

Appendix F:

Texas School for the Deaf



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Overview

Mission

Our mission at the Texas School for the Deaf is to ensure that deaf students achieve personal excellence by providing an exemplary education and student life program that fosters learning in a visually accessible, safe and positive environment. We also strive to improve the lives of deaf students and families in Texas by providing a complete array of outreach services.

Beliefs

- Education is a responsibility shared by the students, home, school, and community.
- All students achieve their maximum potential in a school that recognizes, values, and accommodates their unique abilities and interests.
- Treating people with dignity and respect is essential to a healthy and productive environment.
- The development of the whole person socially, physically, intellectually and emotionally is imperative to success.
- Involving people in decisions that impact their lives promotes ownership, commitment, action, and a sense of value and pride.
- A full signing environment enhances the quality of life for the students, families and the TSD Community.
- Deaf students flourish when educated in a language-rich environment designed to meet their communication, language, and educational needs.
- A rigorous, standards-based curriculum and specialized programs are the foundations for success in literacy, career/work, and life skills.
- Competence in technology is critical for equal access to communication and information.
- Highly qualified staff motivate and empower students to reach their maximum potential.
- Exposure to and experience with Deaf Culture enrich the lives of students and their families.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

Goal 1. Texas School for the Deaf students will demonstrate the academic, career and work, and life skills to become productive citizens and to achieve their maximum potential.

Objective 1. TSD students will annually demonstrate progress in academic programs; career and work programs; and life skills programs.

Goal 2. Texas students, professionals, families, individuals, local school districts, Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf (RDSPDs), and agencies will benefit from TSD outreach and resource services.

Objective 2. Texas students, professionals, families, individuals, local school districts, Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf, and agencies will receive quality technical assistance from TSD.

Functions

TSD is established, as a state agency to provide a continuum of direct educational services to students, ages zero through twenty-two, who are deaf and hard of hearing and who may have multiple disabilities. TSD is also directed to serve as a statewide educational resource center on deafness providing a variety of educational services to programs and professionals throughout the state working with and for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. Texas Education Code, § 30.051.

Anticipated Changes to the Mission, Strategies, and Goals Over the Next Five Years

TSD's two primary functions—serving students on our Austin campus and providing statewide outreach services—are expected to continue without change over the next five years. We will continue to provide educational, residential support and related services to our on-site population of deaf and hard of hearing students. We are experiencing, however, and expect to continue experiencing, a change in the nature of the population of students we serve. If current trends continue, we will serve an increasing number of

students with complex additional disabilities including medically fragile children. We will likely also serve students who have a history of abuse, neglect and serious behavior issues. At the same time, our population of “normal” deaf children will grow as a result of the quality of the School's reputation nationwide, the attraction of TSD as an employer for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing, and the general strength of the Austin area economy.

The same is true for our outreach and resource mission. Although the mission will remain the same, the need for services will expand. As a “center” school for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, TSD has the centralized resources and expertise to share with school districts, families, and professionals involved in the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. As we build a staff in our Educational Resource Center on Deafness, our outreach activities will increase. We have also begun to work more collaboratively with Texas Education Agency statewide deaf services as well as statewide partners in the Education Service Centers charged with providing technical assistance in specified areas to professionals in deaf education. Recently TSD has assumed a statewide leadership role in services to families. We expect to see growth in that role over the next five years including the establishment of a Family Resource Center on the campus in Austin.

Additional Considerations

Key Economic and Environmental Factors.

