
*Chapter 1****Management, Personnel, and Communications***

The Management, Personnel, and Communications chapter evaluates the leadership of the district and how effectively it puts in place systems that ensure that the district is well managed, connected to the community, and academically successful. This chapter provides information regarding data needs, people to interview, activities to perform, and questions to ask while evaluating the management, personnel functions, and communications of a school district. ***Obviously, school districts vary in size, and therefore, many of these data needs, interview requests, activities, and questions will need to be tailored accordingly.***

I. GOVERNANCE

School districts in Oklahoma are governed by elected Boards of Education. Boards should focus on the decision making process, planning, and providing resources for goal achievement. To a great extent, the ability of the board to perform these duties effectively is determined by their knowledge and recognition of the separation of their role from that of the superintendent. The superintendent serves as the administrative leader responsible for policy implementation and day to day operations. An effective superintendent supports the board's responsibility as policy maker. It is important that the superintendent works to help board members fulfill their duties by providing training opportunities and instituting procedures that facilitate effective board meetings, open communications, and timely transfer of information.

Data Needs

- District history
- Board meeting schedule, agendas, and past minutes
- List of opportunities for public input other than board meetings
- List of any board committees and their memberships
- District policies and procedures manuals
- Board members' name, occupation, length of service, and training records

People to Interview

Board members
Superintendent
Central Office administration
Principals
District's Attorney(s)

I.A Board Meetings***Activities to Perform***

- I.A.1 Attend one or more board meetings and observe board conduct, examine and evaluate the board packet, examine and evaluate the minutes, compare the posted agenda to the meeting format, and evaluate the quality and quantity of public input.

Questions to Ask

Are board meetings well organized? Are board meetings conducted according to established procedures and Robert's Rules of Order? Is there a provision for adequate public input through a formal agenda item or other means for citizen comment? How is information recorded and distributed for review?

Is the board agenda and supporting information packet that is prepared by the superintendent, disseminated within a time frame mutually agreed upon by the board and superintendent? Does the board packet contain comprehensive background information that allows the board to make well-informed decisions? Are board packets and other informational items made available on the Internet to board members or the public?

Is there an established criterion for placing an item on the agenda including items requested by the board or citizens? Are executive sessions conducted in accordance with State law?

Are all meetings of the board posted in compliance with state law? How does the district use the local newspaper or a district website to keep the community informed of board meetings, agendas, decisions, and other district news?

How are minutes of the board meetings prepared and who is responsible for preparing them? Are minutes prepared in a timely manner? Are minutes complete and do they contain sufficient detail to be useful in documenting the decisions of the board?

Does the district record board meetings in audio or video format? Does the district televise board meetings to the community? Does the administration use these tapes to determine follow-up actions needed to carry out board policy? Are tapes used to plan future meetings? Does the public and community have access to these tapes?

I.B Board Governance***Activities to Perform***

- I.B.1 Prepare a table showing each board member, any offices held on the board, year elected, term of office, the length of service, and the board member's profession and place of business.
- I.B.2 Interview all board members and the superintendent. Examine public input regarding the

board and the board's relationship with the superintendent. Prepare a summary of individual interviews and compare results with the public perceptions and note any similarities or differences.

- I.B.3 Examine the training records of board members and list the type and number of hours of training attended by each board member. Specifically identify orientation and training for newly elected board members, training on the board's role in budget, personnel matters, etc., seminars and workshops sponsored by regional, state, and national organizations, and special training based on identified needs of board members in addition to basic state requirements. Compare the results to the state's guidelines and note any discrepancies.
- I.B.4 Diagram the organization of the board, including any advisory, ad hoc, or standing committees of the board such as standing and/or ad hoc committees for finance, facility/building, personnel, instruction and/or other special purposes. Delineate the specific purposes of each committee, the makeup and membership of the committees, the process used to ensure fair and equal representation in the selection of committee members and any specific time limits imposed on the life of the committee.
- I.B.5 Chart the path of a complaint received by a board member from a parent, district employee, or other community member.
- I.B.6 Prepare a list of all district provided training for board candidates and board members for the last three years.

Questions to Ask

How does the board fulfill its responsibility to represent and communicate with all citizens of the district?

Are board members elections held in accordance with state laws? Are board member terms set so that a majority of experienced board members hold office at all times? Are district elections, including bond elections, held at locations and set on dates that will result in the greatest voter turnout?

Does the district conduct information sessions for candidates running for the board? What type of formal orientation sessions are provided to new board members to define the role and responsibilities of a board member?

What process is used by the board to hold one another accountable for unethical or self interested behavior?

Do board members understand their roles in the district's governance and exhibit that understanding by allowing the superintendent to manage the district's operations within the constraints set by the board?

Does the board interfere in personnel decisions outside of voting on the superintendent's recommendations? How does the board work constructively with the superintendent to resolve issues and concerns?

How do committees of the board function? Do committees contribute to an overall sense of open-government in the district? Have committees been useful in establishing trust among board members; between the board and the administration?

Has the superintendent established an effective communication process with board members? Is there a full or part-time staff person within the administration that supports the needs of the board? How does the superintendent notify board members of serious or newsworthy events between board meetings?

Do the superintendent and board members have fax and/or email access so that they can receive information quickly and in a format that is easy to review? How does the district work with the board to ensure timely responses to concerns brought to the board by parents, employees and the community?

