

A G E N C Y W O R K F O R C E P L A N 2 0 2 5 - 2 0 2 9

June 1, 2024

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Overview

Functions

TSD provides a continuum of direct educational services to students, birth through twenty-two, who are deaf or hard of hearing; some of these students may have multiple disabilities. TSD is also directed to serve as a statewide educational resource. Through the Statewide Outreach Center (SOC), TSD provides a variety of educational services to programs and professionals throughout the state working with and for persons who are deaf or 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 the Austin campus and providing statewide outreach services—are expected to continue without change over the next five years.

- TSD will continue to provide educational, residential support and related services to TSD's on-site population of deaf and hard of hearing students. TSD is experiencing, and expects to continue experiencing, a change in the nature of the population of students TSD serves. If current trends continue, we will serve an increasing number of students with complex additional disabilities including medically fragile children. TSD will likely also serve students who have a history of abuse, neglect and serious behavior issues. At the same time, TSD's population of "traditional" 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 TSD's outreach and resource mission. Although the mission will remain the same, the need for services continues to expand year over year. 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 a leader in deaf and hard of hearing education, TSD continues to build staff and resources in the Statewide Outreach Center to meet the growing need for TSD's outreach activities. TSD works collaboratively with Texas Education Agency's statewide deaf services and statewide partners in the Education Service Centers charged with providing technical assistance in specified areas to professionals in deaf education. In addition, TSD has established a Family Resource Center on our Austin campus and continues to build the services we provide to our TSD families, including such areas as American Sign Language education for parents and siblings to facilitate familial communication. TSD expects to see growth in this role over the next five years.

Additional Considerations

Key Economic and Environmental Factors

Scarce Teacher Talent Pool. Texas continues to experience a shortage of qualified teachers as noted in the January 2020 communication from the Texas Education agency (TEA) titled 2020-2021 Teacher Shortage Areas and Loan Forgiveness Programs which includes special education teachers for elementary and secondary levels in the approved state-level shortage areas. Further complicating this factor for TSD is a shortage in educators for the deaf. The Council on Education of the Deaf (CED) noted in a February 2019 communication that the nation has experienced a decline in qualified teachers of the deaf. The largest group of deaf educator graduates was in 1985 and numbered 1680. This number has consistently declined over the years with only 737 graduates in 2009, and 450 in 2018 and 2019. It is estimated that 300 will graduate in 2020. With well-qualified deaf educators in short supply and high demand across the nation, a shortage that is expected to continue to worsen in coming years, competition for these valuable teachers is great. TSD currently competes with 50 Residential Schools for the Deaf across the nation and 53 Regional Day School Programs for the Deaf in Texas for teachers with the skills necessary to educate our students.

Shortage of Deaf Education Training Programs. 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. At present, there are 56 colleges and universities that offer deaf education teacher training programs in the United States, down from 63 in 2018, seven of which are offered in Texas. This shortage of programs further impacts TSD's ability to hire the deaf educators needed for our students.

The Status of Teacher Retention is Equally Dim. Every year, thousands of new teachers enter the teaching field. Within the first five years, nearly half of those teachers will transfer to a new school or leave the profession altogether. Exacerbating these trends are teacher retirement rates. Employment demographics indicate that baby-boomers made up approximately 40% of the labor market in 2008 with retirements between 2010 and 2020 expected to be the largest since WWII (Aaronson & Meckel, 2008).

Noncompetitive Salaries. TSD teacher and professional contract salaries are tied to Austin ISD in state statute. While the recent changes to the state's school finance laws have helped to improve teacher salaries, the dire state of teacher salaries in Texas and specifically within AISD due to their budget concerns continues to have a severe negative impact on TSD salaries. Though we are tied to AISD compensation strategies, we must compete for qualified staff with other deaf schools, not local independent school districts and our teachers and professional contract staff must possess a much more complex skill set. TSD teachers and professional contract staff must be certified in both special education for deaf and hard of hearing students, have subject and grade level certification in accordance with state guidelines, be fluent in American Sign Language and pass rigorous state certification tests. As a result, TSD is unable to compete for staff with either other deaf schools across the nation or local school districts outside of Austin ISD to ensure that TSD provides needed services for our students and meets our obligations under state and federal Special Education related laws, the school must employ teaching and non-teaching staff with ASL skills. Salaries that are below the market value compromises our ability to attract and retain critical qualified staff. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) lists the annual entry-level salary for an occupational therapist as \$55,490. Under the AISD salary scale, which TSD is required to follow, the entry-level salary for an occupational therapist is \$52,674. The median salary for this position in the BLS is \$84,270 while the median within AISD's scale is \$54,724. As a result, we are unable to attract and retain the skilled staff needed, forcing the agency to utilize temporary staff through contracts at rates higher than those provided by AISD or risk costly lawsuits when compensable services are not provided. 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, Interpreters, Residential Educators, Teachers, and Teacher Aides.