- **Energy Costs.** The cost to provide electricity, natural gas and water has increased by 45% since 1999. Additionally, increases in crude oil prices have resulted in higher consumer prices for gasoline, diesel fuel, commercial transportation fares and consumer products. These increases have had a significant impact on the School's budget.
- **The Employees Retirement System (ERS) reduced health benefits and increased employee contributions.** The once strong benefits package offered to state employees is losing ground each year. Higher co-pays for medical and drug services make the benefits package less of a selling point for recruitment and retention purposes.
- **New Requirements For An Already Scarce Talent Pool.** Highly qualified deaf educators are in short supply and high demand and that shortage is expected to worsen over the next years. Teachers of children who are deaf or hard of hearing require specialized training to obtain the skills to meet the complex needs of the students, including competency in American Sign Language. The teacher training programs are not preparing sufficient numbers of teachers to meet either replacement or growth needs. Over the past decade, 21 university deaf education teacher-training programs were discontinued while only 12 new programs were initiated. The status of teacher retention is equally dim. Currently, 20% of teachers leave their jobs in less than five years. Ironically, at the same time we face this serious teacher shortage, the No Child Left Behind act has imposed additional requirements for all teachers, including those who teach deaf students, in core academic areas.
- **Unemployment Rate.** Texas state salaries are simply not competitive with the rest of the nation. The reduction in employee benefits and increased costs have adversely impacted employees. As a result, we are unable to compete with the private sector and other states for qualified staff resulting in shortages in critical positions such as Educational Diagnosticians, Counselors, Nurses, Teachers, Interpreters, Residential Educators, Teachers and Teacher Aides.
- **Housing Costs.** Over the past decade, the population migration to Texas, especially Central Texas, has resulted in a dramatic increase in the cost of housing, making it more difficult to recruit from outside the area. The average cost of homes has increased dramatically. As a result, qualified applicants have declined job offers when they realized the high cost of living in Central Texas. Others have relocated to Texas only to learn that the income they earn is not sufficient to allow them to continue living in Central Texas.
- **Transportation Costs.** The high cost of fuel has added to the financial burden of the lower income staff such as our residential educators, cafeteria, transportation and maintenance staff. Many find they are unable to live on only one income and must work more than one job to support themselves and their families. Many TSD employees live outside the Austin city limits and the cost of travel to TSD has become increasingly burdensome.
- **Current Economic Conditions.** The uncertain economy, cost of housing, energy costs and other economic factors have combined to affect our ability to provide the quantity and quality of services needed on our campus and across the state. The unique nature of our staffing needs creates difficulty in maintaining a full staff. Staffing shortages deprive students of the amount of individualized instruction they need and create

circumstances where supervision may be inadequate. Lack of staff makes it difficult to maintain the facilities thus possibly jeopardizing student health and safety. We have not been able to increase services to deaf students and their families across the state.

- **Response to Economic Conditions.** To cope with the affect of past adverse economic conditions and limited resources, TSD has sought alternative methods of providing services. Distance learning classrooms have been established and the use of video conferencing is increasing. Resources are being shifted to provide services in communities across the state.
- **Current Customer Demands.** TSD's customers include students, parents, and professionals throughout the state. Our student population requires a level of services that our current numbers of professional and paraprofessional employees are unable to provide. Adding to this problem, the student population is also becoming increasingly multi-impaired and has complex needs for more intensive services related to the multiple impairments.
- **Parents of TSD students as well as parents of deaf children throughout the state require intensive training in sign language and parenting skills necessary for effective parenting of deaf children.** They require information about all services to which their child is legally entitled or otherwise needs including educational services (e.g.— the Individual Educational Plan and Admission, Review and Dismissal Process) and health services. Additionally, as the population of TSD students living in Austin increases, their parents require increased levels of daily transportation.
- **Long Range Business Plans.** TSD's long-range business plan must include a variety of restructuring efforts to maintain a quality continuum of educational services for our students. We need to continue to represent innovative strategies and proven methods for learning for deaf and hard of hearing students. We need a comprehensive design for effective school functioning that aligns the School's curriculum, technology and professional development into a coordinated plan to improve achievement. We must maintain a continuous professional staff development and training program to meet the current workforce demands. We need new areas of business and community support to implement school activities and programs. We need new sources of federal, state and local funding to sustain our school reform efforts. Lastly, and most importantly, we need to have measurable goals for student performance and benchmarks for meeting those goals.
- **TSD Organization and Structure.** The School is divided into five divisions: executive, instructional, student support, residential and business.

The Executive Division, administered by the Superintendent, includes the Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources, Technology Services, Educational Resource Center on Deafness, Legal and Property/Facilities.

The Residential Division is administered by the Director of Residential Services and includes supervisors of Special Needs, Guidance Programs, Elementary, Middle School and High School Programs. Program Supervisors assist the Director of Residential Services in the management of student residential programs.

The Instructional Division is administered by the Director of Instruction and includes the Early Childhood/Parent Infant Program, Elementary, Special Needs, Middle, High School, and Career Technology Services.

