

*Best Practices With Their Associated Indicators
Best Practices (1, 2, 3 . . .) and Indicators (a, b, c . . .)
Adopted June 2002*

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Best Practices and Indicators

Board and Superintendent Roles and Responsibilities

1. The roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent have been clearly delineated, and board members and the superintendent have policies to ensure that they have effective working relationships.

- a. The district has developed written policies that clearly delineate the responsibilities of the board and the superintendent.
- b. New board members receive orientation training when they first come on the board. Part of this training covers the roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent and Sunshine Law requirements.
- c. The board has qualified as a master board and board members receive ongoing training.
- d. The board and superintendent have policies for how board members are to access district staff or direct staff to respond to constituent inquiries, and board members adhere to these procedures.
- e. The board and superintendent advise each other when they become aware that an agenda item is likely to be controversial or that a controversial topic may arise at a board meeting and develop a plan to manage the issue.¹
- f. The board evaluates its performance and, if the superintendent is appointed, evaluates the superintendent's performance.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.

- a. The district prepares a master calendar showing the dates of major events, and board actions needed to meet legal requirements and uses it to ensure that these matters are placed on the board agenda in a timely matter.
- b. School board meetings are scheduled at a time and place convenient to the public.
- c. The school board pulls items from its consent agenda for discussion and public comment when requested to do so by members of the public.
- d. The board receives agenda materials in sufficient time to review them thoroughly prior to board meetings.
- e. The board's agendas allocate sufficient time for the board to discuss, develop, or evaluate district policies, goals, programs, and strategies for improving student achievement. The board addresses these issues.
- f. For each major agenda item, district staff provide board members with a clearly written summary that describes how the item supports the district's goals and objectives, and other specific information that may include any of the following items deemed necessary by the board:
 - the reason for recommended action on the item;
 - how the action will be accomplished;
 - what the desired results are;
 - what alternatives have been considered;
 - what resources will be needed;
 - who will be affected and whether they have been advised of and given opportunity for input on the proposed action;
 - how the proposed action will affect students and parents;

¹ This should be conducted in compliance with Florida Sunshine Laws. For example, an agenda item could be pulled from the regular board meeting and scheduled for a separate workshop that would be open to the public.

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- what policy or law may apply to the item;
- whether the item complies with, duplicates, modifies, or affects existing policies or procedures;
- whether a new policy is needed to implement the proposed action;
- what the time frame is for implementing and completing the proposed action; and
- who will evaluate the proposed action and how it will be evaluated.

g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.

a. The board has adopted written policies for the district that are updated on a regular basis to reflect changes in law and that ensure relevancy.

b. The district's policies do not cover procedural matters.

c. The superintendent has developed procedures dealing with district-wide administrative matters, and these procedures are up to date and reflect changes in law and board actions.

d. The district's policies and procedures are readily accessible to all district staff, and staff uses them to guide their activities.

e. The board's attorney reviews all proposed policies and procedures revisions to ensure that they comply with state requirements and are relevant and complete.

f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

4. The district routinely obtains legal services to advise it about policy and reduce the risk of lawsuits. It also takes steps to ensure that its legal costs are reasonable.

a. The school board has an attorney (either in-house or on contract) with the primary responsibility of advising the school board, reviewing policy, and reducing the risk of lawsuits.

b. The district can demonstrate that the school board's agenda and meeting materials are provided to its legal counsel in a timely manner.

c. The district has procedures for the board or individual board members to confer with the board attorney.

d. The district has procedures for the superintendent or his designee to confer with the board attorney, and these procedures consider cost of providing attorney services and potential conflict-of-interest situations.

e. The district has procedures for other staff to access the attorney. These procedures consider the cost of providing these attorney services and potential conflict-of-interest situations.

f. The district retains outside counsel (counsel other than the board attorney) when appropriate. Appropriateness includes when particular areas of expertise are needed, cost, and potential conflicts of interest.

g. The district regularly reviews its legal costs (cost of the contract attorney or salary and benefits for in-house attorneys) to determine whether it would be more cost-effective to obtain in-house or contracted legal services for routine legal work.

h. The contract fees or salary the district pays its board attorney is comparable to those of similar districts.

i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

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Organization, Staffing and Resource Allocation

5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.

- a. The district has organizational charts that clearly and accurately depict its organizational structure.
- b. The district has clearly defined the responsibilities of each organizational unit and communicated these responsibilities to staff and the public.
- c. The district's organizational structure eliminates unnecessary overlapping functions and excessive administrative layers.
- d. The district's top administrators (directors and above) have reasonable spans of control.
- e. The district regularly (at least once every four years) reviews its business practices and organizational structure and presents the results in a written report to the board.
- f. The district makes changes to its organizational structure to streamline operations and improve operating efficiency.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.

- a. The district comprehensively reviews its administrative staffing levels to improve operating efficiency and presents the results in a written report to the board.²
- b. In conducting its review, the district obtains broad stakeholder input.
- c. As part of its review, at a minimum, the district assesses the reasonableness of its administrative staffing levels to those of comparable districts using appropriate measures that may include classroom teachers per administrator, instructional personnel per administrator, total staff per administrator, and total administrators per 1,000 students.
- d. The district implements changes to its administrative staffing levels when necessary to improve its operating efficiency.
- e. Administrative staffing is reasonable given the number of students served and services provided by the district.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.

- a. District school board members receive training and understand school district budgeting and finance.
- b. The proposed budget is presented to the board in an easy-to-read, understandable, and concise format that board members and the community can understand.
- c. The district provides the board with information about revenue and expenditures by major function over the past two to three fiscal years for use in evaluating budget proposals.
- d. The district has a procedure for informing, in a concise and easily understood format, the board about the short- and long-term fiscal implications of proposed budgets or budget amendments.

² The frequency of such a comprehensive review will vary based on several factors such as the size of the district, staff turnover, program organization and funding changes, etc. As a general rule of thumb larger districts should conduct a comprehensive staffing review every four to five years and smaller districts less frequently.

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- e. Changes or concerns in financial condition are reported to the board in a timely manner, and the board takes necessary corrective actions.
- f. The school board has established limits for how much various district staff can spend without approval and it reviews and approves all purchases that exceed these amounts.
- g. The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve management structures, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. The district has clearly assigned school principals the authority they need to effectively manage their schools while adhering to district-wide policies and procedures.

- a. The district can demonstrate that it has clearly communicated the authority it has assigned to school administrators; these administrators either know what is expected of them or where to find out.
- b. The district has given school administrators staffing and budget flexibility.
- c. The district has given school administrators sufficient authority over school operations to enable them to achieve school, district, and state education goals.
- d. The district has sufficient controls to ensure that school administrators adhere to district-wide policies and procedures.
- e. The district regularly assesses the authority it has assigned to school-based administrators and looks for ways to enhance school-based decision making.
- f. The district holds school administrators accountable for their performance in achieving school, district, and state educational goals.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Planning and Budgeting

9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.

- a. The school district maintains and publishes a clearly written, multi-year strategic plan to provide vision and direction for the district's effort. The plan addresses state and district education goals, including student performance goals.
- b. In developing the strategic plan the board
 - identifies and formally adopts a limited number of district priorities to guide the district's strategies and major financial and program decisions;
 - instructs district staff on how these priorities should be considered in making program and budget decisions.
- c. The strategic plan clearly delineates
 - the district's goals, and objectives and strategies for achieving them;
 - the priorities the board assigns to its goals, objectives, and strategies;
 - the strategies the district intends to employ to reach desired objectives;
 - the performance measures and standards the district will use to judge its progress toward meeting its goals; and
 - the entities responsible for implementing the strategies in the plan and the time frames for implementation.

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- d. The board annually assesses the progress the district has made toward achieving its objectives.
- e. The board annually reviews and, if necessary, amends its priorities and strategic plan to reflect changes in community standards, student needs, or board direction.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.

- a. The district strives to provide an accurate enrollment forecast and does not regularly overestimate or underestimate its enrollment.
- b. The district bases its enrollment projections on statistical enrollment techniques, such as a cohort survival methodology, that can detect turning points due to changing demographics.
- c. When making enrollment forecasts, the district considers additional factors such as planned enrollment changes in private schools, influences due to changes in employment opportunities, city/county comprehensive plans, and planned new development in the district.
- d. The district documents the methodologies and processes for key areas of its forecasting process.
- e. The district has a process for minimizing the adverse effect of projection errors.
- f. The district implements processes to ensure the accuracy of school FTE counts.
- g. Enrollment projections for individual schools consider the existing school populations, mobility, and housing starts within the areas served by each school. School-based administrators review the reasonableness of these projections.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its annual priorities in the strategic plan and its goals and objectives; and district resources are focused towards achieving those goals and objectives.

- a. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its priority goals and objectives, including those for student performance.
- b. The district can demonstrate that it assesses performance and adjusts its financial plans and budgets to improve its ability to meet its priority goals and objectives.
- c. District staff is aware of and direct their effort toward the achievement of the priority goals and objectives.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.

- a. If additional revenue is needed, the district considers pursuing various local options to increase revenues (e.g., half-cent sales tax, bonds underwritten by voted millage, property taxes).
- b. The district has taken actions to obtain private, state, and federal grants and other alternative funding.
- c. The district has taken advantage of opportunities to improve management structures, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Community Involvement

13. The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district's decision making and activities.

- a. Schools use every practical means of communication to provide timely information to parents/guardians such as: newsletters, flyers, websites, direct school-parent contact, etc.

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- b. The schools annually distribute information about school policies and programs in a clear and understandable format.
- c. District schools conduct annual parent/teacher conferences.
- d. The district has active Parent Teacher Associations/ Parent Faculty Organizations and other effective methods to involve and encourage parent leadership and participation.
- e. The district can demonstrate that parents on School Advisory Councils (SACs) are actively involved in making decisions regarding school improvement.
- f. The district can demonstrate that SAC members receive training on their responsibilities and in district finance and budgeting policy.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

14. The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district's decision making and activities.

- a. District schools have developed forums for regular communication with local business entities.
- b. District schools involve businesses in helping to fund educational programs, including applying for grants.
- c. Each school (or in smaller districts, district staff) has an individual who is responsible for coordinating and monitoring programs and projects with its business partners.
- d. Students, parents, teachers and administrators regularly participate in community service projects, including offering school resources when practical.
- e. District schools have active mentoring programs.
- f. The district actively engages the education committees of business and social organizations.
- g. The district can demonstrate that business partners on School Advisory Councils (SACs) are actively involved in making decisions regarding school improvement.
- h. The district maintains or coordinates with a foundation whose members reflect a wide variety of business interests.
- i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

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PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Best Practices and Indicators

Goals and Measurable Objectives

1. The district has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives that can be achieved within budget for each major educational and operational program. These major programs are

- **Basic Education (K-3, 4-8, 9-12), Exceptional Student Education, Vocational/Technical Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages Education, Facilities Construction, Facilities Maintenance, Transportation, Food Services, and Safety and Security.**¹

- a. The district can demonstrate that it has clearly stated goals and objectives for these programs.
- b. Program goals and objectives reflect the primary purposes of each program and are consistent with the district's strategic plan.
- c. For each program, the district has an accountability system for routinely measuring its progress towards meeting its goals and objectives.
- d. Program-level accountability systems include policy level outcomes the board and public can use to assess performance as well as lower-level interim outcome and process measures managers can use to monitor program progress.²
- e. Program-level accountability systems include linked input, output, process, interim outcome, and outcome measures.
- f. Program-level objectives are designed to be able to be achieved within existing resources.
- g. The district establishes performance standards indicating the progress it would like to achieve in meeting its objectives during the time frames covered by its budget or strategic plan.
- h. The district compares its performance to appropriate benchmarks, which may be its past performance or, when data is available, the performance of comparable districts, or industry standards.³
- i. The district regularly tracks and uses performance information to make management decisions. These could be decisions to maintain the status quo, make budget adjustments, adopt new strategies, streamline operations, outsource program services, or deprivatize already outsourced services.
- j. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

2. The district formally evaluates the performance and cost of its major educational and operational programs and uses evaluation results to improve program performance and cost-efficiency.

- a. The district periodically conducts evaluations of its educational and operational programs, functions, or activities using performance information and other reasonable criteria.⁴

¹ Each district should define those programs considered "major" within these two broad areas. At a minimum, they should include the programs listed. However, the district should have some defensible, logical criteria to identify major educational and operational programs. Criteria may include funding, number of children or full-time equivalents (FTEs) served, or state or federal requirements.

² The number of measures for each level should be limited to no more than 10 or 12.

³ "Benchmarking" is comparing the actual performance and cost of major programs and services to acceptable standards, including the performance of other organizations, to identify differences and opportunities for improvement. Benchmarks should include comparisons to other school districts, government agencies, and private industry that provide the same or similar services; include comparisons to best-in-class organizations (models), best practices, and generally accepted industry standards; clearly define acceptable performance targets/standards (in the top 10 school districts, in the middle of peer districts, within 10% of the industry average, etc.) to assess whether performance and cost expectations have been met; be easy to understand and make sense; show a clear relationship to critical outcomes; be based on reliable and comparable data; be used to identify reasons for differences in performance or costs and to make improvements; and be developed at the same time as goals and objectives and updated annually.

⁴ Formal program evaluation is more comprehensive and generally less frequent than assessments. Formal program evaluations focus on program results and effectiveness, are independently conducted, and examine broad issues such as program structure and administration and whether the program is meeting its intended purpose.

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- b. At a minimum, the district's evaluations examine whether the program or activity is meeting its goals and objectives in a cost-effective manner.
- c. The district issues evaluation reports that include findings and recommendations to improve the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the program or activity being evaluated.
- d. The findings and recommendations of the district's evaluation reports are clearly and directly stated, understandable, and do not require undue assistance to interpret their meaning or significance.
- e. The district provides evaluation reports to school board members and top-level administrators.
- f. The district can demonstrate specifically how it uses evaluation results to improve performance and cost-efficiency.
- g. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

3. The district clearly reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers.

- a. The district periodically reports its progress toward meeting the objectives of its major programs to the board and superintendent.
- b. The district reports its progress toward meeting the goals of its major educational programs and, if considered necessary, its other programs, to school advisory councils, parents, and other taxpayers in a manner that is clear and understandable and does not require undue assistance to interpret its meaning or significance.
- c. The district's progress reports include disaggregated student performance information for special groups of students (e.g., ESE, ESOL, or at-risk students).
- d. The district has established a mechanism to receive and respond to feedback from parents and other taxpayers as an avenue of accountability to improve poor performance and inefficiency.
- e. Other information that demonstrated the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

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EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

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Effective and Efficient Instructional Programs

1. District administrators use both academic and nonacademic data to guide them in their decision making about improving K-12 education programs.

- a. District students perform well on a variety of academic and nonacademic indicators, or student performance has substantially improved over the prior three years.
- b. District administrators compare student academic assessments to state accountability standards and peer districts.
- c. District administrators disaggregate student assessment data to evaluate and improve the performance of subgroups of students.¹
- d. District administrators disaggregate academic assessment data to evaluate and improve the performance of all schools.²
- e. District administrators use performance measures and benchmarks other than student assessment indicators to improve K-12 basic education programs.³
- f. The district has identified and implemented initiatives to address district-wide achievement gaps.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

2. The district provides effective and efficient Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs for students with disabilities and students who are gifted.⁴

- a. The district's procedures for identifying and assessing students, developing individualized education plans (IEPs), providing and coordinating services for ESE students, and transitioning students are consistent with state and federal laws.⁵
(Critical Indicator)
- b. The district places students with disabilities in the least restrictive learning environment as indicated by appropriate measures and benchmark comparisons with the state and peer districts.⁶
- c. The district ensures that its procedures do not disproportionately identify students with disabilities or students who are gifted based on their racial, ethnic, or minority status.

¹ Student subgroups include ESE students (gifted and students with disabilities as defined by 228.041(18) F.S.), at-risk students (ESOL, Title I, and other alternative education programs in the district), minority students, and students in advanced placement programs.

² District administrators evaluate the performance of all schools including low performing D and F schools, alternative schools, Title I schools, and charter schools. Districts also hold charter schools accountable based on the terms of their charter agreements.

³ Examples of such measures and benchmarks include student attendance, promotion rates, graduation rates, disciplinary statistics, SAT and ACT scores, and the percentage of 12th grade students taking the SAT or ACT.

⁴ Programs for students with disabilities are required by federal law to serve children aged 3 through 21.

⁵ Check DOE and federal monitoring reports.

⁶ Indicators could include percentage of ESE students placed full time in ESE classrooms compared to students who are included in regular education at least part of the school day and the percentage of ESE students who are fully included in regular education and perform well academically and socially.

