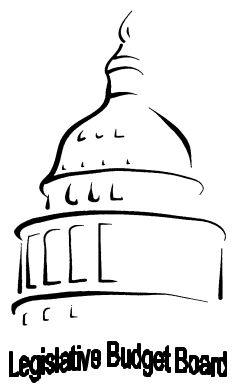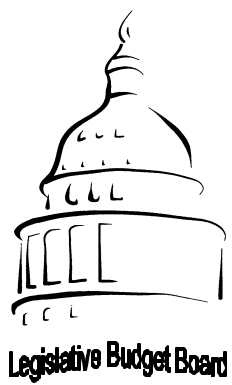# Texas School Performance Review
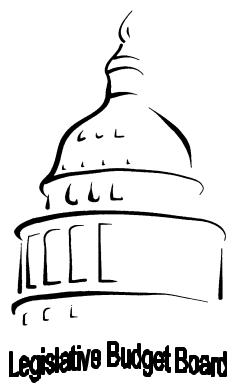
Common Savings Recommendations

Program Overview

- The nation's first state-level program designed to improve the management and finances of individual public school districts.

- The Texas Legislature created the Texas School Performance Review (TSPR) in 1990 to "periodically review the effectiveness and efficiency of the budgets and operations of school districts." (Government Code Section 322.016)

- TSPR reviews school district functions and recommends ways to cut costs, increase revenues, reduce overhead, streamline operations, and improve the delivery of educational, financial and operational services.
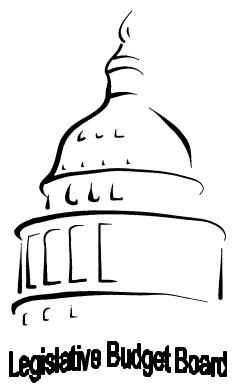
Manage the number of staff

- Create staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios.

  – Largest % of school district budget is for staff (typically 70% up to 85%)

  – Use professional association standards as a guide.

  – Track student enrollment or other measures as the budget driver for determining the number of staff.
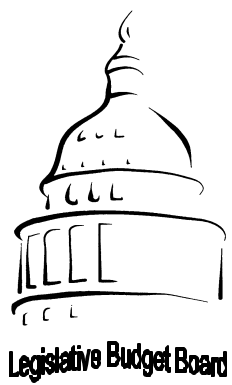
Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Instructional:** Based on the number of students.

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)/Council of Accreditation and School Improvement (CASI) recommends:

    - 500-749 students: 0.5 Administrative or Supervisory Assistants for each elementary school.

    - 1,250-1,499 students: Up to 2 Administrative or Supervisory Assistants for each elementary school.
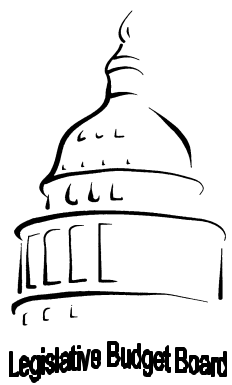
Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Counselors:** Based on the number of students.

- Texas School Counselor Association, Texas Association of Secondary School Principals, and the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association recommends:
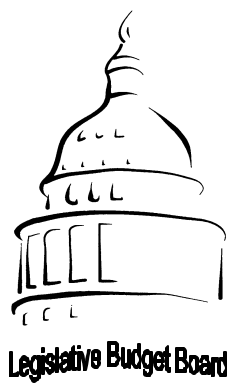
  - Every 350 students = 1 counselor

Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Librarians:** Based on student ADA.

- Texas State Library and Archives Commission (TSLAC) recommends staffing in four categories of standards: exemplary, recognized, acceptable and below standard.

  - 0-500 ADA: At least 1.5 certified librarians=Exemplary
  - 0-500 ADA: Less than 1 certified librarian=Below Standard
  - 1,001-2,000 ADA: At least 3 certified librarians=Exemplary
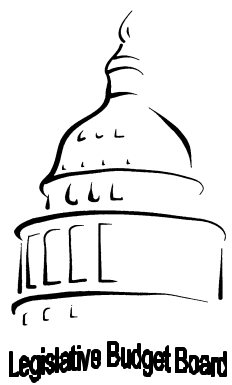 - 1,001-2000 ADA: Less than 1 certified librarian=Below Std

Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Nurses:** Based on the number of students.

