Uvalde CISD Report
June 2025

Overview

The following report details my observations and work during the spring 2025 semester and provides actionable recommendations the district can use to move the talent management work forward. This information has been organized into three key priority areas:

Human Resources Systems and Structures: The organized processes, policies, and tools used to recruit, hire, support, evaluate, and retain high-quality staff across the district. This includes employee compensation/benefits, evaluations, certification, employee relations and compliance.

Strategic Personnel Budget Reductions: At least 80% of a school district's budget is allocated for payroll. The district has a goal to pass a balanced budget, rebuild its fund balance, and position itself to provide incremental annual pay increases soon. This will take intentional steps to reduce the budget while maintaining strategic planning and allocation of financial resources that improve outcomes for students.

Leadership Capacity: Developing and empowering school and district leaders through coaching, mentoring, training, and opportunities for shared leadership is key for excellence to take root. The main goal is to strengthen leadership effectiveness and ensure student success.

Human Resources Systems & Structures

The Human Resources Department is properly staffed for success if the goal is to operate as a transactional department. Currently, this may be appropriate as the team focuses on processes for hiring, payroll, benefits, ensuring compliance and documentation, managing employee records, contracts, and reacting to employee issues and requests. As the department continues their commitment to building sustainable systems, the vision should be set to evolve into an HR office that does more transformational work. When this takes place, then additional staff will be necessary. A transformational HR Department would be able to focus on recruiting and retaining high-quality educators and leaders, develop leadership pipelines and career growth opportunities, use data to improve employee engagement and performance, collaborate with other departments to align talent strategy with academic outcomes, and cultivate a positive work culture.

Progress to Date

HR Systems, Structures & Technology Enhancements

- Contracts were audited and aligned with policy, with digitized contracts issued to all employees.

- A system was established to digitize and publish the Employee Handbook, including the use of electronic signatures to verify receipts for the 25-26 school year.

- Red Rover (a substitute tracking system) was launched during the spring semester. The July Secretary Bootcamp will include additional training on Red Rover.

- A structure was implemented for regular HR team meetings to improve internal support, communication, and accountability.

- Conducted a technology audit that focused on HR, business, and student data entry systems as it relates to PEIMS. After the audit data collection process, appropriate staff was provided relevant training, coaching, organizational and accountability tools.

Staffing, Recruitment, and Talent Placement

- Staffing meetings were conducted with principals and leads from key departments to ensure collaboration and to amplify campus voices.

- A comprehensive spring recruiting plan was initiated, which included participation in job fairs, staffing projections, and planning meetings.

- Surplus staff were placed in available positions following position eliminations.

- A standardized system was implemented for the district and campus administrator interview processes.

- HR roles and responsibilities were reorganized to improve departmental efficiency and responsiveness.

Evaluation Systems and Performance Management

- Evaluation structures were established to ensure that all employee groups (including central office staff, paraprofessionals, and auxiliary staff) were included in Eduphoria workflows.

- Mid-year HR check-ins were held with all campus leaders to support campuses with performance concerns and improve position control accuracy.

- Campus leadership received training on growth plans, documentation, and employee performance monitoring.

Policy, Compliance, and Documentation

- Job descriptions were reviewed and updated to accurately reflect actual roles to ensure alignment with contracts. Organizational charts are in development for each department.

- Certification audit guidance was acquired to establish a review cadence and alignment is in progress.

- Updated grievance forms were completed and placed in the shared drive with all HR documents.

- Pay reviews and equity audits were conducted to ensure fairness and compliance for many employee groups.

- ▪ Updates to the workday calendars and the employee pay plan will be completed for board approval in July.

Employee Engagement, Data, and Relations

- ▪ Employee relations protocols and tools were created to support consistent, proactive responses to employee investigations.

- ▪ Employee attendance, turnover, exit interviews, and non-certified teacher data were tracked for strategic planning.

- ▪ Personalized meetings were held with non-certified teachers to ensure they were aware of support tools and to check-in on their progress.

- ▪ Implemented an employee attendance incentive: Present and Proud, All Day and Every Day (111 total employees), and Superb Showing (259 total employees).

Recommendations for Next Steps

Human Resources Reorganization: Continue to shift work roles and responsibilities so that each member of the HR team is doing the right level of work. This allows the HR Manager to focus on leadership and adaptive work versus clerical tasks.

Reset Stipend Workflow: The stipend workflow needs to be redesigned, digitized, and streamlined with clear operating procedures and tracking tools to ensure accurate payouts.

