

*Effectiveness*

**& EFFICIENCY**

# **School Reviews**

## **Executive Summary**

Prepared for the  
Board of Education  
St John-Hudson Unified School  
District USD #350  
June 2013



**Center for Innovative School Leadership**

Emporia State University • Fort Hays State University • Pittsburg State University

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# Executive Summary

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St John-Hudson USD #350

## 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 good 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 are provided here, including:

- **an overview of St. John-Hudson School District #350**
- **a comparison of St. John-Hudson 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.

## ST. JOHN-HUDSON SCHOOL DISTRICT #350

The St John-Hudson School District is one of several school 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 St John-Hudson's school district was initiated in November 2012 and concluded in March 2013. This report will identify best practices of the St John-Hudson school district and provide suggestions on ways to further improve the district's operation efficiencies.

### School district profile information:

- The St John-Hudson school district is located in Stafford County in Central Kansas. St John-Hudson is one of three school districts located in the county.
- The 2012 U.S. Census data reports Stafford county had an estimated population of 4,358. In 2000, the census reported an estimated 4,789 resided in the county. This is a 9% decline in the county's population.
- The racial makeup of the school district is over 75% Caucasian; this figure has been relatively steady over the years. This compares to an 80% average in the region schools, a 92% average among peer schools, and a statewide average of 67%.
- The school district consists of 300 square miles compared to the state average of 286.8 square miles per school district.
- St John-Hudson school district currently employs 49 employees, including 27 certified teaching and administrative staff.
- The 2012-2013 proposed general fund and supplemental general fund was \$3,496,946.
- In 2011-2012 the average teacher's salary was \$50,966. This compares to an average of \$48,070 in region schools, \$46,610 among peer schools, and a statewide average of \$48,956.
- In 2011-2012 the average building administrator's salary was \$67,746. This compares to an average of \$75,958 in region schools, \$70,973 among peer schools, and a statewide average of \$85,539.
- In 2011-2012, the 20-year salary trend for teachers was ranked 143<sup>rd</sup> in the state. The region average was 182<sup>nd</sup>, and the peer average was 172<sup>nd</sup>.
- In 2011-2012 the pupil-teacher ratio was 11.2:1. This compares to an average of 12.7:1 in region schools, 12.0:1 among peer schools, and a statewide average of 15.1:1.

## COMPARISONS TO PEER AND REGION SCHOOLS

CISL has established peer and region schools to support comparability of selected criteria. There were four peer schools selected and 23 region schools to which St John-Hudson 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 based on school districts that are in contiguous counties which include Barton, Edwards, Pawnee, Pratt, Reno, and Rice counties. The peer schools selected are Minneola #219, Clifton-Clyde #224, St Francis #297, and Burlingame #454. Comparisons between St John-Hudson and these peer 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 St John-Hudson 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, and impacts. An extended report will be submitted in the future with the full findings. Included here are highlights from the commendations, recommendations, and projected impacts.

### COMMENDATIONS:

#### Facilities Management

##### Food Service

1. The staff cross training provides an excellent way to enable staff to fill where needed.

##### Organization and Management

1. The School/Community Library provides excellent resources for both the community and the school district.
2. The patrons are very involved in school matters as is evident by helping with the football field maintenance and the attendance at the parent meeting and other parent involvement.

#### Human Resources

##### Organization and Management

1. Lines of communication are clear. Staff understand who to approach when something is needed.

##### Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention

1. Parents and Board of Education members expressed satisfaction and pride in the overall quality of professional staff describing them as knowledgeable and caring.

**Salary, Wages and Benefits**

1. The district provides all qualifying licensed and classified employees \$5,316 towards a single policy health insurance plan which covers its cost based upon plan level chosen. Classified employees working 17½ hours or more qualify on a pro-rata basis.

**Leadership****District Planning and Goal Setting**

1. Collaboration – the district has a cooperative agreement with one local school district to share a foreign language instructor and an elementary counselor.
2. The superintendent’s budget newsletter is a good learning tool for stakeholders who are interested in learning more about the budget.

**Parent/Patron Organizations**

1. Communication – the board, superintendent, teachers, and community all report that communication with stakeholder groups is good.