The Student Support Division is administered by the Director of Student Support Services and includes Admissions and Records, Assessment, Interpreting Services, Psychology, Social Work, Health Services. Occupational/Physical Therapy, Speech Therapy, Career/Vocational Counseling and Audiology. These divisions support the Instructional Division.

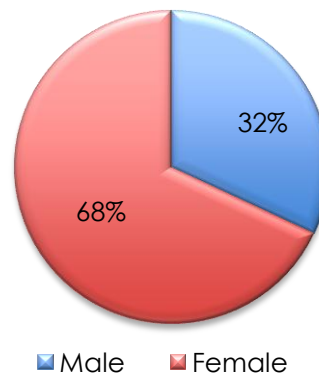
The Business Services Division, managed by the Director of Business and Operations, includes Food Services, Transportation, Accounting and Payroll, Purchasing, Risk Management and Plant Maintenance.

Current Workforce Profile

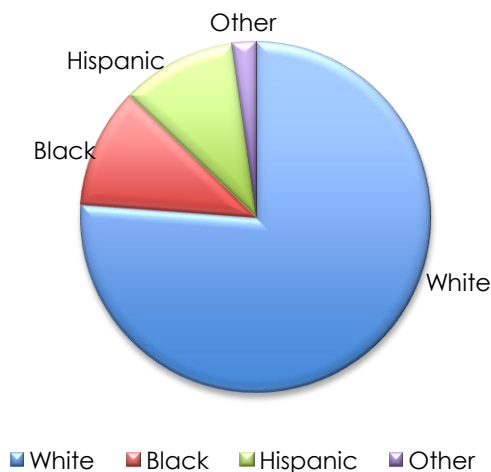
Demographics: Age, Gender, Race, and Tenure

TSD's talented workforce—teachers, staff, administrators, parents, students and community members—is its greatest resource. Every year, however, it becomes more difficult to nourish, retain and replace this resource. As a state agency that functions similarly to an independent school district, we are constantly asked to do more with less. Paperwork overloads, compliance issues and poor salaries challenge enthusiasm and commitment to serve children. Nowhere is this challenge more evident than with our residential educators who assume the role of parents and caregivers in our 24-hour learning and living environment. The same dilemma

Workforce By Gender 0708



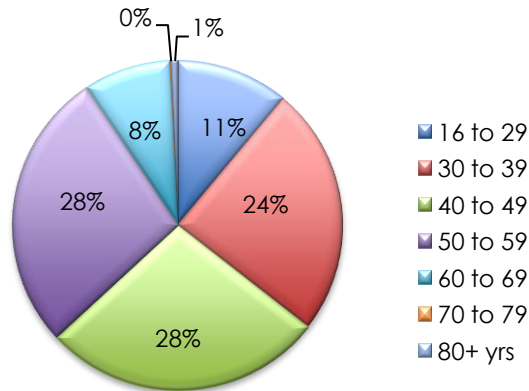
Workforce Ethnicity 0708



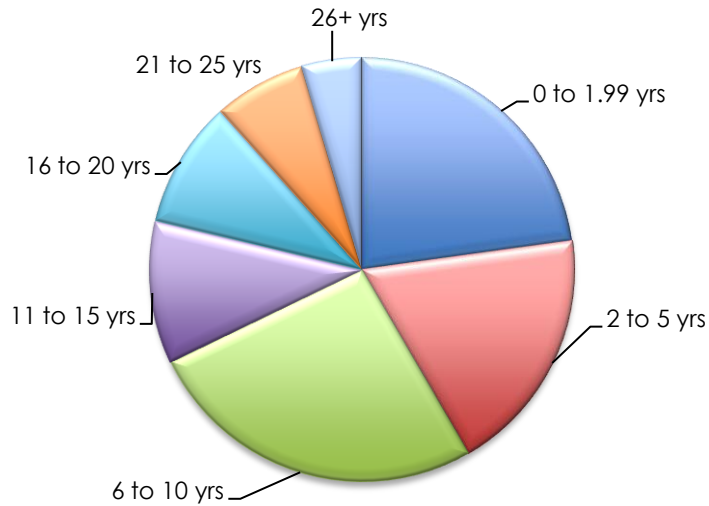
exists for most state classified employees. Their salaries are extremely non-competitive and more often than not the demands of their jobs far exceed their compensation. Our professional faculty members, while paid on the same scale as Austin Independent School District teachers, are still experiencing high burnout and clearly are not replacing themselves in the TSD workforce of the future.