- National Association of School Nurses recommends that the number of nurses per campus should be influenced by multiple factors, such as social, economic and cultural status of the community; special health problems, and the mobility of the community members.
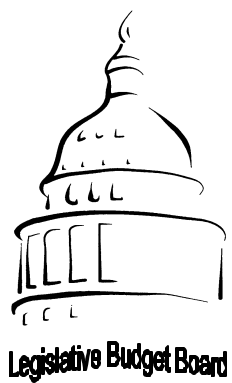
    - Every 750 students = 1 nurse

Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Custodians:** Based on the amount of facility square feet to be cleaned.

- The Association of Physical Plant Administrators recommends custodial staffing levels based on five levels of cleaning.
  - Every 20,000 square feet of facility space = 1 custodian for Level 2, "ordinary tidiness."

- National Center for Education Statistics' Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities recommends staffing levels based on five levels of cleaning:
  - 28,000-31,000 square feet = 8 hour work period for Level 3, "normal for most school areas, acceptable by most professionals, does not pose health issues."
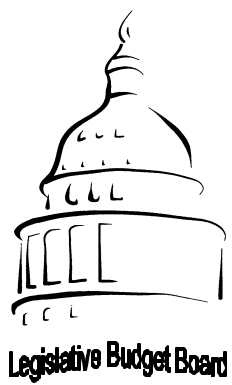
Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Maintenance:** Based on the amount of square feet of facility space.

- American School and University Maintenance & Operations Cost Study recommends staffing for maintenance personnel including electricians, heating/ventilation/air conditioning technicians, general maintenance workers and grounds crews.

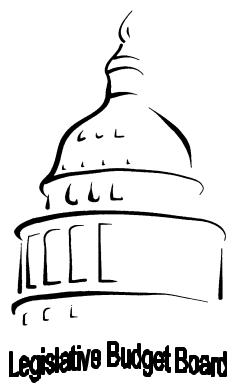 - 107,439 square feet of space = 1 maintenance staff

Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Food Service:** Based on the number of meals served per labor hour (MPLH).

- School Food Service Management for the 21st Century recommends staffing based on MPLH, which is the number of meal equivalents served in a given period divided by the total hours worked during that period.

- Determining the type of food production used affects the staffing levels. Conventional = more items prepared from scratch, such as raw vegetables and homemade bread. Convenience = uses more pre-processed foods. There is also a range for low to high productivity levels.

  - 301-400 meal equivalents = 16-18 staff for conventional; 14-16 staff for convenience.
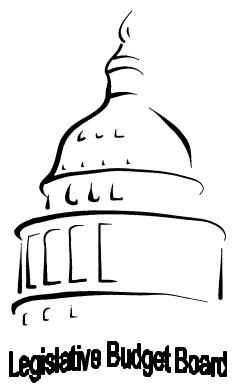
Staffing guidelines/formulas/ratios

- **Technology:** Based on the amount of equipment to be maintained; the number of software applications that are installed and maintained on each computer; the physical size of the district; and the age/condition of the computers and buildings.

- The Michigan Technology Staffing Guidelines recommends technology staffing levels:

    - Computer support = number of workstations and peripherals in use full time divided by 500.

    - User support = number of users divided by 1,000 (further divided into user types: high, medium and occasional).
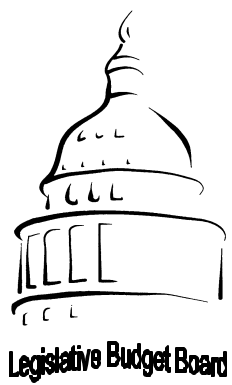
Planning, Policies and Procedures Planning Now Saves Later

- Planning:
  - District Improvement Plan, Campus Improvement Plans, Facilities Master Plan, Technology Plan, Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity

- Policies/Procedures:
  - Document, revise as needed, and follow. Do not reinvent the wheel every time there is a change in personnel.
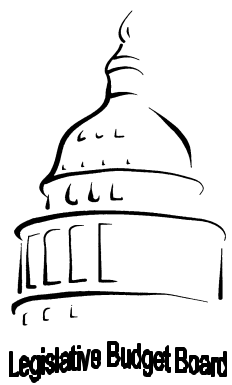
Planning, Policies, Procedures and Paper!

