

Effectiveness & **EFFICIENCY**

School Reviews

Executive Summary

Prepared for the
Board of Education
Iola Unified School District #257
January 28, 2008



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

Highlights found through the review process include the following:

- **an overview of lola School District #257**
- **a comparison of lola to peer and region schools**
- **highlights from reports written by team members who interviewed school district personnel**
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency School Review survey results**

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

IOLA SCHOOL DISTRICT #257

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

The review of Iola's school district was initiated in September 2007 and concluded in January 2008. This report will identify best practices of the Iola School District and provide suggestions on ways to further improve the district's operation efficiencies.

School district profile information:

- The Iola School District is located in Allen County in southeast Kansas. Iola is one of three school districts located in the county.
- The 2006 U.S. Census data reports Allen County had an estimated population of 13,677. In 2000, the census reported an estimated 14,385 resided in the county. This is a 5% decline in the county's population.
- The racial makeup of the school district is over 92% Caucasian; this figure has been relatively steady over the years. This compares to a 95% average in the region schools, a 94% average among peer schools, and a statewide average of 73.7%.
- The school district consists of 140.5 square miles compared to the state average of 273 square miles per school district. The population density of the school district is 65 people per square mile; the state average is 34 people per square mile.
- The Iola School District employs 216 employees, including 126 certified teaching and administrative staff.
- The 2007-08 budgeted general fund and supplemental general fund was \$12,736,520.
- In 2006-07 the average teacher's salary was \$42,333. This compares to an average of \$44,609 in region schools, \$49,547 among peer schools, and a statewide average of \$44,806.
- In 2006-07, the 20-year salary trend for teachers was ranked 183rd in the state. The regional average was 125th, and the peer average was 102nd.
- In 2006-07 the average administrator's salary was \$64,303. This compares to an average of \$69,042 in region schools, \$74,361 among peer schools, and a statewide average of \$77,758.
- In 2006-07 the pupil-teacher ratio was 13.1:1. This compares to an average of 13.1:1 in region schools, 14.1:1 among peer schools, and a statewide average of 15.0:1.

COMPARISONS TO PEER AND REGION SCHOOLS

CISL has established peer and region schools to support comparability of selected criteria. There were four peer schools and 18 region schools to which Iola was compared. The peer schools were selected based on similar size, similar socio-economical status, and performance based on state test results. The region schools were selected from school districts in contiguous counties including: Anderson, Bourbon, Coffey, Linn, Neosho, Wilson, and Woodson. Comparisons between Iola and these schools are explored in further detail in the complete report; the full report also includes all school survey results and the full findings by the Iola review team.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM REPORTS

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

Commendations:

Leadership

1. There is a good working relationship between the board of education and the superintendent of schools. They appear to understand and appreciate their roles as the leadership team of the district and work together to improve the educational system.
2. The elementary school using collaboration time for teachers on Fridays is to be commended. At this school, the building level administrator assumes responsibility for the student body during a period of time each Friday, and teachers are released to consider curricular and learning issues.
3. The high school principal has a powerful vision for his school; he truly understands what must happen for Iola High School to be a school of excellence. His move to create Career Clusters shows his understanding of current educational research.
4. The district curriculum coordinator is held in high regard by the building level administrators and district staff.
5. The district leadership appears open to informal communication channels. There is an open door policy in place and all evidence indicates people feel free to contact any district or building personnel.

6. The site council members are to be commended on their continued commitment to their schools. It is apparent they are concerned about the education of students in Iola and want to support a climate conducive to student growth and performance.

Teaching & Learning

1. The Substitute Teacher Manual is professionally and thoroughly written.
2. The district's website provides video streaming of extracurricular activities.
3. In the past, the high school drop-out rate was 13%. Due to the success of the Crossroads Program the drop-out rate is now 4%. This is attributable to the Learning Center's offering of flexible hours, allowing students to be employed while working toward their high school diploma.
4. The Mentor-Teacher program is praiseworthy because the district concern for the success of beginning teachers encourages professional growth through instructional collaborations.

Facilities Management

1. The district's ability to use the Bowlus Fine Arts Center is a unique situation providing a performance center and rooms for fine arts classes. Most districts do not have access to such a facility or could afford to build an auditorium of this quality.
2. There was an agreement reached with the local endowment association to renovate the football field, track, and stadium using a lease purchase agreement. The endowment agreed to pay for a large part of the costs. To present, the endowment association has paid for about \$300,000 of the estimated \$2,000,000 cost of the project.
3. The energy project undertaken by the district is addressing energy management and utilities costs.
4. The district's Safe Base after school program is well attended and provides a very safe and secure location for students.