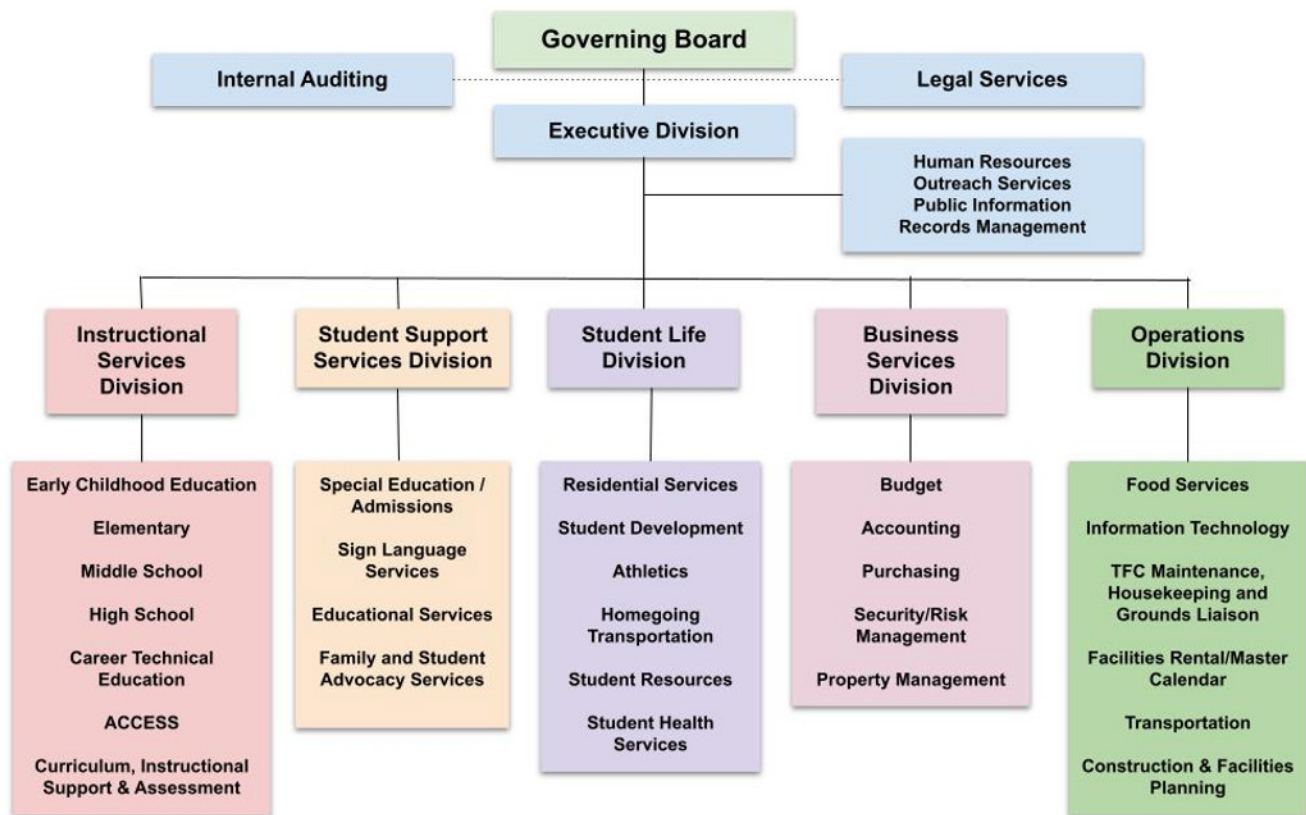
Housing Costs. Housing costs within the Austin metro area have continued to rise. The Austin Board of Realtors has reported a 12.8% increase in the median sale price for the Austin-Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area. Average rent statistics indicate that the fair market rent (FMR) prices for the Austin-Round Rock area are more expensive than 99% of the state. The FMR for a two-bedroom apartment in Austin-Round Rock is \$1,315 per month, a 5.12% increase from the year before (rentdata.org). As a result, qualified applicants have declined job offers when they realized the high cost of living in Central Texas as compared to the salaries the agency can offer. 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.