How does the board oversee the district's financial resources? How does the board direct staff regarding the information and materials the board needs to understand and consider issues with significant financial implications? What processes allow board members to review significant financial issues identified in internal audits, external audits, management evaluations, and performance reviews? How does the board solicit feedback from the public, district campus administrators and teachers when considering issues with significant financial implications?

What kind of training does the board receive to improve oversight of district financial resources? What mechanisms are in place to provide the board a better understanding of the long and short-range financial impact of their decisions on the fund balance?

How is academic performance data used by the board in order to determine the appropriate alignment of resources on all campuses?

I.C Board Policies

Activities to Perform

- I.C.1 Prepare a list of the locations throughout the district where district policy manuals are available. Examine the board policy manual and a representative sample of policy manuals distributed throughout the district. Determine the oldest, latest, and median date of updates. Document the last update and the policy area(s) of the last 10 updates.
- I.C.2 Compare a sample of policies with recent law changes and note any discrepancies. Compare the sample of manuals housed on campuses with the master copy of the manual and note any inconsistencies in the versions.
- I.C.3 Prepare a diagram of the process used by the district to update district policies. Note if a policy service is being used, describe the services provided and show the cost of this service.

Questions to Ask

Are policies clear, concise, and in compliance with state law? Are policies regularly reviewed and updated? Are new or revised policies disseminated in a timely manner to each board member and all other designated staff? Where are policies made available at the administration office and campus locations for use by employees and/or the public? Are policies available to staff and community members on-line?

How is compliance with policy routinely monitored to ensure staff compliance? How many hard copies of policies exist in the district and how many times are they updated annually?

Are there policies regarding public input at board meetings? How do these policies encourage open communication with the public?

What policies exist that specifically pertain to the roles, responsibilities and actions of board members? Does the district have conflict of interest policies for board members? Are there nepotism policies in place for employees and board members? Who ensures that the board is in compliance with these policies? How are exceptions handled?

I.D District-Community Partnerships

Activities to Perform

I.D.1 Interview staff and prepare a list of formal and informal partnerships, interlocal agreements, collaboratives, special committees, etc. that work with the board or the administration and in one or two sentences describes the nature of the partnership.

Questions to Ask

What policy and procedures address the use of district facilities by the community? Do these policies or procedures allow all taxpayers to benefit from their investment in the district?

How does the board ensure that the district reaches a diverse community of business leaders, religious leaders, civic organizations, parents, and community leaders?

Does the district regularly seek innovative ways to:

- build relationships within the business community and other community groups in order to gain financial or "in kind" donations?
- conduct cooperative projects with other governmental bodies, educational institutions, and community or business organizations?
- establish partnerships with other school districts to accomplish mutual goals?

When building partnerships, does the district use memoranda of understanding and/or interlocal agreements to ensure clear understanding and agreement among parties involved?

II. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

While the board sets policy, the superintendent is responsible for carrying out that policy and managing the district in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible. The goal of administration must always be to facilitate and support the instruction of students by ensuring that every possible dollar and resource is directed to the classroom.

Data Needs

- Superintendent's contract, resume, and evaluations
- District directory and organizational chart
- Campus directory and organizational chart
- District administrator and director job descriptions
- Campus administrator and director job descriptions
- District budgets for current and preceding year including updates
- Campus budgets for current and preceding year including updates
- List of contracted, cooperative, and partnership services
- Legal contracts, procedures, and expenditures for current and prior year
- A list of any grievances filed
- Copy of legal liability insurance policy

People to Interview

Board members
 Superintendent
 Central Office administration
 Principals
 Directors
 Representatives of teacher organizations and campus and district committees

II.A Superintendent Hiring, Contracting, and Evaluation

Activities to Perform

- II.A.1 Examine the superintendent's contract and outline the terms and conditions of the contract including a history of renewals. Outline all performance components and terms that might protect the district from the necessity of "buying" out the contract if either the district or the superintendent wants to separate.
- II.A.2 If a recent superintendent search or hiring process was conducted in the district, outline the process used by the district and evaluate the effectiveness of the process.

- II.A.3 Examine the last three board evaluations of the superintendent and assess whether expectations defined clear and measurable goals and objectives and whether the superintendent was given honest and meaningful feedback based upon progress toward expectations.
- II.A.4 Chart the support services and other resources provided by the district to support board duties. Identify the staff and number of hours worked a week for board or individual members.

Questions to Ask

Does the superintendent acknowledge his/her position as chief executive officer for the district by:

- making recommendations for all personnel actions based on input from campus administrators or other appropriate staff?
- making other recommendations to the board regarding operation of the district including an annual budget?
- attending all meetings of the board?
- recommending policies to the board?
- implementing adopted board policies?
- establishing a process to communicate regularly with the board to keep them informed of district activities?
- delegating authority when appropriate?
- coordinating the implementation of procedures regarding district operations?
- does the superintendent actively participating in local, regional, and national school administration associations?

Does the superintendent provide necessary support for the board to perform its function by:

- providing staff to record meetings and minutes, schedule appointments, and maintain files?
- assigning appropriate staff to research and respond to information requests from the board?
- providing budgetary resources for participation in training and professional development seminars including travel and tuition costs?