- Convert paper to electronic:
  - Internal and external forms, documents, procedures, manuals, tracking systems, personnel-related information (job descriptions, job postings, applications, contracts, goals and evaluations).
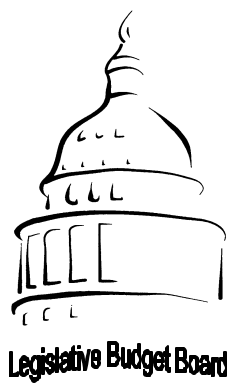
Educational and Organizational

- Eliminate block scheduling and return to a traditional schedule.

- Participate in cooperatives for shared services.

- Contract for services where appropriate. Routinely conduct cost-benefit analyses of providing service vs. contracting. Actively manage and monitor contracts, ensuring performance targets are established and met.

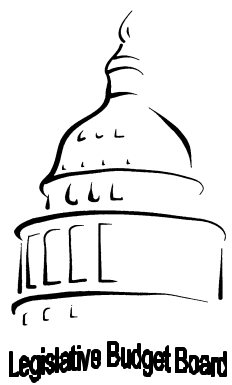- Increase attendance through dropout and truancy initiatives.

Educational and Organizational

- Create education foundations.
- Examine employee and board member supplements to ensure appropriateness.
  - Car allowances vs. use of district vehicles; cell phones, organizational memberships and stipends.
- Evaluate use of legal services – internal and external.
  - Manage the number of staff contacts with external legal counsel. Monitor rates and billed hours for work performed.
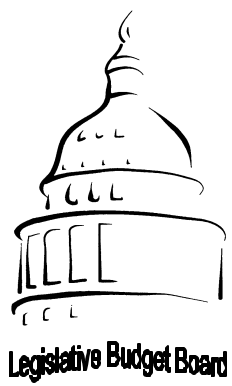
Educational and Organizational

- Use volunteers instead of hiring new employees.

- Implement recruiting and retention strategies to reduce employee turnover and associated costs for new employees.

- Provide online professional development to reduce travel costs. Implement the train-the-trainer model for other types of training received by staff.

- Cross-train staff to maximize continued service despite absences and/or vacancies.
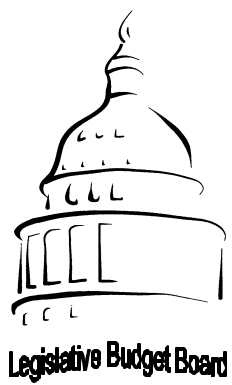
Educational and Organizational

- Post information on district websites to reduce printing costs.

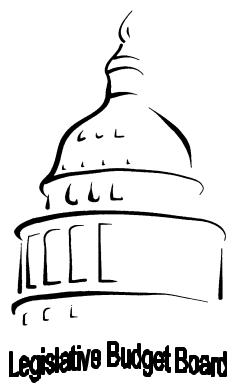- Consider leasing vs. purchasing computers.

Financial and Asset Management

- Manage cash flow and investments:
  - Forecast cash flow needs, move excess funds to higher earning investments, and diversify investment portfolios.

- Manage banking efforts:
  - Consolidate bank accounts into fewer high yield accounts; review depository contract annually; reduce fees and implement positive pay.
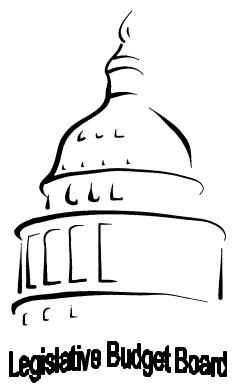
Financial and Asset Management

- Refinance/refund bonds at lower interest rates.

- Monitor property tax collections:
    - Pursue delinquent taxes.
    - Close the district tax office and contract with the county tax assessor-collector.

