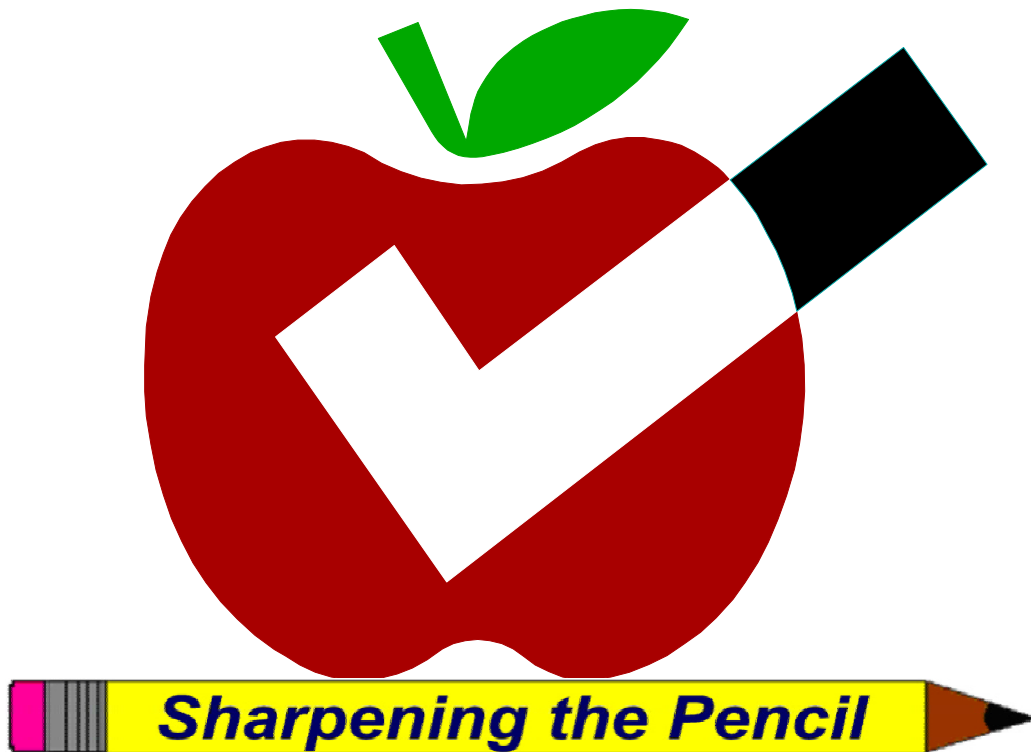


Sharpening the Pencil

Best Financial Management Practices Review

Lee County School District



ValienteHernandez
P.A.



CERTIFIED PUBLIC
ACCOUNTANTS

AUDITORS AND
CONSULTANTS

Under contract with
Office of Program Policy Analysis
and Government Accountability
an office of the Florida Legislature

Report 02-58



The Florida Legislature

OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY



John W. Turcotte, Director

November 2002

The President of the Senate
The Speaker of the House of Representatives
The Joint Legislative Auditing Committee
The Superintendent of the Lee County School District
The School Board Members of the Lee County School District

I have directed that a Best Financial Management Practices Review be conducted of the Lee County School District. The 2001 Legislature directed that the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) contract for a best practices review of the district, and the results of this review are presented in this report. This review was made pursuant to the Sharpening the Pencil Act (HB 269) passed by the 2001 Legislature to improve school district management and use of resources and to identify cost savings.

OPPAGA is issuing the *Digest of Best Financial Management Practices Review, Lee County School District* to comply with the law that directs OPPAGA to issue a report to the district regarding its use of the best practices and cost savings recommendations.

This review was conducted by ValienteHernandez, P.A., of Tampa, Florida; OPPAGA; and the Auditor General. ValienteHernandez, P.A., was primarily responsible for fieldwork and developing report findings and recommendations. OPPAGA and the Auditor General attended site visits to monitor fieldwork, conducted meetings with district staff to receive input on the draft, and reviewed and edited the report. OPPAGA made the final determination on the district's use of Best Financial Management Practices, based on information in the final report and in consultation with ValienteHernandez, P.A.

Rae Hendlin was the contract manager for this review. Other OPPAGA staff included Yvonne Bigos, Julie Golding, Wade Melton, Sarah Mendonca-McCoy, Don Pardue, Nanette Smith, David Summers, David Tranchand, Deborah Wagar, and Don Wolf, under the coordination of Jane Fletcher. Auditor General staff included Denis Jessen and Jim Kiedinger under the supervision of David Martin.

We wish to express our appreciation to the staff of the Lee County School District for their assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. W. Turcotte".

John W. Turcotte
Director

JWT/mc

cc: The Honorable Jeb Bush, Governor
The Honorable Charlie Crist, Commissioner of Education
Mr. Jim Horne, Secretary, Florida Board of Education

Table of Contents

<u>Digest</u>	1
<u>Chapter 1: Introduction</u>	1-1
Overview.....	1-1
Background and Scope	1-2
Methodology.....	1-2
<u>Chapter 2: Statistical Profile</u>	2-1
County Profile.....	2-1
School District Profile.....	2-3
Student Performance.....	2-6
Student Characteristics.....	2-10
Staff Characteristics	2-12
<u>Chapter 3: Management Structures</u>	3-1
Conclusion	3-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	3-3
Background.....	3-3
Methodology.....	3-5
Relationship Between the Superintendent and the School Board	3-6
Strategic Plan	3-46
<u>Chapter 4: Performance Accountability System</u>	4-1
Conclusion	4-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	4-2
Background.....	4-2
Methodology.....	4-6
Educational and Operational Program Accountability.....	4-7
<u>Chapter 5: Educational Service Delivery</u>	5-1
Conclusion	5-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	5-3
Background.....	5-3
Methodology.....	5-7
Operation of K-12 Instructional Programs.....	5-8
Cost-Effective Instructional Materials	5-39
Acquisition, Replacement and Disposal of Instructional Materials	5-42
Analysis of Performance Data and Evaluation of Educational Programs	5-46
Library, Media and Support Services	5-50

<u>Chapter 6: Administrative and Instructional Technology</u>	6-1
Conclusion	6-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	6-3
Background	6-4
Methodology	6-6
Technology Planning	6-7
Technical Support	6-9
Technology Professional Development	6-15
Cost Effective Acquisition	6-18
Information Management and Delivery	6-23
Management Information Systems	6-24
<u>Chapter 7: Personnel Systems and Benefits</u>	7-1
Conclusion	7-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	7-2
Background	7-2
Methodology	7-5
Staff Recruitment	7-6
Management of Human Resources	7-37
<u>Chapter 8: Use of Lottery Proceeds</u>	8-1
Conclusion	8-1
Overview of Chapter Findings	8-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	8-1
Background	8-1
Methodology	8-3
Use of Lottery Proceeds	8-3
<u>Chapter 9: Use of State and District Construction Funds</u>	9-1
Conclusion	9-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	9-1
Background	9-1
Methodology	9-3
Use of State and Local Construction Funds	9-4
<u>Chapter 10: Facilities Construction</u>	10-1
Conclusion	10-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	10-3
Background	10-4
Methodology	10-5
Five-Year Facilities Work Program	10-6
Educational Specifications	10-21
Selection and Acquisition of School Sites	10-24
Construction Cost	10-26
Completion of Projects on Time and Within Budget	10-34
Training and Evaluation for the Construction Program	10-40

<u>Chapter 11: Facilities Maintenance</u>	11-1
Conclusion	11-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	11-3
Background	11-3
Methodology	11-4
Compliance with Standards, Five-Year Facilities Work Plan, and State Laws	11-5
Adequate Facilities Maintenance Budget	11-23
Qualified Personnel and Professional Development	11-31
Computerized Maintenance Management Systems	11-40
Compliance With State And Federal Regulatory Requirements	11-43
<u>Chapter 12: Student Transportation</u>	12-1
Conclusion	12-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	12-3
Background	12-4
Methodology	12-9
Safe and Efficient System	12-10
Adequate Transportation	12-44
Appropriate and Cost Effective Transportation	12-63
<u>Chapter 13: Food Service Operations</u>	13-1
Conclusion	13-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	13-2
Background	13-3
Methodology	13-7
Efficient and Effective Operation	13-7
Financial Accountability and Viability	13-14
Meal Preparation and Service	13-19
Safety and Sanitary Food Service Environment	13-20
<u>Chapter 14: Cost Control Systems</u>	14-1
Conclusion	14-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	14-3
Background	14-4
Methodology	14-5
Internal Auditing	14-5
Financial Auditing	14-8
Asset Management	14-10
Inventory Management	14-13
Risk Management	14-15
Financial Management	14-16
Purchasing	14-24
Payment Processing	14-29

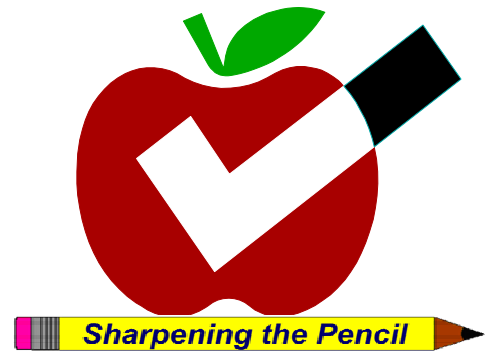
Table of Contents

<u>Chapter 15: Community Involvement</u>	15-1
Conclusion	15-1
Fiscal Impact of Recommendations	15-2
Background	15-2
Methodology	15-3
Communication with Stakeholders	15-4
Parents' Involvement	15-13
Community Involvement	15-16
<u>Appendix A: Action Plans</u>	A-1



Digest of the Best Financial Management Practices Review

Lee County School District



Report No. 02-58A

November 2002

Results in Brief

Enacted in 2001, the Sharpening the Pencil Act (s. 1008.35, *Florida Statutes*) is intended to improve school district management and use of resources and to identify cost savings opportunities.¹ The act directs the Commissioner of Education to adopt the best practices as standards for the Best Financial Management Practices Review and establishes meeting the best practices as the goal for all Florida school districts. The best practices are designed to encourage districts to

- use performance and cost-efficiency measures to evaluate programs;
- assess their operations and performance using benchmarks based on comparable school district, government agency, and industry standards;
- identify potential cost savings through privatization and alternative service delivery; and
- link financial planning and budgeting to district priorities, including student performance.