Current Customer Demands. TSD's customers include students, parents, and professionals throughout the state. TSD's student population requires a level of services that the current number of professional and para- professional employees are unable to provide. Adding to this problem, the student population has continued to become increasingly complex and diverse with increased numbers of students with additional disabilities requiring many more related and support services.

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 includes a variety of restructuring efforts to maintain a quality continuum of educational services for TSD 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 develop and 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. TSD needs new sources of federal, state and local funding to sustain school reform efforts. Lastly, and most importantly, TSD needs to have measurable goals for student performance and benchmarks for meeting those goals.

Organizational Structure



TSD is organized into five divisions: Executive, Instruction, Student Support Services, Student Life, and Business Services and Operations, with the Superintendent overseeing all.

- **The Executive Division** is administered by the Superintendent and includes Legal Services, Human Resources, Maintenance and Facilities, the Statewide Outreach Center (SOC), and Information Technology.
- **The Instructional Services Division** is administered by the Director of Instruction and includes responsibility for all academic school programs including Early Childhood Education, Elementary, Middle School, High School, Career and Technical Education, Curriculum, Instructional Support & Assessment, and Professional Development/ASL Support. The division includes programs for students who need more structured services, the 18+ transitional program (ACCESS).
- **The Student Support Services Division** is administered by the Director of Student Support Services and includes all Special Education Services, including Admissions, Family & Student Advocacy Services, Educational Services, and Sign Language Services.
- **The Student Life Division** is administered by the Director of Student Life and includes responsibility for dorm programs for students in Elementary, Middle School, High School, and Special Needs. The Student Life division includes Residential Services, Student Development, Athletics, Home-going Transportation, Student Health Services, and Student Resources, which provides programs and support outside school hours.
- **The Business Services Division** is administered by the Chief Financial Officer and includes Accounting, Budgeting, Purchasing, Property, School Safety/Risk Management and Security.
- **Operations Division** is administered by the Director of Operations and includes Food Services, Information Technology, TFC Maintenance, Housekeeping and Grounds Liaison, Facilities Rental/Master Calendar, Transportation, and Construction & Facilities Planning.

Current Workforce Profile

TSD's ability to provide services, resources and expertise to its students, the Texas deaf community and those who serve them as well as remain a leader in deaf education services at the national level is a direct result of our talented workforce of teachers, staff, and administrators. The challenges related to the pandemic, inflation, and the ever-increasing cost of living in the Austin area have tested the commitment and fortitude of our workforce while the constant changes within the local, state and national labor markets have hindered our ability to nourish, retain, and replace staff.