- Pursue grant opportunities (consider a grant writer), timely file grant reimbursement reports, and use all grant funds.
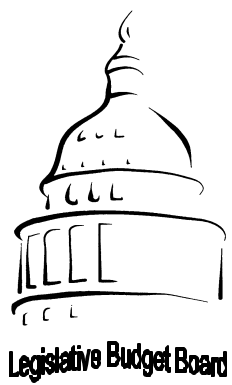
Financial and Asset Management

- Monitor workers' compensation/insurance:
  - Claims, coverage and contract.
  - Implement workplace safety training program to manage costs.
- Review property and casualty insurance – coverage, rates and deductibles.
- Control assets/inventory:
  - Bar code/label, especially for high-cost technology assets (including hardware and software).
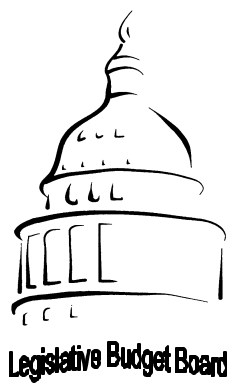 - Conduct annual inventory and require accountability by users.

Financial and Asset Management

- Participate in purchasing cooperatives.
- Consider just-in-time delivery of goods instead of warehousing.
  - If maintaining a warehouse, automate the requisition of items and require an annual inventory.
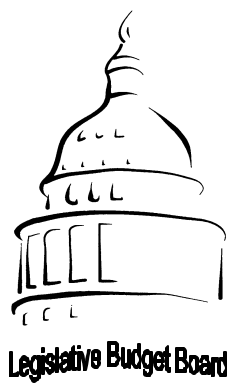
Operational Services

- Use student enrollment projections to determine facility needs.

- Use building prototypes/standards for new construction.

- Ensure cost control of construction projects, including managing and monitoring bond funds.

- Develop a preventive maintenance plan to manage maintenance costs.

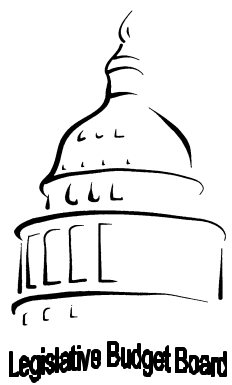- Implement an energy conservation/management program.

Operational Services

- Manage food costs:
  - In menu planning, pre-cost ingredients, and maximize use of U.S. Department of Agriculture food commodities; consolidate food orders of multiple campuses; implement offer vs. serve; adhere to portion size guidelines.
- Consider centralized food preparation, with use of warmers at campuses.
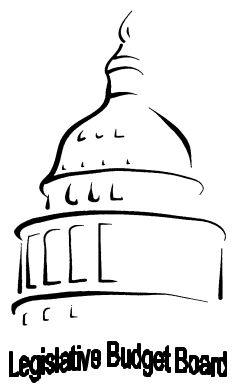- Determine and apply a cost per meal for catering district events.

Operational Services

- Evaluate meal prices – breakfast, lunch and a la carte, for both students and adults.

- Increase breakfast participation by offering non-traditional service methods.

- Use all aspects of the point of sale system to accurately track meals served and to ensure accurate reporting for federal reimbursements.

- Ensure that every eligible student is enrolled for the free and reduced-price meal programs.
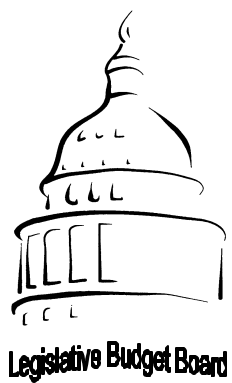
Operational Services

- Conduct bus route analysis to determine routes that can be consolidated or eliminated.

- Consider staggered bell times to maximize the use of the bus and driver for multiple routes each morning and afternoon.

- Require drivers to perform pre- and post-route bus inspections, and to regularly report small repair and maintenance needs.

Operational Services

- Identify various bus driver payment methods to control overtime costs.

  – Rate per route or a set number of hours per driver.

- Charge campuses/departments for extracurricular trips.

A+ Ideas for Managing Schools (AIMS)

- Best practices/commendations/accomplishments identified in each district reviewed.

- Included by category in AIMS.

- Searchable database from LBB's website

- TEA's Best Practices Clearinghouse links to AIMS.

- As of April 2010, more than 1,800 best practices identified from the school performance reviews.