In accordance with the Sharpening the Pencil Act, the Lee County School District underwent a best practices review during Fiscal Year 2001-02.² Based on the recommendations contained in the report, the district could improve operations, save money, and demonstrate good stewardship of public resources. Currently, the district is using 67% (143 of 214) of the best practices adopted by the Commissioner and at this time is not eligible for a Seal of Best Financial Management. (See

¹ The 2002 Legislature made substantial revisions to the school code, including a renumbering of related statutes. As part of this revision, s. 230.23025, *F.S.*, was renumbered to s. 1008.35, *F.S.*

² This review was conducted by ValienteHernandez, P.A., of Tampa, Florida under contract to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA).

Exhibit 1.) A detailed listing of all the best practices that identifies the district's current status in relation to each begins on page 6 of this digest report.

As shown in Exhibit 2, implementing report recommendations will have a positive fiscal impact of \$23,403,968 over a five-year period.

Exhibit 1

The District Is Using 67% of the Best Practices

Best Practice Area (Total Practices)	Is the District Using Individual Best Practices?		
	Yes	No	N/A
Management Structures (12)	8	4	0
Performance Accountability System (5)	0	5	0
Educational Service Delivery (16)	9	7	0
Administrative and Instructional Technology (20)	14	6	0
Personnel Systems and Benefits (15)	12	3	0
Use of Lottery Proceeds (5)	4	1	0
Use of State and District Construction Funds (4)	3	1	0
Facilities Construction (32)	22	10	0
Facilities Maintenance (26)	8	18	0
Student Transportation (20)	12	8	0
Food Service Operations (17)	13	4	0
Cost Control Systems (31)	29	2	0
Community Involvement (11)	9	2	0
All Areas (214)	143	71	0

Exhibit 2

The District Could Experience a Positive Fiscal Impact of \$23,403,968 Over the Next Five Years by Implementing Recommendations

Recommendation(s) by Review Area	Projected Five-Year Net Fiscal Impact
<u>Management Structures</u>	
• Eliminate one position of board secretary. (Action Plan 3-2)	\$ 150,000
• Expand the grants writing activity. (Action Plan 3-25)	4,300,000
<u>Educational Service Delivery</u>	
• Add two curriculum specialists. (Action Plan 5-7)	(385,900)
• Increase accountability for lost or damaged textbooks. (Action Plan 5-11)	418,384
<u>Administrative and Instructional Technology</u>	
• Replace older/obsolete instructional workstations. (Action Plan 6-3)	(5,625,000)
• Consolidate workstation and server vendors. (Action Plan 6-4)	6,300,000
• Acquire additional instructional workstations. (Action Plan 6-5)	(462,000)
<u>Facilities Construction</u>	
• Conduct a facilities audit. (Action Plan 10-6)	(100,000)
<u>Facilities Maintenance</u>	
• Create three maintenance zones. (Action Plan 11-5)	60,000
• Establish a uniform building management system. (Action Plan 11-9)	275,000
• Implement preventive maintenance. (Action Plan 11-19)	1,729,200
<u>Student Transportation</u>	
• Eliminate unnecessary courtesy rides. (Action Plan 12-4)	190,000
• Restructure the district's full-time and substitute bus driver ratios and wage structures. (Action Plan 12-6)	707,500
• Develop a plan to increase bus occupancy, starting in the 2005-06 school year. (Action Plan 12-8)	7,748,800
• Charge school groups for field trips to cover the full cost of the trip. (Action Plan 12-10)	1,460,000
• Pursue reimbursement from Medicaid for eligible transportation. (Action Plan 12-14)	250,170
• Reduce spare bus ratio to 16%. (Action Plan 12-15)	428,400
• Sell 1988 special reserve buses in an auction. (Action Plan 12-15)	153,000
• Formalize and adhere to 12-year bus replacement policy. (Action Plan 12-16)	4,356,750
• Minimize staffing levels. (Action Plan 12-30)	1,744,664
<u>Cost Control Systems</u>	
• Contract out a risk- assessment study. (Action Plan 14-1)	(20, 000)
• Implement a purchasing card system. (Action Plan 14-7)	(275,000)
TOTALS	\$ 23,403,968

Purpose

The purpose of Best Financial Management Practices Reviews is to improve Florida school district management and use of resources and to identify cost savings. Florida law directs the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability and the Office of the Auditor General to review the financial management practices of school districts. Florida law also provides that the best financial management practices, at a minimum, must instill public confidence by

1. addressing the school district's use of resources;
2. identifying ways that the district could save funds; and
3. improving the school district performance accountability systems, including public accountability.

Background

The 2001 Legislature passed the Sharpening the Pencil Act to improve school district management and use of resources and to identify cost savings.³ Two of the most important provisions of the act are that it specifies those districts scheduled to undergo a Best Financial Management Practices Review each year of a five-year-cycle and requires public input during the review process and after the distribution of the final report.

The act also directs that the Commissioner of Education adopt the best practices to be used as standards for these reviews and establishes meeting the best practices as the goal for all Florida school districts. The best practices are designed to encourage districts to

- use performance and cost-efficiency measures to evaluate programs;
- assess their operations and performance using benchmarks based on comparable school district, government agency, and industry standards;
- identify potential cost savings through privatization and alternative service delivery; and
- link financial planning and budgeting to district priorities, including student performance.

In the 2001-02 General Appropriations Act, the Florida Legislature directed that OPPAGA contract for a Best Financial Management Practices Review of the Lee

County School District.

With close to 60,000 students the Lee County School District is the twelfth largest school district out of 67 districts in the state. Located on southwest Florida's Gulf Coast between Naples and Sarasota the district operates 67 schools including 37 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, 10 high schools and 8 other educational facilities.

In accordance with Florida law, OPPAGA contracted with ValienteHernandez, P.A., of Tampa, Florida, a private consulting firm, to conduct this review. ValienteHernandez, P.A. was primarily responsible for fieldwork and developing report findings and recommendations. OPPAGA and the Auditor General staff monitored the firm throughout the review process to ensure that the best practices and indicators were applied in the district consistent with reviews by consultants and OPPAGA in other districts. OPPAGA and the Auditor General staff attended site visits and provided assistance to the consultant during the course of the review, which included report drafting.

The consultant's report contains findings related to each best practice and detailed action plans to implement each report recommendation. These action plans were developed with input from the school district and detail the specific steps the district should take if it decides to implement the recommendation within two years. Pursuant to s. 1008.35, *Florida Statutes*, OPPAGA made the final determination on whether the school district is using best practices adopted by the Commissioner of Education based on information in the final report and the independent assessment of the district's use of each best practice.

OPPAGA expresses its appreciation to members of the Lee County School Board and district employees who provided information and assistance during the review.

General Overview and District Obligations

Currently, the Lee County School District is using 67% of the best practices adopted by the Commissioner, and at this time, is not eligible for a Seal of Best Financial Management. Appendix A of this report contains an action plan detailing how the district could meet the best practices within two years.

³ A list of cost saving opportunities identified in prior best practices reviews is available at OPPAGA's Florida Monitor under [Ways to Save](#).

Digest: Best Financial Management Practices Review

Within 90 days after receipt of the final report, the school board must

- decide by a majority plus one vote, whether or not to implement the action plan and pursue a Seal of Best Financial Management, and
- notify OPPAGA and the Commissioner of Education in writing of the date and outcome of the school board vote on whether to adopt the action plan. If the school board fails to vote on whether to adopt the action plan, the superintendent must notify OPPAGA and the Commissioner of Education.

After receipt of the final report and before the school board votes whether to adopt the action plan, the school district must hold an advertised public forum to accept public input and review the findings and recommendations of the report. The district must advertise and promote this forum to inform school and district advisory councils, parents, school district employees, the business community, and other district residents of the opportunity to attend this meeting. OPPAGA and the consultant will attend this forum.

If the school board votes to implement the action plan, the district must submit two annual status reports, the first report no later than one year after receipt of the final report and the second report one year later.

After receipt of each status report, OPPAGA will assess the district's implementation of the action plan and progress toward implementing the best financial management practices in areas covered by the plan and issue a report indicating whether the district has successfully implemented the best financial management practices.

If the school district successfully implements the best practices within two years, it will be eligible to receive a Seal of Best Financial Management from the State Board of Education, a designation that is effective for five years. During the designation period, the school board must annually notify OPPAGA, the Auditor General, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of Education of any changes that would not conform to the best practices. If no such changes have occurred and the school board determines that the school district continues to conform to the best practices, the school board must annually report that information to the State Board of Education, with copies to OPPAGA, the Auditor General, and the Commissioner of Education.

Conclusions by Best Practice Area

A summary of report conclusions and recommendations by best practice area is presented below.

Management Structures

The district is using 8 of 12 best practices established for management structures. The Lee County School District has many of the managerial elements it needs to create a strong organizational structure that is responsive to school needs. To reach its goals, the district should continue its efforts to realign the organizational structure, strengthen its site-based management configuration and build program accountability.

Performance Accountability System

Currently, the district is using none of the five performance accountability best practices. While the district has begun using performance information and accountability criteria, additional efforts are needed. The district needs to implement specific accountability mechanisms to ensure the efficient and effective performance of its major educational and operational programs.

Educational Service Delivery

The district is using 9 of the 16 best practices for education service delivery. While the district generally offers efficient and effective educational services and programs to its students, it could improve in several areas. The district should improve curricular support by sharing best practices, and teaching strategies to meet standard curricular guidelines, increase support for staff serving ESE students, and ensure that all major programs operate from strategic plans which are periodically evaluated against program goals and objectives.

Administrative and Instructional Technology

The district is using 14 of the 20 best practices related to administrative and instructional technology functions. The district generally provides students, administrators, instructional, and non-instructional personnel with the tools needed to learn, instruct, administer, and work in an efficient and effective manner. However, improvements in the district's practices related to technology acquisition and integration would improve the district's administrative and instructional technologies.

Personnel Systems and Benefits

Overall, the district is using 12 of the 15 best practices in this area. The district's Human Resources Division generally practices sound personnel management. Minor improvements in recruitment efforts, records management, and accountability practices are warranted.

Use of Lottery Proceeds

The district is using four of the five best practices pertaining to the use of lottery proceeds. In general, the district spends lottery proceeds for purposes that enhance education. The district should report how lottery proceeds have been spent each quarter.

Use of State and District Construction Funds

Overall, the district is using three of the four best practices pertaining to the use of state and district construction funds. The district uses state and local construction funds in a lawful manner. The district faces a severe shortage of student stations based on current growth. Significant outlays are needed for new construction to meet this growth.

Facilities Construction

The district is using 22 of the 32 best practices related to facilities construction functions. The district has grown tremendously, especially the southern portion. With growth comes the need for additional facilities. Planning is key, if the district is to have the facilities to meet its educational needs. A long-term facilities work program is needed to design, construct, and maintain quality facilities for the county's public school students.