**Teaching & Learning****Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

1. A decision has been made to contract with Curriculum Leadership Institute for common core curriculum development.

**Special Populations**

1. The elementary staff has implemented a functional MTSS structure.

**Technology**

1. The new administration has plans for upgrading technology use for teaching and learning.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:****Facilities Management****Custodial and Maintenance Services**

1. It is recommended the district keep a copy of all the work orders for the school year. Request a method for input on the work order to determine if the work was done timely and to the satisfaction of the person submitting the request. A summary report presented at the end of the year might be helpful to the Administration and Board.  
**Impact:** This would help determine areas of most concern and repeated repairs and if repair or replacement is the best option. This would, also, help in preparing for summer work as areas of repeated work orders should be identified. This could save money if an

accurate record indicate where most money and time is spent compared to what the District believes is the most important.

2. It is recommended the district use the existing roofing inspection by EMC to have a roofing consultant evaluate the roofs to develop a schedule and propose those areas that can be repaired verses replaced to help develop a budget that is proactive. Additionally, consider having an infrared study done on the roofs of concern to determine if there have been any water leaks.

**Impact:** This would potentially be a savings of \$20,000 over 5-8 years. Timely repairs can give enough life to your roofing system to allow for a reasonable roofing budget.

3. It is recommended the district evaluate the need for more custodians. The figure used is one custodian for every 20,000 square feet. Modifying the figures to take into account mechanical rooms, gymnasiums, and lunchrooms which can be cleaned more quickly, I believe the custodians are approximately 1.5 short of full staffing.

**Impact:** This would improve the building cleanliness. The district may need to look into present cleaning practices and any new equipment that is necessary to help speed up the cleaning process or trying to find any existing staff that can be used in multiple jobs to help fill in the shortage of staff.

#### **Food Service**

1. It is recommended the district consider closing the lunch hour for the high school and discuss with the church, providing meals for the students one day a week, to see if they would consider changing the practice so as not to take funds away from the school food service.

**Impact:** This open lunch hour has the potential of reduced lunch participation in the amount of \$18,000. The Food Service program could see an additional \$5,000-10,000 dollars a year and reduce transfers from General Fund.

#### **Organization and Management**

1. It is recommended the district negotiate the agreement between the city and school district due to the inequality of funding between them. Additionally, it should be determined if there is additional funding that might come from the Educational Foundation and consider the possibility of library grants to help offset costs.

**Impact:** This would possible reduce the expenses the school district covers. At the same time the district can emphasize the importance of the Library.

#### **Human Resources**

##### **Evaluation and Supervision**

1. It is recommended the district review and share job descriptions for all positions with staff on a regular basis. Some job descriptions provided did not have a notation date of last review. Those that did ranged from an adoption date of 2001 to 2004. Some personnel reported they had not seen or been made aware of the job description for their position.

**Impact:** This would promote improved communication in the district and convey to classified staff that their roles are as important to the mission of the district as licensed staff. Some classified staff reported that the nature of their assignment changed and the job description was no longer accurate. A good method for maintaining accurate job descriptions is to require an automatic review prior to posting an open position. This ensures that descriptions are revised as needed.

2. It is recommended the district establish a continuous evaluation process for classified staff. Principals are involved only in the evaluation of teacher aides assigned to their building.

**Impact:** This would improve communication regarding job performance and accountability. Classified employees should be evaluated by in accordance with the policies adopted by the district and published in the noncertified handbook. This would reduce legal exposure to the district in personnel related decisions. Principals should have input in the evaluation of all classified personnel assigned to their building.

### **Recruitment, Hiring, and Retention**

1. It is recommended the district establish and formalize a standard orientation process for all staff. Teachers new to the district spend some time with district personnel and building administrators. A formal mentoring system should be available to new instructional staff.

**Impact:** This would benefit new teaching personnel with an extra contract day added prior to the start of the school year in which they can receive information relevant to district and building responsibilities. Assigning a formal mentor and establishing regular and ongoing opportunities to meet would assist new teachers in learning their duties.

### **Salary, Wages and Benefits**

1. It is recommended the district improve the base salary figure for teachers, as funds become available through the potential of increased retirements among current staff. KASB 20 year salary trend data indicates the negotiated agreement is a robust one. Average teacher salaries also rank comparatively well with peer comparisons (an indication of the experience levels of the staff). However, base (beginning) salary figures are well below peer districts and \$300 less than the statewide median.

**Impact:** This would help in new teacher retention. The district provides a very reasonable health insurance benefit to teachers, but many teachers new to the profession are relatively young and less concerned with the fringe benefit package than in salary.