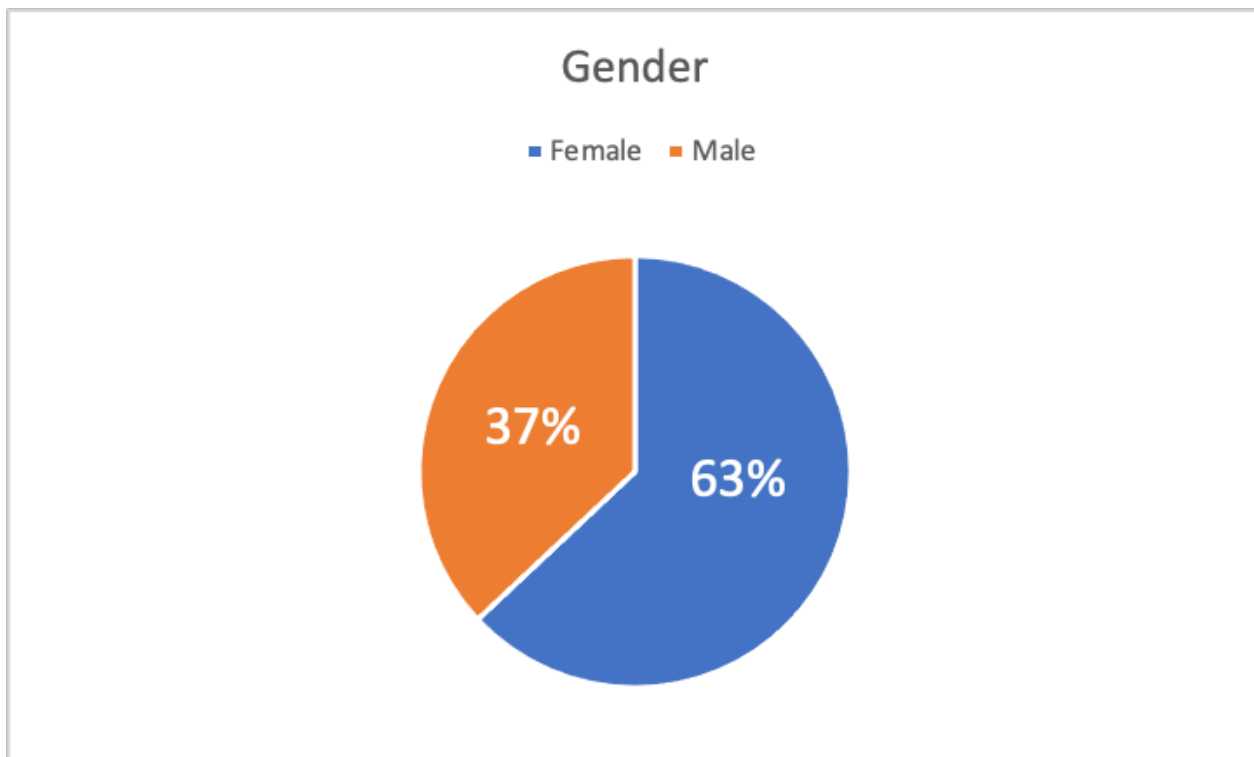
As a school for the deaf, TSD competes with deaf schools across the nation for its workforce. TSD's professional faculty members, while paid on the same scale as Austin Independent School District teachers, are paid well below the market rate for their discipline, making attracting teachers of the deaf challenging. The level of burnout within teachers of the deaf also impacts our ability to attract and retain needed educators. The salaries of our classified staff are, connected to the State Classification System which for some has maximum salaries that are below the rapidly changing markets, are also below the national market. Particularly for our teacher assistants and residential staff.

Demographics: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Tenure

Approximately 64% of TSD's workforce is deaf or hard of hearing. There is a higher percentage of deaf or hard of hearing staff in departments that provide direct care to TSD's students. Support functions generally have a lower percentage of deaf or hard of hearing staff. The workforce data presented does not include substitute employee information.

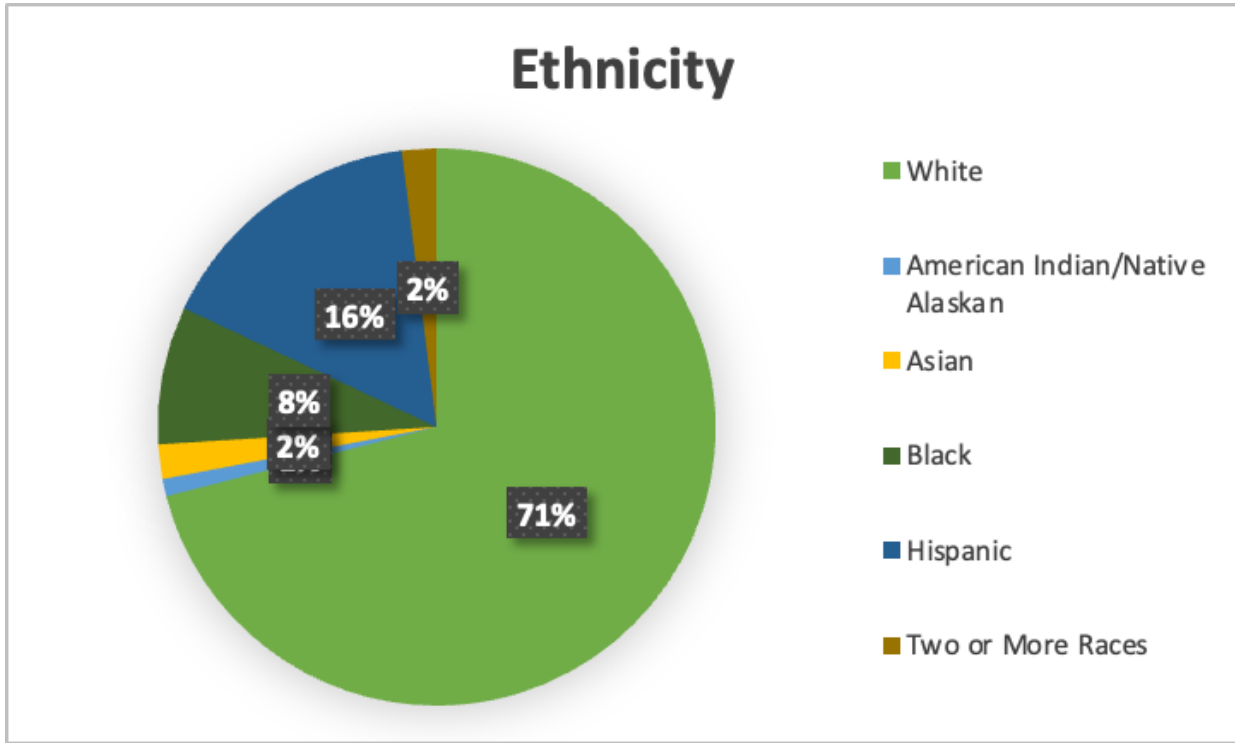
Approximately 63% of TSD's workforce is female and 37% is male. This is a higher percentage of female employees than the overall Texas State Government workforce in which 57.6% is female.