II.B Central Office Organizational Structure

Activities to Perform

- II.B.1 Review organizational chart(s) and interview staff to determine if the organizational structure depicted on the chart(s) reflects the actual organization of the district and document if it has been changed one or more times in the recent past or if change is anticipated in the near future and why.
- II.B.2 Based upon the district's actual central office organizational structure and staffing, including support staff, prepare a written evaluation demonstrating whether the structure ensures:
- appropriate spans of controls;

- clearly defined units and lines of authority that are reflected in both the district's organizational charts and job descriptions;
- minimal management layers that encourage communication and decision-making;
- direct and accessible support for all campuses and auxiliary programs; and
- accountability at all levels within the organization.

Questions to Ask

Does the district conduct periodic reviews to minimize administrative layers and processes?

Has the district clearly assigned authority to campus administrators for the effective and efficient supervision of instruction, instructional support, and other assigned responsibilities, including consideration of site-based decision making and other organizational alternatives?

Does the district's central administration support and facilitate the work of teachers and campus administrators?

II.C Procedures

Activity to Perform

- II.C.1 Review the administrative procedures manual or departmental procedure manuals and by functional area prepare a chart showing whether the procedures are: complete, up-to-date, and reflect or are linked to board policy.
- II.C.2 Prepare a diagram of the process used by the district to implement and update district procedures including staff responsible for each step along the way. Include a list of locations where procedure manuals are available.

Questions to Ask

How does management ensure that policies are translated into operating procedures and are adhered to?

Do administrators review and update procedures annually or on some other cycle?

Who is responsible for ensuring that each department or operating unit develops procedures?

Is formal staff training provided on district procedures?

Is there a process for procedure revision that is clearly defined and allows for staff input? How are revised policies incorporated into operating procedures?

II.D Legal Services

Activities to Perform

- II.D.1 Examine the actual expenditures, current year's budget, and invoices for legal services for the last 1-2 years, as available, and create a chart that shows the name of the in-house attorney or external law firm that represents the district, the nature of the work done by each firm, and the amount paid to each firm.
- II.D.2 Create a list of major lawsuits, judgments, or litigation and show the associated costs and current status.
- II.D.3 Determine the terms and conditions of any existing legal liability insurance contracts.

Questions to Ask

Does the district use cost-efficient legal services to keep abreast of changes in the law, review policy, provide representation in legal actions, and reduce the risk of lawsuits? Does the district employ an attorney (either in-house, on a retainer, or in a cooperative arrangement with another district) with the primary responsibility of advising the board, reviewing policy, and reducing the risk of lawsuits?

Is legal counsel available to the board in a timely manner?

Does the district use an organized evaluation process to determine the circumstances under which outside counsel should be used with cost effectiveness as a consideration? Has the district established a system to review legal costs to determine whether it is more cost-efficient and practical to have a staff attorney or to contract out for legal services on an as-needed basis?

Does the district use a tracking system that alerts of pending deadlines, produces reports for the board, and categorizes types of legal actions?

Is the district paying for legal liability insurance that protects itself from catastrophic litigation costs? Does the district routinely request cost proposals for legal services? Is the district paying a fair market rate for legal services?

Who is responsible for monitoring legal bills using billing rates, number of hours billed, nature of work performed and the individual performing the service?

II.E Campus Administration

Activity to Perform

- II.E.1 Examine the following:
- any campus planning for the purpose of improved student performance;
 - roles and responsibilities of campus administrators and/or directors;
 - community and parental involvement programs and/or processes at the campus level;
 - accountability parameters for student performance;
 - lines of communication from campus administration to staff to parents and back;
 - decision-making processes; and

- flexibility at the campus level in the allocation and use of both human and fiscal resources.

II.E.2 Prepare a chart by campus showing the number of principals, assistant principals, directors, counselors, secretaries, clerks, and other campus administrative staff. Compare these staffing levels by campus and grade level with staffing standards and districtwide allocation formulas and note discrepancies.

Questions to Ask

What are the processes for and how much time is spent changing role definitions of campus staff, training campus staff, communicating with the community, establishing campus objectives, developing and implementing campus programs, and monitoring program success?

Is the campus organization structure arranged functionally to encourage and facilitate shared decision-making, input, and communication?

Are goals determined on a campus level from a campus needs assessment and outcome data?

Are campus activities based on goals and are they initiated and directed by the campus staff with measurable outcomes?

To what extent is budget development and allocation of resources campus-controlled?

Are staff selection criteria guided by standards developed by a campus within the context of state and district guidelines?

III. Planning and Evaluation

A district with a strategic plan that has received broad-based input and has well defined goals will be better able to attain its goals and measure its performance against those goals. The strategic plan can act as filter through which a district can view its decision making process; every decision can be weighed against its impact on or correlation to the district's strategic plan.

Evaluation of a district's programs allows the board and administrators to gauge the success of each program by determining if key objectives and results were obtained and if the benefits merit the costs. Planned programmatic changes can then be made based on those results.

Data Needs

- District vision, mission, and goal statements
- District strategic plan
- Description of the strategic planning process

- Copies of district planning documents including the School Improvement Plan, Professional Development Plan, and Technology Plan.
- Program evaluations and schedules for evaluations
- Any evaluations, audits, reviews, and surveys performed or submitted by external or third party evaluators (do not include financial statements or audits as these will be included in chapter 3).

