Academic Program Management Audit

for the Fort Bend Independent School District

PREPARED AND SUBMITTED BY:

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Table of Contents

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In August 2019, Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. (Gibson), as part of its continuing contract to provide internal auditing services for the Fort Bend Independent School District (Fort Bend ISD/FBISD/the District) Board of Trustees, began conducting an Academic Program Management Audit. This introductory chapter provides a summary of audit findings and recommendations, audit scope and objectives, and a description of Gibson's approach and methodology.

Gibson wishes to thank the FBISD leadership and staff for their assistance in conducting this audit and the Board Audit Committee for overseeing this important work.

Audit Summary

In 2016, the Board conducted a comprehensive policy review and update to reflect its decision to transition from the existing curriculum framework to one that supports a student-centered approach to instruction, promotes student ownership of learning, and instills the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate. Under the direction of a new Chief Academic Officer, FBISD launched a curriculum re-write for all K-12 content areas to address deficiencies in the District's written, taught and tested curriculum identified by a prior curriculum audit. The District also purchased and implemented a new learning management system (*Schoology*) to house the curriculum and serve as an instructional delivery tool. Over the past three years, the District has undergone several central office reorganizations in an effort to align departments and provide more support and accountability for the implementation of the curriculum. Fort Bend ISD is a forward-thinking and progressive school system and the audit team identified numerous practices for which it should be commended:

- FBISD has a comprehensive policy framework that clearly communicates the Board's educational philosophy and expectations for curriculum and instruction.

- FBISD has a comprehensive and robust curriculum to support teachers in planning and delivering high-quality instruction. The organization of the curriculum components in *Schoology* is consistent and aligned across all grade levels and content areas. The audit team determined that FBISD's written curriculum meets, and in some areas exceeds, nearly all of the criteria for deep execution of its curriculum development strategy.

- FBISD has well-defined processes for developing, reviewing, and revising the curriculum; requesting, approving, procuring, and retiring instructional materials and supplemental resources that support the curriculum; and, has a variety of monitoring tools and systems to assess the curriculum and the fidelity of implementation.

- FBISD has a comprehensive professional learning plan that aligns resources and guides the professional learning for all teachers and leaders throughout the district. Professional learning plans have been developed for every job role and include required courses that are content-

specific, aligned to the District's priorities, and differentiated to accommodate individual learning needs.

- FBISD has identified professional learning communities (PLCs) as a high-yield strategy for improving teacher and principal effectiveness, and ultimately student performance. The District's phased approach to scaling the Impact Team PLC model through a progression of practice is commendable. The audit team also found that most of the conditions needed for high-functioning PLCs are in place. Principal are also supported in their personal and professional growth through monthly PLC meetings.

There are, however, several important issues that need to be addressed. Following are the most significant findings made during this audit:

- There have been a high number of organizational changes, job role changes, and new district initiatives in recent years. The audit team received consistent feedback from interviewees at all levels in the organization that the number of new initiatives and the pace of change are "overwhelming." The primary concern mentioned by most staff interviewed is "the lack of time to implement".

- The campus improvement planning process is used more to meet compliance requirements than drive change at schools. Feedback from campus leaders during interviews and focus groups suggests that the much of the work of reviewing and developing the CIPs occurs during the summer months when many campus leaders and teachers are not available.

- While the District has invested significant time and effort to ensure that *Schoology* and *OneNote* contain all of the curriculum components to support teachers in planning and delivering instruction, feedback from both principals and teachers suggests that they may not be accessing all of the resources in the way that is intended.

- Fewer than half of all principals surveyed regularly review and provide feedback on teacher's unit plans. Research suggests that principal feedback on unit plans (even more so than lesson plans) is an effective strategy for improving teacher performance.

- FBISD's assessment strategy is in transition and may not be flexible enough to support the needs of all schools. The audit team identified several implementation challenges.

- Feedback from both principals and teachers regarding the amount of time teachers have to collaborate in PLCs suggests that many teachers do not meet in their PLC with sufficient frequency or duration to be highly effective.

This audit identifies 17 commendations and contains 13 recommendations to improve academic program management at FBISD. These recommendations are listed in Table 1, along with the priority assigned by the audit team. The audit team assigned a priority level to each recommendation based on perceived risk and/or impact to the organization. Recommendations are not listed in order of priority but rather the order in which they appear in the report.

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Table 1. Summary of Audit Recommendations

No.	Priority	Recommendation
District Planning, Accountability, Organization and Management		
1	Medium	Develop and adopt a local policy to articulate the Board's desires with respect to professional learning and leadership development within FBISD.
2	Medium	Establish campus norms to ensure that CIPs are continuously reviewed and updated.
3	Low	Review and update job descriptions to ensure that they accurately reflect assigned roles, responsibilities, reporting relationships, and position qualifications.
4	High	Integrate change management practices with new district initiatives.
Curriculum Management		
5	Medium	Enhance the District's curriculum with the addition of strategies and suggested resources to support culturally responsive teaching in alignment with SEL priorities.
6	Medium	Include scaffolded, application-based performance tasks in the curriculum-focused professional learning sessions.
7	High	Codify expectations for campus leaders to review unit plans and provide timely and meaningful feedback during teacher PLCs.
8	Medium	Develop guidelines for lesson plans that include all essential components.
9	Medium	Ensure campus-based teacher leaders and professional learning provide differentiated support to teachers implementing blended learning practices.
10	High	Develop a tiered assessment strategy that responds to the needs of schools in the most advanced levels of accountability and those at risk of falling into a more advanced category.
Professional Learning		
11	Medium	Provide teachers with more opportunities to apply new learning as part of the professional learning experience.
12	High	Support schools in adjusting their master schedules to allow teachers to meet more frequently and for a longer duration in their PLC.
13	High	Allow for reduced teaching loads for campus-based instructional leaders at the elementary level.

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Project Objectives and Scope

Academic program management is defined as the systems and processes that are applied to establish educational goals, provide leadership and direction in achieving those goals, and being accountable for attaining them. Program management also serves to identify, prioritize, and address academic needs through the use of effective information, decision-making, and communication systems. The primary objectives of this audit were to assess the District's management and implementation of general academic programs and ensure that resources are aligned to the most important, impactful levers for improvement.

The scope of this audit primarily focused on the responsibilities of the Department of Teaching and Learning within Academic Affairs and the Department of School Leadership, but it also included relevant input from other departments as it relates to principal supervision, instruction for special populations, accountability systems and processes, and the management of human resources.

The scope of this audit focused on answering the following questions:

Instructional Leadership and Academic Program Management

- Does the District have a clear vision, strategy, and theory of action for achieving its desired instructional model and student outcomes?

- Is there a decision-making framework that defines the roles of the central office and school administrators in making academic decisions and in being accountable for student achievement?

- Is the central office logically organized with respect to the alignment of key functions, reporting structures, and reasonable of spans of control? Does the current organizational structure enable effective oversight and management of all academic programs and resources?

- Is the central office efficiently staffed according to workload statistics and other performance indicators?

- Are job descriptions for all positions up-to-date and do they accurately reflect position roles and responsibilities?

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- Are the District's curricula and assessments aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)?

- Is the District's curriculum management system implemented as intended and consistently across the district?

- Are processes in place to monitor the fidelity with which the district implements the curriculum?

- Are high-yield instructional strategies identified and implemented districtwide?

- Do all students and teachers have equitable access to instructional technology resources?

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- Do teachers effectively integrate technology into their lessons in order to differentiate instruction for meeting the learning needs of all students?

- Does the District provide sufficient resources to support the effective delivery of its curriculum (e.g., lesson plan templates and pacing guides)?

- Does the District have an assessment strategy that includes short-cycle formative assessments, interim assessments, and a system for progress-monitoring?

- Do educational data systems provide teachers and administrators with real-time access to student data?

- Do teachers have adequate time built into their school schedules to collaborate with their peers and to analyze student data in order to improve instruction?

- Does the District provide schools with the resources and supports they need to implement Response to Intervention (RtI) effectively?

Professional Learning and Supports

- Is there a districtwide professional development plan that is aligned to the District's goals and priorities? Do the results of state and district assessments inform district professional development priorities?

- Are teachers provided with differentiated supports through job-embedded coaching strategies? Are instructional supports monitored for their effectiveness?

- How much is the District investing in professional development for principals and teachers? How does this compare to other districts selected for comparison?

Performance Management

- Is there a deliberate strategy to assign resources to schools based on student need? Are the highest performing principals and teachers assigned to the neediest schools/students?

- Do principal and teacher evaluation ratings on the T-PESS and T-TESS reflect an assessment of performance that aligns with student achievement?

Project Approach and Methodology

The findings and recommendations included in this report were informed by the following data collection and analytical activities.

Data Analysis and Benchmarking

As part of this audit, Gibson collected and analyzed current year and historical data provided by FBISD, which included student enrollment and performance data, position data, budget and expenditure data, and other program-specific information. To provide additional context, Gibson also benchmarked FBISD

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to seven districts, which were selected by the audit team with input from FBISD, based on similarity in size, demographics, district type, and overall performance to FBISD. Gibson also compared FBISD to state and regional averages, where applicable. Throughout this report, Gibson used the most current data publicly available from the Texas Education Agency (TEA). Table 2 presents a profile of the benchmark districts and FBISD.

Table 2. Profile of Benchmark Districts, 2018-19

District	Region	Enrollment	Performance (Alpha/Scale)	% Economically Disadvantaged
CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS ISD (101907)	04: HOUSTON	116,512	B89	55%
KATY ISD (101914)	04: HOUSTON	79,913	A92	32%
FORT BEND ISD (079907)	04: HOUSTON	76,122	B89	43%
NORTH EAST ISD (015910)	20: SAN ANTONIO	65,159	B89	48%
ARLINGTON ISD (220901)	11: FORT WORTH	59,900	B86	73%
KLEIN ISD (101915)	04: HOUSTON	53,328	B89	45%
PLANO ISD (043910)	10: RICHARDSON	53,057	A91	32%
UNITED ISD (240903)	01: EDINBURG	43,364	A94	75%

Source: https://txschools.gov/districts and Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2018-19.

Interviews and Focus Groups

In October 2019, the Gibson audit team conducted 22 individual interviews and 11 focus group sessions with the superintendent, central office administrators and staff, principals, teachers, instructional coaches, Professional Learning Leads and Technology Integration Champions. The objective of the interviews and focus group sessions was to gather information about FBISD's academic programs and to assess stakeholder perceptions regarding areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.

While on-site, the audit team also visited nine campuses where they conducted an interview with the school principal and other campus administrators. The audit team also had the opportunity to observe several teacher Professional Learning Community meetings. Schools were selected based on school level (elementary, middle, high), academic performance, geographic location, and Title I status.

A complete list of interviewees, focus groups, and schools visited can be found in *Appendix A – Site Visit Roster*.

Teacher and Principal Surveys

On-line surveys were administered to all teachers and principals to collect feedback related to the District's initiatives, curriculum and instructional practices, and district-provided professional development, supervision and training. The overall response rates were 51.4 percent of teachers and 89.0 percent of principals surveyed.

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The remainder of this report is organized into the following chapters and appendices:

- Chapter 2 – District Profile

- Chapter 3 – District Planning, Accountability, Organization and Management

- Chapter 4 – Curriculum Management

- Chapter 5 – Professional Learning

- Chapter 6 – Teacher Quality

- Appendix A – Site Visit Roster

- Appendix B – Professional Learning Communities Analysis

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Chapter 2 – District Profile

The Fort Bend Independent School District (Fort Bend ISD/FBISD/the District) is located on the outskirts of Houston, Texas and is the state's 10th most populous county, transforming over the past two generations from a largely rural community to one the largest suburban areas in the state.

In order to provide context for the audit findings and recommendations contained in subsequent chapters of this report, this chapter provides an overview of FBISD's student population, and summaries of the District's overall academic performance, academic spending, and instructional staffing.

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Fort Bend ISD is the 8th largest school district in Texas, enrolling more than 76,000 students in 2018-19 in 50 elementary schools, 15 middle schools, 11 high schools, and 3 specialty campuses to address the academic and vocational interests of students. As shown in Table 3, overall student enrollment increased 4.1 percent over the past four years, and middle schools represented the largest growth (4.9%).

Table 3. Student Enrollment by School Level, 2015-16 and 2018-19

School Level	2015-16	2018-19	Pct. Δ
Elementary	32,805	33,971	3.6%
Middle	16,962	17,786	4.9%
High	23,211	24,239	4.4%
Specialty Campus	137	126	-8.0%
Grand Total	**73,115**	**76,122**	**4.1%**

Source: FBISD School Enrollment Data.

The FBISD student population is ethnically diverse, with 27.3 percent African American, 26.3 percent Hispanic, 26.1 percent Asian, 16.7 percent White, 3 percent Two or More Races, 0.4 percent American Indian, and 0.1 percent Pacific Islander.[1] These percentages have remained relatively unchanged since 2015-16.

In 2018-19, 43.2 percent of students were economically disadvantaged, 39.9 percent of students were identified as At-Risk (i.e., considered to have a higher probability of failing academically or dropping out of school), 15.8 percent were English Language Learners (ELL), 8.8 percent of students had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and received special education (SPED) services, 6.8 percent were Talented and Gifted (TAG), and 0.8 percent of students were militarily connected. Table 4 shows the four-year change in enrollment and representation of these student subgroups.

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[1] 2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).

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Table 4. Student Enrollment and Representation by Subgroup, 2015-16 and 2018-19

Subgroup	Enrollment			Representation		
	2015-16	2018-19	% Δ	2015-16	2018-19	% Δ
All Students	73,115	76,122	4.1%	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Economically Disadvantaged	24,536	32,738	33.4%	33.7%	43.2%	9.5%
At-Risk	32,851	30,409	-7.4%	44.9%	39.9%	-5.0%
ELL	11,962	12,051	0.7%	16.4%	15.8%	-0.5%
SPED	4,675	6,714	43.6%	6.4%	8.8%	2.4%
TAG	5,205	5,180	-0.5%	7.1%	6.8%	-0.3%
Military	673	580	-13.8%	0.9%	0.8%	-0.2%

Source: FBISD Student Snapshot Data and FBISD 2018-19 District Improvement Plan.

Student Performance and Outcomes

Effective the 2017-18 school year, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) redesigned the District and Campus Academic Accountability system. District performance is evaluated on three domains and a letter grade of A thru F is assigned based on performance. The three performance domains[2] are:

1. **Student Achievement –** Evaluates performance across all subjects for all students, on both general and alternate assessments, College, Career, and Military Readiness (CCMR) indicators, and graduation rates.

2. **School Progress –** Measures district and campus outcomes in two areas: the number of students that grew at least one year academically (or are on track) as measured by STAAR results and the achievement of all students relative to districts or campuses with similar economically disadvantaged percentages.

3. **Closing the Gaps –** Uses disaggregated data to demonstrate differentials among racial/ethnic groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and other factors. The indicators included in this domain, as well as the domain's construction, align the state accountability system with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

In 2018-19, the District received an overall rating of 89 (B). FBISD earned a 90 but was capped at an 89 due to having one or more Not Rated campuses this year due to the Hurricane Harvey provision. Of the 75 campuses that received ratings, 75 percent earned a rating of *Met Standard* for the 2018-19 school year. Table 5 presents a summary of FBISD's scale scores and letter grades for each of the academic performance domains.

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[2] TEA web site: https://tea.texas.gov/A-F/

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Table 5. Student Academic Achievement Summary, 2018-19

Domain	Scale Score	Grade	Overall Score	Weight	Total
Student Achievement	89	B			
STAAR Component	88	B			
CCMR	92	A			
Graduation Rate	90	A	89	70%	62.3
School Progress	89	B			
Academic Growth	85	B			
Relative Performance	90	A			
Closing the Gaps	89	B	89	30%	26.7
Overall Score		B			89

Source: https://txschools.gov

Set by the State Board of Education, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) are the statewide curriculum standards that outline what students should know and be able to do at every grade level in in each subject of the required curriculum. Beginning in third grade, the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) provides information on how students are performing against the TEKS at the end of the school year. Students meeting grade level expectations on the STAAR are likely to succeed in the next school year.

Figure 1 shows the percentage of FBISD students At Grade Level or Above on the STAAR tests from 2016-17 to 2018-19. The percentage of students meeting grade level expectations in all core content areas increased slightly over this 3-year period. The percentage of students meeting grade level expectations in all content areas, except Writing, dipped slightly in 2017-18, then increased in 2018-19.

Figure 1. FBISD STAAR Percent At Grade Level or Above, All Grades, 2016-17 to 2018-19
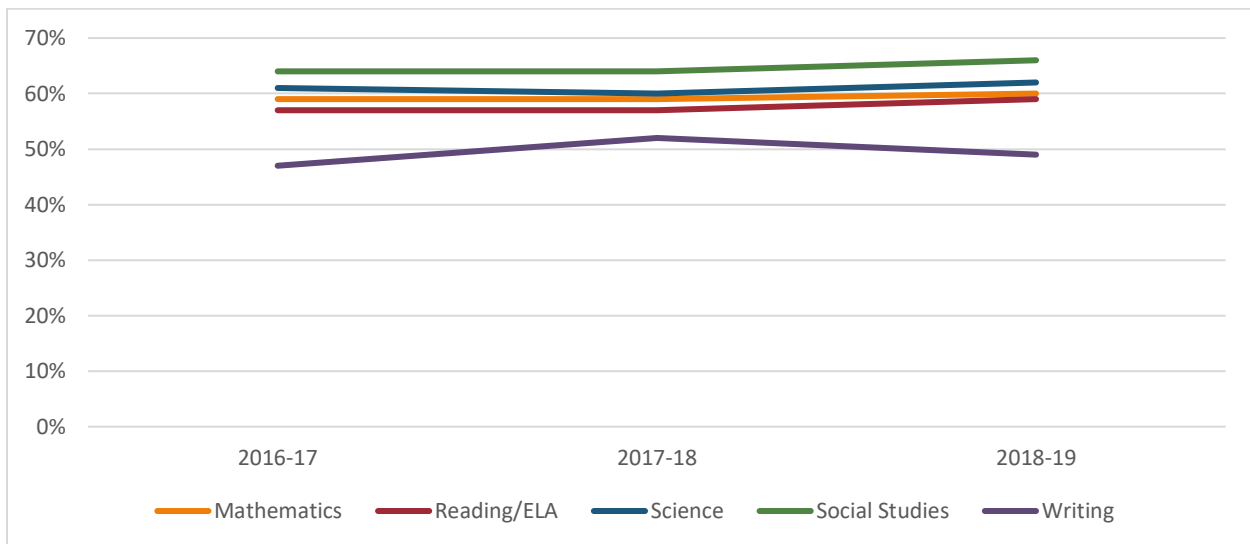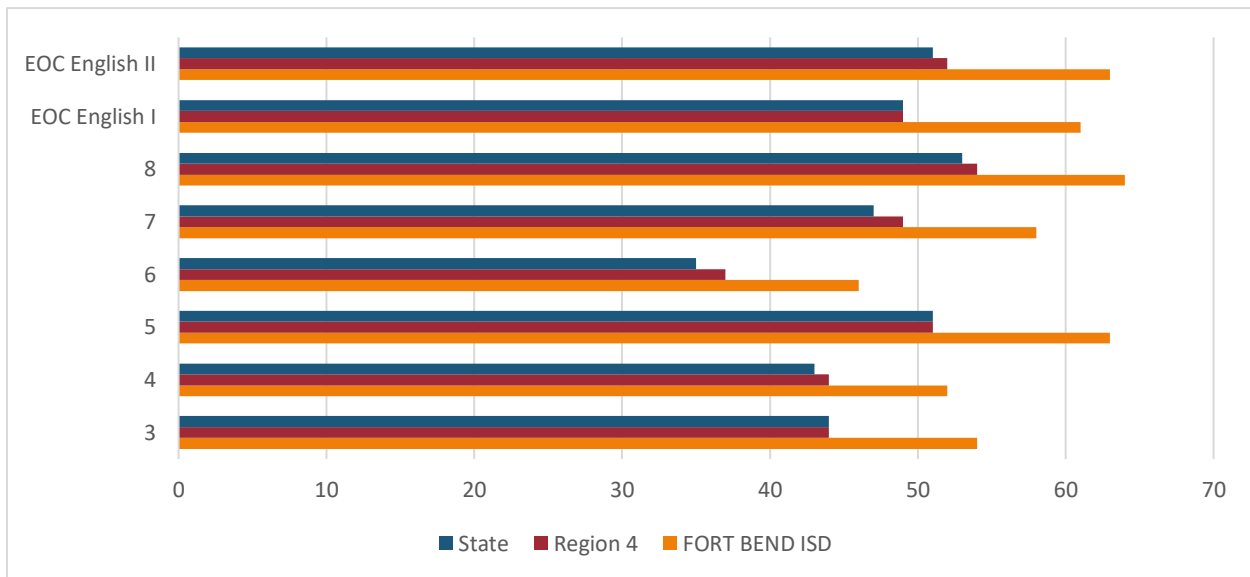

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR).

The following series of charts illustrate the percentage of students in FBISD, Region 4, and the State at Meets Grade Level or Above on the STAAR for each of the tested subjects and grades. FBISD exceeds the Region 4 and State averages in every content area and grade level.

FBISD student performance in Reading/Language Arts exceeds the Region 4 and State averages at all grade levels (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Reading/Language Arts: At Meets Grade Level or Above, 2018-19

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR).

FBISD student performance in Math was also above the Region 4 and State averages at all grade levels.

Figure 3. Math: At Meets Grade Level or Above, by Grades K-8 and High School EOC Algebra I, 2019

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR).

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FBISD student performance in Writing was above the Region 4 and State averages for both of the tested grade levels (Figure 4).
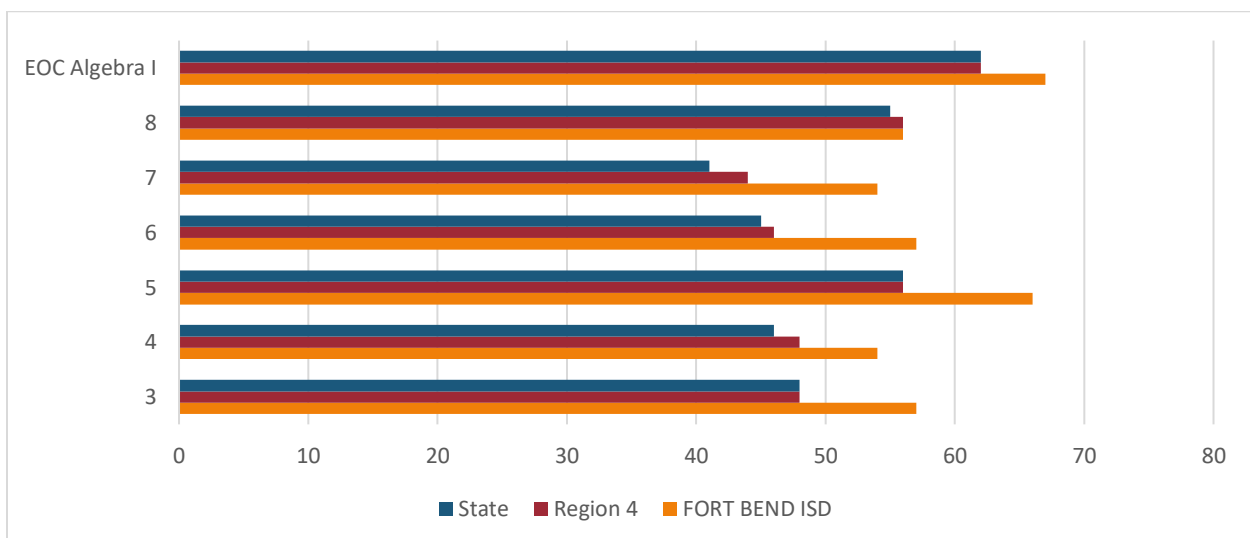
Figure 4. Writing: At Meets Grade Level or Above, Grades 4 and 7, 2019

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR).

FBISD student performance in Science was above the Region 4 and State averages across all grade levels and Biology (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Science: At Meets Grade Level or Above, Grades 5 and 8, and High School EOC Biology, 2019
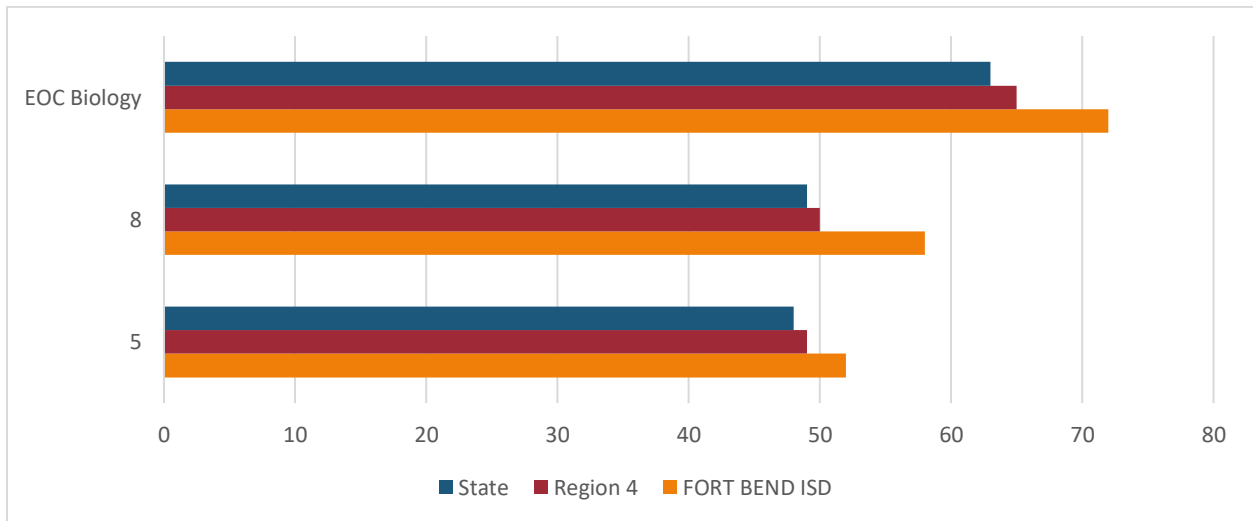
Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR).

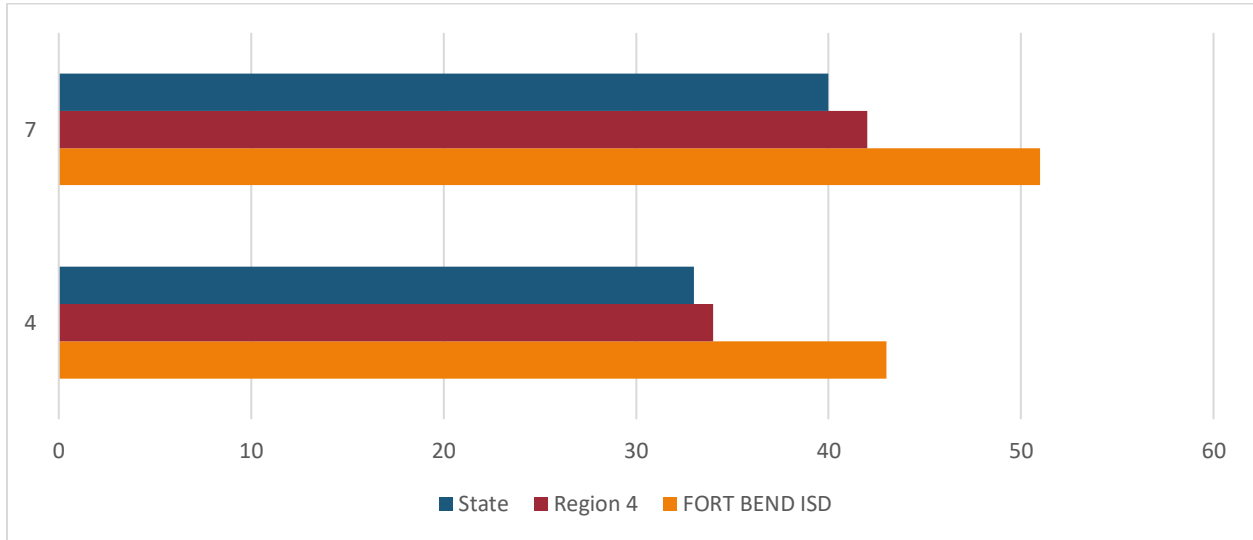FBISD student performance in History was above the Region 4 and State averages in Grade 8 and in US History (Figure 6).
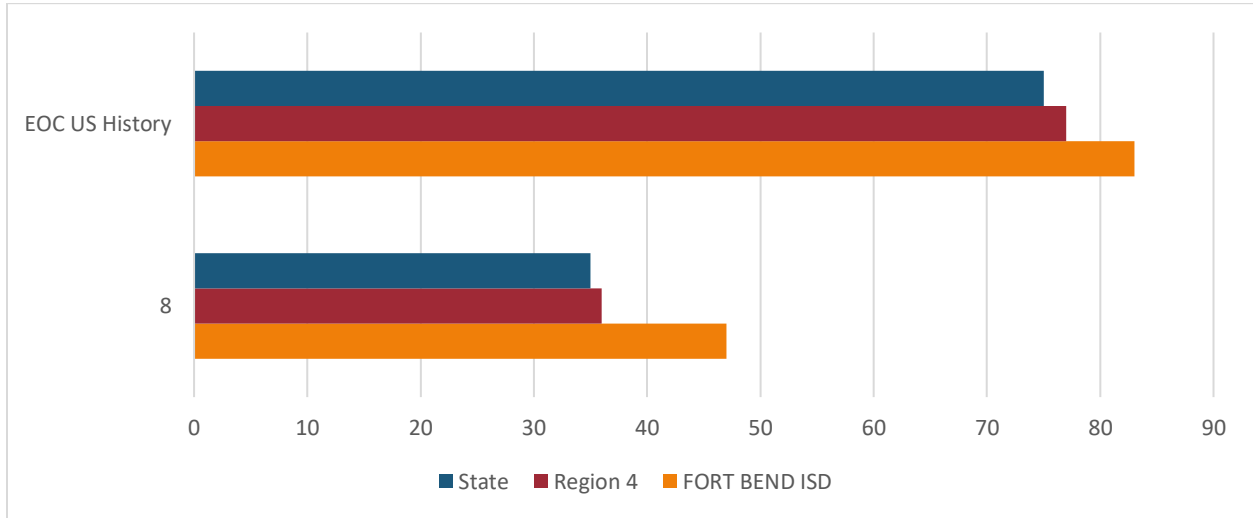
Figure 6. Social Studies: At Meets Grade Level or Above, Grade 8 and High School EOC US History, 2019

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR).

Compared to the benchmark districts, FBISD student performance on the STAAR Grades 3 through 8 ranked 4th or 5th in all content areas (Table 6).

Table 6. STAAR 3-8 All Grades: Percent at Meets Grade Level or Above, 2018-19

District	Reading	Math	Writing	Science	Social Studies
ARLINGTON	43%	47%	33%	48%	54%
CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS	56%	58%	43%	68%	68%
FORT BEND	59%	60%	49%	62%	66%
FRISCO	74%	76%	66%	80%	78%
KATY	67%	69%	60%	75%	75%
KLEIN	52%	55%	42%	58%	60%
PLANO	65%	66%	55%	66%	72%
UNITED	49%	64%	46%	60%	56%
FORT BEND Rank	**4**	**5**	**4**	**5**	**5**

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).

FBISD ranked lower against the benchmark districts on the STAAR end-of-course (EOC) assessments (Table 7).

Table 7. STAAR EOC Percent At Meets Grade Level or Above, All Grades, 2018-19

District	English I	English II	Algebra I	Biology	US History
ARLINGTON	41%	44%	50%	58%	68%
CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS	63%	63%	76%	76%	86%
FORT BEND	61%	63%	67%	72%	83%
FRISCO	85%	83%	86%	90%	94%
KATY	75%	72%	81%	83%	90%

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District	English I	English II	Algebra I	Biology	US History
KLEIN	54%	53%	61%	65%	82%
PLANO	71%	70%	70%	75%	88%
UNITED	42%	38%	83%	56%	63%
FORT BEND Rank	**5**	**4(tied)**	**6**	**5**	**5**

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).

The College, Career, and Military Readiness component of the Student Achievement domain measures graduates' preparedness for college, the workforce, or the military, and accounts for 40 percent of the student achievement indicator for high schools. There are several ways a student can demonstrate college, career, or military readiness: earning minimum scores on national college entrance exams, completing college-level classes in high school, or earning a qualifying industry credential.[3] Table 8 shows the percentage of students in FBISD, Region 4, and the state who met one of these criteria to demonstrate they were ready for one of those paths. In 2017-18, FBISD earned an A in the CCMR portion for Student Achievement in Domain I and is above the Region 4 and State averages.

Table 8. College, Career, and Military Readiness Indicators, 2018-19

Indicator	FBISD	Region 4	State
CCMR Rate	69.1%	65.8%	65.5%
College Ready Graduates	63.5%	51.8%	50.0%
TSI Criteria Graduates (ELA and Math)	59.1%	45.1%	42.1%
Dual Credit	16.2%	17.5%	20.7%
College Credit on AP/IB Exams	20.4%	23.3%	29.5%
Associates Degree	0.0%	1.5%	1.4%
Career or Military Ready Graduates	12.0%	25.2%	28.7%
Approved Industry-based Certification	2.2%	4.3%	4.8%
Completed IEP/Workforce Readiness IEP	1.5%	1.8%	1.7%
Career and Technical Education Coherent Sequence Coursework	13.6%	33.1%	38.7%
US Armed Forces Enlistment	1.4%	4.1%	4.3%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).

In 2018-19, FBISD's retention rates at every grade level are below the State average. FBISD's retention rate was highest in Grade 9, followed by Grade 1, mirroring the State pattern (Table 9).

Table 9. Retention Rates by Grade (Non-Special Education), 2018-19

Grade	Fort Bend ISD	State	Δ
K	0.9%	1.7%	-0.8%
1	2.5%	3.1%	-0.6%
2	1.1%	1.8%	-0.7%
3	0.7%	1.1%	-0.4%

[3] TEA web site: https://tea.texas.gov/A-F/

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Grade	Fort Bend ISD	State	Δ
4	0.2%	0.5%	-0.3%
5	0.2%	0.5%	-0.3%
6	0.3%	0.4%	-0.1%
7	0.3%	0.6%	-0.3%
8	0.2%	0.4%	-0.2%
9	5.7%	7.2%	-1.5%

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).

FBISD's dropout rates have been consistently below the Region 4 and State averages for the past five years (Figure 7), and have declined slightly since the class of 2013.

Figure 7. Dropout Rates (Grades 9-12), 2013 to 2017
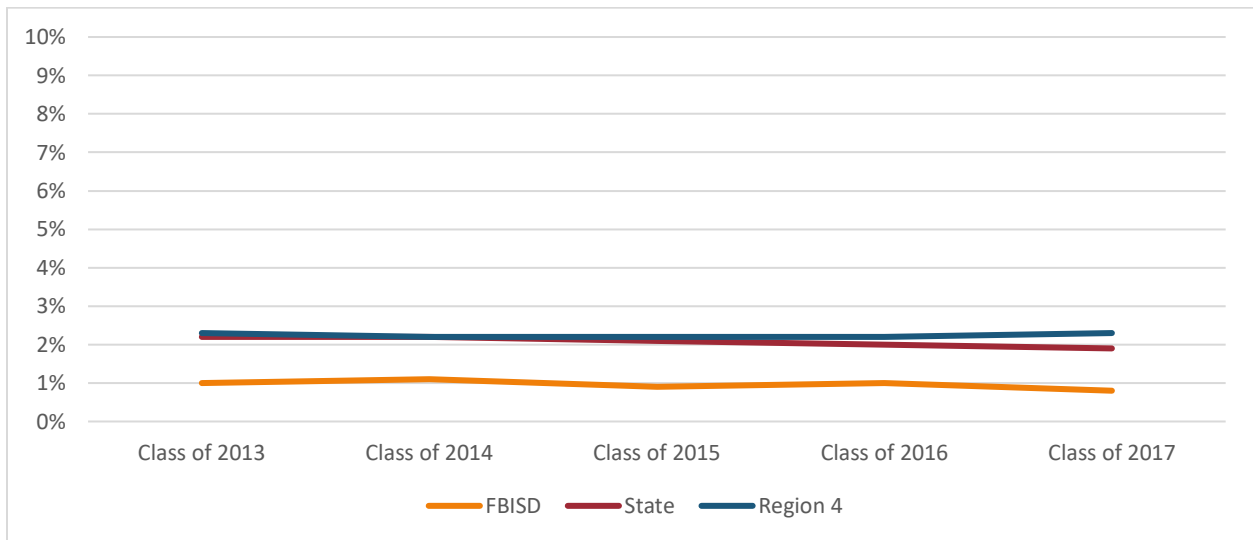
Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).

As shown in Figure 8, FBISD's 4-year longitudinal graduation rate steadily increased from 2013 to 2017 and is above the Region 4 and State averages in all years.

