

A Curriculum Audit™
of the
SCHERTZ-CIBOLO-UNIVERSAL CITY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
Schertz, Texas



Cibolo Valley Elementary second graders demonstrate their knowledge of the water cycle



Texas Curriculum Management Audit Center
Texas Association of School Administrators

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III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

The auditors conducted a Curriculum Audit of the Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District (SCUC ISD) during February 2017. SCUC ISD policies, plans, curriculum, access to the educational programs and activities, student achievement, and productivity of the support offices and programs were analyzed and evaluated against a set of predefined standards and indicators of quality, noting any discrepancies from the standards. These constitute the findings of the audit. The auditors then provide recommendations to help the district address the discrepancies noted in the report. The recommendations represent the auditors’ “best judgment” regarding how to address the discrepancies contained in the report. It is expected that the superintendent and his staff will review the findings and recommendations and make decisions regarding how and when to address the suggested steps for resolving the discrepancies in relationship to the audit standards. The recommendations serve as the starting point for a discussion of how to deal with the documented findings.

Standard audit practice is that the superintendent and the district’s board of trustees *receive* an audit, but they do not *accept* or *approve* it. After review of the audit report, the board may request the response of its superintendent of schools to the audit recommendations. When the superintendent’s response is received, then the board makes a determination regarding how it will act upon the recommendations. In this manner, the superintendent and the board become accountable for what occurs in the school system after an audit report.

SCUC ISD staff take great pride in their student achievement and are determined to remain a top-ranking school system in Texas. The district is a leader in rankings on state achievement tests compared to others. Significant changes over the years, however, have challenged the district in terms of student academic performance. Once a small, rural community, SCUC ISD is now one of the faster growing school districts in Texas. Much like the growth of the state, student demographics have changed considerably over the last decade. This growth and diversity, coupled with steadily increasing state standards (*STAAR*) and the uncertainty surrounding Texas school finance, has placed the district in a position to revisit their strategies and processes to meet student needs.

SCUC ISD is currently undertaking a curriculum management audit in order to conduct a system-wide organizational analysis aimed at improving their support for teachers and the instruction they deliver to address these needs. Information from the curriculum audit will be used to continue a focus on teaching and learning and provide a structure to organize and prioritize the work of the system on closing the achievement gap for all students.

The intent of this audit report is to identify areas in which the education program and supporting district operations do not meet Curriculum Management Audit criteria for effectiveness and to offer reasonable recommendations related to the identified areas of need. The report contains 14 findings, for which auditors have provided seven comprehensive packages of recommendations with action steps to help bring the specified conditions to a status of congruence with audit standards. These findings and recommendations are cross-referenced in Exhibit S.0.1. The findings listed in this exhibit provide the SCUC ISD with specific details about the current and potential barriers and challenges that internal stakeholders face in the efforts to move the district toward achieving its mission and goals enroute to the next level of excellence. [Note: Each of the recommendations covers multiple findings; but the major recommendation assigned to each barrier is indicated with an “X” in Exhibit S.0.1.]

Exhibit S.0.1

**Findings and Recommendations Aligned to Audit Standards
Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District
February 2017**

Recommendations	Standard 1 Control			Standard 2 Direction			Standard 3 Connectivity		Standard 4 Feedback			Standard 5 Productivity		
	Finding 1.1: Policy	Finding 1.2: Planning	Finding 1.3: TO/Job Descriptions	Finding 2.1: Curriculum Planning	Finding 2.2: Curriculum Scope	Finding 2.3: Curriculum Quality	Finding 3.1: Professional Development	Finding 3.2: Instructional Practices/Monitoring	Finding 4.1: Assessment Planning	Finding 4.2: Assessment Scope	Finding 4.3: Use of Assessment as Feedback	Finding 5.1: Curriculum-Based Budgeting	Finding 5.2: Interventions	Finding 5.3: Facilities
1		X												X
2				X	X	X		X						
3	X		X											
4							X							
5									X	X	X			
6													X	
7												X		

Standard One: Control

The auditors found the Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District’s board policies, rules and regulations to be inadequate in both content and specificity to guide all necessary aspects of curriculum management and the educational programs (see [Finding 1.1](#)). Several policies in the curriculum management areas of control, direction, connectivity and equity, feedback, and productivity were either weak or absent.

