Texico receives high praise from think tank

Report speaks highly of districts which maximize spending in classroom.

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CLOVIS — A recent report by the nonpartisan think tank Think New Mexico speaks highly of a number of local school districts and their ability to maximize spending in the classroom.

The theory behind Think New Mexico’s Oct. 8 report “Improving Our Schools by Reallocating Dollars from Administration to the Classroom” is districts that spend money more efficiently by focusing inside the classroom rather than on administration costs produce higher graduation rates and test scores.

The report pointed to Texico as being a model for the rest of the state because of the district’s rank as the 18th most efficient district despite ranking 48th in enrollment.

Think New Mexico Director Fred Nathan said what’s notable about Texico is that despite its low enrollment, the district outperformed larger districts, which can take advantage of economies of size.

Nathan also singled out other local school districts that have been making efficient use of spending inside the classroom.

“You’ve got a lot of districts in and around Texico that did very well — Dora, Elida, Tatum, it really speaks well

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for eastern New Mexico," Nathan said.
The larger local school
districts also ranked among
the top 20 most efficient
spending districts in the
state, according to Think
New Mexico.
Clovis ranks seventh with
76 percent of the budget
going to instruction while
Portales ranks 17th with 74
percent.
Portales Municipal
Superintendent
Johnnie Cain said ensuring
money goes into the class­
room was already a priority
for the district prior to seeing
the report.
Cain said Portales tries to
keep down administrative
costs by employing only a
superintendent and assistant
superintendent, whereas
other districts would have
more assistants driving up
costs.
Cain said the district’s
own budget calculations
show about 81 percent of the
budget goes toward instruc­
tion.
“I think we’re falling with­
in what they’re reporting and
doing a better job than what
they recommend,” Cain said.
In Clovis, Superintendent
Jody Balch said there is a
focus on keeping spending in
the classroom, but he did not
think the district should nec­
essarily try to emulate
Texico.
“We pride ourselves on
being as lean as we can be
and we have leaned in the
past years,” Balch said.
“What somebody else does
and works for them with a
couple hundred students cer­
tainly doesn’t work for a
place that has thousands of
students, typically.”
Balch said one way Clovis
tries to keep costs down and
focus on classroom spending
is by examining every posi­
tion opening that comes up
and deciding if it needs to be
filled.
“So every time we have a
position we look at it, scruti­
nize, do we need to fill the
position or not, and in the
last couple years, lots of
times we have not filled a
position or we’ve re­estab­
lished what that position is
and added more duties pos­
sibly to it. Nothing really is
ever an automatic rehire
when somebody leaves,”
Balch said.
Balch said 90 percent of
the district’s budget goes
toward employees’ salary
and benefits, leaving 10 per­
cent to run and operate the
schools.
Balch said Clovis has also
replaced all of its fluorescent
lighting with LED bulbs,
which has led to a savings in
utilities costs.