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- d. The district's assessment and placement of ESE students is timely using appropriate standards, and at a minimum
 - the district generally completes ESE psychological assessments for students with disabilities within 60 days of referral;
 - the district has few pending referrals prior to FTE counts; and
 - the district has a small percentage of students who are not eligible for ESE services (<25%).
- e. The district maximizes Medicaid reimbursement by billing for all services for which it is cost-effective.
- f. The district has incorporated the state's performance standards for ESE students into the curriculum and ensures that ESE teachers provide appropriate instruction and any necessary accommodations.
- g. The district provides ESE and regular classroom teachers with adequate support and training to assist them in implementing strategies and accommodations to help ESE students become academically and socially successful.⁷
- h. The district maintains a focus on parental involvement for ESE students, including periodic parent training and soliciting formal feedback on parental satisfaction.
- i. District administrators evaluate the success of ESE instruction using student achievement and other appropriate measures and benchmarks and monitor services provided to students in non-public school settings.⁸
- j. ESE students progress well based on an assessment of relevant academic and non-academic indicators.
- k. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

3. The district provides effective and efficient programs to meet the needs of at-risk students [including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Title I, and alternative education].⁹

- a. The district's procedures for identifying students eligible for at-risk programs are consistent with applicable state and federal laws (ESOL, Title I, alternative education).¹⁰ (*Critical Indicator*)
- b. The district's plan for developing and implementing programs for at-risk students is supported by an analysis of student needs.
- c. The district ensures that teachers of at-risk students provide instruction designed to meet identified needs and periodically assess student progress towards meeting those needs.
- d. The district's process for identifying, placing, and removing students from at-risk programs is timely using appropriate indicators and at a minimum compares favorably to state averages and peer districts.
- e. The district provides teachers of at-risk students with adequate support and training to assist them to meet the needs of their students.
- f. The district ensures that teachers of at-risk students assist regular classroom teachers to develop and/or implement strategies for helping at-risk students become more successful academically and socially.

⁷ Indicators could include types of training offered, number of teachers participating in training, district policies for providing accommodations, and rates of disciplinary action for ESE students compared to peer districts.

⁸ Indicators of effectiveness could include trend data or peer district comparisons of graduation rates for ESE students with special and regular diplomas; academic assessments for non-exempted ESE students; percentage of ESE students exempted from academic assessments; and the number and outcome of due process hearings.

⁹ These are students who need academic and/or social skills interventions to assist them to perform to their capacity.

¹⁰ The ESOL program must also be consistent with the Multicultural Education Training and Advocacy (META) agreement.

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- g. The district maintains a focus on parental involvement for at-risk students, including periodic conferences, parent training and formal solicitation of satisfaction feedback.
- h. District administrators evaluate the success of at-risk instruction and programs using student achievement and other appropriate performance measures and benchmarks.¹¹
- i. Students enrolled in at-risk programs perform well on relevant academic and non-academic assessments.¹²
- j. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

4. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs (such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment).

- a. The district regularly assesses the academic needs of its students and provides an appropriate number and type of accelerated programs.¹³
- b. The district makes accelerated programs equally accessible to all students who meet established criteria for participation, regardless of racial, ethnic, or minority status.¹⁴
- c. The district uses state and federal resources in order to maximize the participation, effectiveness, and efficiency of accelerated programs.¹⁵
- d. The district ensures that all students are informed of accelerated program offerings and that schools provide academic advisement that is accurate and appropriate to meet students' individual needs and goals.
- e. District administrators evaluate the success of the instruction provided by its accelerated programs using student performance on relevant assessments (e.g., Advanced Placement examinations, International Baccalaureate examinations, Dual Enrollment course grades, and the Florida College Placement Test) and other appropriate measures and benchmarks.¹⁶
- f. Students enrolled in accelerated programs perform well on relevant assessments identified in "e." above.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

5. The district provides effective and efficient workforce development programs (such as vocational-technical, adult basic education, and adult high school programs).

- a. The district ensures that its workforce programs reflect community needs by obtaining input from business and industry, postsecondary education institutions, and labor organizations.
- b. The district coordinates its workforce services and program offerings with the regional Workforce Development Board.
- c. The district coordinates workforce services and program offerings between high schools, vocational-technical centers, and adult education centers to minimize duplication of services and increase access to services.

¹¹ Depending on the at-risk program, examples of indicators of effectiveness could include student academic assessments and progress, retention and graduation rates, time spent in program, and success (both academic and social) after completion of program.

¹² School districts could use standards such as peer averages, state averages, national data, and increases in performance over time to demonstrate student performance.

¹³ The number and proportion of accelerated course offerings and participation rates can be compared to peer districts. The state already pays for all tenth grade students to participate in the PSAT and PLAN examinations, which are designed to predict student success in college-level courses. The testing companies report individualized results to each school district.

¹⁴ For programs such as International Baccalaureate with limited availability, students are equitably selected from the applicant pool.

¹⁵ For example, Florida provides exam fee subsidies, professional development for teachers, and incentives for schools and teachers.

¹⁶ Evaluations can include comparisons with peer districts and state averages. Comparison data is available from the International Baccalaureate of North America, the College Board, and the Florida Department of Education.

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- d. The district ensures efficient use of resources by eliminating poorly performing programs and programs with low enrollments.
- e. District administrators evaluate the success of its workforce programs using student achievement and other appropriate performance measures and benchmarks such as
 - students attaining technical skill proficiencies;
 - students attaining a high school diploma or GED or a vocational certificate in conjunction with a diploma or GED;
 - student placement in, retention in, and completion of postsecondary education or advanced training, military service, or employment;
 - district’s level of state performance funding compared to peers; and,
 - number of occupational and literacy completion points earned per student enrollee by program.¹⁷

f. Students perform well on relevant academic indicators as identified in “e.” above.

g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. The district ensures that schools use effective planning and evaluation processes to improve student outcomes, including school improvement plans and other data driven processes such as the Sterling process.

- a. At a minimum, each of the district’s schools has a board approved school improvement plan (SIP). (*Critical Indicator*)
- b. The district has an intervention plan to assist schools not making adequate progress.
- c. The district provides assistance and training to school staff, school advisory council members, and other identified stakeholders in developing SIPs and other district-approved school improvement planning and evaluation processes.
- d. The district monitors each school’s implementation of its SIP and other district-approved school improvement planning and evaluation processes and provides constructive feedback and technical assistance where necessary.
- e. The district ensures that major school-level improvement planning processes are integrated to avoid duplication of effort and resources and minimizes paperwork requirements for teachers and administrators (examples: Title I plans, assistance plans, budgets, school improvement plans, technology plans, Sterling plans, etc.).
- f. Schools have developed clear, measurable objectives as part of their school improvement planning process.
- g. The district ensures that each school regularly collects and analyzes data for its instructional programs to evaluate progress on measurable objectives clearly stated in the SIP and any other approved school improvement planning process.
- h. District administrators evaluate the success of the district’s school-based planning and evaluation efforts by periodically compiling the results obtained by SIPs and other approved processes and incorporates these results the district’s decision-making process.
- i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹⁷ Evaluations should address different subgroups of students including students with disabilities.

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EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Best Practices and Indicators

7. The district ensures effective progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of the Sunshine State Standards and prepares students for work and continued education.

- a. The district’s curricular framework, including curriculum guides and instructional materials, align with Florida’s accountability standards and to the Sunshine State Standards. ¹⁸
(Critical Indicator)
- b. The district’s pupil progression plan is consistent with Florida law. ¹⁹ *(Critical Indicator)*
- c. Teachers regularly assess student progress towards meeting district expectations, develop academic improvement plans for students and provide intensive remedial instruction to maximize the student’s ability to progress to the next grade or level.
- d. The district encourages and facilitates the sharing of innovative and effective teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of students.
- e. The district ensures that teachers regularly inform parents of their student’s progress toward achieving district expectations in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. ²⁰
- f. The district ensures that students who do not meet established expectations for progressing to the next grade or level receive instructional strategies designed to meet students’ individual needs to maximize their ability to progress to the next grade or level. ²¹
- g. The district has effective strategies to facilitate the smooth transition of students from one school level to the next and encourages feeder-pattern schools to communicate any deficiencies and work together to address them.
- h. The district periodically assesses how well students’ progress from grade to grade or from one school level to the next (elementary to middle, middle to high, and high school to postsecondary) and uses this information to make improvements. ²²
- i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. The district’s organizational structure and staffing of educational programs minimizes administrative layers and processes.

- a. The district’s organizational structure of its educational programs, including the central office, has reasonable lines of authority and spans of control to meet the needs of district teachers and students.
- b. The district’s central office staffing for its educational programs is adequate to meet the needs of district teachers and students. ²³

¹⁸ Curriculum guides should clearly show strands, benchmarks, and specific teaching strategies and should include alignment with standards for ESE and “at risk” programs.

¹⁹ The plan should be consistent with s. 232.245, *F.S.*

²⁰ This does not refer to report cards but to other mechanisms designed to keep parents informed as to how well their children are progressing on state standards and district expectations for their grade levels. Progress should be based on class work, teacher observation, district and state assessments, and other relevant information.

²¹ Such assessments could include learning modality preferences and review and analysis of deficient areas to identify gaps.

²² Examples of indicators of successful progression include academic assessments including success rates of remedial instruction; percentage of students needing remediation at the next school level including at postsecondary institutions; and changes in retention and graduation rates.

²³ Central office staff can include administrators as well as curriculum specialists and support staff.

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- c. To ensure efficient use of resources, the district regularly compares central office staffing levels, including administrators and resource/curriculum specialists, to peer districts and/or state or national standards, and at a minimum the district compares favorably using these standards.²⁴
- d. The district ensures that the staffing of individual schools within the district is comparable and meets the needs of each school's student population.
- e. The district reviews and compares the staffing of schools to ensure that teacher/student ratios are reasonable and appropriate when compared to peer districts and state averages and considers the needs of students served by the district.
- f. To ensure adequate and efficient use of resources, the district regularly compares school-based staffing levels, including teacher/administrator and student/administrator ratios, to peer districts and state averages.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Effective and Efficient Instructional Support

9. The district ensures that students and teachers have sufficient current textbooks and other instructional materials available to support instruction in core subjects and to meet the needs of teachers and students.

- a. The district purchases instructional materials in accordance with state law.²⁵ (*Critical Indicator*)
- b. All students have access to current state-adopted textbooks and/or other appropriate current instructional materials in core courses.
- c. The district has clearly defined the flexibility that schools have to make decisions regarding instructional materials.
- d. The district's process for reviewing and selecting instructional materials involves input from teachers and other appropriate stakeholders.
- e. The district formally obtains feedback from teachers and principals as to the usefulness of instructional materials in the classroom and uses this information when selecting future materials.
- f. The district maintains and disposes instructional materials in a cost-effective manner, as prescribed by Florida Statutes, and explores all reasonable alternatives before disposing of textbooks.²⁶
- g. The district maximizes the collection of money due to lost or damaged instructional materials and uses the money to offset the costs of new instructional materials.²⁷
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

²⁴ Comparisons would include classroom teachers per central office administrator for discrete programs such as ESE, ESOL, and Title I as well as other district programs designed to meet the academic and social needs of its students.

²⁵ Purchases must meet the requirements of ss. 233.22, 223.34, and 233.43, *F.S.*

²⁶ Refer to applicable sections of Ch. 233, *F.S.*, particularly s. 233.37, *F.S.*

²⁷ Refer to applicable sections of Ch. 233, *F.S.*, particularly ss. 233.37, 233.43, and 233.46, *F.S.* The district's accounting process should segregate the proceeds from these activities to clearly show that these proceeds are used in instructional materials appropriations.

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10. The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction.

- a. The district ensures that school library/media center resources are sufficient to support instruction as evidenced by
 - up-to-date materials and equipment;
 - sufficient, appropriate materials and equipment for students; and,
 - teacher and principal satisfaction with available resources.
- b. The district has and regularly uses procedures to reduce library and media costs, such as coordinating orders to take advantage of bulk rate discounts.
- c. To the extent possible, the district's library and media services are automated.
- d. School libraries and media centers maintain hours of operation that meet the needs of students.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. The district utilizes instructional technology in the classroom to enhance curriculum and improve student achievement.

- a. The district provides schools with recommended lists of instructional courseware that align with the Sunshine State Standards and district grade level benchmarks.
- b. The district provides opportunities for students to utilize technologies in order to benefit by graduating with skills needed for post-secondary education and employment in the 21st century.
- c. The district ensures that all students are encouraged to use technology in school and are required to use computers and current, appropriate software in completing assignments as part of the regular curriculum
- d. Students at all schools are regularly given time to work on computers, and students without computer access at home are able to access computers through school.
- e. The district formally obtains feedback from teachers and principals as to the usefulness of instructional technology in the classroom and uses this information when selecting future materials.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

12. The district provides necessary support services (guidance counseling, psychological, social work and health) to meet student needs and to ensure students are able to learn.

- a. The district's plan for providing student support services is supported by an analysis of student needs.
- b. The district regularly compares student support staffing levels and expenditures to comparable districts and/or state or national benchmarks to ensure efficient use of resources, and the district compares favorably using these benchmarks.
- c. The district regularly evaluates the effectiveness of its delivery of student support services and uses the results to make improvements.²⁸
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

²⁸ For example, the district periodically reviews backlogs of student waiting for services; seeks feedback from teachers, parents, and students on the quality and sufficiency of support services; and that support services staff spend the majority of their time on activities directly related to their support area.

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ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Best Practices and Indicators

Technology Planning

1. The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision making.

- a. The district has a board-approved technology plan that addresses both administrative and instructional technology. (*Basic Indicator*)
- b. The district annually conducts an assessment to identify district and school-level technology needs.
- c. The district has solicited and used broad stakeholder input in developing the technology plan.
- d. At a minimum, the district technology plan addresses the subjects below.
 - Individual school technology needs
 - Equitable resource allocation, anticipating growth and technology advances ¹
 - Funding for technology
 - Cost-effective acquisition
 - Professional development for technology users
 - Technical support needs of users
 - Infrastructure and network communication, including community access issues ²
 - Information management and delivery ³
- e. The district technology plan is compatible with state reporting requirements and aligned with federal initiatives.
- f. The objectives in the technology plan are measurable and reflect the desired outcomes for educational and operational programs. ⁴
- g. The district's annual budget provides funds for major technology initiatives as reflected in the plan.
- h. The district has taken advantage of opportunities to improve technology operations, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- i. The district has identified an individual(s) responsible for implementing and updating the technology plan.
- j. The district investigates grant opportunities for technology funding and stays current with state and federal funding initiatives. ⁵
- k. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹ Planning may include, for example, bandwidth needs and the rationale for these needs.

² Community access issues could include connectivity to community entities such as public libraries (connectivity can be through hardware, through the Internet, or both), and after-hours access to media centers by the public.

³ Data needs are well-defined and prioritized; delivery systems are designed to provide timely and accurate data.

⁴ For example, when establishing objectives related to incorporating instructional technology into the curriculum, the district should include outcomes based on the effect this technology is expected to have on student performance.

⁵ Federal funding includes programs such as E-rate, and the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund.

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Cost-Effective Technology Acquisition

2. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner that will best meet its instructional and administrative needs.⁶

- a. The district bases its technology acquisitions on identified needs and its technology plan.
- b. The district uses the results of research and evaluations of previous decisions to identify technology that will best meet instructional and administrative needs.
- c. The district has established standards for acquiring digital instructional materials, software, and hardware for administrative and instructional use.⁷
- d. The district provides opportunities for district and school personnel to preview, evaluate, and recommend acquisition of technology strategies, instructional materials, and software.
- e. The district coordinates with the schools and uses different purchasing strategies to lower costs of acquiring technology and instructional learning systems.⁸
- f. The district assists schools in negotiating purchase prices for technology acquisitions.
- g. The district considers future support, operating, maintenance, and disposal costs when it acquires technology.
- h. The district equitably distributes technology resources to schools within the district.
- i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Technology Professional Development

3. District and school-based staff receive professional development training for all technologies used in the district.

- a. The district verifies the availability of appropriate training before acquiring new equipment or software.
- b. The district provides appropriate professional development that is based on feedback from central office and school-based staff and is aligned with the district's strategic plan, technology plan, and the School Improvement Plans (SIPs).
- c. The district funds technology training.
- d. The district provides a variety of opportunities in terms of time, location, and delivery mode for educators and other district staff to obtain technology training.⁹
- e. The district has established performance criteria that include technology skills for both administrators and teachers.
- f. The district provides professional development on integrating technology into the curriculum.
(Basic Indicator)
- g. The district provides appropriate professional development to administrators and non-instructional staff.¹⁰
(Basic Indicator)

⁶ Instructional needs include incorporating technology into the curriculum and needs of students learning how to use technology.

⁷ Standards for instructional materials should take into account the Sunshine State Standards, and any other state instructional materials adoption standards.

⁸ Examples of such strategies are negotiating district-wide pricing on instructional learning systems as well as software, hardware, and coordinating orders to take advantage of bulk rate discounts.

⁹ These opportunities may include traditional classroom and computer lab instruction, as well as web-based instruction, electronic bulletin boards, videotapes, and other self directed, technology-based methods.

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- h. The district provides specialized training for technology support personnel.
- i. District and school staff receives training to keep technology skills up-to-date.
- j. The district has a process to assess the effectiveness of professional development training provided to ensure competency in the skills targeted.¹¹
- k. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Technical Support

4. The district provides timely and cost-effective technical support that enables educators and district staff to successfully implement technology in the workplace.