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Figure 8. 4-Year Longitudinal Graduation Rate, 2013 to 2017

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2018-19 Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR).
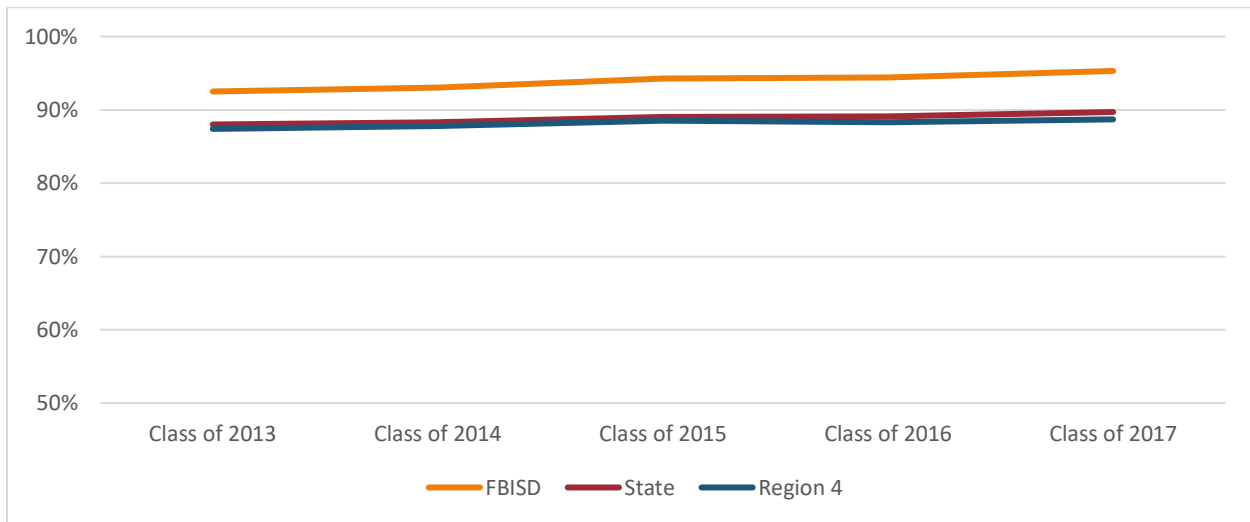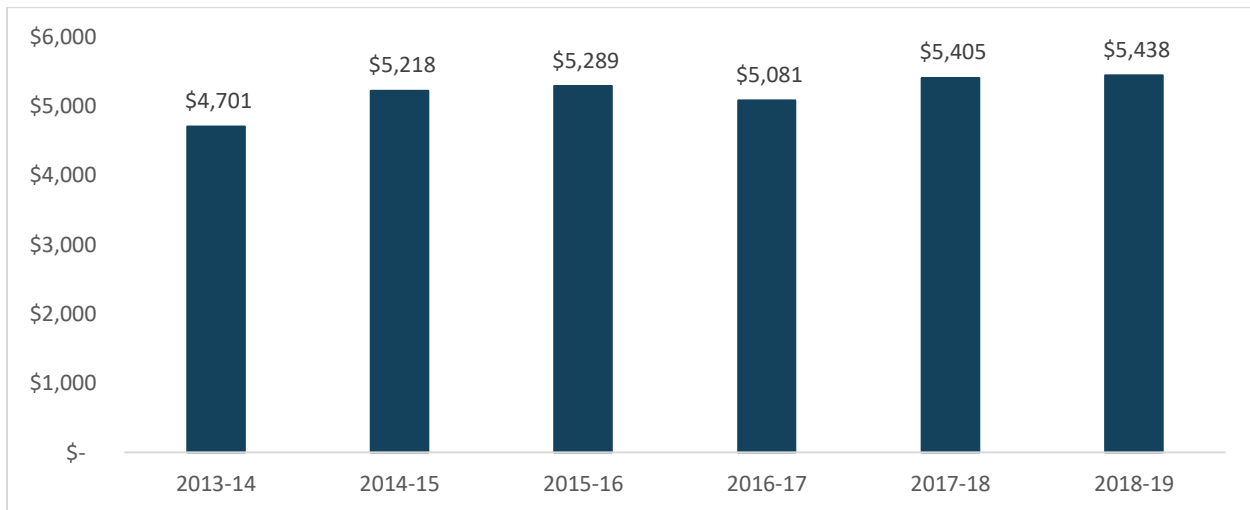
Instructional Resource Allocations

Instructional Spending

Instructional spending represents the largest investment of district annual operating funds. In 2018-19, FBISD's total operating budget was $656.5 million and total expenditures on Instruction (Function 11) accounted for 58 percent, or $380.6 million. Instructional Leadership (Function 21) accounted for 2.4 percent ($16.1 million), and Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development (Function 13) accounted for 1.8 percent ($11.7 million). The following charts illustrate how these expenditures have changed over the past five years relative to the number of students and/or teachers, and how FBISD's spending compares to benchmark districts.[4]

Instruction

Function 11 (Instruction) in Texas' districts accounting code is used to classify expenditures for activities that deal directly with the interaction between teachers and students. In FBISD, the majority of positions (5,789.3 full-time equivalents) assigned to Function 11 are teachers (78.6%), aides (14.2%), and other positions (7.2%). In 2018-19, total Instruction expenditures (all funds) were $380.6 million. On a per student basis, total Instruction expenditures increased 15.7 percent ($737) from 2013-14 to 2018-19. Figure 9 presents FBISD's instructional expenditures per student for the past six years.

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[4] Benchmark comparisons for expenditures are made using 2017-18 data, the most current data publicly available at the time of this audit.

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Figure 9. Instructional Expenditures per Student, Function 11, All Funds, 2013-14 to 2018-19

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
	$4,701	$5,218	$5,289	$5,081	$5,405	$5,438

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2013-14 to 2018-19.

Figure 10 compares FBISD's instructional expenditures per student for 2017-18 to its peers. FBISD's Instruction expenditures per student are below most of the benchmark districts.

Figure 10. Instructional Expenditures per Student, Function 11, All Funds

FRISCO	FORT BEND	UNITED	KLEIN	CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS	KATY	PLANO	
$5,043	$5,405	$5,555	$5,669	$5,684	$5,834	$6,114	$5,650
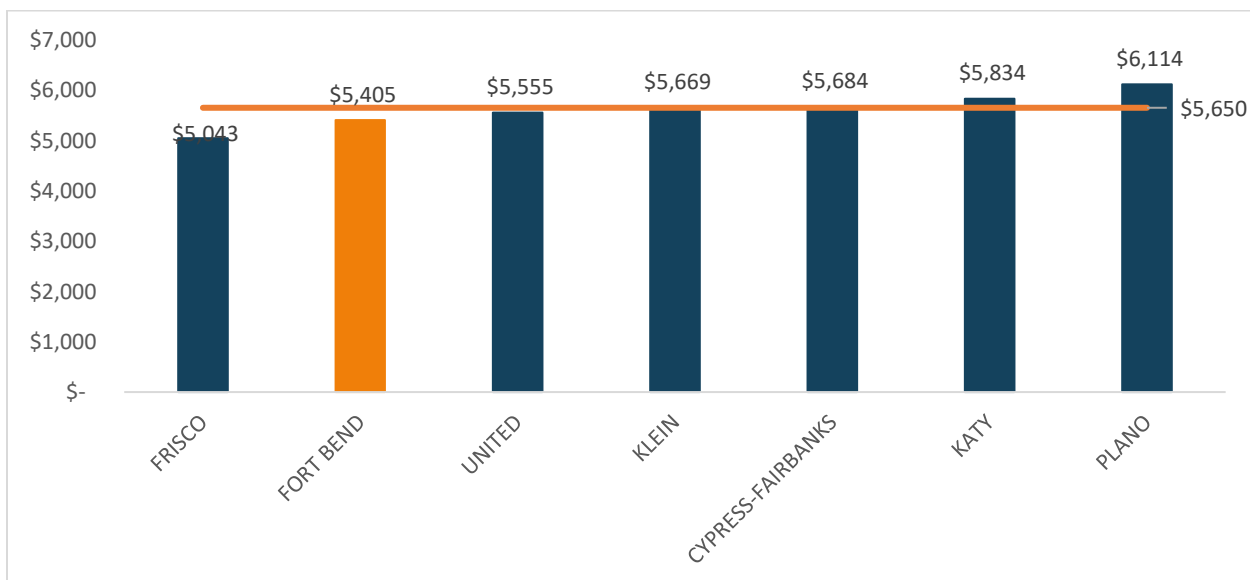
Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2017-18.

Table 10 compares FBISD's percentage of General Fund to All Other Funds instructional expenditures per student. General Fund expenditures account for a higher percentage of FBISD's expenditures on Instruction than in benchmark districts. This is likely due the fact that FBISD has a lower percentage of economically disadvantaged students (43.3%) than all but two of the benchmark districts: Katy ISD (32%) and Plano ISD (32%). Districts with higher percentages of economically disadvantaged student populations have greater percentages of their budgets accounted for by federal funds.

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Table 10. General Fund and Other Funds Instructional Expenditures per Student, FBISD and Peer Average, 2017-18

Fund	Fort Bend ISD	Peer Avg.	Δ
199 General Fund	$5,037	$5,169	($132)
All Other Funds	$368	$446	($78)
Total Instruction	$5,405	$5,615	($210)
Percent General Fund	93.2%	92.1%	1.1%

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2017-18.

Salaries and Wages expenditures per student for Teachers and Paraprofessionals (Object 6119), which account for the largest line item expenditure, are lower in FBISD than in benchmark districts.

Table 11. Comparison of Instructional Line Item Spending per Student, FBISD and Peer Average, 2017-18

Object	Fort Bend ISD	Peer Avg.	Δ
6119 WAGES TEACHERS & PROFESSIONAL	$3,817	$4,012	($195)
6399 GENERAL SUPPLIES	$172	$220	($48)
All Other Objects	$1,416	$1,383	$33
Total Instruction	$5,405	$5,615	($210)

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2017-18.

Table 12 presents instructional spending per student (total enrollment) by program intent code. FBISD spends less per student in basic educational services and most of the other program categories. Gifted and Talented ($193 more than the peer average) and Bilingual ($54 less than the peer average) are two of the more significant exceptions.

Table 12. Instructional Spending per Student by Program Intent Code, FBISD and Peer Districts, 2017-18

Program Intent	Fort Bend ISD	Peer Avg.	Δ
11 BASIC EDUCATIONAL SERVICES	$3,534	$3,753	($219)
21 GIFTED AND TALENTED	$268	$75	$193
22 CAREER AND TECHNICAL	$178	$185	($7)
23 SERVICES TO STUDENTS W/DISABIL	$829	$860	($31)
24 ACCELERATED EDUCATION	$123	$168	($45)
25 BILINGUAL ED & SPECIAL LANG	$129	$75	$54
31 HIGH SCHOOL ALLOTMENT PROGRAM	$116	$108	$8
32 PRE-KINDERGARTEN - REGULAR EDU	$48	$42	$6
All Other Program Intent Codes	$180	$349	($169)
Total Instruction	$5,405	$5,615	($210)

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2017-18.

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Instructional Leadership

Function 21 Instructional Leadership is used to classify expenditures that are used for managing, directing, supervising, and providing leadership for staff who provide either instructional or instruction-related services. In FBISD, the majority of positions (173.2 full-time equivalents (FTE)) assigned to Function 21 are Coordinators (42.4%t), Clerks (18.2%), Directors (12.7%), and Program Managers (11%).

In 2018-19, FBISD's total Instructional Leadership expenditures were $16.1 million. On a per student basis, total Instructional Leadership expenditures steadily increased 144 percent ($133 per student) over the past six years (Figure 11). As described further in *Chapter 3 – District Planning, Accountability, Organization and Management*, much of this increase in spending can be attributed to the net increase (89.2 FTE) in the number of positions at the central office (Non-School) and at schools. The net increase in school-based positions (25.5 FTE) over this six-year period is due to the addition of the Campus Compliance Coordinators and Academy Coordinator positions in 2014-15. Most of the net increase in Non-School positions (63.7 FTE) over this six-year period is due to the addition of 5 FTE positions under the Chief of Schools, 15 FTE Special Education program manager positions beginning in 2016-17, 7 FTE assistant director, director and executive director positions, and 26 coordinator positions (including Curriculum Coordinators, Intervention and Enrichment Coordinators, and Assessment Coordinators in 2017-18).

Figure 11. Instructional Leadership Expenditures per Student, 2013-14 to 2018-19
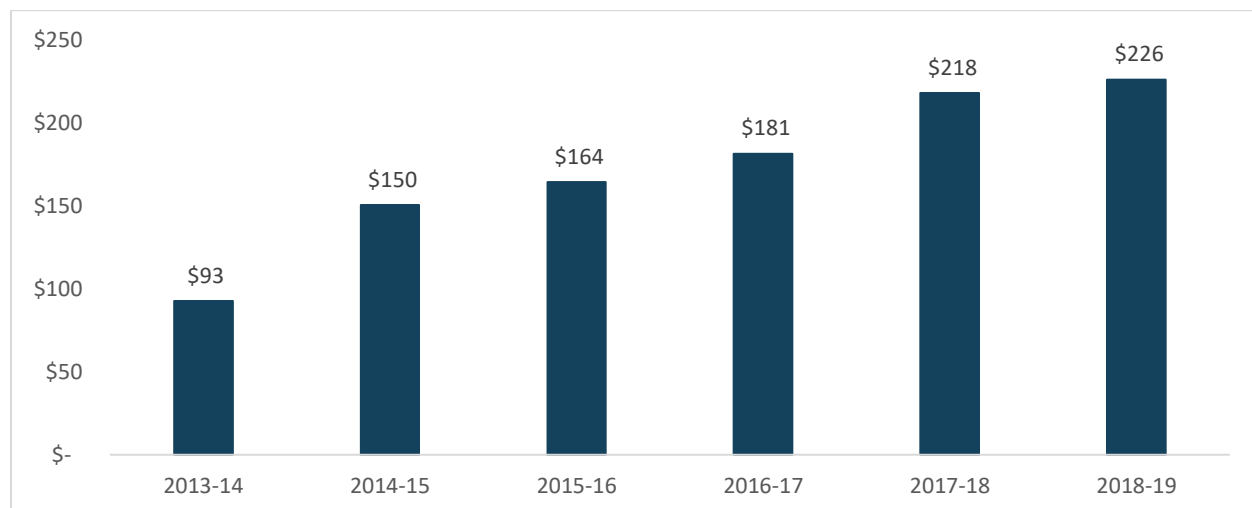
Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2013-14 to 2018-19.

In 2017-18, FBISD's total Instructional Leadership expenditures per student were significantly higher than six of the seven benchmark districts (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Instructional Leadership Expenditures per Student, 2017-18
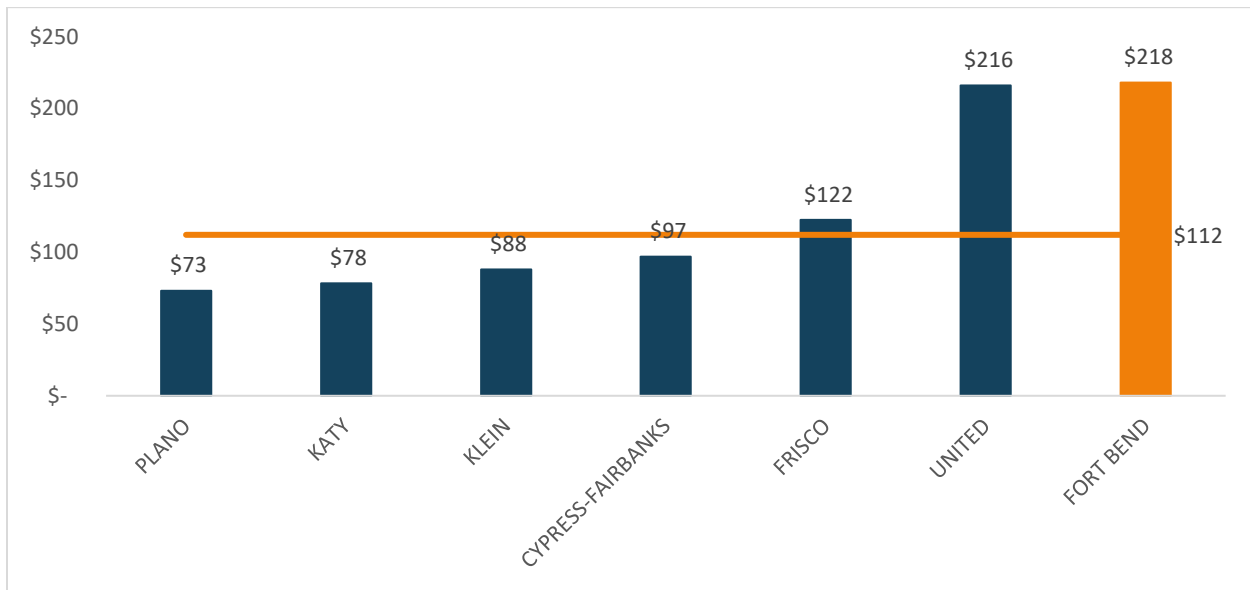
Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2017-18.

Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development

Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development (Function 13) is used to classify expenditures that are directly and exclusively used to aid instructional staff in planning, developing, and evaluating the process of providing learning experiences for students. This includes in-service training and other staff development for instructional or instructional-related personnel of the school district. This function also includes expenditures related to research and development activities that investigate, experiment, and/or follow through with the development of new or modified instructional methods, techniques, procedures, services, etc.[5] In FBISD, the majority of positions (141.3 FTE) assigned to Function 13 include Instructional Coaches (31.8%), Facilitators (25.5%), Specialists (14.2%), and Coordinators (6.4%).
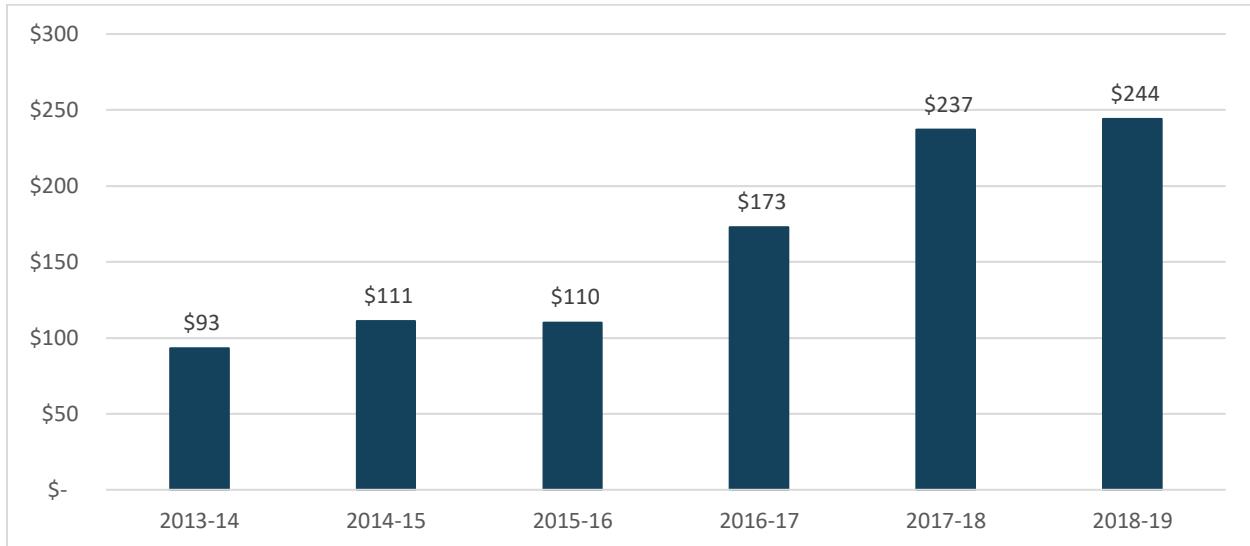
In 2018-19, FBISD's total Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development expenditures were $11.7 million. As shown in Figure 13, on a per student basis, FBISD's total Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development expenditures increased 162.5 percent ($151 per student) over the past six years. As described further in *Chapter 3 – District Planning, Accountability, Organization and Management*, much of this increase in spending can be attributed to the net increase (104.3 FTE) in the number of positions at the central office (Non-School) and at schools. The net increase in school-based positions (78 FTE) over this six-year period is due to the addition of 26 FTE Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) Facilitators (beginning in 2016-17), and 45 FTE Instructional Coach positions (including 40 FTE Title 1 Literacy and Math Coaches). Most of the net increase in Non-School positions (26.3 FTE) over this six-year period is attributed to the addition of 14 FTE Special Education Program Specialists (in 2016-17), 9 FTE Professional Learning Specialists, 5 FTE Sheltered Instruction Specialists (in 2017-18), 4 FTE

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[5] Texas Education Agency (TEA) Financial and Accounting Resource Guide, Update 14.

Technology Integration Specialists (in 2017-18), and 4 FTE Teacher Development Coordinator positions. The increase in these positions were offset by a decrease in 14 FTE content area coordinator positions.

Figure 13. Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development Expenditures per Student, 2013-14 to 2018-19

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2013-14 to 2018-19.

In 2017-18, FBISD's total Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development expenditures per student were above the benchmark district average ($177.8), although spending per student varied widely across districts, ranging from $99 per student in United ISD to $260.3 per student in Klein (Figure 14). This range in spending is worth noting since both United ISD and Klein ISD are high-performing districts.

Figure 14. Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development Expenditures per Student, 2017-18

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2017-18.

On a per teacher basis, total Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development expenditures increased 151.8 percent ($2,412 per teacher) over the past six years (Figure 15).
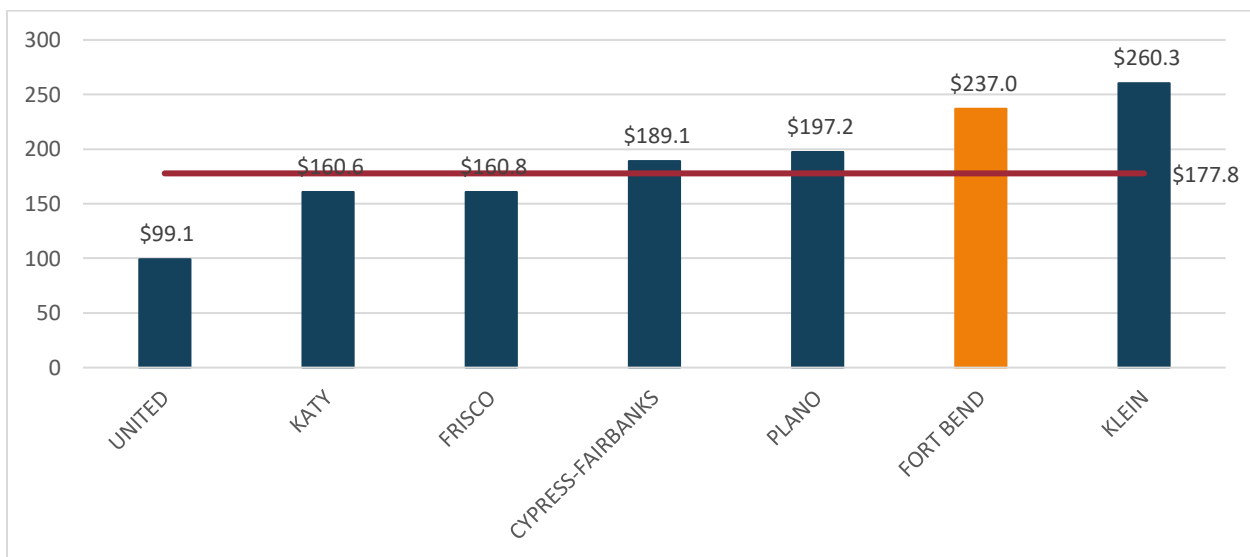
Figure 15. Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development Expenditures per Teacher, 2013-14 to 2018-19

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2013-14 to 2018-19.

FBISD's Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development expenditures per teacher were higher than all but one of the benchmark districts. Mirroring the same pattern as expenditures per student, total spend per teacher varied widely ($2,229 per teacher) across the comparison districts, ranging from $1,680 per teacher in United ISD to $3,909 per teacher in Klein ISD (Figure 16).
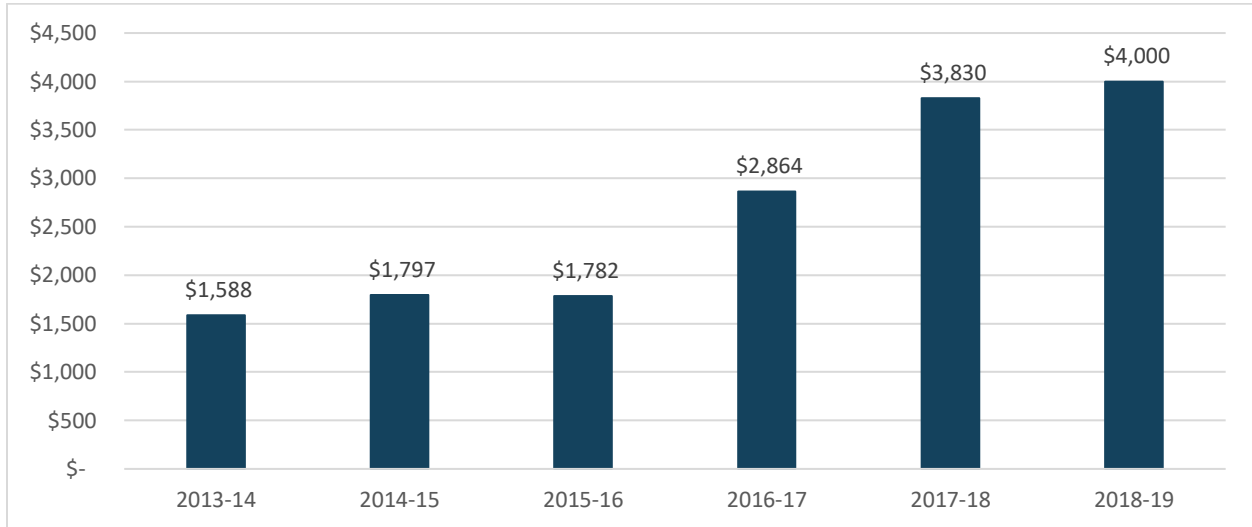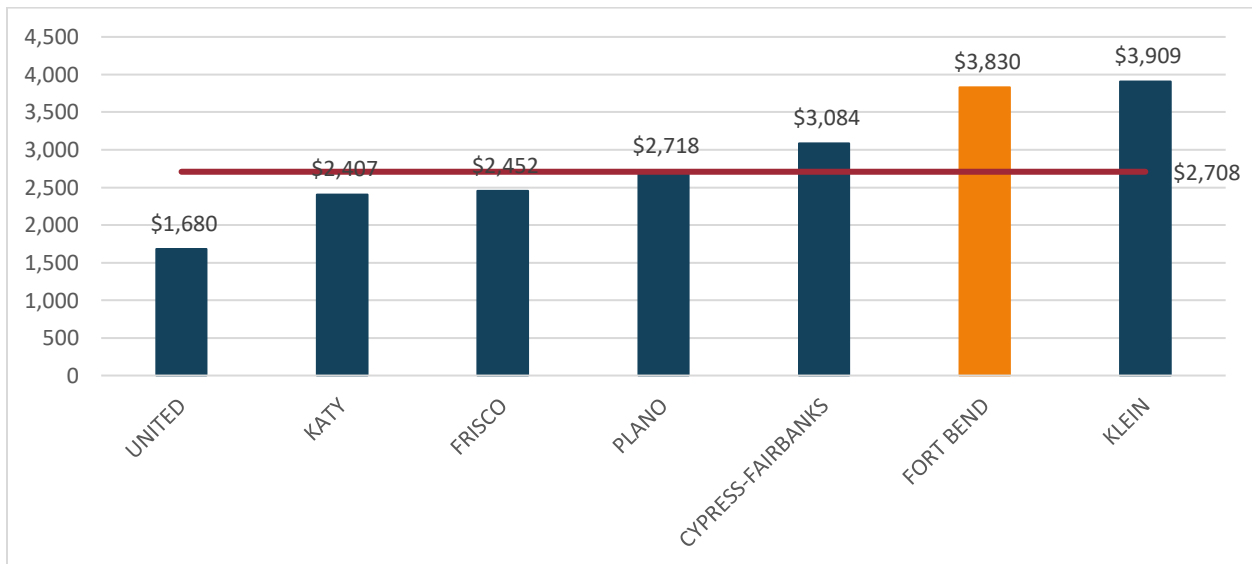
Figure 16. Curriculum Development and Instructional Staff Development Expenditures per Teacher, 2017-18

Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2017-18.

FBISD's Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development spending has been higher at the district level than at the school level, with school-level expenditures ranging from 26.2 percent to 44.9 percent of total expenditures over the past six years. Figure 17 presents the percentage distribution between district and campus spending on Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development.

Figure 17. Percent of Curriculum and Instructional Staff Development Expenditures Budgeted at School or Non-School, 2012-13 to 2018-19
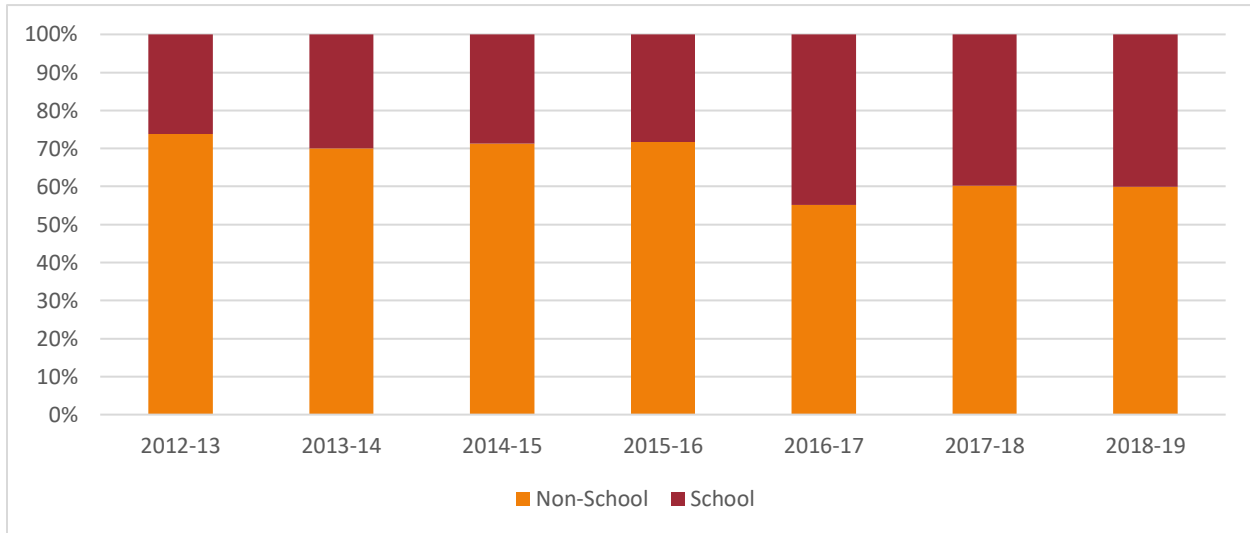
Source: Texas Education Agency PEIMS Financial Data, 2013-14 to 2018-19.

Instructional Staffing

The audit team's analysis of staffing "sufficiency" and "efficiency" involved a comparison of FBISD's staffing levels over time and relative to the benchmark districts. Since teachers comprise the largest employee group of any district, it is important to first examine changes in their staffing levels and trends. From 2013-14 to 2018-19, the total number of teachers in FBISD increased 12.7 percent.[6] During this same time period, the total number of students increased 8.1 percent. These trends are reflected in Figure 18, which illustrates a 4.1 percent decrease in FBISD's student-teacher ratio over the past six years.

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[6] The total number of teachers is derived from Gibson's analysis of FBISD's staffing data where the Role ID for the position equals 087 Teacher.

Figure 18. FBISD Student-Teacher Ratio, 2013-14 to 2018-19
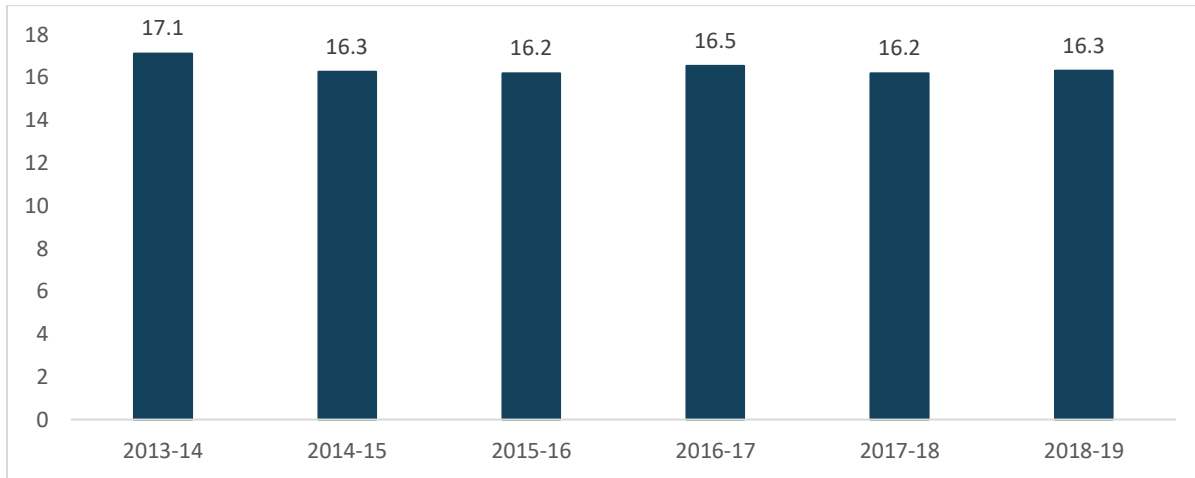
Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2014-15 to 2018-19.

The student-teacher ratio is one indicator of staffing efficiency – the higher the ratio (i.e., more students per teacher) the greater the level of staffing efficiency. Figure 19 shows that the 2018-19 student-teacher ratio in FBISD (16.3) is higher than the benchmark district average (15.2) and all but one of the comparison districts, even after a period of decline shown above. The state's overall student-teacher ratio in 2018-19 was 15.1.

Figure 19. Student-Teacher Ratio, 2018-19

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2018-19.

Average class size is another indicator of staffing efficiency. Table 13 shows that average class sizes in FBISD are higher than the state average in every grade level and subject area, particularly at the secondary level.

Table 13. FBISD Class Size Averages by Grade and Subject, 2018-19

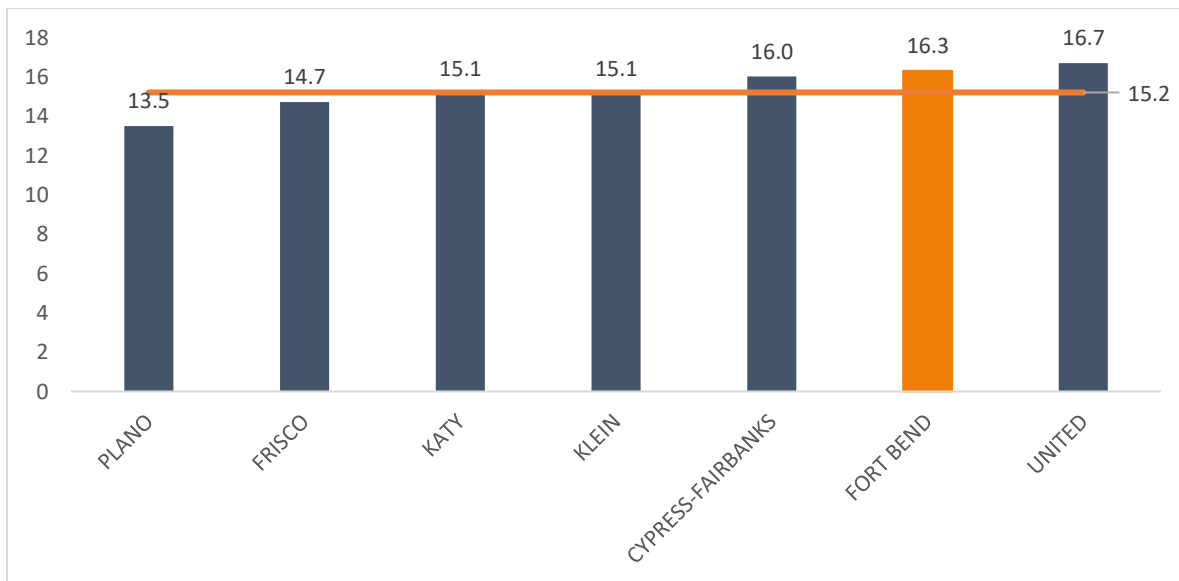| Grade/Subject Area	Fort Bend ISD	State Average	Δ
Kindergarten	19.5	18.9	0.6
Grade 1	19.7	18.8	0.9
Grade 2	20.3	18.7	1.6
Grade 3	20.0	18.9	1.1
Grade 4	20.0	19.2	0.8
Grade 5	22.7	21.2	1.5
Grade 6	23.1	20.4	2.7
ELA	19.2	16.6	2.6
Foreign Language	22.2	18.9	3.3
Math	21.5	17.8	3.7
Science	22.9	18.9	4
Social Studies	22.5	19.3	3.2

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR), 2018-19.

There are several key messages emerging from the data presented in this chapter that are further explained in subsequent chapters of this audit report:

- The FBISD student population continues to grow, as does its percentage of economically disadvantaged students.

- FBISD student achievement is above state and regional averages, yet ranks in the middle or lower half when compared to its peers.

- Pursuant to implementing recommendations from a 2012 curriculum audit and the desire to make greater academic progress, FBISD made significant investments in upgrading its curriculum, related professional development, and ongoing academic support that have only been fully implemented this past year.

- FBISD spends less on direct instruction than most of its peers, even though the pupil-teacher ratio has declined over the past seven years.

In this context, the subsequent chapters in this report provide an assessment of FBISD's academic program management.

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Chapter 3 – District Planning, Accountability, Organization and Management

Academic program management is defined as those systems and processes that are applied to establish educational goals, provide leadership and direction in achieving those goals, and being accountable for attaining them. Program management also serves to identify, prioritize, and address academic needs through the use of effective information, decision-making, and communication systems. Effective program management practices should not be people dependent, but rather be a systemic component of the district that occurs regardless of who is in the management position.

This chapter addresses the following topical areas related to academic program management:

- Policy Framework

- Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement

- Accountability Systems

- Organizational Structure and Staffing

- Change Management

Policy Framework for Academic Program Management

Board policies are statements which set forth the purpose and describe in general terms the organization and program of a school district; they create a framework within which the superintendent and his or her staff can implement their assigned duties with positive direction.

FBISD subscribes to The Texas Association of School Board's (TASB's) Policy On Line (POL), an internet-based tool for publishing board policy. All board policies can be located through a link on the District's website at https://pol.tasb.org/Home/Index/483. There are 64 FBISD board policies related to instruction and the management and oversight of academic programs in Fort Bend ISD. "LEGAL" policies contain compilations of federal law, state law, and court decisions as statutory context in which all other policies are to be read, while "LOCAL" policies reflect policies adopted by the Board specific to FBISD. Below is a brief summary of the major LEGAL and LOCAL policies relevant to the scope of this Academic Program Management Audit. These and other policies are referenced in more detail throughout this report, where applicable.

- *Policy AE (LEGAL) Educational Philosophy* – requires the board to adopt a vision statement and comprehensive goals for the district and the superintendent. This policy also outlines the State's mission, goals and objectives for public education.

- *Policy AE (LOCAL) Educational Philosophy* – communicates the educational philosophy of the district, which is "to honor the mission, vision, and core beliefs and commitments while meeting

District goals through scalable systems that operate with effective change management". Two concepts that support the District's educational philosophy and are fundamental to the District's core business of teaching and learning are: 1) unbiased, aligned, written, taught, tested, and relevant curriculum; and 2) leadership development of students and staff. The Core Beliefs and Commitments and the Profile of a Graduate articulated in this policy should serve as a framework to guide district planning.

- *Policy BQ (LEGAL) Planning and Decision-Making Process* – requires that boards ensure that a district improvement plan and improvement plans for each campus are developed, reviewed, and revised annually for the purpose of improving the performance of all students. This policy also outlines the required components of both the district improvement plan (DIP) and the campus improvement plan (CIP).

- *Policy BQ (LOCAL) Planning and Decision-Making Process* – sets expectations for the District's planning processes to ensure the continuous improvement of student performance; this includes the adoption of a long-range and visionary strategic plan and the development and implementation of action plans designed to support achievement of the goals and objectives included in the District strategic plan. This policy also sets the expectation for the annual development of a DIP and CIPs.

- *Policy DMA (LEGAL) Required Staff Development* – documents the standards for providing staff development to teachers and principals, and specifies that staff development for teachers should be predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives, and developed and approved by the campus-level committee. District-wide staff development that has been developed and approved through the district-level decision process can also be delivered.

- *Policy EA (LOCAL) Instructional Goals and Objectives* – articulates the District's Theory of Action of "managed curriculum and includes a comprehensive system to develop leadership throughout the organization. Managed curriculum aligns what is written, taught, and tested, and requires adequate resources, systematic monitoring, and highly qualified teachers." This policy also articulates the board's expectations regarding a managed curriculum and leadership development.