TSD is allocated 454.8 full-time equivalent positions (FY 2008, 2009) As of the third quarter in 2008, 443.7 of these positions have been filled. Of these, 116 are professional contract or teaching positions and 317 are state-classified positions. 38% of TSD's workforce is deaf or hard of hearing.

Workforce By Age 0708



Workforce Length of Service



Workforce by Service Length.

The majority of TSD's employees have less than two years of experience with TSD. Contributing to this number are employees who have retired within the last two years but have returned to State service.

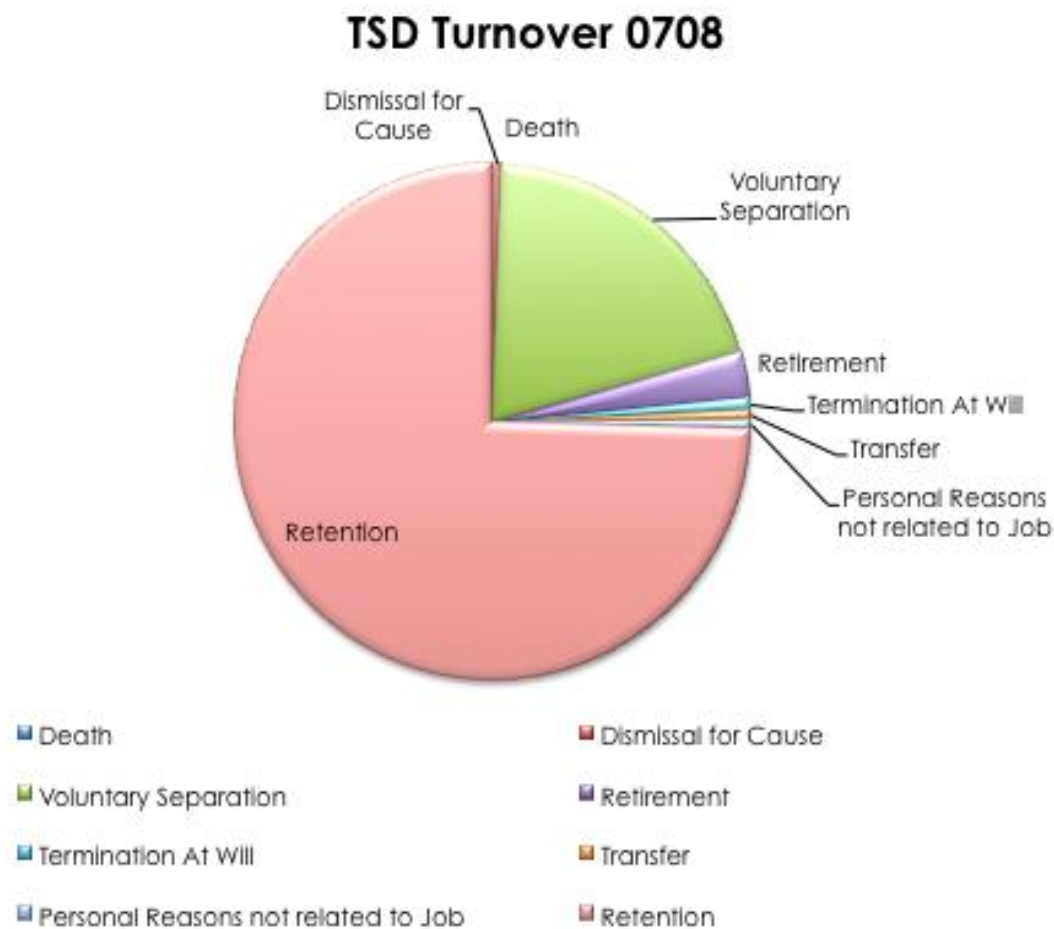
Percentage of Workforce Eligible to Retire Within the Next Five Years

An aging workforce is an on-going concern for TSD. An increasing number of employees are becoming eligible for retirement within the next five years. Because TSD does not have access to data regarding which persons withdrew their retirement contribution as part of the transition from the Teacher Retirement System to the Employees Retirement System in 1993, it is difficult to determine which employees will actually

retire within the next five years. In 2007, TSD had 15 retirements. What we do now is that as a result of the diminished highly qualified pool of applicants, TSD often re-hires its retirees in order to continue providing quality education and to stay compliant with the requirements of NCLB. In most cases these employees are hired back at their current salaries and this continues to place a drain on our resources.