Facilities Maintenance

The Lee County School District is using 8 of the 26 best practices for facilities maintenance. The district has an experienced and dedicated facilities maintenance staff. It has many opportunities to improve maintenance services, including establishing a long-term plan that relates to the five-year facilities work plan, establishing standard operating procedures, establishing a preventive maintenance program, and reorganizing the department to provide more efficient service.

Student Transportation

The district is using 12 of the 20 best practices established for student transportation. It generally provides appropriate transportation to and from school to some 32,000 students each day. Operating within the school of choice plan results in some inherent

inefficiencies, but improvements in routing, driver staffing, bus acquisition, and maintenance facilities could immediately improve transportation services. In the future, opportunities to increase bus occupancy could also significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of student transportation services.

Food Service Operations

The district has a fiscally sound and generally efficient food service program. It is using 13 of the 17 best practices. It is to be especially commended for its staff training program and integration of performance measures into its program oversight system. Improvements are needed in a few areas, with the most significant dealing with lines of authority over the program. Principals in at least two schools have assumed food service management's authority by hiring cafeteria managers and, in at least one school, openly violating federal competitive food rules. Both actions could jeopardize significant federal support through the National School Lunch Program.

Cost Control Systems

The district is using 29 of the 31 best practices established for cost control systems. The district's cost control systems include internal auditing, financial auditing, asset management, inventory management, risk management, financial management, purchasing, and payment processing. The district should conduct annual risk assessments to identify and minimize potential risks. Also, the district's Internal Audit Department should assume the responsibility for monitoring student FTE counts. The district should enhance its monitoring of capital projects by automating the accounting function, the reconciliation of subsidiary ledgers, and the general ledger for fixed assets. The district should distribute its ethics policy to all employees, automate monthly grant reporting, and modify its accounting methods for payroll benefits and purchasing processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Community Involvement

The district is using 9 of the 11 best practices related to community involvement. It has developed and maintained an effective, well-received community involvement program. By addressing community involvement through a formal strategic planning process and by developing an accountability system to help guide program efforts, the program will continue to succeed.

Lee County School District Best Financial Management Practices

Currently, the Lee County School District is using 67% (143 of 214) of the best practices adopted by the Commissioner of Education, and at this time, is not eligible for a Seal of Best Financial Management. This appendix provides a detailed listing of all the best practices and identifies the district's current status in relation to each.

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>		
<u>MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent have been clearly delineated, and board members and the superintendent have procedures to ensure that they have effective working relationships.	✓		3-6
2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.	✓		3-14
3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.	✓		3-16
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.		✓	3-18
5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority.		✓	3-23
6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.		✓	3-34
7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.	✓		3-38
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.	✓		3-42
9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.	✓		3-46
10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.	✓		3-49
11. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its priority goals and objectives, and district resources are focused towards achieving those goals and objectives.		✓	3-52
12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.	✓		3-55

<u>PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
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: • Educational Programs: Basic Education (K-3, 4-8, 9-12), Exceptional Student Education, Vocational/Technical Education, and English for Speakers of Other Languages. • Operational: Facilities Construction, Facilities Maintenance, Personnel, Asset and Risk Management, Financial Management, Purchasing, Transportation, Food Services, and Safety and Security. Goals and objectives must be present in both the educational and operational areas to meet this best practice. The district lacks these accountability mechanisms in the operational areas.		✓	4-7
2. The district uses appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks to evaluate its major educational and operational programs and uses these in management decision making.		✓	4-23
3. The district regularly assesses the performance and cost of its major educational and operational programs using performance measures and benchmark data and analyzes potential cost savings and/or cost avoidance of alternatives, such as outside contracting and privatization.		✓	4-28
4. 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.		✓	4-29
5. 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.		✓	4-32

<u>EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. District administrators use both academic and nonacademic data to improve K-12 education programs.	✓		5-8
2. District administrators facilitate sharing effective instructional practices to improve student performance.		✓	5-15
3. The district provides effective and cost-efficient Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs.		✓	5-16
4. The district provides effective and cost-efficient instruction as part of its English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program.	✓		5-26
5. The district provides effective and cost-efficient secondary vocational and adult/technical education programs.	✓		5-31
6. The district's curricular framework is linked to Florida's accountability standards and to the Sunshine State Standards.		✓	5-35
7. The district has adopted a plan for the progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of the Sunshine State Standards.	✓		5-39
8. The district ensures that school improvement plans effectively translate identified needs into activities with measurable objectives and that school advisory councils meet statutory membership requirements.	✓		5-41
9. The district's process for selecting instructional materials ensures that instructional materials meet the needs of teachers and students.	✓		5-42
10. Each student has current and appropriate instructional materials in core courses that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and the district's pupil progression plan.	✓		5-42
11. The district's procedures for acquiring, maintaining, and disposing of instructional materials are cost-effective.		✓	5-43

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>		

<u>EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
12. The district has implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the overall performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its major educational programs. ⁴		✓	5-46
13. The district regularly reviews its organizational structure and the staffing of the central office and schools to minimize administrative layers and processes.	✓		5-48
14. The district clearly reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers.		✓	5-49
15. The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction.	✓		5-50
16. The district provides necessary support services (guidance counseling, psychological, social work, and health) to meet the needs of its students in a cost-efficient manner.		✓	5-52

<u>ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district has solicited and used broad stakeholder input in developing an integrated learning system and in setting priorities for administrative and instructional technology decisions.	✓		6-7
2. The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision making.		✓	6-7
3. The district provides formal and informal support to assist educators in incorporating technology into the curriculum.	✓		6-9
4. The district provides technical support for educational and administrative systems in the district.	✓		6-9
5. The district provides technical support for hardware, software, and infrastructure in a timely and cost-effective manner.		✓	6-10
6. The district has a professional development plan that reflects the district's vision of integrating technology to enhance and enrich the learning environment, as well as improve administrative support.	✓		6-15
7. The district provides professional development for the instructional technologies.	✓		6-16
8. The district bases technology acquisitions on instructional needs and makes technology acquisitions based on those needs. ⁵		✓	6-18
9. The district bases technology acquisitions on the results of research, planning, and evaluations of previous technology decisions to ensure technology decisions are cost-effective.	✓		6-20
10. The district has established standards for acquiring new programs and digital content that promote the integration of technology into everyday curricular needs.		✓	6-21
11. The district has a stable and efficient infrastructure. ⁶	✓		6-23
12. The district has established and communicated a policy stating appropriate uses of all types of technology resources, including computers, video equipment, software, and the Internet.	✓		6-23
13. The district supports compliance with the established policy on safe and legal use of technology resources.	✓		6-23

⁴ See performance accountability best practices and indicators for more information on each indicator for this best practice.

⁵ Instructional needs include incorporating technology into the curriculum and needs of students learning how to use technology.

⁶ Examples of this include a Wide Area Network (WAN) and a Local Area Network (LAN).

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>		

<u>ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
14. Segregation of Duties: The district segregates duties to reduce the risk that unauthorized transactions will be entered and not discovered quickly.	✓		6-24
15. User Controls: The district's user controls ensure authorization prior to processing transactions and ensure all output represents authorized and valid transactions.	✓		6-24
16. Application Controls: The district's applications are designed to provide users with reliable data.	✓		6-25
17. General Controls: 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.	✓		6-25
18. The district's management information systems provide data needed by administrative and instructional personnel in a reliable and timely manner.		✓	6-26
19. The district has taken steps to minimize the number of databases that are independent of its centralized computer systems.		✓	6-30
20. Other Controls: The district has established appropriate controls related to electronic data exchange transactions, other transactions processed through electronic media, and image processing systems.	✓		6-31

<u>PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district has efficient and effective processes for recruiting and hiring qualified personnel.		✓	7-6
2. The district maintains a reasonably stable work force through competitive salary and benefit packages and through district-wide efforts to address and remedy factors that contribute to increased turnover.	✓		7-14
3. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program to achieve and maintain high levels of productivity and employee performance among non-instructional employees.	✓		7-23
4. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for instructional employees to attain and maintain high quality instruction and to achieve high levels of student performance.	✓		7-25
5. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for school-based administrators.	✓		7-31
6. The district's system for formally evaluating employees is designed to improve and reward excellent performance and productivity, and to identify and address performance that does not meet the district's expectations for the employee.	✓		7-33
7. 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 those persons' employment.	✓		7-34
8. The district maintains clear and effective channels of communication with employees.	✓		7-37
9. The district has efficient and cost-effective policies and practices for providing substitute teachers and other substitute personnel.	✓		7-40
10. The district maintains personnel records in a highly efficient and accessible manner.		✓	7-44
11. The district uses cost-containment practices for its Workers' Compensation Program.	✓		7-47
12. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the human resource program.		✓	7-51

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		

<u>PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
13. The district periodically reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the office of human resources to minimize administrative layers and processes.	✓		7-53
14. The district periodically evaluates its personnel practices and adjusts these practices as needed to reduce costs and/or improve efficiency and effectiveness.	✓		7-53
15. For classes of employees that are unionized, the district maintains an effective collective bargaining process.	✓		7-56

<u>USE OF LOTTERY PROCEEDS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district has defined “enhancement” in a way that the public clearly understands.	✓		8-3
2. The district uses lottery money consistent with its definition of enhancement.	✓		8-4
3. The district allocates lottery funds to school advisory councils as required by law.	✓		8-5
4. The district accounts for the use of lottery money in an acceptable manner.	✓		8-9
5. The district annually evaluates and reports the extent to which lottery fund expenditures have enhanced student education.		✓	8-9

<u>USE OF STATE AND DISTRICT CONSTRUCTION FUNDS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district approves use of 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.	✓		9-4
2. The district uses capital outlay and operational funds appropriately, lawfully, and in accordance with its adopted five-year facilities work plan.	✓		9-12
3. The district minimizes construction costs by using appropriate measures from the SMART (Soundly Made, Accountable, Reasonable and Thrifty) Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards. ⁷	✓		9-14
4. When designing and constructing new educational facilities, the district incorporates factors to minimize the maintenance and operations requirements of the new facility.		✓	9-14

<u>FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district has established a facilities planning committee that includes a broad base of school district personnel, parents, construction professionals, and other community stakeholders.	✓		10-6
2. The district has established authority and assigned responsibilities for facilities planning.		✓	10-7
3. The five-year facilities work plan provides budgetary plans and priorities based on the master plan and input from the facilities planning committee.		✓	10-9
4. The five-year facilities work plan is based on a thorough demographic study and enrollment projections.	✓		10-12
5. The five-year facilities work plan is based on an evaluation of the physical condition and the ability of facilities to meet educational needs.		✓	10-14

⁷ The web page is: <http://smartschools.state.fl.us>.