The breakdown of employees by gender at TSD has remained relatively constant over the last five years.

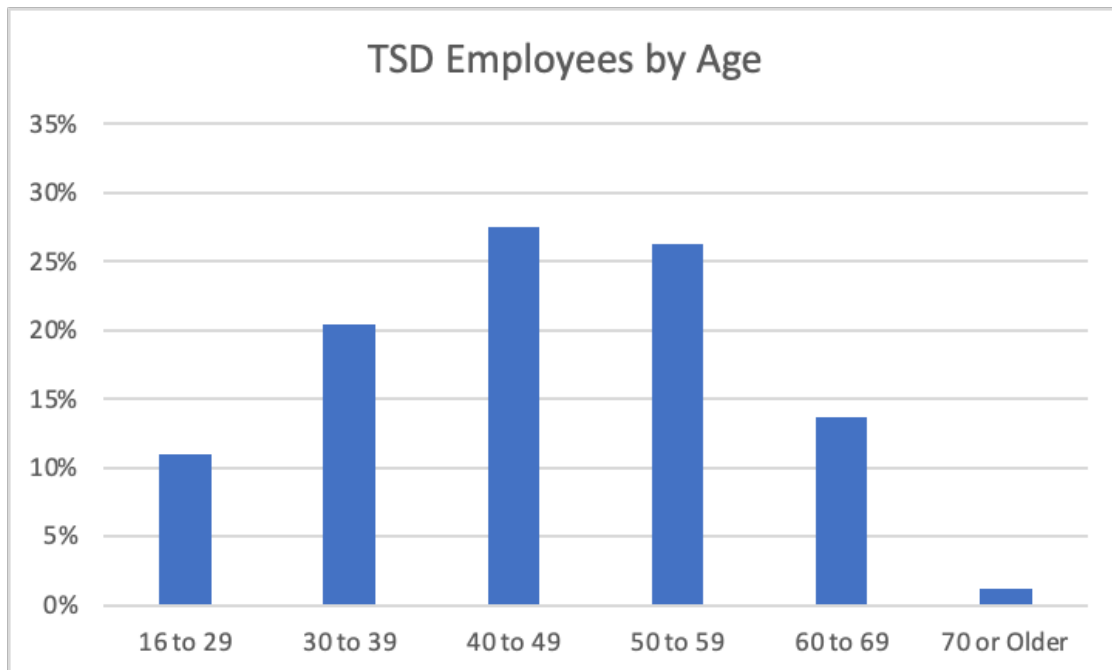


TSD Employees by Ethnicity

71% of TSD employees are White, 16% are Hispanic, 8% of employees are Black, 0% of employees are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 2% are Asian, 2% of employees are two or more races and 1% are American Indian or Alaskan Native.