Employee Turnover

TSD's turnover rate of 25% for 2007 (including interagency transfers) exceeds the statewide average. While this may seem to be a high turnover rate, the percentage is misleading as staff working temporarily as substitute employees are considered in our overall turnover count and according to TSD internal procedure, substitute employees who do work for a period of three months are automatically removed from the substitute lists and are processed as terminations. Additionally, TSD employs many seasonal staff who are selected to work in positions for short-term programs that end after a specific amount of time, for example, during the six week summer program, during a Family Weekend Retreat or as a coach during a given sports season. These employee separations are also considered in the overall turnover count. **When these employees are excluded from the calculation, our actual turnover rate drops to 18.9%**



Approximately 20% of the separations at TSD in 2007 are due to voluntary separation. It is hoped that the legislatively approved increases in recent years will reduce some of the turnover rate. However, if the economy improves as predicted, employees may leave for better paying jobs. There is also increasing competition for qualified staff between deaf schools in the country. Many employees leave TSD to pursue careers at other deaf schools because of the higher salaries they are able to offer. While TSD intends to remain competitive in compensating qualified employees, this will put increasing pressure on TSD's overall budget.

Also affecting TSD's turnover rate is the ongoing emphasis on developing a qualified workforce. Many of our staff members leave employment at TSD to pursue graduate-level degrees. Upon completion, these staff members will hopefully return to TSD.

Workforce Skills Critical to the Mission and Goals

TSD continually searches for employees who are proficient in American Sign Language and aware of issues related to deaf culture, along with quality teaching and educator experience and qualifications. Technological skills for employees are also desirable; as TSD continues to develop technology education programs, advance the technological base of the agency and to explore the best uses of technology to support the deaf culture in Texas. Other critical skills include sign language and interpretation skills, high degrees of interpersonal skills, management skills and skills in working collaboratively to resolve workplace problems and issues.

Additional Considerations

TSD has a growing customer base, both in the Austin area and throughout the state of Texas. As this population increases, the need not only for specialized skills, but also for increased numbers of administrative and support staff will be a growing workforce issue. The need to recruit, train and retain competent and qualified support staff may become a central issue for workforce planning, due to the special skills these positions should have to serve the deaf community on our campus.

Future Workforce Profile

Expected Workforce Changes

TSD's student service load has increased from 682 students in 1993-94 to 895 in 2007-2008. Enrollment is likely to grow in our special needs and short-term programs. The student population is expected to include greater numbers of students with multiple cognitive, behavioral and physical disabilities. Requests for statewide outreach services are expected to grow while TSD is unable to meet even the current demand. Advances in technology will greatly impact the types of student and administrative service requirements.

Future Workforce Skills Needed

TSD's dual mission is expected to remain stable for the foreseeable future. We provide comprehensive educational and residential services to school-age students throughout Texas at the School during the regular school year; and to serve as a primary statewide resource center promoting excellence in education for students who are deaf or hard of hearing through research, training, and demonstration projects.

To achieve the goals supporting this mission, TSD will need teachers and other staff members with training, certification and/or endorsement from the State Board of Educator Certification and/or Universities, Colleges and Educational Services Centers or other training resources in:

- Auditory Impairment
- Early childhood, handicapped.
- Generic special education
- Seriously emotionally disturbed and autistic
- Severely and profoundly handicapped
- Math
- Science
- English as a Second Language
- Cochlear Implants
- Management of students with Behavior Problems and Disorders
- Management with students with complex health needs
- Instructional and Administrative Technology

In addition to this, all TSD teachers who teach core academic subjects to deaf and hard of hearing students must achieve the "highly qualified" standard under No Child Left Behind. This will require a comprehensive effort of additional professional development, new resources and funds to support teachers in their academic coursework endeavors.

We will continue to need certified or licensed professionals in the related services areas, but with particular emphasis on psychological support and assessment personnel because of anticipated attrition through retirement in this area, and the need for more intensive services related to student behavioral disorders.