Auditors determined that the district table of organization is ineffective in providing oversight to the board of trustees. More specifically, the table of organization violates several rules of organizational management, most notably in the areas of span of control, full inclusion, and separation of line and staff function. Auditors determined that job descriptions met audit criteria in all areas, but will need to be updated to reflect changes in district assignments and administrative responsibilities, particularly in the area of linkages to the curriculum (see [Finding 1.2](#)).

The district’s planning and plans are inadequate to accomplish their intended purpose of promoting successful accomplishment of the district’s vision, mission, goals, and priorities (see [Finding 1.3](#)). Some elements of planning across the district are evident, but the absence of oversight has contributed to the lack of attention and focus on planning. Administrators and teachers affirmed the value of planning and report its use on a regular basis, but auditors found little broad-based evidence supporting these claims. Planning documents are also inadequate as guidance documents and were evaluated by auditors as being more compliance in nature than authentic roadmaps for pursuing and achieving intended goals. No single office or person is responsible for the oversight of campus planning and its coordination with other district planning activities, where they exist. This has led to unclear connections between programs, individual campuses, and district goals.

Standard Two: Direction

The auditors found that planning for curriculum management is sporadic and is not coordinated district-wide across content areas. Various documents, including board policies, job descriptions, district-level meeting notes, and district-level documents, were found to provide little direction for curriculum management functions,

including a common framework for consistency in design, delivery, and assessment. Further, the SCUC ISD lacks a plan to provide direction for the design and delivery of the curriculum (see [Finding 2.1](#)).

The Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District administration requested that auditors only examine the core content areas (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) for analysis of curriculum scope and quality. Auditors found that the scope of the written curriculum in the core content areas was adequate at the elementary school grade span, grades K-4, to guide teaching and learning but inadequate at the intermediate (grades 5-6), junior high (grades 7-8), and high school (grades 9-12) levels (see [Finding 2.2](#)). To be considered adequate, all (100 percent) of core content courses were required to have some form of written curriculum guidance for the teachers of those courses.

Auditors reviewed available written curriculum documents for all core content areas in relation to quality criteria necessary for guiding the district curriculum delivery in classrooms. Auditors found the quality of the written curriculum documents in the SCUC ISD was inadequate to provide teachers with consistent and clear direction for effective planning or teaching (see [Finding 2.3](#)). There were no examples of curriculum guidance documents that met the minimum audit standard of 12 of 15 points in the grade spans for core content areas. While most curriculum documents reviewed by auditors included student learning expectations, most lacked references to aligned instructional resources and approaches.

Consistent use of quality curriculum documents to support teaching and learning in classrooms is also essential to ensure that all students have equal access to the adopted curriculum with comparable opportunities for achievement. Board policies and other district guidance documents failed to provide expectations for district written curriculum use and responsibilities for monitoring its delivery. Auditors found that the use of the district's written curriculum documents varied from classroom to classroom and across schools in SCUC ISD (see [Finding 2.3](#)).

Standard Three: Connectivity and Equity

The district offers numerous professional development activities, mostly for teachers and campus administrators. However, the planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of the district's professional development program are inadequate to fulfill the primary purpose of professional development in education—to build human capacity for the improvement of learning by all students. The professional development program is not directed by a comprehensive plan and lacks a clearinghouse function as well as overall coordination to promote focus and the wise use of funds (see [Finding 3.1](#)).