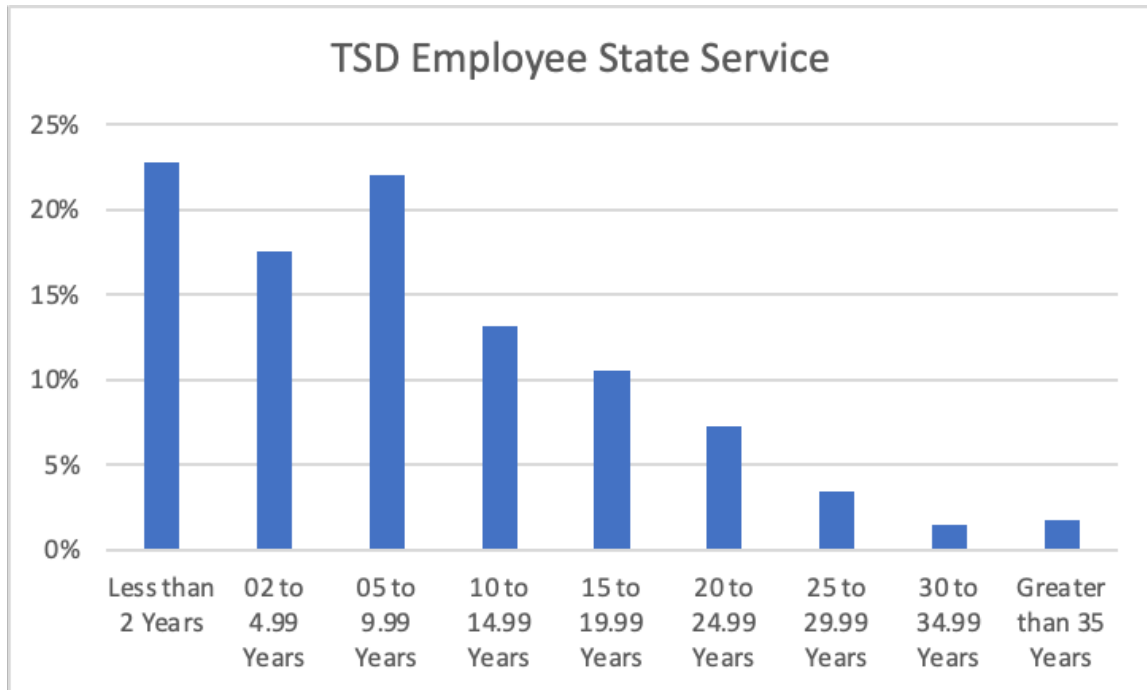


The age of TSD's workforce has remained consistent with that of the overall State of Texas workforce with the majority of our workforce between the ages of thirty and fifty nine.



TSD Employees by Length of Service

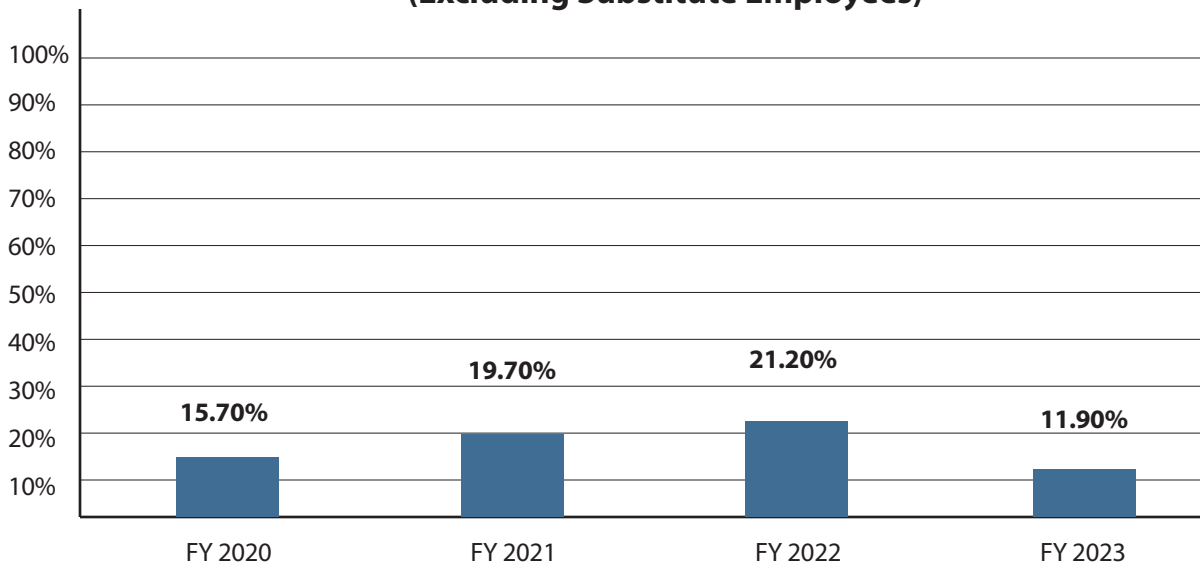
The length of State service for TSD employees is similar to that of the State's overall workforce. Forty one percent of TSD employees have fewer than five years of state service while 15% have at least twenty years.