Another area of anticipated growth is for TSD data systems and records management. Demands for real-time information have increased 108% over the last year and a half. Having begun with one or two simple databases to track basic demographics, we have grown to well over 200 databases. We lack adequate numbers of personnel to support the clerical data entry to maintain the integrity of these databases as well as the training for staff on how to maintain them.

We also anticipate changes in our instructional leadership and superintendent positions in the next five years. Schools for the deaf across the country are seeking administrators for their programs and the available pool of candidates is dwindling at an alarming rate. Many of our current principals are nearing retirement or have already retired and rehired and are within five years of leaving TSD. Our Assistant Superintendent position has been vacant for a year and we are beginning the 2008-2009 without a High School Principal. Our own Superintendent retired and was rehired several years ago. The complexity and time demands, the conditions of the work itself cause some talented people not to enter the profession. For instance, stress, low pay, increased demands from unfunded mandates, higher student performance requirements, greater public expectations, board turnover, diminishing prestige, fear of poor superintendent/board relationships, and inadequate school funding are just a few of the issues that may be discouraging viable candidates from entering the field. We will continue to address these issues to ensure that some kind of succession plan is in place for TSD leadership positions.

Anticipated Changes in the Number of Employees Needed

TSD does not have adequate staff for the students we currently serve, and assuming that both the number and complexity of students we serve increases as we anticipate, we will become more insufficiently staffed.

As enrollment rises, more staff will be needed, but that increase in staff will not necessarily be proportionate. The students referred to TSD by their school districts have more complex, multiply disabling conditions that require greater numbers of staff members for effective and safe service to these students.

We also anticipate growth in our outreach and resource services. We anticipate providing more outreach through technology innovations and expanding our statewide videoconferencing consortium.

As distance learning requests increase, so will the need for dedicated faculty positions to support these requests. Videoconferencing is an effective, but a complex initiative. We already project a need to expand our technology workforce to include experts on managing and maintaining videoconferencing services. Public school programs and regional day school for the deaf programs would like TSD to provide more diagnostic and assessment services for their students and families. We currently have only three educational diagnosticians to serve our 492 on-site students.

TSD is currently not adequately staffed to perform the second prong of its mission: serving as a primary statewide resource center promoting excellence in education for students who are deaf or hard of hearing through research, training, and demonstration projects. The TSD Educational Resources Center on Deafness currently has a staff of one Director, three Program Specialists, one Parent Liaison, one vacant Grant Writer position, and one Administrative Assistant. Statewide requests and needs far surpass the resources available to serve the state. Additional employees are now needed to perform this part of the School's mission.

Next, although we are extremely pleased with the results of our 10-year construction project, we are also currently experiencing shortages in the numbers of employees needed to maintain and manage the grounds of our 64-acre campus.

Workforce Gap Analysis

Anticipated Surplus or Shortage of Employees

We anticipate shortages of employees in the following areas:

- Providing teaching and related services.
- Providing supervision, safety and instruction in the residential program of the School.
- Maintenance and management of the grounds of our 67-acre campus and increased numbers of buildings.
- Providing statewide outreach services through the Educational Resource Center on Deafness.

Anticipated Surplus Or Shortage Of Skills

We anticipate a shortage of skills in the following areas:

- An insufficient supply of teachers certified to teach deaf students and who meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind, educational administrators and related and support service professionals due to increased demand, retirement, attrition and the closing of university training programs for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.
- The lack of staff knowledge and skills in behavior management required working with students who are presenting increasingly challenging disabilities.
- The lack of staff necessary to provide supervision, safety and instruction in the residential program of the School.

- A gap between the technological skills necessary to support innovation and integrate technology into the curriculum and the current staff skill set.

Strategy Development

Specific Goals to Address Workforce Competency Gaps or Surpluses

Goal 1: Retention Programs.

