Assistant Superintendents as noted in **G.1.5**.

**A.1.5:** Using the minimum qualifications, duties, and skills identified in **G.1.5** for the Deputy Superintendent of Instruction as a guide, nominate for the board's consideration a candidate who is qualified to serve in this critical role. Provide this person with sufficient authority to successfully accomplish assigned responsibilities. In addition as funds can be made available nominate for board's consideration one to two additional assistant superintendents (to better balance the work load of the DOSAs), and then assign the necessary subordinates from existing staff members to adequately complete the priorities assigned to this office. Due to financial limitations, these appointments may require the reallocation of existing staff who are presently serving in roles of lesser importance rather than hiring new employees (see **Findings 1.1** and **5.1**).

**A.1.6:** Provide administrative regulations to implement the recommendations of this audit that are current and can be used as first source documents in providing for appropriate direction and control of the written, taught, tested curricula.

**A.1.7:** Provide an annual status report to the board regarding the alignment of the table of organization, job descriptions and related employee appraisal instruments, and achievement of the system's intended outcomes.

**A.1.8:** To minimize resistance and build trust, communicate both verbally and in writing to the board, staff, and patrons Actions **G.1.1** and **G.1.6** and progress towards their completion.

It is recommended that the elements of this recommendation be completed as soon as possible, but no later than the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. The reason for the urgency is that once these elements are in place, the district will be well poised to effectuate the other recommendations of this audit to better meet students' academic needs.

**Recommendation 2: Revise, develop, adopt, and implement board policies and establish corresponding administrative procedures to direct curriculum management, with a special emphasis on codifying in board policy roles and responsibilities and strengthening connections between planning and budgeting to accomplish the district's mission and goals.**

A comprehensive set of policies is necessary for effective curriculum management. Without definitive policies, the district cannot ensure program focus, effectiveness, or consistency. Comprehensive board policies provide clear direction for curriculum development and instructional delivery and set goals for attaining improved student achievement. Maintaining quality control of the curriculum requires the board to develop, review, and revise its policies periodically. This process may result in adding, revising, combining, or eliminating policies to address the changing needs of the school district.

Administrative regulations or procedural guidelines complement board policies by providing additional guidance or direction to staff for implementation of the policies according to the intent of the board.

The current set of board policies in the Fort Bend Independent School District is inadequate to direct the design, delivery, and assessment of the curriculum and provide control over other organizational efforts and initiatives. Many board policies were updated within the past few years to comply with state and federal law. Policies



and procedures in the areas of Standard One—Control and Standard Three—Connectivity and Equity came close to meeting the audit standard of adequacy for curriculum management (see Finding 1.2). While auditors found policies addressing alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum, none adequately addressed requirements for deep alignment in content, context, and cognition. Similarly, there were numerous references to mastery learning, including policies that directed teachers to teach to mastery and to report on students' mastery of learning objectives. However, there was inadequate direction in policy and procedures for inclusion of sufficient specificity in the written curriculum so that all teachers can consistently describe how students will demonstrate mastery of the intended objective (see Findings 1.2, and 2.3).

Policy direction for the development of a comprehensive student assessment process was inadequate. It failed to require differentiation to address student needs. Furthermore, while policy mandated that teachers teach to mastery it did not require district-developed formative assessments deeply aligned to the written curriculum objectives to assist teachers in determining mastery at timely intervals during the instructional process to identify deficits for individual students and reteach when needed. There was also insufficient requirement that summative assessments be deeply aligned in content, context, and cognition and more rigorous than external assessments (see Findings 1.2, 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3). Policies also failed to address adequately the use of data for planning, decision making and, in particular, program adoption and evaluation (see Findings 1.2, 1.3, 4.1, 4.4, and 5.4).

While policies required the development of a budget, and even referenced a program-centered budget, they failed to require a prioritized budget development process, cost-benefit analysis, and sufficient links between budget development, system priorities, and planning processes (see Findings 1.2, 1.3, and 5.1).

As the administration and board of Fort Bend Independent School District undertake the task of revising board policies to provide for sound curriculum management, the following guidelines should be considered:

Sound policies:

- Establish clear direction for the system;
- Provide for local initiatives to enhance the system beyond state directives;
- Ensure consistency of action over time as individual members of the board and administration change office;
- Guide professional staff members in their individual efforts to improve curriculum in the system;
- Establish the framework for the district to monitor progress in the delivery and attainment of district learning goals;
- Establish an historical base for the district for the purpose of avoiding contradictory actions;
- Delineate levels of decision-making authority; and
- Serve as a framework for the systematic evaluation of all professional staff, including the superintendent, and require development and execution of professional development plans based on the evaluations.

Policies should direct educational decisions. The board and superintendent should put into place specific approaches and procedures to ensure that policies and procedures are continually reviewed and updated; that staff and board members receive periodic training on board policy; and that policies are used for decision making.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the FBISD Board of Trustees

**G.2.1:** Direct the superintendent to assist the board in reviewing board policies against the findings and recommendations of the curriculum management audit and to make recommendations as needed to provide clear direction and control over all important curriculum functions, including the management of an aligned written, taught and assessed curriculum. The initial focus should be on any criterion rated below a “2” in Exhibits 1. 2.1 through 1.2.5 (see also Recommendations 4 and 5).

**G.2.2:** Require the superintendent to expand the development of administrative procedures to provide further clarification and direction to staff regarding implementation of board policies, particularly those areas cited in the audit as lacking sufficient specificity for sound curriculum management.

**G.2.3:** Require the superintendent to communicate the expectations of the board as written in policy to all staff, to provide training on new policies or policy revisions as needed, and to monitor the implementation of board policies.

**G.2.4:** Incorporate in the current process for ongoing policy review to comply with legal mandates specific scrutiny of proposed revisions or new policies against the principles of sound curriculum management.

**G.2.5:** Commit to engage in ongoing professional development of board members in areas of governance, including policy, to enhance stability of leadership and minimize dissonance.

**G.2.6:** Commit adequate resources for the effective implementation of board policies and administrative procedures.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District Superintendent of Schools:

**A.2.1:** Submit drafts of the recommended policies for board review, revision, and adoption.

**A.2.2:** Develop written administrative procedures to guide policy implementation in areas that require guidance beyond policy.

**A.2.3:** Adhere to board policies when making decisions.

**A.2.4:** Design and implement an ongoing system for training administrators, other appropriate staff, and members of the board, where applicable, on policy expectations and implementation.

**A.2.5:** Include the implementation of policy and responsibility for keeping staff, various committees, and/or task forces aware of and following policy, a function of the administrator evaluation system.

**A.2.6:** Provide yearly reports to the board on the development and implementation of board policies.

It is recommended that policy development and revision for all policies related to criteria rated below “2” in the curriculum management audit be completed within one year. Policy revision for criteria rated a “2” should be completed within two years.

**Recommendation 3: Redesign the planning process to provide a coherent focus and improved system connectivity throughout the district to facilitate fulfillment of the vision of the board of trustees and new superintendent. Prepare/revise, adopt, and implement a strategic plan, to which departments and individual campuses will link their respective plans.**

Effective planning is essential for focusing and organizing district resources to meet changing student needs. Long-range planning provides a systemic means to sustain constancy of purpose toward achieving district goals. Planning efforts that are comprehensive and clearly focused benefit students by increasing the probability that effective programs will be available to them. Coordination, prioritization, and sequencing of multiple plans and initiatives that emerge within a complex system are essential to ensure that planning efforts support each other and that no area of the organization or group of staff members bears an undue burden for implementing multiple initiatives at once.

Auditors found adequate policy direction for the planning process as a whole, but inadequate clarity about collaboration and coordination of roles, responsibilities, and initiatives, all of which impact planning processes and implementation. FBISD board policy requires establishing a district vision and comprehensive goals, creating a planning process for the district and campuses, involving stakeholders in planning, and using data to design and evaluate plans. Policies were inadequate in clarifying roles and responsibilities and establishing a functional decision-making structure related to all aspects of planning. They also failed to provide sufficient direction about program integration and alignment and use of data from assessments to determine program effectiveness (see [Findings 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 4.4, 5.4](#)).

There was documented evidence of planning over time in Fort Bend Independent School District, and references to the planning function were included in job descriptions at varying levels of the district (see [Finding 1.3 and 1.4](#)). Auditors found plans in a variety of divisions and departments of the central office, including for facilities, technology, various curriculum and support divisions, and at each school campus. However, planning efforts in a number of areas, including curriculum management (see [Finding 2.1](#)), services for special populations such as English Language Learners (see [Finding 3.1](#)), professional development (see [Finding 3.2](#)), program evaluation (see [Finding 4.4](#)), and budget development (see [Finding 5.1](#)), are not sufficiently robust and coordinated to support attainment of district goals to improve performance for all students. Both district and campus improvement plans showed evidence of implementation of the planning process as defined in the FBISD District Accountability Framework. However, there was considerable variance among the plans in the quality of individual design components (see [Finding 1.3](#)). There have been significant changes in key leadership positions over the past two years (see [Finding 1.1](#)). Plans developed during this period of transition revealed inconsistencies in focus and quality and inadequacies in deployment, monitoring, and evaluation. In addition, a number of new initiatives and often conflicting directives emerging from the central office, coupled with ineffective systems for identifying, coordinating, communicating, and maintaining focus on key priorities have had a negative effect on the development and successful implementation of district plans (see [Findings 1.1](#)). Auditors found that the current planning processes are not yet systematized to promote consistency in quality and connectivity at both the system and site levels (see [Finding 1.3](#)).

The following recommendations are designed to improve system planning for the successful accomplishment of district goals.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the FBISD Board of Trustees.

**G.3.1:** Direct the new superintendent to revisit with the board the FBISD mission, goals, and objectives. Revise or restate a commitment to these components of the district vision, and require that these be used as the basis to guide all planning efforts in the district.

**G.3.2:** Direct the superintendent to revise planning processes and the District Strategic Plan to address the criteria rated as “partially adequate” or “inadequate” in the auditors’ evaluation of the plan (see [Finding 1.3, Exhibits 1.3.2 and 1.3.3](#)).