Employee Turnover

The TSD turnover rate for 2023 without including substitute employees is 11.9% which is lower than the overall State turnover rate of 18.7%. However, TSD continues to struggle with turnover rates within specific job classifications. Exit interviews indicate that the higher turnover rates is due to low salaries.

**TSD Turnover Rate
(Excluding Substitute Employees)**



Workforce Skills Critical to the Mission and Goals

As a deaf education entity whose mission is to provide an environment where individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, including those with additional disabilities, have the opportunity to learn, grow and belong in a culture that optimizes individual potential and provides accessible language and communication across the curriculum, our workforce must possess many specialized skills. These skills include Sign Language, cultural competence in deaf culture, and education, experience, and qualifications in the areas of deaf education and child development. Our workforce must also possess the skills necessary to support early language acquisition for both students and families.

Technological skills for employees are also necessary 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 interpretation skills, 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 for specialized skills and increased numbers of administrative, support, and outreach staff continue to be a growing workforce issue. The need to recruit, train and retain competent and qualified support staff is a central issue for workforce planning, due to the special skills necessary to serve the deaf community throughout the state.

Future Workforce Profile

Expected Workforce Changes

Our workforce is dedicated to providing a quality educational environment. Over the years, the school's service load for students with complex medical, behavioral and educational needs have increased, straining our resources. Our limited resources cause us dire concerns about providing an appropriate education for our students. The impact of this type of student on the budget is exponential and we find ourselves unable to provide the related and support services necessary for this type of student to access the general curriculum and receive a quality education. We continue to seek additional resources to serve these growing needs

Texas School for the Deaf Enrollment

REGULAR SCHOOL YEAR PROGRAMS	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Parent Infant Program	18	19	18	28	20	23	21	22	22	20	21	37
Pre-School	12	22	18	19	25	22	26	30	24	14	13	19
Pre-Kindergarten	10	19	19	11	9	18	18	11	26	18	7	9
K-5 Elementary	98	94	104	120	115	110	118	140	142	143	136	130
Special Needs	81	59	64	61	54	57	72	75				
Middle School	106	104	98	82	94	96	101	84	96	95	95	97
High School	173	178	208	197	201	192	201	185	225	204	196	165
ACCESS	28	55	52	66	65	44	44	40	62	58	65	76
TOTAL	526	550	581	584	583	562	601	587	597	552	533	533
Residential Enrollment	241	242	274	262	248	214	247	226	223	220	227	217

SUMMER PROGRAMS	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017 - 2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Extended Year Services Program	52	40	30	32	30	16	29	62	106	83	39	97
Summer Camps and Programs	248	203	66	122	126		67	69	0	44	85	51
Summer Camps and Programs Non-TSD	99	110	101	109	135		53	82	4	68	65	68
Early Childhood Education	16	23	17	14	14		16	9	6	6	16	13
Parent Infant Program	2	3	12	13	15	10	14	15	15	16	17	28
Accelerated Instruction						17	7	27	0	33	20	6
Other Short-Term Programs	145	179	233	159	146	162	180	248	16	232	183	198
TOTAL	461	445	459	449	436	205	366	512	147	482	425	461

TOTAL SERVED	1086	995	1040	1033	1019	767	967	1099	744	1034	958	990
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Future Workforce Skills Needed

TSD's dual mission is expected to remain stable for the foreseeable future. TSD provides comprehensive educational and residential services to school-age students throughout Texas at the School during the regular school year; and serves 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 from universities, colleges, Educational Services Centers or other training sources in:

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- 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

Additionally, TSD will need staff who have certification from the State Board of Educator Certification in the areas listed above.

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 in this area, and the need for more intensive services related to student behavioral disorders.

TSD also anticipates changes in key administrative positions in the next five years. Schools for the deaf across the country are seeking qualified, experienced administrators for their programs and the available pool of candidates is dwindling at an alarming rate. Many of TSD's current Administrators, including the Superintendent, have retired and been rehired and may consider leaving TSD entirely in the near future.