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>

<u>FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
6. When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.	✓		10-16
7. District planning prioritizes construction needs.		✓	10-18
8. The district can demonstrate that the construction program complies with the current Laws of Florida.	✓		10-19
9. For all projects with dates of construction contracted after July 1, 2001, the district can demonstrate that the construction program complies with the Florida Building Code.		✓	10-20
10. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.	✓		10-21
11. The district develops descriptions and educational specifications for each project.	✓		10-21
12. Educational specifications for new construction, remodeling, and renovations include a description of activity areas.	✓		10-22
13. The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.	✓		10-23
14. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.	✓		10-24
15. The district begins school site selection well in advance of future need based on expected growth patterns.	✓		10-24
16. The board considers the most economical and practical locations for current and anticipated needs, including such factors as need to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to development, and consideration of agreements with adjoining counties.	✓		10-26
17. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.		✓	10-26
18. The district has considered, and where possible implemented, the general requirements recommended in the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards.	✓		10-28
19. The district minimizes construction costs through the use of prototype school designs and frugal construction practices.	✓		10-30
20. The district secures appropriate professional services to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.	✓		10-31
21. The district can demonstrate that funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.	✓		10-33
22. District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.	✓		10-34
23. For each project or group of projects, the architect and district facilities planner develop a conceptual site plan and building specifications.	✓		10-34
24. The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.	✓		10-35
25. The district has assigned one person with the authority and responsibility to keep facilities construction projects within budget and on schedule.	✓		10-37
26. The board minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to minimize project costs.	✓		10-38
27. The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project.	✓		10-39
28. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.	✓		10-39

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>		

<u>FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
29. The district conducts a comprehensive orientation to the new facility prior to its use so that users better understand the building design and function.		✓	10-40
30. 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.		✓	10-41
31. The district analyzes building evaluations to determine whether facilities are fully used, operating costs are minimized, and changes in the district's construction planning process are needed.		✓	10-42
32. The district analyzes maintenance and operations costs to identify improvements to the district's construction planning process.		✓	10-43

<u>FACILITIES MAINTENANCE</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district's maintenance and operations department mission, organizational structure, and operating procedures are established in writing.		✓	11-5
2. The district has established maintenance standards in its short- and long-term plans for providing appropriately and equitably maintained facilities within budget and in accordance with the district's five-year facilities work plan and annual budget.		✓	11-13
3. The district clearly identifies and communicates performance standards and expected outcomes to maintenance and operations staff.		✓	11-16
4. The district ensures that maintenance and custodial standards are regularly updated to implement new technology and procedures.		✓	11-17
5. The district obtains and uses customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements.		✓	11-20
6. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance and efficiency of the maintenance and operations program.		✓	11-21
7. The district accurately projects cost estimates of major maintenance projects.		✓	11-23
8. The administration has developed an annual budget with spending limits that comply with the lawful funding for each category of facilities maintenance and operations.	✓		11-24
9. The board maintains a maintenance reserve fund to handle one-time expenditures necessary to support maintenance and operations.	✓		11-24
10. The maintenance and operations department regularly evaluates maintenance and operations activities to determine the most cost-effective method of providing needed services.		✓	11-25
11. The district minimizes equipment costs through purchasing practices and maintenance.		✓	11-26
12. The district uses proactive maintenance practices to reduce maintenance costs.		✓	11-28
13. The maintenance and operations department regularly reviews the organizational structure of the maintenance and operations program to minimize administrative layers and processes.		✓	11-31
14. The maintenance and operations department regularly reviews the staffing levels of the maintenance and operations program to maximize the efficient use of personnel.		✓	11-34
15. The maintenance and operations department ensures qualified staff by using appropriate hiring practices.	✓		11-36
16. The maintenance and operations department has a written job description for each position within the department.	✓		11-36
17. The district provides appropriate supervision of maintenance and operations staff.		✓	11-37

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>

<u>FACILITIES MAINTENANCE</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
18. The district provides a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff to enhance worker job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.		✓	11-37
19. The district provides maintenance and operations department staff the tools and equipment required to accomplish its assigned tasks.	✓		11-39
20. A computerized control and tracking system is used to accurately track work orders and inventory.		✓	11-40
21. The maintenance and operations department has a system for prioritizing maintenance needs uniformly throughout the district.		✓	11-42
22. District policies and procedures clearly address the health and safety conditions of facilities.	✓		11-43
23. The maintenance and operations department identifies and implements strategies to contain energy costs.		✓	11-44
24. The district has an energy management system in place, and the system is maintained at original specifications for maximum effectiveness.		✓	11-45
25. The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health, safety, and energy efficiency conditions.	✓		11-45
26. The district is aware of and prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code.	✓		11-46

<u>STUDENT TRANSPORTATION</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The student transportation office plans, reviews, and establishes bus routes and stops to provide efficient student transportation services for all students who qualify for transportation.		✓	12-10
2. The district ensures that all regular school bus routes and activity trips operate in accord with established routines, and any unexpected contingencies affecting those operations are handled safely and promptly.		✓	12-28
3. The district effectively and efficiently recruits and retains the bus drivers and attendants it needs.	✓		12-33
4. The district trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers to enable them to meet bus driving standards and maintain acceptable student discipline on the bus.	✓		12-36
5. The district provides student transportation services for exceptional students in a coordinated fashion that minimizes hardships to students and accurately reports exceptional students transported to receive state funding.	✓		12-38
6. The district ensures that staff acts promptly and appropriately in response to any accidents that occur.	✓		12-42
7. The district ensures that appropriate student behavior is maintained on the bus at all times.	✓		12-44
8. The school district has a process to ensure that a sufficient school bus fleet is acquired economically and will be available to meet the district's future student transportation needs.		✓	12-44
9. The district provides timely routine servicing for buses and other district vehicles, as well as prompt response for breakdowns and other unforeseen contingencies.	✓		12-51
10. The district ensures that fuel purchases are cost-effective and that school buses and other vehicles are efficiently supplied with fuel.	✓		12-252
11. The district maintains facilities that are conveniently situated to provide sufficient and secure support for vehicle maintenance and other student transportation functions.		✓	12-55

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>		

<u>STUDENT TRANSPORTATION</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
12. The district maintains an effective staffing level in the vehicle maintenance area and provides support for vehicle maintenance staff to develop their skills.	✓		12-58
13. The district maintains an inventory of parts, supplies, and equipment needed to support student transportation functions that balances the concerns of immediate need and inventory costs.	✓		12-61
14. The district provides appropriate technological and computer support for student transportation functions and operations.	✓		12-63
15. The district has established an accountability system for student transportation, and it regularly tracks and makes public reports on its performance in comparison with established benchmarks.		✓	12-65
16. The district coordinates long-term planning and budgeting for student transportation within the context of district and community planning.		✓	12-68
17. The district monitors the fiscal condition of student transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and reviewing them against the budget.	✓		12-70
18. 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.	✓		12-71
19. The district has reviewed the prospect for privatizing student transportation functions, as a whole or in part.		✓	12-71
20. The district periodically reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the student transportation program to minimize administrative layers and processes.		✓	12-72

<u>FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The food service program is clearly defined with a mission statement, operating policies and procedures, and performance expectations.	✓		13-7
2. The district regularly reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the food service program to enhance the efficiency of program operation.		✓	13-8
3. The district uses a comprehensive food service training program to increase productivity, improve employee performance, and enhance the food service program.	✓		13-9
4. The district identifies barriers to student participation in the school meals program and implements strategies to eliminate the barriers.		✓	13-9
5. The district has established cost-efficiency benchmarks based on comparable private and public sector food service programs and other applicable industry standards.	✓		13-11
6. The district regularly evaluates the school food service program based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to increase revenue and reduce costs.	✓		13-12
7. The district regularly assesses the benefits of service and service delivery alternatives, such as contracting and privatization, and implements changes to improve efficiency and effectiveness.		✓	13-12
8. The program budget is based on department goals, revenues, and expenditure projections.	✓		13-14
9. The district's financial control process includes an ongoing review of the program's financial and management practices.	✓		13-15
10. The district accounts for and reports meals served by category.	✓		13-16
11. The district regularly evaluates purchasing practices to decrease costs and increase	✓		13-17

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>

<u>FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
efficiency.			
12. The district has developed an effective inventory control system that is appropriate to the size of the school food service program.	✓		13-17
13. The district has a system for receiving, storing, and disposing of food, supplies, and equipment.	✓		13-17
14. The district has a plan for the repair and replacement of equipment that includes preventive maintenance practices.		✓	13-18
15. The district provides school meals designed to meet the nutritional needs of students.	✓		13-19
16. The district's food production and transportation system ensures the service of high quality food with minimal waste.	✓		13-20
17. The district follows safety and environmental health practices and regulations.	✓		13-20

<u>COST CONTROL SYSTEMS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district has established an internal audit function with its primary mission to (1) provide assurance that the internal control processes in the organization are adequately designed and functioning effectively, and (2) where appropriate, offer recommendations and counsel to management that will improve performance.		✓	14-5
2. The district obtains an external audit in accordance with government auditing standards.	✓		14-8
3. The district provides for timely follow-up of findings identified in the external audit.	✓		14-9
4. The district obtains and reviews required financial information relating to school internal accounts, direct service organizations (DSOs), and charter schools.	✓		14-9
5. Segregation of Duties: The district segregates responsibilities for custody of assets from record keeping responsibilities for those assets.	✓		14-10
6. Authorization Controls: The district has established controls that provide for proper authorization of asset acquisitions and disposals.	✓		14-10
7. Project Accounting: The district has established records that accumulate project costs and other relevant data to facilitate reporting construction and maintenance activities to the board, public, and grantors.	✓		14-11
8. Asset Accountability: The district provides recorded accountability for capitalized assets.	✓		14-12
9. Asset Safeguards: Assets are safeguarded from unauthorized use, theft, and physical damage.	✓		14-12
10. Segregation of Duties over Inventory: The district segregates responsibilities for custody of inventories from record keeping responsibilities for those assets.	✓		14-13
11. Inventory Requisitioning Controls: The district has established and implemented controls that provide for proper inventory requisitioning.	✓		14-13
12. Inventory Accountability and Custody: The district has established controls that provide for inventory accountability and appropriate safeguards exist for inventory custody.	✓		14-14
13. Inventory Management: The district periodically evaluates the inventory function to determine its cost-effectiveness.	✓		14-14
14. General: The district has a process to set objectives for risk management activities, identify and evaluate risks, and design a comprehensive program to protect itself at a reasonable cost.	✓		14-15