**G.3.3:** Direct the superintendent to revise the Department and Campus Improvement Plan process as outlined in the FBISD District Comprehensive Accountability Framework to address the “partially adequate” or “inadequate” ratings in the auditors’ evaluation of the plan against audit criteria (see [Exhibit 1.3.5](#)). Include a process by which department and site plans will be coordinated to facilitate articulated actions at all levels of the district.

**G.3.4:** Direct the superintendent to develop a policy or administrative procedure that will directly address coordination, prioritization, and sequencing of planning efforts.

**G.3.5:** Before approving any new initiatives, programs, or grant applications, hold staff accountable for demonstrating not only how the proposal links to the FBISD District Strategic Plan, but also how it can be successfully integrated into and sequenced with ongoing efforts at the district and site level in order not to scatter focus and unduly burden any individual or groups with responsibility for implementing multiple change efforts at once (see [Findings 1.1, 4.4, and 5.4](#)). Require regular monitoring of new programs and initiatives during the implementation or pilot stages, including not only assessment of outcomes but also impact on the

scarce resources of time, people, and money. Prior to formal adoption, require staff to demonstrate how the program or initiative will be sustained and folded into the ongoing work of the district or school.

**G.3.6:** Direct the superintendent to assist school administrators, their staff, and community in addressing the criteria rated as inadequate in the auditors' evaluation of campus improvement plans against audit criteria (see [Finding 1.3](#) and [Exhibit 1.3.5](#)). In particular, require that a process be developed and implemented to provide additional training and coaching to site staff in appropriately completing the various components of the plan; conduct annual quality reviews of campus improvement plans; and provide support to site staff for revisions when needed. Further, direct that procedures be developed and implemented for both central office and site staff to monitor and evaluate the results of school plan strategies and action steps.

**G.3.7:** Establish procedures that ensure regular, written reports to the board on the progress of all system plans (not just the District Strategic Plan) such as technology, curriculum development, staff development, all major grant efforts, and school site plans. Require that such reports contain sufficient levels of specificity and analysis to clearly indicate what has been accomplished, how progress has been evaluated, and what actions or modifications are planned for the future. Require that the reports clearly define the connectivity to board goals and objectives as well as to the district plan.

**G.3.8:** Through policy, revise budget procedures to align with programmatic budgeting. This will ensure that planning policies are reflected in budgeting and spending activities (see [Recommendation 9](#)). Also, require that the planning process, and plans themselves, identify the specific dollar amount of the fiscal resources needed for implementation of the various elements.

**G.3.9:** Adopt policies, developed or revised, that meet the above-mentioned criteria. Expect the superintendent to monitor the implementation of those policies.

#### **Administrative Functions:**

**A.3.1:** Prepare for board approval new or revised board policies that address governance functions. Revise or develop new administrative procedures to support policy in the area of planning.

**A.3.2:** Refine the current process/framework for creating and monitoring department and campus improvement plans to ensure that they are:

- Developed to be reasonable regarding personnel, time and budget.
- Based on disaggregated data for all student groups, including ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and Special Education students.
- Founded on measurable objectives that include a specific target based on data, processes for collecting appropriate data, and the projected timeline for meeting the objective.
- Developed with input from staff and community members.
- Inclusive of tools to facilitate response to emerging issues, building commitment to change, and deployment of activities and strategies. In particular, ensure that the plan includes sufficient, ongoing professional development to build the skills needed to implement the plan (see [Recommendation 7](#)).

Ensure that revisions to the DCAF processes and template do not create an undue burden of paperwork or other documentation that impedes successful plan implementation.

**A.3.3:** Provide schools with disaggregated data that includes sufficient information to track progress and target improvement efforts for the least successful subpopulations of students including English Language Learners and Special Education students.

**A.3.4:** Provide professional development for campus administrators and department heads pertaining to:

- Understanding and adhering to the critical components of an effective planning process.
- Using data to create measurable objectives (for academic areas as well as those that are not directly related to student performance) that will be used to evaluate and monitor successful implementation.

- Incorporating strategies that are designed to build a commitment on the part of staff to the urgency of the change reflected in campus plans.
- Designing deployment strategies that orient staff to the change and develop sufficient proficiencies to carry out the plan.
- Setting realistic goals aligned to the District Strategic Plan and supporting those with targeted, focused activities that will have the most powerful impact on improving student achievement.
- Choosing research-based strategies focused on the success of English Language Learners and Special Education students (see [Finding 3.1](#)).
- Building a plan that is reasonable in the demands placed on personnel, resources, and time.
- Developing methods for monitoring progress, determining and documenting adjustments made to the plan throughout the year, and reporting results in a way that clearly indicates what has/has not been accomplished and the subsequent impact, particularly as it relates to improved student performance (see [Finding 1.3](#) and [Recommendation 5](#)).

**A.3.5:** Develop procedures to promote system-wide communication, coordination, and integration of plans and planning efforts. Include a procedure for analyzing the potential impact of plans, planning components, or proposed new initiatives on the resources (personnel, time, and money) of individuals and groups of staff members. Include a procedure for prioritizing and sequencing plans and action steps so that they are manageable and that the focus of the strategic plan is maintained.

**A.3.6:** Develop or revise procedures for monitoring and evaluating supporting plans, such as curriculum management, staff development, technology, assessment, facilities, and campus improvement plans, as well as plans incorporated from various funding sources, to ensure that these are closely aligned with the priorities of the District Strategic Plan, that the plans themselves are of high quality, and that action steps are clearly designed to lead to desired outcomes. Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of all plans, including those incorporated in grants, follow a district-developed protocol that clearly identifies progress-to-date on each step and the extent to which desired outcomes (both for student learning and system effectiveness) have been accomplished (see [Recommendations 8](#) and [9](#)). Coordinate specific monitoring strategies or protocols, such as the District Scorecard, quarterly progress reports, and year-end reflections (see [Finding 1.3](#)) with requirements that plans be adjusted or modified to reflect the feedback provided through the monitoring process. Require clear documentation of all such modifications.

**A.3.7:** Prepare regular written reports to the board, staff, and community regarding the implementation and evaluation of the full range of district plans/planning. Emphasize, where possible, specific results or impact of actions on improved student learning and overall system efficiency and effectiveness.

**A.3.8:** Require that planning efforts in the district will be clearly linked to the District Strategic Plan, well coordinated with other system-wide efforts, and sequenced and prioritized in a way that allows for successful implementation, given existing resources and time frames. Place emphasis on a few key, high leverage, clearly focused initiatives at any one time. Before moving on to new areas of focus, determine whether existing efforts are sufficiently institutionalized in practice and adequately supported by resources (time, people, money) to be sustained.

It is recommended that revisions related to the guidelines for planning processes, particularly modifications to the District Comprehensive Accountability Framework, be in place by the start of the 2013-14 school year. Provide training to central office and site staff involved in the planning process regarding key changes, particularly as they relate to monitoring and evaluating existing plans. Begin implementing quality review procedures for both department and campus plans in the fall of 2013. Use data gathered during this initial review process to redesign training and support for department and school leaders related to planning for the upcoming year. Gather feedback throughout the next planning cycle, and use it to make revisions in the templates, process, and support for planners at all levels as they develop plans in subsequent years.

It is further recommended that the board and new superintendent redesign and/or recommit to the district values and goals in the summer of 2013. As soon as possible thereafter, begin the process of revising the current Strategic Plan or implementing a new one. Target revisions to the process and product to address areas identified as needing improvement in [Finding 1.3](#). In particular, strengthen channels of communication and processes for coordinating and prioritizing efforts. Increase the visibility of the district plan as the guiding document for all system-wide efforts.

**Recommendation 4: Revise and adopt a comprehensive curriculum management plan to provide for high quality and user friendly curriculum guides for all district courses. Implement a systematic process for review and revision of curriculum documents, resources, and related assessments to provide for quality control of the written curriculum.**

A comprehensive written curriculum coordinated through all district, department, and school plans enables a district to achieve and maintain a quality, aligned curriculum. In an effective school system, the curriculum development process is directed by board policy and clearly communicates development and maintenance procedures. The curriculum management process culminates in providing teachers with high quality curriculum documents and related instructional resources for every course offered in a school district.

Effective teaching begins with teacher access to quality curriculum guides that direct planning and are aligned and coordinated across subject matter, grades, and schools. Quality guides identify objectives, align objectives with student assessments, include prerequisite skills, designate instructional resources, and delineate teaching strategies. Appropriate curriculum guides include a reasonable number of clear, precise goals and objectives that provide teachers with content and methods to address diverse learners and eliminate inequities (see [Findings 2.3](#) and [3.1](#)). When a quality curriculum is in place, learning is not left to chance but becomes an intentional, focused effort with clear direction. Effective implementation of the written curriculum requires thorough, ongoing professional development and consistent monitoring (see [Recommendation 7](#)).

At the time of the audit, the Fort Bend Independent School District's *Board Policy EG* was the curriculum management plan. It was inadequate in quality to provide for sound curriculum management (see [Finding 2.1](#)). District curriculum guides were inadequate in scope at the high school level and quality across all levels (see [Findings 2.2](#) and [2.3](#)). Few curriculum guides met basic audit quality standards, and discrepancies existed when comparing curriculum guide objectives to assessments and instructional strategies in content and cognition. Teacher curriculum use was challenged by unhandy online access, difficult online document uploading, and the autonomy of individual and building curriculum use decisions. Artifacts collected during school visits indicated the majority of grade levels in core areas were utilizing student work below grade level and at the lower domains of cognitive types.

The Fort Bend Independent School District must complete the district online curriculum for all courses, both core and non-core. Further, the weaknesses in quality outlined in [Finding 2.3](#) should be addressed across all current and future curriculum documents. The revision of the inadequate components of the curriculum management plan, currently *Board Policy EG* and *Administrative Procedure EG-R*, will provide for cohesion, clear articulation, and improved teacher support across all grade levels and schools.

The auditors provide the following recommendations to create and implement the design, implementation, and evaluation of an aligned written curriculum.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District Board of Trustees:

**G.4.1:** Direct the superintendent to revise and implement *Board Policy EG* for curriculum management to ensure development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, regular review, and revision of the school district's written curriculum to meet all audit standards as outlined in [Finding 2.1](#). In particular, address the six criteria noted as not meeting audit quality expectations:

- Presents the format and components of all curriculum, assessments, and instructional guide documents.