Implement an Employee Recognition Program: Design and implement an employee recognition program to improve morale, engagement and productivity which lead to retention and better outcomes for students.

Redesign Onboarding, Orientation and Induction Systems: Evaluate the current onboarding and orientation process for quality and efficiency by using videos and other technology for delivering information and reducing the number of staff members needed to complete the process. The onboarding/orientation process should be followed up with induction activities and other relevant support provided by the appropriate department and/or campus.

Strategic Personnel Budget Reductions

As the district works to pass a balanced budget, it has become necessary to focus on personnel -- the largest portion of our expenditures. After exhausting reductions in non-personnel areas, the only remaining path to financial stability involves making difficult decisions that now impact personnel. These actions, while challenging, are critical to restoring the district's long-term financial health.

Progress to Date

Review of Costly Practices

- The district has identified several unsustainable financial practices contributing to budget strain. These include extended employee workdays to increase pay, prepayment of employee benefits such as insurance and leave days, and leaving vacant positions open at campuses—prompting increased substitute requests. These practices have either been completely eliminated or are being addressed as we become aware of potential oversights.

Cost-Saving Measures

- To address financial challenges and support a balanced budget, the district has taken strategic actions to reduce expenditures. These include staffing reductions, the adjustment of workdays, and the restructuring or elimination of select stipends. These efforts are part of a broader plan to restore fiscal stability while maintaining a focus on student achievement and staff support.

Recommendations for Next Steps

Staffing Review Partnership: The district should engage TASB (Texas Association of School Boards) to conduct a comprehensive staffing review. This evaluation will help ensure staffing levels are aligned with student needs, enrollment trends, and budgetary constraints, supporting more efficient and strategic resource allocation.

Compensation Study and Ongoing Maintenance: To remain competitive and equitable in employee compensation, it is recommended that the district contract TASB to conduct an updated pay review. Compensation studies and ongoing maintenance ensure salaries remain market-aligned and fiscally sustainable.

Leadership Capacity

The district is prioritizing the development of leadership capacity at both the district and campus levels to ensure strong, sustainable systems that support stronger student outcomes. Specifically, a focus was placed on building the capacity of the Human Resources leadership and campus-based leaders. This commitment to building leadership capacity sets a foundation for achieving long-term improvement.

Progress to Date

PEIMS Huddles

- The challenge in a school district is finding time to collaborate across departments. UCISD had a gap in providing clear systems and structures for PEIMS data tracking and submissions. Weekly huddles were established to empower leaders to have conversations about their problems of practice since solutions generally impact more than one department. Empowering employees to own their work and collaborate across teams will improve accuracy and productivity.

Leadership Capacity

- Building the capacity of leaders across the system requires intentional action steps. During the past few months, principals received documentation training and intentional support on HR operations. The main focus of capacity building was spent with the HR Manager through ongoing coaching, modeling and thought partnership.

Building Trust with Internal and External Community

- Customer Service Training was provided to all central office employees and departments across the organization. The intent of this training was to establish a baseline of what customer service means and how it is applied in practice in UCISD. The training was an initial step towards building stronger trust with each other and our community.

Recommendations for Next Steps

Commit to Ongoing Efforts to Strengthen a Culture of Trust: Continue deepening the customer service work to help the district build trust within the organization and with its external community. Trust building is deeper than training, it involves our everyday actions.   Some of the trend areas that were shared by employees during these training sessions as areas of need include: communication, respect in the workplace, and empathy/understanding.

Develop Principals as Talent Managers: Principals serve as a key lever for managing talent that has the most impact on student outcomes. Developing their skill set in the following areas can result in improved student outcomes:

Talent Acquisition: Monitoring pipelines of potential teacher candidates, engaging in proactive recruitment, and running efficient hiring processes.

Talent Acceleration: Implementing effective induction programs, providing mentorship and coaching for novice and experienced teachers.

Talent Advancement: Identifying and supporting teacher strengths and creating opportunities for teacher leadership.

Talent Assessment: Using data and observation to identify teacher needs for support and growth early in the year and mobilize intervention.

Developing a Teacher and Principal Pipeline Program: To ensure long-term stability, instructional excellence, and leadership continuity, it is recommended that the district develop a comprehensive Teacher and Principal Pipeline Program. This initiative would focus on identifying, developing, and retaining high-potential educators and aspiring leaders from within the district. This work is comprehensive, but the need is critical because there is currently a limited bench of certified teachers, assistant principals, and principals to fill vacancies.