People to Interview

Board members

Superintendent

Central Office administration

Principals

Directors

Representatives of parent teacher associations, teacher organizations, campus improvement committees, district improvement committees, business community, and child related non-profit organizations

III.A Planning

Activities to Perform

- III.A.1 Using copies of district planning documents determine the nature and scope of each plan, the time frame of the plan, and the process by which the plan was developed.
- III.A.2 Using the compiled planning documents, create a chart to show whether each plan contains board approved goals, objectives, implementation strategies, assignments of responsibilities, links to the annual budget, annual monitoring activities, and the like. In addition, evaluate how the goals, objectives and strategies of each plan are linked to each other and the budget, the assignment of responsibility for implementation, and the process by which the plan's implementation is monitored.
- III.A.3 Conduct a comparative analysis of campus performance data to the district's allocation of resources in order to determine if academic performance data is being used to determine the appropriate alignment of resources on all campuses? Compare findings to that of comparable districts.

Questions to Ask

Does the district have a strategic plan? How was it developed? Does it encompass other district plans (professional development, CLEP, gifted education, special education, counseling, facilities, technology, etc.)? Are other district plans compatible with the strategic plan? How are these plans developed? Are there direct ties to annual budgets?

Does the board establish annual goals and undertake a formal planning process? Do the board and superintendent conduct annual goal setting and planning sessions? How are district plans and goals publicized?

III.B Program and Service Evaluations

Activities to Perform

- III.B.1 Examine any formal or informal program or services evaluation processes.
- III.B.2 Determine what staff perform specific evaluations, whether the evaluations are required by state or federal law, whether evaluation activities are prioritized, and if so, by what methodology (e.g. board policy, student needs, etc.)

Questions to Ask

Does the district regularly review and use evaluation results to improve the performance and cost efficiency of its major educational and operational programs (e.g. grant programs, after-school programs, summer programs, special education programs, gifted education programs, counseling programs, technology-related programs, professional development programs, food service programs, maintenance programs, custodial programs, transportation programs, etc.)?

What types of evaluation instruments are used? Are these evaluations required by state or federal laws or regulations or board policies? Are these evaluations used when deciding to keep, discontinue, or modify such programs?

IV. Personnel Management

The single largest expenditure in any school district is its personnel costs. As a result, it is critical that a district practice efficient and effective management of personnel functions. Compliance with federal and state laws, such as Equal Employment Opportunity statutes and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and concise work policies, procedures, and training programs are required for effective personnel management. Typical tasks performed in regards to personnel management include:

- recruiting employees;
- overseeing the interviewing, selection, and processing of new employees;
- retaining employees;
- processing promotions, transfers, and resignations;
- determining and maintaining compensation schedules;
- planning and forecasting personnel needs;
- maintaining complete employee records;
- developing and maintaining job descriptions;
- managing the employee evaluation process;
- handling employee complaints and grievances;

- developing personnel policies; and
- ensuring that the employer follows all laws and regulations.

Data Needs

- Organizational chart
- Staffing levels of district functions/departments
- Personnel Policy manual/employee handbook
- Employee evaluation policies
- Sample employee evaluations (certified and non-certified)
- Job descriptions of district employees
- Turnover statistics
- Employee complaints
- Grievance records
- Grievance procedures
- Training records
- Training opportunities
- Training announcements

People to Interview

Superintendent
 Personnel Director
 All personnel function employees
 Payroll, benefits, and staff development employees
 District's attorney
 Technology Director
 Staff development coordinator/staff development committee chairperson
 Selected district employees

IV.A Organization Structure of Personnel Function

Activities to Perform

- IV.A.1 Examine the organization and staffing charts and job descriptions for personnel and interview staff to determine reporting arrangements, determine whether the organizational structure depicted on the chart reflects the actual organization of the department, and document if it has been changed recently or repeatedly in the recent past or is anticipated to change in the near future and explain the reasons for changes.
- IV.A.2 Examine the staffing and budgets of personnel and personnel-related functions such as recruiting, payroll, and benefits management functions and determine the ratio of total staff to staffing within the personnel function. Compare the budget and staffing levels to

industry standards.

- IV.A.3 Obtain information on qualifications of key personnel through résumés or interviews to determine qualifications.

Questions to Ask

Who heads the personnel department? Are functions that relate to personnel such as payroll and benefits efficiently aligned within the overall district organization? What is the staffing pattern of the personnel department? What are the functions supported by the personnel department? How are related functions coordinated within the district?

What training does staff in the personnel department receive to better understand current and emerging developments in the personnel function? How does personnel staff serve as resources to other administrators in personnel matters? Are employees in the department cross-trained? To what extent does personnel staff participate in workshops, conferences, seminars, read professional literature, and interact with personnel administrators in both public and private sectors to improve job performance?

IV.B Management of the Personnel Function

Activities to Perform

- IV.B.1 Examine any administrative procedure manual, departmental budgets, strategic planning documents, mission statements, and performance measures to determine their adequacy and how they are tied to the district's policies and strategic plan.
- IV.B.2 Evaluate the computer system used by the personnel unit as well as the connectivity between this system and related systems such as finance, payroll, and other systems used for district operations.
- IV.B.3 Evaluate use of computer systems to analyze staff development patterns within campuses, across campuses, and alignment with special population priorities.

Questions to Ask

Does the district/personnel department have a mission statement relating to personnel? Goals? Performance measures? How is the personnel function treated in the district's strategic plan?