Human Resources

1. The district management and leadership are viewed in a positive manner by survey respondents. Staff is competent and care about students. Strong, competent school principals are viewed as good leaders and educators. District leadership, staff, teachers and employees are supported by general public and board of education members.

2. There appears to be strong parental support and participation in school district activities and programs.
3. District employees feel the superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader. They also feel he is an effective business leader. Employees feel the central office is run efficiently and supports the education process.

Opportunities for Improvement / Recommendations:

Leadership

1. It is recommended a formal orientation program for new board members be created and implemented whenever a new member comes on board. Attending the KASB workshop is a good beginning, but it must be followed by nurturing within the district.
2. It is recommended the board of education complete a formal facilities study to determine needs, assess community feelings, and move in an organized manner to address facilities that will not improve without intervention. This activity will require the use of an outside professional who will start the process and be an objective observer of what is currently happening.
3. Perhaps the greatest need of the district is to create the following items:
 - a. a vision all board of education members, administrators, faculty and staff can repeat and understand;
 - b. A long-range plan for the board of education including the overall goals of the district. Each board of education member should know the plan and be sure it is adhered to at every meeting;
 - c. Building-level improvement plans in all buildings which address the board of education's overall goals.
4. The creation and implementation of an ongoing district-level new teacher development program is recommended.
5. It is recommended all building level administrators be trained in how to provide feedback to teachers once they have visited a classroom, even if it is a short 10-15 minute drop-by visit.
6. The district should be encouraged to develop K-12 committees where faculty can see the continuum of what is begun in elementary school to what students finish at high school. If faculties do not communicate they are unaware of who has responsibility for what.
7. Opportunities exist for even more utilization of the site councils as new issues and challenges face the district. If the district moves forward with a facilities study, the site council

members need to be directly involved. They could be mobilized into action to speak to community groups, new families in the community, and generally carry the district vision throughout the area.

Teaching & Learning

1. It is recommended a technology inventory be in place where expenditures, time of purchase, and tentative replacement dates can be used to determine expenditures and needs.
2. It is recommended the district investigate statistics and their implications upon identification of special education students. A way to do this would be to review the level of discrepancies to prevent a “wait to fail” system where a student loses academic ground for three to five years before s/he receives instructional intervention. The district could offer district-wide in-services addressing these issues.
3. It is recommended the district add a link to its website addressing special education.
4. The district should continue its support of paraprofessional pay. The district should communicate with ANW about the possibility of increased pay when paraprofessional receive advanced training.
5. The district should continue its Mentor-Teacher program and explore the incorporation of training instructional coaches to work with teachers.

Facilities Management

1. Three of the district’s four elementary schools are not handicap accessible. Combining the elementary schools into one or two buildings could address this issue and provide better access to technology, more adequate facilities for safety, better energy conservation, and continued educational opportunities for the students.
2. The development of an inventory system would help identify and track usage and locate areas that could be helpful in cutting costs for repairs and cleaning.
3. If a bond issue is studied, the master facilities plan could be updated to better reflect present needs.
4. Development of a formal rotation system for items such as roof renovations, vehicle maintenance, carpets, computers, furniture and food service would help to keep the district from incurring unanticipated costs.

5. It is recommended the district develop a written preventative maintenance plan targeting monthly preventative maintenance to be performed.
6. It is recommended the district consider scaling down the amount of items on the evaluation form for support staff. This could streamline the evaluation process without sacrificing the intent of the evaluation instrument. Presently there are 30 items to evaluate for maintenance work, 34 for the head custodian, and 38 for custodians.
7. It is recommended the district develop an energy conservation plan for the district, including the evaluation and effectiveness of the HVAC systems of all district buildings. This can help in developing set back and operational times and is the most effective way to schedule heating and cooling.
8. There are approximately 14 buses of model year 1996 and older. The district should determine if it could self-insure these buses by dropping collision and comprehensive coverage and carry liability coverage only.
9. An after-school loading concern at Iola Middle School exists and needs to be addressed.
10. The chemistry lab in the science building was open and on each lab table was hydrochloric acid and sodium chloride very close to one another and not secured. The chemical safety procedures for the district should be reviewed to determine proper procedures.
11. A centralized lunchroom at the high school would help provide security for the building.
12. The district should determine if there are additional areas where security cameras should be installed to provide adequate security in locations such as food service storage areas, the central office, at alternative schools, in the bus lot, and at the football field.
13. The district should consider obtaining assistance from its worker's compensation company to determine procedures to help control workers compensation costs.