- *Policy EH (LOCAL) Curriculum Design* – recognizes the need and value of an ongoing cycle of curriculum review and development, and requires the administration to design a curriculum management plan to ensure quality control and alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

- *Policy EK (LEGAL) Testing Programs* – permits districts to adopt and administer criterion-referenced or norm-referenced assessment instruments, or both, at any grade level, and limits the time spent administering local assessments to students to no more than 10 percent of the instructional days in any school year. A district may not administer to any student more than two benchmark assessment instruments to prepare the student for a corresponding state-administered assessment instrument. This policy also addresses the administration of college

preparatory assessments, assessments for homeschooled students, and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Test.

▪ *Policy EK (LOCAL) Testing Programs* – articulates the Board's assessment philosophy and requires the District to implement a student-centered assessment system which promotes student ownership of learning. The assessment system shall provide appropriate and timely feedback to students about progress toward proficiency in the district curriculum and encourage students to engage in the teacher-facilitated formative assessment cycle.

Commendation 1. The District has a comprehensive policy framework that clearly communicates the Board's educational philosophy and expectations for curriculum and instruction.

In 2016, the Board conducted a comprehensive policy review and update to reflect its decision to transition from the existing curriculum framework to one that supports a student-centered approach to instruction, promotes student ownership of learning, and instills the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate. Examples of LOCAL board policies that were recently developed or revised include: Policy EK, EK-R, EIA-R, EIE, and EIC. This is consistent with TASB's recommendation to conduct a thorough policy review every five to seven years, or sooner, if the district's local priorities or philosophies have shifted.[7]

The audit team reviewed all relevant LEGAL and LOCAL board policies to assess whether they provide adequate guidance for the Superintendent and the administration for the management of academic programs and the implementation of the District's written, taught, and tested curriculum in accordance with the Board's educational philosophy and expectations. Supporting documents referenced in board policies, such as the District's strategic plan, district improvement plan, campus improvement plans, the curriculum management plan, the professional learning plan, and the K-12 Literacy and Math plans, were examined as well. Relevant board policies are referenced throughout all of these documents and collectively they communicate clearly the Boards expectations to district administrators and staff and provide clear guidance for implementation.

In addition, the audit team solicited feedback from administrators and staff through interviews and focus groups to assess whether or not board policies are effectively communicated and well understood. Qualitative feedback provided to the audit team with respect to district policy-making and communication was overall positive, and there appears to be a strong consensus from interviewees that board policies set clear expectations and provide adequate guidance to school administrators regarding curriculum and instruction.

Finding 1. The Board has not adopted a local policy to articulate its desires with respect to professional learning and leadership development within the context of FBISD.

Policy DMA (Legal) Required Staff Development documents the standards for providing staff development to teachers and principals. This policy states that staff development for teachers should be predominantly

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[7] https://www.tasb.org/services/policy-service/frequently-asked-questions-faqs.aspx

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campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives, and developed and approved by the campus-level committee. District-wide staff development that has been developed and approved through the district-level decision process can also be delivered. *Policy DMA (Legal)* also outlines the mandated areas of professional learning related to students with disabilities, suicide prevention, mental health support programs, child abuse and maltreatment, student discipline, special programs training (Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies, Gifted and Talented Education, Elective Bible Course), automated external defibrillators, extracurricular activity safety training, steroids, concussions, and resources for staff development.

While *Policy DMA (Legal)* articulates the State's requirements for staff development for teachers and principals, it does not specifically address the board's desires with respect to how professional learning and leadership development within FBISD should be planned and delivered. Within the scope of this audit, *Policy DMA (Legal)* is the only policy where the Board has not adopted a corresponding local policy. Of the seven benchmark districts, only Plano ISD has also adopted Policy DMA (Local) to articulate their Board's intentions with respect to the district's teacher induction program, required hours of professional development, sanctions for non-compliance, and definitions for a master's degree, teacher, and the professional development calendar year. LOCAL board policies should chart a course of action and to articulate what is wanted or not wanted, and may also include "why" and "how much". Importantly, local board policies should be broad enough to allow administrative discretion but specific enough to provide clear guidance.

Recommendation 1. Develop and adopt a local policy to articulate the Board's desires with respect to professional learning and leadership development within FBISD.

The FBISD School Board should develop and adopt a local policy to expand on or qualify the legally referenced provisions of *Policy DMA (Legal)* and/or to portray the Board's stated intentions with respect to areas related to professional learning but not specifically addressed by *Policy DMA (Legal)*, such as leadership development and teacher induction programs. FBISD may wish to align local policy to specific areas addressed by the District's professional learning plan (discussed further in *Chapter 5 – Professional Learning* of this audit report).

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. Currently a comprehensive professional learning plan exits to guide the development of ongoing job embedded learning. The development of a policy will ensure systematic and ongoing implementation of professional learning while communicating expectations to all stakeholders. By May 2020, the recommended policy revisions will be added to the District policy committee calendar for development.*

Strategic Planning and Performance Measurement

The Texas Education Code (Board Policy AE (LEGAL)) requires school districts to adopt a vision for education in the district and comprehensive goals to achieve that vision.[8] The vision statement should

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[8] Texas Education Code Section 11.1511(b)(2)

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capture the purpose and vision of the ideal district and guide formulation of changes to achieve that ideal. The vision of FBISD is *to graduate students who exhibit the attributes of the District's Profile of a Graduate*. FBISD seeks to fulfill the Profile of a Graduate, which was adopted by the Board in 2017, for each student who graduates from the district. The Profile of a Graduate attributes are shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20. Fort Bend ISD Profile of a Graduate
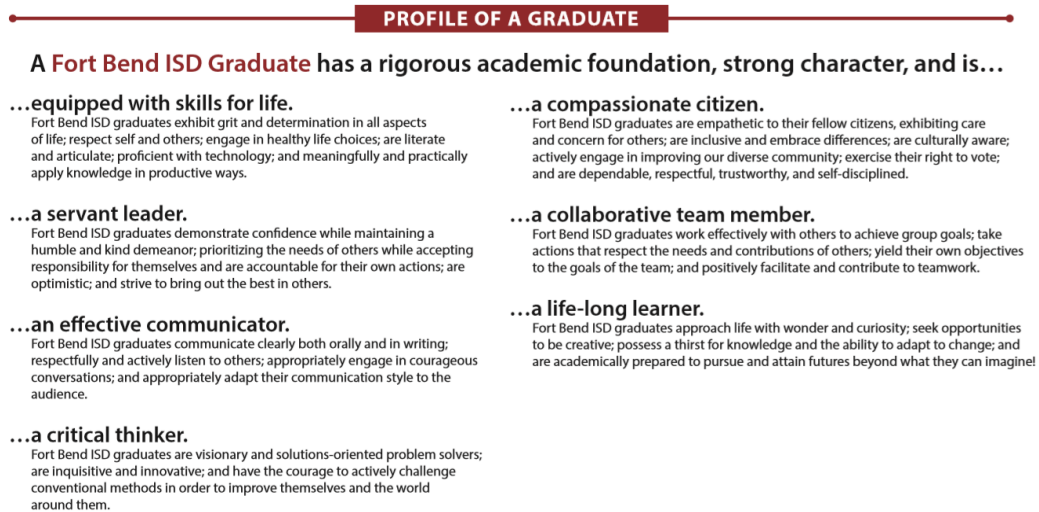
Source: Fort Bend ISD.

In addition to the Profile of a Graduate, the District's Core Beliefs and Commitments, Vision, Mission, and Goals and Objectives serve as the framework to guide all of the District's planning efforts (see Figure 21).

Figure 21. Fort Bend ISD Core Beliefs and Commitments
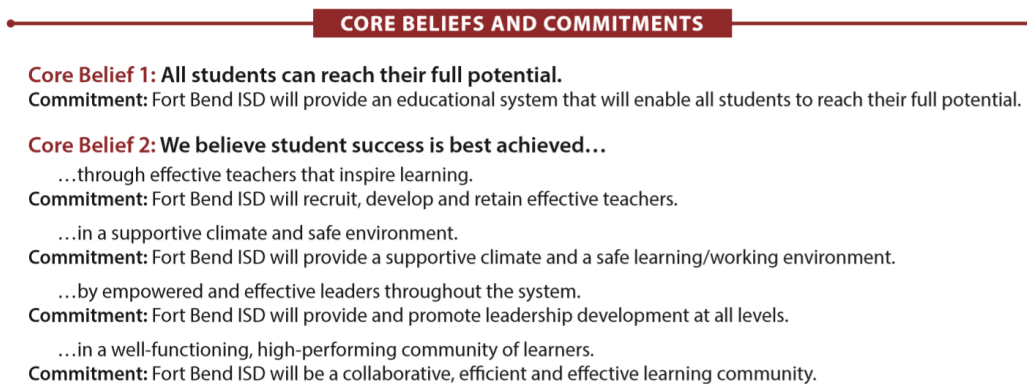
Source: Fort Bend ISD.

The mission of FBISD is *to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine.* To achieve its vision and mission, Texas Education Code (Policy BQ (LEGAL)) also requires the Board of Trustees to adopt comprehensive district goals and Policy EA (LOCAL) assigns responsibility to the Superintendent or designee for aligning district actions and resources to accomplish the District goals. FBISD's strategic goals and objectives are shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22. Fort Bend ISD Goals and Objectives

District Goal 1:
Fort Bend ISD will provide an equitable learning environment that provides all students access to the FBISD curriculum.

Objective 1:
FBISD will implement systems and develop a curriculum that supports closing student achievement gaps among all student groups.

Objective 2:
FBISD will implement systems and develop a curriculum that supports academic growth among all student groups.

Objective 3:
FBISD will implement an assessment system to monitor and measure student, campus, and District growth.

District Goal 2:
Fort Bend ISD will ensure students own and are responsible for their learning, behavior, and progress through the FBISD curriculum.

Objective 1:
FBISD will implement a student-centered assessment system to monitor and measure student growth.

Objective 2:
FBISD will implement systems that enable students to own and be responsible for their learning and behavior.

Objective 3:
FBISD will implement curriculum and systems designed to support whole-child wellness and develop students' life skills.

District Goal 3:
Fort Bend ISD will provide an inclusive, collaborative, and fluid learning environment with opportunities for both risk-taking and success at every school.

Objective 1:
FBISD will use innovative teaching strategies with the integration of technology to provide opportunities for blended and project-based learning experiences.

Objective 2:
Fort Bend ISD will provide student choice through diverse programming and differentiated learning experiences.

District Goal 4:
Fort Bend ISD will develop students' social-emotional, academic, literacy, language, and life skills in a safe and secure Collaborative Community at every school.

Objective 1:
FBISD will support student achievement and success through collaborative partnerships with parents, other educational entities, charities and faith-based entities, and businesses.

Objective 2:
FBISD will support a system of school-to-school partnerships.

District Goal 5:
Fort Bend ISD will develop an organizational culture that embraces care, respect, safety, and inclusion.

Objective 1:
FBISD will educate students in a culture that is safe, secure, and conducive to learning at every school.

Objective 2:
FBISD will develop teachers and other staff that demonstrate care toward students and other team members.

Objective 3:
FBISD will implement effective and efficient systems with resources that support progress toward fulfilling the District's Vision.

Source: FBISD.

Each year, through the process of developing the DIP, the Board also approves annual performance objectives for each of its long-term goals. These performance objectives are intended to fulfill compliance indicators and focus efforts and resources on identified problem areas that will gain the best leverage in improving student performance toward achieving the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate. A review of the District's 2018-19 DIP found that FBISD established six performance objectives for Goal 1 and two performance objectives for Goal 2; all innovative district leadership initiatives supporting Goals 3 and 4 are included on the Superintendent's evaluation. The key performance indicators are measured and monitored through the on-going district improvement planning process. Table 14 shows that FBISD met all but one of the Performance Objectives for Goals 1 and 2.[9]

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[9] FBISD's 2019-20 DIP is located on the district website at https://www.fortbendisd.com/Page/74905.

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Table 14. FBISD District Improvement Plan Summative Evaluation (Goals 1 and 2), 2018-19

2018-19 Performance Objective	Summative Evaluation
Goal 1: Fort Bend ISD will provide an equitable learning environment that provides all students access to the FBISD curriculum.	
▪ **Performance Objective 1:** By May 2019, FBISD's All Students and student groups will increase literacy performance by demonstrating growth in academic performance for reading on at least 8 out of 11 Expected Results Measures as reflected in district, state or federal/national data reports	Met Performance Objective
▪ **Performance Objective 2:** By May 2019, All Students and student groups will increase literacy performance by demonstrating growth in academic performance for writing on at least 4 out of 6 Expected Results Measures as reflected in district, state and federal/national reports.	Met Performance Objective
▪ **Performance Objective 3:** By May 2019, FBISD's All Students and student groups will demonstrate growth in mathematics by demonstrating expected academic performance on at least 8 out of 11 Expected Results Measures in district, state, and national performance reports.	Met Performance Objective
▪ **Performance Objective 4:** By May 2019, FBISD's All Students and student groups will demonstrate growth in science and social studies performance by achieving 3 out of 4 Expected Results Measures as reflected in district, state, and federal/national performance reports.	Met Performance Objective
▪ **Performance Objective 5:** By May 2019, FBISD's All Students and student groups will receive equitable access to a safe, challenging and engaging learning environment as reflected on 5 out of 7 Expected Results Measures.	Significant Progress Made Toward Meeting Performance Objective
▪ **Performance Objective 6:** By May 2019, improve the academic performance of campuses by co-developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating integrated support and intervention plans addressing areas of need as demonstrated on at least 3 out of 3 Expected Results Measures related to the state and federal rating systems. (i.e., Comprehensive, Targeted, PEG, PBMAS, Additional Targeted and Improvement Required).	Met Performance Objective
Goal 2: Fort Bend ISD will ensure students own and are responsible for their learning, behavior, and progress through the FBISD curriculum.	
▪ By May 2019, all FBISD campuses will utilize a academic and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) framework to increase positive behavior and culture and climate among staff and students as measured on at least 2 out of 2 Expected Results Measures.	Met Performance Objective
▪ By May 2019, FBISD will develop and implement student safety and wellness programs to support productive and healthy lifestyles and choices among all student groups as measured on at least 3 out of 4 Expected Results Measures.	Met Performance Objective

Source: FBISD 2018-19 District Improvement Plan.

Commendation 2. FBISD's Progression of Practice focus areas align to the District's vision, mission, goals and objectives set forth in the 5-year strategic plan.

In addition to the DIP, FBISD has developed a 5-year strategic plan (per Board Policy BQ (LOCAL)) to ensure a continuous process for improving student performance. As such, the strategic plan is mostly centered around meeting district Goals 1 (access to the curriculum), 2 (student ownership of learning), and 3 (fluid learning environment), although there are other touchpoints related to Goals 4 and 5. The priorities of the District are expressed through five Progression of Practice focus areas, a concept that was first introduced district-wide in 2016-17. They are:

1. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

2. Instructional Practices that Develop Student Ownership of Learning

3. Blended Learning

4. Formative Assessment Framework

5. Student Ownership of Behavior[10]

Each Progression of Practice is organized as a matrix in which campus leaders can progress along a spectrum from "Launching" to "Emerging" to "Progressing" to "Empowered" by implementing a series of leadership decisions and focused actions. The Progression of Practice was designed to give school leaders clarity around the District's expectations for each of the focus areas, while giving campus leaders the flexibility to select a focus area and customize their professional learning to move along the progression based on their current level of practice. The District's strategic plan includes major milestones, action items, and key performance indicators (KPIs) aimed at moving all campuses to reporting "Empowered" on each Progression of Practice. District leadership supports principals in their Progression of Practice focus area through the Leading Improvement Communities (LIC) meetings and the Campus Support Team (CST) walkthroughs. These milestones and support activities are discussed further in subsequent chapters of this report.

Figure 23 shows the percent of campuses whose principals responded to the audit team's survey by school level and their selected Progression of Practice focus area. The majority of campuses have selected Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as their Progression of Practice focus area, followed by Instructional Practices for Student Ownership of Learning.

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[10] The Student Ownership of Behavior Progression of Practice was finalized in October 2019.

Figure 23. Progression of Practice Focus Area (Self-Reported), By School Level
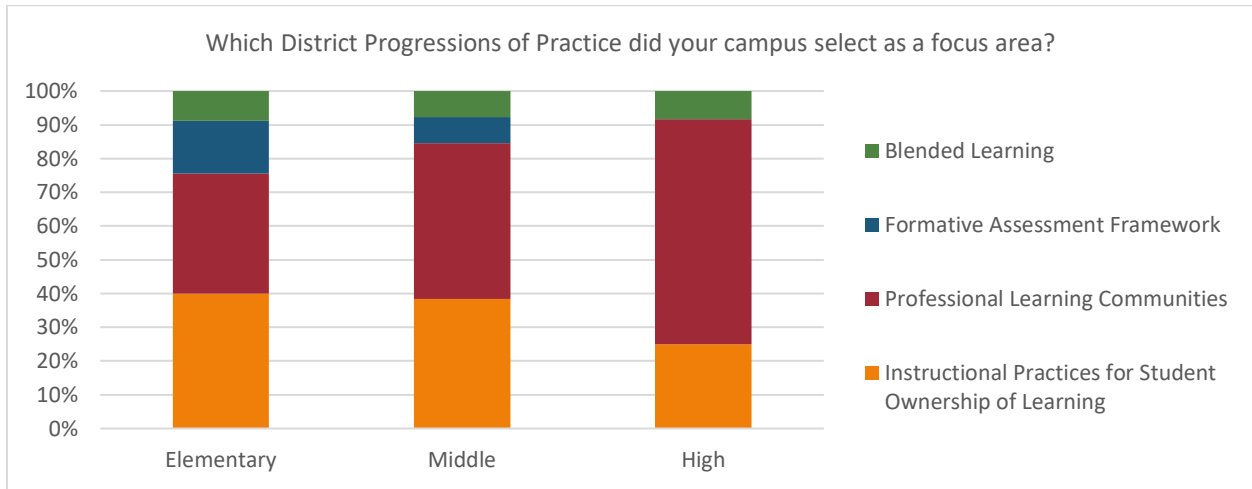
Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

Finding 2. The campus improvement planning process is used more to meet compliance requirements than drive change at schools.

Pursuant to Board Policy BQ (LEGAL) and (LOCAL), each campus is responsible for annually developing a Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) for the purpose of improving student performance for all student populations, including students in special education programs. The campus improvement planning process is led by the principal with the assistance of a Campus Based Leadership Team (CBLT). The CBLT is comprised of 12 members who represent the campus-based professional staff, parents, business, and the community; at least two-thirds of the campus professional staff must be comprised of classroom teachers. The CBLT is to participate in campus decision-making related to planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing, professional learning, and school organization.

The campus improvement planning process is intended to be a year-long cycle that includes the collection and analysis of data for development of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), which is the means by which campuses identify their educational strengths and areas in need of improvement. The CNA guides the development of the CIP and provides benchmarks for its formative and summative evaluation. Campuses should begin the improvement planning process by reviewing their vision and mission statements and verifying that they are in alignment with the District's vision and Profile of a Graduate. In FBISD, the District's comprehensive goals are also used as campus goals, and campuses are required to develop their own performance objectives and strategies to address the specific needs of the campus and tie them to the District's goals using the Progression of Practice. The CBLT is responsible for establishing a timeline and creating a calendar for accomplishing this work throughout the year.

The District's deadlines for campuses to complete their 2019-20 CIP is as follows:[11]

- June 28, 2019 – Complete the Summative Review of the 2018-19 CIP in Plan4Learning.[12]

- August 9, 2019 – Submit Performance Objectives and Strategies for the 2019-20 CIP in Plan4Learning.

- August 16, 2019 – Campus leaders update the Performance Objectives and Strategies based on feedback from district leadership.

- August 30, 2019 – Campus communicates the final CIP Performance Objectives and Strategies to all campus stakeholders and implements the CIP.

When asked on Gibson's survey about the effectiveness of the CIP as a tool to prioritize the work of the campus, 76 percent of principals that responded to the survey agreed/strongly agreed with this statement. Further, 85.5 percent of principals agreed/strongly agreed that the campus leadership team was involved in the development of their most recent CIP, while just 68.1 percent of principals agreed/strongly agreed that other stakeholders were involved in the CIP development process. Figure 24 illustrates that there was little variation in agreement rates depending on the principal's year of experience in the principalship or by school level; however, principals with 6 to 10 years of experience and middle school principals tended to have slightly lower rates of agreement.

Figure 24. Principal Survey – CIPs by Principal Years of Experience and School Level
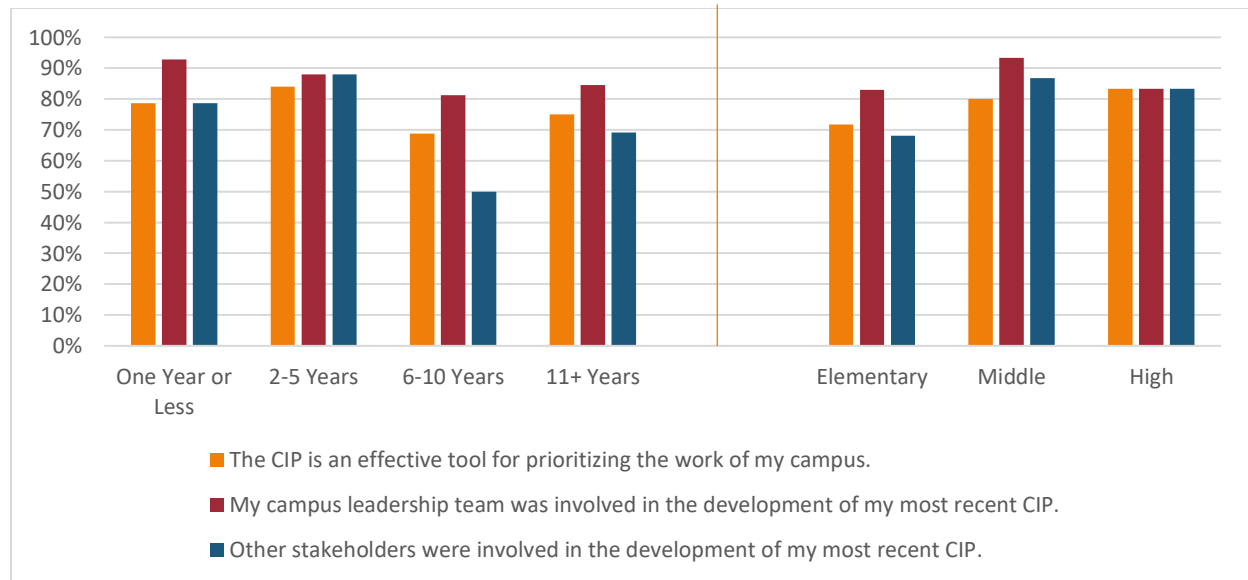
Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

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[11] FBISD Campus and District Improvement Planning Handbook, 2019-20.

[12] Plan4Learning is a district and campus improvement planning software used by FBISD to manage the development of the DIP and CIPs.

Feedback from campus leaders during interviews and focus groups suggests that the much of the work of reviewing and developing the CIPs occurs during the summer months when many campus leaders and teachers are not available. This is not best practice and contrary to the requirements set forth in Board Policy BQ (LEGAL and LOCAL).

When asked on Gibson's survey about the involvement of the principal supervisors in the campus improvement planning process, less than one-half of principals (48.7%) that responded indicated that they reviewed the performance objectives and strategies in their most recent CIP with their supervisor prior to approval, and 67.1 percent of principals responded that they have had conversations with their supervisor about progress toward meeting their campus goals outlined in their CIP. One of the primary responsibilities of the newly-established Executive Director position is to review, and continuously update the CIP each year, with the assistance of the principal and CBLT. These percentages, however, may be lower than expected due to the fact that the Executive Director position was just implemented at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year when the principal survey was administered.

Recommendation 2. Establish campus norms to ensure that CIPs are continuously reviewed and updated.

To move the CIP from a compliance document to a "living" document to drive campus improvement, principal supervisors and principals should establish a process to identify and prioritize the work of the CIP. One practice that has been used successfully by a number of districts is to think about the work in 90-day segments. Based on the work that is identified in the CIP, what needs to take place during the first 90 days? This helps the principal move the totality of the work into a smaller, more reasonable period of time, and the conversation can move to one of mutual accountability and support. For example, are there resources that the principal needs help from the supervisor to procure? Are there system barriers the principal supervisor needs to address to help the principal accomplish the 90-day goals? The principal supervisor can lift up support issues or resource challenges at district-level meetings and a review of 90-day action plans should then be a component of the principal supervisor's campus site visit. At the end of the first 90-days, the principal supervisor and principal can debrief on progress and create the next 90-day plan. This process helps to move the CIP from an annual compliance document to a living action plan that focuses the work of the principal, principal supervisor, and at times, district leadership. It would also help to drive budget priorities for the following year, as the CIPs and related resource requirements are not finished until two months after the District's budget is adopted.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. Recently the Board of Trustees revised and adopted the BQ policy series that details expectations for planning and decision-making. A revised CIP process will be part of the regulations tied to this policy series. Implementation will launch during the 2020 – 21 school year.*

Accountability Systems

The Director of District Strategic Transformation (recently reorganized within the Division of Human Resources and Organizational Transformation) oversees the development and implementation of the

District Strategic Plan, District Improvement Plan, and facilitation of the development of department improvement plans that support defined metrics and milestones aligned to Board goals and objectives.

Commendation 3. FBISD is developing an accountability framework—with input from the community—that provides holistic measures of school progress and success aligned to the District's vision (Profile of a Graduate) and goals (student ownership of learning).

In addition to the District and Campus Accountability System described in the *Chapter 2 – FBISD District Profile*, FBISD is currently one of more than 50 districts in the state who have joined the Texas Public Accountability Consortium (TPAC) in order to build an accountability framework to assess the District's progress and measure its success using measures beyond the State's current A-F accountability system, which relies singularly on STAAR test results. The new Community Based Accountability System (CBAS) framework is comprised of seven pillars to represent standards of effective schools. They are:

- Student learning and progress

- Student readiness

- Engaged and well-rounded students

- Community engagement and partnerships

- Professional learning and quality staff

- Fiscal and operational systems

- Safety and well-being of students

FBISD is currently piloting the CBAS framework at six campuses and has plans to add an additional 10 campuses in 2020-21. FBISD intends to fully implement the CBAS framework and accountability system at all campuses by 2021-22.

Organizational Structure and Staffing

An organizational structure defines supervisory roles and alignment of functions under leadership positions. A well-established organizational structure enables organizational units to work together to accomplish the strategic goals of the district.

Over the past three years, FBISD has undergone several significant reorganizations with the ultimate goal of aligning departments to provide more support and accountability for the implementation of the curriculum. In March 2017, FBISD reorganized the instructional departments into the Academic Affairs Division under the direction of the Chief Academic Officer. This reorganization created four distinct divisions within Academic Affairs, each with defined departments. In May 2019, FBISD reorganized the Academic Affairs and School Leadership Divisions. In Academic Affairs, departments were shifted to include just three divisions; the fourth division, Accountability and Assessment, was split, with the Accountability function moving to the Strategic Planning Division and the Assessment function moving

under the Teaching and Learning Division. In School Leadership, Executive Directors were added to support supervision and leadership of schools.

In November 2019, FBISD further refined its organizational structure. A Deputy Superintendent position was added and School Leadership, under the direction of the Chief of Schools, was shifted to report to this new position. Additionally, Strategic Planning and Teacher Development were merged with the Human Resources Department, which was rebranded under a new Division of Human Resources and Organizational Transformation, also reporting to the Deputy Superintendent. Other refinements to the District's organizational structure were also made, but are not referenced here since they occurred deeper within the organization or are insignificantly tied to the scope of this audit. Figure 25 illustrates the District's current organizational structure.

Figure 25. FBISD Organizational Structure (Executive Team), 2020
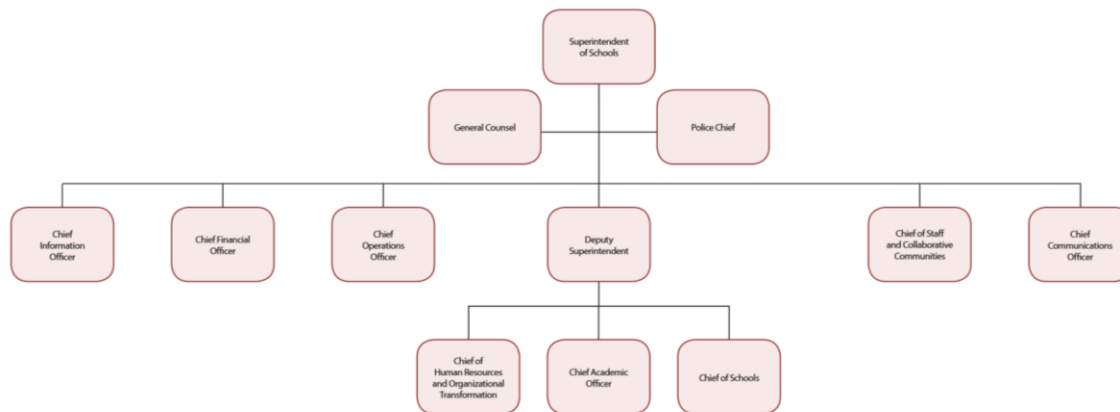
Source: FBISD.

Given the magnitude of these organizational changes, it is important to articulate the roles and responsibilities of the Deputy Superintendent, who oversees the three divisions whose functions are included (either fully or partially) within the scope of this audit. Some of the primary responsibilities of the Deputy Superintendent position are:

- Serve as a leader to assist the Superintendent and Board to develop a vision for the school district and a comprehensive long-range plan. Recommend to the Board, annually, district-wide goals and monitor and report to the Board on the progress toward achieving established goals.

- Promote a common vision and establish effective communication to build support, unity and trust among the Superintendent, Board, administrators, district staff and community stakeholders.

- Facilitate the ongoing development of education that will allow all students to achieve their highest potential and be successful in meeting TEA and FBISD's learning standards, while continuing the District's focus on providing well-balanced education, activities and programs.

- Recruit, employ, develop and retain the highest quality teachers, administrators and support staff.

- Understand the dynamics of demographic, economic and social-emotional change in the Fort Bend ISD community and provide proactive planning to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

- Provide long term planning to guide the Superintendent and Board in policy development, present recommendations for the adoption or revision of Board policies, communicate Board policies to members of the Board, personnel, students and the public, and ensure through delegation to staff that all policies of the Board are implemented.

- Work with the Superintendent, Board and District to prepare and plan to operate the School District for several years with reduced state and federal financial support in which to manage the District in a fiscally responsible manner. Find creative ways to bring in revenue and spend prudently, while maintaining an appropriate fund balance.

Academic Affairs Division

The Academic Affairs Division is organized under the direction of the Chief Academic Officer (CAO). The primary job goal of the CAO is to plan, direct, manage and evaluate all FBISD Division of Academic and Instructional Services programs, services, and personnel. Some of the essential duties and responsibilities of this position outlined on the job description are to:[13]

- Develop and implement a mission and shared vision of the future for departments in the division.

- Provide guidance for assigned departments on developing appropriate strategic goals and objectives aligned with the FBISD overall strategic vision, mission, goals, and objectives, and provide active support for achieving them.

- Participate in the district-level decision process to establish and review the district's goals and objectives and major instructional programs.

- Articulate the District's mission, instructional philosophy, and curriculum implementation strategies to the community and solicit their support in realizing its mission.

- Establish and maintain collaborative working relationships with school and department-based personnel, officials, and community members.

Figure 26 illustrates the current organizational structure for the Academic Affairs Division.

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[13] The CAO job description was last updated June 8, 2016.

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Figure 26. FBISD Organizational Structure, Academic Affairs Division, 2020
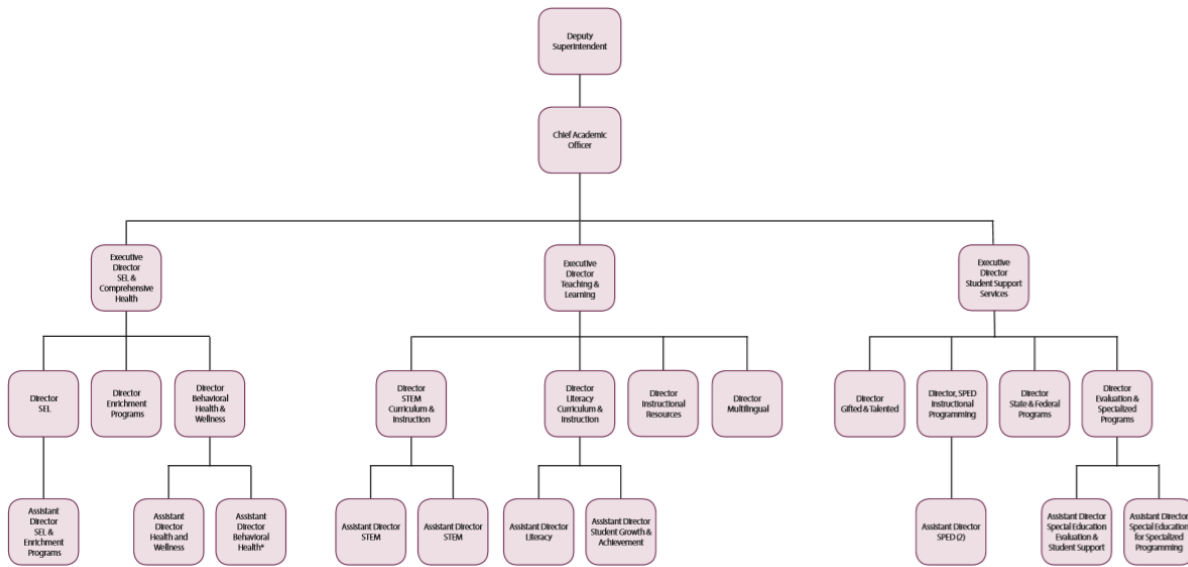
Source: FBISD.

The focus of the audit teams' organizational and staffing review centers primarily on the Division of Teaching and Learning within Academic Affairs (and School Leadership, which is addressed further below). Teacher Development, which has been realigned within the Division of Human Resources and Organizational Transformation, is also included in the scope of this audit.

Division of Teaching and Learning

The Division of Teaching and Learning is led by an Executive Director who is responsible for oversight of all departments within the division, including the development and implementation of budgeting, staffing, professional development, and program management, while leading instructional innovation for continuous district and school improvement. Some of the essential duties and responsibilities of this position outlined on the job description are to:[14]

- Lead the Teaching and Learning instructional division regarding the district-level decision making process in order to establish and review the district's instructional priorities, goals, and objectives along with major instructional programs related to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

- Provide visionary leadership to ensure effective 21st Century teaching and learning including the effective utilization of technology.

- Coordinate and establish cyclical revision of the curriculum as outlined in the Curriculum Management Plan and ensure regular updates to the learning management system.

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[14] The Executive Director Teaching and Learning job description was last updated on December 9, 2019.

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- Collaborate to participate in leading a district instructional walk through process to monitor the implementation of the curriculum and identify professional learning needs.

- Develop the protocols for data from assessments, instructional walk-throughs, and stakeholders to be used to evaluate the curriculum, identify needed revisions, and lead revision efforts to ensure a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

- Collaborate with Organizational Transformation to develop, implement, and evaluate professional learning plan for the district that supports the District's goals and priorities.

- Lead a district-level Campus Support Team that engages in instructional walk-throughs to monitor the implementation of the curriculum and establish support structures for identified campuses.

- Develop systems to facilitate PLC practices to support the implementation of the written curriculum, instructional best practices, and student-centered assessment.

- Develop systems to oversee the development of campus based instructional leaders to build capacity to support instructional programs and curriculum implementation.

- Develop and manage the annual Curriculum and Instruction budget and oversee the budgets of assigned departments to ensure prudent management of funds and human resources necessary to carry out the diverse functions of assigned departments.

The Executive Director of Teaching and Learning has four direct reports: 1 Director of STEM Curriculum and Instruction, 1 Director of Literacy Curriculum and Instruction, 1 Director of Instructional Resources, and 1 Director of Multilingual. This span of control (i.e., the number of direct supervisory reports) appears reasonable given the nature and scope of the departments that are supervised. The structure and staffing for these departments are discuss briefly below.

- **STEM Curriculum and Instruction** – This department is led by a Director who is responsible for leading the design, development, and revision of the EC-12 Math, Science, and Technology curriculum and assessments within the learning management system. The Director is supported in her role by 2 FTE Assistant Directors. Staff within the department are organized into three teams: a Math Team, a Science Team, and a Technology Applications Team. The Math and Science teams are further organized into elementary, secondary, and K-12 support teams. The Math and Science teams each include a 2 FTE Curriculum Coordinators, 2 FTE Assessment Coordinators, 2 FTE Intervention and Enrichment Coordinators (for elementary and secondary, respectively), 1 FTE Sheltered Instruction Specialist (K-12), and 1 FTE Technology Integration Specialist (K-12). The Technology Integration Team includes 5 FTE Coordinators specializing in technology integration, robotics, outclass/VILS/partnerships, and digital media, and library media services, plus 1 FTE Specialist position.

- **Literacy Curriculum and Instruction** – This department is led by a Director who is responsible for leading the design, development, and revision of the EC–12 ELA and Social Studies curriculum, instructional priorities, and assessments within the learning management system. The Director is supported by 1 FTE Assistant Director. Staff within the department are organized into three

teams: an English Language Arts (ELA) Team, a Social Studies Team, and an Elementary Literacy Interventionists Team. The ELA and Social Studies teams are further organized into elementary, secondary, and K-12 support teams. The ELA team includes 3 FTE Curriculum Coordinators (by grade level), 2 FTE Assessment Coordinators, 2 FTE Intervention and Enrichment Coordinators, 1 FTE Bilingual Instruction, 1 FTE Sheltered Instruction Specialist, and 1 FTE Technology Integration Specialist. The Social Studies team includes 2 FTE Curriculum Coordinators, 2 FTE Assessment Coordinators, 1 FTE Intervention and Enrichment Coordinator, 1 FTE Sheltered Instruction Specialist, and 1 FTE Technology Integration Specialist. There are also 3 FTE Literacy Interventionists.

- **Instructional Resources** – This department is led by a Director who is responsible for providing leadership in the procurement, acquisition, renewal, management, and implementation of instructional resources to include print and/or digital materials and online learning programs that support teaching and learning. The Director also ensures that instructional resources are aligned to the TEKS, District instructional priorities, and meet minimum technology requirements for utilization on the District's network. The Director is supported by 1 FTE On-line Learning Coordinator and 1 FTE Instructional Materials Coordinator.

- **Multilingual** – This department is led by a Director who is responsible for the overall development and management of district curriculum, Bilingual, ESL, and Dual Language programs, teacher and administrator professional learning, and identification of recommended strategies and resources for the assigned program area. Staffing within this department includes: 1 FTE Bilingual Multilingual Programs Coordinator, 1 FTE Bilingual Programs Specialist, 3 FTE ESL Programs Coordinators, 1 FTE Compliance Officer, 2 FTE Student Assessment and Data Analysts, 1 FTE Multilingual Programs Specialist, 1 FTE Translator, and 1 FTE World Languages Coordinator.