- a. The district conducts a comprehensive assessment of the technical support needs of the schools and district offices.
- b. The district budgets for all costs associated with the installation and support of its technology.
- c. The district provides comprehensive technical support to the schools and district offices.¹² (*Basic Indicator*)
- d. Technical support responsibilities are appropriately assigned to specific personnel at both the district and the school level.
- e. The district has procedures for a regular, systematic, and equitable prioritization of technical support services.
- f. The district effectively coordinates the delivery of support services, analyzing the technical support provided, and shares the resolution of support issues among technical support staff.
- g. The district provides timely technical support in accordance with its service priorities.
- h. The district evaluates the quality and timeliness of the technical support provided.
- i. The district has an equipment replacement policy that specifies a time frame for technologies to be recycled or replaced to minimize the cost of supporting out-of-warranty computers.
- j. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Infrastructure and Network Communication

5. The district maintains a dependable, standards-based infrastructure employing strategies that cost-effectively maximize network and Internet access and performance.

- a. The district employs practices that provide a consistently available and fully operational network.
- b. The district has developed written speed and access standards for district network resources.
- c. The district has virus protection software and procedures in place.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹⁰ The type of professional development provided to this staff depends on their job duties and responsibilities. For example, data entry clerks at schools should be provided training on maintaining data integrity.

¹¹ Districts should strive to go beyond issues such as whether participants liked the professional development opportunity and focus on intended outcomes and skills to be mastered. Performance evaluations may be good indicators of improved skills as a result of professional development if there is something in the evaluation that addresses the issue.

¹² Providing technical support is accomplished in a variety of ways. For instance, it may include one or more of the following: providing a trained non-instructional technology support person or providing a technology facilitator in each school; training an individual with teaching duties as an application expert to assist their peers; managing a central help desk at the district; implementing a work-order tracking system; or contracting for regional or vendor support services. Areas of technical support may include email support, intranet/internet access, software application support, web development, or computer hardware installation and maintenance.

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6. The district uses technology to improve communication.

- a. The district uses web technologies, such as the Internet and intranet sites, and email to improve and enhance communication between groups such as schools, districts, the state, parents, and the community.
- b. The district administration uses email to supplement communications of policies and information to schools.
- c. The district uses email to circumvent costly meetings whenever feasible and to increase the frequency and speed of communications to parents and teachers.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. The district has written policies that apply safe, ethical, and appropriate use practices that comply with legal and professional standards.

- a. Staff, teachers, students, and parents are provided written and verbal guidelines describing the appropriate and inappropriate uses of technology, such as school computers, the Internet, copiers, facsimile machines, and TV/VCRs.
- b. The district has implemented policies and procedures to prevent access to inappropriate Internet sites.
- c. The district provides staff, teachers, students, and parents with written and verbal guidelines describing legal uses of digital materials, both instructional and non-instructional.¹³
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Information Management and Delivery

8. The district has established general controls in the areas of access, systems development and maintenance, documentation, operations, and physical security to promote the proper functioning of the information systems department.

- a. The district has written procedures and a standards manual.¹⁴
- b. The district has had an EDP audit within the last three years with no outstanding findings of material weaknesses.
- c. Appropriate segregation of duties based on district size exists within the data processing function.¹⁵
- d. The district protects systems from unauthorized users by using room locks, passwords, firewalls, and other needed means as conditions warrant.
- e. Controls exist to limit access to and prevent release of confidential and sensitive data.
- f. The district ensures that independent databases are effectively managed to provide reliable and accurate data and ensure efficient operations.¹⁶
- g. If a school district engages a service organization to process transactions on its behalf, the district has executed appropriate agreements with the providers and appropriate control procedures have been established.¹⁷

¹³ Guidelines may address copyright issues and legal responsibilities.

¹⁴ This manual should include procedures as they relate to systems operations, systems development and maintenance standards, documentation standards, operations policies, and access security policies.

¹⁵ In smaller districts and minicomputer installations with limited opportunities for segregation of duties, compensating controls exist such as managerial or user review of work performed.

¹⁶ Independent databases refer to systems that are not directly managed by the district. For example, districts may have contracts with vendors providing food service or transportation management that includes the operation of independent databases.

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h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

9. The information needs of administrative and instructional personnel are met by applying appropriate project management techniques to define, schedule, track and evaluate purchasing, developing, and the timing of delivering IT products and services requested.

a. The district analyzes alternatives to identify the most cost-effective method of delivering IT products and services.¹⁸

b. The district can demonstrate that its information systems deliver IT products and services in a timely manner.

c. The district has a way to gauge user satisfaction with the delivery of IT products and services.

d. Users are satisfied with the information they receive from the IT department.

e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹⁷ A school district that engages a service organization to process transactions on its behalf should assure itself that proper controls are followed. There are many ways school districts can do this. One tool available is to require the service organization to provide a report on its internal controls pursuant to *Statements on Auditing Standards* Number 70. Such a report should address whether the service organization has suitable controls to achieve the desired objectives and whether they were in operation as of a specific date.

¹⁸ Information products and services may include modifying existing programs, adding data elements to centralized computer systems, developing applications, writing interfaces, installing, configuring, and testing new technology, etc.

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Human Resource Management

1. The district efficiently and effectively recruits and hires qualified instructional and non-instructional personnel.

- a. The district
 - can demonstrate that it verifies the qualifications of all of its instructional employees, and that all instructional employees are qualified for the positions that they hold;
 - by policy conducts its employment procedures in a manner that assures equal opportunity regardless of age, race, color, religion, sex, and national origin; and
 - completes at least preliminary background checks of all new employees prior to placing the employee in a position that involves contact with students. (*Basic Indicator*)
- b. The district maintains up-to-date, clear, concise, and readily accessible position descriptions that accurately identify the duties of each position and the education, experience, knowledge, skills, and competency levels required for each class of positions, and for each district-level administrative position.
- c. The district's recruiting practices generate a sufficient number of qualified applicants to fill vacant positions in a timely manner. Factors that should be considered in reviewing the district's recruiting practices include those below:
 - Are job vacancy announcements clear and readily accessible to potential employees?
 - Do out-of-state recruiting trips achieve measurable results over time that justify the costs of those trips?
 - Has the district developed/used other recruiting practices, such as job fairs, college partnerships, or local training programs?
- d. The district uses a variety of methods, including the Internet, to increase the accessibility of information on job vacancies, the ease with which potential applicants can submit applications, and the efficiency with which applications can be processed and shared within the district.
- e. In those areas in which the district experiences a shortage of qualified applicants, the district has developed and implemented short- and/or long-term strategies to remedy the situation. ¹
- f. If the district is not generating enough qualified recruits to fill its vacancies, then the district has compared its entry-level salaries and other recruitment factors with neighboring or competing districts to determine what steps are necessary to better compete for qualified applicants. Those steps have been identified, reported to the board, and addressed by the board to the extent feasible.
- g. The district can demonstrate that district employees generally reflect the population of the district, OR, if certain minorities are underrepresented, the district has implemented a long-term plan to remedy that situation.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹ One strategy for meeting shortages in instructional areas is the use of out-of-field teachers. The district should be taking steps as required by law to minimize the use of out-of-field teachers, such as providing training to help those teachers become in-field.

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- 2. To the extent possible given factors outside the district's control, the district works to maintain a reasonably stable work force and a satisfying work environment by addressing factors that contribute to increased turnover or low employee morale.²**
- a. The district can demonstrate through climate surveys, exit interview results, collective bargaining negotiations and/or other appropriate methods, that it has created a working environment for its employees that enhances worker satisfaction, and minimizes employee turnover. At a minimum
- unless the results of surveys conducted by the employee unions are available to the district, the district should conduct climate surveys that measure employee satisfaction on such factors as work environment, quality of supervision, safety, district-wide support, and opportunities for professional development; and
 - the district should conduct exit interviews with employees who terminate employment, and compile the results of these interviews.
- b. The district maintains historical data on turnover rates for major classes of employees and monitors this data to identify unusual variations in the turnover rate. In lieu of historical data from the district, current turnover data from peer districts can be used.
- c. Districts monitor data related to portions of the workforce approaching retirement, with attempts to forecast any large numbers of retirements that are likely to create a need for an abnormally high number of qualified applicants in any given year.
- d. The administration and board have been informed of the results of efforts to evaluate the working environment of the district. Based upon analyses of the working environment, the district has taken steps to identify and remedy factors that adversely affect this working environment. These steps may include
- comparison of salary and benefit packages with peer districts and with other public and private employers in the area;
 - internal equity studies (comparisons of pay grades and responsibilities for major classes of positions within the district);
 - linking pay increases to performance, including student achievement;
 - incentive pay policies to encourage and reward effective teachers, critical shortage teachers, and teachers in hard to place schools; or
 - basing the selection of personnel for positions that receive supplemental pay on performance criteria.
- e. The district maintains clear and effective channels of communication with its employees, including
- providing readily accessible copies of a useful employee handbook, the collective bargaining agreement, and information on district personnel policies and benefit packages;
 - communicating district news and changes in policy to all employees; and
 - opportunities for employee feedback on district policies and practices that affect their areas of work or expertise, including employee membership on policy committees, and/or the solicitation of employee input on district policies and programs.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

² A reasonably stable work force is characterized by a turnover rate that is low enough so that vacancies can be filled in a timely manner without requiring extraordinary recruitment efforts. This includes both a focus on the district as a whole as well as individual schools and departments. Evidence of an unstable work force could include situations in which school sites or a support departments have been beset by an extremely high turnover rate so that programs and activities have been disrupted, discontinued or have decreased value.

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3. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program to improve student achievement and to achieve and maintain high levels of productivity and employee performance among non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees.³

- a. The district
- conducts orientation programs for all new employees, and includes information on district procedures, performance expectations and evaluations, training and career opportunities, and personnel policies regarding such issues as absences, leave approval and tardiness;
 - has a professional development system that meets the requirements of Florida law, including approval by the state Department of Education; and⁴
 - has a district-wide training program and maintains training records on each staff member. (*Basic Indicator*)
-
- b. In the process of providing professional development for all employees, the district conducts needs assessments that include input from employees and their supervisors at least every other year. Included within these assessments is input related to the new employee orientation programs.⁵ Professional development for instructional personnel should be planned and implemented based on an analysis of student needs.
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- c. The district establishes and maintains formal staff development plans to ensure that all employees receive needed training.⁶ Individual professional development plans that meet the requirements of Florida law are maintained for instructional personnel.⁷
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- d. As required by law, the inservice activities for instructional personnel primarily focus on
- subject content,
 - teaching methods,
 - technology,
 - assessment and data analysis,
 - classroom management, and
 - school safety.⁸
-
- e. The district solicits employee feedback on in-service training activities, especially high-cost or recurring training efforts. This feedback is used to evaluate the quality of the training; the performance of the trainers; the extent to which training efforts have met identified long-term training objectives; and the relative benefits produced by the training in view of the costs of the training.⁹
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³ In some districts, the staff development programs and issues related to non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees may vary widely. In such cases, it is acceptable to separate this best practice into two or three separate best practices, and to deal with these employee groups separately.

⁴ See s. 231.600(4), *F.S.* If a district has a DOE-approved professional development system, then the focus of this best practice review will be upon verifying that the district has implemented and continues to implement the system as approved.

⁵ Other tools that can be used for planning include an analysis of the aggregated results of employee evaluations, and, for instructional training, an analysis of disaggregated student data pertaining to goals for student learning and development.

⁶ The responsibility for the delivery and coordination of training for classes of employees may be delegated to other units within the district (i.e., transportation employees may be trained by the district's transportation unit).

⁷ See s. 231.600(5), *F.S.*

⁸ See s. 231.600(4), *F.S.*

⁹ This best practice does **not** suggest that employee feedback has to be collected on **every** individual training event, as that has the prospect of producing lots of paper that never gets used or reviewed. However, the district should use a strategy for collecting and analyzing employee feedback data, and using that data to improve the training program.

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- f. Individual departments are aware of their training responsibilities and have access to budgeted funds in order to meet those responsibilities.¹⁰ The district has policies and/or procedures to guide the use of district funds for high cost training activities such as conference attendance, consultant trainers, or the purchase of video training or other training packages.
- g. The district has mentoring programs for new non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees. Mentors receive training at least bi-annually. Mentoring programs should be relationship-based with minimal paperwork requirements. For new teachers, the district has a comprehensive induction program that provides
- opportunities to learn the additional skills necessary to be successful in specific school environments; and
 - a mentoring component for new teachers.
- h. The district provides information and administrative support to encourage instructional personnel to pursue certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, in accordance with the provisions of Florida law.¹¹
- i. All principals, assistant principals, and school site administrators have completed (or anticipate completing within the current school year) the district leadership training program for administrators and school-based managers.
- j. Considering the size of the district and the projected need for new school administrators over the next three to five years, the district has developed a pool of potential administrators who are receiving training prior to their selection to become administrators.
- k. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

4. The district's system for formally evaluating employees improves and rewards excellent performance and productivity, and identifies and addresses performance that does not meet the district's expectations for the employee.

- a. The district
- has established and implemented procedures for assessing the performance of all instructional personnel as required by Florida law, and these procedures have been approved by the Department of Education;¹²
 - provides written information regarding the performance assessment process to all personnel at the beginning of a rating period, including performance criteria that will be used in the assessment and the process that will be used to make the assessment;
 - has performance criteria including measures and standards related to student outcomes for instructional personnel, as required by Florida law; and¹³
 - provides employees with a written employee disciplinary procedure that includes provisions of due process. (*Basic Indicator*)
- b. The evaluation of instructional employees includes an appraisal of the employee's content knowledge in the area of instruction. The evaluation of performance may include input from peers and subordinates, from parents and from other classes of employee. Master teachers who have received training for this purpose may be used to assist in the evaluations of new teachers.

¹⁰ The policies and procedures do not have to be identical for all departments. Approval for training costs can be assigned to department or school site administrators so long as the district has policies that set parameters for those approvals.

¹¹ See s. 236.08106, *F.S.*

¹² See s. 231.29, *F.S.*

¹³ See s. 231.29, *F.S.*

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- c. The district verifies that all instructional employees receive performance evaluations at least once a year as required by law, and all non-instructional employees receive performance evaluations as required by district policy.
- d. The evaluation process is structured in such a way that employees are clearly informed when their performance does not meet the district's expectations. When an employee's performance does not meet expectations, the supervisor provides the employee with written notice as to when performance will be reevaluated, and a copy of this notice is provided to the district.
- e. The evaluation of school administrators is made after considering feedback solicited and received from non-administrative personnel and from parents.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

5. The district ensures that employees who repeatedly fail to meet the district's performance expectations, or whose behavior or job performance is potentially harmful to students, are promptly removed from contact with students, and that the appropriate steps are taken to terminate the person's employment.¹⁴

- a. The district regularly provides training, guidance, and coaching to managers on the procedures and issues associated with working with poorly performing employees.
- b. The district has established procedures and criteria to identify the employee behaviors and performance problems that are potentially harmful to students.

¹⁴Evidence of a problem in this best practice area could include one or more of the following examples

- the forced reinstatements of employees who had been dismissed;
- large monetary settlements to employees who had been dismissed;
- public forum, survey or focus group results that suggest that poor performing employees are transferred from site to site rather than being dismissed; or
- incidents occur that are adverse to students involving employees who had previously been identified by the district as poor-performers or as potentially harmful to students.

Evidence that a district is performing this best practice should include

- general consensus from the public forum, survey, and/or focus groups that behavior and performance problems are dealt with effectively by the district;
- if there are cases or incidents as those described above, the district should be able to explain how such cases or incidents were exceptional and should not repeatedly occur within the district; and
- on the indicators listed under this best practice, it is more important that the district provide examples of the application of these procedures than that it provide evidence that a particular procedure is written down some place.

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- c. The district has established and implemented policies regarding the drug testing of employees and who are impaired by alcohol or drug abuse, in accordance with Florida and federal law.¹⁵ The established policy includes the confidential random testing of new employees and of employees after specified accidents or incidents. The policy provides for termination of persons who test positive for drug or alcohol use under the provisions of federal law.
- d. The district conducts an employee assistance program for staff to receive assistance with any admitted substance abuse issues or any impairment resulting from alcohol or drug abuse, as required by Florida law. While staff receive counseling or other treatment, the district ensures they are suspended from bus driving or other safety-sensitive functions.
- e. District managers¹⁶
- follow district procedures and state requirements for working with employees with unsatisfactory performance in such a way that performance is improved or employment is terminated; and
 - monitor the progress and performance of students who are under the instruction of a teacher who has been evaluated as performing unsatisfactorily.
- f. At least one official at the district level is charged with the responsibility of working with principals and other administrators to appropriately document poor performance and to provide administrative and legal consultation to the principals and other administrators in making and implementing decisions to terminate employees.
- g. The district provides for
- the prompt investigation and resolution of allegations of behavior by district employees that is potentially harmful to students and
 - the expeditious removal from contact with students those employees whose behavior, attitude, or performance may be harmful to students.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. The district has efficient and cost-effective system for managing absenteeism and the use of substitute teachers and other substitute personnel.

- a. The district monitors rates of absenteeism and the use of substitutes among teachers and other essential employees. The district has defined the rate of absenteeism that requires district review, and has developed policies/practices to deal effectively with the problems created by excessive absenteeism.
- b. The district recruits and maintains a sufficient number of substitute teachers to cover most absenteeism peaks. The district has clearly defined procedures for teachers and essential non-instructional personnel to notify the appropriate school or district officials of an anticipated absence and for substitutes to be contacted.
- c. The district provides ongoing training and orientation for substitute teachers.
- d. The district routinely provides special assistance (training and oversight) to those who must substitute for extended teacher absences.