- Requires for every content area a focused set of precise student objectives/student expectations and standards that are reasonable in number so the student has adequate time to master the content.
- Directs that curriculum documents not only specify the content of the student objectives/student expectations, but also include multiple contexts and cognitive types.
- Directs curriculum to be designed so that it supports teachers' differentiation of instructional approaches and selection of student objectives at the right level of difficulty. This ensures that those students who need prerequisite concepts, knowledge, and skills are moved ahead at an accelerated pace, and that students who have already mastered the objectives are also moved ahead at a challenging pace.
- Requires the design of a comprehensive staff development program linked to curriculum design and its delivery.
- Establishes a communication plan for the process of curriculum design and delivery.

**G.4.2:** Commit adequate resources to support the curriculum development and revisions necessary to improve the quality, internal consistency, and user-friendliness of curriculum documents to provide for quality control. Provide the adequate district level staff to orchestrate these actions. Incorporate curriculum priorities in strategic and budget development priorities.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District Superintendent:

**A.4.1:** In accordance with **G.4.1**, prepare a revision draft of *Board Policy EG*, and develop any additional policies necessary to direct district curriculum management. Consider revising board policy to set expectations for the curriculum management process, but develop a curriculum management plan as a separate document to provide for connection to the additional plans in Recommendations 3, 5, 7, and 9. The plan can then be revised without formal board action.

**A.4.2:** Revise *Administrative Procedure EG-R*, and develop or revise any other administrative procedures to support newly created or revised board policies once adopted.

**A.4.3:** Revise and/or create job descriptions that include curriculum management responsibilities and that clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for each task in the development, implementation, and evaluation of district curriculum (see Finding 1.4).

**A.4.4:** Revise district evaluation instruments to include expectations for all facets of the curriculum management process, and hold individuals accountable for implementation (see Recommendation 6).

**A.4.5:** Determine actions necessary to provide teachers a complete, high quality, and easily accessible online software system to house the district curriculum.

**A.4.6:** Build on existing district documents and procedures to formalize a model for the design of curriculum guides as follows:

**Organizational Preparation:**

- Build upon curriculum guides meeting audit criteria, expanding them to meet all 15 audit expectations (see Finding 2.3).
- Expand curriculum development to include all other courses taught within the district.
- Require that all curriculum guides adhere to the format outlined in the curriculum management plan; in particular, develop assessment format and components.
- Create a consistent timeline in both policy and administrative procedures for developing, evaluating, and revising curriculum documents for each subject and course offered.
- Determine who will serve on the district's curriculum design team, and provide extensive training in curriculum and assessment design to this small group of individuals, concentrating on deficiencies as outlined in audit findings.

- Require a curriculum review team to analyze the design team’s curriculum documents as they are revised or drafted in terms of audit quality criteria. In addition to teachers who teach the discipline under review, the review team should include a principal and teachers trained in the following areas: instructional technology, special education, gifted education, and English language learners.

### **Curriculum Design:**

- Review the latest research and expert thinking in the discipline.
- Assess existing curriculum document’s strengths and weaknesses based on research and the audit criteria in Exhibit 2.3.1.
- Review existing goals and objectives, and edit as needed for the discipline to ensure linkage to district goals and alignment to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). In particular, address the deficiencies as outlined in frames of analysis in Finding 2.3. Review and revise curriculum objectives to provide objectives written with clear and precise language in multiple contexts and cognitive types. Further, examine the objectives to provide a reasonable number of unit and grade level objectives to ensure student mastery.
- Include the following components of a quality curriculum document:
  1. A clear statement of what skills/concepts should be learned, when and how it should be performed, and the amount of time or emphasis given to each objective;
  2. Linkages between each objective and district and state assessments;
  3. Specific delineation of prerequisite skills/concepts in the curriculum documents;
  4. Specific linkages to adopted texts and other instructional materials; and
  5. Specific examples of how to teach the key concepts and skills in a classroom, using a variety of proven instructional strategies. Refer to the process as outlined in Recommendation 6, and use the instructional strategies that will be monitored.
    - Include strategies for differentiating instruction and, in particular, to meet the needs of special education, gifted, and English language learners.
    - Integrate instructional technology into the curriculum.
- Address the further frames of analysis for strategy and assessment congruency to objective content and cognitive type.
- Determine appropriate time frames for objective mastery to account for remediation and extension. Provide in curriculum documents a reasonable number of days to provide new instruction and a reasonable number of objectives per unit.
- Obtain feedback from the curriculum review team, and revise as necessary.

### **Curriculum Implementation:**

- Field test the curriculum and related assessments as they are revised;
- Pilot resource materials and instructional strategies;
- Evaluate the curriculum and related assessments effectiveness in relation to teacher support (buy-in) and student achievement;
- Revise field-tested curriculum/assessment documents based on teacher feedback and student achievement data;
- Develop curriculum guides and related district adopted assessments for every course offered in the school district using this process.



**A.4.7:** Provide access to resources included in the district curriculum guides to all teachers. Review all resources periodically for reasonable number and usefulness.

**A.4.8:** Develop a formalized plan for articulation between and among teachers of all grade levels.

**A.4.9:** Expand the communication criterion in the curriculum management plan to include more than a yearly board report. Provide ongoing curriculum communication to all personnel not only during the formal adoption and revision cycle but as changes occur within the current district curriculum.

**A.4.10:** Establish and communicate clear expectations for administrators and teachers with regard to use of the written curriculum.

**A.4.11:** Coordinate the district professional development plan with the development and ongoing implementation of the curriculum, providing for ongoing training as changes occur in existing curriculum.

**A.4.12:** Annually, provide staff development and training in use of the written curriculum to support new teacher orientation to expectations and to ensure fidelity in implementation of the curriculum.

**A.4.13:** Annually, evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the written curriculum in increasing achievement for all students and all student subgroup populations, and use the data to inform curriculum revision actions in the review cycle.

**A.4.14:** Monitor the ongoing artifacts utilized in classrooms and determine whether they are meeting district expectation for content and cognitive type.

**A.4.15:** Provide financial resources, including personnel (see Recommendation 1), within the budget to accomplish the elements of curriculum design, implementation, and ongoing evaluation noted in this and other recommendations.

**A.4.16:** Submit the newly created curriculum guides for adoption by the board of trustees.

**Recommendation 5: Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for student assessment and program evaluation that will provide meaningful data for decision making supporting improved student achievement. Develop system-wide formative and summative assessment tools concurrently with curriculum development. Require systematic evaluations of major programs and interventions linked with evidence of student learning to provide feedback for decisions regarding program selection, continuation, expansion, modification, or termination.**

In the Fort Bend Independent School District, the auditors found board policies, plans, and job descriptions to be inadequate to direct student assessment and the use of data to address student needs, provide feedback for curriculum modification and program evaluation, inform funding allocations and facility requirements for programmatic implementation (see [Findings 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3](#), as well as [Finding 2.1](#)). Planning for a comprehensive assessment program was not in place to provide feedback to students, parents, teachers, and administrators with results of student attainment of expected outcomes in all core and non-core courses (see [Finding 4.1](#)). The scope of student assessment was inadequate to evaluate the taught curriculum in core and non-core courses to provide sufficient data for making sound curricular decisions (see [Finding 4.2](#)). At all levels, the overall percentages of district students meeting the standard on state assessments has remained above those of students statewide; however, significant gaps in student achievement among various subgroups have persisted (see [Finding 4.3](#)). Use of formative and summative student assessment data varied from campus to campus (see [Finding 4.4](#)).

Auditors found that a wide variety of district-wide and campus-based programs and interventions were in place (see [Finding 5.4](#)). Auditors found evidence that a few programs and interventions were being evaluated, but most were not (see [Finding 4.5](#)). District budget development practices did not indicate that student performance data were used to establish priorities for instructional delivery to improve the success of all students (see [Finding 5.1](#)).

Auditors recommend revision of district policies and administrative regulations directing the design of comprehensive planning for student assessment in all core and non-core courses for kindergarten through

grade 12 and for the evaluation of programs to determine the cost-benefit of programs and their alignment with district priorities. Additionally, auditors recommend revision of board policies directing data use to identify and respond to achievement gaps. Significant gaps in student achievement among certain subgroup populations, as presented in [Finding 4.3](#), pose an immediate need to determine which programs are beneficial in closing these gaps. Therefore, auditors recommend the revision of existing policies and/or development of new ones as soon as possible, but no later than the beginning of the 2013-14 school year.

Lacking a comprehensive plan for student assessment and program evaluation means the district lacks critical linkages with the curriculum (see [Findings 2.1](#) and [2.2](#)) and, therefore, direction for producing desired learning outcomes. The leadership of Fort Bend Independent School District needs to consider, as a priority, design and implementation of a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan or planning process. Having an assessment process in place can serve as a means to acquire, organize, and analyze information needed to guide instructional planning, inform teachers about student learning, assess program effectiveness, and make critical decisions regarding the educational program, district practices, and resource allocations. Closely tied to the curriculum management plan (see [Recommendation 4](#)), this plan should be in place as soon as possible, but not later than the 2013-14 school year.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to Fort Bend Independent School District's Board of Trustees:

**G.5.1:** Direct the superintendent to present to the board for review and adoption a new or revised policy that provides a framework for a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan, which may be part of the curriculum management plan (see [Recommendation 4](#)) and which includes the following:

- Description of the philosophical framework for the design of the student assessment plan and direction for both formative and summative assessment of the curriculum by course and grade in congruence with board policy.
- Direction for use of data to analyze group, school, program, and system student trends.
- An expectation for ongoing formative and summative program evaluation, an explicit set of formative and summative procedures to carry out these expectations, and provisions for regular formative and summative assessment at all levels of the system (organization, program, and student).
- Requirement that formative, diagnostic assessment instruments are aligned to district curriculum and are administered to students frequently to give teachers information for instructional decision making.

**G.5.2:** Direct the superintendent to prepare for board review and adoption a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan as described in policy under action [G.5.1](#).

**G.5.3:** Commit adequate resources to support implementation of comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation planning.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Superintendent of the Fort Bend Independent School District:

**A.5.1:** Assist the school board in developing a new or revised policy that provides direction for development and implementation of a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan as described in governance action [G.5.1](#).