Who are the department's customers? How does the department know it is meeting its customers' needs? How does the department measure and monitor success?

How are departmental expenditures controlled?

What computer systems support the personnel functional area? Does the district's personnel software tie together staffing, payroll, and leave data? Is the district's personnel software capable of providing

data on the number of positions and teachers in each certification area? Is it capable of providing data on staff characteristics such as race, sex, age, experience, and certification?

Does the district maintain employee records electronically? How does the district ensure that personnel records are safeguarded against loss or damage? How does the district regulate access to personnel records? How does the district coordinate record requests from employees or the public under the Open Records Act?

Is staffing information used to project staffing for budgetary purposes? Does the district provide breakdowns by staff-to-student ratios? Does the district have a system for position control that is automated and integrated with budgeting, personnel, and payroll to ensure effective position control?

IV.C Contracting for Personnel-related Functions

Activity to Perform

IV.C.1 If the personnel function or any parts of the personnel function are contracted for, obtain copies of and examine all service contracts, status reports on services performed, feasibility studies, cost benefit analyses, performance data, and copies of any memorandum of understanding or interlocal agreements.

Questions to Ask

Does the district use contracts for any aspect of personnel services (e.g. recordkeeping, job searches)? Does the district routinely examine options for contracting personnel services?

If any services are performed or contracted for through private companies or interlocal agreements, was a cost benefit analysis and feasibility study performed prior to bidding the service and entering into the contract? What competitive procurement process was used? Did the bid process comply with state law? Did face-to-face negotiation occur? Were all stakeholders in the service represented in the negotiation and in the evaluation? Did vendor due diligence occur as part of the evaluation process? How were bid proposals evaluated? Were vendor references checked? Were quantitative and qualitative measures used in evaluating each proposal? Did vendor presentations or interviews take place and how was this information used in the bid process? Did staff document the evaluation process and make written recommendations?

During contract negotiation, was a contract awarded to the lowest viable vendor? Was the contract written by the district, the vendor, or in collaboration? Were the terms and conditions negotiated? Were the purchasing and finance divisions involved in the evaluation? Did a district-employed or district-hired attorney draft or review the final contract before signature? Were all relevant documents referenced in the contract for future reference? Is the contract written?

What are the basic terms and conditions of the contract? Did both the district and the vendor sign the contract? Does the district have a way to shift services back in-house should in-house operations prove the most efficient way to do things? Are escalator clauses tied directly to changes in the market that affects the vendor's costs? Are increases in contract costs tied directly to rising labor or

supply costs? Are terms of the contract favorable in comparison to market rates for services? Are cost controls part of the contract, and are costs monitored for changes?

Are there options to renew or renegotiate the contract as the result of the contract ending? Are there options to renegotiate the contract in response to changes in district needs or market conditions? Are contractors required to report regularly to the board? To the administration? If so, how do they report? If so, are they reporting as required?

Does the contract include a contract change mechanism? Did the contract include all relevant terms and conditions required by board policy, local, state, and federal law, and the uniform commercial code? Are specific steps outlined in the contract for dispute resolution? What is the district's liability and what is the vendor's liability? When does the contract expire?

Has the district dedicated correct and sufficient contract management resources to manage the contract? Who manages the contract in the district? Does this person have the authority to enforce or change the contract? Does the contract include the name of the contract manager and who represents the district as the final authority for contract disputes?

What reports must the vendor provide the district and when do they have to be provided? What mechanisms are in the contract for providing the vendor with feedback on performance?

Does the vendor have to account for any cost changes to the district? Does the district require the vendor to notify the district in the event the vendor changes suppliers for items included in the service agreement?

Does the contract outline how the district can terminate the contract for poor performance or failure to perform without liability to the district? How are risks to the district managed by the contract?

Is a specific individual responsible for reviewing and documenting vendor performance? Does the contract specifically outline minimum and preferred performance standards? Can the standards be measured objectively by the district? Does the contract describe each service to be performed in sufficient detail?

Does the contract describe specific levels of performance the vendor must meet in performing the service? Are these performance measures tracked by the district or by the vendor? How is performance measured relative to payment?

Does the contract include remedies in the event the vendor fails to perform the contract or fails to perform acceptably? What types of options does the district have in remedying poor performance or terminating the contract? Is payment tied to performance?

Are performance measures related to quality and quantity of activities performed by the vendor? Does the contract include specific periods in which the service must be performed?

IV.D Employee Evaluations

Activities to Perform

- IV.D.1 Examine a sample of employee evaluations for teachers, administrators, and support staff. Evaluate them for timeliness, thoroughness, effectiveness, and compliance with state guidelines and local policies and procedures.

Questions to Ask

Does the district have a formal performance evaluation program documented in board policy or administrative procedures? *The TLE Evaluation System is to be implemented in 2015-16 school year. All administrators must be trained in the district's selected evaluation system (Tulsa or Marzano for teacher evaluation; McREL or Reeves for administrator evaluation).*

How often are evaluations given to employees? Is performance measured against pre-established standards?

Do managerial and supervisory evaluations allow for subordinate or self-ratings? How do evaluations tie weaknesses or strengths to recommended actions for future performance? What is the evaluation hierarchy (What level does which evaluations)? What feedback is allowed by the person being evaluated?

Does the district tie performance to student achievement for teachers? Does the district tie performance to student achievement for other employees such as administrators and principals?