- TSD will initiate agency-wide programs to recognize and reward employee commitment and dedication. Examples of programs being considered include:
 - When appropriate, flexible schedules for employees who perform satisfactorily will be developed, to allow greater individual emphasis to be placed on personal/home priorities while at the same time accomplishing TSD goals and objectives.
 - Educational reimbursement opportunities for employees who wish to obtain outside education/training directly related to the development and care of deaf students.
 - Professional development activities to support TSD teachers meeting the No Child Left Behind "Highly Qualified Staff" standards.
 - Analyses on positions that indicate high turnover rates.
 - Analyses on key positions to determine gaps that exist between current competencies and competencies of staff needed to assume future leadership roles.
 - Development of a career progression system for staff identified to fill key positions as they become available.
 - Further development of Supervisor's Academy which will address management and staffing issues
 - Job bidding system where staff can express interest in other positions at TSD before they become available.
 - Reevaluation of Hiring Procedure that will more easily accommodate staff seeking to transfer positions.
 - Efforts to retain retiring employees as substitute employees.
 - Compensation analyses between TSD and nationwide deaf schools to ensure that TSD remains competitive in recruiting qualified staff.
- TSD has begun agency-wide programs to increase employee retention. Examples of programs being implemented include:
 - A staff wellness program to augment the existing EAP.
 - Career ladders for classified positions to provide financial incentives for employees with critical skills and abilities to stay in their positions.
 - Continuation of the annual Employee Recognition and Awards Program, to recognize those employees who demonstrate superior job performance. Rewards may include cash bonuses, administrative leave days or other creative incentives.
 - First line supervisor training to address supervision issues that have high impact on employee morale and retention. Topics for supervisor training include motivating and managing employee performance, proper performance evaluation strategies and techniques and creating appropriate workplace environments.
 - Brown Bag program that offers presentations on various topics during the lunch hour.

Goal 2: Recruitment plans.

- TSD will also use creative approaches to traditional recruiting to develop qualified applicant pools specifically for professional and teaching positions. These creative approaches include: hosting nation-wide deaf education conferences where students from a cross-section of universities and institutions can experience the TSD environment; initiating a paid summer intern program for college juniors and seniors; working with

universities who offer fields of study in deaf education to provide student teaching experience to graduating students; and forming partnerships with private industry that will lead to recruiting/sharing employees for TSD work experience. Consideration may also be given to recruiting outside the U.S.

- Development of a job bidding system where potential applicants can register interest in positions before they become available.
- Using a web-based technology system to notify potential applicants as positions become available.
- An increased presence at job fairs and in recruitment activities nationwide, specifically those that focus on deaf education or special education.
- Further participation in online recruiting through the use of online job boards and with other media centers.
- Consideration of an employee-referral program whereby employees will be rewarded for referring a qualified applicant who is hired at the school.
- Recruiting presence at statewide conferences for the deaf.
- Further partnership with nationwide organizations supporting deaf services and universities with programs in deaf education, special education, deaf studies, and interpreting services.

Goal 3: Career Development Programs

- TSD employees will be encouraged to attend career development programs and training, at agency expense and on agency time. In addition, the Human Resources Department will research and develop in-house development programs for employees to assist them in reaching their maximum personal and professional potential.

Goal 4: Succession Planning

- A program that uses a mix of executive mentoring and management development experiences will be initiated to give internal staff opportunities to experience senior leadership roles and demonstrate competencies and skills needed by senior management staff. Through a voluntary program of study, project development and close coaching and mentoring, a qualified group of individuals will be able to compete for key leadership positions within the agency when they open. Particular attention will be placed on program diversity, and competitive analysis of applicants will be emphasized. Through our reorganization efforts, we hope to identify potential employees to prepare for leadership roles.
- We need a program that offers instructional leaders the opportunity to experience leadership positions and then be groomed for the next level of that position. For example, we have a vacant Assistant Superintendent position. We need to look at that position with the idea of a possible future Superintendent and determine what kind of mentoring and support will best facilitate that outcome.

Goal 5: Leadership Development

- A management development program addressing first line, mid-management and senior management development will be developed and staff training will be supported to attend these activities. Focus will be on managing employee performance and core supervision/management skill development.
- In addition, TSD will continue to form relationships with universities that offer administrative training programs (e.g. Lamar University, Texas State University and Gallaudet Leadership Institute) to increase the availability of leadership/administrative training to staff. Jointly with our succession planning goals, TSD will identify potential leaders within our organization and encourage their attendance and enrollment in both leadership training programs and alternative certification programs. Reorganization efforts have also made new leadership positions such as "Assistant Principal" and "Lead Teacher" available. These leadership opportunities foster internal leadership while simultaneously relieving the administrative burden on School principals.