**A.5.2:** Tied closely with a curriculum management plan (see [Recommendation 4](#)), develop a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan that includes, in addition to the elements listed in [G.5.1](#), the following:

- Inclusion of a list of student assessment and program evaluation tools, purposes, subjects, type of student tested, timelines, and so forth. Tools should make use of diverse formative and summative assessment strategies for multiple purposes at all levels.

- Specification of responsibilities of the central office staff and school-based staff for assessing all students using designated assessment measures, and for analyzing test data.
- Specification of connection(s) among district, state, and national assessments.
- Description of overall assessment and analysis procedures for use in determining curriculum effectiveness.
- Requirement that aligned student assessment examples and tools be placed in curriculum and assessment documents.
- Specifics regarding how equity issues will be identified and addressed, using data sources that include controls for possible bias.
- Identification of components of the student assessment system to be included in program evaluation and specifics as to how these data will be used to determine continuation, modification, or termination of a given program.
- Establishment of processes for communicating and training staff in the interpretation of results, changes in state and local student achievement tests, and new trends in the student assessment field.
- Provision for appropriate trainings for various audiences on assessment and the instructional use of assessment results.
- Delineation of responsibilities and procedures for monitoring administration of the comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan and/or procedures.
- Description of creation of an assessment data system that allows for the attribution of costs by program, permitting program evaluations to support program-based cost-benefit analyses.

**A.5.3:** Assign responsibility for development and implementation of formalized procedures for systematic student assessment and program evaluation aligned with the curriculum management plan (see [Recommendation 4](#)).

**A.5.4:** Further efforts to implement technology to facilitate ease of data collection and use at all levels of the system. Through technology solutions, eliminate the needs for campus personnel to enter data into spreadsheets by hand. Provide ongoing training in technology use to ensure its effective implementation system-wide (see [Recommendations 7 and 8](#)).

**A.5.5:** Expand training in formative and summative data access, analysis, and use in facilitating teaching and learning. Extend this training to all instructional staff and administrators, and provide systems to connect this training to district-wide efforts to increase student achievement (see [Recommendation 8](#)).

**A.5.6:** Establish clear expectations for administrators and teachers in board policies, administrative regulations, and job descriptions on use of assessment data for diagnosing student needs, evaluating student progress, determining curriculum and program effectiveness, and making decisions in all district operations (see [Recommendation 1](#)).

**A.5.7:** Expect all program evaluations to provide a cost-benefit analysis and recommendations for continuation, expansion, modification, or termination (see [Recommendation 10](#)).

These recommendations, if implemented, should give the district a means of ensuring consistent, appropriate use of data to assess student progress and evaluate programs and interventions, analyze results, and ensure such results are used to make sound decisions about curriculum, instruction, and programs. Additionally, assessment and evaluation data will be available for use in informing students, parents, and other stakeholders of the effectiveness of staff in educating the district's students.

**Recommendation 6: Establish and implement quality standards and shared expectations for monitoring and evaluating district and instructional practices, which promote consistency across all programs and campuses. A primary function of a school district is curriculum management, which includes monitoring expectations for curriculum delivery.**

Successful school districts provide the structure and work requirements for a well-organized, focused, and efficient teacher monitoring and evaluation system. Quality control for monitoring and evaluating professional educators depends on clear communication of roles and responsibilities within the organization. Monitoring, feedback, and continuous evaluation must take place to determine if instructional practices are meeting the needs of all student groups see [Findings 3.1](#) and [4.3](#). Communicating expectations of monitoring classroom practices and curriculum delivery and providing professional development based on that information afford school district personnel the opportunity to adjust for learner differences, thus impacting student achievement results. The absence of clearly defined and communicated monitoring and evaluation procedures leaves curriculum delivery up to individual interpretation and the related competencies of teachers and their supervisors (see [Finding 3.3](#)).

The monitoring of instructional practices was taking place in FBISD schools during the audit (see [Finding 3.4](#)). Multiple walk-through instruments were being used throughout district schools and departments. However, the content and terminology of walk-through instruments varied and were inconsistently implemented. Board policy, job descriptions, and evaluation instruments referred to monitoring in terms of formal supervision responsibilities. This was accomplished by using the Professional Development Appraisal System (PDAS) for summative assessment. The monitoring documents reviewed by auditors did not outline a consistent monitoring process that assessed teaching strategies in terms of student learning or teacher growth.

The summative evaluation instruments used in the school district at the time of the audit contained performance sections in which narratives could be utilized (see [Finding 3.5](#)). The administrative instruments referred to supervision responsibilities. Classroom instructional monitoring was included in the administrative documents, but was not used in the majority of evaluations that auditors analyzed. In the walk-through documents used for observing classroom teaching and management, the type, frequency, and quality of monitoring practices were found to vary widely among principals. The quality and purpose of the feedback sections of the formative teacher evaluations were also used inconsistently (see [Finding 3.4](#)).

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District's Board of Trustees.

**G.6.1:** Direct the superintendent to draft new policies and/or revise *Board Policies DNA and DNB* for consideration and subsequent adoption by the board to accomplish the following:

- Describe the district's philosophical approach to instructional practices.
- Prescribe the nature and characteristics of instruction sought in the district's classrooms. Include specific expectations for research-based teacher activities including: best practice strategies observed in district classrooms, highly effective strategies and activities included in curriculum documents, instructional strategies that meet the differential needs of all disaggregated student groups, varied instructional methods that match national, state, and local standards and objectives, and data from [Findings 2.3](#), [2.4](#), and [3.3](#).
- Clearly define all instructional strategies to provide for consistent implementation across the district.
- Align all strategies to the updated curriculum documents required in [Recommendations 4](#) and [5](#) and the newly formulated or revised board policies.
- Revise district and building planning documents, job descriptions, and evaluation instruments to reflect the established district instructional methodology. Define roles and responsibilities to centralize and coordinate district instructional practices. Include a process to update these documents on a regular cycle.
- Direct and require the curriculum to be delivered as designed to provide for consistency throughout grade levels, schools, and across the district.

- Require that teachers be evaluated in terms of demonstrated competence in the classroom.
- Formalize the connection between instructional practices and professional development activities to support them (see [Recommendation 7](#)). Require mandated professional development for all employee groups in the adopted instructional strategies. Support ongoing, differentiated professional development for all instructional staff members, including administrators, in the district’s instructional methodology. Provide instructional strategy training for new instructional employees, including administrators.
- Include a process to analyze and update instructional strategies on a periodic basis, related to the written curriculum’s review and development cycle.

**G.6.2:** Direct the superintendent to determine the responsibilities for monitoring teachers in regard to the delivery of the curriculum. Identify specific roles and responsibilities of each position responsible for monitoring, and include these responsibilities in related job descriptions (see [Findings 1.1](#) and [1.2](#) and [Recommendation 1](#)). Review and revise the current walk-through documents to provide a uniform process for district and building administrators and content specialists (see [Finding 3.4](#)) monitoring the delivery of the curriculum, as well as a predictable experience for teachers.

**G.6.3:** Direct the superintendent to revise system plans (see [Recommendation 3](#)) and evaluation instruments to reflect the newly created monitoring requirements. State clearly that all teachers will be evaluated based upon their teaching competency and that only high quality instruction is acceptable. Further, the primary role of the evaluator is to facilitate and improve the instructional program through growth-producing feedback. Include a process to update these documents on a regular basis.

**G.6.4:** Direct the superintendent to provide focused professional development (see [Recommendation 7](#)) to implement and provide ongoing support for monitoring classroom practices and the use of the teacher evaluation system. This includes continued training for new administrators.

**G.6.5:** Require the superintendent to formulate administrative regulations to address all new and revised board policies (see [Recommendation 2](#)).

**G.6.6:** Require an annual report to the board on the effectiveness of monitoring and teacher evaluation efforts in relation to student achievement.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District Superintendent.

**A.6.1:** Draft new and/or revise *Board Policies DNA and DNB* for board consideration and adoption using the criteria detailed in [G.6.1](#).

**A.6.2:** In following the directive of [G.6.2](#), develop a consistent walk-through document and implement walk-through procedures and training. Consider the following criteria in selecting and/or revising the districts walk-through instrument:

1. Utilizes a research-based model that addresses the difference in the skill level of teachers in implementing the district’s instructional model.
2. Focuses on the delivery of the curriculum as well as on expected instructional strategies.
3. Utilizes frequent short classroom observations.
4. Is not dependent upon an activity checklist.
5. Provides for reflective thought and dialogue between the teacher and supervisor.

**A.6.3:** Revise system plans (see [Recommendation 3](#)) and evaluation instruments to reflect specific and defined instructional practices and monitoring requirements. State clearly that all teachers will be evaluated based upon their teaching competency and that only high quality instruction is acceptable. Further, the primary role of the evaluator is to facilitate and improve the instructional program through growth-producing feedback (see [Finding 3.5](#)). Include a process to update these documents on a regular basis.

**A.6.4:** Provide a focused professional development (see [Recommendation 7](#)) to implement and provide ongoing support for monitoring classroom practices and the use of the teacher evaluation system. Design continued training for new teachers and administrators.

**A.6.5:** Develop a comprehensive communication plan to assist staff in understanding the necessity of a coordinated monitoring and evaluation process.

**A.6.6:** Require district administrators to monitor the principals they are supervising to ensure that classroom instructional monitoring and evaluation occur following district procedures and that monitoring and evaluation data are analyzed in terms of student achievement.

**A.6.7:** Formulate administrative regulations to address all new and revised board policies (see [Recommendation 2](#)).

**A.6.8:** Provide an annual report to the board on the effectiveness of monitoring and teacher evaluation efforts in relation to student achievement.

It is recommended that the district have in place the elements of this recommendation by the beginning of the 2013-14 school year.

**Recommendation 7: Design and implement a coordinated and system-wide professional development program that is differentiated to meet individual needs, supports the district curriculum, and focuses on improved student achievement.**

The primary purpose of professional development is to provide all staff members with the knowledge and skills to deliver the written curriculum effectively, thereby improving student achievement. Professional development is a key factor in ensuring alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum. An effective professional development plan is comprehensive, long-term, based on district goals, linked to staff and student needs, and aligned to the district's curriculum management plan (see [Recommendations 3](#) and [4](#)).