Does the district have a performance-based system for compensation? If not, has the district considered such a system?

IV.E Staff Development***Activities to Perform***

- IV.E.1 Determine how the district tracks professional development by employee and examine the system to determine whether records are kept for all employees, whether records are current, and whether goals and guidelines for professional development are being met.
- IV.E.2 Prepare a chart of major staff development performed in the last year and show the training audience, number attending and examine a sample of any evaluations of the training to determine staff response.
- IV.E.3 Diagram the staff development delivery system showing the role of the central office, campuses and other support staff in the process. Interview staff on their ease of accessing professional development and its relevance to their jobs.

Questions to Ask

Is the responsibility for coordination of staff development centralized?

Does the district set minimum continuing education or training hours for staff? Does the personnel division collect feedback from trainees on training received? Does the personnel division use this feedback to develop and refine training? Does the district evaluate the usefulness of training periodically?

Is training scheduled to be least disruptive to an employee's job schedule? Does the district provide incentives for training outside regular hours? What training opportunities are provided in summer months?

Does the district have a partnership with a nearby community college or university for training? How does the district use training offered by the State Agencies?

Does the district pay any of the costs for the pursuit of additional certification or degrees? Does the pursuit of additional certification or degrees qualify for mandatory staff development hours? Are staff development goals linked to districtwide goals?

How many days for staff development are allowed by the district?

What training is offered to substitute teachers?

V. Community Involvement

Local school districts were established to be responsive to the needs of their community, which includes students, parents, non-parent residents, taxpayers, businesses, other political subdivisions and special interest groups. By the same token, if the community is to respond appropriately to the district's needs and concerns, it must be well informed about issues facing the district. For this reason, districts need mechanisms to disseminate information and to gather feedback from community members. Effective two-way communication enables school districts to win the confidence, support and involvement of their local communities. Similarly, school districts need the support of local organizations and businesses to enhance educational programs. A good partnership and outreach program needs to be in place; one that fosters the district's relationship with the community and supports school activities.

Oklahoma school districts use a variety of methods to generate community involvement. Some school districts have departments dedicated to this function, while smaller districts must rely on a handful of people who perform a variety of community relations functions. Boards of Education can also play an important role in community involvement. Boards perceived as accessible and sensitive to citizens' concerns are less likely to be seen as insulated from the community.

Data Needs

- Organization and staffing charts for all communications, community and parental involvement functions, and external liaison positions including open records personnel
- Mission statement, strategic plan and goals relating to community and business involvement

- Job descriptions of personnel that have outreach responsibilities
- Budget
- Copies of internal procedure and policies
- Contracts and agreements (as they apply)
- Grants, donations and other external funding sources

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent with assigned responsibility
 Board members (as appropriate)
 Assistant superintendent with assigned responsibility
 Administrative staff with assigned responsibility (directors, coordinators, etc.)
 Principals
 School counselors
 Community and business sector representatives
 Chamber of commerce
 Civic organizations
 Local colleges and universities

V.A. General Organization

Activities to Perform

- V.A.1 Compile organization and staffing charts for all community involvement activities, ombudsman or other external liaison positions including open records management functions and interview staff to determine if the organizational structure depicted on the chart(s) reflects the actual organization of the district, and document if it has been changed recently or repeatedly in the recent past or is anticipated to change in the near future and explain why changes are being made.
- V.A.2 Obtain copies of job descriptions, and based upon the organizational structure and staffing, including support staff, prepare a written evaluation demonstrating whether the structure ensures:
- Clearly defined units and lines of authority that are reflected in both the district's
 - organizational charts and job descriptions;
 - Minimal duplication of effort;
 - Direct and accessible support for all campuses and auxiliary programs
- V.A.3 Compile a list of the district's various committees, whose makeup includes external stakeholders, and determine if committee representatives reflect the demographics of the district and the community and if members have appropriate representation.

Questions to Ask

Does the district conduct periodic reviews to ensure that functions are properly aligned to reduce any overlap of duties?

Does the organizational structure encourage community involvement? Is there a single point of contact for people to call to get information about the district? What mechanisms are in place to educate the community about who to call if they have a question?

How do central office staff support campus-level community involvement initiations? How are campus-level staff supported in their effort to involve community members? Do staff members involved in community involvement have other responsibilities?

V.B. Planning, Policies and Procedures

Activity to Perform

- V.B.1 Compile all planning documents, policies and procedures as they deal with communications, community and parental involvement, and open records management functions. Identify how these documents are linked, if there are conflicts, and whether there are existing gaps?
- V.B.2 Diagram the open records process and compile a list of recent open records requests. Examine the documentation to determine whether the system adequately captures all requests, including those made to campuses and individual departments, whether the requests are handled within stipulated time frames, and whether appropriate, but not excessive, fees are collected to recover expenses related to filling the request.

Questions to Ask

Is the communication or community involvement plan tied to the district's strategic plan or board goals and objectives? How are these planning documents linked to improving education? Do plans contain strategies for maximizing parent, community, business, alumni and foundation involvement in schools?

Do the department procedures or plans identify the district's stakeholders and customers? How does the department or function measure success?

Who tracks open records requests and insures that the district remains in compliance with the law? How are legal questions addressed and monitored? Does the district's legal counsel become involved in the open records process? What charges are associated with legal advice on open records issues? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that campus staff is complying with open records laws? How are alleged complaints regarding open records resolved?