¹⁵ See ss. 112.0455 and 231.263, *F.S.* While the policy should be enforced for all employees, the analyst should pay special attention to the enforcement of the policy with regard to full and part time bus drivers.

¹⁶ The team is looking for evidence that these types of activities are occurring when the described situations occur. The existence of a written procedure is not sufficient evidence by itself. The attendance of managers at training courses on how to deal with poorly performing employees is a positive indicator, with some qualitative support from focus groups, surveys, and forums that affirms that these practices are routinely followed within the district.

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- e. The district has implemented ways to decrease absenteeism, which may include an incentive program to reward good attendance.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. The district maintains personnel records in an efficient and readily accessible manner.

- a. The district maintains personnel records, including confidential records, in accordance with the *Florida Statutes* and regulations.¹⁷
(Basic Indicator)
- b. The district uses automated record-keeping systems and minimizes the use of antiquated or time-consuming hardcopy record systems. The district has an efficient and effective record keeping system for both automated and hardcopy personnel records, including a system for the identifying and archiving of old records.
- c. The district has established procedures to allow officials at school sites to access automated personnel records. School administrators can amend personnel records without compromising the security of those records, thus diminishing the need for the transfer of paper from the school to the district office.
- d. The district can demonstrate that it updates personnel records in a timely manner, and, when dealing with a filing backlog, files hardcopy records in a prioritized fashion so that needed records can be found in the file.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. The district uses cost-containment practices for its Workers' Compensation Program.

- a. The district reviews its Workers' Compensation Program to evaluate workers' compensation claims and expenses. Included in this evaluation, at a minimum, are an examination of claims trends and a comparison with state and national statistics, peer and area school districts, and as appropriate for some positions, other government agencies and private industry.¹⁸
- b. The district uses the results of these evaluations to be proactive in attempts to cost effectively reduce frequency and cost of Workers' Compensation claims.¹⁹
- c. The district has procedures that are distributed to all employees concerning prompt reporting of all on-the-job injuries.
- d. The district has a safety inspection program that determines the corrective actions necessary based upon past workers' compensation claim experience and proactive inspection of known and probable high-risk areas and professions.

¹⁷ See s.231.291, *F.S.*

¹⁸ The frequency of this review of claims and expenses will vary based upon the size of the district and the value of the review findings.

¹⁹ For example, the district may have implemented changes within the district to reduce the potential for similar accidents or it may have identified trends in the claims that can be addressed through training or changes in the employment criteria.

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- e. The district practices strong cost-containment measures to limit the amount needed to be placed annually into the workers compensation reserve fund. These cost containment measures include
- a light duty program to get injured employees back to work as soon as possible;
 - routine, cost-efficient monitoring and follow-up of claims (usually by a third party administrator) to ensure that workers are returned to work as soon as possible;²⁰
 - a training and safety program to reduce the likelihood of on-the-job accidents; and
 - a claims review function to identify and address situations, unsafe conditions, or training deficiencies that may have contributed to worker injuries or accidents.

f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

9. The district uses cost-containment practices for its employee benefits programs, including health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, and retirement.

a. The district reviews its employee benefits prior to each new contract with employee unions to ensure that the district is attaining appropriate value for its benefit costs.

b. The district works cooperatively with employee unions to evaluate alternative delivery options for its employee benefits in order to contain costs, such as

- self-insurance;
- alternative approaches to benefit programs, such as cafeteria plans;
- variable family benefit choices;
- HMO and preferred provider plans;
- variations in the levels of deductibles and co-payments;
- the relative level of benefits provided to part time and full-time employees.

c. The district calculates the anticipated short term and long term fiscal impact of changes to its benefit packages prior to agreeing to those changes in negotiations with the employee unions.

d. The school board is informed as to the short term and long term fiscal impact of changes to its benefit packages prior to approval of employee contracts.

e. When considering early retirement offerings, the district calculates both the short term and long term fiscal impact of such proposals, including the effect on employee benefits and the effect on employee recruitment, before offering the options.

f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The district's human resource program is managed effectively and efficiently.

a. The district has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for the human resource program that reflect the intent (purpose) and expected outcomes of the program and address the major aspects of the program's expenditures.

b. The district conducts formal and/or informal reviews of the human resource program's organizational structure and staffing levels to minimize administrative layers and processes. The results of formal reviews are provided in writing to the school board.²¹

²⁰ A monitoring program should produce results that justify its costs either in terms of deterrent effect or in actual cost recovery.

²¹ The frequency and formality of these reviews will vary depending upon the size of the district.

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- c. The district's human resource program staffing levels are reasonable, based on applicable comparisons and/or benchmarks, and that each position performs work that adds value to the district. Furthermore, the district can demonstrate that each administrative position has supervisory or management responsibilities that justify classification as an administrative position.
- d. The district has considered the advantages, disadvantages, potential costs and potential cost savings of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering human resource services and benefits through increased use of automation and technology and the use of outsourcing.²²
- e. The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve personnel management, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. For classes of employees that are unionized, the district maintains an effective collective bargaining process.

- a. The district clearly designates which staff member(s) is (are) responsible for labor relations and contract negotiations, and these staff members receive annual training to enhance knowledge of the negotiations process, issues, and legislative mandates.
- b. The district has clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of the negotiator, the superintendent and school board members during the negotiation process. The process includes steps to establish district priorities for the negotiation process while maintaining confidentiality.
- c. School and unit administrators are asked to identify potential issues of concern that could be raised in the collective bargaining process. District negotiators determine the costs or potential cost savings associated with these issues, and then meet with district level administrators to determine the feasibility of addressing the concerns raised and whether the district wishes to include these issues in the district's proposal(s) to the union(s).
- d. Upon receipt of union proposals other than salary, district officials determine the estimated costs, and the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal.
- e. The administrative negotiating team(s) has access to an attorney trained in collective bargaining law and procedure.
- f. Records of negotiations are updated and maintained for at least five years or some other time prescribed by the district.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

²² For example, in order to handle requests for personnel assistance from administrators and employees more efficiently at the district level, the district has evaluated and implemented, when warranted, the use of automated systems as a means of more efficiently receiving and/or answering these requests and other inquiries.
Making wholesale changes without determining the advantages, disadvantages, and costs is not a good practice.

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Construction Planning¹

1. The district has effective long-range planning processes.²

- a. The district has established a facilities planning committee that includes a broad base of school district personnel, parents, construction professionals, and other community stakeholders. The board specifies the role and responsibility of the committee, provides a forum for the committee to offer the board recommendations, and establishes the committee's goal and interim reporting targets.
- b. The district has established authority and assigned responsibilities for facilities planning.
 - The district uses accurate and relevant planning information through professionals knowledgeable in facilities planning, design, and construction.
 - The district addresses the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of alternative program solutions.
 - The district evaluates existing facilities support of current and planned programs and activities.
 - The district has an opportunity to reassess goals and objectives and to plan further programs and activities.
 - The district reassesses the educational program and identified future needs.
- c. The district estimates facilities and site needs based upon demographic projections that are regularly updated.³
- d. The district prepares a comprehensive Five-Year Educational Plant Survey in accordance with Florida law.
- e. The district uses FISH data in conjunction with recent student occupancy surveys to ensure that the district is making optimal use of building capacity.⁴
- f. The district routinely assesses facilities for physical condition, educational suitability, and technology readiness. A uniform checklist was used to provide evaluation criteria related to
 - site size and layout;
 - space (size, number, utility, and flexibility of various areas in the facility and the relationships of these areas to each other);
 - light, heat, and air;
 - acoustics;
 - aesthetics;
 - equipment;
 - availability of utilities;
 - hazardous materials;
 - maintenance;
 - structural adequacy;
 - adaptability to change; and

¹ Senate Bill 1906, passed during the 2002 Legislative Session, changes intergovernmental coordination and planning and requires district participation in the region's comprehensive planning process. It combines the Educational Plant Survey and the Five-Year Educational Facilities Work Plan into a comprehensive planning document; The Educational Facilities Plan. Staggered submission of interlocal agreements, which will include the new Educational Facilities Plan, will begin March 1, 2003 and conclude December 1, 2004. The implementation of the new law will have an impact on the structure of the BFMP reviews.

² Long-range covers 5-20 years out.

³ The district's enrollment projections are based on student data provided by the Florida Department of Education and factors such as land use, geographical limitations and developable land, local ordinances that regulate the rate of growth of the area, forecasts of economic conditions reported by the private sector, vocational opportunities in the community, availability of community services, major highway and street networks and their probable future development.

⁴ FISH data should be updated on a monthly basis and when new facilities come on-line or old facilities are phased out.

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- fire safety; and/or other health, sanitation, safety issues and future operational and maintenance costs.

g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

2. When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.

- a. The district evaluates, in writing, alternatives to new construction that could reduce the demand for new construction.^{5,6}
- b. New school facilities are planned to accommodate expansion through relocatables or permanent facilities when changes in demographics or rapid growth can be anticipated.
- c. The school district has considered joint-use agreements that share the construction, operation, and maintenance costs of a multi-use complex with a local municipal or county government, further reducing the construction costs of its schools.
- d. When appropriate, the school district considers building regional multi-use complexes to be shared by middle and high schools.
- e. The five-year facilities plan allows for construction only when needs cannot be met through other means.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

3. The five-year facilities work plan establishes budgetary plans and priorities.

- a. The five-year facilities work plan identifies sources of funds and accurately itemizes the costs of facility needs such as site purchase, new construction, remodeling, renovation, the long-term use of relocatables, site improvement, and deferred maintenance.
- b. District effectively prioritizes construction needs to meet highest needs first.
- Projects including instructional capacity are given higher priorities than administrative or support projects.⁷
 - Construction and renovation priorities are established to ensure equitable treatment of all areas within the district.
- c. The established budget incorporates inflation factors that may affect future construction costs.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

4. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.

- a. The school board holds regular hearings at which information regarding the construction program is provided.
- b. The school board provides a clear explanation of each construction project in a format that allows for public response.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

5. The district has an effective site selection process based on expected growth patterns.

- a. The district begins school siting decisions well in advance of future need based on expected demographic changes.

⁵ This compares the advantages and disadvantages of each of the alternatives including long- and short-term cost implications.

⁶ Possible alternatives include, but are not limited to, year-round education, extended day schools, block scheduling, changes in grade level configuration, changes in zoning, use of relocatable facilities (portables).

⁷ Under extraordinary circumstances the district may be able to justify giving administrative or support needs higher priority, but this should be carefully reviewed.

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- b. The facilities planning committee, or a similar committee, reviews areas for potential sites and provides input regarding site acquisitions.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. The board considers the most economical and practical sites for current and anticipated needs, including such factors as need to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to development, and consideration of agreements with adjoining counties.

- a. The district has established appropriate site selection criteria that incorporate:
 - the requirements of sections 235.054, 235.19, and 235.193, *F.S.*, and Section 1.4(2), State Requirements for Educational Facilities (SREF) and follow basic acquisition procedures and ⁸
 - safety, location, environment, soil characteristics, topography, size and shape, accessibility, site preparation, public services, utilities, costs, availability, political implications (zoning, environmental impact report requirements, joint use, etc.), transportation of students, and integration.
- b. The district determines the most economical and practical locations for sites based on its established criteria and its ranking of potential sites. ⁹
- c. The district properly anticipates and evaluates obstacles to development. ¹⁰
- d. When appropriate, the board considers condemnation to acquire selected sites.
- e. Prices paid for sites reflect fair market value based on independent appraisals that were obtained as specified in Florida law. ¹¹
- f. The district has an effective mechanism/process to reconcile differences in appraisals.
- g. Sites selected meet the previously established selection criteria.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.

- a. The district can demonstrate that if local bond referendum proceeds were used, the scope of each project was spelled out in the bond resolution.
- b. The district can demonstrate that if local sales-surtax revenue was used to finance any project, the scope of that project was spelled out in sales-surtax referendum resolution advertisement.
- c. The district has evaluated in writing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative methods for funding and financing construction projects when developing its capital-planning budget.
- d. In order to increase construction funding, the district first maximizes the use of local revenue alternatives.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. The district approves and uses construction funds only after determining that the project(s) are cost-efficient and in compliance with the lawfully designated purpose of the funds and the district's five-year facilities work plan.

- a. Approved uses of construction funds have been determined by the district's finance director to be in

⁸ This could include receiving recommendations from site-election specialists or real estate/ development professionals, planning acquisition prior to the projected need, Reviewing potential sites and recommend sites to the Board in priority order.

⁹ This is based upon full development costs.

¹⁰ This could include transportation plans, zoning, environmental concerns, and neighborhood concerns for each site considered.

¹¹ See s. 235.054, *F.S.*

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compliance with the lawfully designated purpose of the funds ^{12, 13, 14} (*Basic Indicator*)

- b. The district submits all reports required to assure construction funding to the Department of Education. ¹⁵
- c. The district does not use funds from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund or the School District and Community College District Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund for any new construction of educational plant space with a total cost per student station, including change orders, that exceeds the amounts specified in Florida law. ^{16, 17}
- d. The district uses the school tax defined in Florida law, as two-mill money for construction, renovation, and other authorized purposes. ¹⁸
- e. The school board uses state funds in a timely manner.
- f. All available capital resources are applied towards the five-year facilities work plan and limited use capital funds are not diverted to other lower priority allowable uses. ^{19, 20}
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

9. The district develops thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each construction project. ²¹

- a. The educational specifications effectively address educational program components. ²²
- b. Program goals, objectives and activities, and teaching strategies and instructional methods have been defined based on staff input.
- c. The needs and design implications of advanced technology such as computers, integrated networks, and satellite transmissions and reception have been identified.
- d. New facilities are designed to be adaptable to changes and innovations in education and flexible enough to accommodate a variety of program uses. Interior spaces are simple with inherent versatility. ²³
- e. The specifications effectively address spatial relationships. ²⁴

¹² See s. 236.25, *F.S.*

¹³ Approved by the district school board.

¹⁴ This includes renovation, remodeling, or upgrading.

¹⁵ Required reports include Survey for Validation (s. 235.15, *F.S.*); Project Implementation Information for projects over \$200,000 (SREF 4.1 (97)); (s. 235.26(c), *F.S.*); Project Priority List for use of CO&DS bond funds (section 9(d), Article XII, state constitution); Twelve-month PECO Capital Outlay Projection and Request for Project Encumbrance Authorization (s. 235.14, *F.S.*); and Florida Inventory of School Houses Update (s. 235.014, *F.S.*). Optional reports include Letter of Transmittal, Facility Space Chart, and Life Cycle Cost Analysis for projects with department plan review assistance (SREF and s. 235.26, *F.S.*); Capital Outlay Bond Issue Form for participation in CO&DS bond sale.

¹⁶ If the district applies for a waiver they fail to meet the best practice.

¹⁷ See s. 235.435(6)(b)1., *F.S.*

¹⁸ See s. 236.25(2), *F.S.*

¹⁹ The board has deleted items from the list of previous year expenditures that do not relate to facilities improvements.

²⁰ The district facilities director provides the board and the public a full accounting of the use of all capital funds.

²¹ This includes such descriptions as a rationale for the project; a determination of the size of the facility and that it meets the space requirements of current *Laws of Florida*; a determination of the grade level the facility will serve; a determination of whether the new facility will serve all parts of the district on an open enrollment basis or will be a "magnet" school or a special school; a map has been prepared that shows the location of the planned facility within the community and the proposed attendance area of the school; construction budget that meets the state averages or requirements of current *Laws of Florida*, relative to cost per student station; the source of funding for the project; planning and construction time line; durability and maintenance costs; an estimate plan for the time of construction; the date of completion and opening.

²² Such as the curriculum, instructional methods, staffing, and support services; also included is a statement of the school's philosophy and program objectives.

²³ This includes variable group size, individualized instruction, team teaching, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, interdisciplinary teaching, use of computers, year-round education, and before- and after-school use.

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- f. Educational specifications comply with the “small schools” requirement.²⁵
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.

- a. The district submits the educational specification and communicates all program requirements to the architect before the commencement of written specifications and schematic drawings.
- b. The planning leader, the users of the facility and the architect and engineers have matched the written specifications and schematics against the educational specifications. The planning leader, design professionals and principal verify in writing that the final plans represent the district’s needs.²⁶
- c. The district communicates its findings and recommendations for every step of the design process to the school board.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.

- a. Appropriate safety features are incorporated into the design of all new construction.²⁷
- b. Whenever facilities are renovated, safety needs are assessed and safety designs are revised or added to the facility.²⁸
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

12. The district minimizes construction and maintenance and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs, prototype school designs, and frugal construction practices.