The auditors found that professional development offerings were available in the Fort Bend Independent School District. However, there was no coordination guiding the use of the training in terms of its effect on student achievement. Individual teacher Gold Star Professional Development plans were based on teaching content but were not differentiated for individual teacher needs nor connected to student achievement results (see [Findings 3.3](#), [3.4](#), [3.5](#), and [4.4](#)). Further, no professional development plan existed to oversee and coordinate initiatives at district, building, and individual levels.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District Board of Trustees:

**G.7.1:** Direct the superintendent to develop and revise, for board consideration and adoption, existing professional development board policies to define the purpose of professional development in terms of student achievement. Align all board policies to the 18 Quality Criteria for Professional Development found in [Finding 3.2](#). The policy should:

- Include a mission statement and goals related to professional development in terms of student achievement;
- Establish a timeline for the yearly evaluation of the professional development plan to determine if the plan increases teacher competence and, as a result, increases student performance;
- Link professional development initiatives to the appropriate funding required to implement the initiatives as planned;
- Clarify the roles, responsibilities, resources required, and accountability procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the professional development plan and its coordination with campus-based activities;
- Require congruence with all district and building plans. This will require regular input and feedback from the teachers participating in the professional development.

**G.7.2:** Direct the superintendent to design a comprehensive professional development plan to provide a framework for all stakeholders as an integral part of curriculum development, implementation, and assessment.

**G.7.3:** Direct the superintendent to align the newly created professional development plan to all district and building plans as they are developed.

**G.7.4:** Direct the superintendent to provide annual reports to the board of trustees concerning the quality and effectiveness of the plan and its impact on instruction and student achievement.

**G.7.5:** Provide the necessary budget in terms of personnel and resources to carry out the professional development expectations.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District Superintendent of Schools:

**A.7.1:** Recommend to the board policies that reflect a comprehensive professional development program for all employees to support the design and delivery of curriculum and district priorities. Include all 18 Quality Criteria for Professional Development as provided in [A.7.4](#).

**A.7.2:** Develop administrative regulations to implement all adopted professional development policies.

**A.7.3:** Revise all academic job descriptions in terms of professional development responsibilities. Clearly determine lines of authority and responsibility. Eliminate overlapping efforts. In particular, address the following:

- Include in the job description of the newly appointed Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction responsibility to oversee all professional development activities (see [Recommendation 1](#)).
- Revise the job description of the Director of Organizational Development so that he/she is responsible for the overall coordination of district and campus-based professional development and the creation of a comprehensive professional development plan based on audit criteria.
- Revise the job descriptions for the four Coordinators for Organizational Development so that they can assist the Director of Organizational Development with the overall coordination and oversight of district and campus-based professional development.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of the members of the Academic Advisory Council in determining the focus for professional development opportunities in the district.

**A.7.4:** Develop a comprehensive professional development plan to increase teacher capacity, support district goals, and increase student achievement. The plan should include the 18 Audit Criteria for Professional Development as provided in [Exhibit 3.2.2](#). The plan should accomplish the following:

- Has a policy that directs staff development efforts;
- Fosters an expectation for professional growth;
- Is for all employees;
- Is based on a careful analysis of data and is data-driven;
- Provides for system-wide coordination and has a clearinghouse function in place;
- Provides the necessary funding to carry out professional development goals;
- Has a current plan that provides a framework for integrating innovations related to mission;
- Has a professional development mission in place;
- Is built using a long-range planning approach;
- Provides for organizational, unit, and individual development in a systematic manner;
- Focuses on organizational change-staff development efforts are aligned to district goals;

- Is based on proven research-based approaches that have shown to increase productivity;
- Provides for three phases of the change process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization;
- Is based on human learning and development and adult learning;
- Uses a variety of professional development approaches;
- Provides for follow-up and on-the-job application necessary to ensure improvement;
- Expects each supervisor to be a staff developer of staff supervised;
- Requires an evaluation process that is ongoing, includes multiple sources of information, focuses on all levels of the organization, and is based on actual changed behavior.

**A.7.5:** Align the professional development plan with all district and building plans as they are developed. This will require regular input and feedback from the teachers who participate.

**A.7.6:** Align all professional development activities with district curriculum, district improvement plans, student achievement results, as well as performance data of staff members.

**A.7.7:** Determine how professional development will be delivered. Determine who will be the trainers and provide extensive development in curriculum content, instructional strategies teachers are to emulate, group presentation skills, and adult differentiation techniques.

**A.7.8:** Provide time during monthly administrative meetings for campus administrators and central office administrators to establish connectivity between campus-based and district professional development activities.

**A.7.9:** Require consistent participant feedback, and evaluate the effectiveness of staff development activities in relationship to increased teacher capacity and improved student achievement.

**A.7.10:** Review and revise the Gold Star Professional Development Plans for teachers. Align the program with the 18 audit criteria found in Finding 3.2. In particular, account for individual differences and adult learning needs.

**A.7.11:** Assign the Director of Organizational Development the responsibility of reporting annually to the board of trustees on the impact of professional development on increased teacher competency and student achievement. The reports should include the following:

- A description of the process used to assess professional development needs;
- A summary of the professional development needs assessment data;
- A summary of student achievement data;
- A review of the planning process used to identify and coordinate the approaches to address student needs and the process used to identify the knowledge and skills required by teachers and administrators to address the student needs;
- A review of all professional development plans for both individuals and buildings.

**A.7.12:** Continue to monitor and revise the professional development plan as necessary to meet district goals in terms of student achievement and adult capacity.

Completion of the individual elements of this recommendation should begin immediately and progress towards full implementation by the beginning of the 2014-15 school year.

**Recommendation 8: Provide equitable access to comparable programs, services, and opportunities that impact student achievement. Eliminate the achievement gap between ethnic and socioeconomic student groups. Take further steps to allocate resources on student needs.**

Equal access to comparable programs, services, and opportunities in all schools is present in an effective school district. Fairness to all students is apparent in such areas as placement in special programs and access to challenging course offerings. In examining district programs and services, the auditors expected to find similar



proportions of students by gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status as reflected by the student population. School districts that serve diverse communities have students that require differentiated resources if all learners are to be given an equal opportunity to experience success in the educational program.

The Fort Bend Independent School District board policies and some planning documents were examined for goals and strategies for addressing inequalities and inequities (see [Findings 1.1, 1.3, 3.1, 4.4, 5.1, and 5.4](#)). The challenge for district leadership is to develop and translate such policies and goals into actions that make a difference for all FBISD students. With the exceptionally diverse student population of the district and the large number of English language learners (ELLs), the administration must make greater effort to provide access to an adequate educational program and the resources necessary to prepare these students to become assimilated into the English language culture while retaining the distinct characteristics of their primary culture (see [Findings 3.1 and 4.3](#)).

Auditors found that the quality of a student's educational experience is often dependent upon the school he/she attends (see [Finding 2.4, 3.1, 4.3, 5.1, 5.2 and Recommendation 3](#)). The curriculum lacks articulation and coordination, which contributes to inconsistent delivery of the curriculum from classroom to classroom and from school to school (see [Finding 2.1](#)). Inequalities exist in access to certain academies, AP classes, technology, and experienced teachers.

Inequalities exist on the basis of ethnicity and socioeconomic status in the participation of students in Special Education and in advanced programs such as Gifted and Talented and Advanced Placement (see [Finding 3.1](#)). The auditors found that allocation of resources are based on tradition and are primarily formula-driven rather than on the curricular goals and strategic priority needs of different subgroups of students (see [Finding 5.1](#)). The capacity of an individual school's PTA/booster club to raise funds also contributes to the inequities found among district schools (see [Finding 3.1](#)).

In order to not perpetuate but to overcome the relative disadvantages that some students bring to the educational system, the following recommendations are presented to the board of trustees and superintendent.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District's Board of Trustees.

**G.8.1:** Direct the superintendent to involve stakeholders in developing a definition of equal access and of equity. Review and revise *Board Policy FB* and the entire *EHB* section of the policy manual to include the agreed upon definition and to establish and communicate a commitment to provide equal access to programs and services and equitable distribution of resources to students based upon their varying needs. Note: Equal treatment of unequals further exacerbates inequality. Equity is generally defined as the allocation of resources based upon what is needed to effectively close the achievement gap among subpopulations of students.

**G.8.2:** Direct the superintendent to establish the improvement of student achievement as the primary district priority and to ensure that board policies focus all district operations in supporting achievement. Include the following:

- District strategic planning (see [Recommendation 3](#)).
- Program planning with connectivity (see [Recommendation 3](#)).
- Curriculum design and delivery (see [Recommendation 4](#)).
- Professional development (see [Recommendation 7](#)).
- Assessment (see [Recommendation 5](#)).
- Program selection, adoption, monitoring, and evaluation (see [Recommendations 5, 6, and 7](#)).
- Equal access and equitable distribution of resources (see [Recommendation 8](#)).
- Budget planning and district priorities (see [Recommendation 9](#)).
- Technology planning and implementation (see [Recommendation 9](#)).

- Expectations for staff performance (see [Recommendations 6 and 7](#)).

**G.8.3:** Direct the superintendent to revise and present to the board for their consideration and adoption, *(Local): Special Programs/Bilingual Education/ESL*. This policy should provide a directive with benchmarks for tracking the proficiency levels of the English language development of English language learners and their assimilation into the community while retaining characteristics of their native culture. Similar policies may also need to be drafted for other sub-groups of students as noted in [G.8.4](#).

**G.8.4:** Direct the superintendent to prepare for board consideration and adoption, a policy or policies that provide for the following:

- A commitment to end the achievement gap based on gender, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. Establish high expectations for all students to achieve, and by policy authorize the administration to take whatever steps necessary to change any practice that inhibits the district's response to increasing student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps.
- Hold principals and teachers accountable for student success through the appraisal process (see [Finding 3.4](#) and [Recommendation 6](#)).
- Review curriculum areas, academies, and interventions to determine equality of access and equitable distribution of resources, using achievement data and cost/benefit analyses.
- Create a recruiting plan to attract and retain minority, bilingual/ESL, and male teachers to the district.
- Provide for an equitable educational program throughout district schools regarding personnel allocation, budget formulas, grants, and fund raising efforts. Note: Because of the wide variation in individual schools' fundraising abilities, the board may need to adopt a matching formula funded by the district to equalize this source of revenue.