How are procedures for dealing with the media, handling of controversial issues, handling parent complaints, handling of crisis communications and the like communicated to campus staff? What formal training on these issues is available specifically for principals and department heads?

V.C. District/Community/Business Partnerships

Activities to Perform

- V.C.1 Interview staff and create a matrix of formal and informal partnerships, interlocal agreements, collaboratives, special committees, foundations, colleges, local military bases, Rotary Club, local affiliates of the Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts of America, Optimists Clubs, Endowment Funds and other local foundations, and alumni etc. that work with the board, administration, schools, principals or teachers, and in one or two sentences describe the nature of the partnership.
- V.C.2 Examine policies and procedures that pertain to or impact community involvement, and determine how each of these policies is encouraging or discouraging community or parental involvement.

Questions to Ask

Does the district use advisory committees as appropriate for input and comment in any area required by law, for example, Gifted and Talented, or Title I?

How does the district solicit input from the community relating to special programs, bond issues and goals of the district? Does the board support community input by holding public forums, hearing, rotating board meeting locations, and the like? Does the district survey its stakeholders (i.e., community leaders, business leaders, civic leaders, etc.)?

Are there partnerships with local foundations, as well as national foundations that fund educational initiatives?

What policy and procedures address the use of district facilities by the community? Do these policies or procedures allow all taxpayers to benefit from their investment in the district? How does the board ensure that the district reaches a diverse community of business leaders, religious leaders, civic organizations, and community leaders?

Does the district regularly seek innovative ways to:

- build relationships within the business community and other community groups in order to gain financial or "in kind" donations?
- conduct cooperative projects with other governmental bodies, educational institutions and community or business organizations?
- establish partnerships with other school districts to accomplish mutual goals?

When building partnerships, does the district use memoranda of understanding and/or interlocal agreements to ensure clear understanding and agreement among parties involved?

What are examples of community involvement in the schools (Career Day speakers, etc)? Is there a uniform policy for screening volunteers to determine the best role for each volunteer (particular skills and backgrounds)? Is there a system for tracking the contribution of volunteers? Is there a

directed focus on obtaining additional resources such as tutors in at-risk schools? Are there ways to involve alumni in school activities?

Does the district have volunteer and partnership recognition programs such as volunteer/partner of the year and service awards? Is there adequate funding for volunteer recognition and awards programs? Does the district provide structured volunteer training? Do the schools have a lounge or designated rooms for volunteers to use and/or work from?

How does this department advertise or solicit business or community partners? How does the district ensure that businesses and community organizations are not approached multiple times by various groups within the district?

Who is responsible for fostering business partnerships and collaborating with nonprofit agencies? Who has the responsibility for the creation and nurturing of collaborative partnerships?

How are local affiliates of nonprofit organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, Young Men's Christian Association, Boy/Girl Scouts of America and Communities in Schools used in the schools? Is a community outreach plan part of the annual planning process? Are there strategies for providing feedback to citizens who voice concerns and share ideas?

Does the staff provide a regular liaison to school/community organizations? What administrator is assigned to work as liaison with organizations in the district?

Does the district identify and maintain a list of community resources?

Does the district have a memorandum of understanding or interlocal agreement for providing any partnership services?

How are business and community partners involved in fund-raising for scholarships or to supplement the educational or special programs, such as dropout prevention initiatives, mentoring programs and after school programs for parents? Does the district have special initiatives to foster foundations that offer scholarship programs in inner city schools and campuses with high numbers of low income students?

How does the district promote a positive relationship with non-parent community members? Are there programs in place to encourage retired citizens to become involved in the schools? Are discount cards or special privileges granted to retired citizens to encourage them to attend school events such as sporting activities, theatrical presentations and concerts?

VI. Communications/Public Relations

Honest and timely communication with parents and the community is critical if a district is to maintain the trust and confidence of the community.

Data Needs

- District publications (internal and external)
- Student/parent handbooks
- Newspaper clippings
- Examples of media releases
- Parent survey instruments
- Newsletters and calendars

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent with assigned responsibility
 Staff as assigned
 Local media
 Parents
 Parent organizations (booster clubs, PTAs, PTOs)

VI.A. Printed and Electronic Communication

Activities to Perform

- VI.A.1 Compile a list of all district publications including both external publications and internal newsletters. Prepare a chart showing the frequency of the publication, the target audience, the number of copies distributed and the approximate costs for publishing, printing and mailing each item.
- VI.A.2 Examine the district's electronic communication network including television or radio broadcasts, any Websites created and maintained by the district or at individual campuses and email correspondence. Prepare a chart showing each medium's purpose and use, target audience, frequency of use or frequency of updates and the approximate cost for each medium.

Questions to Ask

Does the district maintain a district speaker's bureau and furnish community organizations a list of speakers and topics? Is staff given training in public speaking?

Does the district have a user-friendly telephone system? Is district staff trained in telephone courtesy? When callers do not know the name of a person or department, how are inquiries handled? How does communication flow from the central office to the campuses? Has the district established a procedure for regular communication with employees? Who is responsible for providing information regarding action taken by the board to employees in a timely manner? Does the district have an ombudsman, who reports to the superintendent, who helps employees, parents and community members negotiate the communication structure?