- a. When selecting designs for new construction the district evaluates and compares the costs of construction for various designs using school prototypes, energy conservation, life cycle costing, and operation of the facility.²⁹ (*Basic indicator*)
- b. The district has a written policy that encourages the design team to comply with the district’s SMART school design philosophy and develop practical design solutions that are functional and cost-effective and when possible the district selects construction designs that will earn SIT awards for frugal construction practices.
- c. The district uses the results of the life cycle cost analyses to design, construct, select equipment for, and furnish new facilities to minimize maintenance and operations costs.
- d. Consideration has been given to maximizing passive design and “green architecture” concepts and techniques such as building orientation, shading walls and fenestration, using light colors on exterior walls and roofs, etc. to take advantage of, or minimize the negative impact of, the prevailing environmental influences.
- e. The district regularly assesses and revises facility designs and construction practices to ensure it minimizes maintenance and operations costs based on appropriate standards from comparable school districts, government agencies, and private industry.

²⁴ This includes consideration given to the location and size of the various spaces within and surrounding a facility, the association of those spaces and the ability of individuals to interact between and within the spaces.

²⁵ Schools must be built or operated in accordance with the “small schools” requirement. Refer to s. 235.2157, *F.S.*

²⁶ The users include teachers, students, parents, site administrators, maintenance, safety, and district administrators.

²⁷ Features include limited access entrances, sufficient entrances and exits, signs, and front desks having views of the entrance.

²⁸ These needs and designs include lighting, break-proof doors, security systems, fencing, and window or door bars. Essentially, is safety reviewed and addressed as part of the renovation process?

²⁹ See s. 235.0155, *F.S.*

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- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

13. The district has effective management processes for construction projects.

- a. The school district has a written evaluation of the potential costs and benefits of privatizing part or all of the construction program.
- b. The district has considered alternative delivery methods including but not limited to design/build and turnkey.
- c. The district has assigned one person with the authority and responsibility to keep facilities construction projects within budget and on schedule.
- The district has determined the credentials and construction-related experience required of the manager for each project.
 - Each project manager reports directly to the individual responsible for implementing the five-year facilities work plan.
 - The project manager is held accountable for keeping facilities construction projects within budget and on time.
- d. The school board establishes a "not-to-exceed" cost.³⁰
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

14. District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.

- a. The tasks for achievement of all phases of each project have been incorporated and timed to coordinate with the opening of schools. When time frames are not met, the district revises them accordingly and identifies why they were not met, with updates provided to the board and public.³¹
- b. The plan contains an accountability component that provides assurance to the board and to the public that the projects addressed in the plan will be implemented at the proposed budget levels within the time frame outlined.³²
- c. The board receives budget updates at the completion of each phase of design.³³
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

15. All projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the *Florida Building Code*.

- a. The appropriate district personnel can demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the *Florida Building Code*.³⁴
- b. The district has procedures in place to ensure that all projects with dates of construction contracted after March 1, 2002, comply with the permitting and inspection requirements of the *Florida Building Code*.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

³⁰ The total project amount, including change orders, for each new project prior to the beginning of the initial planning phase is limited and cost-per-student station contract amount for each new project prior to the beginning of the initial planning phase is limited.

³¹ This includes site purchases, board actions, procurement cycles, interface with local and state entities, contingencies for weather delays, etc., and the district has met its planned time frames.

³² The board has delegated adequate decision-making authority and holds the long-range plan manager accountable to resolve issues in a timely manner and keep the master plan on time and within budget.

³³ There are quarterly reporting systems required that contain status, schedule, task/time assessments, budget update, program update, potential problems, and critical issues.

³⁴ This means that the appropriate personnel have received training in the Florida Building Code or can justify not needing training.

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16. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.

- a. The district requires inspection by competent building code professionals that complies with Ch. 235, *F.S.*, and the requirements of the *Florida Building Code*.³⁵
- b. A final inspection is conducted and a certificate of occupancy is issued before buildings are occupied.
- c. If the facility does not pass inspection, the district can document the reasons for failure and the corrective steps taken.
- d. The district files the appropriate documentation with the Department of Education and updates its FISH data.³⁶
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

17. The district retains appropriate professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.

- a. The district uses a selection committee to find appropriate professionals for each construction project who are familiar with architecture, design and construction, and engineering.
- b. The district can demonstrate that professionals were selected early in the planning process, in compliance with ss. 287.055 and 235.211, *F.S.*, and that the committee screened written applications in order to select an appropriate number of professionals to interview and that the selected candidates were interviewed. (*Basic Indicator*)
- c. The district considers alternative project delivery methods including but not limited to design/build and turnkey and bases the selection of the appropriate professional on the type of project management selected.
- d. Interviewers consider experience; adequacy of technical and support personnel and availability of particular individuals for the type of project management selected; the proximity of the candidate's office to the district; thoroughness; creativity within the context of sound construction practices and wise expenditures of public funds; adequacy of project supervision; sound business procedures and record keeping on the job; financial responsibility; suitability of size and type of organization; methods of operation; willingness of the candidate to make changes in plans at various points in the process; ability and inclination of the candidate to protect the district's interests in his or her dealings with the contractor; minority business enterprise status; and references contacted when selecting project professionals.
- e. The district can demonstrate that finalists were evaluated based on interviews; visits to examples of their work; interviews with previous clients; examination of typical documents such as plans, specifications, and change orders; and visits to the architects' offices.
- f. The district can demonstrate that the contracts with professionals include all of the district's requirements; meet the requirements of current law; and clearly state the amounts and methods of compensation; and that compensation does not encourage overbuilt or extravagant project costs.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

18. The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.

- a. For each new project started in the past three years, the board considered using alternative bidding and construction systems.³⁷

³⁵ This includes new construction, renovation, remodeling, or alteration projects, for installation of relocatables, and for day labor projects.

³⁶ Documentation includes a certificate of occupancy.

³⁷ This includes cost, long-term quality of construction, and management implications of using a construction system such as design/build, construction manager, or construction manager at-risk versus the traditional construction system prior to selecting the type of contracting and construction system to use.

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- b. The board uses generally accepted bidding procedures including:
 - bids opened at the exact time advertised and inspected to confirm that all required documents are in order;³⁸
 - after bids are opened, they are submitted to the board for awarding of the contract;
 - when contracts were negotiated, all provisions of law were met;
 - legal counsel reviewed contract documents;
 - contracts are awarded to the lowest responsible bidder whose bid met the specifications or to the construction manager or design build contractor selected pursuant to s. 287.055, *F.S.*
- c. Each contract is signed by the appropriate district official and that each contractor awarded a contract has submitted the following:
 - a signed owner-contractor agreement;
 - a workers' compensation insurance certificate, a payment bond; and
 - a performance bond, a guarantee of completion within the time required or other requirements as needed.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

19. The district minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to control project costs.

- a. The districts uses contracting methods that minimize change orders and all changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated require board approval.
- b. The district can document the reason for any change orders and the person responsible for making them.
- c. Change orders implemented do not result in the project exceeding budget, do not compromise educational specifications, do not exceed industry standards, and do not extend the completion date beyond the date projected, unless unforeseen circumstances occur.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

20. The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project.

- a. The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work correctly completed and in conformance with the contract documents.
- b. Payments are made to contractors on the basis of requests for payment reviewed by the architect.
- c. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending final completion of the project to cover non-conforming work that must be corrected prior to occupancy.
- d. The district has a system of internal controls to ensure that timely payments are made only after the architect's approval of the work completed, and with the concurrence of the district's project manager in charge of the project.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

21. The district conducts a comprehensive orientation to the new facility prior to its use so that users better understand the building design and function.

- a. The district provides a customized orientation program for maintenance personnel and school staff.³⁹

³⁸ Documents include signed bid form, with dollar amount; bid bond; designation of sub-contractors; a non-collusion affidavit; and certificates regarding worker's compensation and liability insurance.

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- b. The architect, the facilities planner, the contractor, and/or the educational administrator share the responsibility for the orientation program.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

22. The district conducts comprehensive building evaluations at the end of the first year of operation and regularly during the next three to five years to collect information about building operation and performance.

- a. A comprehensive evaluation that assesses facility use and operating costs, as well as building operation and performance, is conducted by the end of the first year of occupancy.⁴⁰
- b. Additional evaluations are performed at appropriate intervals during the first three to five years of operation.
- c. Results of evaluations are used to compare the product with educational specifications to see whether the district received the product it said it wanted, and whether the district still needs the product it built.
- d. Evaluations are used to make changes, if necessary, to the district's construction planning process for facilities to be built in the future.
- e. The district can identify improvements made to its construction planning process based on its analysis of maintenance and operations costs.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

23. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.

- a. The district has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for the program that reflect the intent (purpose) of the program and address the major aspects of the program's purpose and expenditures.
- b. The district uses appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks, including comparisons to adjoining districts, to evaluate the program and uses these in management decision-making.
- c. The district has established and implemented strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data.
- d. The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve construction operations management, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

24. The district regularly evaluates facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.

- a. The district assesses its facilities construction operations as a whole at least annually using performance data and its established benchmarks.
- b. The district reports its progress towards meeting its goals, objectives and benchmarks to the board and the public on an annual basis.
- c. The district has established and implemented strategies based on the outcomes of these recommendations.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

³⁹ The orientation program should include clear and understandable users' manuals designed for the appropriate staff. The program may also need to be customized to the particular type of user (i.e., maintenance staff or teacher).

⁴⁰ The evaluation should include educational adequacy, function, safety, efficiency, and improvements for future facilities.

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Program Direction and Accountability

- 1. The district's maintenance and operations department has a mission statement and goals and objectives that are established in writing.**
 - a. The maintenance department has approved a mission statement that clearly defines the purpose and expected outcomes of the department.¹
 - b. The maintenance and operations department has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for each program that reflect the expected outcomes of the program and address the major aspects of the program's purpose and expenditures.
 - c. Goals and objectives include written comprehensive projections of the following needs:
 - manpower;
 - budget;
 - equipment; and
 - physical condition and repair/replacement needs of district facilities including, but not limited to, paint, roofs, HVAC equipment (tracking age and repair history), grounds (including paving), electrical service, and plumbing.
 - d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?
- 2. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance and efficiency of the maintenance and operations program.**
 - a. The maintenance and operations department uses appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks to evaluate each program and uses these in management decision making.
 - b. The maintenance and operations department has established and implemented strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data.
 - c. The maintenance and operations department regularly evaluates the performance of all maintenance and operations work and can demonstrate that adjustments are made to maximize performance and efficiency.²
 - d. The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve maintenance operations management, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
 - e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?
- 3. The district obtains and uses customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements.**
 - a. Customer feedback is used to conduct a self-analysis to improve the performance and productivity of the maintenance department.³
 - b. Customers are surveyed at least annually using a written instrument to determine strengths and weaknesses of the maintenance department service and to identify major maintenance needs.
 - c. Customer survey results are shared with customers and staff.
 - d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹ The mission statement identifies the priority customer as the school centers, employee input was used in the development of the mission statement, and the mission statement is posted and shared with the public and all employees of the department.

² Adjustments include, but are not limited to, reassignment of personnel, reallocation of resources, and implementation of new procedures.

³ The self-analysis includes, but is not limited to, the efficient assignment of work orders and scheduling, and the efficient and effective completion of work assignments.

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4. The district has established procedures and staff performance standards to ensure efficient operations.

- a. The maintenance department has and follows written procedures that, at a minimum, provide for
 - replacement and selection of equipment;
 - purchase of equipment, supplies and materials;
 - maintenance and operations budget criteria;
 - facilities standards;
 - personnel staffing and hiring policies; and
 - use of facilities and equipment.
- b. Written operational procedures for the maintenance and custodial services departments are up to date and accessible to school personnel and the public. ⁴
- c. The maintenance and operations department has written performance standards for staff that are communicated to employees and are made readily available to other interested parties. ⁵
 - Performance standards for commonly repeated tasks have been established by the district on the basis of internal review or available benchmarks of industry practices and are used for assigning work and conducting performance appraisals. ⁶
- d. The school district performance standards ensure that all schools are maintained equitably.
- e. The district has a process for communicating failures to meet departmental and staff performance standards and can track responses to those failures.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

5. The department maintains educational and district support facilities in a condition that enhances student learning and facilitates employee productivity.

- a. District educational facilities are effectively maintained and provide an appropriate teaching environment.
- b. District educational facilities are effectively maintained and provide an environment conducive to student learning.
- c. District support facilities are effectively maintained and provide appropriate working conditions for district employees.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Organizational Structure and Staffing

6. The district regularly reviews the organizational structure of the maintenance and operations program to minimize administrative layers and assure adequate supervision and staffing levels.

- a. The maintenance and operations department is administered in accordance with a published organizational chart that has been approved by the school board.

⁴ Files and records of procedures and practices are maintained and readily available for review by the public, district, and department staff. Procedures are updated on a regular schedule and employees are included in the process. The district has a written standard for cleanliness that is included in the custodial service standards.

⁵ Standards may be based upon industry benchmarks, comparisons with other districts, or internal reviews. All standards, however, must set performance goals.

⁶ Internally developed standards must include clear performance goals but may cover a variety of standards such as time open for a work order or drive time.

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- The district provides appropriate supervision of maintenance and operations staff.
- Levels of authority and responsibility have been assigned to each position.
- Supervisor/employee ratios have been established and are based on appropriate standards or benchmarks.

- b. The maintenance and operations department regularly reviews the program's organizational structure and staffing levels and makes appropriate staffing adjustments based on these reviews.⁷
- The district has appropriate staffing levels based on applicable comparisons and/or benchmarks such as the number of custodial staff in relation to the size of the facilities and other relevant factors.
 - Staffing projections reflect the activities proposed in the five-year facilities work plan.
 - Staffing formulas provide for additional staff as new facilities are brought on-line and as existing facilities become older and require more maintenance and provide for deleting staff and closing facilities whenever indicated.
 - The district reports organizational staffing review findings in writing and distributes these findings to school board members and the public.

- c. The program structure includes reasonable lines of authority and spans of control given the responsibilities of each organizational unit.⁸

- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. Complete job descriptions and appropriate hiring and retention practices ensure that the maintenance and operations department has qualified staff.

- a. Job descriptions have been developed, properly reflect the needs of the department, and are reviewed and updated periodically to address changing requirements and actual practices.
- Appropriate personnel participate in the writing and review of job descriptions.
 - Job descriptions are readily available for applicants and staff to review.

- b. Procedures are established for attracting qualified applicants based on district size, location, and needs.

- c. Job vacancy notices adequately describe job responsibilities; job qualifications; educational/professional requirements; application and selection criteria; and salary and benefits.

- d. Personnel procedures ensure that adequate personal and professional references are obtained and contacted.

- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. The district provides a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff to enhance worker job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.

- a. The district ensures that maintenance and custodial standards are regularly updated to implement new

⁷ In conducting this review, the district uses feedback from staff and the public. The review includes a comparison of the program's (or schools') staffing levels to programs in comparable districts using appropriate measures, which might include age of and distance between facilities.

⁸ Reasonable lines of authority and spans of control should be in comparison to industry standards.

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technology and procedures.

- b. The district provides professional development and training programs based on district size and capabilities, identified needs, and the relevant trades. Annual planned training programs are implemented for appropriate trades personnel, support and supervisory personnel, and administrators.
- Written training goals and expected outcomes are established in the areas of safety, trades enhancement, cross trades utilization, interpersonal team skills, district policy awareness, and department procedures.⁹
 - The maintenance and operations director works closely with the curriculum development department to ensure a planned, sequential program for personnel skills development.
 - The programs include technical training as well as personnel interaction strategies. Training is individualized when possible to fit skills/trades/group needs and to assist employees in meeting work standards.
 - Instructors used for staff training are from appropriate trade/instructional areas. Outside professional trainers are used when possible.¹⁰
 - Training programs provide an opportunity for staff feedback and evaluation.
 - Where possible, there is a defined apprenticeship program.
- c. Participation in state and national organizations is supported in order to remain current with maintenance issues, new technology, equipment, materials, and procedures.
- d. The maintenance and operations department subscribes to various trade publications and the publications are available to employees.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Resource Allocation and Utilization

9. The administration has developed an annual budget with spending limits that comply with the lawful funding for each category of facilities maintenance and operations.

- a. The budget does not rely on or permit unlawful use of taxpayer dollars.¹¹ (*Basic Indicator*)
- b. The annual budget addresses long-term goals for maintaining and operating district facilities.
- c. The annual budget addresses ongoing and recurring maintenance tasks in order to avoid high repair or replacement costs in future years.
- d. Funds have been reasonably allocated to address deferred maintenance needs and these funds are used for their intended purpose.
- e. The budget process provides for routine evaluation of actual versus planned expenditures.
- f. The budgets for physical plant maintenance and custodial services are developed using appropriate professional standards.¹²
- g. Allocations are included for the correction of deficiencies identified in the district's annual Safety, Casualty and Fire Safety Inspection report and the district can demonstrate that the monies are used as intended.

⁹ This may be prohibited by union contracts.

¹⁰ This may include manufacturer's training representatives, technical experts, or Department of Education facilities support personnel.

¹¹ See ss. 235.186, 235.211, 235.435, and 236.25, *F.S.*, for requirements regarding maintenance funding.

¹² The goal is to have a budget based on a clear, rational basis such as comparisons with similar districts and historical data. The goal should not simply be a function of what the last budget allocated.

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- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The district accurately projects cost estimates of major maintenance projects.

- a. Cost estimates are based on the district's experience with prior similar projects, current estimating cost standards, and market conditions.
- b. The cost of inflation for maintenance projects is projected for five years.
- c. The district regularly evaluates projected cost estimates for accuracy and utilizes this information to improve future estimates.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. The board maintains a maintenance reserve fund to handle one-time expenditures necessary to support maintenance and operations.