Teacher Development

With the most recent reorganization, Teacher Development was rebranded Leadership Transformation and realigned under newly-created Division of Human Resources and Organizational Transformation. The department is led by a Director who is responsible for the design, development, management, and implementation of the District comprehensive professional learning plan including implementation of professional learning aligned to district instructional priorities, professional learning to support blended learning and technology integration, development of teacher leaders, retention of educators, and identification of recommended strategies and resources for the assigned program area.

Staffing within this department includes 5 FTE Professional Learning Coordinators and 9 FTE Teacher Development Specialists. Both of these positions have similar essential duties and responsibilities listed on their job descriptions, which includes responsibility for the management of the District's comprehensive professional learning plan, implementation of professional learning aligned to the District's instructional priorities and campus improvement plans, development of teacher leaders, and identification of recommended strategies and resources for the assigned program area. Department staffing also includes 1 FTE Data Specialist.

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Over the past six years, the total number of positions organized within Academic Affairs increased 29.1 percent, from 564.7 FTE in 2013-14 to 729 FTE in 2018-19. In 2018-19, 42.4 percent of these positions were located at schools and 57.6 percent were centrally located (non-school) positions (Table 15).

Table 15. Academic Affairs FTE by Location, 2013-14 and 2018-19

Work Location	2013-14	2018-19	FTE Δ	FTE % Δ	% Representation
Non-School	347.2	420.1	72.8	21.0%	57.6%
School	217.5	308.9	91.4	42.0%	42.4%
Total	**564.7**	**729.0**	**164.2**	**29.1%**	**100%**

Source: FBISD Staffing Data.

School-based positions are allocated to campuses though a staffing model using formulas that are generally applied based on campus enrollment and/or program (e.g., special education, multilingual). Some positions are allocated based on campus needs and at the discretion of the central office (e.g., special education teachers and aides). The audit team analyzed the changes in FTEs over this time period and found that the majority of the increase in school-based positions within Academic Affairs is attributed to special education positions.[15] Also, in 2017-18, the District added 20 FTE Title I Literacy Instructional Coach positions and 21 FTE Title I Math Instructional Coach positions. The increase in the number of school-based special education positions and instructional coach positions was offset by decreases in other positions, such as 19 FTE Data Specialists and 20.5 FTE Parent Center Coordinators. There were increases and decreases in other school-based positions within Academic Affairs as well, but changes in position titles due to reclassifications makes the staffing analysis difficult.

The number of non-school positions within the Division and its departments is not determined through a formula. The audit team's analysis of changes in non-school FTEs within Academic Affairs found that the majority of the increase in non-school positions within Academic Affairs is attributed to special education positions (80.4 FTE), and Coordinator positions within Department 314 STEM Curriculum and Instruction (20 FTE) and Department 315 Literacy Curriculum and Instruction (17 FTE); 27 FTE Educational Technology Specialists; and, 9 FTE Professional Learning Specialists. It should be noted that the increase in positions within Department 314 STEM Curriculum and Instruction and Department 315 Literacy Curriculum and Instruction were based on the defined curriculum development priorities related to the Professional Learning Community Framework, and that the increases in the Educational Technology Specialists and Professional Learning Specialists were redirects from existing positions in other departments.

The increase in the number of non-school special education positions and coordinator positions was offset somewhat by decreases in other positions, such as 24 FTE Helping Teachers. As with the school-based positions, there were also increases and decreases in other non-school positions within Academic Affairs, but changes in position titles due to reclassifications makes the staffing analysis difficult. The net savings

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[15] The Special Education program is not included in the scope of the Academic Program Management audit.

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from the 2017 reorganization (estimated at $500K) was used to fund stipends for the Professional Learning Leads (PLLs) and the Technology Integration Specialists (TICs) teacher leader roles.

Department of School Leadership

The Department of School Leadership is organized under the direction of the Chief of Schools. The primary job goal of the Chief of Schools position is to provide leadership to support the District mission, vision, and goals of the Board and Superintendent through oversight of school administration and effective implementation of instructional programs and initiatives. Some of the essential duties and responsibilities of this position outlined on the job description are to:[16]

- Provide guidance for assigned departments with developing appropriate strategic goals and objectives aligned with the District's overall strategic vision, mission, goals, and objectives, and provide support for achieving the goals.

- Participate in district-level decision process to establish and review the District's goals and objectives and major instructional programs.

- Articulate the District's mission, instructional philosophy and curriculum implementation strategies to the community and solicit their support in realizing its mission.

- Plan the necessary time, resources and materials to support assigned areas of supervision in accomplishment of district and departmental goals.

- Oversee the recruitment, selection, assignment, supervision and evaluation of departmental personnel and campus principals.

- Direct the development, revision and approval of proposed new and revised Board Policies and Administrative Procedures relevant to the division to ensure compliance with School Board guidance and governmental regulations.

- Obtain and use evaluative findings, including student achievement data, to examine the effectiveness of instructional programs within assigned areas of supervision.

- Guide, direct and evaluate assistant superintendents in their roles of campus supervision so that staff and students reach their full potential.
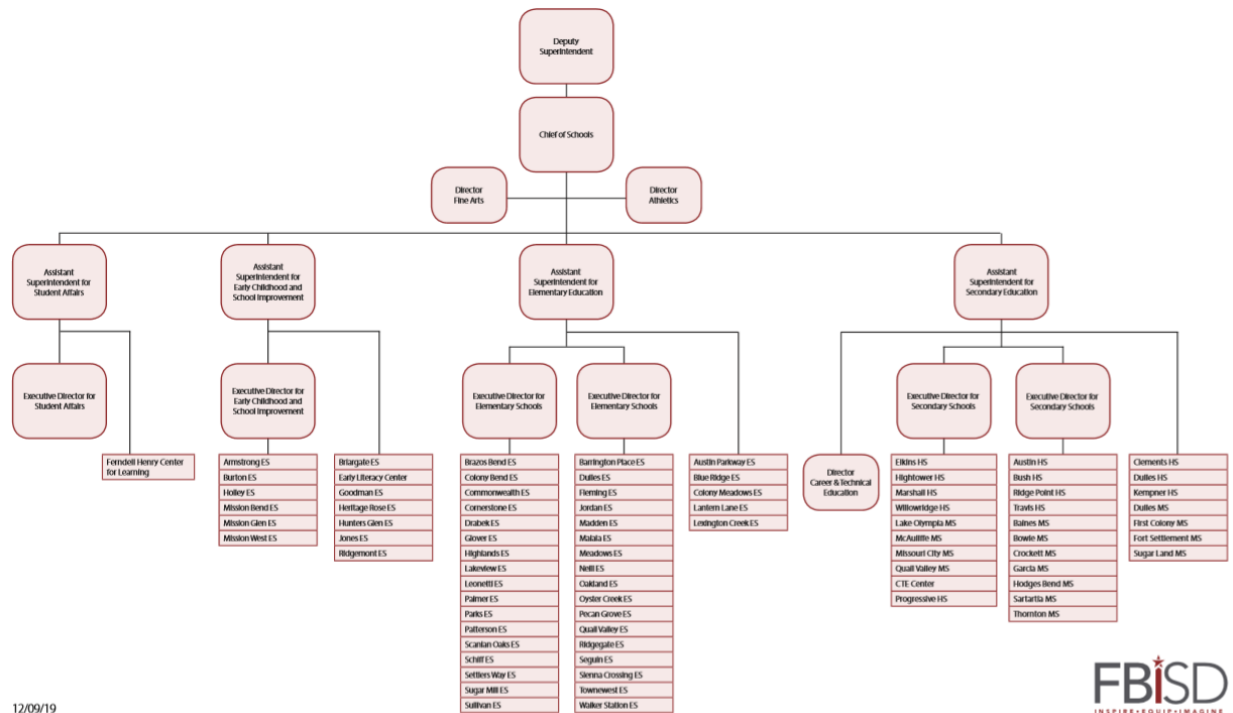
Figure 27 illustrates the current organizational structure for the Department of School Leadership.

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[16] The Chief of Schools job description was last updated May 30, 2019.

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Figure 27. FBISD Organizational Structure, Department of School Leadership, 2020

Source: FBISD.

The Chief of Schools has six direct reports: 2 FTE Directors (Fine Arts and Athletics) and 4 FTE Assistant Superintendents. As shown in Figure 27 above, the Assistant Superintendents each oversee one or two Executive Directors, plus a small number of school principals. Most of the campuses directly supervised by the Assistant Superintendents are geographically located in close proximity to the central office building in order to minimize travel time and maximize the Assistant Superintendent's ability to spend more time on those campuses. The Assistant Superintendent's also directly supervise the highest need campuses within their zone. The span of control of the Assistant Superintendents ranges from six (Executive Director for Early Childhood and School Improvement) to ten (Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education).[17] Some of the essential duties and responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendents outlined on the job description are to:[18]

- Provide leadership in causing student achievement goals of the school district to be met in assigned schools through guidance for assigned campuses on developing appropriate strategic goals and objectives aligned with the FBISD overall strategic vision, mission, goals, and objectives, and provide active support for achieving them.

- Collaborate with district personnel to schedule and administer professional development to positively impact student outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

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[17] The Department of Student Affairs is not included in the scope of this Academic Program Management Audit.

[18] The Assistant Superintendent job description was last updated July 29, 2013.

- Monitor campus data, including but not limited to enrollment, staffing, student and teacher attendance, graduation rates, special education services, standardized testing, failure rates, dropouts, completion rates, discipline, class size, and extracurricular activities.

- Monitor assigned campuses in regard to curriculum, instruction, and the integration of technology.

- Involve the appropriate staff in evaluating and selecting instructional materials to meet student-learning needs.

- Communicate the District's policy, goals, and guidelines to assigned principals.

The addition of the six Executive Director positions occurred at the beginning of the 2019-20 school year in order to diffuse some of the principal oversight responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendents and provide additional support to campuses. Some of the essential duties and responsibilities of the Executive Directors related to instructional leadership and school management outlined on the job description are to:[19]

- Assist in defining the vision and mission of the school.

- Provide leadership in causing student achievement goals of the school to be met in assigned schools through guidance for assigned campuses on developing appropriate strategic goals and objectives aligned with the FBISD overall strategic vision, mission, goals and objectives, and provide support for achieving them.

- Assist the principal with administrative and instructional leadership for the campus.

- Must review, and continuously update the Campus Improvement Plan each year, with the assistance of the Campus Based Leadership Team.

- Oversee the development and implementation of campus specific-staff development.

- Works directly with principals to create high-quality instructional programs and other services for students.

- Communicate the District's policies, goals and guidelines to assigned principals.

Over the past six years, the total number of positions organized within School Leadership increased 17 percent, from 5,775.3 FTE in 2013-14 to 6,756.2 FTE in 2018-19. In 2018-19, 99.3 percent of these positions were located at schools and 0.7 percent were centrally located (non-school) positions (Table 16).

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[19] The Executive Director job descriptions were last updated June 3, 2019.

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Table 16. School Leadership (Chief of Schools) FTE by Location, 2013-14 and 2018-19

Work Location	2013-14	2018-19	FTE Δ	FTE % Δ	% Representation
Non-School	39.0	44.6	5.6	14.4%	0.7%
School	5736.3	6711.6	975.2	17.0%	99.3%
Total	**5775.3**	**6756.2**	**980.8**	**17.0%**	**100%**

Source: FBISD Staffing Data.

The scope of the audit team's staffing analysis focused primarily on the principal supervisor positions, which increased from 5 FTE to 7 FTE over this time period. Not included in the table above is the decrease in 3 FTE Assistant Superintendent positions and the addition of 6 FTE Executive Director positions, which occurred in 2019-20. This organizational restructuring resulted in a lower principal-principal supervisor ratio and more reasonable spans of control for principal supervisors (Table 17).

Table 17. Principal Supervisor Span of Control, 2013-14 to 2019-20

Position	2013-14	2019-20	Δ
Principals	73	80	7
Principal Supervisor*	5	8	3
Ratio	**14.6**	**10**	**4.6**

Source: FBISD Staffing Data and 2019-20 Schools List. *Excludes Student Affairs.

Commendation 4. Recent organizational changes created reasonable spans of control for principal supervisors, logically aligned key functions, and should strengthen the support and accountability for the implementation of the District's curriculum.

Ensuring that the District's curriculum is implemented with fidelity and in accordance with the vision and expectations established by the Board requires collaboration and coordination amongst the Academic Affairs Division (who oversees the academic and instructional programs and the development of the curriculum) and School Leadership (who oversees school leaders who are responsible for implementing the curriculum). Figure 28 provides a good illustration of the envisioned working relationship between instructional leadership, school leadership, and campus leadership.

Figure 28. Instructional and Leadership Roles
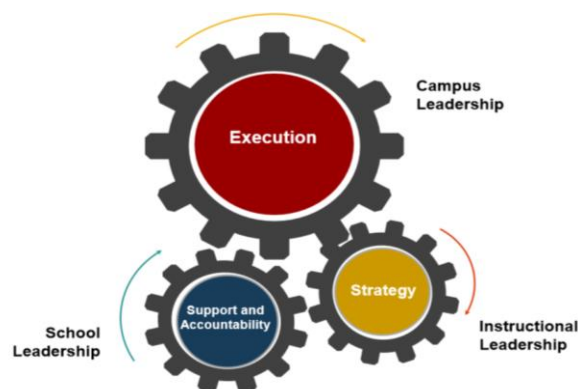
Source: FBISD.

Feedback from district leaders during interviews and focus groups, however, suggests that Academic Affairs and School Leadership have been operating as silos rather than in lock-step, as the above graphic illustrates. Principal supervisors expressed concern about the number of new initiatives being rolled out and their ability to adequately support principals and hold them accountable in their implementation. (Note change management is discussed further in the next section.) Principal supervisors are often the "first line of support" to principals and many expressed concern that they have not been provided with sufficient information or are fully aware of the expectations for campuses implementing some of the new initiatives. This also inhibits their ability to hold principals accountable. Principal supervisors are in the position to provide upward feedback to Academic Affairs regarding any barriers to implementation of new initiatives, but some indicated that communication channels to do this have been lacking.

Commendably, district leaders are aware of these and other challenges and have recently taken steps to facilitate better communication and collaboration amongst these organizational units. First, bi-monthly Instructional Council meetings that include leadership from Academic Affairs and the Assistant Superintendents and Executive Directors in School Leadership were implemented for the purpose of discussing academic and instructional initiatives. Monthly Leadership Council meetings convene the Superintendent, his executive team, and the Executive Directors representing all departments for the primary purpose of having collective conversations to support what is happening in schools and classrooms. Also, monthly Focus on Learning meetings with school principals provide a communication mechanism for distributing information both upward and downward in the organization. The Campus Support Team (CST) walkthroughs, which are discussed in detail in *Chapter 5 – Professional Learning*, involve leadership and staff from Academic Affairs, School Leadership, and campuses to monitor and support campuses in the implementation of the curriculum and their Progression of Practice focus area.

Second, feedback from principals during interviews and focus groups indicates a high level of satisfaction with the addition of the Executive Director positions within School Leadership. This new structure greatly reduced the span of control of the Assistant Superintendents. Although newly implemented, principals are appreciative of the additional support and guidance available to them from this new structure.

Finally, and most significantly, was the recent addition of the Deputy Superintendent position and the realignment of School Leadership, Academic Affairs, and Human Resources and Organizational Transformation divisions reporting to this position. This new structure provides a logical alignment of key functions. A primary advantage of this approach is centralized accountability for curriculum implementation, since school oversight and curriculum development are aligned under the same leadership position. These recent organizational changes, along with the various collaboration mechanisms involving different district stakeholders, will greatly improve the support system and accountability structures for ensuring fidelity of implementation of the District's curriculum and academic programs.

Finding 3. Some job descriptions are not current.

The audit team reviewed 168 job descriptions for positions included in the scope of this audit within Academic Affairs and School Leadership (including campus-based positions). Notably, most of the job

descriptions reviewed have been updated within the past three years, which is an acceptable range of time. However, the audit team did find that some job descriptions have overlapping responsibilities with other positions, list essential duties and responsibilities that do not reflect the actual responsibilities performed, and/or list supervisor titles that are no longer accurate. For example, many of the essential duties and responsibilities listed on the CAO and Chief of Schools job descriptions overlap, which could lead to confusion over accountability for some responsibilities. Below are some examples:

- Participate in district-level decision process to establish and review the District's goals and objectives and major instructional programs.

- Articulate the District's mission, instructional philosophy and curriculum implementation strategies to the community and solicit their support in realizing its mission.

- Think strategically with the ability to plan, formulate, and execute policies and programs.

- Direct the development, revision, and approval of proposed new and revised Board Policies and Administrative Procedures relevant to the division to ensure compliance with School Board guidance and governmental regulations.

Recommendation 3. Review and update job descriptions to ensure that they accurately reflect assigned roles, responsibilities, reporting relationships, and position qualifications.

Updated job descriptions are essential for ensuring that both supervisors and staff understand the essential knowledge, skills, abilities, responsibilities, and reporting relationships for their position. It is also necessary for recruiting and hiring, conducting performance evaluations, determining Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations, and mitigating employee complaints related to compensation or Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) charges, among other things. FBISD should establish a plan to review and revise job descriptions every three years, or more often and as needed when job responsibilities or working conditions change. Position descriptions will also need to be updated to reflect new roles and responsibilities and reporting structures, and all staff should receive on-going professional learning to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to carry out their essential duties and responsibilities.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. An audit response team will be developed in order to identify a timeline for recommendations that are not already part of a revision or implementation cycle. By May 2020, the schedule for revision of identified job descriptions will be completed.*

Change Management

Change management is defined as the process, tools and techniques to manage the people side of change in order to achieve a desired business outcome. Change management incorporates the organizational

tools that can be utilized to help individuals make successful personal transitions resulting in the adoption and realization of change.[20]

Finding 4. There have been a high number of organizational changes, job role changes, and new district initiatives in recent years.

In addition to the organizational changes described previously, and the staffing reassignments that accompanied many of those changes, there have also been a significant number of new district initiatives since 2016-17, beginning with the re-write of the District's curriculum. Other major initiatives include the introduction of the Progression of Practice focus areas, the Blended Learning Pilot, the Impact Team Pilot, the Grading Pilot, the CBAS Pilot, the Technology Toolkit implementation, the Relay School Model initiative, the addition of Teacher Cadres and other teacher leader positions, and the implementation of the early learning program. (Several of these initiatives are discussed in *Chapter 4 – Curriculum Management* and *Chapter 5 – Professional Learning*). Other initiatives are also on the horizon, such as a review of the District's Gifted and Talented program and the Bilingual program. And, of course, this list does not include any non-instructional initiatives led by other divisions that may also be impacting district and school-based personnel.

Although 97.3 percent of principals and 86.9 percent of teachers that responded to Gibson's survey agreed/strongly agreed they understand how all of the District's initiatives align with one another, the audit team received consistent feedback from interviewees at all levels in the organization that the number of new initiatives and the pace of the change are "overwhelming". The primary concern mentioned by most staff interviewed is "the lack of time to implement". This feedback is important for the District to consider because pockets of resistance to change can derail progress. As an example, when the District began the process of re-writing the curriculum, a massive undertaking, there was a large exodus of Curriculum Coordinators who were either unwilling or unable to assume new responsibilities.

Change management and project management are two critical disciplines that are applied to a variety of organizational changes to improve the likelihood of success and return on investment. The change management function in FBISD is organized within the Division of Human Resources and Organizational Transformation and is led by the newly-created Director of Change and Program Management who is responsible for directing and overseeing the Project Management Office to ensure programs and projects meet organization goals and requirements.

Other responsibilities outlined on the job description include:

- Lead the design, development, execution and management of an organizational change management strategy and plan for the Division of Human Resources and Organizational Transformation to address changes in business processes, organizational structure, and culture.

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[20] https://www.prosci.com/resources/articles/change-management-definition

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- Establish a communications plan and strategy to ensure consistent messaging across the program and impacted stakeholders.

- Oversee and measure effectiveness of change management plans, deliverables and outcomes and present recommendations to leaders for continuous improvement.

- Establish change management methods and procedures to lead the organization through effective change implementation.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of project and change management plans to ensure continuous improvement.

The new organizational structure and the rebranding of this function should help to ensure sufficient resources are dedicated to change management efforts. The Division is currently in the process of developing an organizational health survey to assess the organizational culture and climate within FBISD.

Recommendation 4. Integrate change management practices with new district initiatives.

The success of many of the District's initiatives will depend on the ability of the organization to effectively absorb and manage change. Establishing a visible change management function within the District is a commendable first step. Developing a change management strategy and plan should soon follow. For each major initiative, FBISD should ensure that change management practices are integrated as part of the implementation. These may include:[21]

- Conducting a readiness assessment

- Developing a communications plan and communicating

- Providing a sponsor roadmap

- Providing coaching and training

- Developing strategies to manage resistance

- Collecting feedback and data

- Developing a corrective action plan, if needed

- Recognizing success

As part of this recommendation, the District should also look to develop strategies to manage the number of initiatives schools and/or staff are expected to implement at one time.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. The recent organizational restructure launched the Division of Organizational Transformation that combines strategic planning with organizational change management, project management, leadership and learning. Initial department*

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[21] https://www.prosci.com/resources/articles/change-management-process

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work will be to adopt a change management framework in order to support the management of the number of initiatives schools and staff are expected to implement.

Chapter 4 – Curriculum Management

Curriculum Management refers to a structured set of activities designed to assess and adjust a district's curriculum. This chapter provides an overview of the Fort Bend ISD's Theory of Action and the policy framework that guides curriculum management, addresses the District's written curriculum (curriculum development and revision), taught curriculum (instructional practices and resources), assessed curriculum (assessment strategy), and curriculum monitoring and evaluation (protocols and procedures).

Theory of Action

Policy EA (LOCAL) Instructional Goals and Objectives articulates the District's Theory of Action of managed curriculum and includes a comprehensive system to develop leadership throughout the organization. Managed curriculum aligns what is written, taught, and tested, and requires adequate resources, systematic monitoring, and highly qualified teachers. The key attributes of the District's Theory of Action are:

- Common performance standards and student-centered assessments that are applied to all students and all schools;

- Deep commitment to an equitable learning environment with a proven instructional model and curricular approach;

- District systems that are aligned with equity and consistency;

- District guidance and support of innovative teaching strategies that integrate technology;

- District capacity to intervene in low-performing schools;

- Commitment to leadership development in a collaborative culture of learning; and

- Leadership modeling and leadership opportunities for students and staff.

The Board's expectations include the following:

- The District's written curriculum shall address every subject and grade level, and shall include content standards along with success criteria that define what every student should learn within a predetermined scope and sequence.

- The District's curriculum shall be guaranteed, viable, aligned, relevant, and coherent. It shall include detailed and differentiated (Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3) instructional guidance, instructional resources, and sample assessment items, all of which shall be made available to teachers through a learning management system for easy and timely access.

- Strategies and instructional resources shall be integrated into the District's curriculum to support leadership development and the attributes of the District's Profile of a Graduate.

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- Formative assessments shall be administered, and the results shall be disaggregated through the learning management system. Analysis of data shall be used to inform instruction, respond to students' learning needs, and support continuous improvement.

- All instructional staff shall attend comprehensive professional development focused on curriculum, instruction, assessment, and the use of data to equip teachers to meet the needs of every student.

- Timely, targeted enrichment and intervention strategies shall be explicitly outlined in the curriculum to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to master the content standards.

The Board's intent is for teachers to have the autonomy to determine the pedagogy they will employ to deliver instruction in congruence with the District's curriculum to ensure student mastery. Policy EA (LOCAL) also requires that district and campus instructional leaders utilize a systematic monitoring system to ensure the implementation and use of the District's curriculum, and the system include required professional development, protocols for the review of assessment data, and a district walk-through system to support and guide professional practices.

Curriculum Management Plan

A curriculum management plan should communicate the intentions of a district in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A school district with a strong curriculum management system has a written plan that outlines and guides the design and delivery of the curriculum. A comprehensive plan should articulate the process for curriculum development, adoption, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision for all courses of study. Policy EH (Local) Curriculum Design recognizes the need and value of an ongoing cycle of curriculum review and development, and requires the administration to design a curriculum management plan to ensure quality control and alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

Commendation 5. FBISD has a comprehensive curriculum management plan that provides a framework for the alignment of the written, taught, and tested curriculum.

FBISD's curriculum management plan (adopted August 19, 2019) is designed to support the District's mission "to inspire and equip all students to pursue futures beyond what they can imagine by establishing a system to ensure the continual development and revision of a relevant and rigorous curriculum." FBISD's curriculum management plan is comprehensive and provides a framework that outlines the guidelines and procedures for the on-going systematic process of curriculum development, assessment, implementation, professional learning models, and evaluation of the curriculum.[22] Many of the standard operating procedures detailed in FBISD's curriculum management plan were referred to by the audit team to assess whether current practices align to documented procedures.

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[22] FBISD Curriculum Management Plan, 2019.

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In addition to the curriculum management plan, the District also has a comprehensive PK-12 Literacy Plan to articulate "how the district will cultivate and strengthen literacy skills for all students in Fort Bend ISD through building a shared knowledge base and vision for implementation of the literacy curriculum over a multiple year period"[23] and a PK-12 Math Plan for math instruction and professional learning for teachers in Fort Bend ISD that supports the implementation of the written curriculum through the components of a student centered math classroom in all grade levels.

Written Curriculum

The written curriculum articulates 'what' to teach. It outlines the standards, big ideas, essential questions, and learning progressions for each content area. All grade levels and courses in FBISD include specific subject-area curriculum, which is stored digitally in *Schoology*, the District's learning management system (LMS).

Curriculum Development, Review, and Revision

In July 2013, FBISD participated in a curriculum management audit conducted by the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA). That audit produced nine recommendations to address deficiencies related to the District's written, taught, and tested curriculum, as well as the alignment of resources to district priorities. Although many of those recommendations were addressed in subsequent years (e.g., updated board policies, reorganized the department, revised job descriptions, created curriculum guides), the District's curriculum framework still lacked consistency in organization of its components and alignment across all K-12 areas. In October 2016, FBISD launched a curriculum re-write for all K-12 content areas to transition from the existing curriculum framework to one that supports a student-centered approach to instruction, promotes student ownership of learning, and instills the attributes of the Profile of a Graduate. The revised curriculum, along with a newly purchased LMS (*Schoology*) to house the curriculum and serve as an instructional delivery tool, was launched at the beginning of the 2017-18 school year.

Commendation 6. FBISD has a comprehensive and robust curriculum to support teachers in planning and delivering high-quality instruction.

A quality written curriculum provides direction to teachers through clearly stated learning objectives and specifies prerequisite skills needed for the successful mastery of new objectives. It also aligns learning objectives to instructional resources, instructional strategies, and to the tested curriculum. A quality curriculum ensures consistency among teachers and across campuses, resulting in more predictable learning for all students.

One of the key objectives of the District's curriculum re-write in 2016 was to ensure consistency in organization of its components and alignment across all grade levels and content areas. As such, the

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[23] FBISD PK-12 Literacy Plan, August 2018.

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following standardized curriculum components are present in all content area/course unit maps throughout the PreK-12 curriculum:

- Unit Overview
- Learning Progressions
- Unpacked TEKS
- Integration Focus
- Key Vocabulary
- Teaching Considerations
- Unit Assessments
- Instructional Delivery
- Instructional Delivery Supports
- Re-Engagement
- Resources

The audit team was able to access and review the components of the District's LMS. Figure 29 shows a screenshot of the curriculum components in *OneNote*.

Figure 29. Screenshot of OneNote
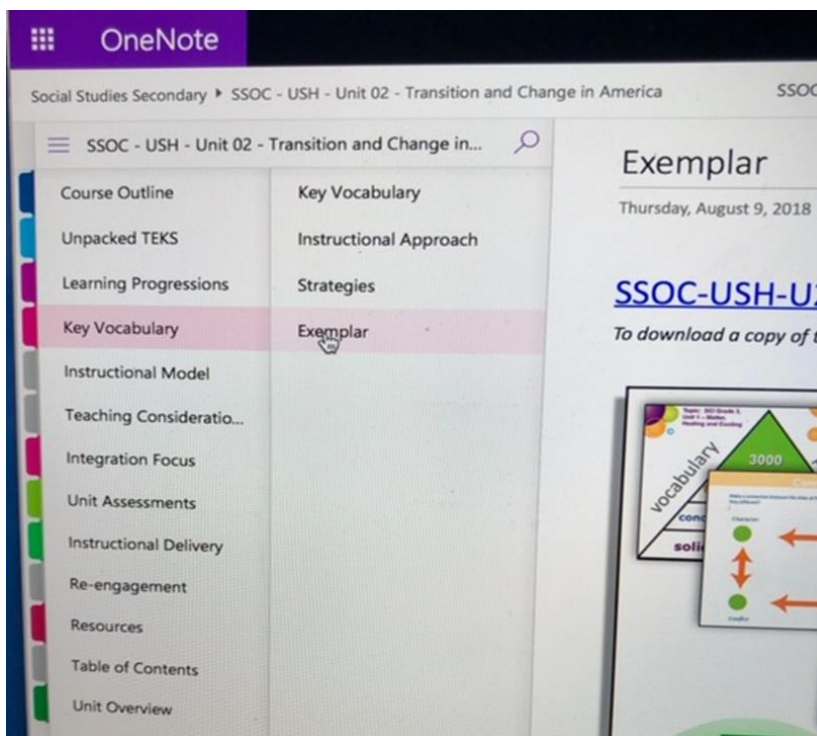
Source: FBISD OneNote web page.

To assess the scope and quality of the District's written curriculum, the audit team examined the curriculum components housed in *Schoology*, as well as documents and resources accessible via links to *OneNote* and *SharePoint*, using the following criteria established by the University of Virginia:[24]

▪ **Foundational Execution** defines, at a minimum, what a district must have in place both in terms of curriculum components and design strategy to support standards-based instruction. With a solid foundation in place, the district can enhance and improve the curriculum over time.

▪ **Core Execution** builds on the foundation by adding additional curriculum components such as aligned instructional resources, units of instruction based on a solid design, such as backwards planning, differentiation strategies, sample formative assessments and exemplars of student work.

▪ **Deep Execution** is more difficult to achieve and is reflective of an advanced district response to providing teachers with a rigorous curriculum with all of the resources necessary to plan and deliver high-quality instruction. This level includes components such as cross-curricular connections, technology integration, enrichment and re-teaching strategies and a design process that provides for a structured annual review that includes opportunities for stakeholder input.

As shown in Table 18, the audit team determined that FBISD's written curriculum meets, and in some areas exceeds, nearly all of the criteria for deep execution of its curriculum development strategy.

Table 18. Assessment of District K-12 Curriculum Components Identified at Foundational, Core, and Deep Execution Levels

Execution Level	Reading/ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
Foundational Execution				
Curriculum team with specific meeting dates	√	√	√	√
Curriculum rationale developed and communicated to stakeholders	√	√	√	√
Clear expectations for implementation that have been communicated and monitored	√	√	√	√
State standards arranged in sequential order indicating suggested time for teaching, assessing, analyzing results and re-teaching	√	√	√	√
Vertical alignment documents at least one grade level above and below	√	√	√	√
Standards grouped, classified and bundled conceptually	√	√	√	√
Priority content, process, and if included, value standards identified	√	√	√	√

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[24] The University of Virginia has a nationally renowned school turnaround program that partners with school district leadership teams to address the district conditions, systems, and processes essential for schools to thrive and improve.

Execution Level	Reading/ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
Gap analysis protocol competed to ensure all standards are included	√	√	√	√
Documents are accessible and user-friendly	√	√	√	√
Core Execution				
Grade-level text resources are identified and includes suggestions for differentiated needs	√	√	√	√
Essential Questions/Understandings identified	√	√	√	√
Academic vocabulary included	√	√	√	√
Common error and misconceptions identified	√	√	√	√
Sample formative assessment questions, performance tasks and grading rubrics	√	√	√	√
Internal and external resources aligned to district curriculum and state standards identified	√	√	√	√
Strategies for ELL, advanced and special needs students included	√	√	√	√
Example exemplar lessons and student work	UD	UD	UD	UD
Appropriate text level resources identified	√	√	√	√
Deep Execution				
Technology integration lessons/activities included or linked to each standard	√	√	√	√
Enrichment and re-teaching resources identified and updated regularly	√	√	√	√
Suggested instructional strategies for differentiation identified for each standard	√	√	√	√
Cross-curricular connections and suggestions for implementing included	√	√	√	√
Exemplars, or ideal student responses to performance tasks included	UD	UD	UD	UD
Strategies and suggested resources that support culturally responsive pedagogy	X	X	X	X
Written protocol for annual review and update that includes data-based feedback and opportunities for stakeholder input	√	√	√	√

Source: University of Virginia School Transformation Program, 2019.

Table Note: *√ indicates that the component is addressed; "UD" indicates the component is Under Development and has been identified by the district as a priority in the curriculum revision cycle; and, "X" indicates that the component is missing.

In addition to the components addressed above, FBISD exceeds the deep execution criteria by several additional best practice components that support the District's goal of student ownership of learning and guides teachers in the delivery of best-practice instruction.

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Specifically:

- **Instructional Model** – Includes an overview of FBISD's preferred instructional model for the given content area. Each model supports best practices for tiered instructional delivery, which supports teachers in whole group, small group, and one-on-one instruction with students.

- **Unit Assessments** – Provides an overview of the formative assessment cycle as well as specific examples of varied assessment aligned to the TEKS for the unit's content.

- **Instructional Delivery** – Includes exemplars of learning intentions and success criteria aligned to the unit's priority standards. The learning intentions are clear statements that explicitly state what students are going to learn and why the learning is important. Success criteria, or "look-fors", help students be clear about what the criteria is for assessing their work.

- **Re-Engagement** – Includes common student misconceptions and areas of difficulty within the unit's core concepts as well as suggestions for how to re-teach/re-engage students who are struggling. The District pacing guide has built-in time for teachers to re-engage students at the end of each unit before moving to the next unit of instruction. This need for extra time is often overlooked in district pacing guides and is a real plus in the curriculum resources.

- **Resources** – While resources are addressed at the deep execution level, FBISD has also detailed the resources to address unit content for whole group, small group and on-on-one instruction. Additionally, the resources section is tiered to provide teachers with multiple resources to address student needs in Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 instruction.

On Gibson's survey of principals, 96 percent of respondents agreed/strongly agreed that their teachers have access to the instructional resources they need to support their instruction. Agreement rates were lower for responding teachers, however, and varied depending on the content area (Figure 30).

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Figure 30. Teacher Survey – Percent Agreement (Agree/Strongly Agree), by Content Area and Years Teaching Experience, Instructional Resources

District provides the instructional resources I need to support my instruction.
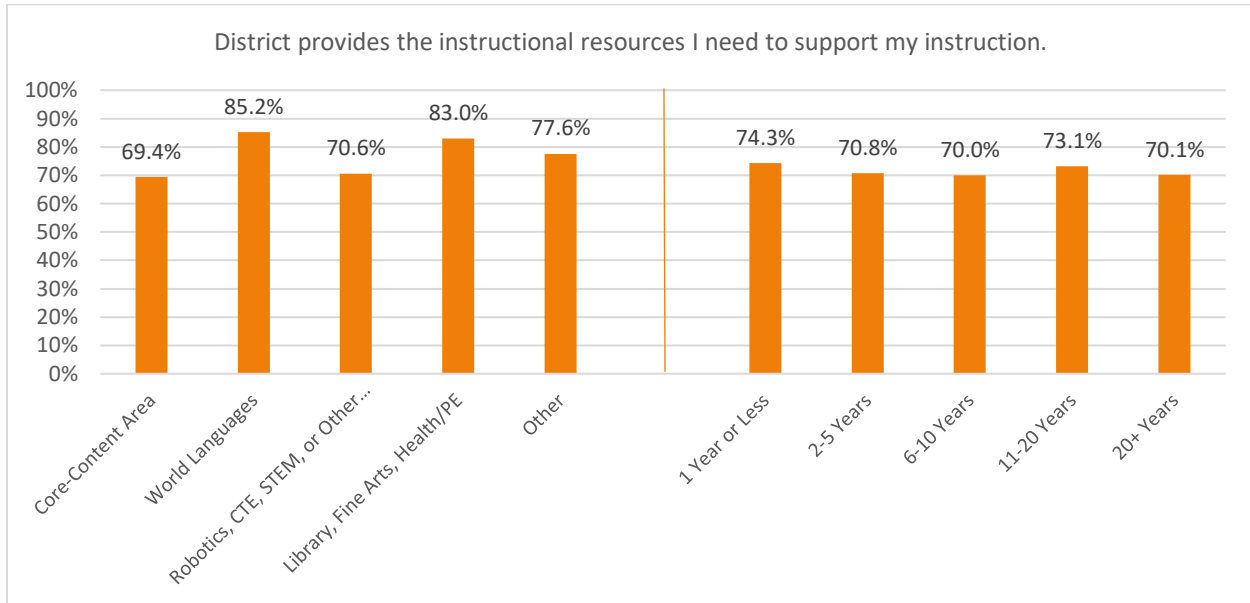
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

Recommendation 5. Enhance the District's curriculum with the addition of strategies and suggested resources to support culturally responsive teaching in alignment with SEL priorities.

Strategies and suggested resources that support culturally responsive teaching was the only area identified as a gap in the district's curriculum. This is important given FBISD's diverse student population. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning and is grounded in teachers' displaying cultural competence: skill at teaching in a cross-cultural or multicultural setting. The ability to provide culturally responsive teaching involves an interplay between professional learning and curriculum content (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Teachers providing culturally relevant instruction encourage each student to relate course content to his or her cultural context. Students of color and culturally and linguistically diverse students benefit most from teachers with a rich repertoire of culturally responsive teaching strategies and recent research supports embedding culturally responsive instruction in the comprehensive curriculum yields positive learning outcomes for many minority students (Butler, 2019).

