

**Testimony for the Oversight Hearing of  
The United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
Regarding  
Indian Education Series:  
Indian Students in Public School - Cultivating the Next Generation**

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## **BACKGROUND**

In January 2010, the Baboquivari Unified School District (BUSD) took the bold step to say enough to a legacy of mediocre performance and results, and committed to transforming itself to an excelling school system. Since that time, teachers, staff, administrators, parents, governing board, and of course, students have put forth an unprecedented effort to move from a school district producing mediocre results to one with high expectations and accountability! Our students have made significant strides in their academic “self-determination” to become effective learners who strive for excellence and our staff/teachers’ level of expertise and experience has never been better. We believe the Baboquivari Unified School District is now poised to become the great educational institute that we all envision, and that our students will be college and career ready upon graduation from high school! To this end, we have challenged our students, parents, community, and the BUSD educational team to take full advantage of our ongoing transformational efforts toward ensuring that:

1. Students will reach their academic potential preparing them for the next academic year (yes, including college for our high school graduates);
2. Parents will be highly involved and engaged with their children’s education;
3. Schools will provide a nurturing and positive learning environment conducive to effective learning; and,
4. The entire community will develop the “determination” that makes the education of our children its highest priority!

Long gone are the days of low expectations, mediocre performance and results often seen in Tribal educational settings. We insist that the entire BUSD community support our efforts in educating our children. We believe that a community with high expectations will result in a quality educational system! These efforts will positively impact the health and wellness, economic prosperity, and quality of life of the Tohono O’odham for generations to come. The students of the Tohono O’odham Nation deserve a quality education and the Baboquivari Unified School District is poised and committed towards fulfilling its obligation.

Examples of our students' success include:

- Nearly a 40% increase in Baboquivari High School's graduation rate over the past five years.
- Six Gates Millennium Scholars and one Dorrance Scholar over the past three years.
- Over \$2 million in scholarships in 2013 (all-time high for BHS).
- State & National Science Fair winners in 2012, 2013, and 2014.
- 52 seniors graduated in the Class of 2013; 30 applied to college; 24 were accepted; 19 enrolled in college in 2013 (all-time highs for BHS).
- K-3 cohorts have the highest achievement of all grades as a result of the full benefit of our current transformation efforts.

## **CALL TO ACTION: OUR JOURNEY TO SUCCESS**

As one of two school systems on the Tohono O'odham Nation, BUSD is a state public school serving 1,100 students in Preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (the Bureau of Indian Education serves approximately 800 students). BUSD has a P-5 elementary school, 6-8 middle school, 9-12 high school, and two alternative schools serving students in grades 6-12. In 2012, Baboquivari High School (BHS) and Indian Oasis Elementary School (IOES) were designated as Persistently Lowest Achieving Schools by the Arizona Department of Education. By definition, these two schools were in the bottom 5% of all schools in Arizona. In May of 2008, BHS had a graduation rate of 39% and IOES had not made Adequate Yearly Progress in several years (Arizona Department of Education, 2008). As a result, a call to action was necessitated and put into motion by the BUSD Governing Board. The first step was initiated in the summer of 2009 when the new superintendent was hired to spearhead the transformation of BUSD.

With the support of the Governing Board, the newly hired superintendent began the process of developing a strategic plan at addressing the root cause of BUSD's underperforming schools. Several internal data points including student achievement, attendance, enrollment, discipline, college going rates, student interviews, community input, budgetary allocations and expenditures, teacher/staff performance, and parent involvement & engagement rates were used in a comprehensive needs assessment. Additionally, data points directly associated to the overall wellness of the Tohono O'odham Nation including high school completion rates among adults, college attainment levels, unemployment rates, and incidences of health issues were utilized. As a result, four key areas were identified to guide the work of transforming BUSD:

1. Design a highly effective and efficient educational support services division: Human Resources, Transportation, Facilities, Technology, and Finance.

2. Establish positive and meaningful partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders including the Tohono O’odham Nation, higher education institutions, parents, and the various wraparound service agencies on the Tohono O’odham Nation.
3. Develop a highly effective system of support for the Governing Board that leads to highly effective governance.
4. Develop a teaching and learning approach based on best practices that focuses on student achievement.

The emphasis moving forward was to assume a systems-thinking approach by which all district divisions required partial to full overhauls. Unfortunately, the comprehensive needs assessment demonstrated serious inefficiencies within all district departments and divisions. The following sections will identify those deficiencies along with their remediation.