**G.8.5:** Direct the superintendent to provide annual updates to the board regarding efforts and progress in eliminating inequalities and inequities within the district.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District's Superintendent.

**A.8.1:** Prepare drafts of the policies recommended in [G8.1](#) through [G.8.4](#) for board consideration and adoption.

**A.8.2:** Assist the board in obtaining stakeholders' commitment to equal access and equitable allocation of resources. Take steps to ensure that all students can succeed regardless of their ethnicity, primary language, mobility, or economic status. Establish connectivity to the budget process (see [Recommendation 9](#)).

**A.8.3:** Develop a comprehensive curriculum, program, and assessment plan to provide the framework for a consistent educational program, including the components in [Recommendations 4](#) and [5](#).

**A.8.4:** Supervise and monitor the implementation of the intended curriculum and of expected instructional strategies so that all students have access to comparable instructional and curricular experiences (see [Recommendation 4](#)).

**A.8.5:** Oversee all reports, budgets, planning documents, assessments, programs, and interventions to ascertain the equitable treatment of all students at all school sites and alignment with board policies relating to equity.

- Require the use and analysis of disaggregated data pertaining to the needs of students served or to be served as background information in all reports, planning documents, and programming plans.
- Require that budgets reflect the equitable distribution of resources.
- Require annual analysis of disaggregated data pertaining to all district practices in the area of program enrollment, advanced classes, and interventions to determine disparities and inequities. Use these analyses for equitable and rational program and instructional decision making.

**A.8.6:** Monitor placements in special programs for disparities in participation among various subgroups.

**A.8.7:** Revise teacher and administrator recruitment and retention procedures. Develop funding or other appropriate incentives to recruit minority, male, and ESL/bilingual staff. Recruit in high minority, declining enrollment districts for bilingual/ESL teachers such as in New Mexico. Assign highly qualified minority mentors to newly hired minority staff members.

**A.8.8:** Provide annual reports to the board that report progress on the demonstrated equitable treatment of all students and their academic progress.

It is recommended that all of the elements of this recommendation begin immediately and be fully in place by the beginning of the 2014-15 school year.

**Recommendation 9: Develop and implement a three-year plan that aligns district and building-level resources to curricular goals and strategic priorities. Include systematic cost-benefit analyses to assure that expenditures are producing desired results.**

Linkage between the budget and the district's curricular goals and strategic priorities is vital. When expenditures are fully aligned to the educational priorities of the district, the ability to effectively deliver the district's curriculum is greatly enhanced. Such alignment provides a system that promotes the efficient attainment of desired results. A comprehensive, curriculum-based, systemic budget development process, helps ensure that the budget represents the district's priorities for student learning. Additionally, a thorough evaluation system based on intended results, allows for an annual opportunity to reallocate funds as needed to enhance the attainment of curricular goals and strategic priorities.

Since 2008, Fort Bend Independent School District has been able to decrease expenditures, increase revenues, and grow their general fund balance. Through the current budget development and management processes, the district has been able to maintain fiduciary control. However, the auditors found no evidence of district efforts to link student achievement or program performance feedback to budgetary decisions. For the most part, budgetary decisions are based on formula funding and staffing protocols (see [Finding 5.1](#)). From 2008 to 2012 the district was considered productive, since district expenditures continually decreased while student academic achievement increased (see [Finding 5.1](#)).

Auditors determined that Fort Bend Independent School District's facility planning is adequate. However, due to uneven student distribution throughout the district, both over-utilized and under-utilized facilities exist (see [Finding 5.3](#)). Under-utilized and over-utilized buildings create issues regarding learning, safety, program availability, staffing, campus revenue, and fiscal inefficiency. While capacity issues exist within certain areas and schools, the buildings in the district range from exceptional to adequate and are very clean and well maintained.

The auditors found that Fort Bend ISD's technology plan is inadequate to provide direction for the use and integration of technology into the teaching and learning environment. The absence of key planning criteria along with identified system disconnects prevent the technology program from making its designed impact. Technology is available for teacher and student use, but with few exceptions is generally limited to teacher-centered activities (see [Exhibit 5.2.2](#)) and non-innovative student use (see [Exhibit 5.2.3](#)). A lack of coordination at all levels of the organization exasperates the ability to deliver a cohesive approach to the selection, adoption, implementation, and evaluation of technology systems and software used to improve organizational effectiveness.

In an effort to support student academic performance and/or behavioral needs, Fort Bend ISD has implemented a sundry of programs and interventions. An effective school system carefully selects supplemental and intervention programs that align with the curriculum and respond to student needs, based on student performance data. Evaluation strategies are determined in advance, and implementation of such programs and/or actions is monitored regularly. The audit team found that the selection, implementation, and evaluation of interventions/programs were similar to the budget development processes. A loosely coupled system prevails in which interventions and programs were chosen without adhering to any system-wide selection procedure or a district-wide plan to assess their effectiveness (see [Finding 5.4](#)). Auditors identified over 500 interventions/programs currently in use throughout the district. Currently, there are no processes in place to ensure that interventions are aligned to the district's curriculum, goals, or objectives. Furthermore, no evidence was provided to demonstrate

that an intervention program was strategically abandoned because it did not accomplish the program's intended results.

The auditors recommend several steps to bring the budget development process in line with expectations for a curriculum-driven, program-focused budget that can improve linkage to the district plans, goals, and priorities. Auditors also suggest recommended actions related to long-range facility planning, and the selection, implementation, and evaluation of technology and intervention programs.

**Governance Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District's Board of Trustees:

**G.9.1:** Direct the superintendent to develop budgetary policies using the criteria noted in [Exhibit 5.1.16](#) and in [A.9.2](#).

**G.9.2:** Direct the superintendent to present draft policies for board review, modification as needed, and adoption that:

- Require ongoing needs assessments of curriculum, and supplemental programs based on goals and on results as indicated by student performance and other feedback data.
- Require a systematic process that links budget proposals with the district's curriculum, support programs, technology programs, and planned interventions.
- Require, as part of the budget development process, a presentation from the administration to communicate how the proposed budget addresses the goals and priorities of the district and responds to student and program evaluation data. The presentation should include an evaluation based upon measurable criteria of the effectiveness of the previous year's budget in achieving district priorities and those programs/interventions that are being revised or terminated on the basis of lack of effectiveness.

**G.9.3:** Require the superintendent to direct the preparation of a long-range financial plan that incorporates all revenue sources for supporting district operational needs over the next five years.

**G.9.4:** Require the superintendent to develop and implement cost/benefit criteria and an action plan to reduce capacity issues and increase the efficient use of school facilities through alterations in the current student attendance zone plan.

**G.9.5:** Require the superintendent to develop and implement a three-year plan that aligns district and building-level resources to curricular goals and strategic priorities.

**G.9.6:** Direct the superintendent to draft a policy outlining criteria for the selection, adoption, district-wide implementation, and assessment of technology hardware/software, and student intervention programs at the district and school levels.

**G.9.7:** Require that long-range facility plans include clear linkage of facility needs and planned actions with the educational program priorities and student needs reflected in school and district improvement plans. Communicate expectations that the documents prepared for board, staff, and public information include user-friendly narrative demonstrating these linkages and clear explanations of the parameters for decisions on capital projects.

**G.9.8:** Require annual reports that communicate how effectively the budget, facility plan, technology plan, and interventions are meeting the district's curricular goals and strategic priorities, based on predetermined evaluation data. These reports should include recommendations for continuation, modification, or elimination of all programs and/or practices.

**G.9.9:** Through policy, require the superintendent to establish a plan that will lead to the successful implementation of curriculum-based budgeting.

**G.9.10:** Direct the superintendent to develop and implement cost/benefit criteria and an action plan to increase Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA) in relationship to enrollment. The plan should focus on boosting

enrollment in all programs that impact WADA by eliminating barriers to the programs, and increasing Average Daily Attendance (ADA).

**G.9.11:** Develop and implement a student achievement centered proposal that will allow voters to decide on increasing revenue through a Tax Roll-Back Election.

**Administrative Functions:** The following actions are recommended to the Fort Bend Independent School District's Superintendent:

**A.9.1:** Design or revise policies for board approval and adoption as noted in the Governance Functions.

### **Budget Development and Management**

**A.9.2:** Revise the Budget Development Process (see **G.9.1** and **G.9.9**) to ensure that the budget development processes are focused on curricular goals and strategic priorities. Clear connections must be maintained between student performance data and the written, taught, and tested curriculum. The following steps will increase the linkage between the district's curricular goals and strategic priorities:

1. Using the current construction of your budget, identify various educational activities or programs, and group them into broad areas of need or purpose served.
2. Assign a budget/program manager to each program/intervention or budget request. Direct them to prepare a concise and meaningful budget package for their respective areas.
3. Attach a goal statement to each program area or budget request that states the program/intervention's linkage to established goals and priorities, its purpose, the criteria for identifying success, and how these will be evaluated and reported. Each budget request should be described to permit evaluation of the consequences of funding or non-funding in terms of performance results. Principals' involvement in this responsibility is critical. School level repurposing of any building-level budget should be required to show tight linkage to established system-wide goals and priorities.
4. Compile the goal/linkage statements, and give them to appropriate staff to gather data that best describe needed service levels, program outcomes, and cost-benefits.
5. Define program performance expectations and accountability with the involvement of staff (including principals, teachers, and support staff). Current results should be compared to desired expectations and related service level requirements. For example, to be successful a specific program may need to be established at 110 percent of previous spending levels. This will necessitate a comparable reduction from some other program/budget judged to be of lesser current consequence.
6. Prepare guidelines and recommendations, and give them to budget/program managers who will then combine all recommendations into a single budget proposal.
7. Compile past cost information, especially expenditure percentages of budget, with performance data and recommendations to guide preliminary budget estimates.
8. Appoint a budget planning team representing the various stakeholders who will eventually bring the draft budget documents to the Superintendent's Cabinet. This team studies the goals, priorities, and parameters inherent in the decisions being made and receives technical support from the directors and managers who developed the program budgets. Discussions of cost-benefit information are critical at this stage. Where needed, budget plans should be extended over a minimum of five years to assure consistency of effort and focus (see **G.9.3**).
9. The Superintendent's Cabinet evaluates and ranks the budget packages. Budget requests need to compete with each other for funding based upon data derived from evaluation of the priorities of need and level of program effectiveness.
10. Compile results of the evaluation and ranking, and publish them in a tentative budget with programs listed in priority order. Ask administrators for input before a final draft is prepared for use as the presentation document.