Human Resources

1. It is recommended all new and current district employees should review and sign their respective job descriptions.
2. It is recommended the district develop and utilize a pre-employment offer letter for all new district employees.
3. It is recommended the district develop a policy and post signs declaring the prohibited use of cameras or cell phones with cameras, or any other video recording equipment in restricted areas, including bathrooms or dressing rooms. This policy would also apply to the general public.

4. It is recommended the district be sure all district employees receive at least one performance review annually.
5. It is recommended the district consider having a workman's compensation audit completed by an outside vendor.
6. It is recommended the district ask its insurance carrier to perform an on-site audit of operation and practices.
7. It is recommended the district consider paying the first \$250 to \$300 of all workmen's compensation cost in-house to possibly lower expenditures.

IMPACT

Efficiency Impact:

1. By adding a link for the district's special education resources to the district's website, parents, patrons, and educators can access information without assuming the Interlocal cooperative is the sole communicator of special education resources.
2. A pre-employment offer letter allows the candidate to understand their rate of pay, work hours, reporting relationship, benefits, and start dates. This letter should be issued by the superintendent and serves as a reference point should employment concerns arise later. Employees should sign the letter once they accept the offer. The letter should be kept in the employee's personnel file.
3. Performance reviews need to be conducted on all employees annually. These provide an opportunity for supervisors to encourage positive employee performance and correct any performance problems in a timely manner. By only doing select reviews, employees not receiving reviews may get the message that they are not important. This can contribute to low employee morale, theft, sick time abuse and turnover.

Fiscal Impact:

1. Paying for additional training is an avenue to ensure employee morale and maintains high levels of productivity.
2. Building one or two new elementary schools to replace the existing buildings would provide savings in utilities, travel, grounds, custodial, maintenance costs, and repairs. The projected savings would be \$60,000-\$100,000 per year.

3. An inventory system for custodial/maintenance supplies could save money by identifying necessities and excesses. This could identify \$5,000-\$10,000 in savings annually.
4. A well-developed preventative maintenance plan could save the district from unanticipated major expenses. With a preventative plan in place, the maintenance department will have the opportunity to evaluate and catch potential problems before they occur. Preventative plans could include scheduling filter changes, performing HVAC evaluations, roof inspections, field maintenance, replacing major equipment, etc. An adequate plan can save the district \$5,000- \$10,000 per year in major repairs.
5. The development of an energy policy can produce savings, depending on its establishment and implementation. The potential savings of the policy is \$3,000-\$5,000 per year.
6. Turning on Windows XP Power Saving Option on PC's and establishing guidelines requiring staff to turn off computers, monitors, and printers when not in use – especially on nights and weekends/holidays – will save approximately \$50 per computer per year.
7. Self-insuring buses of model year 1996 and older can provide savings in insurance costs of approximately \$2,500 per year.
8. By reviewing worker's compensation injuries and developing a plan to control accidents, up to \$10,000 per year could be saved.
9. There could be additional costs for camera equipment to provide security at selected sites. The district should work with its insurance carrier to determine if there would be any positive effect on insurance premiums by adding more cameras.
10. Putting up signs stating "No filming, videotaping or photography, including cell phone cameras, is permitted in the locker rooms, restrooms or dressing areas on all school property" should be inexpensive, could decrease insurance premiums, and protect students from unwanted exposure on the Internet.
11. By having a third party complete a worker's compensation audit, the district can be assured the audit is accurate and fair. Companies who perform worker's compensation audits usually review the previous three years and only charge a percentage of any cost saving they find. If no improvements or cost savings are found, there is no charge for the service.
12. Insurance companies will help identify current and potential problems which the district can work to improve. These improvements can help reduce the liability insurance premiums and save the district money.

13. By paying the first \$250 or \$300 of a workman compensation medical claim, the district holds down the amount the insurance carrier has to pay out and should reduce premiums. It will also help control the district workman compensation mode rate which is set by the state and is a factor in establishing the work/comp premium. This can result in a reduced premium and a savings to the district.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY SCHOOL REVIEW SURVEY RESULTS

STUDENTS' SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 35 statements students were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Students:

- Over 80% of responding students said the district has effective science programs.
- Over 80% of students agreed district teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.
- Nearly 75% of students thought the district's schools have equal access to educational equipment such as computers, television monitors, science labs, and art materials.
- Eighty percent of students felt the cafeteria facilities are sanitary and neat.