## **Educational Support**

The design of a highly effective and efficient educational support services division that included Human Resources, Transportation, Facilities, Technology, and Finance was and continues to be the basis for supporting highly effective instruction and ultimately learning.

### Human Resources

The quality of any organization is dependent on the quality of its employees. BUSD believes that teachers are the most important and that principals are the most influential members of the school district. And of course, other staff including non-certificated personnel and all district level-administrators exists to provide key levels of support to the teaching and learning that occurs in classrooms. Following were the existing deficiencies and the remediation BUSD has taken over the last four years toward building and developing the quality of services provided by employees:

#### *Human Resource Deficiencies and Remediation:*

Ineffective hiring practices and procedures that de-emphasized hiring highly effective certificated personnel and support staff were exceedingly evident. BUSD had resorted to simply filling positions by settling with the only candidate applying for a teaching vacancy.

BUSD committed to developing a comprehensive approach and philosophy of hiring only effective personnel. Specifically, the following corrective steps were taken:

- a. BUSD determined that it would follow a turnaround approach in the School Improvement Grant process and chose to non-renew all probationary teachers in the spring of 2010. In all, 49 out of 87 classroom teachers were non-renewed. All the non-renewed teachers were provided the opportunity to reapply for teaching positions and only 13 were rehired. All other teachers for the following school year were hired from a BUSD hosted teacher fair held in Tucson, Arizona.

It is important to note, that BUSD was bound by Arizona Law in its decision to select only probationary teachers for non-renewal. Because BUSD was not effectively following State mandated teacher evaluation procedures, it could not bring forward statement of charges for poor performance for teachers in the continuing category.

- b. BUSD determined that it had to develop a comprehensive approach to hiring teachers. The following procedures and policy changes were put in place:
  - Developed two strategies for teacher recruitment:
    - Teacher Recruitment One or TR1:** When a vacancy exists, BUSD will follow the typical hiring procedures in school districts: post an advertisement, accept applications, invite qualified candidates to interview, select the best-qualified candidate.
    - Teacher Recruitment Two or TR2:** BUSD administration will identify superstar teachers from other school districts and actively recruit them. Identification of such teachers is based on referrals by other educators, newspaper articles indicating previous successes of a teacher such as awards or implementation of unique programs, or self identified teachers that contact BUSD. The superstar status is based on data that demonstrates their ability to move students academically. The concept of TR2 is very similar to how college sports coaches identify and recruit star athletes.
  - BUSD committed to increasing teacher pay by strategically utilizing its Federal funding (including Impact Aid) and State funding. BUSD went from being one of the lowest paying school districts in Arizona to the highest in 2013. The goal is to continue on this trajectory each year.

- BUSD changed the governing board policy that provides the superintendent discretion in placing newly hired TR2 teachers on any step on its teacher salary schedule. Arizona school districts typically have policy that awards between five to ten years of experience to newly hired teachers for placement on salary schedules. Commonly, this is why teachers don't move from one school district to another after they have surpassed this range of years of employment in any one school district. BUSD now has the ability to recruit experienced superstar teachers from other school districts by leveraging this change in policy.
- c. BUSD determined that it had to develop a comprehensive evaluation system for teachers. It appeared that prior to 2010, employees were not provided with an effective evaluation. For teachers it simply became a process of compliance with law and not providing accurate and meaningful evaluations.

The shift from a philosophy of compliance to one of meaningful feedback for continuous teacher growth has become the norm in BUSD. Teachers recognize that the principal will progress monitor their instruction as a means toward improving academic achievement of students. As a result, BUSD developed and implemented the Teacher Performance Evaluation System based on the Arizona Framework for Measuring Educator Effectiveness. Key components of this system include:

- All teachers, regardless of experience, receive at least two evaluations per year. The first evaluation is completed by the end of the first quarter of the school year. This provides the teacher with feedback early in the year and, if warranted, the teacher is placed on an improvement plan with the necessary support.
- The school principal is required to conduct multiple formal and informal teacher observations throughout the year.
- Three district teams comprised of the superintendent, key district personnel, principals, and school improvement coaches conduct monthly walkthroughs that provide principals with specific observational feedback on teacher performance. Each of the teams observes the same teachers monthly and the observational data is scored and monitored throughout the year.

- Each teacher is also evaluated based on the academic achievement growth of their students using classroom and whole school results.

Issuance of subsequent year contracts is based on these components of the BUSD Teacher Performance Evaluation System.