Management Response: *Although Management agrees with the recommendation, we would also like to point out that currently FBISD is working on integration of learner dispositions into the curriculum to align with the profile of a graduate attributes in order to assist teachers with planning learner experiences that support socioemotional development (SEL).*
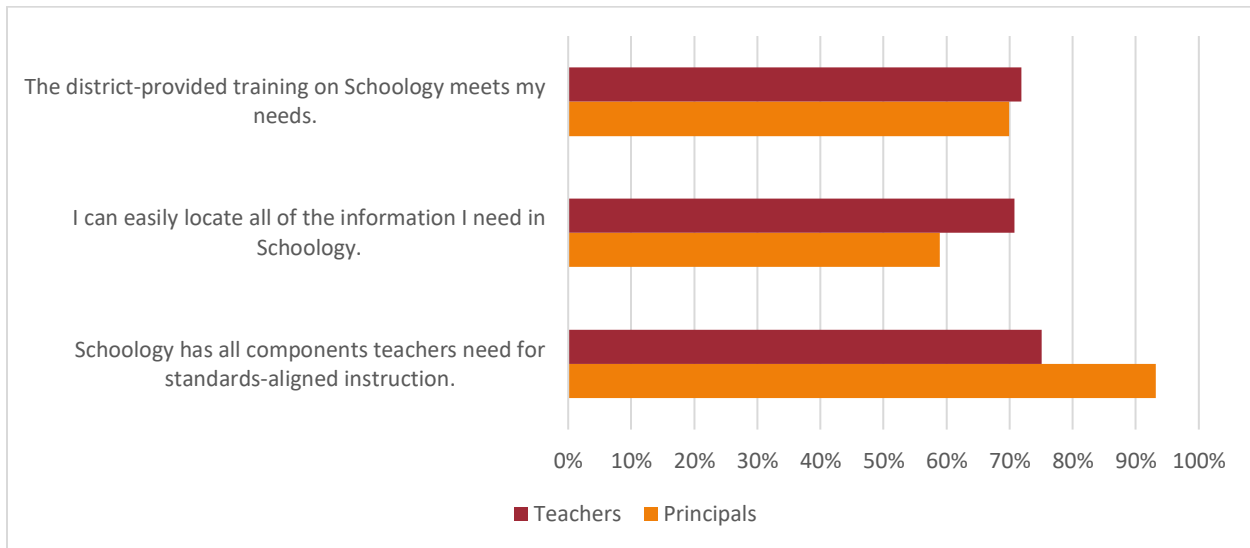
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Finding 5. Teachers may not be accessing all of the components of the District's written curriculum at the level expected.

Schoology serves as the platform and warehouse for the District's curriculum. Each curriculum component has a tab that links teachers into *OneNote* for the written curriculum. *Schoology* is intended to be used as a classroom instructional tool, a parent communication tool, and support professional learning delivery for teachers and leaders. While the District has invested significant time and effort to ensure that *Schoology* and *OneNote* contain all of the curriculum components to support teachers in planning and delivering instruction, feedback from both principals and teachers suggests that they may not be accessing all of the resources provided.

Figure 31 shows the percent of teachers and principals that responded to Gibson's survey that agreed/strongly agreed with positive statements about *Schoology*. While 75.1 percent of teachers and 93.2 percent of principals agreed that *Schoology* contains all of the components teachers need for standards-aligned instruction, a lower percentage of teachers (70.8%) and principals (58.9%) report being able to easily locate the information they need.

Figure 31. Principal and Teacher Surveys – Percent Agreement (Agree/Strongly Agree), Schoology

Source: Gibson Principal and Teacher Surveys.

While the survey feedback points to a need for additional training in *Schoology*, qualitative feedback provided to the audit team during interviews and focus groups also suggests that many teachers may not be consuming the information in *Schoology* in the way that was intended by the curriculum development team. For example, district curriculum surveys, as well as principal and teacher feedback, indicate that teachers tend to focus on the unit overview and then go directly to the resources list housed in *Schoology* to design their instruction, rather than taking the time for deeper analysis and planning using the more detailed documents in *OneNote*. Potential barriers cited by staff include the limited planning time for teachers, a lack of understanding on how best to use the more detailed components of the curriculum, and/or the ease of navigation between *Schoology* and *OneNote*. Further, when the District's instructional

leaders were asked about challenges to deep curriculum implementation, they consistently referenced the time it takes for teachers to become fluid navigating the system and understanding all of the curriculum components, particularly those that are focused on planning instruction (that should be accessed during PLC meetings).

FBISD has taken steps to address these challenges by providing more in-depth professional development for Professional Learning Leads (PLLs) and Instructional Coaches at the elementary level, and Teacher Cadres at the secondary level. As these individuals deepen their understanding of the curriculum, they are better able to facilitate instructional planning in their respective PLC meetings. In addition, there are professional learning sessions designed specifically to address the use of the District's curriculum as a component of the new teacher induction program, as well as ongoing professional learning for teachers and administrators to deepen their understanding and use of the District curriculum. (Professional learning is discussed further in *Chapter 5 – Professional Learning*.)

Recommendation 6. Include scaffolded, application-based performance tasks in the curriculum-focused professional learning sessions.

FBISD should design a series of progressive performance tasks that require teachers to use the various components of the curriculum system to demonstrate an acceptable level of proficiency. Tasks should be designed to the appropriate level of teacher experience and include rubric-based standards of proficiency. For example, FBISD could develop standards for the level of use and proficiency that should be reasonably expected for a first-year teacher in their first semester as they plan a unit of instruction, as well as how those expectations might differ for teachers with two to five years of teaching experience. Expectations could also be developed for instructional coaches or other teacher leaders expected to facilitate and support PLC meetings focused on planning instruction. Extended performance tasks should be designed for responding to assessments of student learning that would drive teachers into the re-engagement strategies or other advanced components of the curriculum system.

Designing opportunities to apply learning with an expectation for a given level of proficiency should strengthen a deeper understanding of the District's curriculum and move the impact of the professional learning from "I showed them how" to "they demonstrated they can do it." Data from the performance tasks would also serve to inform improvements that may need to be made to the professional learning sessions themselves to ensure that the learning transfers into practice.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. For 2020 summer, learning some classes will include application-based performance tasks. FBISD will use this as a pilot prior to developing the application-based performance tasks that are recommended. In the long term, beginning in 2021, these tasks will also be included in mentorship programming and where applicable, as part of job embedded experiences.*

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Commendation 7. FBISD's processes for developing, reviewing, and revising the curriculum are well-defined and include input from many stakeholders.

Curriculum development in FBISD is an iterative, on-going and cyclical process in which the curriculum is repeatedly developed, used, refined and improved based on ever-changing student needs, performance data, and subject area standards. The curriculum development and/or revision processes are initiated in one of four ways: 1) TEA revises the TEKS curriculum standards, 2) a new course is approved by the District, 3) the District's annual review process identifies the need for a revision, and/or 4) there is a shift in district instructional priorities (as described previously with the District's comprehensive re-write of the curriculum).

Cross-functional curriculum development teams in FBISD are comprised of leaders, teachers, and content area experts within the Division of Teaching and Learning and Student Support Services who collaborate to write, review and revise curriculum units of instruction. Foundational documents are available to curriculum writers to guide the curriculum development and revision process and to ensure alignment with the TEKS. Importantly, decisions about improvements and updates to the curriculum are guided by feedback from key stakeholders through an annual K-12 curriculum survey, Curriculum Feedback Protocols, and the *Let's Talk* platform, an internal messaging platform within *Schoology*.

Taught Curriculum

The taught curriculum is the content knowledge, skills, attitudes, and processes or strategies that a teacher uses to deliver instruction to students. This section focuses on the components of the curriculum that assist teachers in their instructional planning and delivery: instructional models, unit and lesson planning, blended learning, and instructional resources.

Instructional Models

Instructional Models are guidelines or sets of strategies on which the approaches to teaching by instructors are based. Effective instructional models are based on learning theories, which describe the ways that theorists believe people learn new ideas and concepts (Driscoll and Carliner, 2005).

Commendation 8. FBISD has identified preferred instructional models for the delivery of instruction for each of the four core content areas.

While most school districts articulate a preferred instructional model, it is unusual and exceptional that FBISD has identified a preferred instructional model for the different content areas: Reading/Writing Workshop (ELA), Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract (Mathematics), 5-E (Science), and inquiry-based approach with a focus on critical thinking skills (Social Studies). Each instructional model supports best practices for tiered instructional delivery, which supports teachers in whole group, small group, and one-on-one instruction with students. Distinct, research-based instructional models, which interact fluidly with the instructional delivery supports ground all content areas. The curriculum outlines the instructional delivery expectations so that teachers effectively utilize their content-specific instructional model. Board Policy EA

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(LOCAL) is clear, however, that the Board's intent is for teachers to have the autonomy to determine the pedagogy they will employ to deliver instruction in congruence with the District's curriculum to ensure student mastery.

Feedback from principals and teachers responding to Gibson's survey suggest that there is a high degree of fidelity across the district with respect to the implementation of the District's preferred instructional models. Nearly 95 percent of principals reported that their teachers typically follow the District's preferred instructional model for their content area, while a slightly lower percentage (74.2%) of teachers across all content areas and years of teaching experience agreed/strongly agreed that the District's prescribed instructional model has helped them improve teaching in their content area. Figure 32 shows the distribution of teacher responses across content areas and teacher experience levels.

Figure 32. Teacher Survey – Percent Agreement by Content Area and Years Teaching Experience, Instructional Models
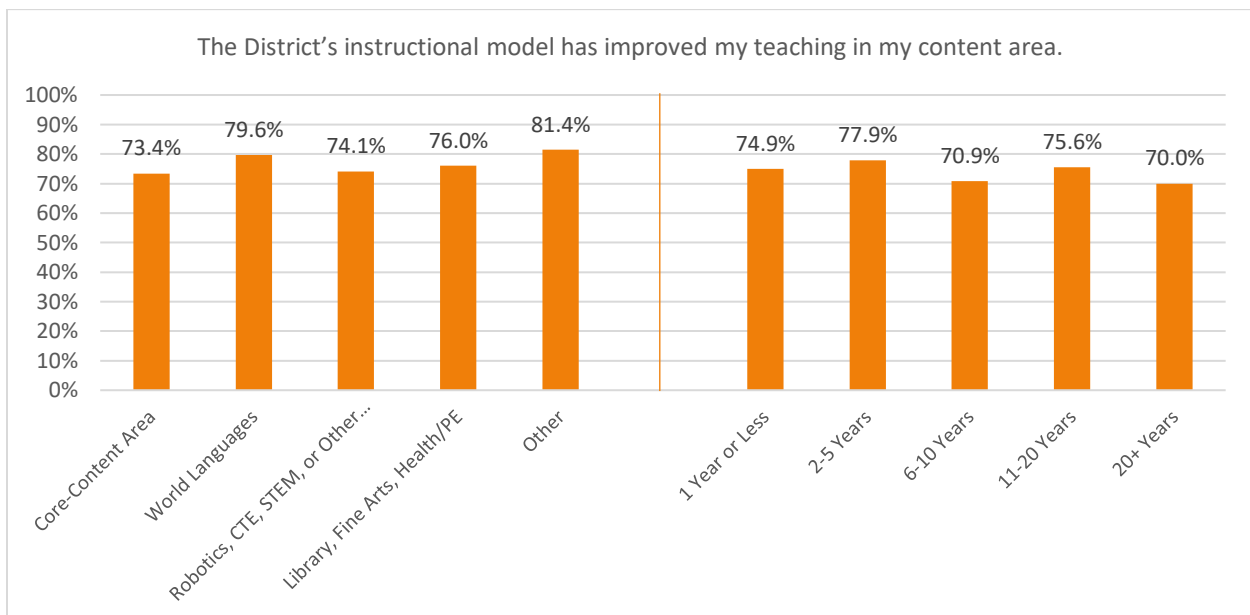
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

Both responding principals (74.7%) and teachers (76.4%) agreed/strongly agreed that the professional learning that teachers receive is sufficient and supports teacher effectiveness implementing their content area instructional model.

Unit and Lesson Planning

A lesson plan is a step-by-step guide that outlines the teacher's objectives for what students will accomplish during the course of the lesson and how they will learn it. Creating a lesson plan involves setting goals, developing activities, and determining what resources will be used. A unit plan consists of concepts and learning goals that are taught over a period of time; a unit of instruction can include several lessons.

As previously mentioned, FBISD has identified a best-practice instructional model for each of the core content areas as well as most elective areas. Each of the core content areas has a model-aligned unit planning protocols located in *Schoology* to guide the teacher planning process. Each unit plan in *Schoology* has a series of tabs that directs the teacher to an additional resource, *Unit Notebook,* that provides detailed information for each section of the unit plan. A particular strength of the unit plan is the tab for *Re-Engagement* that offers suggested strategies for re-teaching concepts that students did not master with first-time teaching. FBISD's PLC Concept Planning Protocol provides a roadmap for a deep analysis of the unit plan and translation of the unit plan into a weekly/daily lesson plan.

One exceptional feature of the PLC Concept Planning Protocol is the *Next Steps for Educator* component that asks teachers to:

- Identify the professional learning the team or individual teacher will engage in to increase their understanding of the instructional practices to deliver or facilitate the learning experiences.

- Develop daily lesson plans individually or collectively to target individual and classroom learning needs.

The District should also be commended for aligning the primary instructional resources, such as texts and reading programs, with the units of instruction. This is particularly helpful for teachers teaching multiple content areas. The pacing guide also provides time in the calendar for re-teach before moving on to the next unit of instruction.

Finding 6. Fewer than half of all principals regularly review and provide feedback on teacher's unit plans.

Principal and administrator engagement in the PLC meetings that address unit planning is an excellent practice to better understand the current understanding and potential learning needs of their teachers. Research suggests that principal feedback on unit plans is a more effective strategy for improving teacher performance than collecting and attempting to provide feedback on weekly/daily lesson plans.[25] Unit plans are richer and deeper than daily lesson plans, form the foundation for lesson planning and an effective review can head off misconceptions before they occur and support teacher learning needs to necessary to effectively deliver the instructional goals of the unit plan.

On the principal survey administered by Gibson, 86.8 percent of responding principals reported that they require teachers to develop unit plans, but a much lower percentage of principals reported that they or their administrator always review teacher's unit plans (47.4%), or provide feedback on them (34.7%). Figure 33 shows the variation in responses by principal's years of experience and school level. Principals with the most years of experience and middle school principals tended to review or provide feedback on unit plans with the lowest rates of frequency.

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[25] Kim Marshall, *Rethinking Teacher Supervision and Evaluation (2013).*

Figure 33. Principal Survey – Percent Agreement (Most of the Time/Always), by Principal Years of Experience and School Level, Unit Plans
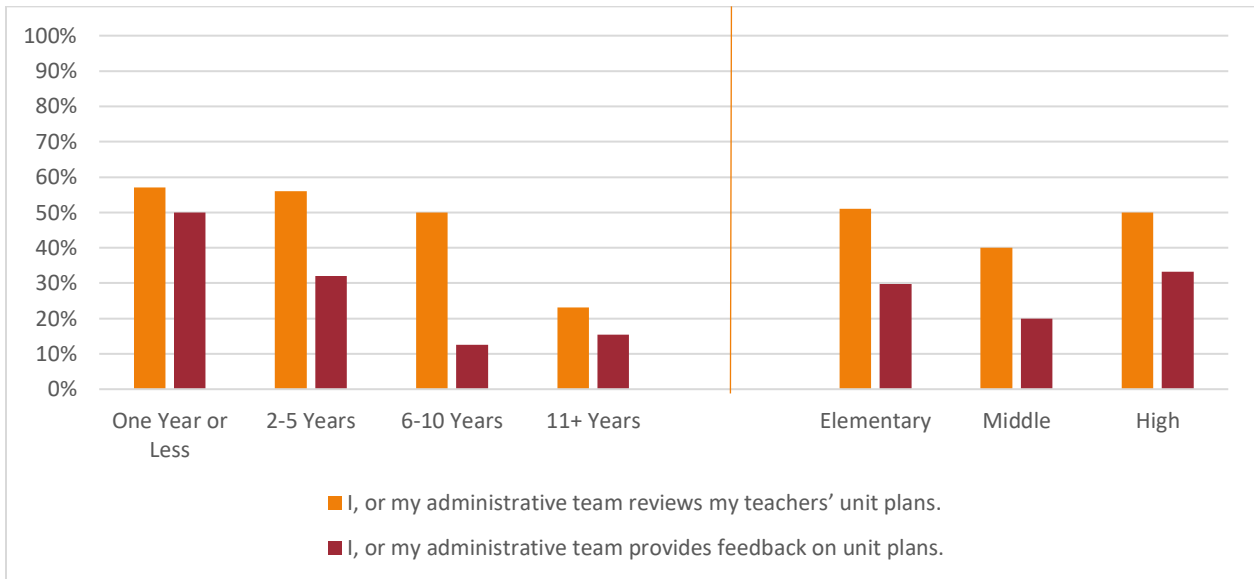
Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

On the teacher survey administered by Gibson, 59.7 percent of responding teachers reported that their principal requires them to develop unit plans. Nearly 65 percent of teachers responded that they use a unit plan template when developing a unit of instruction, 59.5 percent of teachers responded that they develop unit plans in collaboration with their PLC, and just 29.5 percent of teachers reported that their principal/campus administrator provides feedback on their unit plans.

Recommendation 7. Codify expectations for campus leaders to review unit plans and provide timely and meaningful feedback during teacher PLCs.

Unit planning provides a scaffold to weekly lesson planning and is a best practice for planning instruction. Unit planning ensures that teachers have the "big picture" of what they are trying to accomplish before they dive into the details of planning and delivering daily lessons. Good unit planning leads to good lesson planning, and principal involvement in teacher's unit planning is a high-yield investment of time. Also, the task of explicitly identifying teacher learning needs to ensure they have the skills necessary to successfully teach the unit is a best practice if consistently addressed by campus leadership either through attending planning PLC meetings or reviewing and providing feedback on unit plans. FBISD should set the expectation that principals and/or other campus administrators routinely review the unit plans as they are developed during PLCs.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. As part of summer 2020 focus on learning professional development for administrators, campus leaders will engage in specific learning experiences that articulate both the components of lesson planning and criteria for evaluating and providing feedback on unit plans.*

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Finding 7. Teacher lesson plans are missing some essential components.

Regardless of format, effective lesson plans generally contain the following *minimum* components (Stout, Kachur, & Edwards, 2010):

- **Introductory matter** – Information such as the grade level of the students, content area, name of the unit of which the lesson is a part, the standards being addressed or other information that communicates "where" in the curriculum the teacher is.

- **Instructional objective** – What is to be learned?

- **Prerequisites** – What must the student already know or be able to do in order to be successful with the lesson?

- **Instructional procedures** – What will the teacher do to teach the lesson, including how the lesson will be introduced, activities and instructional strategies, and how the lesson will be closed?

- **Materials and equipment** – What materials and/or equipment are needed by the teacher and students to complete the lesson?

- **Assessment/evaluation** – How will the teacher determine the extent to which the students have attained the instructional objective?

- **Differentiation strategies** – How will teachers modify instruction to meet the needs of English Language Learners, gifted and/or students with disabilities?

- **Post-lesson reflection** – What went well? What needs to be adjusted to improve the lesson?

Additional components may include information such as use of instructional technology and/or blended learning activities, and more detail about the lesson itself such as opening and closing activities.

The audit team requested sample lesson plans for ELA and Mathematics from each of the nine schools that were visited. All lesson plans reviewed by the audit team provided the level of specificity that would support a principal's evaluation of whether a teacher is on pace in the District's curriculum and whether or not the lesson reflects the instructional model for the observed content area.

The District does not provide a specific lesson plan template for each content area that can be used by teachers, and in most cases, teachers are using a version of the PLC Concept Planning Protocol and/or the instructional model template to develop daily lesson plans. During site visits to schools, the audit team found that principals did not prescribe a particular format or template for lesson plans but typically asked for certain components and provided teachers with flexibility in determining the format and level of detail they need to prepare their lessons. Table 19 provides a summary the audit team's assessment of the lesson plans reviewed relative to the components of an effective lesson plan referenced above.

Table 19. Summary of Gibson's Lesson Plan Assessment

Criteria	ES ELA (n=4)	SSS ELA (n=5)	ES Math (n=4)	SS Math (n=5)
Introductory Matter	80%	100%	80%	100%
Instructional Objective	80%	100%	80%	100%
Prerequisites	0%	0%	0%	0%
Instructional Procedures	80%	100%	80%	80%
Differentiation	40%	40%	60%	60%
Materials and Equipment	80%	100%	80%	80%
Assessment and Evaluation	60%	100%	80%	100%
Teacher Reflection	0%	0%	20%	20%

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

In response to the survey, nearly all (96.1%) principals reported that they require teachers to develop weekly lesson plans, and just over half (55.4%) of principals require teachers to utilize a lesson plan template. Figure 34 illustrates the variation in response rates by principal experience and school level. These response rates mirrored the principal responses when asked similar questions about unit plans (see previous Finding 6).

Figure 34. Principal Survey – Percent Agreement (Agree/Strongly Agree), by Principal Years of Experience and School Level, Lesson Plans
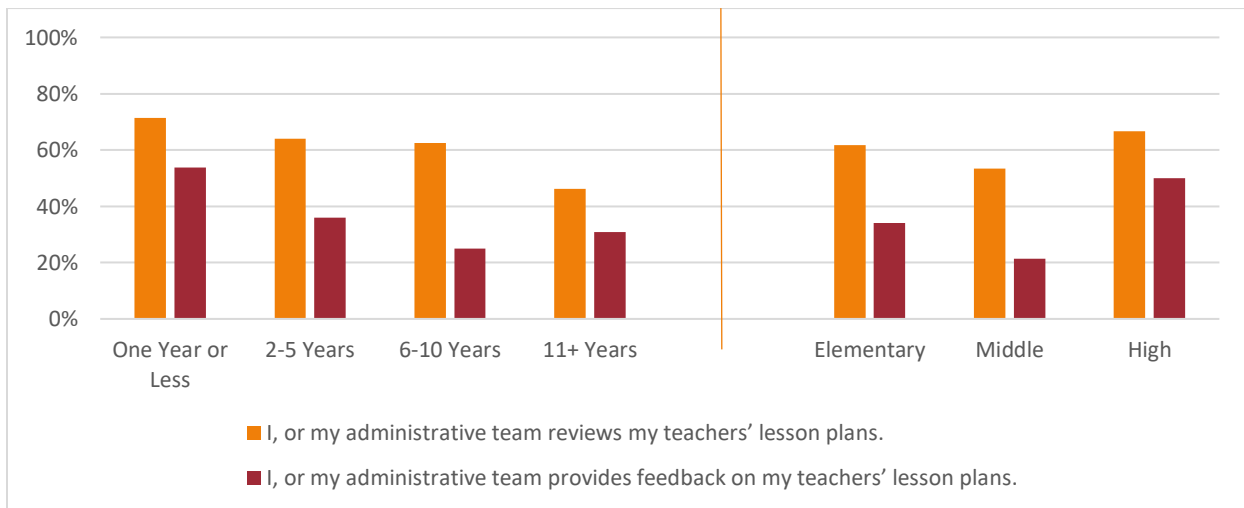
Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

On the teacher survey administered by Gibson, 92.3 percent of teachers reported that their principal requires them to develop weekly lesson plans, while just 32.9 percent of teachers reported that their principal/campus administrator provides feedback on their lesson plans.

Recommendation 8. Develop guidelines for lesson plans that include all essential components.

FBISD does not necessarily need to prescribe a standardized format for lesson plans, however they should require that the eight essential components listed above be addressed. This will ensure that lesson plans are robust and effective in achieving learning objectives. Of particular note is the need to include prerequisite skills for students to succeed in the week's instruction, differentiation strategies, and an opportunity for reflection at the end of the week's lesson cycle based on analysis of assessments of student learning. Similar to unit plans, the District should also encourage principals to review and provide feedback on lesson plans whenever possible. This is particularly important for novice teachers, struggling teachers, and/or teacher teams that are not well-established.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. Though the district does not currently have a required or standardized lesson plan format, the district will message and support integration of the eight essential components of strong lesson planning. Administrators will receive training on these components, including how the curriculum supports integration in summer 2020.*

Instructional Materials

Instructional materials and resources refer to textbooks, library acquisitions, supplemental materials for classroom use, and any other instructional materials, including electronic resources, used for formal or informal teaching and learning purposes. Categories of resources include district-adopted resources, district supplemental resources, and campus-identified resources. The following Board policies address the acquisition, management and support of instructional resources in FBISD:

- *Policy EFA (LOCAL) Instructional Resources – Instructional Materials* outlines the Board's expectations to provide a wide range of instructional resources for both students and staff to deliver, support, enrich and assist in implementing the District's educational program. This policy also outlines criteria for selecting instructional resources and provides guidance with respect to any materials that address controversial issues and the process for parents or staff to formally challenge their use.

- *Policy EFAA (LOCAL) Instructional Materials Selection and Adoption* requires that the District establish an instructional materials allotment team to select instructional materials and equipment, certify that all selected resources cover the essential knowledge and skills as required by law, and that the Board must approve all selections and ratify the District's certification of all instructional materials.

Commendation 9. FBISD has well-defined processes for requesting, approving, procuring, and retiring instructional materials and supplemental resources to support the District's curriculum.

The Director of Instructional Resources within the Department of Teaching and Learning is responsible for the procurement, acquisition, renewal, management, and implementation of instructional resources in FBISD to include print and/or digital materials and online learning programs that support teaching and

learning. She is supported in this role by an On-line Learning Coordinator and an Instructional Materials Coordinator.

The Instructional Resources Department identifies materials that supports the written curriculum and partners with campuses in reviewing resources requested at the campus level. The Department also partners with the Information Technology Division to manage the device selection and support for both teacher and student devices. Commendably, all of the district-provided resources are integrated through *Schoology* (as described previously). The Instructional Resources Department facilitates the review of the proclamation, department, and campus resource requests by applying three frameworks:[26]

- **Instructional indicators** ensure TEKS alignment, FBISD curriculum alignment, support of program-specific models, differentiation, and flexibility of format.

- **Assessment indicators** ensure alignment to subject area TEKS, FBISD assessment philosophy, item format and validity, rubrics and answer keys with analysis, and feedback to the user.

- **Technical indicators** ensure compatibility with *Schoology*, expectations for blended and online learning, user and data security, access protocols, and technical support requirements.

A list of approved instructional resources, applications and web tools is maintained and circulated to campuses and staff. The Department also has a documented resource deselection process and checklist designed to facilitate decision-making with regard to continuing or retiring district instructional resources. Having clearly-defined systems and processes for requesting, approving, procuring and retiring instructional materials and resources mitigates the proliferation of unaligned and unsupported resources across the district, and helps to ensure good stewardship of the district's financial resources.

Technology and Blended Learning

The District's Profile of a Graduate states that students will graduate "proficient with technology", and Goal 3 of FBISD's strategic plan states that "Fort bend ISD will provide an inclusive collaborative and fluid learning environment with opportunities for both risk-taking and success." To achieve this goal, the first objective states that "FBISD will use innovative teaching strategies with the integration of technology to provide opportunities for blended and project-based learning experiences." Implementing and expanding blended learning practices is clearly one of the District's priorities and is a Progression of Practice focus area.

Commendation 10. FBISD's Educational Technology Plan provides a roadmap and a measured approach to increasing technology resources and access, and ensuring support systems and processes are in place for both devices and staff.

FBISD's Educational Technology Master Plan (October 2018) articulates the District's strategies for accomplishing its vision, which includes expanding and upgrading the wireless infrastructure across

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[26] FBISD Curriculum Management Plan, 2019.

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campuses; launching the LMS (*Schoology*); initiating the teacher EQUIP to Empower technology cadre and a professional learning plan to support technology integration and blended learning models; adopting a Universal Access strategy to ensure all teachers and students have access to technology regardless of their location, socioeconomic status, or disability (e.g., campus-based lending libraries, expanded curriculum and programming); and, standardizing the classroom configuration through the technology toolkit device deployment initiative. Many of these strategies are being (or have been) implemented gradually through pilot projects, which has allowed time for evaluation and adjustment before scaling the initiative district-wide. As an example, the technology toolkit device deployment initiative is being rolled-out in two phases—half of the campuses were selected for the Year 1 (2019-20) deployment, and the other half of campuses were selected for the Year 2 (2020-21) deployment. The Teaching and Learning Division and the Information Technology Division worked collaboratively to assess campus and teacher readiness using a rubric in order to determine which campuses would participate in each phase of the implementation. This measured approach helps to ensure that support systems and processes are in place for both the devices and the teachers utilizing them.

Finding 8. The instructional coaching model for the blended learning initiative is in the early stages of implementation.

Implementation of the District's blended learning initiative is in the early stages of implementation. During the 2017-18 school year, 16 campuses participated in the Blended Learning implementation pilot. In 2018-19, the EQUIP to Empower technology teacher cadre was initiated, and in 2019-20, Phase 1 of the technology toolkit device deployment initiative and the Blended Learning Progression of Practice framework were initiated. Figure 35 below highlights the key milestones for the Blended Learning Progression of Practice.

Figure 35. Blended Learning Progression of Practice Implementation Milestones

		2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Blended Learning Milestone	Develop Schoology Infrastructure	Develop							
	Pilot Campuses		Pilot						
	Launch EQUIP Cadre			Launch					
	Device Deployment				Phase 1	Phase 2			
	Implement Blended Learning Progression of Practice				Use Progression of Practice for Continuous Learning				
% Campuses ≥Developing on CST Data					(BM)				
% Campuses reporting EMPOWERED on Blended Learning Progression					*				

Source: FBISD.

On Gibson's survey, 63.5 percent of principals reported that their teachers are effective at providing blended learning opportunities, and 52.2 percent of teachers reported that they always provide blended learning opportunities for their students. Figure 36 shows how teacher responses varied by content area and years teaching experience. Not surprising, more than 80 percent of STEM, Robotics/Other Elective teachers always incorporate blended learning experiences into their instruction; less than half of all other teachers (excluding World Languages) do. Also interesting is the fact that teachers with fewer years of experience reported providing blended learning opportunities at higher rates than their more experienced colleagues.

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Figure 36. Teacher Survey – Percent Agreement (Most of the Time/Always), by Content Area and Years Teaching Experience, Blended Learning

I provide blended learning opportunities for my students.
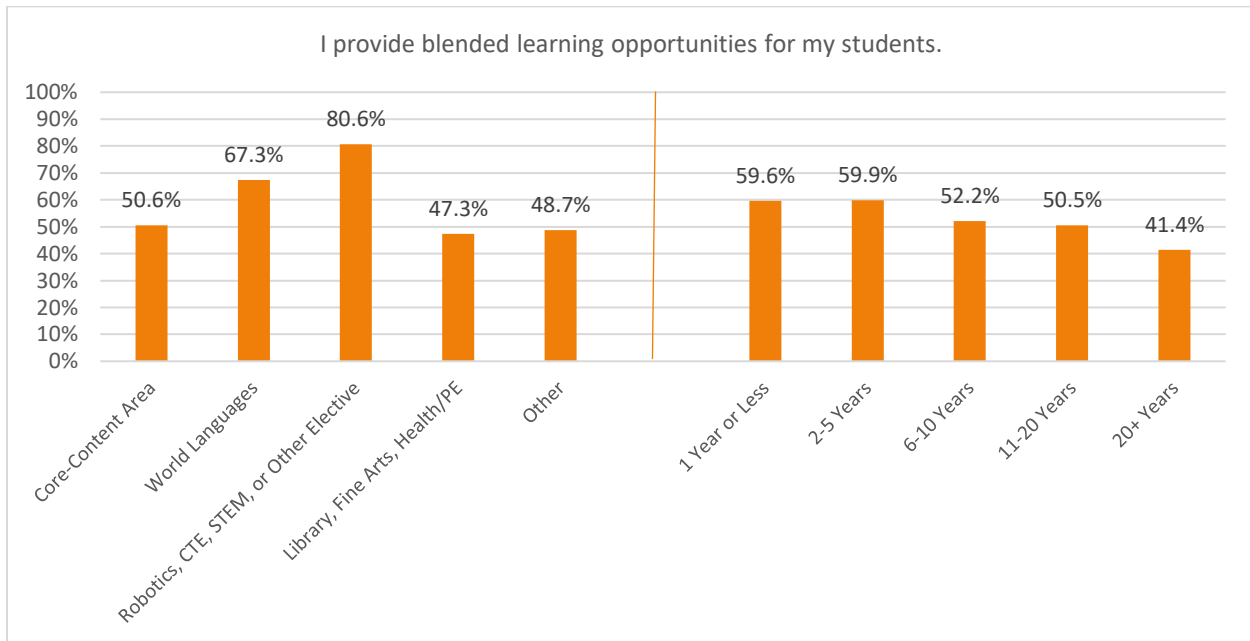
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

The teacher support structure for blended learning at the campus level includes members of the EQUIP to Empower technology teacher cadre and Technology Integration Champions (TICs). (Teacher cadres and TICs are discussed further in *Chapter 5 – Professional Learning*.) On Gibson's survey, 65.8 percent of teachers reported that the District-provided professional learning related to blended learning meets their needs.

Recommendation 9. Ensure campus-based teacher leaders and professional learning provide differentiated support to teachers implementing blended learning practices.

On-going efforts to support teachers in their use of technology and blended learning practices should be differentiated, as teachers in different content areas or years of experience have different learning needs. Further, the District should ensure that campus-based teacher leaders (teacher cadre teachers and TICs) are able to effectively support teachers in their role. This includes reduced teaching loads for PLLs and TICs at the elementary level, as well as ensuring that demonstration classrooms are established and that teachers have time in their schedules to participate in guided observations (see *Recommendation 13* in *Chapter 5 – Professional Learning*).

Management Response: *Management disagrees with the recommendation. The role of the PLL and TIC were created to support the development of lab classrooms on campuses that can be used for guided observations. These roles are not intended to serve as instructional coaches. FBISD has a long-term plan to integrate the instructional coach role into each campus.*

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Assessed Curriculum

The assessed curriculum references the knowledge and skills for which teachers monitor student progress. Assessments administered throughout the school year include a variety of both formative and summative measures of learning.[27]

In August 2017, FBISD underwent an independent Testing Audit to support on-going efforts to improve the District's testing program. The audit resulted in 10 recommendations which addressed deficiencies related to the percent of time teachers were focused on STAAR testing, the District's grading policy and practices, teacher's ability to analyze and interpret test results, and teacher morale. In collaboration with campus leaders, the District prioritized the following three recommendations:

- Address the misuse of STAAR data and define its intended purpose.
- Review and redefine the local assessment framework.
- Adjust the grading policy and grading regulations.

In May 2019, *Policy EK (Local) Testing Programs* was updated to articulate the Board's assessment philosophy and require the District to implement a student-centered assessment system which promotes student ownership of learning. This policy requires that the assessment system provide appropriate and timely feedback to students about progress toward proficiency in the District curriculum and encourage students to engage in the teacher-facilitated formative assessment cycle.

The District's assessment framework includes three types of assessments: diagnostic assessments, formative assessments, and state/national assessments. A brief overview of each type of assessment is presented below:[28]

- **Diagnostic Assessments** – In general, universal screeners are used to help teachers identify students who may be at risk academically. FBISD utilizes a universal screener, Renaissance 360 (Ren 360), to provide teachers with preliminary student data in the areas or reading, math and early literacy. Ren 360 is administered three times per year to all FBISD students in Grades K-5 in math and reading. Students in Grades K-3 also complete the in Ren 360 early literacy universal screener. Students in Grades 6-10 who do not achieve the "Approaches" performance level on the STAAR assessments are also required to complete the Ren 360 assessment; secondary schools may administer Ren 360 to additional students as needed. FBISD is encouraging the more frequent use of Ren 360 as a formative assessment that is predictive of success on the STAAR state assessments.

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[27] FBISD Curriculum Management Plan.

[28] Fort Bend ISD Curriculum Management Plan, August 2019.

- **Formative Assessments** – Teachers in FBISD utilize a variety of formative assessments to drive instruction and promote student growth. These may include pre-assessments, teacher rubrics, student checklists, common formative assessments (CFAs), and District Learning Assessments.

  o *Common Formative Assessments (CFAs)* – CFAs are assessments that are created collaboratively by a team of teachers responsible for the same grade level or course. In FBISD, teachers are expected to collaboratively develop CFAs through their PLCs to assess student's mastery of one or more TEKS standards for a unit of instruction. Teachers teams analyze student performance on the CFAs, and then collaboratively plan ways to adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students. (PLCs are discussed in more detail in *Chapter 5 – Professional Learning*).

  o *District Learning Assessments* – FBISD is moving away from multiple choice benchmark testing in favor of rubric-based learning assessments that are narrow in focus and aligned to FBISD's curriculum that target critical areas of need. Learning Assessments are designed to determine student learning and growth along learning progressions. Like CFAs, teachers are expected to engage in intentional conversations within their PLC to develop the learning assessments, score the assessments, analyze student work using a protocol, and develop an instructional plan to meet the needs of all students at each learning progression. Learning Assessments are administered two times per year to all students in Grades K-10 in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies. Figure 37 shows the District's Formative Assessment Progression of Practice implementation milestones – the goal is to have 100 percent of campuses using the local assessment framework by 2021-22.

Figure 37. Formative Assessment Progression of Practice Implementation Milestones

		2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Formative Assessment Milestone	Design and Implement Formative Assessment Framework (FAF) (LA/REN/3 P's)	Design	Implement						
	Develop Policy and Regulations [EK(LOCAL), EK-R, EIA-R, EIE, EIC(LOCAL)]			Develop	Implement				
	Discontinue Campus Level Benchmarking					Discontinue			
	FAF Progression of Practice				Use Progression of Practice for Continuous Learning				
	Standards-based Grading			Pilot	Expand	Scale			
% Campuses using Local Assessment Framework					85%	85%	100%		
% Campuses Reporting EMPOWERED on Formative Assessment Framework Progression					*				

Source: FBISD.

- **State and National Assessments** – FBISD administers the two state-mandated assessments: State Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) and Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS).

Finding 9. FBISD's assessment strategy is in transition and is not be flexible enough to support the needs of all schools.

The District, based on a clear district leadership philosophy regarding the value of various forms of assessment, and in response to the August 2017 testing audit, is discontinuing the STAAR benchmark assessments, *Checkpoints*, to track student progress toward success on end of year state summative assessments.

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FBISD encourages the local assessment framework comprised of pre-assessment, classroom common formative assessments, and rubric-based assessments to provide students with cycles of feedback on their progress. The curriculum includes assessment samples aligned to the priority standards. These samples include both open-ended and multiple-choice items for teachers to use to gather evidence of student learning.

When there is a major shift in district and school practices, it is not unexpected to encounter some resistance from stakeholders. Below are several implementation challenges identified by the audit team:

- Principals in schools with advanced accountability ratings requiring specific state reporting requirements, and schools at high risk of falling into the next accountability rating, lack confidence in the District's current assessment strategy to meet their need to monitor progress towards identified academic achievement targets.

- Schools in the Relay partnership have more frequent and rigorous data-driven-instruction (DDI) strategies and while they are successfully applying these strategies to formative assessments, they indicate the need for a more varied approach to assessing students so students can demonstrate mastery in multiple forms.

- Some principals and principal supervisors question the efficacy of completely eliminating multiple choice style questions across the board.

- Without district support, schools are constructing STAAR-like assessments to address their needs while sensing that they are working against the District's philosophy or support. As a result, there is duplication of effort across schools, the tests they are using or constructing may not be of sufficient quality to meet the identified need and it is creating a culture that has potential negative ramifications in terms of how these schools are supported by the district and how they relate to district leadership.

Figure 38 shows the percent of responding principals that agreed/strongly agreed with positive statements regarding the different types of assessments on the survey. Middle school principals in particular seem to lack confidence in the Learning Assessments and the Ren 360 assessment in terms of their ability to monitor student progress on priority standards or identify effective teachers.