Opportunities for Improvement / Recommendations from Students:

- One third of students felt they did not have regular access to computer equipment and software in the classroom.
- Two thirds of the students surveyed thought drugs and alcohol use are problems in the district.
- Over half of the students surveyed said vandalism is a problem in the school district.
- Nearly two thirds of the students surveyed reported students wait in food lines longer than 10 minutes.

TEACHERS' SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 49 statements teachers were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Teachers:

- Three quarters of the responding teachers felt the Iola board of education members listen to the opinions and desires of others.
- Nearly 90% of teachers surveyed felt the central office staff morale is good.
- Over 90% of teachers surveyed said building administrators in their schools care about the needs of students.
- Nearly 95% of teachers surveyed thought students feel safe and secure at school.
- Over 90% of teachers surveyed said the cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.

Opportunities for Improvement / Recommendations from Teachers:

- Over 80% of teachers surveyed felt district salaries are not competitive with similar positions in the job market.
- Over 85% of teachers surveyed said the district's employee recruitment plan is not effective.
- Over 85% of teachers surveyed felt teachers are not rewarded for superior performance and experience.
- Two thirds of teachers surveyed thought drug and alcohol use are problems for the district.
- Nearly 70% of teachers surveyed felt repairs are not made in a timely manner in the district.

CLASSIFIED STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 48 statements classified staff members were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Classified Staff Members:

- Three quarters of the classified staff members responding said the superintendent is a respected and effective instructional leader.

- Over 85% of classified staff members surveyed felt central office personnel support the education process.
- Three quarters of classified staff members surveyed thought their building administrators are effective instructional leaders.
- Over 85% of classified staff members reported teachers in the Iola school district care about students' needs.
- Over 93% of classified staff members thought students feel safe and secure at school.

Opportunities for Improvement / Recommendations from Classified Staff Members:

- Over three quarters of classified staff members thought district salaries are not competitive with similar positions in the job market.
- Over half of classified staff members felt the district needs to improve its orientation of new employees.
- Nearly 60% of classified staff members thought employees performing below the standard of expectation are not counseled in an appropriate or timely manner.
- Nearly 60% of classified staff members said drug and alcohol use are problems in the district.
- Over half of the classified staff members reported vandalism is a problem in the district.

PARENT/PATRON SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 40 statements parents were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Parents/Patrons:

- Over three quarters of parents/patrons surveyed said the district's building administrators are effective instructional leaders of their schools.
- Eighty percent of parents/patrons surveyed felt the district's teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.
- Three quarters of parents/patrons surveyed thought students feel safe and secure at school.
- Nearly 90% of parents/patrons surveyed reported the district's schools are kept clean.

Opportunities for Improvement / Recommendations from Parents/Patrons:

- Forty percent of parents/patrons surveyed felt the district does not have effective programs for addressing students at risk of dropping out.
- Nearly 45% of parents/patrons surveyed thought counseling programs for students are not effective.
- Nearly half of parents/patrons surveyed said the district's schools do not regularly communicate with parents.
- Seventy percent of parents/patrons surveyed felt the use of drugs and alcohol is a problem in the district.
- Nearly half of parents/patrons surveyed thought vandalism is a problem in the district.

ADMINISTRATORS AND BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 56 statements administrators and board of education members were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

Commendations from Administrators and Board of Education Members:

- Over 80% of administrators and board members surveyed felt the board listens to the opinions and desires of others.
- Nearly 90% of administrators and board members surveyed thought the superintendent is a respected and effective community leader.
- Nearly 95% of administrators and board members surveyed said administrators' suggestions for effective programs and materials are listened to.
- Over 80% of administrators and board members surveyed thought students feel safe and secure at school.
- All administrators and board members surveyed said the cafeteria staff is helpful and friendly.

Opportunities for Improvement / Recommendations from Administrators and Board of Education Members:

- Sixty-five percent of administrators and board members surveyed felt the district needs to improve its orientation of new employees.

- Sixty- five percent of administrators and board members surveyed thought the district's employee recruitment plan was not effective.
- Nearly 90% of administrators and board members surveyed felt teachers are not rewarded for superior performance.
- Over 85% of administrators and board members surveyed thought drug and alcohol use are problems in the district.
- Over 70% of administrators and board members surveyed said vandalism is a problem.