- d. BUSD requires an annual evaluation of all non-classroom certificated staff and all non-certificated staff. Though a policy requiring annual evaluations had been in place in previous years, it was not until recently that this became the expected practice for all supervisors.
- e. BUSD implemented strategic and curricular aligned professional development for instructional certificated staff and para-professionals. All certificated staff received an extended contract that requires attendance in professional development before the beginning and end of the school year. During the 2013-14 school year, instructional staff was provided 19 days of professional development aligned to the district curriculum and expectations including Common Core Standards, AVID (Advancement Via Individual Advancement), Success for All Reading, PowerTeaching Math, technology, and Tohono O'odham Culture awareness.
- f. All BUSD non-instructional support staff receive job-specific training during the summer and throughout the school year as needed.
- g. BUSD strongly believes that school principals are the most influential members of the school district. As a result, three highly effective school principals with a deep knowledge of instruction, learning, and successful school leadership experiences are currently leading the three schools in BUSD. Each of the principals were recruited and invited to apply.

Transportation

*Transportation Deficiencies and Remediation:*

The BUSD transportation required a shift from antiquated transportation procedures to a system that took into account more current methods of training, routing, and maintenance of its vehicle fleet.

The following changes resulted in improved transportation of students to school and home:

- a. Hired an experienced transportation director to assist in providing effective leadership.
- b. Downsized the number of mechanics from five to one in accordance with industry standards based on the size of the district's bus and white fleet. The one remaining mechanic oversees general breakdowns and miscellaneous repairs of the fleet.
- c. Determined that it is more cost effective to contract out repairs and general maintenance of the district's fleet.
- d. Developed more strategic bus routes to reduce, as much as possible, the time students spend on the bus. Due to the remoteness of the district this continues to be a concern.
- e. Provide ongoing training to bus drivers in transportation specific areas in addition to areas generally considered more academic such as Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), Child Find, Mandatory Reporting, and Tohono O'odham Culture awareness.

BUSD acknowledges that our bus drivers are the first and last school employees to see our students daily. As such, we strongly view this department as a critical component of student success.

## Facilities

### *Facilities Deficiencies and Remediation:*

The BUSD Facilities were in major need of remediation at the start of the 2009 school year. All aspects of classrooms were in poor condition from walls needing repair and painting, inoperable light fixtures, stained and dirty carpets, and broken furniture. Generally, our school grounds were not maintained and in poor condition as well. Playgrounds, common areas, and athletic fields and facilities were not up to standard. Our students were not being provided a learning environment conducive to effective learning.

The following changes resulted in aesthetically pleasing and safe learning environments for students, teachers & staff, and parents:

- a. Hired a facilities director and grounds lead with expertise in the areas of facilities & grounds maintenance and repair.
- b. Strategically leveraged our Impact Aid, ARRA funds, and donation funds in the development of a comprehensive plan to fix all existing facilities and grounds and to develop maintenance schedules including:
  - Purchase of new furniture aligned to our teaching practices (desks and tables easily movable for cooperative learning activities).
  - Replaced carpet in all classrooms.
  - Painted all classrooms and in the process of painting the exterior of schools.
  - Repaired classroom fixtures such as clocks and pencil sharpeners.
  - Repaired roofs and replaced ceiling tiles.
  - Designed and built a playground for the elementary school.
  - Brought all athletic fields and courts up to Arizona Interscholastics remoteness Association standards so that our student athletes were provided safe venues to practice and play games. This included the purchase of score boards in several venues that didn't have them.
- c. Provide department specific training and support for all employees in accordance with industry standards.

## Information & Technology

### *Information and Technology Deficiencies and Remediation:*

BUSD had several areas of concern regarding its ability to deliver IT services both as a management system and as an instructional tool. Because this area required a high level of expertise, a new IT director was hired with the expertise and school district experience needed to resolve a variety of key issues. The following provides details of the deficiencies and how they were remediated.

#### *Internet Service*

The district had only 9 mbps of bandwidth total during the 2010-11 school year. The bandwidth was shared with the district office and all three school sites. Each school site had only 1.5 mbps each. During the 2012-2013 school year the district was upgraded to 200 mbps; 100 mbps at the district office/middle school, 50 mbps at the elementary school, and 50 mbps at the high school.

In November 2011, the district procured Internet services using the E-Rate process. No vendors were able to deliver services at the 1000 mbps rate. The only service provider that could promise more than 50mbps was the Tohono O'odham Utility Authority (TOUA). The district applied for E-Rate funding and asked the vendor to deliver service at the earliest available time allowable using E-Rate funding. At the time, TOUA did not have any fiber based Internet services. After many conversations and pressure on TOUA, Fiber Optic services became available to BUSD in July 2012. BUSD was the first TOUA customer able to order fiber optic Internet services. However, the district was not able to fully switch to the fiber optic Internet services until December 2013. This was due to TOUA's inability to provide reliable service.