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Figure 38. Principal Survey – Percent Agreement (Agree/Strongly Agree), Assessments
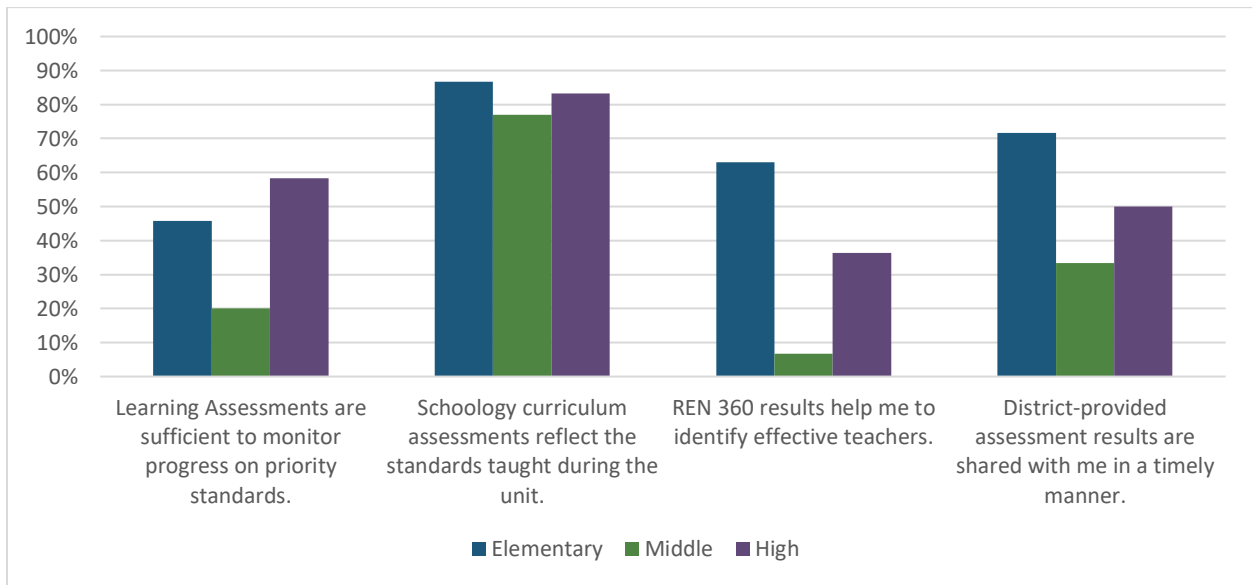
Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

Figure 39 shows the percent of teachers that agreed/strongly agreed with positive statements regarding the different types of assessments. Teacher responses seem to mirror the same lack of confidence principals have in the Learning Assessments and Ren 360 assessments.

Figure 39. Teacher Survey – Percent Agreement (Agree/Strongly Agree), Assessments
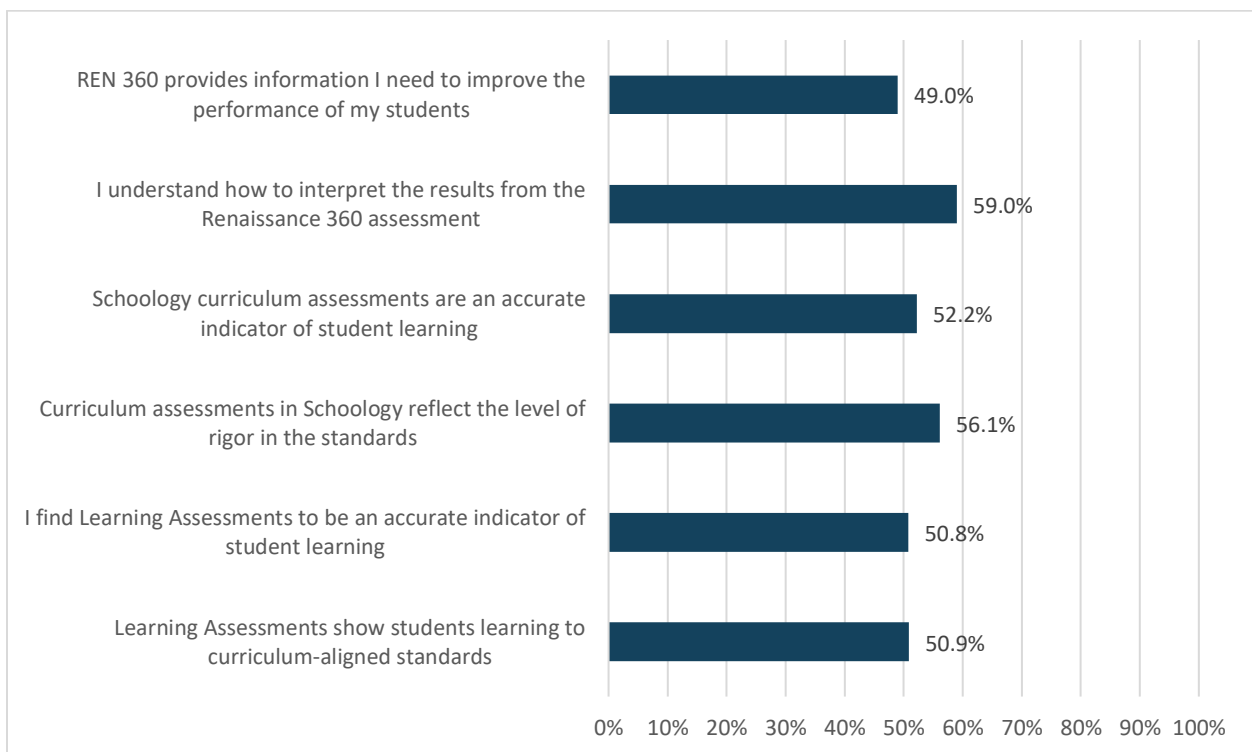
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

This raises the following questions:

- Given that the District Learning Assessments are rubric-based and are still in the early implementation phase, can the District reasonably expect principals, especially of schools with advanced accountability ratings, to rely on these assessments, along with Ren 360 as a valid measure of student learning that is predictive of success on STAAR?

- Is there value in exposing students to the format of high stakes tests such as the STAAR and STAAR EOC assessments, especially at schools with advanced accountability ratings?

Recommendation 10. Develop a tiered assessment strategy that responds to the needs of schools in the most advanced levels of accountability and those at risk of falling into a more advanced category.

Given that the District's assessment strategy is in transition, and long-term data is lacking regarding the predictability of district Learning Assessments and Ren 360 to inform student success on state summative assessments, the District should to work collaboratively with the principals of these schools and their principal supervisors to have a healthy and open discussion of their assessment concerns. Bringing their needs into the open with a problem-solving orientation will go a long way towards acknowledging their unique needs and provide the space to co-create a "middle ground" that meets the needs of the district relative to the assessment strategy while acknowledging the unique needs of these schools. Acknowledging the high-stakes reality of these schools and listening to their needs should support building a stronger relationship between school and district leadership.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. Policy EK Local was adopted in 2019. The regulations or standard operating procedures for this policy provide guidance on the decision-making process for determining which campuses might need a tiered assessment approach. Implementation of this approach to assessment will occur in the 2020 – 21 school year.*

Curriculum Monitoring and Evaluation

Curriculum monitoring is the process of gathering information for evaluating the effectiveness of the curriculum and ensuring that the written, taught and tested curriculum are aligned.

Commendation 11. FBISD has a variety of monitoring tools and systems to assess the curriculum and the fidelity of implementation.

Effective and on-going processes for monitoring and evaluating the curriculum is essential to ensuring that the written, taught, and tested curricula are aligned. Principals have primary responsibility for monitoring curriculum implementation on their campus, which occurs through a variety of strategies such as reviewing unit and lesson plans, conducting implementation walks and focused classroom observations, evaluating teachers as part of T-TESS, and analyzing assessment data. District administrators monitor and support curriculum implementation fidelity primarily through the Campus Support Team (CST) walkthroughs, which allow for continued access to campuses and classrooms and the on-going

collection of data to measure implementation. Both the CST walkthrough and implementation walks are described further below.

Campus Support Team Walkthroughs are campus-based instructional walkthroughs that are conducted jointly by district representatives from Academic Affairs and School Leadership and campus administrators and teachers. First implemented in 2017-18, the CST walkthrough was intended to monitor curriculum alignment and implementation and to gauge implementation of instructional practices tied to student ownership of learning. Based on feedback provided by campus administrators after the first year of implementation, the process and protocols were revised and evolved to follow a coaching cycle. Campus administrators select a Progression of Practice focus area and the walkthrough teams gather evidence of teacher and student behaviors during classroom observations using the CST rubric for the Progression of Practice. Each CST member inputs classroom observation data into *Tableau*, an interactive on-line platform, to examine evidence of patterns and support discussions at the campus and district level. Observations are framed using a common language: Noticings (*what we saw and heard*), Wonderings (*what we wanted to hear more about or wondered why*), Inspirations (*what we loved and were inspired by*), and Suggestions (*future focus for the campus*). A support plan is then developed for each campus to assist with areas identified as needing improvement. Campus Support Team walkthroughs and follow-up support visits are conducted on each campus 5 times per year; high-need campuses may have more.

Figure 40 shows the percent of principals responding that agreed/strongly agreed with positive statements regarding the CST process, and the variation in responses by principal's years of experience and school level. Overall, 74.3 percent of principals agreed/strongly agreed that the CST visit provides actionable feedback to help them improve their school, and 67.1 percent of principals agreed/strongly agreed that the CST process helps them grow as an instructional leader.

Figure 40. Principal Survey – Percent Agreement (Most of the Time/Always) by Principal Years of Experience and School Level, CST Process
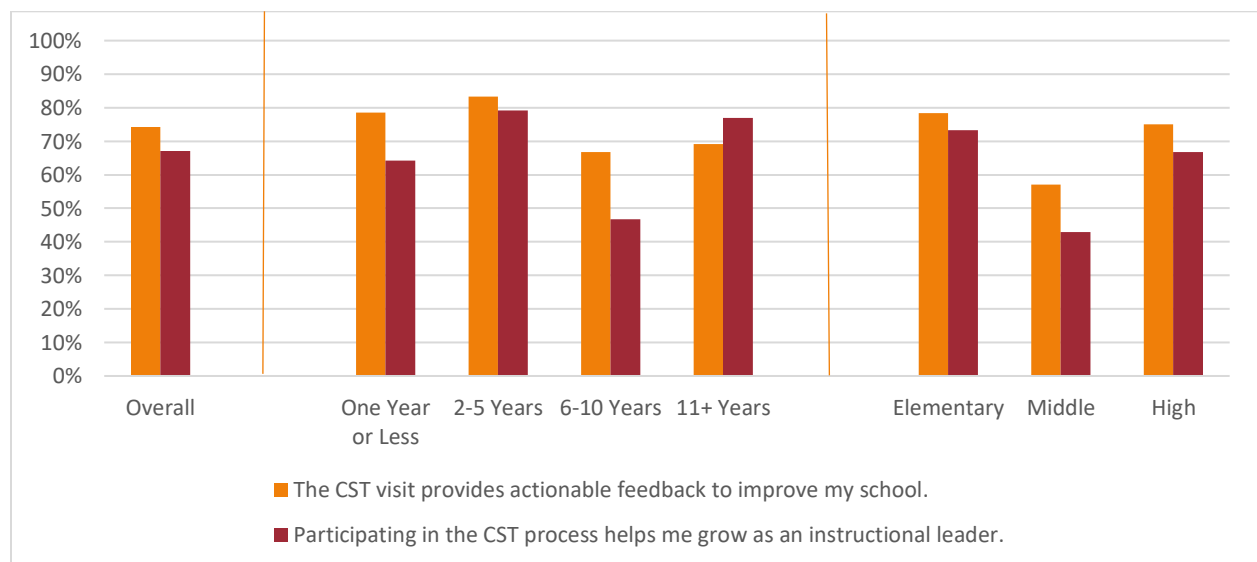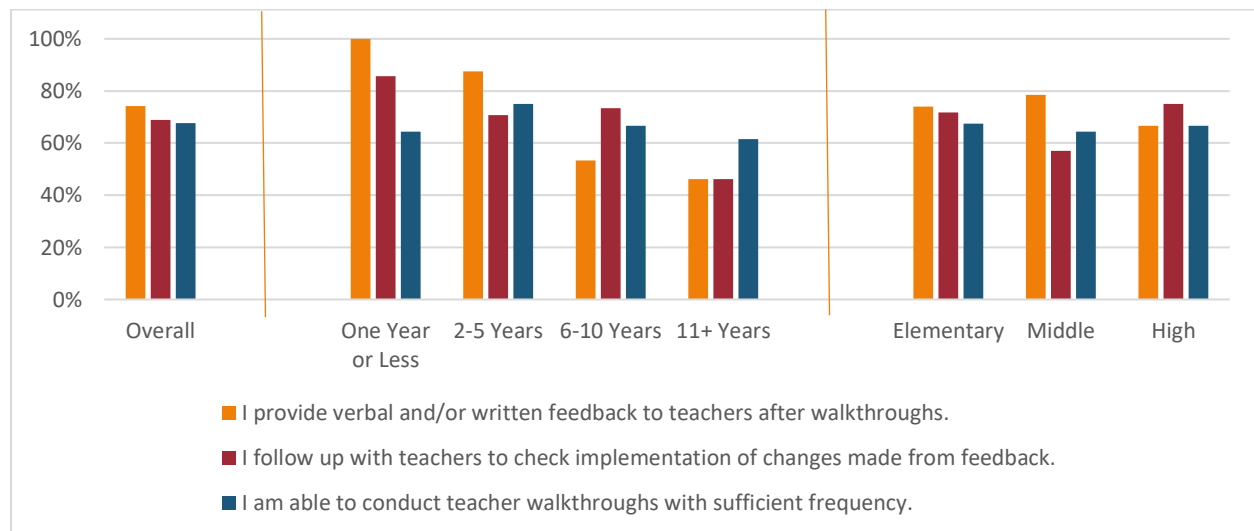

Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

Implementation Walks are conducted monthly by campus administrators to monitor instruction and evaluate curriculum implementation. Campus leaders have the flexibility to utilize their own protocol, or use one of the observation protocols developed by the District (e.g., CST protocol, guided observation protocol, balanced literacy observation tool).

Figure 41 shows the percent of principals who responded on Gibson's survey that they are always able to conduct walkthroughs with sufficient frequency (74.3%), provide verbal or written feedback to teachers after a walkthrough (67.6%), and follow-up with teachers to check whether or not changes as a result of the walkthrough have been implemented (68.9%). Interestingly, 100 percent of first year principals responding to the survey reported that they always provide feedback to teachers after a walkthrough, while less than half (46.2%) of the most experienced principals do. Principal responses follow a similar pattern regarding the post-walkthrough follow-up. There was not much variation in principal responses across school levels, however.

Figure 41. Principal Survey – Percent Agreement (Most of the Time/Always) by Principal Years of Experience and School Level, Implementation Walks

Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

Nearly 60 percent of teachers reported that their campus administrator conducts a walkthrough monthly or more often (Figure 42).

Figure 42. Teacher Survey – Frequency of Principal Walkthroughs, All Teachers
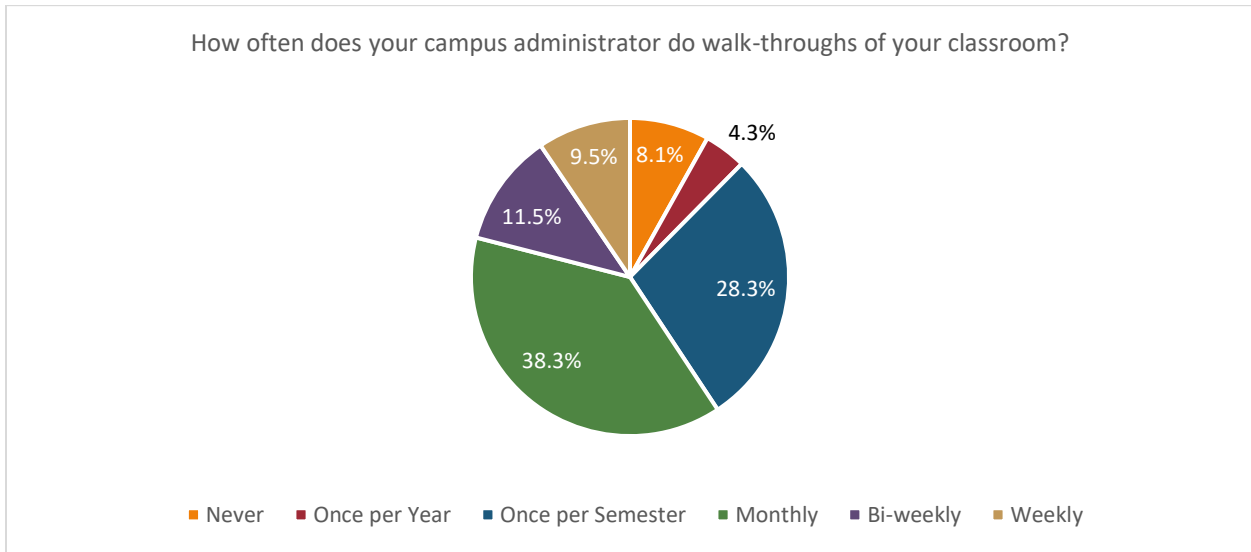
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

The majority of teachers (64.2%) that responded to Gibson's survey reported that they always receive feedback after a walkthrough; a small percentage of teachers (3.7%) reported that they never receive feedback (Figure 43).
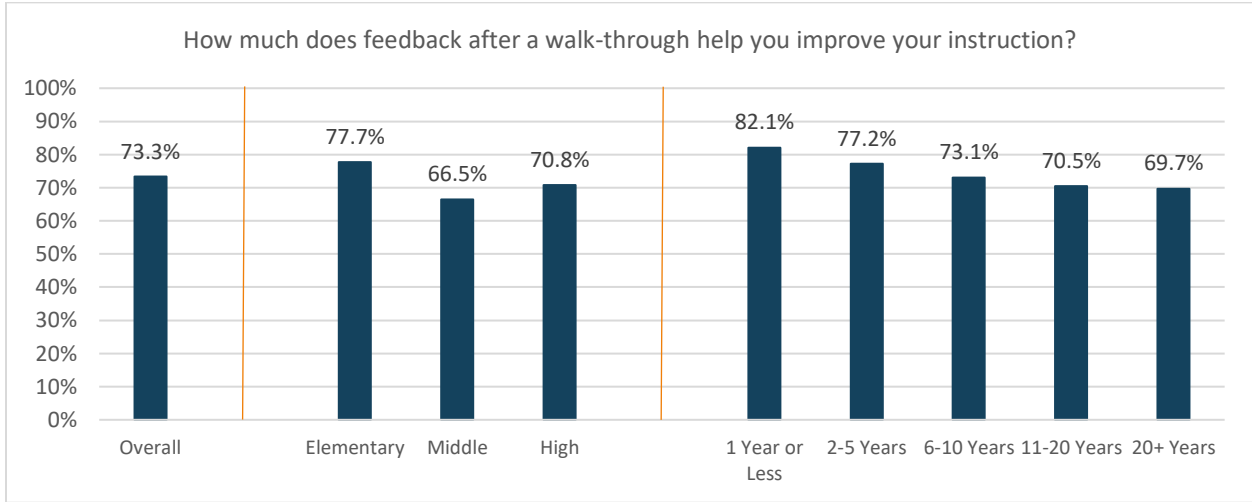
Figure 43. Teacher Survey – Frequency of Principal Feedback, by School Level and Teacher Years of Experience
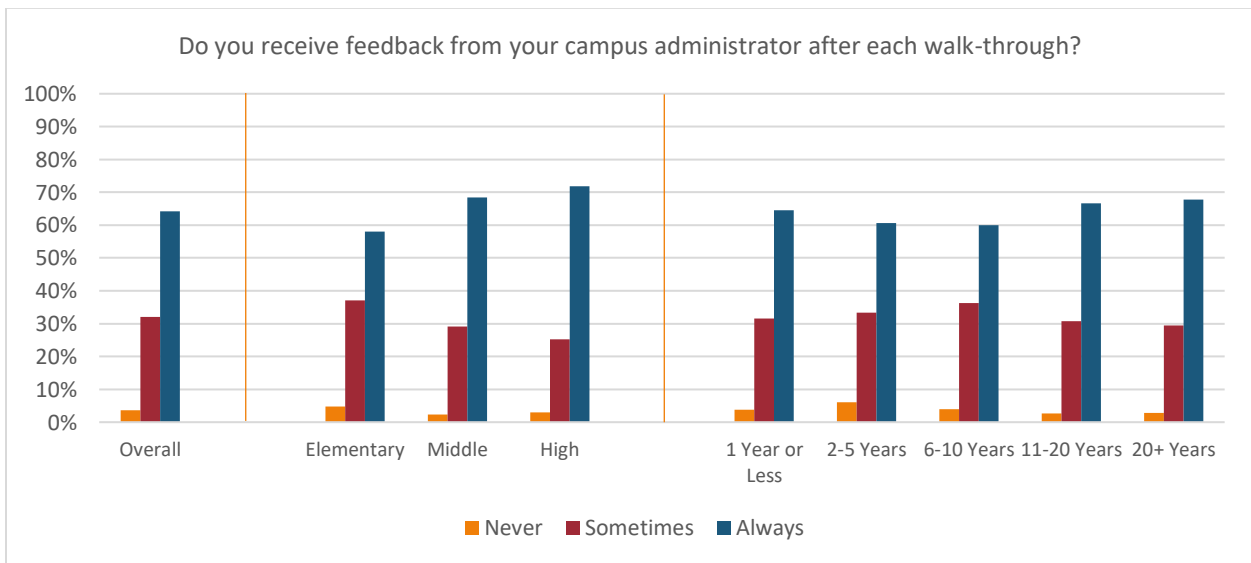
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

Overall, 73.3 percent of teachers feel that feedback after a walkthrough helps them improve their instruction (Figure 44). There appears to be a direct and positive correlation between the percent of teachers that feel this way and their years of teaching experience.

Figure 44. Teacher Survey – Principal Feedback Improves Instruction (Moderately/Significantly), by School Level and Teacher Years of Experience

How much does feedback after a walk-through help you improve your instruction?

Category	Value
Overall	73.3%
Elementary	77.7%
Middle	66.5%
High	70.8%
1 Year or Less	82.1%
2-5 Years	77.2%
6-10 Years	73.1%
11-20 Years	70.5%
20+ Years	69.7%

Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

Chapter 5 – Professional Learning

One of the most powerful way to raise student achievement is through professional learning. Current research shows that on-going, collaborative, and primarily job-embedded professional learning for administrators and teachers leads to an increase in student achievement.[29] This chapter provides an overview of the policy framework that guides professional learning, an assessment of FBISD's professional learning plan, and the various ways professional learning is provided to teachers and leaders, including professional development courses, Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), and job-embedded supports provided by campus-based instructional leaders.

Professional Learning Plan

A professional learning plan is a set of purposeful, planned actions and the support system necessary to achieve the identified goals. Effective professional learning programs are ongoing, coherent, and linked to student achievement (Killion, J. 2008).

Commendation 12. FBISD has a comprehensive professional learning plan that aligns resources and guides the professional learning for all teachers and leaders throughout the district.

In 2016-17, FBISD collaborated with Learning Forward to develop a comprehensive Professional Learning System Plan, aligned to the seven Standards for Professional Learning[30], to ensure that all educators and staff who support student learning engage in continuous improvement; have multiple, differentiated supports for increasing their effectiveness and for career growth; and support a culture of collective responsibility for student success.[31] The key components of FBISD's professional learning plan include:

- Professional learning vision, mission and core beliefs.

- Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning which outline the characteristics for professional learning that lead to effective teaching practices, supportive leadership, and improved student results.

- Laws, policies, and regulations created by federal, state, and district agencies that guide the professional learning of educators to ensure growth and success for all students.

- Teacher requirements for professional learning.

- Purposes of professional learning for individual development, team and campus improvement, and in support of district initiatives.

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[29] Learning Forward, the National Staff Development Council (NDSC), and the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.

[30] https://learningforward.org/standards-for-professional-learning

[31] Fort Bend ISD Professional Learning Comprehensive Plan (DR #47.1).

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- Seven step process for developing professional learning plans for the district, campuses, teams and individuals.

- Characteristics of job-embedded professional learning in FBISD.

- Leadership roles and responsibilities for professional learning.

- Process for assessing and evaluating FBISD's professional learning.

FBISD's professional learning plan establishes a framework, standards, and tools to design and deliver professional learning experiences to support the implementation of the District's priorities. The plan details a three-year phased implementation, beginning in 2016-17 and ending in 2018-19. Documentation provided to the audit team shows that many of the steps identified in the plan have been implemented according to schedule (e.g., launching the LMS, establishment of Impact Teams).

District-led Professional Learning

Educators in Texas are required to complete continuing professional education (CPE) requirements to renew a teaching certificate. The requirements vary depending on the type of teaching credential held, and include 150 clock hours every five years for classroom teachers and 200 clock hours every five years for educators who hold professional certificates including counselors, learning resource specialists and school librarians, reading specialists, educational diagnosticians, master teachers, superintendents, and principals.[32] Teachers in FBISD meet their CPE requirements through district-led summer professional learning courses, on-line courses, and/or courses offered outside of the district (e.g., conferences, seminars), as well as 3.5 district-wide job-embedded professional learning days throughout the year.

Commendation 13. Teacher professional learning plans have been developed for every job role and include required courses that are content-specific, aligned to the District's priorities, and differentiated to accommodate individual learning needs.

All teachers in FBISD are required annually to complete 14 hours of professional learning courses during the summer. Of the 14 required hours, half are focused on content-specific training and half are focused on training related to district-wide priorities, such as the Progressions of Practice focus areas. Teacher professional learning plans are developed and delivered through a collaborative effort between the content area experts within Teaching and Learning (i.e., Curriculum Coordinators) and the Coordinators and Specialists within Teacher Development. Monthly "Course Developer" meetings that include Executive Directors, Directors, Coordinators across the various departments within the Teaching and Learning Division focus on aligning instructional priorities with on-going professional learning in order to support implementation through common messaging. In addition to the required 14 hours of summer professional learning, teacher professional learning plans also include compliance sessions (if courses are required to fulfill a compliance or legal requirement for a particular job role) and additional sessions (which are optional beyond the required 14 hours). It is particularly notable that FBISD invests in

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[32] Texas Education Code, Section 21.054

developing the skills of instructional leaders (e.g., Professional Learning Leads, Technology Integration Champions). All courses in teacher professional learning plans indicate alignment with one or more of the T-TESS dimensions. Required professional learning is also supported through blended learning opportunities (i.e., on-line courses), PLCs, and job-embedded instructional coaching and supports (which are discussed further in the following sections of this chapter).
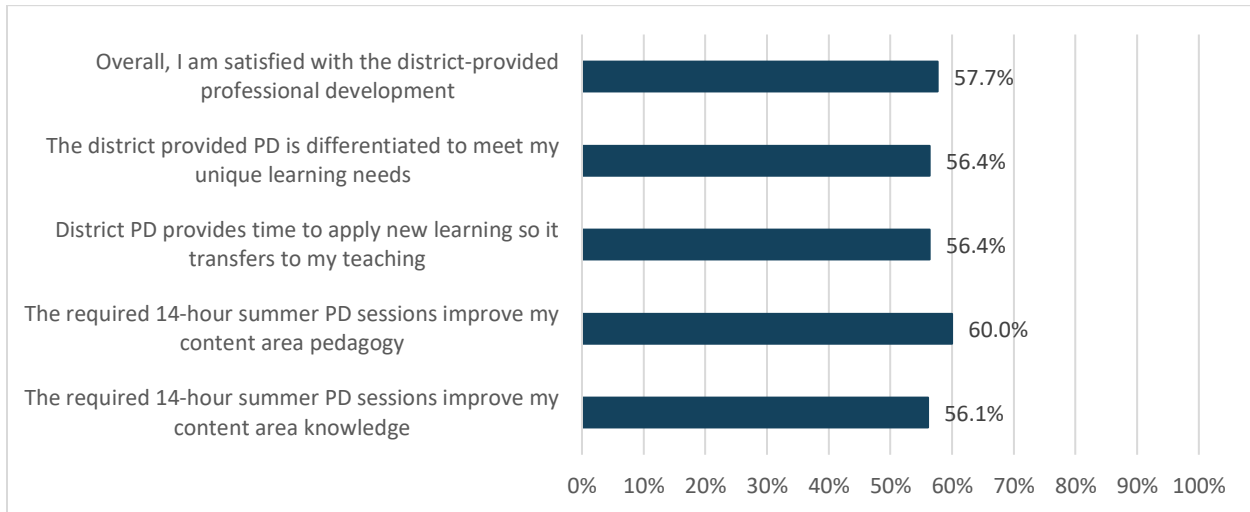
Commendation 14. End-of-course surveys are administered to assess the effectiveness of professional learning sessions.

The Teaching and Learning Division administers a standardized participant survey at the conclusion of every professional learning session to assess the effectiveness of the session and to collect data to determine next steps for teacher support and learning. The survey instrument contains six standard questions and the course developer has the ability to have content-specific questions added to the survey. Monthly course developer meetings are structured so that there is time for analysis of survey results and teacher reflection. Survey response data provided to the audit team indicates a high degree of participant satisfaction with FBISD's 2019 summer professional learning sessions.

Finding 10. Teacher feedback suggests that there are opportunities to improve district-led professional learning, particularly for more experienced teachers.

On the principal survey administered by Gibson as part of this audit, 86.3 percent of principals that responded to the survey reported that they are satisfied with the district-led professional learning they have received, and 80.8 percent of principals that responded to the survey reported that the district is responsive to their requests for resources to provide campus-based professional development. Feedback from teachers regarding district-led professional learning was less positive, however. Figure 45 shows the percent of teachers that responded to Gibson's survey who agreed/strongly agreed with positive statements related to district-led professional learning. The fact that more than 40 percent of all teachers disagreed/strongly disagreed with these statements suggests that there are opportunities for improvement.

Figure 45. Teacher Survey – District-led Professional Development Overall Rates of Agreement

Statement	Agreement
Overall, I am satisfied with the district-provided professional development	57.7%
The district provided PD is differentiated to meet my unique learning needs	56.4%
District PD provides time to apply new learning so it transfers to my teaching	56.4%
The required 14-hour summer PD sessions improve my content area pedagogy	60.0%
The required 14-hour summer PD sessions improve my content area knowledge	56.1%

Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

Further analysis of survey data shows variation in agreement rates by teacher experience (see Figure 46). Teachers with one year or less teaching experience reported a higher level of satisfaction (76.2%) with district-led professional learning than teachers with more years of experience. New teachers also more strongly agreed that district-led professional learning was differentiated to meet their learning needs (70%) and that they have sufficient time to apply new learning (78%).

Figure 46. Teacher Survey – District-led Professional Development Rates of Agreement by Years Teaching Experience

Legend:
- Overall, I am satisfied with the district-provided professional development.
- The district provided PD is differentiated to meet my unique learning needs.
- District PD provides time to apply new learning so it transfers to my teaching.

Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.
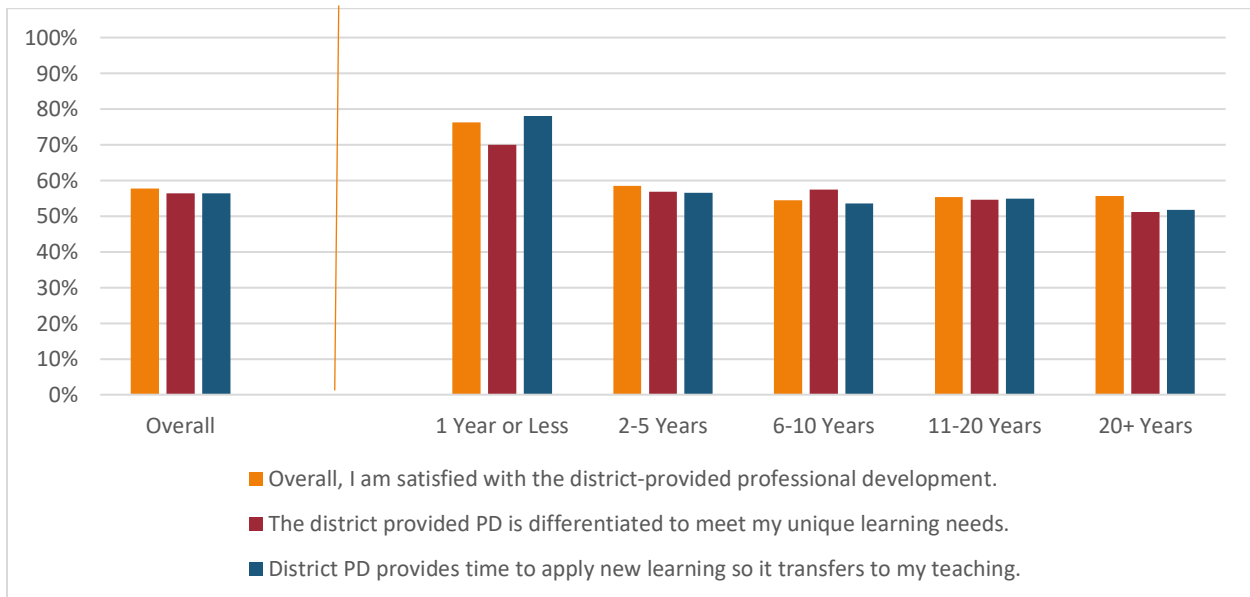
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While these survey results are positive with respect to professional learning for the District's most inexperienced teachers, they are less positive when it comes to teachers with more years of experience and who account for approximately 96 percent of all FBISD teachers. The audit team also received consistent feedback from both teachers and principals during interviews and focus groups suggesting that they need to more time to practice and apply what is learned as part of their professional learning experience.

Recommendation 11. Provide teachers with more opportunities to apply new learning as part of the professional learning experience.

With the volume of new initiatives rolled out over the past few years in FBISD, it is important to ensure that teachers and leaders have sufficient time to practice and apply what is learned. In fact, learning is generally more effective when it is immediately applied. FBISD should consider developing performance tasks for skills-based professional learning sessions where it is essential that participants are able to apply and activate their new learning. For example, in professional learning sessions where principals are shown the various curriculum components in *Schoology* and how they can use these resources to support classroom observation and feedback, design a performance task based around a classroom observation exemplar. If the exemplar lesson is off pace and has student work lacking in the appropriate level of rigor, have participants access the curriculum resources to both diagnose the issue and design a feedback session for the teacher.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. In Summer 2020, professional learning courses for teachers will include skills based professional learning sessions where participants submit artifacts to demonstrate implementation. The use of artifacts will be incorporated into the Focus on Learning monthly principal meetings in order to deepen understanding of curriculum components.*

Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are a collaborative approach to professional development in which small groups of educators meet regularly to explore new concepts, share expertise and insights from their teaching experiences, and engage in collective problem solving. There is substantial research that indicates that there is a strong correlation between the effective use of PLCs in schools and improved teacher learning and instruction, and student learning.[33] This section focuses on the PLC structures in FBISD for both teachers and principals.

Teacher Professional Learning Communities

FBISD has identified PLCs as a high-yield strategy for improving teacher effectiveness, and ultimately student performance, and is one of the District's Progression of Practice focus areas. As such, FBISD has identified the Impact Team PLC model (based on John Hattie's Visible Learning research) to increase the benefits of teacher collaboration throughout the District. The Impact Team model taps into the

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[33] Carroll, Fulton, & Doerr, 2010; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008.

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collaborative planning time every school already has in place, but repurposes it to build on teacher expertise and increase student learning. It combines two existing practices—formative assessment and collaborative inquiry—to promote a culture in which teachers and students are partners in learning.[34] This model is aligned to and supports the District's philosophy of Student Ownership of Learning.

Figure 47 shows FBISD's timeline for scaling the Impact Team PLC model district-wide. As of the 2019-20 school year, 19 campuses, 67 teacher teams, and 286 teachers are implementing the Impact Team PLC model. By 2023-24, FBISD seeks to have 100 percent of campuses "empowered" on the PLC progression.

Figure 47. PLC Progression of Practice Implementation Milestones

		2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	2022–23	2023–24
Professional Learning Communities Milestone	Establish PLC Impact Teams/DDI		Implement						
	Expand PLC Work			Expand					
	PLC Progression of Practice				Use Progression of Practice for Continuous Learning				
% Campuses Reporting EMPOWERED on PLC Progression					20%	37%	56%	74%	100%

Source: FBISD.

Two other PLC models currently being implemented on FBISD campuses are:

- **Concept Planning Protocol PLC** – This model is based on the work of Dufour and is supported with protocols to guide the cycle of work that is required of effective PLCs. The supporting documents exist in the curriculum management system and address unit planning, translating the unit plan into lesson plans, concept planning and formative assessment protocols. Each protocol includes guiding questions and directs teachers, when appropriate, into the various resources and documents in the district curriculum management system. This is the District's "standard" PLC model currently being implemented by most teacher teams across the District.

- **Relay Team PLC** – This is a state and district supported model for the most intensive-need schools. This model has an increased focus on using data to gauge student learning and the creation of teacher action plans to provide additional support where needed. Relay schools also use the various district model protocols as appropriate.

The District's intent is to have the Impact Team PLC model implemented schoolwide on all campuses (except Relay schools). While some campuses have implemented this model schoolwide, others have taken a phased approach by piloting the Impact Team model with high-performing teacher teams. By demonstrating their success, schools will expand the model to other teacher teams. At the time of this audit, some schools had more than one PLC model implemented on their campus. Figure 48 shows the percent of principals, by school level, who responded to Gibson's survey question regarding which PLC models are currently being implemented on their campus.

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[34] https://corwin-connect.com/2018/01/impact-teams-next-big-thing-success-story-one-school-evolved-past-plcs/

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Figure 48. Principal Survey – PLC Model (Self-Reported)
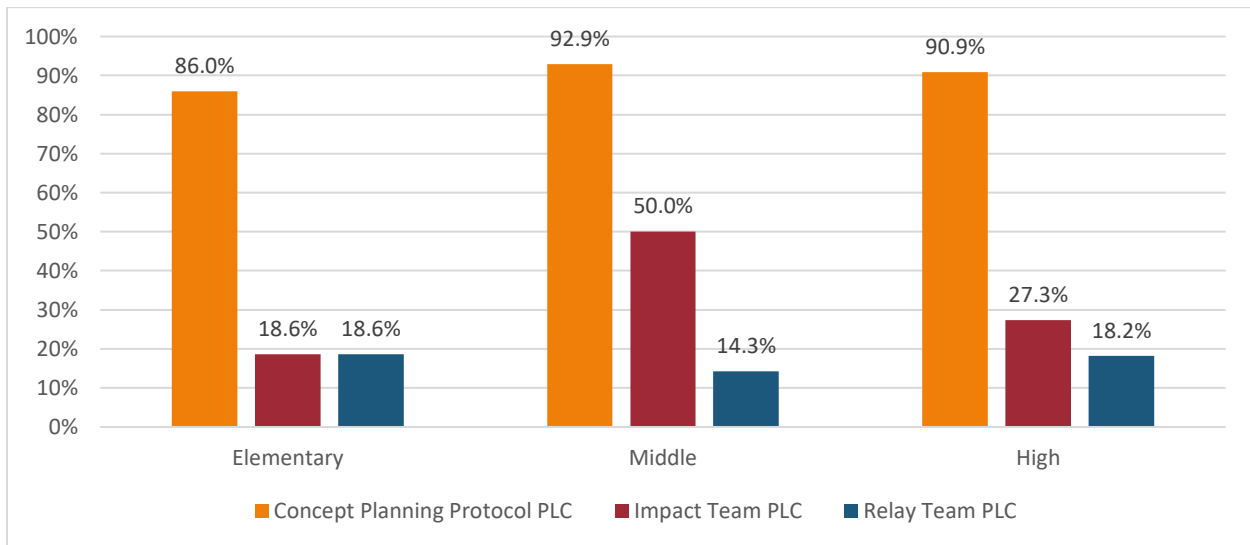
Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

Commendation 15. Many of the conditions for effective PLCs are in place.