- a. The district and maintenance department do not use the reserve fund for recurring expenses.
(Basic Indicator)
- b. The budgetary policy is flexible enough to ensure funding of unforeseen maintenance needs that could adversely affect the district's mission if not funded (e.g., emergency funds).
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

12. The district minimizes equipment costs through purchasing practices.

- a. The district regularly conducts cost comparisons to determine whether purchasing practices have minimized costs.
- b. Volume purchases are made whenever cost-effective.
- c. The maintenance and operations department considers equipment operating and maintenance costs when buying new equipment.
- d. Refurbishing or repairing is considered along with new purchases and the most cost-effective method is selected.
- e. Inflationary costs for equipment are provided for a five-year period.
- f. Replacement projections have been developed for plant and maintenance equipment.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

13. The district provides maintenance and operations department staff the tools and equipment required to accomplish their assigned tasks.

- a. The maintenance and operations department personnel are provided with the tools necessary to accomplish assigned duties.
- b. Seldom needed tools and equipment are readily available through other sources.
- c. A procedure exists for maintenance and operations staff to acquire parts, materials, and equipment that are not stocked on maintenance vehicles.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

14. The district uses proactive maintenance practices to reduce maintenance costs.

- a. The maintenance and operations department evaluates the cost to maintain specific facility designs and implements strategies to reduce labor and long-term maintenance costs.
- b. A preventative maintenance program has been implemented to reduce long-term maintenance costs and service outages.

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- c. The administration has a process in place to ensure that policies and procedures are followed for disposal of surplus furniture and equipment.¹³
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

15. The maintenance and operations department identifies and implements strategies to contain energy costs.

- a. The district collaborates with its utility providers, government agencies, uses available local industry experts and/or other organizations to identify energy efficiency benchmarks and implement actions to increase cost-efficiency.
- b. The district has a written energy management plan.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

16. The district has an energy management system in place, and the system is maintained at original specifications for maximum effectiveness.

- a. The district has a written energy management plan in place.
- b. The maintenance and operations department regularly monitors energy management controls and generates routine reports to verify the energy management system is working.
- c. Plans have been developed to address corrective actions in facilities where the energy management system is less effective.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

17. District personnel regularly review maintenance and operation's costs and services and evaluate the potential for outside contracting and privatization.

- a. District personnel regularly evaluate existing services and activities to explore the feasibility of alternative methods of providing services, such as outside contracting and privatization.¹⁴
- b. District personnel regularly evaluate all contracted and/or privatized services to verify effectiveness and cost savings.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Information Management

18. A computerized control and tracking system is used to accurately track work orders and inventory.

- a. A work order tracking system is used to increase management capability.
- The computerized work order system includes control of inventory as well as tracking of parts, materials, equipment, and associated costs to individual work orders.
 - The inventory control system accounts for commonly used parts, materials, and equipment, including those carried on maintenance vehicles.
 - The inventory control system includes a procedure to automatically re-order supplies when they are depleted.
 - The system provides a mechanism to charge back work order expenses to the appropriate entity.
- b. The maintenance department analyzes information such as actual work hours (sometimes referred to as

¹³ This is equipment that is old, outdated, worn out, and/or otherwise unusable.

¹⁴ The maintenance and operations department should have written evaluations of the costs and benefits associated with alternative delivery methods.

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“wrench time”), hours scheduled versus hours worked, travel time, and total hours required to complete jobs.

- c. Work order reports are routinely produced and analyzed to improve performance.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

19. The maintenance and operations department has a system for prioritizing maintenance needs uniformly throughout the district.

- a. The maintenance and operations department places highest priority on responding to life, health, and safety issues.
- b. The maintenance and operations department prioritizes maintenance needs based on its prioritization guidelines and completes regular and emergency maintenance repairs accordingly.¹⁵
- c. The school district’s process of prioritizing maintenance is designed to address every school’s needs.
- d. District procedure determines when emergency maintenance is necessary and provides for effective emergency repairs.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

20. District policies and procedures clearly address the health and safety conditions of facilities.

- a. The district has established written health and safety standards.¹⁶ (*Basic Indicator*)
- b. Evaluations are made and documented for the condition of buildings and of each school.
- c. The district has a written plan for healthy indoor air quality that requires monitoring of indoor air quality as appropriate and includes corrective action plans for indoor air quality problems.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

21. The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health and safety conditions.

- a. Procedures comply with all relevant federal and state requirements.¹⁷
- b. The district participates in state and federal voluntary efforts regarding facility health and safety conditions and has documented resulting cost savings and/or avoidance.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

22. The district is aware of and prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code.

- a. Maintenance and operations staff received training regarding Florida Building Code and all other applicable state and local requirements.¹⁸
- b. The maintenance and operations department has procedures in place to ensure that all required permits are obtained prior to the start of a project.

¹⁵ Guidelines may consider the educational program needs, changing enrollment projections, and long-range facility planning to determine priorities of maintenance needs.

¹⁶ See also D.2.a.

¹⁷ Examples include EPA guidelines, Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s Hazardous Communication Standards, federal and state regulations hazardous materials plans, Asbestos Hazardous Emergency Response Act rules, other mandated environmental and safety issues (i.e., Refrigerant Use and Disposal, Florida Department of Labor and Employment regulations).

¹⁸ Training will probably be focused on explaining the new code requirements in terms of facility condition as well as inspections and permitting.

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- c. The maintenance department has reviewed the *Florida Building Code* and has developed a procedure to ensure that all necessary inspections will take place.¹⁹
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

¹⁹ The district has several options for completing inspections. Inspections can be done in-house, it can be contracted out to a consultant, it can be done through local municipalities, or through some other comparable method. The key is that the maintenance and operations department knows how it will ensure that all permitting and inspections are obtained.

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TRANSPORTATION

Best Practices and Indicators

Planning, Organization and Staffing

1. The district coordinates long-term planning and budgeting for student transportation within the context of district and community planning.

- a. Transportation staff conduct a systematic assessment of transportation needs to identify priorities and basic needs. The process includes consideration of all current and anticipated budget categories and potential areas of transportation cost savings such as reducing the number of courtesy riders service, reducing the number of spare buses, realigning routes, purchasing larger buses, etc. As part of the budget process, transportation administrators present cost-savings options to the school board and public.
- b. Transportation planning staff consult regularly with district planning staff to ensure that transportation needs, concerns, and costs are considered when planning for future schools or physical plant needs.¹
- c. Transportation planning staff consults regularly with community planners to identify areas in the district where community growth and development will have an impact on the need for student transportation services in the future.²
- d. Transportation planning staff consult regularly with district planning and budgeting staff to develop and present factual information for the school board and public on the student transportation cost implications of district educational program decisions, such as school choice and magnet schools, charter schools, opportunity scholarships, transportation to higher-performing schools, community busing, exceptional student education programs, and staggered school start times.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

2. The district provides regular, accurate, and timely counts to the Florida Department of Education of the number of students transported as part of the Florida Education Finance Program.

- a. The district was found to be in compliance with the requirements of the FEFP program, based on the results of the most recent Auditor General review
- b. If the Auditor General finds the district not to be in compliance, the district is taking identifiable steps to address recommendations in a timely manner.
- c. Transportation administrators regularly review the student count information to identify trends and issues that may require managerial or budgetary responses and that may result in cost savings within the present time frame or in the future.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

3. The transportation office plans, reviews, and establishes bus routes and stops to provide cost-efficient student transportation services for all students who qualify for transportation.³

¹ Considerations include county growth patterns, the length and time of current bus runs, existing district land holdings, and other information that is pertinent to transportation functions.

² Such consultations should include consideration of residential construction, roadway improvements, sidewalk construction, and other community developments that may have associated transportation needs.

³ Measures of cost-efficient student transportation services include reasonably high average bus occupancy and reasonably low cost per mile and cost per student.

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- a. Route planning staff annually uses a systematic approach to create and update bus routes (including computer routing if appropriate for the size and complexity of the district) and bus stops that are effective and cost-efficient without compromising safety.^{4,5} Existing bus routes and stops are reviewed on an annual basis for effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and safety.
- b. Route planning staff responds promptly to complaints or suggestions received from school site staff, parents, or the general public about current or proposed bus routes or a driver's performance on an official assignment.⁶
- c. Route planning staff (or their designees) regularly reviews areas within two miles of the school with the responsible local or state agency having road jurisdiction to identify and document where hazardous walking conditions exist. The district works cooperatively with the local or state agency whenever possible to eliminate hazardous walking conditions. Walking conditions that cannot be made safe are reported to the Department of Education and students are claimed for transportation funding under the provisions of law.
- d. The district's policy and practice is not to provide service to courtesy students.
- e. The school board has adopted staggered school start times to help ensure that the district's buses can serve as many students as possible (i.e., maximize the district's average bus occupancy). Alternatively, the district can demonstrate through a financial analysis that staggered school start times would not make student transportation more cost-efficient
- f. The district's routing practices result in reasonably high average bus occupancy, and low cost per mile and student, compared to districts with similar demographics and educational programs and exemplar districts.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

4. The organizational structure and staffing levels of the district's transportation program minimizes administrative layers and processes.

- a. The district periodically reviews the transportation program's organizational structure and staffing levels to ensure that administrative layers and processes are minimized. Input for the review includes staff feedback and structure/ staffing levels comparisons with selected peer districts.
- b. The district can demonstrate the program has an appropriate structure (including reasonable lines of authority and spans of control) and staffing levels based on applicable comparisons and/or benchmarks.
- c. The district reports organizational structure and administrative staffing review findings in writing and distributes these findings to school board members and the public.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

5. The district maintains an effective staffing level in the vehicle maintenance area and provides support for vehicle maintenance staff to develop its skills.

- a. District staff periodically evaluates the level of vehicle maintenance staffing and make adjustments as necessary to operate a cost-efficient operation.

⁴ Creation and updating effective and cost-efficient bus routes includes taking into account any special circumstances in the district such as school choice, magnet schools, and court-ordered busing as well as regular routing considerations such as distance between bus stops.

⁵ Staff will use the routes to create and maintain detailed schedules and maps/driving directions that are readily available for all bus routes. This information can be used to provide guidance to substitute drivers and others on route times, locations of bus stops, anticipated number of students at each bus stop, and special conditions such as road hazards.

⁶ Staff maintains records that show what action was taken in response to each complaint or suggestion including notification to the person making complaint/suggestion.

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- b. The district sends all vehicle maintenance staff to courses and training sessions to improve current skills, develop special expertise not currently represented in the vehicle maintenance shop, and become familiar with emerging technology and techniques.
- c. The district provides regular in-service training opportunities for vehicle maintenance staff to receive instruction on district maintenance policies and procedures, including topics of current interest and concern.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. The district effectively and efficiently recruits and retains the bus drivers and attendants it needs.

- a. The district notifies the public of job opportunities for bus drivers, substitute bus drivers, and bus attendants. The district uses a variety of approaches and activities to reach individuals likely to be interested in such employment options, and takes advantage of effective low-cost venues whenever possible.
- b. The district assesses its turnover rate for drivers and attendants and makes changes to practices as necessary to retain drivers and effectively recruit replacements.⁷
- c. Transportation staff collects information on wages and benefits offered by adjacent school districts and by local employers that are likely to be competing for the pool of applicants for positions as bus drivers, substitute bus drivers, and bus attendants in the district. Staff regularly use this information to compare the district's relative competitiveness for these positions when recruiting replacement drivers and attendants and setting salaries and benefits.
- d. The district provides bus drivers and attendants with incentives, financial or otherwise, for good performance as demonstrated by their safety records, timeliness, attendance, and ability to maintain discipline on the bus.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

7. The district trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers to enable them to meet bus-driving standards and maintain acceptable student discipline on the bus.

- a. Transportation staff provides or contracts for the initial training required for prospective bus drivers to receive a commercial driver's license.
- b. The transportation office provides periodic in-service training (including the required annual training) for bus drivers, substitute bus drivers, and bus attendants that includes topics needed to keep licenses current along with other district transportation needs and concerns.
- c. Training meets the concerns and needs expressed by drivers and attendants in periodic meetings with transportation management.⁸
- d. The transportation office provides regular direct oversight, at least annually, of basic bus handling skills, safe driving practices, and pupil management techniques of all school bus drivers.
- e. The district ensures that all bus drivers receive annual physical examinations as required by statute and maintains records of these examinations.⁹
- f. The school board has adopted and enforces a safe driver policy that establishes when or if school bus drivers with traffic violations charged against them are able to continue driving.¹⁰

⁷ District staff maintains information on the numbers of individuals who leave the district and why they leave their current job along with information maintained on those individuals who apply for and are hired as bus drivers, substitute bus drivers and bus attendants.

⁸ Such issues could include the condition of the school buses, quality of vehicle maintenance support, availability of spare buses, adequacy of route planning, school support for disciplinary referrals, and quality of intra-office communications.

⁹ See s. 316.615, *F.S.*

¹⁰ Enforcement includes review of the state traffic database by district staff on the schedule required in State Board of Education Rules.

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- g. The district has considered implementing a policy for recouping training costs for bus drivers who terminate their employment within one year from being hired.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance

8. The school district has a process to ensure that sufficient vehicles are acquired economically and will be available to meet the district's current and future transportation needs.

- a. The school board has adopted a policy addressing the cost-effective replacement of school buses and other district vehicles. The replacement policy should include criteria such as age of the vehicle, vehicle mileage, and maintenance costs vs. vehicle value. The school board periodically reviews this policy for any revisions that may be needed.
- b. District staff maintains records of district vehicle purchases over a multi-year period to document that the district's vehicle replacement standards are being met and that sufficient allowance has been made for both projected growth and accommodation of school board program decisions that have an impact on the need for district vehicles.
- c. District staff minimizes the number of spare vehicles but ensures that enough spare vehicles are available when needed to cover special situations that may reasonably be expected to occur.¹¹ Staff evaluates past situations when spare buses were needed but were not available and make adjustments as necessary.
- d. Transportation staff maintains regularly updated records on the numbers and types of vehicles in the district.¹²
- e. The district uses the Florida Department of Education's annual pool purchase agreements or Florida Department of Management Services annual vehicle purchasing contracts (as applicable) to minimize cost and maximize value unless the district is able to obtain equivalent vehicles at lesser costs.
- f. District staff receives and inspects new vehicles. New school buses are phased into service so that new buses are assigned to routes with the greatest need, while older buses are rotated to shorter or smaller routes, used as spare buses, or removed from service.
- g. The district regularly conducts and documents its reviews of costs related to older vehicles to determine whether they should be maintained in service or not.¹³
- h. When the district removes vehicles from service it recovers as much value as possible.¹⁴
- i. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

9. The district provides timely routine servicing for buses and other district vehicles, as well as prompt response for breakdowns and other unforeseen contingencies.

- a. The district provides required 20-day inspections for all buses used to transport students. The schedule is distributed to bus drivers and other staff, and timely reminders are issued to ensure that drivers remember to report to vehicle maintenance on their assigned days.¹⁵

¹¹ This includes situations when regular or exceptional student buses are temporarily out of service (such as for inspection and repairs) and when extra buses are needed for activity trips.

¹² These records can be used to identify information such as the numbers of regular buses in service, exceptional student buses in service, regular and exceptional student buses temporarily out of service, spare buses available for service, and buses permanently out of service but still owned by the district.

¹³ This review should include information on reliability, safety, salvage value, and the ability to get replacement parts.

¹⁴ This includes provisions for removal from the insurance list for the district and an analysis of options for disposal, including sale at auction or use for parts.

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- b. The transportation office ensures that all bus drivers inspect their buses prior to each bus run and maintain records of such inspections as required by State Board of Education Rules.¹⁶
- c. The district documents quality control reviews of the servicing and repair work done on vehicles.
- d. The district has a preventive maintenance program for vehicles to provide timely routine servicing that may be on a schedule that differs from calendar-based servicing (e.g., the 20-day bus inspection cycle) such as mileage-based servicing.
- e. District staff has established guidelines to assist in making cost-effective decisions about whether to make complex or expensive repairs on older vehicles.
- f. District staff ensures that all district vehicles are serviced in a timely and cost-effective manner. Charges/credit for services are made to the appropriate department(s).
- g. District staff maintains a vehicle maintenance management system to provide data on the maintenance costs, performance, and operations of school buses and other vehicles.¹⁷
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The district ensures that fuel purchases are cost-effective and that school buses and other vehicles are efficiently supplied with fuel.

- a. District departments cooperate with purchasing office staff to develop purchasing arrangements with vendors to ensure that the district receives the most favorable rates available.¹⁸
- b. District staff has established procedures to determine when orders to replenish the district's fueling stations should be placed.¹⁹ Also, if exceptions occur, staff should have a specific justification or otherwise analyze the circumstances to ensure that exceptions will not recur.
- c. The district has secure fueling stations for buses and other vehicles that are convenient and accessible. District staff periodically reviews whether there are enough locations and whether they are efficiently sited. If not, they make recommendations for change to district administrators.
- d. District staff has implemented controls over the fueling system to ensure its security and the accuracy of its records.²⁰ If the district does not use an automated fueling system, staff should be able to justify why that would not be cost-effective for the district.
- e. The district ensures that departments using the fueling stations are appropriately billed/credited.
- f. District staff cooperates with governmental environmental agencies charged with conducting environmental inspections of fueling stations. Staff maintains records of all such inspections, and if deficiencies are encountered, they take prompt action to correct them.