#### *E-Rate Funding*

Baboquivari School District had not received E-Rate funding between FY 2008 and FY 2011. This was due to procurement and filing deadline issues. BUSD brought in a consulting vendor to help correct issues and get the district back in good standing with the E-Rate Program. The district is now reimbursed for 90% of all communications

services. This includes Internet, telephone, cellphones, websites, internal connections, and maintenance of internal connections.

### *Infrastructure*

The district infrastructure was not fully operational through the 2010-11. The district had purchased a wireless solution and it was never configured or fully installed. Access points were mounted and no cabling was present to power up the wireless access points. Network switches were connected at lower than ideal speeds using copper and not fiber. Some network switches were broken and not replaced. Servers were also in need of upgrades and replacement parts.

During the fall of 2012 the district procured a full district-wide infrastructure overhaul using E-Rate funding. Funding was approved in February 2013. The district completed work at all sites in January 2014. E-Rate funds were only used at the middle school. School Improvement Technology Grant funding was used at the elementary and high schools. Using the school Improvement Technology Grants allowed the district to get the project fully funded. E-Rate funding only covers 90 percent of any costs.

### *Hardware*

The district purchased 800 student laptops during the 2008-09 school year. Only 450 of those devices were deployed in 2010. Many of the deployed laptops did not have sufficient wireless coverage to be used effectively. After the infrastructure was installed and repaired all the devices were deployed.

### *Power*

Power is still a big concern. Most of the network infrastructure had no battery backup power. The district infrastructure now has at least 2 hours of runtime and can support wireless devices and phones for that time.

*Support*

The district now has effective and responsive tech support. District technicians are able to work with staff and ensure that all district technology is in good working order. Also, the district now has a technology integration specialist. This position supports teachers directly in effective technology and content integration.

Finance

*Finance Deficiencies and Remediation:*

Effective budgeting processes are essential to the successful operation of a school district. BUSD receives funding from State Aid, Federal Entitlement Funds, and Federal Impact Aid. However, during the 2009-10 school year it became evident that BUSD didn't have defined budgeting processes with a clear focus toward supporting schools. The major areas of concern included:

- a. Lack of a defined budget development processes.
  - Decisions were made arbitrarily by the District's business manager and superintendent without input from key stakeholders including principals, department directors, and parents
  - The school board had little to no involvement in the development of the budget, other than final approval.
- b. Lack of effective and efficient budget management processes.
- c. Out of compliance with State of Arizona Audit requirements. In the 2009-10 school year, auditors were unable to complete discovery due to a lack of established general budgeting procedures, therefore, the completion of audits were delayed over a four-year period.

The following measures were taken to remediate these deficiencies:

- a. Hired an effective school business manager with 20 years of successful experience in Arizona public schools.

- b. Developed an inclusive budget development process that included the formation of a budget committee comprised of teachers, parents, principals, and district administrators.
- c. The Governing Board is provided a detailed budget report at a regular board meeting once a month.
- d. A study session is held annually with the Governing Board to review budget recommendations and to gather input from members.
- e. Upgraded budgeting and payroll software.
- f. Provide ongoing training to the business department staff.
- g. Developed best practice business procedures.
- h. Hired a reputable school auditing firm that assisted in bringing BUSD into compliance with the Arizona Auditing requirements.

## **Meaningful Partnerships**

Key to the success of BUSD is the establishment of positive and meaningful partnerships and relationships with key stakeholders including the Tohono O’odham Nation, higher education institutions, parents, and the various wraparound service agencies on the Tohono O’odham Nation. BUSD strongly believes that if we are not successful with this component, our transformation efforts will plateau and sustainable effective learning will not occur.

## **The Tohono O’odham Nation**

BUSD believes that a strong partnership with the Tohono O’odham Nation’s leadership is a key component in the sustainability of an effective school system. Of particular mention is BUSD’s efforts to create a C-20 Council on the Tohono O’odham Nation that brings key decision makers together to support the education of children (the C in this case refers to conception). Such a group will create the necessary collective efficiencies, not only for the benefit of BUSD, but the greater community as well. All service agencies and departments on the Tohono O’odham Nation will develop the much needed coordinated health and wellness approach so urgently needed.