11. Build the technology and capital outlay and improvement budget from a zero (or modified zero) base each year with multi-year planning for improvements, including life-cycle replacement and preventive maintenance. Prioritize decisions based on health and safety factors, the impact on student learning and the learning environment, and protection of investment. Identify and communicate documented parameters for decisions on needs that are not considered health and safety matters. Many needs change annually and do not reoccur once met and paid for, such as durable goods and construction costs. The budget planning process should reflect these changes while projecting life-cycle replacement costs of technology, buildings, and other systems over five to 15 years.
12. Design the budget management process to allow for an acceptable variation (such as a plus or minus 3-5 percent) permitting program managers sufficient stability to achieve the desired results. Budget amendments should only occur when acceptable variations have been approved; failure to do so would violate sound accounting practices and may create misalignment between dollars spent and identified student needs.
13. Finalize budget allocations based on available revenues, the appropriation levels to be authorized, and funding priorities and rankings. Prepare the recommended budget to be taken to public hearing before the board of trustees.
14. Use the public hearing process to communicate broadly the financial planning link with student needs, program priorities, and the results sought through the actions taken. Allow time for individual comments and questions before the budget adoption meeting. Prepare the final document after considering public and board comments and seek adoption.
15. Establish final program and services to be funded at the level approved by the board, and set the budget in place.

**A.9.3:** Provide training and consultation to all budget managers during the transition toward a curriculum-driven budgeting process. Special and extended training is advisable since curriculum-driven budgeting requires that both financial and programmatic effectiveness be monitored simultaneously.

**A.9.4:** Develop and implement cost/benefit criteria and an action plan (see **G.9.4**) to reduce capacity issues and increase the efficient use of school facilities through alterations in the current student attendance zone plan.

**A.9.5:** Develop a policy that correlates staffing patterns to the district's curricular goals and strategic priorities. Staffing patterns should be data-driven and address identified inequities (see Finding 3.1 and Recommendation 8). District productivity associated with the staffing protocol should be determined through a cost benefit analysis.

**A.9.6:** Develop a competitive salary schedule that reflects the job assignment and contract length of employees and is based on large urban district national norms, while reflecting regional differences.

**A.9.7:** Develop a policy regarding the equitable distribution of revenue for all campuses. Include in this policy the requirement for cost benefit analyses based on student achievement needs and revenue distribution. Adjustments to the distribution model based on the cost benefit analyses should be made to enhance the district's productivity.

**A.9.8:** Develop and implement a three-year plan that aligns district and building level resources to curricular goals and strategic priorities.

**A.9.9:** Develop and implement cost/benefit criteria and an action plan to increase Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA) in relationship to enrollment (see **G.9.10**).

**A.9.10:** Assist the board of trustees in developing and implementing a student-centered proposal that will allow voters to decide on increasing revenue through a Tax Roll-Back Election.

## Technology and Interventions

**A.9.11:** Develop a policy that requires that all technology programs to be district-wide initiatives (see [Finding 5.2](#) and [Finding 5.4](#)). These programs should be closely aligned with the district's written, taught, and tested curriculum, and they should have a positive impact on student achievement and/or system-wide productivity. The superintendent should create accompanying administrative procedures that include the following:

- Establish an annual schedule for the review of technology-related hardware and software programs and/or related interventions by the appropriate central office administrative staff. Use performance data to evaluate individual technology programs usage and effectiveness, and develop and implement procedures for verifying individual program efficacy in order to justify retention, retention with modification, or termination.
- Develop a long-term plan that includes the following elements:
  - Detailed role of the use of technology in the daily teaching and learning of the written curriculum.
  - Standard of hardware/software and related support for each classroom in the district. This should include a funding plan for scheduled acquisition, replacement, and repair. Funding plans should be designed to ameliorate the current inequities that have resulted from the great variation in the fund-raising capacity of individual schools (see [Finding 3.1](#) and [Recommendation 8](#)).
- Provide professional development specific to each provider and end user to ensure competency and that technology is appropriately integrated into teaching and learning (see [Recommendation 7](#)).

## Facilities

**A.9.12:** Direct all leaders with responsibilities in the long-range facility planning process to respond to the direction in [G.9.7](#) above and prepare documents congruent with that expectation. Components of the plan should include the following:

- Philosophy statements that review the community aspirations and the educational mission of the district and their relationship to short-range and long-range facilities goals;
- Enrollment projections that take into account any known circumstances that may cause change in pupil population;
- The current organizational patterns of schools and an identification of possible organizational and administrative changes necessary to support the educational program as the district grows (see [G.9.4](#));
- Identification of educational program needs (see [Finding 4.3](#)) to be considered by designers of capital projects for renovation or addition of school facilities (e.g., space for specialty grouping of students, technological infrastructure, lab requirements, etc.);
- A detailed evaluation of each existing facility, including assessment of structural integrity, mechanical integrity and efficiency, technology capacity, energy efficiency, operations and maintenance, and health and safety requirements;
- Prioritization of needs for renovation of existing facilities and the provisions for additional facilities;
- Cost analysis of potential capital projects to meet the educational needs of the district, including identification of revenues associated with capital construction;
- Procedures for the involvement of all stakeholders of the district-wide community in the development and evaluation of the long-range facilities plan.

**A.9.13:** Direct the appropriate administrator to assist facility planners in preparing public information related to facility needs and their alignment with educational needs and priorities, as well as with district goals.

**A.9.14:** Require that the expanded facility planning information related to plans for expansion, remodeling, and replacing current buildings be included in presentations to the board and the public.

**A.9.15:** Continue current emphasis among all staff of quality maintenance and custodial care for all buildings.

The implementation of the elements of this recommendation should begin immediately with the goal to have a completed facilities plan (with the assistance of the planned comprehensive facilities study) by the end of 2013; the technology plan should be fully implemented by the beginning of the 2014-15 school year; and program-based budgeting should be fully implemented in three years.



## V. SUMMARY

A Curriculum Audit™ is basically an “exception” report. That is, it does not give a summative, overall view of the suitability of a system. Rather, it holds the system up to scrutiny against the predetermined standards of quality, notes relevant findings about the system, and cites discrepancies from audit standards. Recommendations are then provided accordingly to help the district improve its quality in the areas of noted deficiency.

The auditors subjected the Fort Bend Independent School District to a comparison of predetermined standards and indicators of quality, and discrepancies were noted. These constitute the *findings* of the audit. The auditors then provided *recommendations* to help the district ameliorate the discrepancies. The recommendations represent the auditors’ “best judgment” about how to help the district ameliorate the discrepancies disclosed in the report. It is possible that the superintendent, his staff, and the board may demur with some the recommendations. However, they form the *starting point* for discussion of how to deal with the documented findings. Summary Exhibit 0.1 shows the relationship between audit recommendations and the findings upon which the recommendations are based.

### Summary Exhibit 0.1

#### Findings and Recommendations Aligned to Audit Standards Fort Bend Independent School District March 2013

| Standard I  |             |             |             | Standard II |             |             |             | Standard III |             |             |             |             | Standard IV |             |             |             | Standard V  |             |             |             | Recommendations |   |   |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Finding 1.1 | Finding 1.2 | Finding 1.3 | Finding 1.4 | Finding 2.1 | Finding 2.2 | Finding 2.3 | Finding 2.4 | Finding 3.1  | Finding 3.2 | Finding 3.3 | Finding 3.4 | Finding 3.5 | Finding 4.1 | Finding 4.2 | Finding 4.3 | Finding 4.4 | Finding 5.1 | Finding 5.2 | Finding 5.3 | Finding 5.4 |                 |   |   |
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Normal audit practice is that the board of trustees *receives* an audit; they do not *accept* it. After review of the audit report, the board requests a response from its superintendent of schools. When the superintendent’s response is received, then the board is in a position to act upon the two sets of recommendations. In this manner, the superintendent and the board are always accountable for what occurs in the school system after an audit report.

Fort Bend Independent School District (FBISD) is at a crossroads. There has been considerable turnover in key leadership positions over the past few years. Coordination and communication among the various departments and between the different levels of the system is weak, and services are fragmented. There is no clearly established authority to ensure the written, taught, and tested curriculum is designed and delivered with fidelity. Stakeholders perceive a lack of direction for the system as a whole, significant compartmentalization and confusing messages about policies and procedures, and blurring of the lines of authority and responsibility. A new superintendent, working with a relatively new board, faces both the challenge and the opportunity to realign administrative personnel and their related responsibilities to ensure that the functions of planning,

communication, curriculum development, professional development, assessment, and resource allocations are integrated to into a coherent system that maximizes cooperation among and between departments and the schools that they serve.

Board policies, while relatively current and clearly designed to meet state and federal legal requirements, fail to meet Curriculum Management Audit criteria for effective control of many curriculum management functions. Policies come close to minimal adequacy standards in two areas: Standard One (Control) and Standard Three (Connectivity and Equity). Policies do not provide adequate direction for all areas of curriculum and program alignment, development and use of a student and program assessment process, program-centered budgeting processes, resource and support system alignment and allocation, and implementation of adequate change processes to ensure long-term institutionalization of district priority goals.

The district has employed a continuous improvement model in their approach to planning over the past five years. District leaders have developed templates and guidelines for planning processes and plans for both system and campus levels that meet most of the audit criteria for successful planning and plans. Implementation of these guidelines, however, shows considerable variance in quality of particular design components such as providing clear rationale, setting meaningful, measurable objectives, developing powerful action steps clearly aimed at the target strategic objectives, monitoring and evaluating implementation, and making adjustments where needed. The District Strategic Plan was last updated more than a year ago, and while current department and campus plans show linkages to that plan, district and site staff reported uncertainty about the viability of the district plan in this period of transition.