¹⁵ Bus files should include complete records of these inspections and all work done in connection with the inspections to establish that all buses meet state operating standards before they are returned to service.

¹⁶ They include provisions for student transportation safety or vehicle maintenance staff to review those records periodically, and for bus drivers to report immediately any deficiencies or irregularities to vehicle maintenance staff for corrective action.

¹⁷ The system should be useful for scheduling routine inspections and preventive maintenance, identifying information for all vehicles (including current operational status), itemizing costs associated with each vehicle (including labor, tires, other parts, outside repairs, and fuel and oil), calculating mileage and fuel usage, and determining life cycle costs for individual vehicles.

¹⁸ This effort may include the development of cooperative agreements with local governments about shared purchasing arrangements for fuel.

¹⁹ Staff should include the guiding principles of arranging fuel deliveries so that the fueling stations never run out, while still receiving the maximum bulk rate price whenever possible.

²⁰ Staff should include security of the fueling area, access that is restricted to authorized personnel, and routine monitoring of fueling releases and records to ensure that opportunities for waste or fraudulent use are minimized.

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g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. The district maintains facilities that are conveniently situated to provide sufficient and secure support for vehicle maintenance and other transportation functions.

- a. All district vehicle service centers have a shop layout that allows technicians to work most of the time in covered areas, and technicians have ready access to the specialized tools and support they need to do their job.²¹
- b. District staff has established procedures to control and minimize the generation of any hazardous wastes from district vehicle service centers, and any hazardous wastes that are generated are safely and securely stored in accordance with state and federal requirements.
- c. All district vehicle service centers include needed storage space for parts, tires, supplies, and related equipment, and access to them is controlled. All district vehicle service centers include areas for supporting functions such as computer data entry, paperwork processing, and records storage. All district vehicle service centers are securely fenced and lighted, and vehicle routing and parking options are clearly marked.²²
- d. The district ensures that district vehicles are securely parked when not in use.²³
- e. District staff periodically reviews the sufficiency and efficiency of transportation physical facilities and evaluate the feasibility and desirability of satellite vehicle servicing areas.²⁴
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

12. The district maintains an inventory of parts, supplies, and equipment needed to support transportation functions that balances the concerns of immediate need and inventory costs.

- a. The district maintains a "just in time" inventory of all parts and supplies to minimize the size and cost of inventory while providing needed support to district transportation functions.²⁵
- b. The district obtains on a continuing basis those parts, supplies, and services that are needed to support district transportation functions in a cost-effective manner.²⁶ Such items and services can be obtained using methods such as competitive bids, local pool purchases, pre-negotiated state contracts, and discounted blanket purchase orders.
- c. Transportation-related parts room staff review all parts, supplies, and services when they are received to ensure that the correct items were delivered, the billing price is correct, and services were satisfactory. All transportation-related parts and supplies are inventoried and tracked via a computer system.²⁷

²¹ Specialized tools and supports include vehicle lifts, tire work areas, paint and bodywork areas, parts storage areas, and computers.

²² The centers are safely and conveniently accessible by bus drivers, and staff parking is provided to prevent conflicts with buses arriving and departing or being parked for service.

²³ The district provides for circumstances under which drivers may park vehicles at their homes during the school year, as well as arrangements for secure bus parking areas during the summer or other long periods when vehicles are not in regular use.

²⁴ Such a review should include an assessment of vehicle service areas, storage needs, bus and other vehicle parking, and facilities required to provide training, operations, and administrative support. When deficiencies or needs are identified, staff make appropriate recommendations to district administrators.

²⁵ Inventory procedures should include provisions for identifying high-turnover, critical-need, and other priority items, as well as items that can and cannot be obtained quickly from suppliers, old items that can be phased out, and seasonal items.

²⁶ Staff should include provisions to review all bids equitably and include past performance of vendors as a factor in decision making.

²⁷ The system provides accurate, up-to-date information on parts and supplies that are in stock and available, assists in maintaining minimal levels of stock, and facilitates the regular review of expenditures on parts and supplies.

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- d. The district ensures that transportation-related warranty claims are made against manufacturers or vendors whenever possible. Warranty repairs will be performed in-house if shown to be a cost-effective method to make such repairs.
- e. The district has controls to prevent the inappropriate use of facilities and supplies, and it maintains the security of parts and supplies in the transportation area.²⁸
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Operations, Management and Accountability

13. The district ensures that all regular school bus routes and activity trips operate in accordance with established routines, and any unexpected contingencies affecting vehicle operations are handled safely and promptly.

- a. The district has an effective process for responding to vehicle breakdowns, and it is clear who should be notified and when. District procedures address the roles and responsibilities of bus drivers, operations staff, vehicle maintenance staff, and school site staff.
- b. The district has an effective process for bus drivers to report their own intention to miss work as soon as possible and for operations staff to respond to those absences with substitute drivers or other solutions.
- c. The district effectively responds to bus overcrowding situations. Responses address the immediate situation, and, when appropriate, also provide for longer-term solutions, such as a redesign of affected bus routes.
- d. Transportation operations staff maintains records of the number of students who ride longer than the state recommended ride time standard (or the local ride time standard if the school board has adopted a more stringent standard) and take actions to minimize this number when possible.²⁹
- e. The school board has adopted and implemented a policy on the circumstances under which a bus driver may discharge a student at any stop other than the one the student usually uses.
- f. The district has written a process for school site staff to request and pay all transportation costs (including operational and administrative costs) for all educational, extracurricular, and athletic activity trips.³⁰ Implementation of these procedures is demonstrated in activity trip records.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

14. The district provides efficient transportation services for exceptional students in a coordinated fashion that minimizes hardships to students.

- a. Transportation staff and exceptional student education staff communicate and consult regularly about student transportation services for exceptional students.
- b. The district policy, along with district exceptional student education guidelines, ensures that exceptional students ride a regular school bus whenever possible and appropriate.^{31, 32}

²⁸ The control procedures should have provisions for limiting the access to the parts room or other storage areas, restricting access to the parts room computer system, and conducting routine checks to verify the accuracy of the computer records.

²⁹ State recommended ride standards are 50 minutes or less for elementary students and 60 minutes or less for middle and high school students.

³⁰ District procedures include provisions for providing sufficient advance notice, criteria for approving activity trips, and agreements on covering the costs of such trips.

³¹ When the need for specialized transportation services is questionable, exceptional student education staff verifies the need for specialized transportation services with transportation staff. Specialized transportation decisions approved during the individual education plan meetings for particular students are communicated to appropriate transportation staff.

³² Specialized transportation services include transportation on specialized buses and on regular buses where additional services are provided to the ESE student.

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- c. Exceptional student education staff and transportation staff identify exceptional students who qualify for Medicaid funding for certain approved bus runs. The district makes claims for Medicaid reimbursement for transporting those students.
- d. For any exceptional education students who cannot be accommodated on district school buses, suitable alternative arrangements are made such as specialized medical transport or parental transportation.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

15. The district ensures that staff acts promptly and appropriately in response to any accidents or breakdowns.

- a. The transportation office equips all school buses with two-way communications devices, and staff monitor communications at all times when school buses are in service.
- b. The district has an effective process for responding to vehicle breakdowns, and it is clear who should be notified and when. District procedures address the roles and responsibilities of district staff including bus drivers, operations staff, vehicle maintenance staff, and school site staff. These procedures are periodically reviewed in training sessions with copies of the procedures carried on each district vehicle.³³
- c. The district maintains complete records of all accidents that occur and promptly reports all qualifying accidents to the school board and the Florida Department of Education.³⁴
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

16. The district ensures that appropriate student behavior is maintained on the bus with students being held accountable for financial consequences of misbehavior related to transportation.

- a. Bus drivers report disciplinary infractions directly to school site staff. School staff report to drivers what disciplinary actions were taken.
- b. District policy and procedures require that parents of students damaging buses be assessed repair costs.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

17. The district provides appropriate technological and computer support for transportation functions and operations.

- a. The transportation office has a computerized management information system that administrators use to produce reliable and timely budgeting and expenditure information on student transportation functions, as well as basic performance data for the office. This system is coordinated with other district systems.
- b. The district maintains computerized data that enables it to record and track information on transportation staff training and certifications, driver's license data, substance abuse testing, and personnel performance.³⁵
- c. Transportation administrators, with the assistance of district information systems staff, periodically review their current level of technological and computer support to identify issues, needs for the future, and coordination with other district systems.³⁶

³³ They specify the roles and responsibilities of administrative, safety, operations, and vehicle maintenance staff in making immediate responses, coordinating with law enforcement and emergency medical personnel, and reporting information to school site staff, parents, and the general public.

³⁴ Such records should include complete accident inspection reports, any relevant law enforcement reports, photographs, notes of meetings with the driver, and any appropriate insurance claims.

³⁵ The development and use of such data should be coordinated with district personnel office staff whenever possible. It should provide information to identify turnover rates for position classes, such as bus drivers. The computerized data should also contain warranty information to notify staff when repairs should be covered under warranty.

³⁶ If the district is currently functioning without computer system support in any key areas (such as electronic mail, vehicle maintenance management, fueling, parts and supplies inventory, computer routing, management information, or personnel), staff should have plans to obtain such technology in the future.

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d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

18. The district monitors the fiscal condition of transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and reviewing them against the budget.

a. The approved budget for transportation includes appropriate categories by which expenditures may be usefully tracked. Transportation staff systematically reviews expenditures against the budget for these categories. Administrators respond promptly to cost control issues raised during such reviews and identify what actions must be taken, by whom, and when.

b. Vehicle maintenance staff in the transportation office maintains current records of all maintenance and repairs conducted on all vehicles, and the costs associated with those repairs. They review those records regularly to identify maintenance cost concerns, such as unexpected patterns of maintenance activity, excessive costs, or high costs associated with particular types or ages of buses.

c. The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve transportation management, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.

d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

19. The district has reviewed the prospect for privatizing transportation functions, as a whole or in part.

a. Transportation staff has developed key unit cost information for student transportation functions and tasks to enable them to make comparisons with those of private providers. ³⁷

b. Transportation staff periodically reviews the costs associated with transportation functions and tasks that could be conducted by private vendors. ³⁸ When the results of such reviews indicate savings to the district, staff arranges for such functions and tasks to be performed by private vendors.

c. Transportation staff conducts quality assurance checks for any transportation function or task performed by private vendors to ensure that work was conducted in accordance with the original agreement.

d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

20. The district has established an accountability system for transportation, and it regularly tracks and makes public reports on its performance in comparison with established benchmarks.

a. The district has clearly stated goals and measurable outcome-oriented objectives for the student transportation program that reflect the intent (purpose) of the program and address the major aspects of the program's purpose and expenditures.

b. The district has identified other Florida school districts it considers to be peers and exemplars against which it can compare its performance, and it can identify reasons for selecting those districts. The district makes regular comparisons of its own performance with those of the peers and exemplars. ³⁹

c. Transportation administrators have established appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and benchmarks (i.e., measurable targets for future performance) for key indicators of student transportation performance. ⁴⁰

³⁷ Tasks are defined as components of functions. For example, air conditioning repair is a task under the vehicle maintenance function.

³⁸ Factors that should be considered in evaluating such outsourcing decisions include the availability of warranties from private providers, the convenience and timeliness of service, and the need to rely on specialized equipment or servicing procedures.

³⁹ Such comparisons should use Q-Link data from the Florida Department of Education or any other available and appropriate basic student transportation data. Comparisons should include multi-year trends when available, and student transportation administrators should report the results of these comparisons to district administrators responsible for overseeing the student transportation office.

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- d. Transportation administrators provide district administrators and the school board an annual “report card” that shows actual performance for all selected performance and cost-efficiency measures in comparison with the selected benchmark for that indicator, the performance of peer districts, and actual performance during the previous year.⁴¹ The district uses this information to assess performance and make management decisions.

- e. Transportation administrators have complied with applicable provisions of the Safe Passage Act, Section 229.8348, F.S., requiring each district to issue and review a public report of its performance in implementing the adopted School Safety and Security Best Practices.

- f. In addition to “big picture” performance reporting, transportation administrators have established a system of regular management reports throughout the transportation office to track daily and weekly performance for key functions.⁴²

- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

⁴⁰ The benchmarks should include, at a minimum, targets for average bus occupancy, the percentage of courtesy students served, annual operational cost per student, vehicle breakdowns per 100,000 miles, the percentage of buses that are spare buses, accidents per million miles, and the percentage of students delivered within established ride time standards. Benchmarks should be established based on past performance and reasonable expectations for future performance. They should be limited to selected indicators that collectively provide a “big picture” assessment of student transportation performance such as client (e.g., parents, school site staff, and students) satisfaction with the provided service, cost per transported student, and average bus occupancy.

⁴¹ This performance report should also briefly describe the significance of each selected indicator and make other explanatory comments as appropriate, including mention of any corrective actions that are being implemented or planned to improve future performance.

⁴² Such management reports should be provided to appropriate managers within the student transportation office. They should acknowledge areas of non-compliance and other current problems, identify opportunities for improvement, and describe what needs to be done, who will do it, and when it will be completed.

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FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS

Best Practices and Indicators

Planning, Organization and Staffing

1. The program has developed strategic or operational plans that are consistent with district plans, the program budget, and approved by the district.

- a. The food services program has a broadly-approved plan that is consistent with the district's strategic plan.
- b. The district has an appropriate vision or mission statement so team member share a common, agreed-upon purpose.
- c. Program management has developed goals that support the mission statement and objectives to assist in the accomplishment of these goals. These objectives should be quantifiable so that progress toward goal accomplishment can be measured.
- d. Program management has prepared a budget that is based on its plan, goals and objectives, and not limited to historical, incremental increases.
- e. The district has integrated automation (data and equipment) opportunities and needs into its plans.
- f. The district has integrated kitchen renovations into its plans and budgets where needed.
- g. The district food program has reviewed, modified as needed, and approved kitchen layouts and designs in plans for new schools.
- h. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

2. The district and program are organized with clear lines of responsibility and in a manner that provides the food service program sufficient authority to succeed.

- a. Food service program management has developed an organizational chart that accurately reflects the food service program.
- b. The food service program has organizational units that minimize administrative layers.
- c. District management has appropriately positioned the food service program in the district organization to have sufficient authority to fulfill its responsibilities.
- d. Program management has developed organizational relationships designed to allow and promote the food service program to succeed.
- e. Span-of-control is appropriate within the program's organization.
- f. Food service staffing levels are appropriate considering such information as the number of meals served, serving periods, and student participation.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

3. Program management has developed training designed to meet basic program needs as well as improve food services, both based on a needs assessment.

- a. Program management analyzes and develops training plans that are comprehensive and periodically includes essential functions of the program (food safety, portion control, production control, special diets, inventory, meal count procedures, receiving and storage of food and supplies, emergency procedures, customer service).
- b. Program management addresses in its training plan the needs of new employees and filling of future management positions, such as an intern development program.
- c. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS

Best Practices and Indicators

Management

4. Program management has developed comprehensive procedures manuals that are kept current.

- a. Food service management has developed program procedures that are consistent with overall district policy.
- b. Program management has developed a procedures manual for cafeteria managers that covers essential areas of responsibility and communicates management intent (key areas include, at a minimum, cash control, receipt of goods, inventory procedures, production record keeping, sanitation and food safety, employee safety, emergencies in case of injury, and ordering of food and supplies).
- c. If appropriate for the size of district, central staff procedure manuals have been developed to cover key areas of responsibility and communicate management intent (such areas as warehousing, procurement, technical assistants, area managers, dietitians, etc.).
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

5. The district performs sound cash and account management.

- a. The food service program's unreserved fund balance is sufficient to operate the program and is not dependent upon general fund transfers for operations.
- b. The program has a five-year cash flow budget in-place that meets planned needs and will not require use of general fund monies.
- c. Program managers submit and receive federal and state reimbursements timely (requested within 30 days).
- d. The program directly, or through the district's indirect services rate pays for appropriate program-related expenses (e.g., trash removal, utilities, equipment, repairs, cafeteria renovation) to ensure general fund monies intended for the classroom are not diverted to support the food service program.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

6. District and program management optimizes its financial opportunities.

- a. The district analyzes and aggressively seeks to expand its food service operations as opportunities are developed or arise.
- b. Program management takes full advantage of USDA Donated Foods, by (1) ordering its full annual allocation, (2) considering purchased food prices when developing commodities allocation orders, (3) accepting additional allocations when offered and needed, and (4) using commodity processors when financially advantageous.
- c. The district board, district management, and food service management periodically reviews to ensure that pricing of meals and a la carte items are appropriate and at a level to meet budget needs.
- d. At least every 5 years, district and program management assess the efficiency and effectiveness of its core process functions (i.e., warehousing, delivery, procurement, and management).
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

Performance and Accountability

7. Food service program management has developed comprehensive performance and cost-efficiency measures that provide management with information to evaluate program performance and better manage operations.