As an example, it is critical that a priority is placed on providing an expecting female the needed wraparound services she requires so that both mom and the baby have a healthy pregnancy term. There are two primary reasons for this: First, the expected female needs guidance and support in maintaining a healthy pregnancy from prenatal care to awareness on what the dos and don'ts are during a pregnancy. For example, the incidence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome has a direct correlation on the child's health and cognitive abilities for the rest of his/her life. Expecting moms need to have knowledge of this and know exactly where and how to get the necessary assistance. Unfortunately, the standard of prenatal care for Native American women is not at the level recommended by the medical profession. Again, there is a need to provide all the necessary services to ensure that expecting moms have knowledge and access to the appropriate prenatal care and information associated with a healthy pregnancy. Secondly, brain research clearly informs us that the brain is about 80% fully developed by the age of three and to a great extent, the level of prenatal services are highly correlated to the cognitive developmental levels of children in Tribal environments. Sadly, there exists a crisis surrounding this matter.

Just as critical in the C-20 Concept is the quality of early childhood services and education provided to children in our community. The research on learning suggests that children who are exposed to strategic learning opportunities and that are provided the appropriate levels of nutrition and wellness care are more apt to succeed academically. Unfortunately, this too is in a state of crisis and requires a significant overhaul. For example in BUSD, we do not see a correlation with kindergarten readiness with those students that are enrolled in the Tohono O'odham Nation's Head Start Programs and those that are not.

The current levels of wraparound services and safety nets for children of all ages fall short of providing the quality of services needed to support BUSD students and their families. The C-20 Concept is intended to support the necessary changes that lead to the delivery of effective wraparound services and the development of the much needed safety nets for all BUSD children and their families. However, extensive work is required to reach this goal.

Generally, BUSD is garnering the needed support from the Nation's leadership through the following means:

1. Regular meetings with the Human Resource Development Committee of the Legislative Council. BUSD provides progress reports and updates on program changes in addition to the implementation of new programs.
2. Annual Progress Report presentations to the Legislative Council.
3. Established meetings with directors and leaders of the Tohono O'odham Nation's key departments including Education, Behavioral Health, Recreation, Police Department, Fire Department, and Public Safety, along with the leadership of the Indian Health Services. This effort is continuously improving as BUSD strives to build collaborative partnerships and relationships with the various agencies on the Tohono O'odham Nation.
4. Periodic progress report presentations and meetings with the Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation. This is an area that continues to improve annually.
5. BUSD's direct involvement in the Circles of Care Grant that supports a coordinated model of the delivery of effective wraparound services and the development of safety nets for the Tohono O'odham Nation.

### Higher Education

BUSD has established effective partnerships with several institutions of higher education including the University of Arizona, Pima Community College and the Tohono O'odham Community College. In particular the Tohono O'odham Community College (TOCC) and BUSD have established a comprehensive partnership to support the needs of students. Key components of this partnership include:

1. Monthly collaborative meetings with BUSD and TOCC leadership.
2. Implementation of a dual credit programs where juniors and seniors earn college credit for Math and English classes taught at Baboquivari High School.
3. TOCC and BUSD are partners in the delivery of a United States Department of Education i3 Innovation Grant that provides students in K-12 with AVID. AVID is a college

preparation system that infuses key strategies and expectations in the development of a college going culture.

4. An MOU that ensures that both institutions will maintain a collaborative partnership in providing education to the Tohono O’odham in Preschool through Community College.

Additional information related to BUSD’s partnership with the University of Arizona is described later in this document.

### Parent Involvement & Engagement

BUSD has made the involvement of parents, guardians, and caretakers a priority. The research and literature in educational best practices suggests that perhaps the most important component of student success is the level of parental involvement in their children’s education. BUSD has implemented several key strategies and programs in supporting our parents, guardians, and caretakers involvement in their children’s education. Among these are:

1. POP Academy: The Power of Parents Academy is designed to engage parents at two critical levels in the lives of their children as described below:
  - a. Provide a series of classes over 15 hours in seven weeks on topics that affect their children’s lives and that impact their quality of life now and in the future. This includes the following topics:
    - How to navigate the school system successfully (communicating with teachers, principals, and staff).
    - How to setup homework expectations that lead to effective learning.
    - Knowledge and awareness of social issues that influence their children (gangs, controlled substances, sexual activity, etc.).
    - Basic life skills such a financial literacy, how to maintain your vehicle, how to repair leaky faucets.
    - Topics surrounding health and wellness.
  - b. Enforce to parents the significance of their own education by building the self-determination that they too can become lifelong learners. Their attendance not only helps them but they also become role models for their children. This in itself is perhaps the most significant aspect of the POP Academy: children seeing their parents attend school.