The design of the organizational chart does not conform to the principles of sound organizational management. Positions are not logically grouped, spans of control are excessive, some supervisory relationships are unclear, essential positions are missing from the chart, and relative levels of responsibility are not accurately portrayed. The majority of stakeholders interviewed indicated that the relationships reflected in the current organizational chart do not support sound design and delivery of curriculum. Job descriptions were available for most positions on the organizational chart, and approximately half satisfied minimal audit criteria for adequacy of design. However, many job descriptions have not been revised since 2010, and the alignment between numerous job descriptions, current day-to-day operations of the district, and the table of organization is inconsistent. Some job descriptions contain too many duties and responsibilities to be useful to the employee or the appraiser, and others do not accurately reflect the duties employees actually perform. Curricular linkage is not included in many job descriptions for administrators and staff who are responsible for ensuring that the written and taught curriculum are aligned. Consequently, the job descriptions are inadequate to provide for sound curriculum and instructional management.

The curriculum management plan was presented to auditors as *Board Policy EG: Curriculum Development*. Auditors used this board policy and *Administrative Procedure EG-R: Curriculum Development* to review components of an effective curriculum management plan. The documents met nine of the 15 total audit criteria or 60 percent. Criteria not meeting audit standards included: format and components, a reasonable number of precise objectives, objective content in relation to multiple context and cognition types, differentiation and selection of instructional approaches and student objectives, a staff development plan, and a communication plan for design and delivery of the curriculum.

The scope of a district's curriculum is the presence of curriculum documents to guide instruction in every subject and course offered to students. The lack of guiding curriculum documents increases the risk of inconsistency and fragmentation across courses, grade levels, and schools. To be considered adequate according to audit criteria, 100 percent of the core subject areas and 70 percent of the district's non-core subjects and courses must have guiding curriculum documents. The curriculum scope of the Fort Bend Independent School District was adequate at the elementary and middle school levels but inadequate at the high school level. Auditors were not presented with curriculum guides for all subject areas at all levels of the system. Fifty-nine percent of the total courses offered by the school district had curriculum guiding documents available at the time of the audit.

Having curriculum documents available is only one piece of providing appropriate curriculum guidance to teachers, however. Curriculum documents must also provide direction and consistency to enable students

to achieve at high levels. Comprehensive curriculum documents identify lesson objectives, specific pre-requisite skills necessary to address those objectives, instructional resources, preferred teaching strategies, and assessment measures. Auditors reviewed curriculum guides for all subject areas of the curriculum in relation to quality criteria necessary for guiding the district curriculum delivery in classrooms. The district's curriculum guides did not meet audit quality criteria for basic or deep alignment. In depth analysis of core curriculum guides indicated discrepancies in content and cognitive type when comparing objectives with assessments and strategies. Further, the feasibility of objective mastery was hampered by aggressive instructional unit schedules and the number of objectives associated with units and grading periods.

The student work artifacts collected during classroom visits were not congruent with district expectations in content and cognitive type. The analysis of artifacts revealed deficits in 58 percent of the grade levels across the four core areas: English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. The cognitive analysis of artifacts illustrated that the majority encompassed the lower, less demanding areas of knowledge, comprehension, and application. The rigor of the student artifacts did not match the district expectations of a "challenging" curriculum.

The auditors found that inequalities exist in student access to some district programs and services. Examples include disproportionate representation of some student subgroups in special education, gifted and talented programs, and advanced classes at the high school level. There is insufficient definition of the written curriculum for English Language Learners (ELLs); inadequate staff development for teachers focused specifically on the unique needs of ELLs; inequitable access to curriculum for some ELLs; and insufficient coordination between regular education, special education, and programs for English Language Learners. Some additional resources are allocated on the basis of need, but fundraising is inequitable across the district's schools. An inadequate data management system impedes the district's efforts to monitor program effectiveness and address inequities.

Planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of the staff development programs are inadequate. Although many staff development activities are occurring, most of which focus on understanding behavior and goals set forth in campus improvement plans, the overall staff development program lacks district-wide coordination and a comprehensive district plan that coordinates district and campus professional development initiatives.

The auditors found a lack of clear and consistent direction for classroom instruction. During classroom visits, auditors noted that instructional delivery district-wide generally consisted of teacher-directed whole group instruction or individual seat work and did not reflect district expectations for rigor and relevance; active engagement of students; and use of technology for instruction. Most lessons focused on low levels of cognitive processes involving mostly recall and comprehension.

The auditors also found that the curriculum was being monitored, but the type, frequency, and quality of monitoring practices vary widely among principals. The quality of feedback to teachers is inconsistent. Teacher efficacy and related accountability is a concern. Over 95 percent of teachers receive ratings of "Exceeds Expectations" or "Proficient" in all appraisal domains. Written comments, if present, provide few specific recommendations for teacher or principal growth or improvement, which is contrary to the FBISD Employee Handbook: "Evaluation of an employee's job performance is a continual process that focuses on improvement."

No single document existed as a plan for student assessment and program evaluation, although some elements of a planning process were present. However, existing documents did not provide adequate direction for making curricular and program evaluation decisions.

The scope of formal assessment in the Fort Bend Independent School District was inadequate in that only 65 percent of core courses and none of the non-core courses had some form of state or district-wide assessment. To meet audit criteria for scope of assessment, 100 percent of courses in the core content areas and at least 70 percent of courses in non-core areas must be formally assessed.

District students regularly outperformed their peers statewide on state assessments. However, analysis of performance of several subgroup populations within the district showed most achievement gaps were unlikely to close in the foreseeable future without appropriate intervention, and the percentage of low income students in a given school tended to be a predictor of assessment scores.

Various district and campus formative assessments provided student performance data in core courses, although the data were not necessarily aligned vertically and horizontally, and required substantial amounts of teacher time to acquire. Summative data collection was limited to courses having required state assessments. Use of formative and summative data varied from campus to campus and teacher to teacher. Overall, data use had increased in the district over the last several years, but it remained inadequate to inform curricular, instructional, and programmatic decision making district-wide. For the most part, district personnel were not using data in making decisions about selection, implementation, modification, or termination of programs and interventions.

The auditors did not find clear linkages between curriculum planning and budget planning. The auditors found that a formula-based approach was used for budget development, and no succinct processes were in place that tied student achievement or program performance feedback to budgetary decisions.

When expenditures are not aligned to educational priorities, a district's ability to effectively deliver the district's curriculum is diminished. Auditors found that from 2008 to 2012 the district reduced expenditures as revenues increased, which resulted in a growth of the general fund balance. While the financial condition of the district appears strong, three issues could jeopardize the district's productivity in the future. First, there is an inverse relationship between Weighted Average Daily Attendance (WADA) and enrollment. While enrollment increased from 2008 to 2012, WADA, as a percentage of enrollment, decreased. Since the basis for a district's total revenue is based on WADA, it is important that a district develops ways to increase their total number of WADA. Second, the local Maintenance and Operation (M&O) tax rate is set at a \$1.04. Currently in Texas, with voter approval, a district can set a tax rate up to \$1.17. When a district increases their local tax rate, the revenue the district receives for each WADA increases, which in turn maximizes total revenue. Additionally, while the district has taken major steps to reduce expenditures over the past five years, fixed costs associated with operating the district continue to escalate: fuel, step raises, electricity, insurance, vehicles, food, etc. At present, the district is fiscally sound; however, in the near future, steps should be considered to increase the district's revenue to match inflationary costs.

Delivery of the written curriculum requires appropriate facilities, which are clean and well maintained. The facilities should be appropriately designed to provide for the specific educational needs of the students, teachers, and the delivery of the curriculum. Additionally, facilities should address district goals and priorities. While there is not a single comprehensive facility plan, the various facility documents presented to auditors meet the audit criteria for adequacy. The Fort Bend Independent School District's facilities are clean and well maintained. However, there are classroom capacity issues due to uneven student distribution throughout the district. Some schools are currently over-utilized, while others are under-utilized. Under-utilized and over-utilized buildings create issues regarding learning, safety, program availability, staffing, campus revenue, and fiscal inefficiency.

Successful technology integration provides an engaging modality that can facilitate more meaningful student learning, and improve district efficiency and effectiveness. Auditors found the district's technology plan to be inadequate by audit criteria. The use of technology throughout the district is fragmented. A lack of a consistency and coordination throughout the district regarding the selection, adoption, implementation, and evaluation of technology systems and software has created compatibility issues and inefficiencies. The availability of technology varies among schools and is often dependent on an individual school's ability to raise its own funds.

Effective program interventions contribute to school improvement and productivity. An intervention that sustains a positive impact is connected to district priorities and is well planned, adequately funded, and fully implemented. Fort Bend Independent School District has a plethora of programs, initiatives, and strategies being used throughout the district. As with technology, auditors found a loosely coupled system regarding the selection, implementation, and evaluation of these programs and interventions. Currently, no district-wide processes are in place to regulate, control, or align interventions to the district's curriculum, goals, or objectives.

Challenges lie ahead for district leadership in meeting the needs of every student ranging from those with disabilities to that of meeting the potential of gifted/talented youngsters. Pressures to improve achievement at all schools for all students, especially as related to subpopulations and their access to challenging courses, will continue.

The efficacy of the recommendations contained in this audit rests on a viable, valid, comprehensive, and focused framework of board policies and related planning efforts. As district leaders respond to the recommendations of this audit, the audit team encourages them to set short-term goals with a reasonable number of objectives to be accomplished in the recommended timelines and to establish broad knowledge and a common vocabulary among all stake holders for each endeavor. Ensuring common understandings will lead to sustainable buy-in.

The Fort Bend Independent School District's curriculum management audit team hopes that this report will provide the stimulus for the board, administration, teachers, and community to take stock of their present situation and unite together to accomplish these very doable tasks. The audit team is optimistic that given proper attention to the areas requiring improvements in the district, as cited by the curriculum management audit, the expectation of the board and professional staff for further betterment of the system will be met. The curriculum management audit will provide direction on how to continue to develop and maintain the focus that is necessary for maximizing student learning and for closing the achievement gap among students and schools as well as challenging those students who already demonstrate high levels of performance. Best wishes.