How does the district develop and distribute its annual report card on student and district performance? Is an individual and/or office assigned responsibility for developing the formal report

on district activities and accomplishments for the year? Is distribution of the report accomplished through board meetings, service clubs, realtors, chambers of commerce or direct mail?

How is information regarding district operations, activities of various district committees, district and/or school honors disseminated to the community? Does the district maintain a hotline or informational website where parents or community members can obtain information regarding school closures or other emergencies?

Does the district periodically review and evaluate the public relations program? Has the district developed an annual plan for a Community/Public Relations program containing goals and objectives for improved community relations and are resources assigned for effective implementation?

Has the communications office assessed the public's knowledge and attitudes about the district through periodic surveys? What does the district do with survey results and other input/suggestions from the community?

Where/how are board meeting notices posted?

VI.B. Media Contacts

Activity to Perform

VI.B.1 Diagram the process used to communicate with the media showing how inquiries are handled when directed to campus-level staff or to district administrators, and where possible, show the elapsed time between media inquiries and district responses. Also show how media releases are originated from the central office or administrative levels, and show any board involvement in the process.

Questions to Ask

Who reviews, edits, and distributes media releases regarding district operations or activities? Who coordinates campus-level media releases?

Who is the spokesperson for the district? Who handles media contacts if the spokesperson is unavailable? Is there a chain-of-command or a reporting mechanism to alert the communications office when a media inquiry has been received?

Are formal policies or procedures in place regarding employee contacts with the media? What processes or procedures exist for working with the media in the event of crisis, emergencies, school closures and the like?

Are campus-level staff authorized to speak to the media? Who trains staff to work with the media? Who assists in assuring that media-related communication plans and skills exist in each school and department?

What is the district's relationship with the local media? How are relationships with regularly assigned education reporters nurtured? Does the district have established communication with the local media that includes:

- Personal meetings with local editor(s), reporters or media staff?
- Press conferences or news releases for major events and/or activities?
- Advance copies of all board meeting agendas with backup material provided upon request?

VII. Parental Involvement

Teachers and administrators alike agree that involvement of parents in the education of their child is one of the primary keys to the child's educational success.

Data Needs

- Parent handbooks
- Lists of parental involvement initiatives
- Title I program materials; list of Title I
- Parental involvement agreement(s)
- Documentation on parent resource centers or family centers
- Grants and other external funding sources
- Incentive programs (for parents)

Possible People to Interview

Superintendent/assistant superintendent with responsibility
 Staff assigned to parental involvement activities
 PTO/PTA leaders
 Teachers, principals and counselors

VII.A. Parental Initiatives

Activities to Perform

- VII.A.1 By campus, prepare a list of major parental involvement programs (including Title I programs) or activities including Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) or Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), booster clubs, as well as any programs that encourage volunteerism, educate parents or encourage parents to be involved in their child's education.
- VII.A.2 Tour parent or family centers; talk to parents to gauge their perceptions about the services provided to families and students, and determine if the district's outreach efforts are successful, and if parents feel welcome in schools. Does the district sponsor Internet sites that list homework assignment by teacher?

Questions to Ask

Are there forums where principals and PTO/PTA leaders can share ideas? What opportunities exist for PTO/PTA leaders from various campuses to exchange information and ideas? Is district or campus staff assigned to work with parent organizations, booster clubs and other organizations? Is there a plan to aid in identifying parent concerns and issues? Does the parent handbook contain information on how parents should approach complaint resolution? What board-approved recourse does a parent have when concerns or issues cannot be resolved at the campus level? At the central office level? How do board members handle parental complaints that have not been heard at the campus or central office level?

How do teachers encourage parental involvement? Have teachers identified specific tasks and opportunities for parental volunteers? Have campus-level administrators identified specific tasks and opportunities for parental volunteers? How are parents notified of needs for volunteers at the campuses? Are teachers properly trained to know how to manage activities of parent volunteers in the classroom?

Are some campuses more successful at recruiting parent and community volunteers than others? What techniques do these successful campuses use to encourage participation? Are these techniques replicable? What opportunities exist for campus administrators and teachers to share ideas and experiences for increasing parental involvement?

What obstacles exist to parental involvement? Is there a central point (parent and/or family center or room) at each campus where parents can come to volunteer?

How are minority groups, religious organizations and other citizen groups asked for input regarding ways to involve parents? What strategies are used to encourage minority and economically disadvantaged parents to become involved in the education of their children? Are interpreters provided at parent meetings to encourage participation by non-English speaking or hearing-impaired parents?

Are there opportunities for parents to meet and build rapport in order to stay connected to one another and to the schools? Does the district offer parenting classes or any other parent education/training programs?

What are the district's efforts in fulfilling parents' rights according to state law? For example, is there access to student records; state assessments tools; teaching materials, including textbooks and tests; board meetings; full information about their child(ren); school districts' public records; and a grievance process for any violation of their rights?

How do parents access specific information about their children and the district?

IX. Review and Evaluation of Contracting Process

District management functions such as staff development and legal services can be purchased or contracted for through private companies or interlocal agreements with neighboring districts or other governmental entities. It is important to regularly evaluate whether there are goods or services that can be obtained from the private sector at a lower cost, higher quality or both. It is equally important to continually evaluate existing contracts to determine if the district is getting the best value possible through the contracting arrangement. In other words, do the district's management functions and services meet industry standards?