BUSD is collaborating with TOCC in the development of programs that will encourage parents in returning to school to earn a GED and/or to continue their education. Unfortunately, nearly 50% of the adults on the Tohono O’odham Nation have not graduated from high school and very few have college degrees.

The POP Academy will eventually assist our parents in continuing their education as follows:

- Those that successfully complete the POP Academy will earn a college credit through TOCC.
- Those who have not graduated from high school will be encouraged to enroll in TOCC's Adult Education Program leading to a GED.
- Those who have graduated from high school will be encouraged to enter a certificated program, an associates degree or a transfer program.

An educated populace results in an improved quality of life for all members of the Tohono O'odham Nation. Certainly, as research suggests, there is a correlation in students' academic success and the levels of educational attainment of their parents. The POP Academy is designed to capitalize on this.

2. BUSD strongly believes in the significance of parent involvement and engagement and has dedicated funding that provides a fulltime district level administrator and a parent involvement specialist at each campus.
  - a. The district Coordinator of Parent/Community Involvement & Engagement oversees all related programs and events associated with this effort.
    - Provides training and support for the site-level parent involvement specialist.
    - Plans and implements district level programs including the Back to School Celebration and the Miracle on Main Street Winter Festival. The Back to School Celebration is a comprehensive effort that brings over 1,000 students and parents to a community type fair. Students receive haircuts, backpacks and supplies, and participate in fun activities; while parents are provided classes in a variety of school and community related topics. The Miracle on Main Street provides and brings a community building approach where the schools and community agencies provide educational activities for students, school and community leaders perform Christmas carols, and students and adults are provided culturally relevant stories. Well over 1,000 meals are served to those in attendance.
    - Oversees the POP Academy.
    - Oversees the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program.
    - Leads BUSD's community outreach efforts including newsletters, communiqués, and community meetings.
  - b. The site level Parent Involvement Specialists work directly with teachers and principals in all aspects of engaging parents including:
    - Conducting home visits as needed.
    - Providing transportation to parents to school events/meetings and to school related appointments with external agencies.

- Making referrals for students and families to wraparound agencies as needed.
  - Participating in a variety of parent meetings.
  - Translating for parents as needed.
  - Overseeing their sites clothing bank.
  - Collaborating with the district coordinator in the delivery of all parenting classes and events.
3. Generally BUSD expects parents, guardians, and caretakers to be fully involved and engaged in their child's education. BUSD has established a compact that requires the following of parents:
- a. Read to and/or with their child at least 20 minutes daily.
  - b. Spend at least 10 minutes daily having a meaningful conversation about school with their child.
  - c. Volunteer at a minimum 4 hours monthly in their child's school. This can include participation in the POP Academy and other parent classes and events throughout the year.
  - d. Attend the back to school event where students are provided backpacks school uniforms, shoes, haircuts, etc.
  - e. Attend Parent/Teacher conferences as scheduled twice per year or as needed.

## **Governance**

BUSD strongly believes in providing a highly effective system of support for the Governing Board that leads to highly effective decision-making.

- a. The superintendent maintains communication with each board member in matters related to the operation of the school district. In BUSD this includes regular written updates along with communication on pertinent information as it occurs.
- b. The superintendent provides the Governing Board with the necessary information that prepares members for effective decision-making at official meetings. This includes the dissemination of critical information in the board packet delivered timely in advance of scheduled board meetings so as to provide adequate time for review. Additionally, in BUSD, the superintendent meets and/or calls each board

member in the days prior to the board meeting to provide additional information and/or clarification to items and supporting documents as needed.

- c. The superintendent ensures that timely and effective training is provided to the Governing Board and its members. Additionally, an annual retreat is held where the Governing Board reviews previous years goals and outcomes, and sets the same for the subsequent year.

## **Teaching and Learning**

BUSD is highly committed to providing a rigorous learning environment for each of its students. To this end, BUSD has implemented a teaching and learning approach based on best practices that focus on student achievement. We also believe that the most significant aspect of learning is direct instruction and as such, we have focused on improving our teachers preparation and readiness to deliver a rigorous curriculum that leads to students being next year ready at the completion of the current school year, and of course, college and/or career ready upon graduation from high school. BUSD believes that the most influential members of the district are its principals and that its teachers are the most important. BUSD also recognizes that the development of highly effective learning environments can only occur through individuals that have a clear purpose, unwavering passion, and a powerful persistence. BUSD has such a team of professionals in its teaching staff, administrative team, and support staff.