Observed classroom instruction did not meet the district's explicit and implicit expectations for classroom teaching and learning activities (see [Finding 3.2](#)). Teachers were typically engaged in teacher-centered direct instruction and monitoring or assisting students with seatwork. The most often observed student activities were completing a worksheet and active or passive listening to the teacher. Further, more than 50 percent of the learning activities were determined to be at the lowest level of cognition—knowledge. When technology use was observed, the level of application (using the SAMR model) was at the *substitution* level in more than 87 percent of classrooms. Monitoring curriculum delivery to determine alignment of the written, taught, and assessed curriculum is perceived as valuable and practiced within the district, mainly via classroom walk-throughs and professional learning communities (PLCs). However, the “who, what, when, why, and how” of monitoring has not been clearly determined or communicated, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent efforts across campuses (see [Finding 3.2](#)).

Standard Four: Feedback and Assessment

Student assessment and program evaluation planning documents provided to the auditors for review, combined with interviews and campus observations, did not provide sufficient evidence of a comprehensive student assessment and program evaluation plan. Auditors found no evidence of a systematic means of evaluating instructional programs for the purposes of making decisions about their selection, continuation, modification, and/or termination (see [Finding 4.1](#)).

The scope of formal assessment in SCUC ISD is inadequate when viewed across all grade levels and curriculum offerings as well as when considering various grade level groups. Overall, the scope of formal assessment was

inadequate in that only 63 percent of core courses had some form of state or district-wide assessments (see [Finding 4.2](#)).

Data use was found to be inadequate to inform curricular, instructional, and programmatic decision making to improve student achievement. Although a system of district formative assessments provided data in most core courses, data use to guide instruction is undefined, and data were used inconsistently from campus to campus and classroom to classroom (see [Finding 4.3](#)). District-wide summative data collection was limited to courses having required state assessments. Data show that over a five-year period, SCUC ISD exceeded the state average in most cases; however, performance is trending downward, and the achievement gap between subgroups continues to widen. A system-wide process for the use of data in evaluating programs prior to implementation or when making decisions about continuation, modification, or termination was not in place.

Standard Five: Productivity

Auditors determined that financial decision making and budget development processes lack cost-benefit analyses and are not adequately linked to curricular goals and priorities. While a budgetary planning process is in place, the auditors found an absence of direct linkages among department goals and budget priorities (see [Finding 5.1](#)). No formal, routine effort has been made to link student achievement or program performance feedback to budgetary decisions. Additionally, participation in the budget planning processes at the district level lacks full inclusion of stakeholders, and at the campus level lacks consistency across the district.

The auditors found that the SCUC ISD has little control over the selection and implementation of program interventions. The sense of autonomy at the campus level has resulted in numbers of programs added to the curriculum as a means of enhancing student performance without monitoring oversight. Interventions are not screened in accordance with any standards prior to implementation and are not evaluated for effectiveness. No processes are in place to ensure that interventions are aligned to district goals and objectives (see [Finding 5.2](#)). Response to Intervention (RTI) was further analyzed as an intervention and found to be inconsistently implemented and lacking oversight on the district level as to implementation fidelity and effectiveness.

Auditors concluded that the SCUC Independent School District has taken recent steps to address aging buildings and enrollment capacity concerns. The facility planning process is rated adequate and is being actively utilized to help guide major renovation, remodeling, and new construction in the district to address facility needs in the future (see [Finding 5.3](#)). However, facility planning lacks elements of connectedness between education goals and philosophy as it relates to facility design to enhance and support the learning environment.

The CMSi audit team has suggested several steps for improving all areas in which the current practices precluded the district's meeting audit criteria. These recommendations and detailed action steps are contained elsewhere within this report. Additional actions might be developed by district leaders and staff to implement these recommended changes, but most of the suggested actions have a history of success in other districts and merit focused attention.

The critical first step is for the superintendent to develop a work plan for responding to the findings and recommendations. Eventually, the board of trustees should approve an implementation plan that spans the next one to three years.

Overall, the auditors recognized the immense challenges facing the leaders of Schertz-Cibolo-Universal City Independent School District. In light of the identified needs in areas of curriculum and instruction, major changes will be needed to address necessary actions while maintaining reasonable funding and staff. Given the core of committed administrators and staff and the vitality that comes from a program analysis of the district, the audit team expresses confidence that focused efforts and courageous decisions and actions will bring the desired results in the next few years.