The complexity and time demands and the conditions of the work itself have caused many talented people to not enter the field of deaf education. 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 develop leaders who are prepared to advance into TSD leadership positions.

Anticipated Changes in the Number of Employees Needed

Because TSD students require smaller classes and more services, TSD's workforce does not currently have adequate staff for the students we serve, and assuming that both the number and complexity of students TSD serves increases, as anticipated, TSD will become more insufficiently staffed. As enrollment rises, more staff will be needed, but that increase in staff will not necessarily be proportionate to current staffing needs. The students referred to TSD by their school districts have more complex, multiple disabling conditions that require greater numbers of staff members for effective and safe service to these students.

Workforce Gap Analysis

Anticipated Surplus or Shortage of Employees

We anticipate shortages of employees in the following areas:

- Teaching and related services.
- Wrap around services such as occupational and physical therapy, audiology, speech and language support.
- Supervision, safety and instruction in the residential program of the School.
- Statewide outreach services through the Statewide Outreach Center.

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, educational administrators, and related and support service professionals. This insufficient supply is largely 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 for 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.
- The lack of staff within business related areas such as human resources and business services with cultural and ASL language competencies.

Strategy Development

Through its Strategic Five-Year plan, TSD has set the following objectives to be completed in the next five years.

- Continue to refine TSD's plan to recruit a well-qualified staff that includes focus on skills, diversity, and potential.
- Increase employee satisfaction by establishing programs and services that support short- and long-term personal and professional goals.
- Continue to develop and refine strategies to maximize employee compensation.
- Continue to develop and refine strategies to help the school maximize skill acquisition for both hearing and deaf staff to improve communication, cultural competency and expand skill acquisition in areas of deficiencies

Survey of Employee Engagement

TSD utilized the Survey of Employee Engagement (SEE) in 2024 as a means of assessing employee perceptions of the School as an employer, an educator, its strengths and weaknesses and areas needing improvement.

Response Rate

48.3% of agency employees responded to the survey. This is above the acceptable response level of 30%.

Benchmark Groups

TSD's SEE results were compared with Size Category 4 organizations (301-1000 employees) within the Education mission which includes Universities, Colleges, Institutes and other agencies involved with students, teachers, administrators and family's throughout many areas of learning.

Scores

The School's overall survey score was 367, down slightly from the 2019 score of 369. Overall scores typically range from 325 to 375.

Construct Analysis scores were provided. As noted in the report, scores above 350 suggest that employees perceive the issue more positively than negatively, while scores of 375 or higher indicate areas of substantial strength. Conversely, scores below 350 indicate that employees perceive the issue less positively and scores below 325 indicate a significant source of concern for the School.

In the Construct Analysis, the School received the following:

Supervision	390
Workgroup	396
Strategic	383
Pay	242
Benefits	363
Workplace	392
Employee Development	349
Community	374
Information Systems	384
Internal Communication	364
Employee Engagement	379
Job Satisfaction	360

Additionally, the survey completed a Climate Analysis of the survey data. The climate in which employee's work does, to a large extent, determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the School. A workplace that is a combination of a safe, non-harassing environment with ethical abiding employees who treat each other with fairness and respect with pro-active management and thoughtful decision-making capabilities that produces the most efficient and effective organization.

The Climate Analysis revealed:

27.2% of respondents feel there aren't enough opportunities to give supervisor feedback

22.4% of respondents feel that upper management should communicate better.

11.3% of respondents feel there are issues with ethics in the workplace.

15.1% of respondents feel they are not treated fairly in the workplace.

6.3% of respondents feel workplace harassment is not adequately addressed.

Plan for Continued Improvement

Survey results were shared with all employees. In addition, as a part of the School's CEASD Accreditation process, TSD will develop a Five-Year Plan. The results of the SEE, along with results from additional surveys, will be provided to the School's Strategic Goals Planning Group who review staff and community responses to identify areas of concern. These concerns are then translated into Strategic Goals which will be addressed by the agency through our Strategic Goals team process.

Conclusion

TSD management considers the School's participation in the survey as a valuable tool for improving School operations. TSD will participate in future surveys with a goal to increase participation and improve key indicators. Comparison of current and future results will enable TSD to further define methods for addressing the needs of the School and its employees.