As previously mentioned in this document, BUSD has implemented a comprehensive approach at providing training and support to all members of the instructional team including teachers, para-professionals, principals, and district staff and administration. Specifically, the instructional team participates in a focused effort that includes:

1. Professional Development (PD) for the Instructional Team
  - a. 24 days contractually required PD in 2013 and 19 days in 2014 (these days were scheduled prior to the school year and after the school year, with three days occurring during the school year; reduction in PD days attributed to decreased funding).
  - b. Additionally, job-embedded training and support is provided throughout the year in reading and math. Trainers model lessons and strategies, observe teachers, and provide immediate feedback and coaching.

- c. Site level instructional coaches provide differentiated professional development and support to teachers aligned to principal observations and district walkthrough observations (described in the Human Resource section of this document).
- d. The following topics and areas continue to be the focus of the BUSD Professional Development Program:
  - Common Core Standards
  - Tohono O’odham Culture
  - Beyond Textbooks (curriculum mapping, lesson planning, and benchmark assessments)
  - Marzano’s Art and Science of Teaching
  - Classroom Management
  - Technology as an Instructional Tool
- e. All teachers new to the district and all teachers in their second year in the district are required an additional 16 hour of professional development in the BUSD New Teacher Induction Program. Teachers receive extended training in the areas highlighted above. This is part of our efforts at ensuring that all teachers receive the same level of training and support in the expected pedagogy and curriculum.

Additionally BUSD has set very clearly articulated expectations for teachers that are employed in our schools. The teacher contract includes the following language that articulates expectations:

1. *The Teacher agrees to teach such grade, grades or subjects and to perform such other professional duties as may be assigned by the Governing Board or its administrators including but not limited to:*
  - a. *Meet the needs of all students through the use of the District's adopted instructional strategies, programs and procedures so that all students are given every reasonable opportunity to achieve one year's growth in the course(s) taught. This includes, but is not limited to the use of AVID strategies, Success for All, and all other adopted materials.*
  - b. *Integrate the provided technology into everyday instruction in alignment with the District's grade level and/or content expectations.*
  - c. *Maintain a classroom environment that promotes effective learning through the use of best practice routines and procedures, displaying exemplary student work, posting learning objectives prominently visible to students in grade level*

*appropriate language, maintaining bulletin boards/displays consistent with current instructional themes, and that promotes the Tohono O'odham Culture.*

- d. Maintain an adherence to professional growth by attending all District approved professional development during the term of the contract.*
- e. Collaborate with grade-level and/or content teachers at a minimum of once per week in the development of lessons, units, and activities in alignment with the District's curriculum.*
- f. Collaborate with grade-level and/or content teachers and other school personnel at a minimum of once per week in the disaggregation of student achievement, attendance, and behavioral data so as to develop and implement differentiated instruction as needed.*
- g. Meet District expectations in the use of school-wide and classroom quantitative data that measures student academic progress in alignment with the Arizona Framework for Measuring Educator Effectiveness*
- h. Complete lesson plans weekly in alignment with the district's curriculum and post electronically utilizing the District's lesson plan template.*
- i. Maintain accurate records in Infinite Campus, which are updated and posted as required by the District. This includes, but is not limited to, grade book, grades, attendance, and correspondence.*
- j. Develop and design a teacher web page that includes, but is not limited to, teacher welcome page, lesson plans, curriculum, assignments, and links.*
- k. Provide timely communication to each of your student's parents or guardians at a minimum once per quarter or as needed .*
- l. Recognize the significance of the Tohono O'odham Culture in teaching and learning and, as such, demonstrate proficiency through its integration into daily instruction in alignment with the District's expectations.*

As part of the issuance of contracts, each principal meets with each teacher and reviews the language to ensure that there is full understanding and agreement of the district's expectations.

BUSD has implemented the following key initiatives over the past four years that will enable students to be next year ready upon the completion of the current school year and college and career ready upon graduation from high school. The selection of these initiatives was strategic

having been preceded by careful review, research, and dialogue with principals, teachers, and school improvement specialist.