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>		

<u>COST CONTROL SYSTEMS</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
15. Providing for Coverage Against Risk Exposure: The district has comprehensive policies and procedures relating to acquiring and reviewing coverage for risks of loss.	✓		14-15
16. Management Control Methods: District management communicates its commitment and support of strong internal controls.		✓	14-16
17. Financial Accounting System: The district records and reports financial transactions in accordance with prescribed standards.	✓		14-17
18. Financial Reporting Procedures: The district prepares and distributes its financial reports timely.	✓		14-17
19. Budget Practices: The district has a financial plan serving as an estimate of and control over operations and expenditures.	✓		14-18
20. Cash Management: The district has effective controls to provide recorded accountability for cash resources.	✓		14-19
21. Investment Practices: The district has an investment plan that includes investment objectives and performance criteria designed to maximize return consistent with the risks associated with each investment, and specifies the types of financial products approved for investment.	✓		14-19
22. Receivables: The district has established effective controls for recording, collecting, adjusting, and reporting receivables.	✓		14-20
23. Salary and Benefits Costs: The district has effective controls that provide accountability for the payment of salaries and benefits.	✓		14-20
24. Debt Financing: The district analyzes, evaluates, monitors, and reports debt-financing alternatives.	✓		14-22
25. Grant and Entitlement Monitoring: The district effectively monitors and reports grants activities.	✓		14-23
26. Segregation of Duties: The district segregates purchasing responsibilities from the requisitioning, authorizing, and receiving functions.	✓		14-24
27. Requisitioning: The district has established controls for authorizing purchase requisitions.	✓		14-24
28. Purchasing: The district has established authorization controls over purchasing.	✓		14-25
29. Receiving: The district has established controls to ensure that goods are received and meet quality standards.	✓		14-28
30. Disbursements: The district has established controls to ensure disbursements are properly authorized, documented, and recorded.	✓		14-29
31. Invoice Processing: The district has established controls for processing invoices to ensure that quantities, prices, and terms coincide with purchase orders and receiving reports.	✓		14-29

<u>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district has developed a meaningful community involvement mission statement and maintains ongoing community involvement activities in its strategic plan directed toward performing that mission.		✓	15-4
2. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the Community Involvement Program.		✓	15-6
3. The district solicits and incorporates parent and community involvement and support.	✓		15-8

<i>Best Practices</i>	<i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i>

<u>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</u>	YES	NO	PAGE
4. The district uses a variety of methods of communicating with parents.	✓		15-10
5. The district periodically reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the Community Involvement Program to minimize administrative layers and processes.	✓		15-12
6. The district has active Parent Teacher Associations /Parent Faculty Organizations (PTA/PFO) and other effective methods to involve and encourage parent leadership and participation.	✓		15-13
7. The district provides activities that encourage families to be involved in the schools.	✓		15-14
8. The district uses community resources to strengthen schools, families, and student learning and consistently offers school resources to strengthen communities.	✓		15-16
9. The district has developed school-business partnerships.	✓		15-17
10. District schools maintain active and effective programs to involve volunteers in the education process.	✓		15-18
11. District schools solicit economic support through school foundations.	✓		15-21

The Florida Legislature

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- [Florida Government Accountability Report \(FGAR\)](#) is an Internet encyclopedia of Florida state government. FGAR offers concise information about state programs, policy issues, and performance. Check out the ratings of the accountability systems of 13 state programs.
- [Best Financial Management Practices Reviews of Florida school districts](#). In accordance with the *Sharpening the Pencil Act*, OPPAGA and the Auditor General jointly conduct reviews to determine if a school district is using best financial management practices to help school districts meet the challenge of educating their students in a cost-efficient manner.

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Auditor General staff included Denis Jessen and Jim Kiedinger under the supervision of David Martin.

1

Introduction

Best Financial Management Practices Reviews are designed to help districts meet the challenge of educating students in a cost-effective manner.

Overview

Best Financial Management Practices Reviews are designed to help school districts meet the many challenges of educating students in a cost-effective manner. In these reviews, a school district's management and operational activities are compared to the "best practices" established by the state of Florida. These best practices were developed based on national best practices determined by looking at the management and operations of school districts across the country as well as published educational and operational research. Because the reviews compare districts against best practices it is not unusual for school districts to fall short of full compliance. In those instances, the review recommends a plan of action that, if implemented, will allow the district to meet the best practice, thus improving the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. The district school board must vote whether or not to implement this recommended action plan and then have two years to fully implement these plans. Districts that successfully use all of the Best Financial Management Practices will be awarded a "Seal of Best Financial Management" by the State Board of Education. Board members and administrative staff of Lee County welcomed the review to assist them in improving the management and operation of the school district.

The 2001 Legislature passed the Sharpening the Pencil Act, HB 269 mandating that all Florida school districts undergo a Best Financial Management Practices Review. These reviews are intended to increase public confidence and support for districts that demonstrate good stewardship of public resources, encourage cost-savings, and improve school district management and use of funds. The best practices were developed by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and the Auditor General, in consultation with stakeholders, and adopted by the Commissioner of Education. Overall, the best practices are designed to encourage districts to:

- use performance and cost-efficiency measures to evaluate programs
- use appropriate benchmarks based on comparable school districts, government agencies, and industry standards to assess their operations and performance
- identify potential cost-savings through privatization and alternative service delivery
- link financial planning and budgeting to district priorities, including student performance

As directed by law, OPPAGA and the Auditor General jointly examine a district's operations to determine if the district is using the best practices. The law also gives OPPAGA the authority to contract outside consultants for all or parts of the review, although OPPAGA remains responsible for determining district compliance with each best practice. For the School District of Lee County, OPPAGA subcontracted with ValienteHernandez, P.A., to complete the review.

Background and Scope

The mission of the Lee County School District is "to provide a quality education in a safe and well-managed environment." The district has 37 elementary schools; 12 middle schools; 10 high schools, and 8 special schools and centers as well as additional special centers. In 2001, the district employed over 7,500 full and part-time personnel, and served over 62,000 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. In Fiscal Year 2000-01, the district's budget was approximately \$662 million.

In accordance with the law, ValienteHernandez P.A. assessed the operations of the district under the thirteen (13) review areas illustrated in Exhibit 1-1.

Exhibit 1-1

Best Financial Management Practices Review Areas

1. Management Structures	8. Facilities Construction
2. Performance Accountability Systems	9. Facilities Maintenance
3. Educational Service Delivery	10. Student Transportation
4. Administrative and Instructional Technology	11. Food Service Operations
5. Personnel Systems and Benefits	12. Cost Control Systems
6. Use of Lottery Proceeds	13. Community Involvement
7. Use of State and District Construction Funds	
-

Both OPPAGA and ValienteHernandez P.A. express appreciation to the members of Lee County School Board and district employees who provided information and assistance during the review.

Methodology

The review begins with the district takes 90 days to complete a self-assessment of its operational and management activities against the best practices. This information and documentation provides the starting point for the external review, completed by ValienteHernandez, P.A., OPPAGA and the Auditor General's Office.

In conducting this review, ValienteHernandez, P.A. used a variety of methods to collect information about the district's use of the Best Financial Management Practices. Review staff made four site visits to the Lee County School District, with a timeline of major project activities presented in Exhibit 1-2. The ValienteHernandez review team conducted numerous individual interviews with district administrators and staff, held one public forum, and visited schools. Staff also gathered and reviewed many program documents, district financial data, data on program activities, and data on student performance.

ValienteHernandez P.A. also surveyed three groups of stakeholders: school board members, principals, and teachers. Questions varied depending on the subject-area and group surveyed, and the results have been incorporated into these reports, where applicable. The surveys were compiled using the Reiter Scale. That is, percentages were calculated only after eliminating "neutral" or "no opinion" responses. In addition, the categories "strongly agree/agree" and "strongly disagree/disagree" were combined.

In an effort to put Lee's programs and activities in context with other Florida school districts, staff gathered information from five peer districts around the state: Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia. The peer districts were selected based on their similarities with Lee across a number of

categories, including the geographic size of the district, the size of the student population and its demographic information. In some special instances, the activities of Lee were alternatively compared to neighboring districts: Charlotte, Collier, Glades, and Hendry.

Exhibit 1-2

Lee County School District

Best Financial Management Practices Review Timeline

Activity	Date
Self-Assessment Site Visit OPPAGA and Auditor General staff provided technical assistance to district staff on completing the self-assessment.	January 28, 2002
OPPAGA Workshop OPPAGA staff formally presented the scope of the project to the ValienteHernandez P.A. team.	April 11, 2002
OPPAGA and ValienteHernandez P.A. Conducted First Site Visit Team members reviewed the district's self-assessment with district staff, conducted numerous interviews, collected additional data, and identified preliminary high level issues and potential cost savings.	April 15 -19, 2002
OPPAGA and ValienteHernandez P.A. Teams Conducted One Public Forum Team members conducted a public forum to obtain input from the community on current issues and concerns as well as outstanding district services or programs.	April 16, 2002
ValienteHernandez P.A. Conducted Second Site Visit Team members conducted numerous interviews with the superintendent, assistant superintendents, program supervisors, and directors to collect additional data and information, discuss preliminary findings and potential solutions. Individual meetings were held with each school board member.	May 13-17, 2002
ValienteHernandez P.A. Conducted Third Site Visit Team members shared a draft report with district staff for feedback and to collaboratively check accuracy and refine the action plans.	July 25-26, 2002
OPPAGA and ValienteHernandez P.A. Conducted Fourth Site Visit Team members shared the second draft with district staff for feedback and to collaboratively check accuracy and refine the action plans.	August 26-28, 2002
Present Final Report to the Lee County School Board	November 21, 2002
OPPAGA and ValienteHernandez P.A. Attend School District Public Forum	December 19, 2002

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Interviews

The review team conducted over 200 on-site interviews with a wide range of district personnel representing all levels of staff to understand the School District of Lee County's practices and programs. Interview participants included school board members, the superintendent, assistant superintendents, various program directors and supervisors, principals and support staff. In addition, the team held many telephone conversations and exchanged electronic correspondence with district staff to gather additional information and feedback on relevant issues.

On-site observations

Team members conducted on-site observations of district operations. These observations included school campuses, transportation facilities, Learning Resource Center, the district's warehouse, and school cafeterias. In total, the review teams visited nine (9) elementary schools, seven (7) middle schools, six (6) high schools and three (3) other educational facilities as illustrated in Exhibit 1-3.