## **Leadership**

### **Administrative Team**

1. It is recommended the district engage the staff in the development of the new teacher evaluation instrument. After development the administrative staff development should put into operation training activities to improve their teacher evaluation skills. The training should be based on current best practice.

**Impact:** This comprehensive structured process that aligns with the instructional vision of the district and the teachers stated job description would improve the knowledge and

skill of the instructional staff and ultimately improve student learning. The training in curriculum development would be complimented by improvements in the teacher evaluation system. Teacher evaluation to improve student learning is the primary duty of the administration.

### Board of Education

1. It is recommended the district update the master set of board policies and make it available to all stakeholders, preferably through access on the district web site.

**Impact:** This would aid the board in attending to their primary role of policy development. This task would save administrators time and avoid confusion with patrons and staff over policy decisions.

### District Planning and Goal Setting

1. It is recommended the district develop a long range (3-5 year) strategic plan. The plan should have input from patrons, parents, staff, students and administrators. The board should consider employing a facilitator/consultant to guide the Board through this process.

**Impact:** This would create a plan to serve as a road map for the district to make progress on achieving the mission of the district. The strategic plan would provide a way to measure that progress through benchmarks and assess the district's effectiveness in reaching their goals.

2. It is recommended the district establish quarterly meetings with neighboring school district representatives to review current cooperative ventures and explore additional ways to cooperate. The superintendent should be requested to meet at least once a month with neighboring superintendents to communicate on current issues. These meetings would also be used to develop agendas for the quarterly meetings. The superintendent should report to the board the agendas and results of these activities.

**Impact:** This would form the basis for improved communication and cooperation with neighboring districts. All entities can help each other meet the challenges they face. The strategic plan study might be enhanced through exploring ways contiguous districts can cooperate in regard to the facility, technology, virtual school, and staffing challenges the districts are facing.

### Finance and Contracted Services

1. It is recommended the district continue planning and discussing to improve funding for the school/public library. The superintendent has taken the first big steps in: 1) identifying the current funding disparity between supporting groups, 2) making stakeholders aware of the disparity, and 3) attending meetings where these disparities are discussed and solutions are considered. The district should work toward a financial solution where each of the three groups contributes approximately one-third of the annual costs.

**Impact:** Reaching an equitable solution with the three major sources of funding (school district, foundation, and city) would reduce the financial burden for the school district, allowing them to cut their budget further or add programming. The district has had their budget reduced by cuts handed down from the state. In addition, declining enrollment has reduced available funds. The result has been a reduction in services to students. The cost

of operating the library for both the school's needs and the community's needs has become unmanageable.

## Teaching & Learning

### Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

1. It is recommended the district develop a coordinated and aligned system using a strategic planning model, including school improvement plans for each school. This system would include long and short range district goals toward which the major components of the teaching and learning structure would be directed.

**Impact:** This would provide a most productive organization. The most effective schools/districts are those that build a foundation of a common mission, shared values, and clearly established goals to which all participants must support and adhere. In the field of curriculum, this translates to a system that is created and adopted by both the authorizing body (the board of education in the case of public schools) and those charged with its implementation, administrators and teachers. It is valuable, if not essential, for staff to be involved in developing the curriculum and for the instructional system to “fit together”, or be aligned.

### Special Populations

1. It is recommended the district continue to develop the MTSS structure at the elementary level and expand it to the secondary level.

**Impact:** This system would diagnose and serve all students at an appropriate, student-centered level. MTSS structure is perceived by many as a special education tool, and indeed, it complements the identification process for special needs students. To implement the MTSS process in less than the entire organizational range, is to fail to serve all the students.

### Staff Development

1. It is recommended the district align staff development energies with district goals and academic needs.

**Impact:** This would enhance focused resources through an aligned professional development structure that serves the goals and priorities of the district. An integral part of the strategic planning and district goal-setting advocated throughout this review is incorporation of teacher learning and growth through targeted professional development.

### Technology

1. It is recommended the district develop a useable and active technology plan.

**Impact:** This would continue to sustain the priority of technological support for teaching and learning, a priority which continues to address real world goals for the learning process. Distracted by multiple demands on a diminished budget, the technology aspect of a strategic plan for the district should be a priority.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY SCHOOL REVIEW SURVEY RESULTS

### ADMINISTRATORS AND BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS SURVEY RESULTS

Of the administrators and board of education members in the St John-Hudson school district, seven completed the survey. Of all the 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:

- All of the responding administrators and board of education members thought the superintendent was very well respected as a community leader.
- Six of the seven responding administrators and board of education members thought the central office staff is effective in supporting the educational program.
- All of the responding administrators and board of education members felt the teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.
- All of the responding administrators and board of education members said the students and faculty feel very safe at school.
- All of the responding administrators and board of education members said the district's health insurance package meets the employees' needs well.