- a. Program management has developed *program-level* performance and cost-efficiency measures such as, net income margin, food cost margins, salary plus benefits margin, and participation rates (free and reduced as percentage of eligible and overall participation).

FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS

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- b. Program management has performance and cost-efficiency measures in-place to assist in managing *school-level* operations, such as meals per labor hour, salaries plus benefits margin (lunch and breakfast) and food cost margin (lunch and breakfast).
- c. Program management uses sound methodology to develop performance and cost-efficiency measure benchmarks, such as historical performance, comparison with peers, and then integrated planned program changes.
- d. Program and district management periodically review its performance and cost-efficiency measures and benchmarks to ensure reliability and relevance.
- e. The district has taken advantage of all significant opportunities to improve management, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.
- f. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

8. At least annually, the program inspects and evaluates its operational components and the system as a whole, and then takes action to initiate needed change.

- a. Program management has an inspection system to ensure that policies and procedures are followed and at a minimum, address each of the following areas:
 - Program management protects and accounts for its assets (cash, equipment, food, and supplies).
 - Warehousing for the program is appropriate (what and where is it stored).
 - Program management protects its personnel by having safety procedures in-place as well as prepared for treatment or care in case of injury.
 - Program management ensures that food is prepared safely, staff are using the menu ingredients per instructions, and that proper portion control procedures are followed.
- b. Program management has a viable preventive maintenance and long-range equipment replacement program in-place.
- c. Program management ensures that the district does its training plan, or appropriate alternative training.
- d. Program management has take appropriate action to improve operations when indicators of the operational evaluation system warrant.
- e. Program management periodically informs district management of program performance using performance measures and financial information and makes recommendations for action.
- f. The district seeks to optimize its procurement opportunities.
 - Food service management is actively involved in the procurement process and assists in the development of product specifications that best match menus and supplier prices.
 - Large districts attempt to obtain bids by zone to maximize bidders and direct purchase product from suppliers.
 - Small districts evaluate the use of procurement coops in conjunction with other school districts when financially advantageous.
- g. Is there other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice that should be considered?

9. District and program administrators effectively manage costs of the food services program and use performance measures, benchmarks, and budgets on a regular basis to evaluate performance and use the analysis for action or change.

- a. The program has a reporting system that provides accurate and timely information.

*Best Financial Management Practices With Their Associated Indicators
Best Practices (1, 2, 3 . . .) and Indicators (a, b, c . . .)
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- b. Program management evaluates staff allocation and makes adjustments as needed, at each school, 5 to 8 weeks into each new school year, and mid-year, if permitted by labor contract.
- c. Program management, at least quarterly, uses food and labor costs (or similar measures) to monitor menu costs, trends, production, and waste for each school site and the program overall.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

10. The food service program and district complies with federal state and district policy.

- a. The district has demonstrated a “good faith effort” in the latest Department of Education School Meals Initiative review.
- b. The district passed its latest Department of Education Coordinated Review Effort examination.
- c. The district passed its latest USDA Donated Foods inspection.
- d. Program management ensures federal and state vending machine rules are followed and districts policies and practices support these rules.
- e. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

11. The district conducts activities to ensures that customer needs are met and acts to improve services and food quality where needed.

- a. Program management identifies barriers to student participation and methods used to overcome barriers are appropriate for the circumstance.
- b. Program and district management has developed an effective suggestions system that readily accepts and ensures complaints are considered.
- c. Program management periodically contacts stakeholders (students, parents, principals, and teachers) to solicit comments and ideas.
- d. Is there other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice that should be considered?

COST CONTROL SYSTEMS

Best Practices and Indicators

Financial Management

1. The district periodically analyzes the structure and staffing of its financial services organization.

- a. The financial services department has an approved organizational structure.
- b. The position descriptions for critical financial service positions contain appropriate education and experience requirements.
- c. Financial services staff are cross-trained for critical accounting processes.
- d. Financial service staff receives appropriate training and professional development.
- e. The financial services units are appropriately staffed to ensure effective delivery of financial services to users.
- f. Decentralized accounting services positions are appropriately trained.
- g. The district staff analyzes potential cost savings of alternative financial services delivery, i.e., privatize vs. employees.
- h. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

2. Management has developed and distributed written procedures for critical accounting processes and promotes ethical financial management practices.

- a. These procedures address
 - identification and description of principal accounting records;
 - standard accounting and journal entries including requirements for supporting documentation;
 - identification of positions that approve accounting and journal entries prior to entry; and
 - instructions for determining appropriate cut-off and closing of accounts for each accounting period.
- b. The board has approved written ethics policies for the district financial staff.
- c. The district has established written procedures that provide for confidential reporting of suspected improprieties.
- d. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

3. The district has adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information.

- a. The financial accounting system has appropriately integrated financial software components that minimize manual processes including
 - efficient data entry (decentralized vs. centralized);
 - capital projects tracking by and across fiscal years;
 - reconciliations between control accounts and subsidiary records (receivables, payables, payroll, inventories, fixed assets, etc.) which are automated or are rendered unnecessary by integrated accounting controls that ensure that the records remain in balance;
 - direct-deposit program for payroll checks that is implemented to reduce workload for accounting for payroll checks; and
 - manual processes, including those using spreadsheet software, which are used to verify, track, or maintain accounting activities are minimized.
- b. The district staff analyzes cost savings of automation or manual processes
- c. The district staff analyzes financial accounting and reporting procedures to minimize or eliminate duplication of efforts

*Best Financial Management Practices With Their Associated Indicators
Best Practices (1, 2, 3 . . .) and Indicators (a, b, c . . .)
Adopted June 2002*

COST CONTROL SYSTEMS

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- d. The district staff analyzes strategic plans for measurable objectives/results
- e. The accounting system facilitates accountability for restricted sources of funds through fund/grant/project accounting.
- f. District financial staff provides the board and district management with monthly and annual financial reports that effectively summarize financial operations and financial condition in an easy-to-understand format that assists the board in making financial decisions.
- g. District financial staff provides effective feedback to the board and management on funding sources, budget limitations, and financial condition impacts relating to major financial proposals.
- h. District managers receive periodic (at least monthly) reports or can electronically view data showing budget vs. expenditure comparisons for their responsibility areas.
- i. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

4. District financial staff analyzes significant expenditure processes to ensure they are appropriately controlled.

- a. District financial staff analyzes significant contract methods and financial negotiations, especially large dollar amount or high volume contracts.
- b. District financial staff analyzes major expenditure categories to recognize and review unusual fluctuations in cost.
- c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

Internal Controls

5. The district has established adequate internal controls.

- a. The district has established effective controls over receipting processes to ensure
 - timely depositing and recording of collections;
 - recording of collections to the correct accounting codes (fund, revenue source, object); and
 - compliance with federal, state, and district laws, rules, and policies as appropriate relating to accounting for moneys received.
- b. The district has established effective controls over payroll processes to ensure
 - appropriate and timely reporting and remitting of federal payroll taxes to appropriate agencies (review reports and determine reasons for any payroll tax penalties paid by district);
 - appropriate and timely reporting of other payroll deductions, such as health insurance premiums;
 - appropriate and timely reporting of payroll and attendance information to employees (both on a payroll and annual basis);
 - compliance with federal, state, and district laws, rules, and policies; and
 - salary costs are properly charged to the correct accounting codes, including but not limited to fund, function, project, location, and object.
- c. The district has established effective controls over disbursing processes.
 - Payments are for authorized purposes, have sufficient budget authority, and prior verification of funds availability.
 - Payments are supported by evidence that the goods and services were received.
 - Payments are supported by appropriately canceled vendor invoices/bills.
 - Disbursements are properly charged to the correct accounting codes (fund, function, project, location, object).

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d. Other information that demonstrated the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

6. Management proactively responds to identified internal control weaknesses and takes immediate steps to correct the weaknesses.

a. Internal control weaknesses are identified from external and internal audit reports, risk assessments, grantor monitoring reports, and other sources, such as communications from employees and the public.

b. District management assigns responsibility for resolving internal control weaknesses to appropriate staff.

c. Assigned staff must periodically report to management on progress towards resolving internal control weaknesses.

d. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

7. The district produces an annual budget that is tied to the strategic plan and provides useful and understandable information to users.

a. Budgets are formed and adopted pursuant to applicable state law and rules.

- Budget meets state-mandated and district required time deadlines.
- Budget document summaries are in approved format and appropriate detail is included.

b. District staff use appropriate revenue-estimating practices when developing estimated budget sources for appropriation.

- Includes prior year comparisons
- Enrollment projections

c. The district has established a budget planning process and timeline that is clearly communicated to all of the involved stakeholders.

d. The district has established a budget planning process to link strategic plan objectives to the development of the budget.

e. School principals include SAC/community input when developing school budgets.

f. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

8. Management analyzes strategic plans for measurable objectives or measurable results.

a. Strategic plan objectives can be tied to specific departments or projects and provide guidance to determine appropriate expenditures to achieve plan objectives (note-overlaps with accountability chapter).

b. Strategic plan includes a provision for maintaining adequate levels of unreserved fund balance.¹

c. Management has developed a process that primarily commits funds for activities and projects that meet strategic plan objectives.

d. The district has established appropriate procedures for reviewing, evaluating the financial impact of, and approving budget amendments.

e. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

¹ The amount held in reserve considers the potential overestimation of FEFP funding due to error in the district's enrollment projection, potential exposure to emergencies, and potential industry or community changes.

COST CONTROL SYSTEMS

Best Practices and Indicators

External and Internal Auditing

9. The district ensures that it receives an annual external audit and uses the audit to improve its operations.

- a. Audit reports indicate that the audits were completed in accordance with Government Auditing Standards.
- b. The district responds to audit comments timely and appropriately.
- c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

10. The district has an effective internal audit function and uses the audits to improve its operations.²

- a. The district's internal audit function is organizationally independent.
 - It reports to the board or to a board-designated internal audit committee.
- b. The internal audit function performs annual risk assessment.
- c. The internal audit function prepares an annual internal audit plan that is based on prioritization of risks identified in the annual risk assessment.
 - The board approves the annual internal audit plan.
- d. Internal audit function has sufficient resources to provide reasonable audit coverage on a periodic basis.
 - The internal audit function uses appropriate audit programs to conduct audits.
- e. The board periodically approves internal audit reports.
 - Internal audit reports include district responses and corrective action plans.
 - The internal audit function has a process that ensures periodic follow-up of findings noted in previous internal audit reports.
- f. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

11. The district ensures that audits of internal funds and discretely presented component units (foundations and charter schools) are performed timely.

- a. The district ensures that required reports are timely and received by the external auditor for consideration in the completion of the district's financial audit.
 - Annual school internal accounts financial audits are timely completed and presented to the board.³
 - CPA audits of direct support organizations are timely completed and presented to the board.
 - CPA audits of charter schools are timely completed and presented to the board.
- b. District management review financial reports of school internal accounts and discretely presented component units and use the information contained in the reports to make appropriate decisions involving these activities.
- c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

12. The district periodically reviews cash management activities, banking relationships, investment performance, and considers alternatives.

² Most school districts do not have an internal auditor. They generally do have internal accounts auditors, whose responsibility is to audit the school internal accounts. These internal accounts auditors should not be confused with internal auditors. However, school districts that do have internal audit functions often assign the audits of the school internal accounts to the internal auditor for efficiency purposes.

³ Some school districts have not been successful in presenting audited financial data on the school internal accounts by the time the external auditor is ready to complete the district's financial audit. Please also remember that the school internal accounts auditor often is not an internal auditor.

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- a. The district has appropriate written policies and procedures for cash management.
 - The district maintains its cash deposits in qualified public depositories.
 - Cash collections are timely deposited and invested.
 - District staff that do not have the ability to update accounting records timely perform bank reconciliations.
 - District staff that prepare bank reconciliations ensure that needed adjustments are timely made.
 - Appropriate management staff periodically review bank reconciliations and investigate unusual reconciling items.
 - The district has cash forecasting processes that ensure adequate liquidity throughout the year.
 - Banking contracts are periodically analyzed to ensure terms and fee schedules are appropriate.
- b. The district has appropriate written policies and procedures for investments that provide guidance for maximizing return for investments while ensuring the safety and liquidity of investments.
 - The district has an investment policy when it invests in those authorized investments for which an investment policy is required.
 - When investing in other than SBA investments, the district periodically reports to the board the results of its investing activities—monthly or quarterly, and annually as appropriate.
 - When investing in other than SBA investments, district staff analyzes the risk of the investment vs. the projected return on the investment.
 - When investing in other than SBA investments, district staff are knowledgeable and receive periodic training on investments.
 - If appropriate, the district either physically protects its investments or provides for sufficient safekeeping of investment securities.
 - If appropriate, the district monitors investment earnings to ensure accuracy of amounts collected.
- c. Other information that demonstrates the district’s use of this best practice and should be considered.

Capital Asset Management

13. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of capital assets.

- a. District staff is knowledgeable about capital asset financial reporting requirements and has established procedures to ensure adequate and timely reporting.
- b. The district has implemented effective procedures to ensure that capital outlay purchases are appropriately capitalized.
 - The districts capitalization thresholds are consistent with state requirements.
 - The district reconciles capital asset expenditures with additions to capital assets.
 - The district has procedures to ensure that appropriate asset values for completed construction projects are timely transferred to detailed subsidiary records for capital assets.
- c. The district maintains detailed subsidiary records of capital assets.
- d. The district physically safeguards and tags capital assets.
- e. The district physically inventories capital assets annually using cost-effective methods.
- f. The district has established and carries out appropriate procedures to follow up on missing property items.
- g. The district appropriately accounts for capital assets acquired with restricted source funds.

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h. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

14. The district ensures significant capital outlay purchases meet strategic plan objectives.

a. The district prepares separate capital projects budgets.

b. The district does not charge maintenance and operations staff salaries to restricted capital outlay sources that do not permit such charges.

c. The district has implemented effective procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of assets.

d. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

Debt Management

15. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective debt management.

a. The district tracks debt service requirements and ensures timely payment.

b. The district is knowledgeable about debt service financial reporting requirements, e.g., continuing financial disclosures pursuant to Securities and Exchange Commission requirements, and has established procedures to ensure adequate and timely reporting.

c. The district complies with federal arbitrage requirements.

d. The district complies with bond covenants.

e. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

16. The district ensures that significant debt financings meet strategic plan objectives.

a. The district evaluates debt capacity prior to issuing debt.

b. The district evaluates financing alternatives when acquiring major capital assets.

c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

Risk Management

17. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective risk management

a. The district's policies require clear and complete financial contract terms for all insurance contracts.

b. District staff analyzes current insurance plans including deductible amounts, co-insurance levels, and types of coverage provided.

c. The district periodically compares costs and a risk analysis with peer districts.

d. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

18. District staff periodically monitors the district's compliance with various laws and regulations related to risk management.

a. The district has established policies and procedures and periodically updates them to identify various risks and provide for a comprehensive approach to reducing the impact of losses.

- The board has written risk management policies.

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- District management maintains written procedures that carry out board policy.

b. The district has adequate insurance coverage. ⁴

- Liability, property, casualty, umbrella, employee and public official bonds.

c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

19. The district prepares appropriate written cost and benefit analyses for insurance coverage.

a. District staff analyzes alternatives for insurance coverage such as self-insurance and other current industry trends.

b. Management reports to the board comparisons with local industry, other governmental entities, and comparable school districts.

c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

Purchasing

20. The district has established written policies and procedures to take maximum advantage of competitive bidding, volume discounts, and special pricing agreements.

a. The district periodically evaluates purchasing practices to maximize use of human resources assigned to the purchasing function.

- Purchase cards are used for small dollar purchases.
- Effective quotation procedures are used for purchases above small dollar purchases, but less than dollar limits requiring competitive bidding.
- Competitive bidding processes are used for purchases above competitive bidding thresholds.
- State contract bids, bids of other school districts, and other innovative purchasing processes are considered where appropriate.

b. The purchasing function is organizationally separate from district departments that requisition goods and services.

c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

Inventory Management

21. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of inventories.

a. The district monitors inventory turnover to ensure that it does not have significant balances of outdated inventory items.

b. The district has established effective controls over inventory processes including effective receipt and issue procedures.

c. Warehouse or inventory storage areas are reasonably safeguarded to

- prevent unauthorized access; and
- protect inventory items from physical deterioration.

d. The district conducts annual physical counts of inventories using cost-effective methods.

⁴ State law and rules establish requirements that school districts must follow regarding both the types of insurance coverage and how they acquire insurance coverage. Also, employee benefits (health, dental, etc.) and worker's compensation along with loss prevention activities are covered in Personnel Best Practices.

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e. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.

22. The district periodically evaluates the warehousing function to determine its cost-effectiveness.

a. The district periodically identifies and evaluates the costs to maintain inventories. These costs are allocated to the per-unit cost of inventory items to compare with other warehousing alternatives such as next-day or rapid response inventory services provided by vendors.

b. The district evaluates warehousing services to ensure effectiveness and user satisfaction.

- Inventory requisitions are delivered timely.
- Users receive inventory items they ordered.
- Items stored in warehouse are those that user most frequently ask for.
- Effective reorder points are used for stock replenishment.

c. Other information that demonstrates the district's use of this best practice and should be considered.