Exhibit 1-3

ValienteHernandez P.A. Visited Twenty-five District Campuses

Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools	Other Educational Institutes
Diplomat	Caloosa	Cypress Lakes	High Tech Central
Edison Park	Cypress Lake	Dunbar	High Tech North
Franklin Park	Diplomat	Estero	Michigan Montessori
Gateway	Dunbar	Ft. Myers	
Hancock Creek	Ft. Myers	LeHigh	
Mirror Lakes	Lee	Riverdale	
Orange River	Riverdale		
Sunshine			
Tice			

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Public forum

The review teams conducted a public forum in Lee County allowing citizens to express their concerns regarding current issues, and obtain feedback on outstanding district programs and services. At the forum, citizens were invited to speak with or provide written comments to ValienteHernandez P.A. representatives. The public forums were very useful to team members in identifying and/or confirming several issues related to the best practice areas. Additionally, community members were offered an “800 number” provided by OPPAGA to submit their comments at any time during the review.

Peer school districts

OPPAGA in collaboration with school district staff identified five peer districts with the purpose of putting Lee’s programs and activities in context with comparable Florida school districts. To gather information from the group of peers, the ValienteHernandez P.A. review team contacted the superintendent of each district who then provided a list of contact individuals for the different review areas. Consequently, ValienteHernandez P.A. staff interviewed a variety of staff from each of the five peer districts on numerous matters. Peer district staff provided information, documents, and data for comparison purposes.

The five peer districts chosen for this review were Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia. These districts were selected based on their similarities with Lee across a number of categories, including geographic size of the district and student population size and demographic information. ValienteHernandez P.A. also used data from the neighboring districts of Charlotte, Collier, Glades, and Hendry to compare selected aspects in the review areas of Personnel Systems and Benefits, Administrative and Instructional Technology, and Educational Service Delivery.

Surveys

To receive program input, ValienteHernandez P.A. surveyed three groups of stakeholders, as illustrated in Exhibit 1-4. The nature of the questions varied depending on the subject-area and group surveyed, and the results have been incorporated into the report, where applicable. The surveys were compiled using the Reiter Scale. That is, percentages were calculated only after eliminating “neutral” or “no opinion” responses. In addition, the categories “strongly agree/agree” and “strongly disagree/disagree” were combined.

Exhibit 1-4**ValienteHernandez P.A. Surveyed Three Groups of Stakeholders**

Survey Group	Total Surveys Distributed	Total Surveys Responded	Percentage Response
Board Members	5	5	100%
School Principals and Assistant Principals	69	52	75.4%
School Teachers	3,495	2,062	59.1%

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

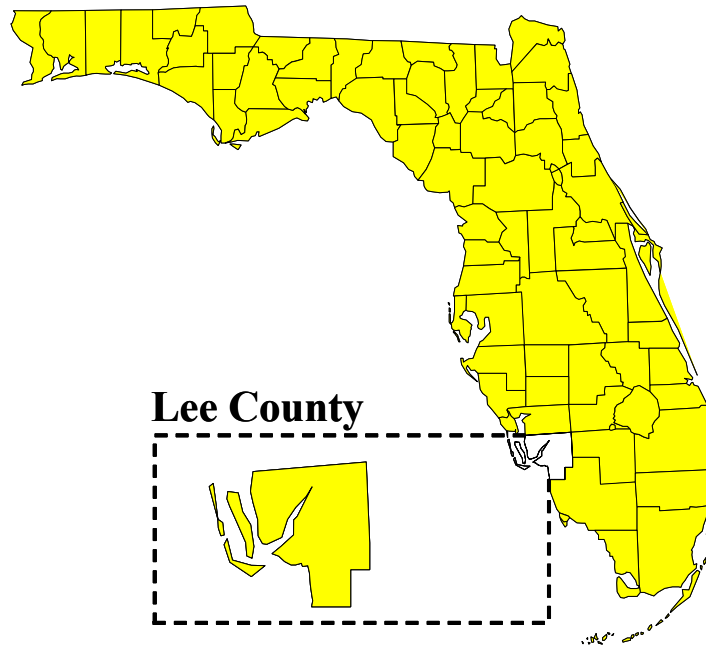
Other sources of information

As part of the review, team members obtained additional information on a variety of topics, such as statewide practices and data, model district programs, federal and state requirements, and technical/expert assistance. Team members contacted and received extensive input and information from several offices under the Florida Department of Education, especially the department of Education Information and Accountability Services (EIAS). Several other agencies that guide and rule the administration of different educational programs also provided valuable information and data, such as the Office of Multicultural Student Language Education (OMSLE), Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP), and the office the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, Clearinghouse Information Center. Other related agencies that were contacted include the Florida Department of Agriculture, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS), the *Fort Myers News Press*, and the Florida School Boards Association (FASB).

2

Statistical Profile of the School District of Lee County

The mission statement of the School District of Lee County is “To provide a quality education in a safe and well-managed environment.”



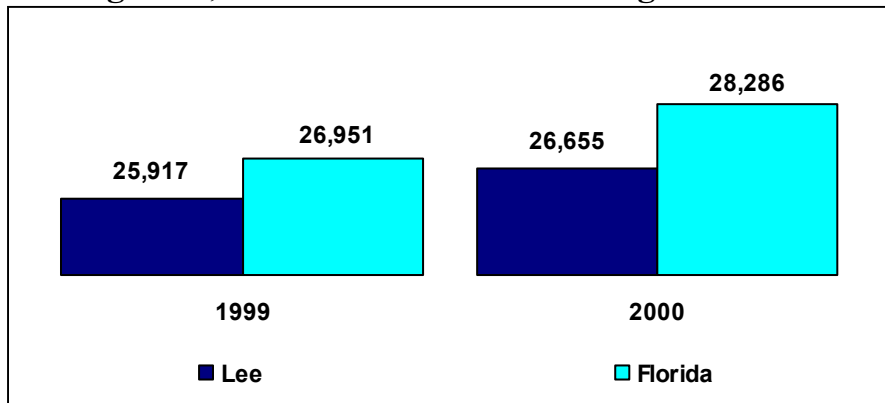
County Profile

Lee County is located on Southwest Florida's Gulf Coast between Naples and Sarasota. Its beaches stretch for 50 miles in a primarily resort and retirement community atmosphere. It was named in 1887 for the Civil War General Robert E. Lee. Lee County includes the city of Ft. Myers, the county seat and the cities of Sanibel and Captiva Islands, Ft. Myers Beach, Cape Coral, Bonita Springs and Estero, North Ft. Myers, Pine Island and Boca Grande, and Lehigh Acres. Its 2001 population was 454,918, continuing a 32% growth trend since 1990.

The county's primary sources of employment are retail trades, healthcare industries, and government sectors. The School District of Lee County, Lee Memorial Health System, Publix Supermarkets, Wal-Mart Corporation, Lee County Government, and the Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center are the principal employers. As shown in Exhibit 2-1, the per capita income of residents averaged \$1,300 below the state average in Fiscal Years 1999 and 2000, primarily due to the large number of retirees living in the county.

Exhibit 2-1

**The Per Capita Income of Residents
Averaged \$1,300 Below the State Average for 2000**

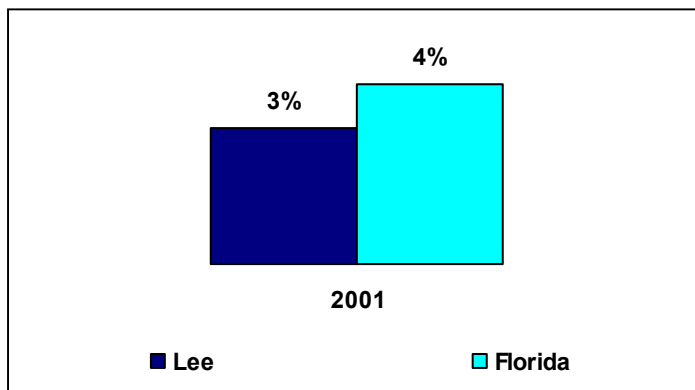


Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis.

As shown in Exhibit 2-2, the unemployment rate in Lee County was lower than the state's rate during the Fiscal Year 2001. This year, Lee County's unemployment rate was 1.3% lower than the state's rate of unemployment.

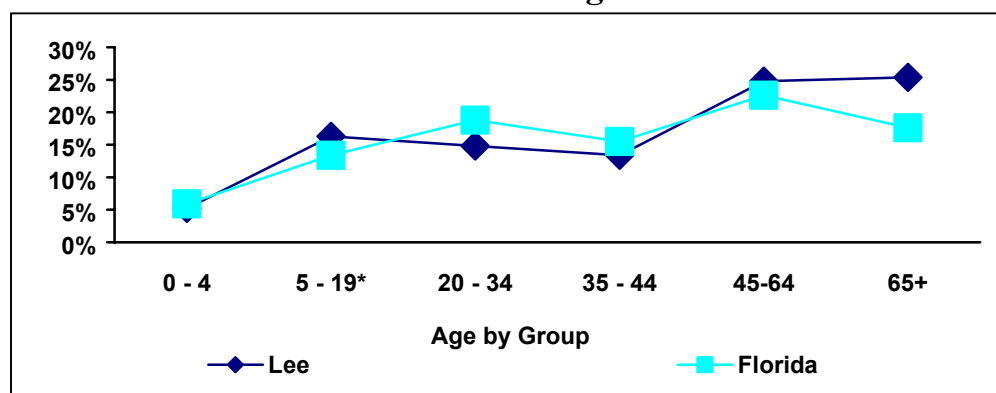
Exhibit 2-2

**Lee's Unemployment Rate was Lower
Than the State's for 2001**



Source: Lee County Business, Facts and Figures, and Demographic Data.

About 25% of Lee County residents were 65 years or older in 2000. Exhibit 2-3 compares the ranges between the age groups for Lee County and the state. Lee County's population was within 4% of the state's average in all age groups except the 65 years and older group, which was about 8% greater than the state.

Exhibit 2-3**The Percentage of Lee's School-aged and Over-65 Population Were Greater Than the State Average for the Year 2000**

Source: US Census: Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000.

School District Profile

Lee County is ranked as one of the 100th largest school districts in the United States. The majority of the school district buildings are located in the city of Ft. Myers. The following section provides a profile of the School District of Lee County in comparison with five peers—the Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia school districts. The peer districts were selected based on their similarities with the School District of Lee County across a number of categories, including the size of the student population, student demographic information, and county size. Information in this section is presented across four main areas.