- Common Core Implementation – Though required in Arizona through a phase-in over three years, BUSD implemented fully prior to the full implementation time period. The Common Core Standards provide the rigor our students need to successfully be college ready.
- Success For All Reading – provides a very structured program with intensive professional development and training. As a result, BUSD teachers have become effective teachers of reading. SFA also provides fluid leveled groupings that support struggling as well as proficient readers.
  - IOES was labeled as an SFA Ambassador School as a result of significant growth in reading.
- Power/Teaching Math Framework – Similar to SFA, this framework provides effective instructional strategies incorporated with our math adoptions.
- Beyond Textbooks – Provides BUSD teachers for a framework for curriculum mapping, teacher resources for lesson planning, and assessment calendars.
- Increased rigor in graduation requirements. The BUSD Curriculum provides our students with a much deeper understanding of the Common Core Standards in all courses. Additionally, high school students are offered the necessary honors courses through direct instruction on campus, online courses, and dual credit courses through TOCC and Pima Community College.
- Data Driven Response to Intervention
  - Effective use of Formative & Summative Assessments at all levels
  - GALILEO weekly and quarterly assessments
  - Interventions provided during school, afterschool, Saturdays, and all Intercessions
- BUSD added 23 school days to the school year in 2011. The additional days was an increase to the 157 day school year up to that point.

More specifically in our goal of students being college ready upon graduation from high school, BUSD has implemented the **Wisdom Project**. The Wisdom project is a joint effort with TOCC under a United States Department of Education i3 Innovation Grant in the delivery of a college readiness system. As mentioned previously, the implementation of the AVID system is funded through this grant. AVID, Advancement Via Individual Determination, is a college readiness system for elementary through higher education that is designed to increase school-wide learning

and performance. AVID accelerates student learning, uses research based methods of effective instruction, provides meaningful and motivational professional learning, and acts as a catalyst for systemic reform and change (AVID, 2014). Beginning in elementary school the WICOR method, which stands for writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading becomes the standard for learning. AVID curriculum is used in AVID elective classes and in content-area classes. These basic skills are research-based strategies that help prepare students for college.

Additional components of the **Wisdom Project** are:

- Dual Credit Courses through TOCC and Pima Community College.
- Focused visits to university and college campuses where students are introduced to specific fields of study and professions.
- Teen Town Hall where students plan and implement a forum where community leaders from throughout the Tohono O’odham Nation are invited to respond to specific student issues, concerns, and questions.
- On campus college fairs and presentations where students receive information from colleges from throughout Arizona and the United States.

Components of the Wisdom Project currently in development are:

- Internships where high school students will be placed in degree required job experiences.
- The Compact to Academic Success (CAS). BUSD is finalizing this unique program with the University of Arizona (UA) that provides Baboquivari High School Students with the following based on very specific requirements while in high school:
  1. Automatic Admission to the UA.
  2. “Front of the line” status for financial aid and scholarship opportunities.
  3. Dedicated retention services while enrolled at the UA

BHS students must:

1. Maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher
2. Maintain an attendance rate of 95% or higher
3. Must be involved in extra-curricular activities

4. Model exemplary citizenship
5. Successfully complete all prerequisite courses
6. Meet ACT or SAT requirements

Our goal is to expand this program to other universities in Arizona in subsequent years.

## Next Steps

Additional efforts are currently in development and scheduled for implementation for the 2014-15 school year:

- BUSD is adding an additional 20 days to the 180 day school year currently in place.
- Implementing a digital program:
  - All math and reading materials at the elementary school will be fully digital
  - The middle school and high school will be fully digital
  - Each student will be issued a take home tablet that will have all materials as listed above on their tablets
  - Each classroom will have a 75” HD monitor with a touch overlay that will permit the teacher and students to manipulate it with their finger. Additionally, the teacher and students will have the capability of manipulating the 75” HD monitor from their tablet.
  - This will create a true 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning environment that prepares students not only for college, but also for the exponentially moving technological world. This will permit our students to develop skill sets and foundational knowledge of 21<sup>st</sup> century possibilities.
- Moving to a School-wide III budgeting process that permits the blending of all entitlement funds with State aid.
- Development of a Foundation that will support scholarships for students, additional educational programs, and increased salaries for teachers and staff.

The development of a Superstar Teacher salary schedule based on specific criteria aligned to student achievement and leadership. Teachers successfully meeting this criteria are moved to a “master level” pay rate significantly higher than the current salary schedule.

## **Closing**

BUSD is committed toward meeting its obligation of providing a comprehensive learning environment that leads to college and career readiness for our students. Over the past four years, BUSD has had courageous conversations with all key stakeholders and has taken the courageous actions resulting in improved outcomes for students. Though we celebrate these successes, we recognize the need toward continued improvement and will continually strive to do what is best for our students. I thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share the challenges and successes on BUSD’s Journey to Success and welcome further discussion.