#### Recommendations from Administrators and Board of Education Members:

- The majority of the responding administrators and board of education members felt not satisfied with the dual credit/college equivalency class program and instruction for students in the district.
- Five of the seven responding administrators and board of education members said the schools are not clean.
- Five of the seven responding administrators and board of education members thought the district does not respond well to repairing and maintaining school facilities.
- Four of the seven responding administrators and board of education members felt not satisfied with the district's process for teacher evaluations.

## **CLASSIFIED STAFF SURVEY RESULTS**

Of all the classified staff in the St John-Hudson school district, 22 completed the survey. Of all the statements classified staff were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

### **Commendations from Classified Staff:**

- The majority of the responding classified staff felt satisfied with the quality of education students are receiving from the schools.
- 20 of the responding classified staff said the superintendent is respected as a community leader.
- 19 of the responding classified staff thought the central office staff is effective in supporting the educational program.
- 18 of the responding classified staff said the students and faculty feel safe at school.

### **Recommendations from Classified Staff:**

- The majority of the responding classified staff was not satisfied with the dual credit/college equivalency class program and instruction for students in the district.
- Eight of the responding classified staff felt not satisfied with the opportunities classified staff have in providing suggestions to improve the school.
- 19 of the responding classified staff said drugs and alcohol are a problem in this district.
- The majority of the responding classified staff felt the schools are not clean.
- The majority of the responding classified staff thought the district does not respond well to repairing and maintaining school facilities.

## **PARENTS' SURVEY RESULTS**

Of all the parent/patrons in the St John-Hudson school district, 36 completed the survey. Of all the statements parents/patrons were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

### **Commendations from Parents:**

- 28 of the responding parent/patrons said the building principals care about the students' needs.

- 25 of the responding parent/patrons thought the information the schools give you about the academic growth of your children is useful.
- The majority of the responding parent/patrons felt the teachers are knowledgeable in the subjects' areas they teach.
- 30 of the responding parent/patrons said the teachers care about their students' needs.
- The majority of the responding parent/patrons thought the children feel safe at school.

### **Recommendations from Parents:**

- 19 of the responding parent/patrons are not satisfied with the advanced placement educational program and instruction for students in the district.
- 18 of the responding parent/patrons are not satisfied with the dual credit/college equivalency class program and instruction for students in the district.
- The majority of the responding parent/patrons said drugs and alcohol are a problem in this district.
- 19 of the responding parent/patrons felt the schools are not clean.

### **STUDENTS' SURVEY RESULTS**

Of all the students in the St John-Hudson school district, 86 completed the survey. Of all the statements students were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

### **Commendations from Students:**

- The majority of the responding students said they were satisfied with the quality of education they are receiving from the schools.
- The majority of the responding students felt the building principals care about students' needs.
- 82 of the responding students thought the teachers are knowledgeable in the subject areas they teach.
- Almost all of the responding students felt safe at school.

**Recommendations from Students:**

- 13 of the responding students are not satisfied with the vocational (career and technology) educational programs and instruction for students in their school.
- 12 of the responding students are not satisfied with the advanced placement educational programs and instruction in their school.
- 15 of the responding students are not satisfied with the dual credit/college equivalency classes educational programs in their school.

**TEACHERS' SURVEY RESULTS**

Of all the teachers in the St John-Hudson school district, 20 completed the survey. Of all the statements teachers were asked to respond to, the items below were the ones receiving the strongest responses.

**Commendations from Teachers:**

- All of the responding teachers thought the superintendent is effective in providing leadership for the school district.
- All of the responding teachers said the building principals care about students' needs.
- 20 of the responding said students and faculty feel safe at school.

**Recommendations from Teachers:**

- 13 of the responding felt the schools are not clean.
- 16 of the responding said the district does not respond well to repairing and maintaining school facilities.
- 15 of the responding thought the orientation program for new employees is not effective to the district.
- 16 of the responding felt the district does not reward teachers well for superior performance.