- District Information
- Student Performance
- Student Characteristics
- Staff Characteristics

School district general information

The School District of Lee County (the district) operates 37 elementary, 12 middle, 10 high school and 8 other educational facilities. The district employs over 6,300 persons of which approximately 3,400 are instructional staff.

According to district records as of 2001, the district served 58,384 students, grades pre-kindergarten through twelfth of which: 28,640 are elementary students, 14,204 are middle school students, 15,540 are high school students.

Exhibit 2-4 shows the fall 2000 student population of Lee and its peer districts. As illustrated in Exhibit 2-4, Lee's growth rate has been higher than most of its peers over a five-year period. Since the 1996-97 school year, Lee has grown by about 6,000 students (approximately 10 %) from 52,319 in fall 1996 to 58,384 in fall 2001. The growth rate in Lee County is also higher than the state's by about 2%. Exhibit 2-5 shows detail of the enrollment over the five-year period.

Exhibit 2-4

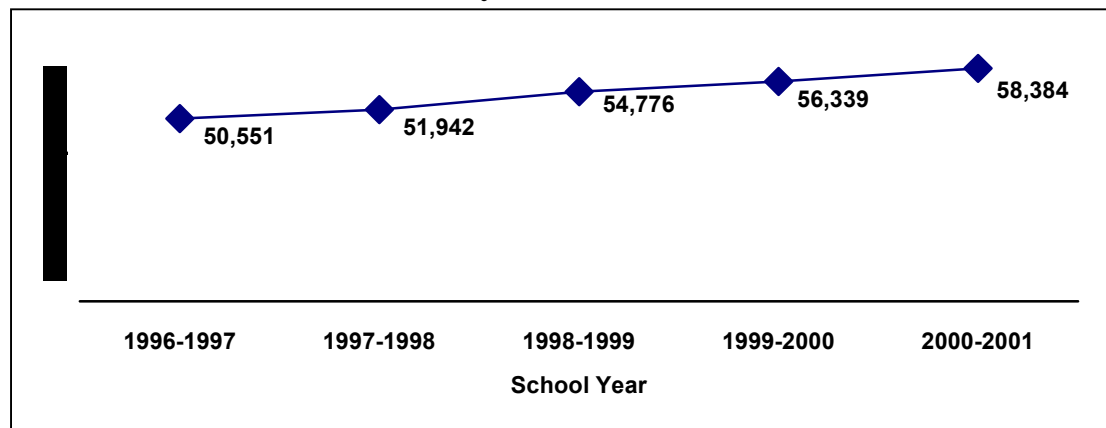
Lee's Student Population is Growing Faster Than the State Average and Four of its Five Peers

School District	Student Population		Percentage of Growth
	Fall 1996	Fall 2000	
Lee	52,319	58,384	10%
Brevard	66,664	70,591	6%
Pasco	43,461	49,683	13%
Polk	74,819	79,462	6%
Seminole	55,993	60,733	8%
Volusia	58,004	61,336	5%
Peer Average (without Lee)	59,788	64,361	9%
State	2,239,411	2,431,521	8%

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2000-2001

Exhibit 2-5

Lee's Enrollment Has Steadily Increased Over the Past Five Years



Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts, 1996-2001.

School district financial information

The 2001-02 general fund budget for the School District of Lee County is approximately \$383 million. The school district receives revenue from federal, state, and local sources, as well as monies transferred in. Almost half of the state revenue is from the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). This funding source, established by the Legislature annually, prescribes state revenues for education as well as the level of ad valorem taxes (property taxes), which may be levied by each school district in the state. It also includes restricted funding called 'categoricals,' which are funds specified by the Legislature for selected district services, such as instructional materials (textbooks). Exhibit 2-6 shows the district's sources of funds for the general fund for the budgeted 2001-02 year.

Exhibit 2-6**District Funds Include Federal, State, and Local Sources**

Source	Operating Budget	Total Budget
Federal	\$272,000	\$47,556,255
State	131,318,769	144,384,657
Local	206,008,865	319,975,225
Transfers In - Capital Projects	3,136,653	29,532,783
Others	35,341	35,341
Total Revenue Sources	340,771,628	541,484,261
Fund Balance	42,407,850	120,430,436
Total Funds Available	\$383,179,478	\$661,914,697

Source: School District of Lee County.

As detailed in Exhibit 2-7, 39.2% of the district's budgeted appropriations are allocated to instruction expenditures. Facilities acquisition and construction is the second largest expenditure category, followed by central services.

Exhibit 2-7**Almost 40% of the District's 2001-02 Budget Was Allocated for Instructional Activities**

Appropriations	Operating Budget	Total Budget	Percentage of Total
Instruction	\$228,100,765	\$247,614,010	39.2%
Pupil personnel services	17,772,706	20,838,690	3.3%
Instructional media services	5,766,194	5,895,661	0.9%
Instruction/curriculum development services	5,425,096	11,867,574	1.9%
Instructional staff training	4,064,912	7,459,309	1.2%
Board of education	551,860	551,860	0.1%
General administration	3,490,192	5,706,948	0.9%
School administration	25,635,890	25,657,676	4.1%
Facilities acquisition and construction	726,278	105,654,481	16.7%
Fiscal services	2,691,249	2,697,249	0.4%
Food services	0	20,484,971	3.2%
Central services	11,751,985	53,161,174	8.4%
Pupil transportation services	22,036,251	22,235,689	3.5%
Operation of plant	36,684,544	38,877,363	6.1%
Maintenance of plant	6,690,139	6,722,235	1.1%
Community services	539,053	1,881,183	0.3%
Debt service	0	29,151,350	4.6%
Subtotal	371,927,114	606,457,423	95.9%
Transfer of funds	0	29,532,783	4.7%
Fund balance	11,252,364	25,924,491	4.1%
Total	\$383,179,478	\$661,914,697	100.0%

Source: School District of Lee County Final 2001-02 Budget Summary.

The School District of Lee County's expenditures per FTE for 1998-99 are shown in Exhibit 2-8. Lee's expenditures at \$6,032 per FTE were higher than those of its peer districts. The expenditures include funds from the General and Special Revenue Funds.

Exhibit 2-8

Lee's Expenditures Per FTE Were Higher Than Its Peers'

School District	1998-99 Expenditures Per FTE		
	Unweighted FTE	Current Expenditures	Expenditures Per FTE
Lee	54,007	325,752,594	6,032
Brevard	68,015	345,567,221	5,081
Pasco	45,751	256,153,881	5,599
Polk	76,980	417,805,297	5,427
Seminole	58,085	298,009,012	5,131
Volusia	59,634	330,559,457	5,543
Average Without Lee			5,343
State Total	2,335,661	13,141,468,926	5,626

Source: Florida Department of Education. Profile of Florida School Districts, Financial Data.

Student Performance

The effective delivery of educational services is the first and most important aspect of all school district missions. Critical to the delivery of these services is how districts can maximize student performance while keeping within current budget constraints. Indicators of how well the district is accomplishing this include test scores, graduation rates, and dropout rates. This section profiles student achievement of the School District of Lee County, as well as performance information about its peer districts.

Student test scores

The Florida Comprehensive Assessment test measures student performance on selected benchmarks in reading and mathematics that are defined by the Sunshine State Standards. The standards articulate challenging content that Florida students are expected to know. The standards were developed in seven content areas and were adopted by the State Board of Education in May 1996. All public schools are expected to teach students the content found in the Sunshine State Standards. Students' proficiency in reading and mathematics in grades 4, 5, 8, and 10 is measured by the FCAT and is scored on levels 1 through 5, with 5 being the most accomplished. Exhibits 2-9 and 2-10 illustrate the scores ranging in the five levels for reading and mathematics.

Exhibit 2-9

**FCAT Reading Achievement Levels
for Tests Administered in 1999, 2000, and 2001**

Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
4	100-274	275-298	299-338	339-385	386-500
8	100-270	271-309	310-349	350-393	394-500
10	100-286	287-326	327-354	355-371	372-500

Source: Student Assessment Services Section, Department of Education.

Exhibit 2-10**FCAT Mathematics Achievement Levels
for Tests Administered in 1999, 2000, and 2001**

Grade	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
5	100-287	288-325	326-354	355-394	395-500
8	100-279	280-309	310-346	347-370	371-500
10	100-286	287-314	315-339	340-374	375-500

Source: Student Assessment Services Section, Department of Education.

Exhibit 2-11 provides results for the 2000-01 FCAT Reading and Mathematics exam. Lee County's reading scores ranged from 299 to 304. Lee County's mathematics scores ranged from 293 to 318. Lee students scored at a higher level than the state on three out of the six tests. When compared to the average of its peer districts, Lee generally scored below the average.

Exhibit 2-11**Lee's FCAT Reading and Mathematics 2001-02 Scores
Are Comparable to the Peer Districts**

District	Mean Scale Scores					
	Reading			Mathematics		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 10
Lee	304	299	301	293	309	318
Brevard	314	310	319	310	320	334
Pasco	294	299	306	291	311	322
Polk	292	285	294	285	296	311
Seminole	317	315	316	312	324	331
Volusia	306	298	310	302	304	322
State Average	299	295	303	294	305	319

Source: Department of Education. District FCAT Reading and Mathematics Results 2001-02.

The FCAT Writing exam is also administered throughout each of the state's 67 districts. The FCAT Writing test is an assessment that measures student writing proficiency in Grades 4, 8, and 10. The test requires students to write responses to assigned topics in a single testing period. Beginning in 2000, the Florida Writing Assessment Program (FWAP), also known as Florida Writes!, was called FCAT Writing. Prior to that year, writing was assessed separately through a test called Florida Writes! The FCAT exam scoring ranges from 1, the lowest score, to 6, the highest score. Exhibit 2-12 provides 2000-01 FCAT Writing results. Lee's mean scores ranged from 3.5 to 3.8. Lee's results are comparable to the state average and to its peer districts.

Exhibit 2-12

**Lee's FCAT Writing 2000-01 Results
Are Comparable to Its Peer Districts and the State**

District	Combined Mean Score		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
Lee	3.5	3.7	3.8
Brevard	3.5	3.9	3.9
Pasco	3.3	3.7	3.8
Polk	3.5	3.8	3.9
Seminole	3.4	3.8	4.1
Volusia	3.4	3.7	3.7
Statewide Average	3.4	3.7	3.8

Source: Florida Department of Education.