The audit team's analysis of PLC's did not focus on the fidelity with which the different PLC models were being implemented, but rather on whether or not the conditions for effective PLCs are in place. These conditions, together with research-based best practices, have been translated into *Five Principles of Collaboration*[35] that guided the audit team's interview protocols and assessment of FBISD's PLCs. They are:

1. Meetings have a clear purpose and measurable outcomes.

2. Structures are in place to support collaboration around student achievement.

3. A cycle of work guides the focus of collaboration meetings and collaborative data discussions are aligned to a cyclical process.

4. Effective instructional strategies are discussed and shared based on recent improvements in student performance data.

5. The cycle is monitored for measurable outcomes.

Detailed results of the audit team's analysis of PLC data and observations are contained in *Appendix B – PLC Analysis*. With the exception of Principle #2 (which is discussed further in Finding 11 below), the audit team found that many of the conditions needed for high-functioning PLCs are in place. This does not mean, however, that all PLCs are high functioning. Rather, the District's phased approach to scaling the Impact Team model through a progression of practice is commendable in that it ensures that the critical

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[35] The *Five Principles of Collaboration* were developed by University of Virginia's School Transformation Program.

components of effective PLCs are in place. Further, many of these conditions are also present in the Concept Team Planning Protocol and Relay Team PLC models as well.

Additionally, a high percentage of both principals and teachers responded favorably to positive questions about their PLC practices. Figures 49 and 50 provide a summary of the principal and teacher responses to survey questions related to PLCs. While the percentage of principals and teachers that agreed/strongly agreed to positive statements about PLCs exceed 80 percent in most cases, some of these overly positive results should be interpreted with a bit of caution. It has been the experience of this audit team that principals and teachers sometimes "don't know what they don't know", meaning they may believe that their PLC is high functioning when in fact they may have never experienced a high functioning PLC.

Figure 49. Principal Survey – Percent Agreement (Agree/Strongly Agree), PLC Practices
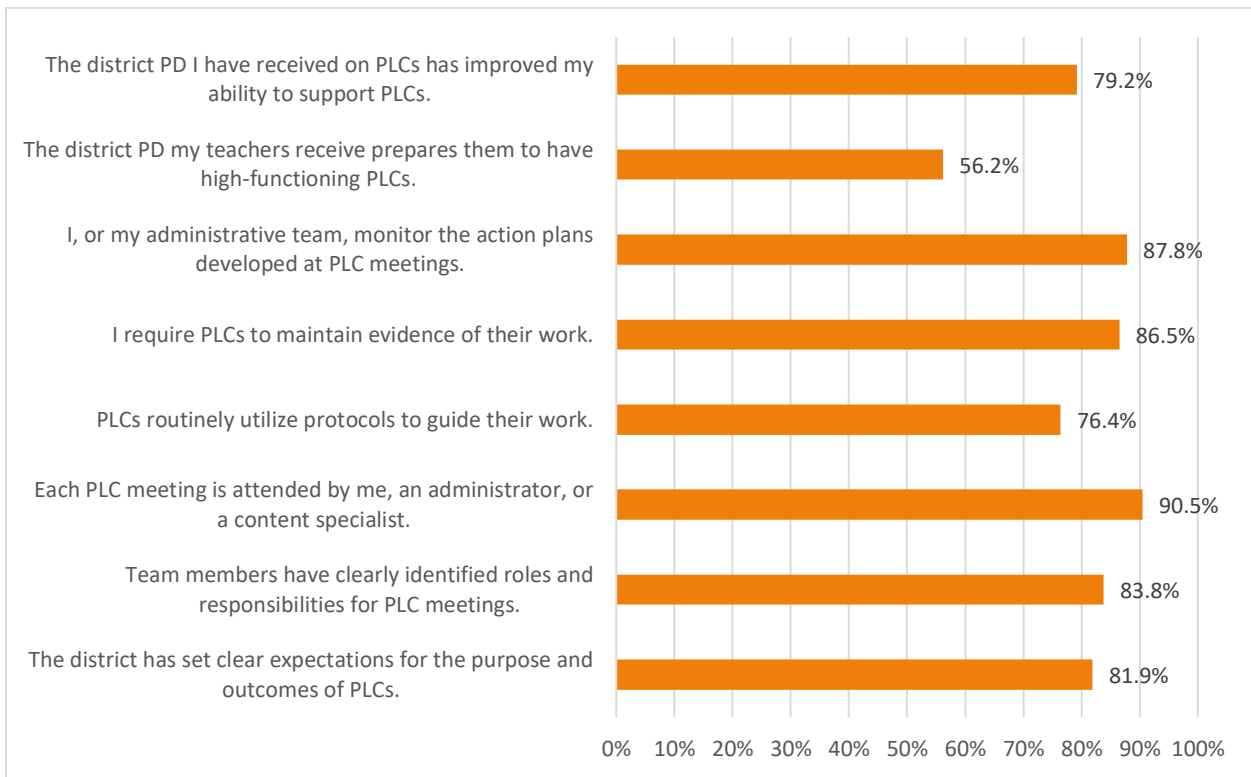
Source: Gibson Principal Survey.

Figure 50. Teacher Survey – Percent Agreement (Agree/Strongly Agree), PLC Practices
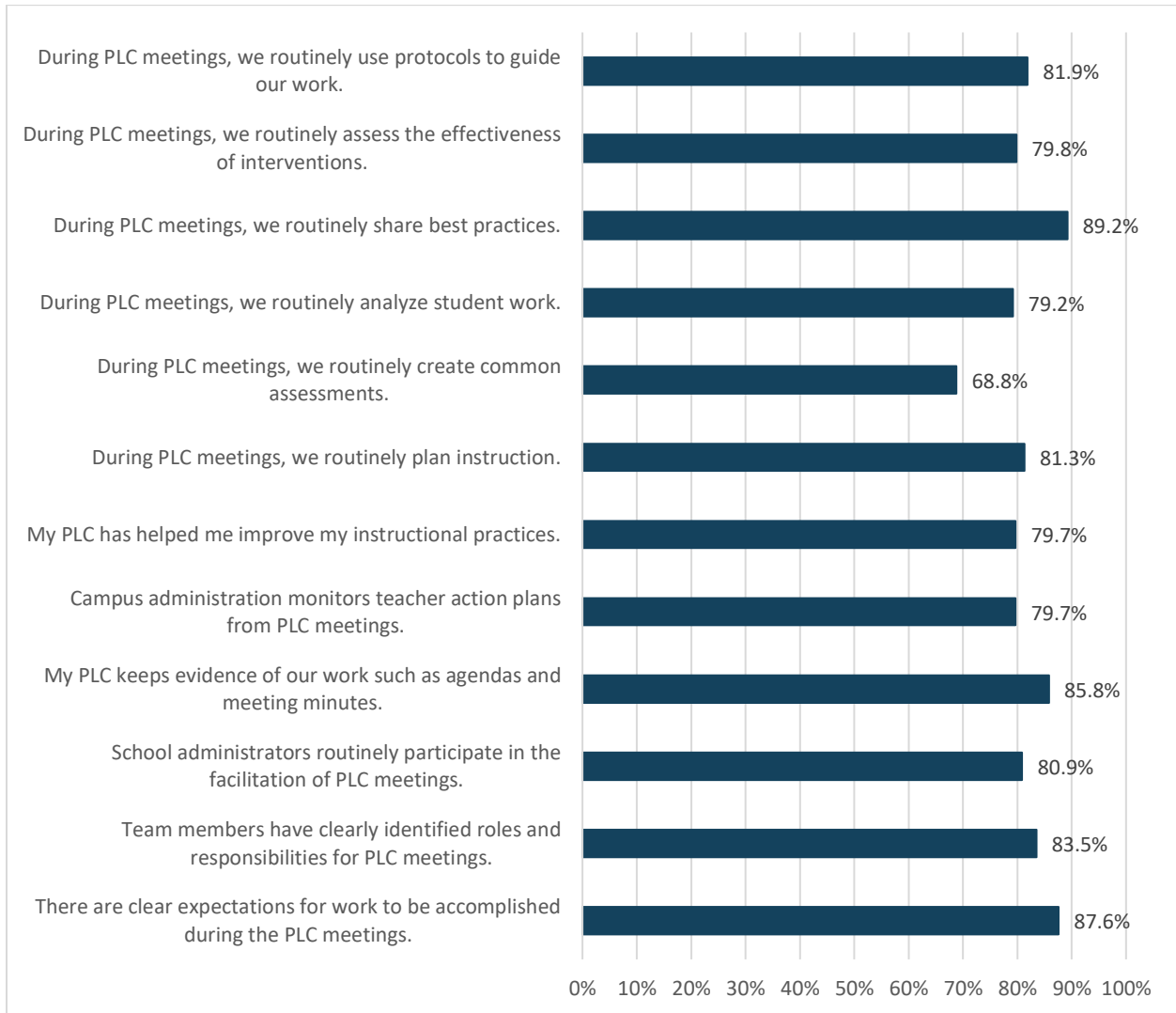
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

Finding 11. Many teachers do not meet in their PLC with sufficient frequency or duration to be highly effective.

Perhaps one of the most important conditions needed for high functioning PLCs is ensuring that there is sufficient *time* for collaboration. Feedback from both principals and teachers regarding the amount of time teachers have to collaborate in PLCs yielded some interesting and somewhat concerning insights with respect to the timing, frequency and duration of teacher PLCs.

▪ 97.8 percent of elementary principals and 100 percent of secondary principals responding to the survey reported that PLC meetings occur during contract time. Elementary teachers (91.2%), middle school teachers (84.8%), and high school teachers (68.5%) reported that PLC meetings occur during contract time. This indicates that some PLC meetings are occurring outside of contract time, which should be avoided. In fact, the ability to complete work within the school

day is cited in a number of recent studies as a factor that contributes to teacher retention.[36] The discrepancy between principal and teacher responses at the secondary level should be examined further.

▪ Forty-six percent of teachers reported that they have a personal conference period on the days they attend a PLC meeting. While this is positive, this means that more than half of all teachers are sacrificing their individual planning period on days they meet in their PLC. This situation is not uncommon; however, when the master schedule creates time for PLC meetings in addition to the teacher's individual or common planning time, teachers report a higher level of job satisfaction and the ability to complete work expectations within the school day.

▪ The frequency with which teachers meet in their PLCs varies by school level (shown in Figure 51). Less than half (49.3%) of elementary teachers report meeting in their PLC weekly – this percentage is higher for middle school (72.7%) and high school (62.5%) teachers. Also noteworthy is the fact that 21.6 percent of middle school and 20.4 percent of high school teachers report that they meet monthly or less than monthly in their PLC.

Figure 51. Teacher Survey – Frequency of PLC Meeting Time, by School Level
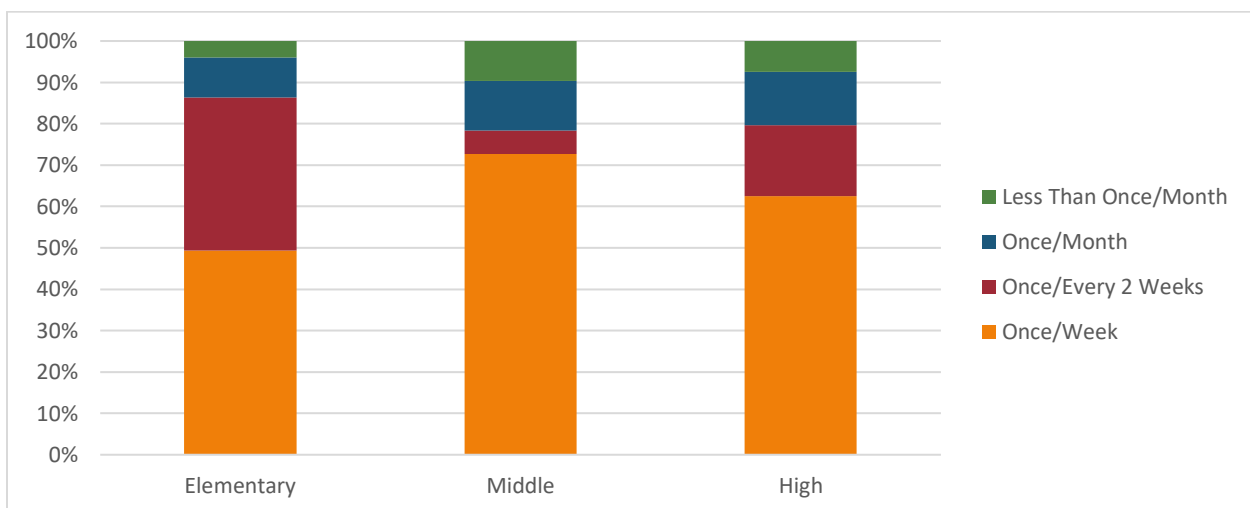
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

▪ When asked about the duration of PLC meetings (see Figure 52), more than 90 percent of elementary school principals and teachers responded that teacher PLCs meet for an hour or less; only a small percentage (4.4%) of teachers reported that they meet for 30 minutes or less, while a slightly larger percentage of teachers (8.3%) and principals (6.8%) responded that teachers meet in their PLCs for more than an hour. At the secondary level, principals and teachers responded very differently: 35.7 percent of middle school principals and just 7.2 percent of middle school teachers responded that PLCs meet for 90 minutes or more. Similarly, 50 percent of high school

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[36] https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/education/attachements/rpt_teacher_retention.pdf

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principals and just 21.7 percent of high school teachers responded that teachers meet in their PLCs between 46 and 60 minutes.

Figure 52. Principal and Teacher Surveys – Minutes of PLC Time, by School Level
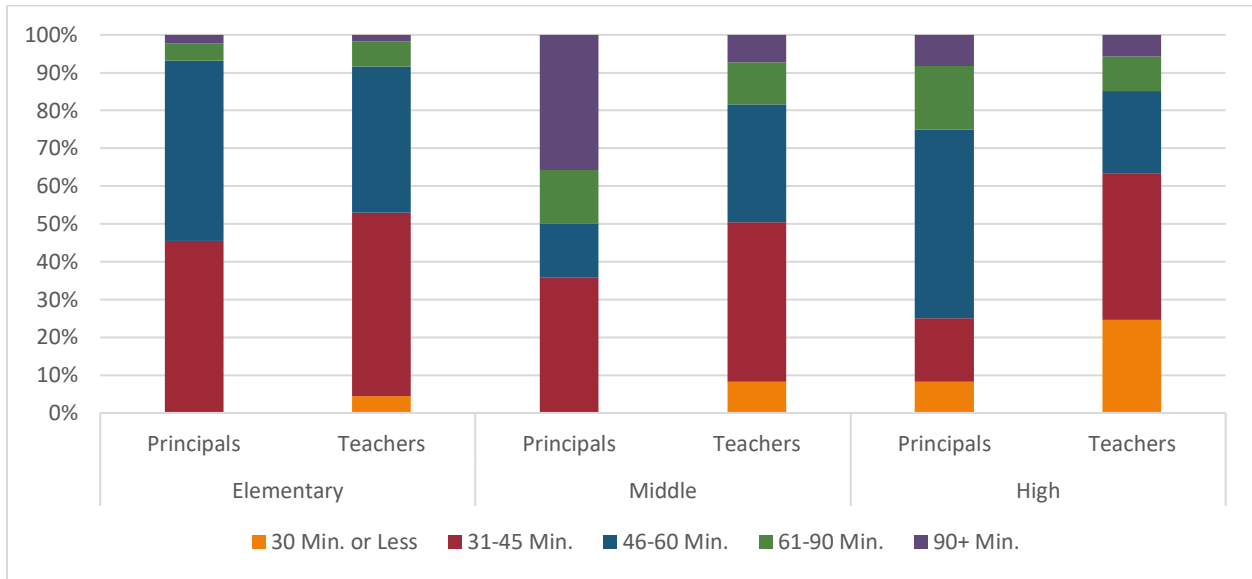
Source: Gibson Principal and Teacher Surveys.

▪ Forty-two percent of principals responded that the amount of time teachers spend in PLCs is "too little", while the remainder of principals felt that it was "just right". None of the principals reported that the amount of time teachers spend in PLCs is "too much". Alternatively, 13.8 percent of teachers responded that the amount of time they spend in PLCs is "too little", 68 percent felt that it was "just right", and 18.3 percent felt that it was "too much". Figure 53 shows the variation in teacher responses by years of teaching experience and school level. As teachers become more skilled in the collaborative practices of PLC meetings, they typically cite the need for more time to engage in deep conversations and action planning.

Figure 53. Teacher Survey – PLC Time by Teacher Years of Experience and School Level
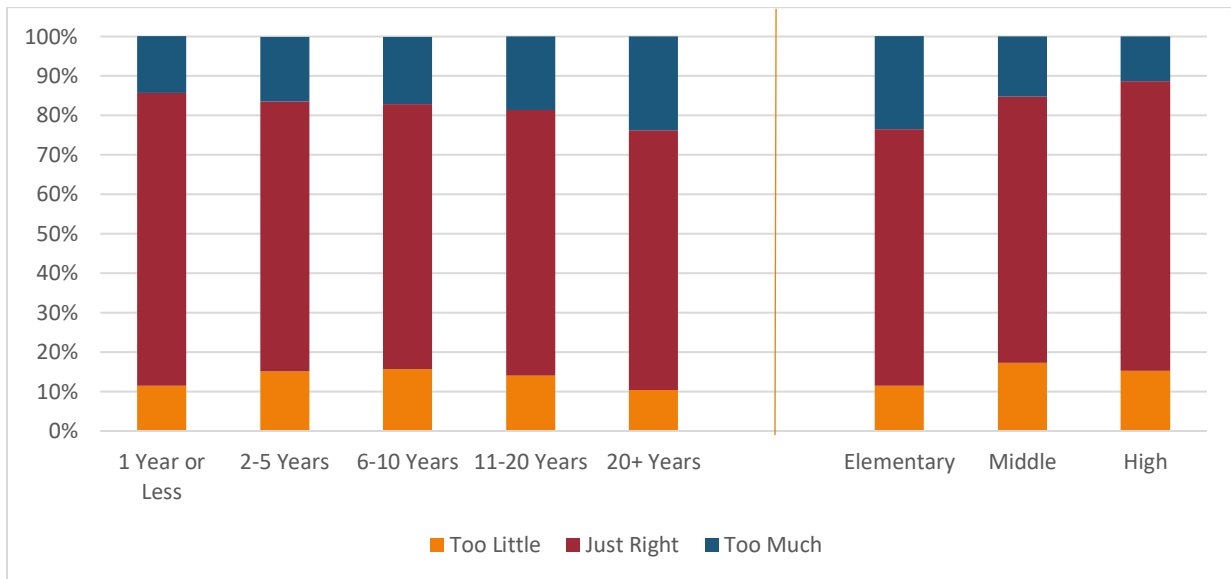
Source: Gibson Teacher Survey.

Recommendation 12. Support schools in adjusting their master schedules to allow teachers to meet more frequently and for a longer duration in their PLC.

FBISD's strategy for implementing PLCs is to repurpose the collaborative planning time already built into school schedules for PLCs to meet. As demonstrated above, many school schedules do not currently provide teachers with adequate time to collaborate with their peers, much less at the frequency and duration that is sufficient to allow for the deep execution of the cycle of work to be done as part of the Impact Team (or other) PLC model.

A best practice standard set forth by the University of Virginia's research-based School Transformation Program, and other institutions, is 90 contiguous minutes per week for teachers to meet in their PLC. If this is not possible, then a reasonable substitute is two 45 to 60-minute PLCs per week with clear assignments of pre-work so that teachers come prepared to dive into the work (Venables, 2011). When teachers have 90 minutes of continuous planning time, they are better able to complete the various tasks in the cycle of work to a higher degree of quality.

Ensuring that teachers have additional time built into their weekly schedule will require support and leadership from the District. First, the Department of School Leadership should work closely with school principals to ensure that master schedules are optimally designed and balance the school's priorities with respect to student needs and scheduling, staffing efficiency, and teacher teaming and collaborative planning time. Next, the District may need to strategically invest in additional teaching positions in order to create the bandwidth to allow for additional common planning time for some teachers. The District is already doing this to some extent, as Title I campuses receive extra funds that are used for additional teacher positions which allows for an additional planning period for math and literacy teachers. Given that effective PLCs represent a key lever for improving student performance and a priority for FBISD, a deeper

analysis of the investment may be required in this area. Finally, the District should reach out to other districts, such as Leander ISD and San Antonio ISD, that are implementing PLCs successfully through the use of innovative scheduling and staffing strategies.

Management Response: *Management agrees with the recommendation. Administration has developed an elementary master schedule to support all teachers receiving additional time for PLC work every six days. In addition, at the secondary level, leaders are currently providing feedback on three different models to impact additional teacher planning time. During the 2020- 21 school year, additional PLC time will be implemented at some schools. Administration is currently designing the timeline for implementation across the district.*

Principal Professional Learning Communities

Like teachers, it is important for principals to collaborate with their peers to improve their leadership and learning skills.

Commendation 16: FBISD supports principals in their personal and professional growth through monthly PLC and Leading Improvement Communities meetings.

For the past few years, principals in FBISD have participated in monthly Town Hall meetings and principal PLC meetings. These meetings give the opportunity to School Leadership and Academic Affairs to provide professional learning for principals in the areas of school operations and instructional leadership, respectively. These monthly meetings are typically four hours, with the first two hours dedicated to the Town Hall and the second two hours dedicated to the principal PLC.

At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, FBISD implemented another form of PLC for principals, Leading Improvement Communities (LICs), in order for principals to collaboratively engage in continuous learning around one of the four Progression of Practice focus areas: Professional Learning Communities, Blended Learning, Instructional Practices, and Formative Assessments. Principals are organized into their LIC according to their chosen Progression of Practice. Each LIC will be co-facilitated by one or two leaders and will meet 7 times during the 2019-20 school year. The stated goals for the LICs during the first year of implementation are:[37]

- Engage in a collaborative experience focused on continuous learning around a specific area of focus.

- Assist leaders in understanding, developing and implementing the area of focus at the campus level.

- Share evidence of implementation at each campus and engage in feedback and conversation about implementation.

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[37] FBISD Leading Improvement Communities Summary (DR #47.10).

- Create a structure for campus leaders to learn from each other through discussion and observation at different campuses.

Although just one LIC meeting had taken place at the time of the audit team's site visit, feedback provided during interviews and focus groups suggests that some principals are optimistic about the opportunity to engage collaboratively with their peers around their Progression of Practice focus areas, while others worry that the LIC will be "just one more thing to do." All principals expressed a desire for more input in setting the agenda of their PLC meetings. While ensuring principals have the opportunity to collaborate in a structured way with their peers is commendable, FBISD should solicit feedback from principals at the end of this school year to assess their satisfaction with the LIC meeting structure/format and identify opportunities for improving and/or streamlining the PLC and LIC meetings.

Campus Instructional Leaders and Job-embedded Supports

In accordance with the initiatives outlined in the District's Professional Learning Plan, FBISD significantly revamped its campus-based instructional support model in order to focus on building the capacity of teachers to implement the curriculum using research-based, data-driven instruction. At the beginning of the 2017-18 school year, FBISD launched the Professional Learning Leads (PLLs), Technology Integration Champions (TICs), and Instructional Coach job roles, and in 2018-19, launched the Teacher Cadres. Each of these job roles is discussed further below.

- **Professional Learning Leads (PLLs)** are responsible for collaborating with campus and district leaders to create, implement, and monitor campus professional learning plans that align campus needs indicated in the CIP, with district instructional priorities.[38] PLLs provide job-embedded supports to build teacher capacity and encourage a philosophy for continuous learning. The key experiences for job-embedded professional learning include setting up lab classrooms, providing professional learning sessions, and conducting guided observations. Every campus has 1 PLL teacher stipend position.

- **Technology Integration Champions (TICs)** are responsible for collaborating with campus and district leaders to create, implement, and monitor campus professional learning plans that align campus needs, identified in the CIP, with district instructional priorities related to technology integration and blended learning. The TIC promotes the use of technology integration on their campus through the creation and delivery of professional learning experiences for teachers. Every campus has 1 TIC teacher stipend position.

- **Instructional Coaches** specialize in providing job-embedded professional learning in the areas of literacy and math to teachers through professional learning experiences, facilitating PLCs, and coaching. Instructional coaches are located on Title I campuses.

- **Teacher Cadres** develop teacher leaders by preparing them to design and deliver purposeful, blended professional learning aligned to the District's goals. The cadre provides teacher leaders

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[38] PLL job description.

with opportunities to lead and engage in professional learning pertaining to the implementation of a student-centered curriculum, and provide feedback on upcoming district initiatives. FBISD has 7 Teacher Cadres in the areas of math, science, literacy, ESL and world languages. Cadre members are selected through and application process.

Finding 12. Job-embedded coaching is not consistently implemented across schools.

An important element of FBISD's strategy of building teacher capacity through job-embedded coaching is dependent on the effectiveness of the PLL and TIC teacher positions. Figure 54 shows the percent of teachers and principals that agree/strongly agree to positive statements about the effectiveness of PLLs and TICs. For both positions, teachers are much less positive than principals.

Figure 54. Principal and Teacher Surveys – PLLs and TICs
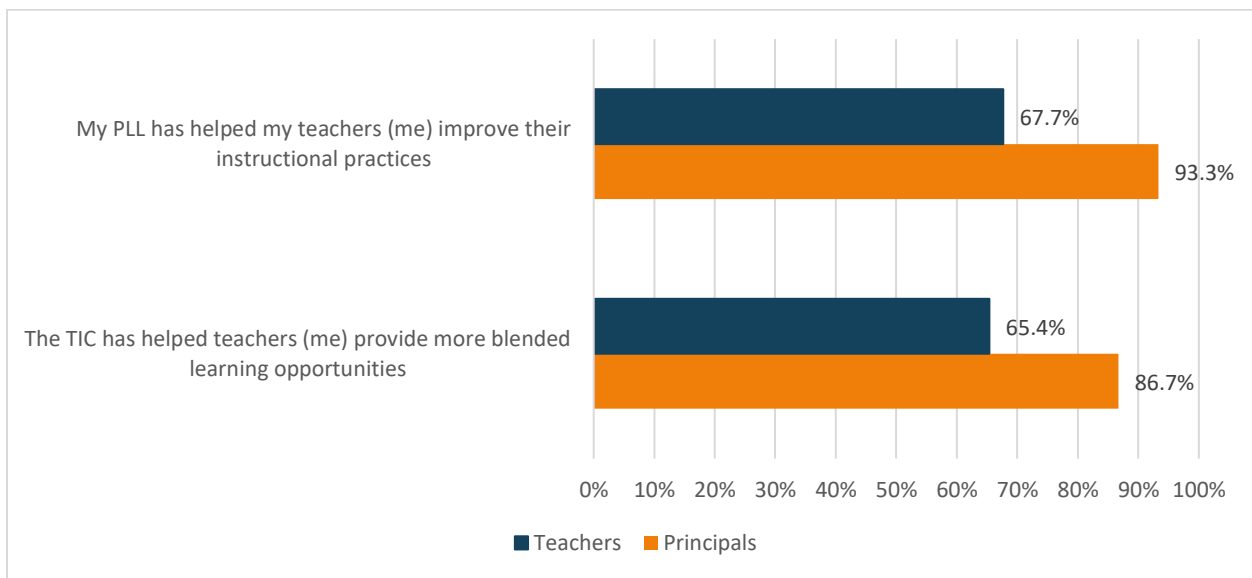
Source: Gibson Principal and Teacher Surveys.

With some exceptions, PLLs and TICs at elementary schools teach a full load, while at secondary schools they frequently teach less than a full load (at the discretion of the principal). During interviews and focus groups, the audit team received consistent feedback that school schedules, particularly at the elementary level, do not enable these teacher positions to effectively fulfill their responsibilities (e.g., they do not have time to model lessons, conduct guided observations). Many staff reported that PLLs and TICs have not yet set up demonstration classrooms on their campuses, and those that have, reported that many of their teacher colleagues do not have time to observe them unless it is during their own conference period. In an effort to support teachers, some principals reported to the audit team that their PLLs and TICs offer optional workshops after school.

Recommendation 13. Allow for reduced teaching loads for campus-based instructional leaders at the elementary level.

As stated above, an important element of FBISD's strategy for building teacher capacity relies on job-embedded coaching provided by campus-based PLLs and TICs. To successfully implement this strategy, FBISD must ensure that all campuses have sufficient resources (e.g., staff) and provide the necessary support structures (e.g., master schedule). PLLs an TICs at elementary schools should have a reduced teaching load to allow them sufficient time to mentor and coach their teacher colleagues. Principals should also ensure that demonstration classrooms are fully set-up on their campuses and that teachers that need support are provided ample opportunity to participate in guided observations.

Management Response: *While management agrees with the recommendation, we would like to point out that currently, teacher leader roles such as the PLL and TIC are intended to develop a lab classroom. Lab classrooms allow a safe space for risk taking and implementation of instructional practices. Administrators or other teacher leaders (instructional coaches/specialists) should develop a system of to support campus teacher engagement in Guided observations using these lab classrooms.*

Currently the PLL and TIC teacher leaders have 1 – 2 class periods where they are not instructing students in addition to a conference period to provide time for these job roles to develop professional learning.

The Instructional Coach model is the designated teacher capacity-building model though not all campuses have coaches at this time.

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Chapter 6 – Teacher Quality

Research has clearly shown that quality teaching matters to student learning, and that teacher quality has been consistently identified as the most important school-based factor in student achievement.[39] As such, this chapter provides a profile of FBISD's teacher workforce, an overview of the programs to on-board and support new teachers, and teacher performance management.

Fort Bend ISD Teacher Profile

In 2018-19, FBISD staff consisted of 9,971.8 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, including 4,629.7 FTE teachers (46.4%). FBISD's teacher turnover rate, which has been consistently below the state average, has fluctuated over the past five years. In 2018-19, FBISD's teacher turnover rate was 13.9 percent, which is 2.6 percentage points below the state average (Figure 55).

Figure 55. Teacher Turnover Rate, 2015-15 to 2018-19
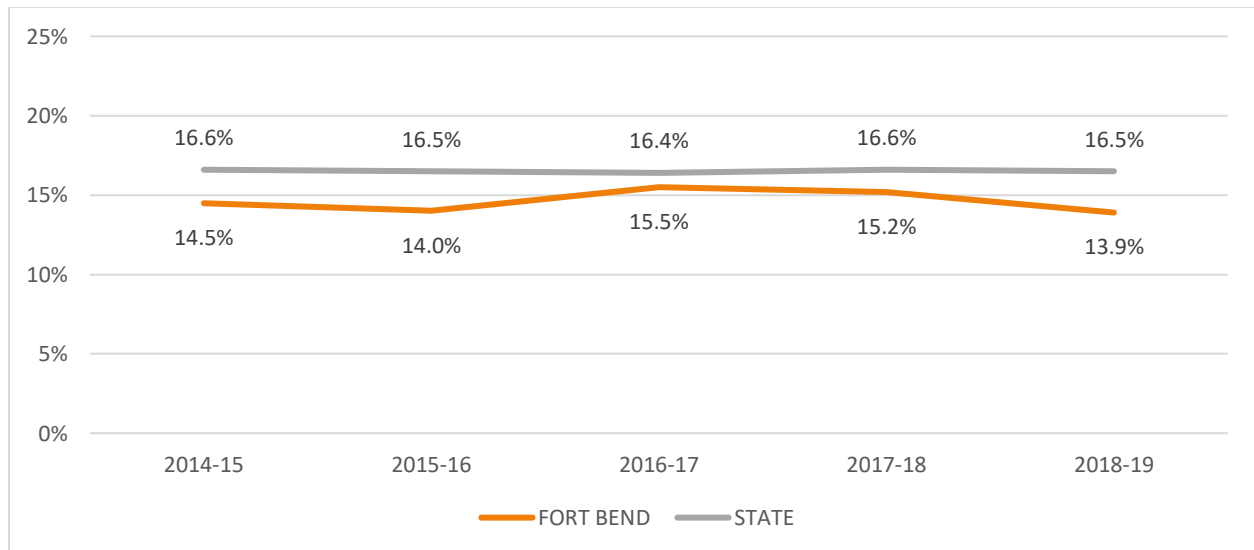
Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2014-15 to 2018-19.

The teacher turnover rate in FBISD is close to the average of the benchmark districts (excluding United ISD, which is an outlier).

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[39] https://www.edweek.org/media/eperc_qualityteaching_12.11.pdf

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Figure 56. Teacher Turnover Rate, 2018-19
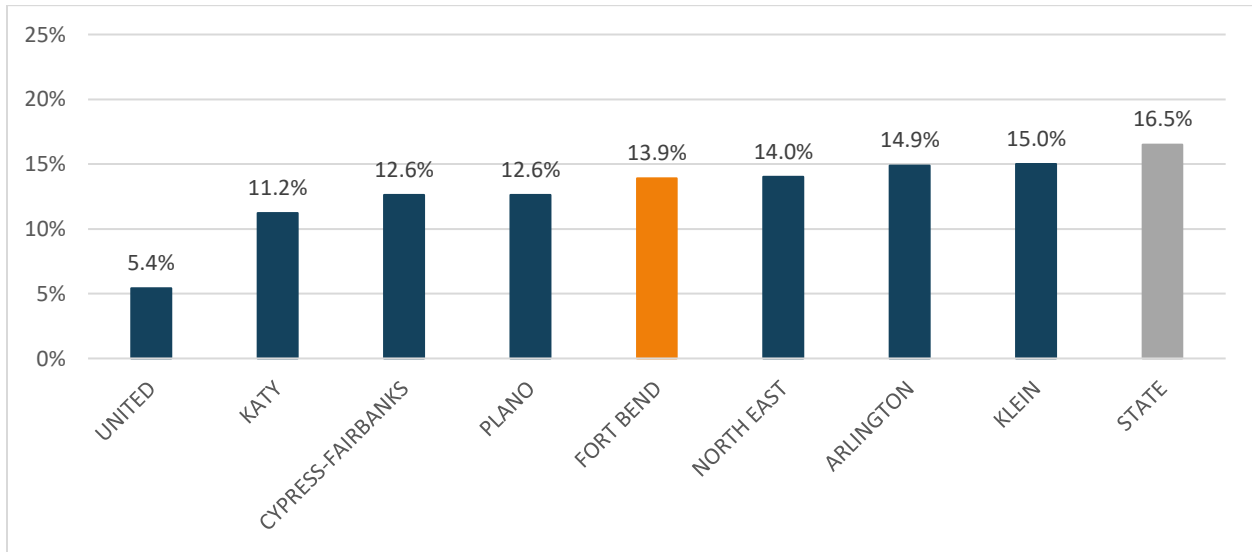
Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2018-19.

There is extensive research that demonstrates that teaching experience is associated with student achievement gains and other measures of success, such as school attendance, and experienced teachers have a positive impact on the performance of their peers and are more likely to confer benefits to their colleagues, their students, and the school as a whole.[40] One-third of FBISD's teachers have less than six years of teaching experience, which is similar to the benchmark districts (Figure 57).

Figure 57. Percent of Teachers by Years of Teaching Experience, 2018-19
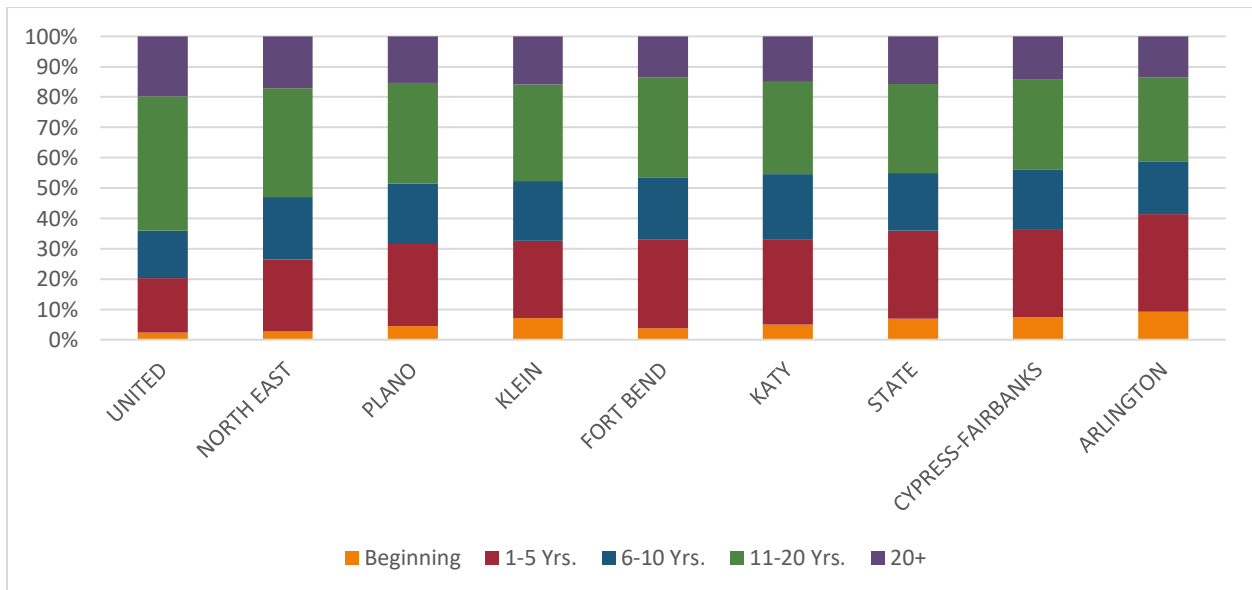
Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2018-19.

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[40] https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/03/25/new-studies-find-that-for-teachers-experience.html

Since 1995, Texas law has allowed districts to hire teachers who have earned their teaching credentials through alternative certification programs. FBISD currently partners with ACT Houston to identify and place alternatively certified teachers. The percentage of FBISD's teachers that are alternatively certified has increased over the past three years while the percentage of teachers that earned their teaching credentials through a standard program has decreased (Figure 58).

Figure 58. FBISD Teachers Employed by Certificate Program, 2009 to 2018
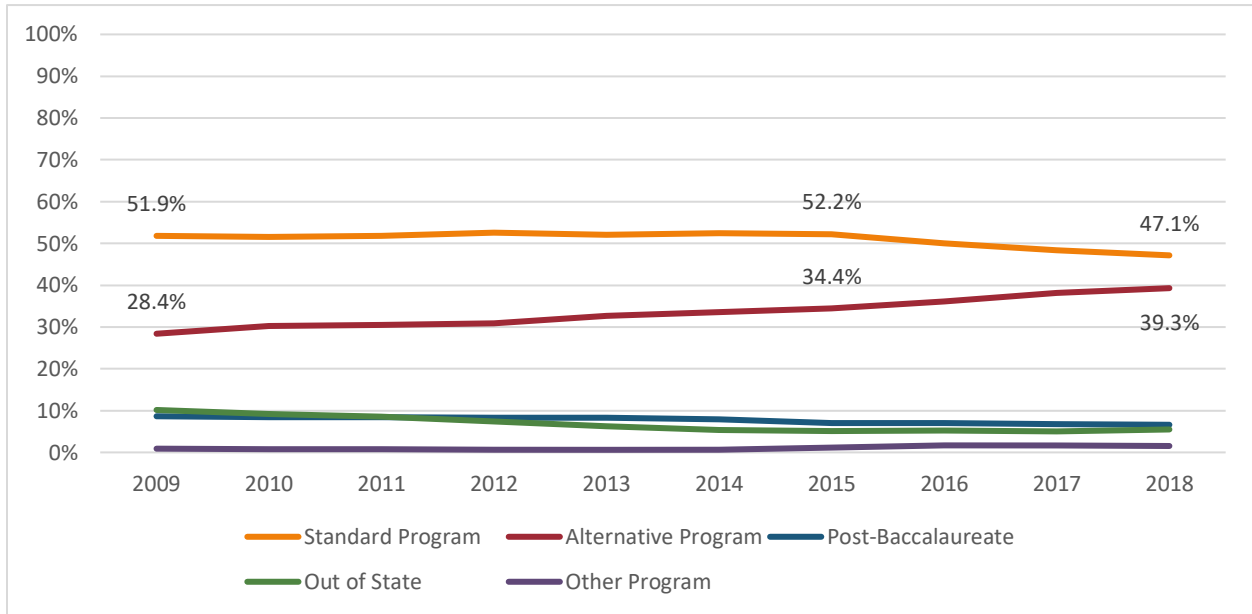
Source: TPEIR Texas Education Reports, Teachers Employed by School District Certification and Classification Report.

Compared to benchmark districts, FBISD has the lowest percentage of teachers (47.1%) who earned their teaching credentials through a standard program.

Figure 59. Teachers Employed by Certificate Program, 2018
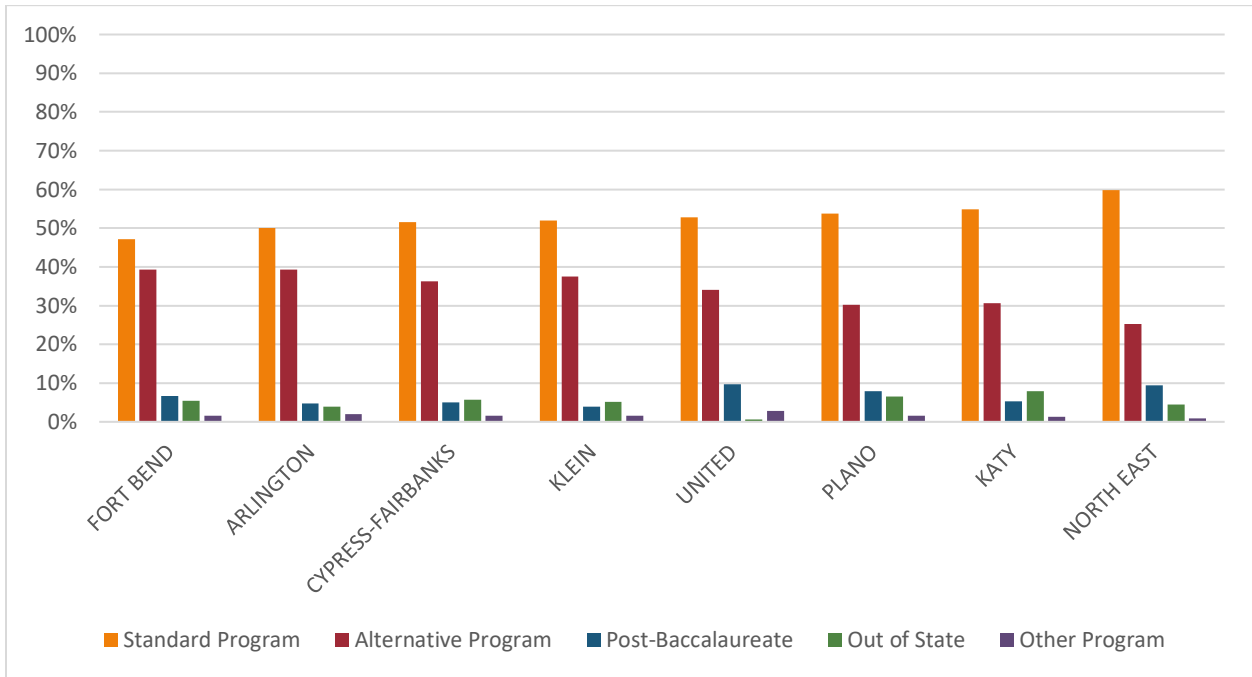
Source: TPEIR Texas Education Reports, Teachers Employed by School District Certification and Classification Report.

More than 29.6 percent of teachers in FBISD have a masters or doctoral degree, placing it near the top of the benchmark district averages, which ranged from a low of 21.9 percent in United ISD to a high of 35.2 percent in North East ISD (see Figure 60).

Figure 60. Percent of Teachers by Highest Degree, 2018-19
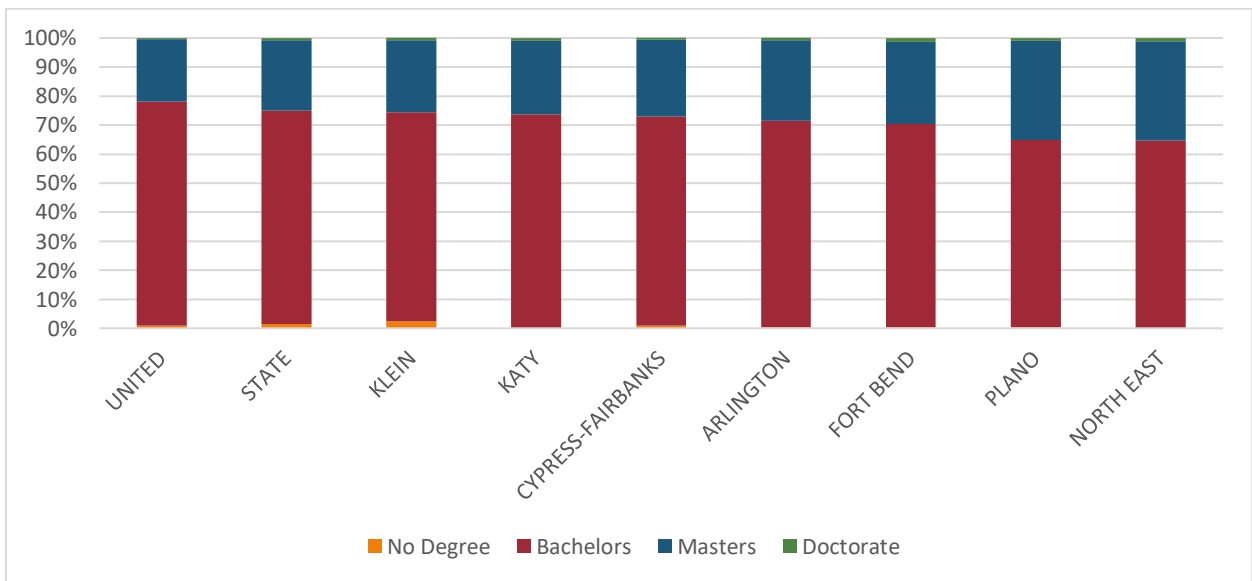
Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), Texas Academic Performance Reports (TAPR), 2018-19.

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Teacher Induction and Mentoring

Teacher induction programs are essential for helping beginning teachers successfully transition to the classroom and remain in teaching. In fact, research shows that it is more cost effective to provide teacher induction programs that reduce teacher attrition than to fund recruitment and hiring initiatives to replace departing teachers.[41]

Commendation 17. FBISD has a teacher induction program to support and mentor new teachers.

As shown above, nearly 40 percent of teachers in FBISD obtained their teaching credentials through an alternative certification program. Most alternative certification preparation programs are not designed to include a teaching practicum prior to being hired by the district. As a result, these teachers require a higher level of support to be successful, especially during their first year of teaching.

FBISD's Teachers Advancing Professional Practice (TAPP) program mentors are designed to provide the necessary supports to develop and retain quality new teachers. These goals are achieved through ongoing support via weekly mentor-mentee meetings, quarterly professional learning sessions with mentors and mentees, differentiated blended learning, and job embedded professional learning experiences utilizing guided observations. The primary goal is to develop and retain teachers that will be equipped to meet the needs of every student in FBISD.[42]

T-TESS Performance Management

In 2016-17, Texas adopted a new state-recommended appraisal system for teachers, called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System (T-TESS), which focuses on providing continuous, timely and formative feedback to educators so they can improve their practice.[43] The system consists of an evaluation rubric, a goal-setting and professional development plan, and a student growth measure embedded in processes of support that encourage professional growth, goal identification, and the establishment of strengths, as well as professional development needs.

The T-TESS rubric includes four domains and 16 dimensions (see Figure 61). The T-TESS domain and dimension rubrics include specific descriptors of practices and five performance levels: Distinguished, Accomplished, Proficient, Developing, and Improvement Needed. FBISD does not produce a single summative rating for teachers; instead, final ratings are at the dimension level so each teacher receives 16 ratings.

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[41] https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED467748

[42] FBISD Professional Learning Plan.

[43] Texas Education Agency (TEA) website.

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Figure 61. T-TESS Performance Domains and Dimensions

Domain 1: Planning

- 1.1 Standards and Alignment - The teacher designs clear, well-organized, sequential lessons that reflect best practice, align with standards, and are appropriate for diverse learners.

- 1.2 Data and Assessment – The teacher uses formal and informal methods to measure student progress, then manages and analyzes student data to inform instruction.

- 1.3 Knowledge of Students – Through knowledge of students and proven practices, the teacher ensures high levels of learning, social-emotional development and achievement for all students.

- 1.4 Activities – The teacher plans engaging, flexible lessons that encourages higher-order thinking, persistence and achievement.

Domain 2: Instruction

- 2.1 Achieving Expectations – The teacher supports all learners in their pursuit of high levels of academic and social-emotional success.

- 2.2 Content Knowledge and Expertise – The teacher uses content and pedagogical expertise to design and execute lessons aligned with state standards, related content and student needs.

- 2.3 Communication – The teacher clearly and accurately communicates to support persistence, deeper learning and effective effort.

- 2.4 Differentiation – The teacher differentiates instruction, aligning methods and techniques to diverse student needs.

- 2.5 Monitor and Adjust – The teacher formally and informally collects, analyzes and uses student progress data and makes needed lesson adjustments.

Domain 3: Learning Environment

- 3.1 Classroom Environment, Routines and Procedures – The teacher organizes a safe, accessible and efficient classroom.

- 3.2 Managing Student Behavior – The teacher establishes, communicates and maintains clear expectations for student behavior.

- 3.3 Classroom Culture – The teacher leads a mutually respectful and collaborative class of actively engaged learners.

**Domain 4: Professional Practices and Responsibilities**

- 4.1 Professional Demeanor and Ethics – The teacher meets district expectations for attendance, professional appearance, decorum, procedural, ethical, legal and statutory responsibilities.

- 4.2 Goal Setting – The teacher reflects on his/her practice.

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> - 4.3 Professional Development – The teacher enhances the professional community.
>
> - 4.4 School Community Involvement – The teacher demonstrates leadership with students, colleagues, and community members in the school, district and community through effective communication and outreach.

Source: https://teachfortexas.org/Resource_Files/Guides/T-TESS_Rubric.pdf

Figure 62 shows the percentage of FBISD teachers at each performance level by dimension. Across all dimension, more than 90 percent of teachers were rated Proficient or above in 2018-19. *Instruction: Dimension 2.4 – Differentiation* had the highest percentage of teachers (9.6 percent) rated Developing or Improvement Needed.

Figure 62. Percent of Teachers by T-TESS Domain and Performance Evaluation Rating, 2018
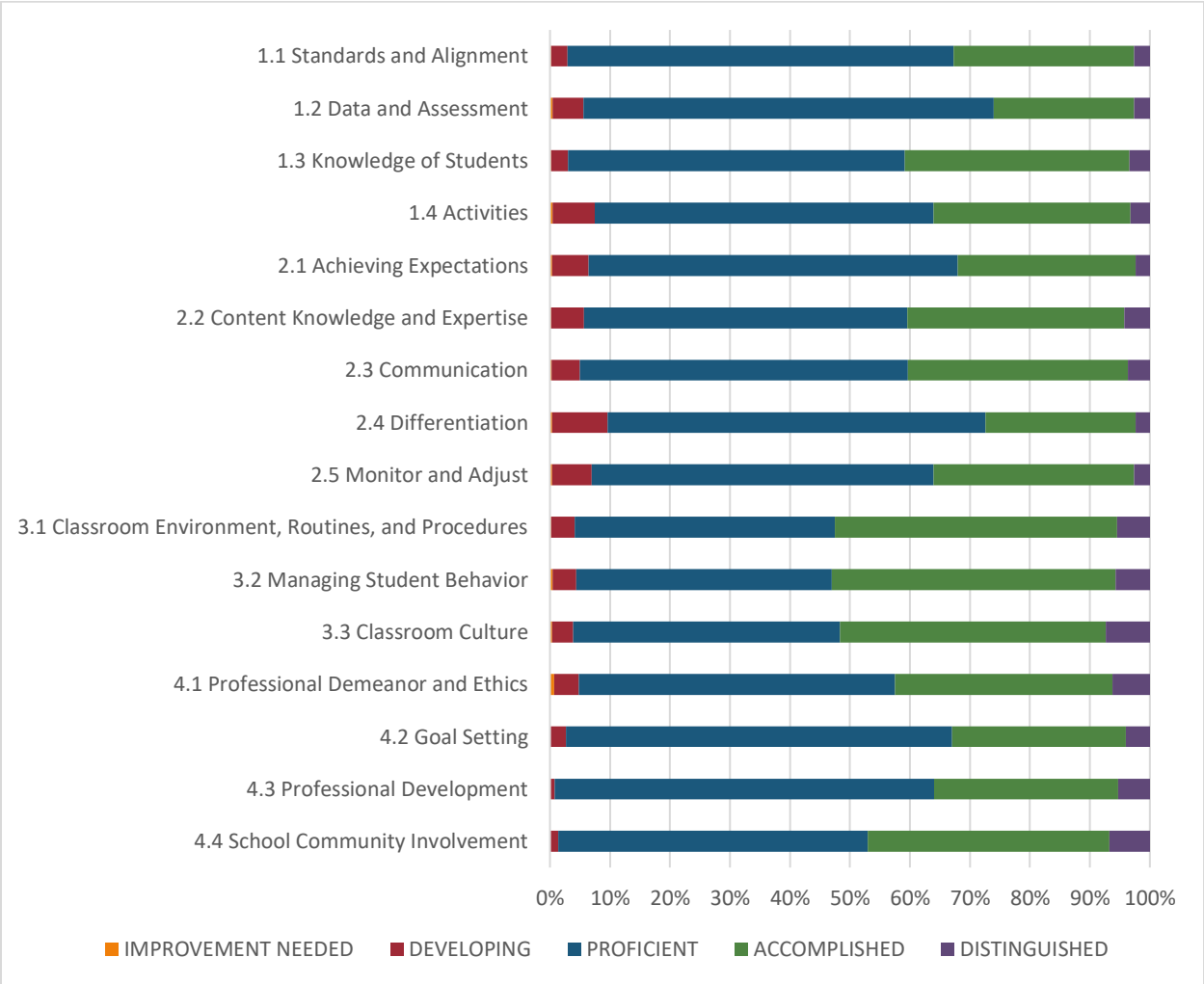
Source: FBISD Teacher Summative Data, 2018-19. Note: Analysis includes only Teacher positions.

The percentage of teachers rated Developing or Improvement Needed decreased for all dimensions for domains 1 and 2, with the exception of *Dimension 2.5 – Monitor and Adjust* (Figure 63).
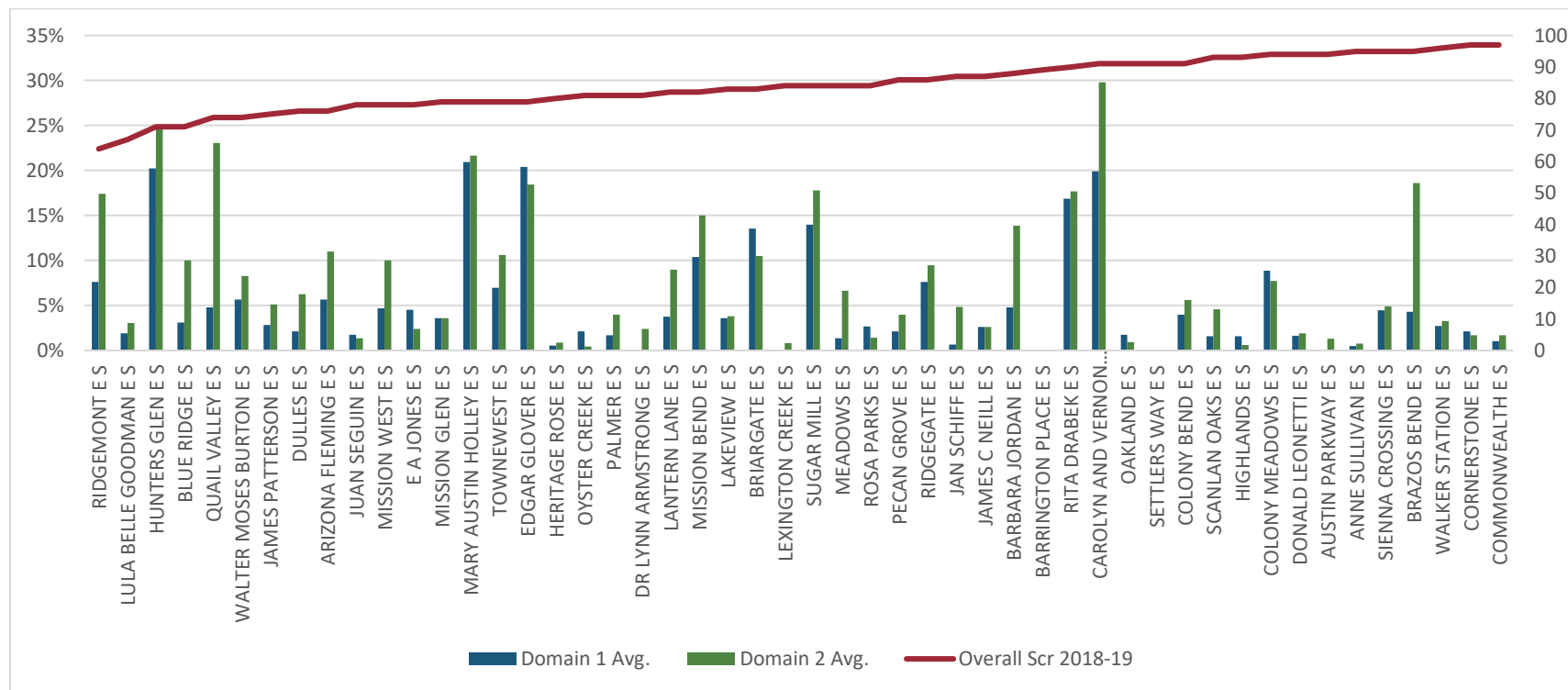
Figure 63. Percent of Teachers Rated Developing or Improvement Needed for Domain/Dimension 1 and Domain 2, 2017-18 and 2018-19
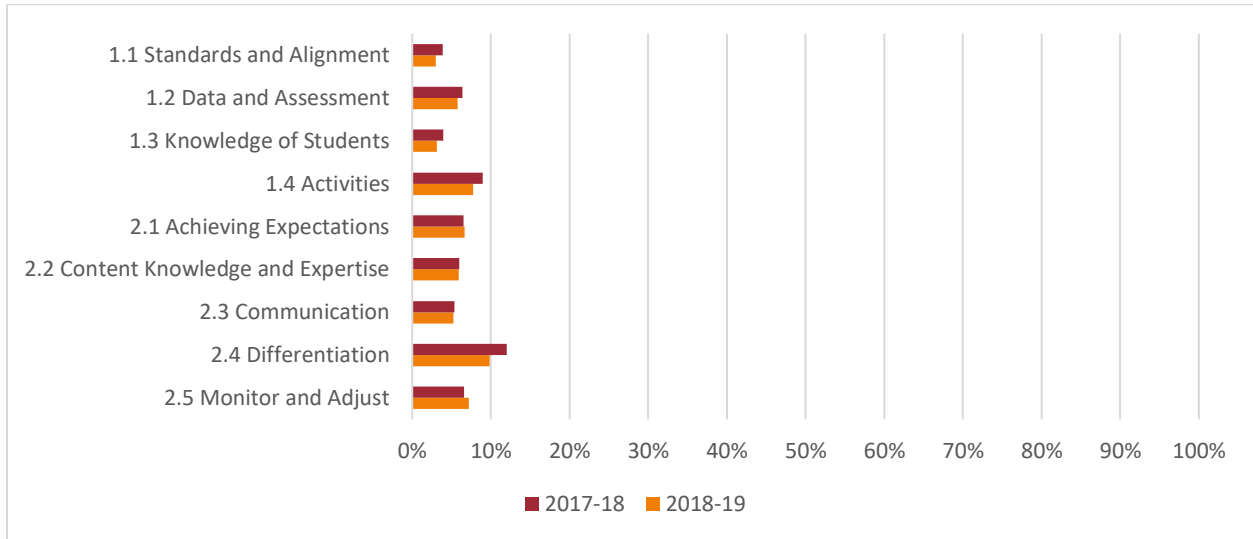
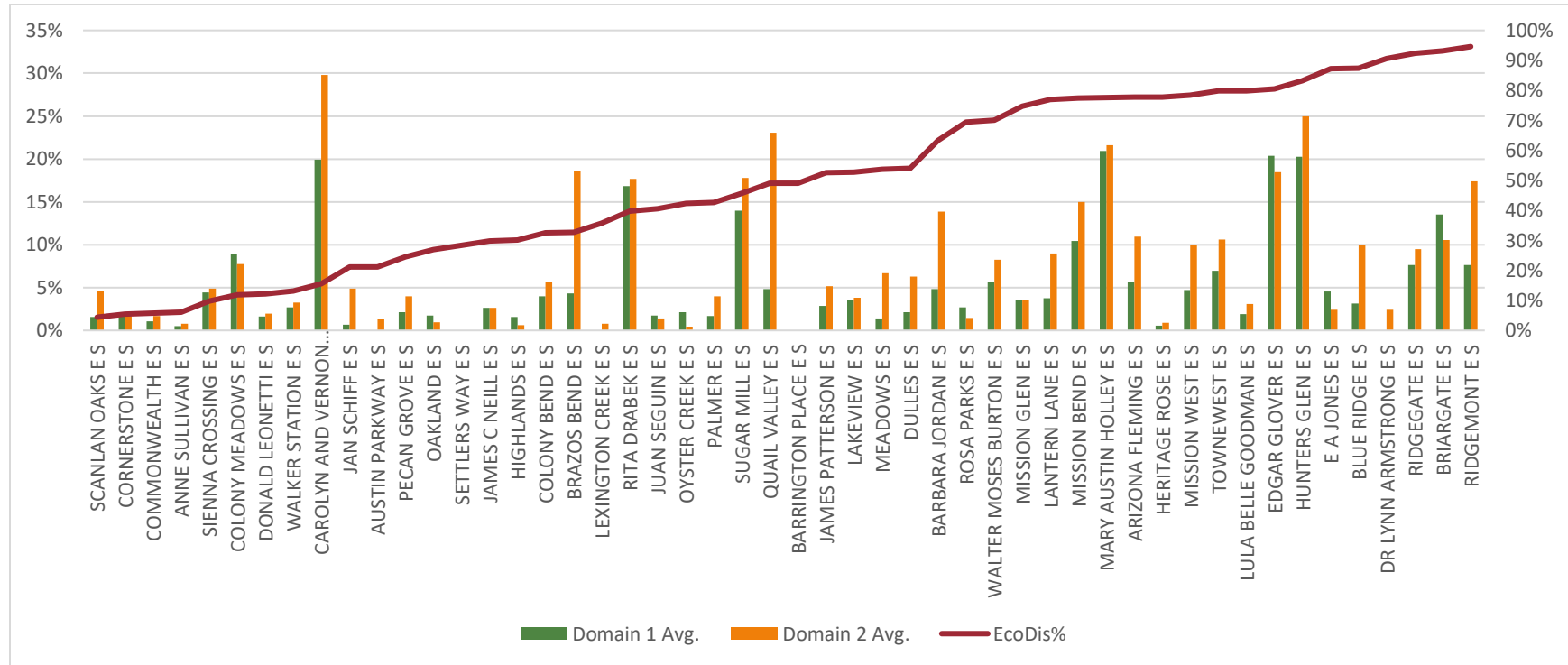Source: FBISD 52.2 T-TESS Report 2017-18 and 2018-19.

The audit team further analyzed teacher T-TESS performance ratings by campus for domains 1 (Planning) and 2 (Instruction), and found that while some campuses had a significantly higher percentage of teachers with dimension performance ratings of Developing or Needs Improvement, there did not appear to be a strong relationship between teacher performance ratings and the overall school performance (Figure 64) or the percent of students economically disadvantaged (Figure 65).

Figure 64. Average Percent of Teachers Rated Developing or Improvement Needed for Domain 1 and Domain 2 and Overall School Performance Score, Elementary Schools, 2018-19

Source: FBISD 52.2 T-TESS Report 2018-19.

Figure 65. Average Percent of Teachers Rated Developing or Improvement Needed for Domain 1 and Domain 2 and Percent of Economically Disadvantaged Students, Elementary Schools, 2018-19

Source: FBISD 52.2 T-TESS Report 2018-19.

On Gibson's survey, 86.8 percent of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that "T-TESS feedback provides actionable information to help me improve," and 76.2 percent of teachers agreed/strongly agreed that they "get job-embedded coaching to address learning goals from T-TESS evaluation." There was little variation across school levels or teaching experience in these responses.

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Appendix A – Site Visit Roster

Interviews

The audit team conducted interviews with the following Fort Bend ISD staff:

- Charles Dupre, Ed.D., Superintendent

- Diana Sayavedra, Deputy Superintendent

- Joe Rodriguez, Ed.D., Chief of Schools

- Beth Martinez, Chief of Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Gwen Touchet, Chief Human Resources Officer

- Brian Guinn, Interim Chief Financial Officer

- Carmela Levy-David, Assistant Superintendent Early Childhood and School Improvement

- Kwabena Mensah, Assistant Superintendent Elementary Education

- Devin Pedavil, Assistant Superintendent Secondary Education

- Xochitl Rodriguez, Assistant Superintendent Student Affairs

- Stephanie Williams, Executive Director Teaching and Learning

- Deena Hill, Ed. D., Executive Director Student Support Services

- Pilar Westbrook, Executive Director SEL and Comprehensive Health

- Melissa Hubbard, Director Teacher Development

- Christopher Freeman, Director Student-centered Assessment

- Clarissa Rodriguez, Director Enriched Learning Opportunities

- Ashley Causey, Director STEM Curriculum and Instruction

- Susan Voradakis, Director Instructional Resources

- Lisa Coston, Director Literacy Curriculum and Instruction and Sarah Morvant, Coordinator

- Laurie Westphal, Director Gifted and Talented

- Meredith Watassek, Director CTE

- Angela Tran, Director Multilingual Programs

Focus Groups

The audit team conducted the following group interviews; participants were randomly selected by the Gibson audit team.

- Executive Directors, School Leadership
- Elementary School Principals
- Secondary School Principals
- Elementary School Teachers (Impact Team)
- Secondary School Teachers (Impact Team)
- Social Studies and Literacy Curriculum Coordinators
- Math and Science Curriculum Coordinators
- Teacher Development Coordinators
- Technology Integration Specialists
- Professional Learning Leads (PLLs) and Technology Integration Champions (TICS)
- Instructional Coaches

School Visits

The audit team visited nine schools. Schools visited were selected based on school level, academic performance, student demographics, and geographic location.

- Colony Bend Elementary School
- Burton Elementary School
- Fleming Elementary School
- Seguin Elementary School
- Baines Middle School
- Garcia Middle School
- Missouri City Middle School
- Elkins High School
- Willowridge High School

Appendix B – Professional Learning Communities Analysis

Background

Professional Learning Communities provide a systematic means of improving instruction and school culture. By design, PLCs overcome the isolated, fragmented cultures in which teachers usually work. Studies have found that schools adopting the PLC model made greater achievement gains in mathematics, science, history, and reading than did their counterparts in other schools, and showed smaller achievement gaps among students from different social classes and racial/ethnic backgrounds. In these schools, teachers collaborate, take collective responsibility for student learning, and strive for continuous improvement in their practice (Dufour and Marzano, 2011).

Dufour and Marzano (2011) list seven conditions for effective PLCs. These conditions are the responsibility of district and school leaders and are essential for creating conditions at the school level for effective PLCs:

- **Organize into meaningful teams** – The most important criterion in organizing educators into teams is their shared responsibility for addressing student learning needs. The most common structures include same course or grade-level teams, vertical teams and interdisciplinary teams.

- **Provide teams with time to collaborate** – It creates dissonance for teachers to assert that working together is an organizational priority and then provide inadequate time for teams to meet the expectations of district and school leaders. PLC teams need adequate and frequent enough time to engage in deep conversations and complete a cycle of work that encompasses examining standards, designing formative assessments, planning and designing the delivery of instruction, assessing the impact of instruction, re-teaching, enriching, and reassessing. All of this work takes time if it is to be done with a level of quality that students deserve.

- **Provide supportive structures that help groups become teams** – Teams are more effective when they have clarified expectations regarding how they will work together, how they translate those expectations into collective commitments, and how they use the commitments to monitor their working relationship on an ongoing basis.

- **Clarify the work teams must accomplish** – A skillful manager can assign people into meaningful teams, create schedules that provide them with time to collaborate, and guide teams in creating acceptable norms and SMART goals. It takes *effective leaders,* however, to help teams clarify their purpose and priorities, focus on the right work, and continuously improve their effectiveness.

- **Monitor the work of teams and provide direction and support as needed** – The corollary to clarifying the work that must be done in the collaborative team process is developing strategies for monitoring that work. One of those strategies calls for teams to develop products that flow from the dialogue of a team engaged in collective inquiry on the right work.

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- **Avoid shortcuts in the collaborative team process** – Decide what is tight and what is loose – what should be consistent across all PLCs across the district and where is there room for variation?

- **Celebrate short-term wins and confront those who do not contribute to the team** – It is difficult to create momentum for the collaborative team process and impossible to sustain the process without recognizing and celebrating both concerted effort and incremental progress. Additionally, effective PLCs depend on leaders who are willing to be direct in addressing those who make no contribution to their collaborative teams.

These seven conditions, together with research-based best practices, have been translated into *Five Principles of Collaboration* that guided the design of the audit team's school visits and the assessment of PLC effectiveness. The University of Virginia's highly acclaimed School Transformation Program relies heavily on high-functioning PLCs as one of the transformative practices for school improvement. Based on research and experience, they have identified these five principles to guide teacher, principal, and district professional learning regarding implementation of high functioning PLCs. These principles are representative of a cycle of work that, while not observed in every meeting, should be observable in an entire collaborative cycle.

Professional Learning Communities Analysis Summary

To assess the extent to which FBISD's school-based PLCs engage in work that exemplifies the five principles, the audit team conducted in-depth interviews with the principal and in some cases other members of the school leadership team, examined work artifacts such as master schedules, meeting agendas, minutes and protocols used by the PLCs and, when possible, observed PLC meetings. Table 20 provides a summary of the audit team's analysis of FBISD's PLCs.

Table 20. Summary of Analysis of Professional Learning Communities

Principle	Classroom Observation Results
Principle #1 **Meetings Have a Clear Purpose and Measurable Outcomes.** - Logical team structure that supports purpose of the PLC - Purpose and outcomes are aligned to school-level priorities - Purpose is identified using evidence-based metrics that are both qualitative and quantitative	**Logical Team Structure** - Every school had a logical team structure. Elementary was structured around grade level and content area when departmentalized. Secondary school PLCs were organized around course alike subjects. **Purpose and Outcomes Aligned to School-level Priorities** - Every school, with one exception, addressed their PLC within at least one goal area on the CIP. The most frequently cited was district goal 1: *FBISD will provide an equitable learning environment that provides all students access to the FBISD curriculum.* Within this goal, PLCs were cited as a performance objective and/or strategy and primarily focused on using protocols to

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Principle	Classroom Observation Results
	engage in unit planning, data analysis, and formative assessment development. The identified purpose and expected outcomes were aligned to school-level priorities. **Evidence-based Metrics** ▪ There is opportunity for improvement in using more quantitative metrics to determine the desired impact/outcome of the work of PLCs. Every CIP had qualitative measures and at least two schools had a quantitative measure, stating that PLCs are an essential strategy for ensuring at least a year's worth of growth. The CIP template includes the Strategy's Expected Result/Impact and affords an opportunity to tighten the measurement of the impact of PLC actions.
Principle #2 **Structures are in Place to Support Collaboration Around Student Achievement.** ▪ Master schedule / collaborative time calendar/sufficient time to meet ▪ Meeting protocols exist and guide the work of the team ▪ Teams have norms and make collective commitments to common goals	**Time for Collaboration** ▪ This was the biggest challenge faced by all but two of the schools visited. Missouri MS and Willow Ridge HS, with the additional Title 1 funding they receive due to their improvement status, provide a daily PLC for all tested subjects in addition to the teacher's individual planning time. ▪ All other schools utilize a period of teacher common planning time for designated PLC meetings: - Four schools have PLCs meet one time per week for 45-50 minutes - Three schools have PLCs meet bi-weekly for 45-50 minutes **Meeting Protocols Guide the Work of the PLCs** ▪ The District has developed a variety of protocols that guide the various phases of PLC work. Specifically, there is a protocol for planning instruction, developing lesson plans, creating formative assessments and analyzing data. The protocols vary based on the PLC model adopted by the school: Concept Planning Protocol, Impact Team, or Relay Team - Five schools use all or some of the district protocol documents for their respective model to support their planning, delivery of instruction, assessment and data analysis. Schools that are at earlier stages

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Principle	Classroom Observation Results
	of PLC development, have developed their own protocol based off of the district protocols - Four schools use a school-based protocol that is less intensive and state this is based on the current development of their PLCs **Teams Have Norms and Make Collective Commitments to Common Goals** ▪ Eight of the nine schools visited had developed team norms with several having processes in place to re-visit norms on a regular basis.
Principle #3 **A Cycle of Work Guides the Focus of Collaboration Meetings and Collaborative Data Discussions are Aligned to a Cyclical Process.** ▪ Team members have clear understanding of meeting cycle – typically includes: - Creating lessons - Reviewing student work - Creating common assessments - Sharing best practices - Analyzing data - Creating instructional action plans - Designing re-teach/interventions/enrichment	**A Clear Cycle of Work Guides the Focus of PLC Meetings** ▪ District provided PLC protocols support the work that should happen at the various stages of the PLC cycle of work. Activities of an effective PLC typically include: - Analyzing unit standards - Designing formative assessments - Planning instruction - Assessing learning - Evaluating data - Executing re-engagement and/or enrichment - Reassessing learning ▪ PLC teams are at various stages of proficiency executing the cycle of work. The most often used protocol relates to planning instruction that builds off of the district Unit Planning Protocol and the Concept Planning Protocol. School leaders like the fact that the protocol drives teachers into the curriculum documents. The two schools with the opportunity for more frequent PLCs had the most effective use of the planning protocol with demonstrated use of district curriculum documents. PLCs also use the protocol for analyzing data and creating formative assessments. Each protocol includes guiding questions that support collaboration. ▪ The challenge most PLCs faced regarding the use of protocols is the time available for PLC meetings. The protocols support deep conversations, analysis of student learning and planning and designing formative assessments as well as responding to student learning needs when they have not been successful on formative assessments. A 45-50 minute meeting once per week or

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Principle	Classroom Observation Results
	a 45-50 minute bi-weekly meeting keeps conversations and utilization of the protocols at a more surface level than desired.
Principle #4 **Effective Instructional Strategies are Discussed and Shared Based on Recent Improvements in Student Performance Data.** ▪ Discussion addresses instructional action plan and progress ▪ Lesson and unit plans include evidence of collaborative discussions ▪ Evidence of effectiveness of implementation is maintained through collection and review of authentic student work and other relevant data	**Discussion Addresses Instructional Action Plan and Progress** ▪ The Concept Planning Protocol includes guiding questions that directly address the design of instruction and include analyzing pre-assessment data and the resulting implications for the design of meaningful learning experiences. This protocol was the most widely cited and utilized for planning a unit of instruction and delving into the supporting curriculum documents. ▪ While there are a number of protocols available to teams to develop action plans following analysis of data, given the frequency and time available for PLC meetings, this was not observed as an area of strength – with the exception of the Relay Schools which have a very tight process around analyzing data and developing teacher action plans following assessment analysis. **Evidence of Effectiveness of Implementation is Maintained Through Collection and Review of Authentic Student Work and other Relevant Data** ▪ Every school had a system for how teams compiled and stored the record of their work from formats as simple as individual and team binders to digitally supported systems with team and teacher folders housed in Schoology, SharePoint, or One-Drive. ▪ All teams submit for administrator review: agendas, meeting minutes, meeting decisions and completed protocols. These documents are frequently used to guide classroom walkthrough Lookfors (e.g., does the observed classroom instruction map to the work planned in the PLC meetings?)
Principle #5 **The Cycle is Monitored for Measurable Outcomes.** ▪ Walk-throughs, teacher observations, professional development and interventions	**The Cycle is Monitored for Measurable Outcomes** ▪ Several principals shared examples of how the work of planning instruction in the PLC meetings, paired with district curriculum documents, was used to focus their classroom walkthroughs and to provide feedback to

Principle	Classroom Observation Results
are directly aligned to the purpose and outcomes of the collaborative discussions ▪ Evidence of implementation is monitored by the administration, evaluated by the collaborative team for effectiveness and acceleration/enrichment is redesigned when necessary	teachers regarding the strength or need for improvement in the observed classroom instruction. ▪ In all cases, members of the school administrative team attend and/or monitor the work of the PLCs. This helps to inform the need for professional learning support and principals stated they are able to request assistance from Teaching and Learning or to push in instructional coaches and other specialists to support teacher professional learning needs. ▪ Given the general lack of adequate time for the deep implementation of all phases of work typically addressed in a PLC, there were few examples of teacher action plans following data analysis that the team was able to review.

Source: Gibson Consulting Group.

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