The 1976 Legislature created a competency test used as part of the requirements for a regular high school diploma. All eleventh graders must take the High School Competency Test (HSCT) and must pass both parts of the test (reading and mathematics) to qualify for a diploma. Exhibit 2-13 compares the percentage passing rate for the School District of Lee County and its five peers for the 1998-99 HSCT exam. Lee County students had passing rates generally lower than its peers and below the state average.

Exhibit 2-13

**Percentage of Students Passing the HSCT in Lee County
is Lower Than Its Peers and the State Average**

District	Grade 11	Percentage Passing
Lee	70	54
Brevard	87	83
Pasco	77	61
Polk	75	62
Seminole	79	62
Volusia	75	54
State Totals	71	54

Source: Florida School Indicators Report.

Another indicator of performance of its students is the results of the college placement tests taken by twelfth graders. Students are likely to take either the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) or the ACT (American College Test) tests as they prepare to graduate high school. Exhibit 2-14 compares Lee's results with its peers. The mean SAT score for Lee students was lower than four of its peer districts' mean SAT scores. The ACT composite score for Lee was the lowest among its peers and the state average.

Exhibit 2-14

**Lee Students' Average Score Was Lower Than Most Peers,
But Comparable to the State Average on Both the SAT and ACT Tests
in 2000-01**

School District	SAT			ACT		
	Number Tested	Percentage 12th Graders		Number Tested	Percentage 12th Graders	
		Tested	Mean Score		Tested	Composite Score
Lee	1,359	42.9%	994	977	30.9%	20.1
Brevard	2,218	56.9%	1,033	1,394	37.2%	21.8
Pasco	855	38.7%	1,008	657	29.7%	21.1
Polk	1,534	39.6%	980	1,292	33.3%	20.2
Seminole	2,263	63.1%	1,042	1,131	31.6%	21.7
Volusia	1,569	48.2%	1,002	1,061	32.6%	20.4
State	54,827	45.8%	993	40,508	33.8%	20.3

Source: Florida School Indicators Report 2000-01.

Graduation rates and students continuing their education

The School District of Lee County's dropout and graduation rates for the previous three school years are compared against its peers and the state in Exhibit 2-15. The district's dropout rate has generally increased since the 1998-99 school year, while its peer districts' dropout rates have generally decreased. The graduation rates for Lee County's peers have generally increased over the past three school years, while Lee's rates have decreased.

Exhibit 2-15

**Lee's Graduation Rate Has Decreased While its Dropout Rate Has Increased
Over the Past Three School Years**

School District	Dropout Rate			Graduation Rate		
	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year	School Year
Lee	4.9%	4.6%	5.6%	69.4%	67.8%	65.9%
Brevard	3.5%	2.0%	2.4%	64.0%	80.4%	86.8%
Pasco	5.5%	4.4%	4.3%	63.5%	64.8%	65.9%
Polk	8.7%	5.9%	5.8%	53.3%	55.3%	52.6%
Seminole	2.1%	3.4%	1.0%	63.3%	67.0%	70.9%
Volusia	1.8%	1.6%	1.4%	70.1%	74.9%	77.0%
State	5.4%	4.6%	3.8%	60.2%	62.3%	63.8%

Source: Florida School Indicators Report.

The percentage of Lee County students who entered college was lower than the statewide average and that of three of its peers. The percentage of School District of Lee County's students who entered college is compared against its peers in Exhibit 2-16.

Exhibit 2-16

The Percentage of Lee's 2000-01 Graduates Entering Postsecondary Education Was Lower Than Three Peers and the State Average

School District	Percentage Entering Postsecondary Education
Lee	56.28%
Brevard	75.67%
Pasco	54.18%
Polk	50.74%
Seminole	65.68%
Volusia	71.27%
State	62.96%

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

Student Characteristics

This section provides information about the student population of the School District of Lee County, as well as information about five of its peer districts. The size and demographics of a school district's student population is an important consideration in understanding the challenges it faces. For instance, a different set of challenges exists for a district that is growing versus one that has a declining student enrollment, high poverty or high rates of non-English speaking students. Exhibit 2-17 shows a history of pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade membership from fall 1996 to fall 2000 for Lee and its peers. Student population has grown consistently in Lee County over the last five years. This is consistent with the statewide trend as well as the average for the peer districts.

Exhibit 2-17

**Student Population in Lee Schools
Has Grown Consistently Over the Last Five Years**

School District	Fall 1996	Fall 1997	Fall 1998	Fall 1999	Fall 2000
Lee	52,319	53,786	54,776	56,339	58,384
Brevard	66,664	67,876	68,680	69,788	70,591
Pasco	43,461	44,770	46,067	47,693	49,683
Polk	74,819	76,495	77,354	78,816	79,462
Seminole	55,993	56,927	58,150	59,571	60,733
Volusia	58,004	59,310	59,851	60,665	61,336
Peer Average (without Lee)	59,788	61,076	62,020	63,037	64,361
State	2,239,411	2,294,160	2,336,793	2,379,348	2,431,521

Source: Profiles of School Districts 1996-2001.

As proxy information for poverty rates, Exhibit 2-18 provides information regarding the percentage of the 2000-01 student population eligible for free or reduced lunch for Lee and its peers. The School District of Lee County's percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch was higher than three of its peer districts and slightly lower than the state average.

Exhibit 2-18**The Proportion of Lee's Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch is Higher Than Three of Its Peers but Lower Than the State Average for 2000-01**

School District	Student Population	Percentage Receiving Free/Reduced Meals
Lee	58,384	42%
Brevard	70,591	30%
Pasco	49,683	44%
Polk	79,462	50%
Seminole	60,733	25%
Volusia	61,336	38%
State Average	2,431,521	44%

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-19 provides information regarding the racial/ethnic makeup of the fall 2000 student population of Lee County and its peers. The School District of Lee County's percentage of white students was generally lower than its peers, but higher than the state average. The percentage of black students in Lee County was higher than four of its peers, but lower than the state's percentage of black students. Lee's percentage of Hispanic students was higher than all of its peers, but lower than the state's percentage. Lee has similar percentages of Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, and multi-racial students to those percentages reported by the peer districts and the state.

Exhibit 2-19**Lee County's Hispanic Population is the Highest Among Its Peers**

School District	White	Black (Non-Hispanic)	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian	Multi-Racial
Lee	65.42%	15.56%	15.88%	1.09%	0.32%	1.70%
Brevard	77.34%	14.14%	4.52%	4.69%	0.27%	2.10%
Pasco	86.30%	3.69%	7.26%	1.09%	0.27%	1.37%
Polk	62.86%	23.40%	11.88%	.94%	0.15%	0.73%
Seminole	67.97%	13.73%	12.33%	2.94%	0.25%	2.74%
Volusia	72.63%	15.55%	9.03%	1.05%	0.21%	1.5%
State	52.53%	24.81%	19.11%	1.85%	.026%	1.39%

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-20 provides information on the membership of Lee County's fall 2000 student population by grade. There were no grade level groupings in which Lee County had the most students. In all four categories, Lee was lower than the peer average.

Exhibit 2-20

**Lee County's Student Population Distribution by Grade Level
is Similar to Its Peers in Fall 2000**

School District	Pre-kindergarten-Kindergarten	1st-5th Grades	6th-8th Grades	9th-12th Grades
Lee	5,839	22,801	14,204	15,540
Brevard	6,211	26,887	17,565	19,928
Pasco	5,097	19,217	11,614	13,755
Polk	7,842	31,860	18,273	39,760
Seminole	4,950	23,176	14,696	17,911
Volusia	5,337	23,391	14,919	17,689
Peer Average (without Lee)	5,887	24,906	15,413	21,809
State	230,891	949,948	567,901	673,781

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2000-2001.

Staff Characteristics

Staff characteristics provide a look at the personnel employed by the School District of Lee County, as well as information about five of its peer districts. Exhibit 2-21 provides information regarding the number of full-time staff (administrative, instructional, and support) employed by the district.

Exhibit 2-21

**The School District of Lee County Had a Lower Number
of Full-time Staff Than All of Its Peers in Fall 2000**

School District	Full-Time Staff						Total
	Adminis- trators	Percentage Of Total	Instruction	Percentage Of Total	Support	Percentage Of Total	
Lee	225	3%	3,455	55%	2,633	42%	6,313
Brevard	252	3%	4,293	57%	3,024	40%	7,569
Pasco	212	3%	3,309	51%	2,976	46%	6,497
Polk	297	3%	5,519	53%	4,578	44%	10,394
Seminole	185	3%	3,663	58%	2,487	39%	6,335
Volusia	263	3%	4,237	53%	3,518	44%	8,018
Peer Average (without Lee)	242	3%	4,202	54%	3,317	43%	7,761
State	9470	3%	150,551	55%	115,068	42%	275,089

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2000-2001.

Exhibit 2-22 provides information regarding the gender and race of all full-time staff in the School District of Lee County and its peers. Eighty-two percent of Lee's teaching staff is white. This is 14% higher than the state average and 1% lower than the peer average. Eleven percent of the District's staff is Black (Non-Hispanic). Lee County has the highest percentage of Hispanic employees among its peers.

Exhibit 2-22**The Racial Distribution of Lee County's School Staff is Similar to Its Peers**

School District	Race					Gender		Total
	White	Black (Non Hispanic)	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian	Male	Female	
Lee	5,168 (82%)	683 (11%)	415 (7%)	23 (<1%)	24 (<1%)	1,728 (27%)	4,585 (73%)	6,313
Brevard	6,579 (87%)	726 (10%)	208 (3%)	44 (<1%)	12 (<1%)	1,838 (24%)	5,731 (76%)	7,569
Pasco	6,106 (94%)	176 (3%)	184 (3%)	28 (<1%)	3 (<1%)	1,515 (23%)	4,982 (77%)	6,497
Polk	8,327 (80%)	1,701 (16%)	333 (3%)	20 (<1%)	13 (<1%)	2,274 (22%)	8,120 (78%)	10,394
Seminole	4,837 (76%)	1,041 (16%)	388 (6%)	47 (<1%)	22 (<1%)	1,504 (24%)	4,831 (76%)	6,335
Volusia	6,488 (81%)	1,079 (13%)	397 (5%)	35 (<1%)	19 (<1%)	2,007 (25%)	6,011 (75%)	8,018
Peer Average (without Lee)	6,467 (83%)	945 (12%)	302 (4%)	35 (<1%)	14 (<1%)	1,828 (24%)	5,935 (76%)	7,763
State	187,969 (68%)	56,600 (21%)	27,972 (10%)	1,769 (<1%)	779 (<1%)	67,448 (25%)	207,641 (75%)	275,089

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2000-01.

Exhibit 2-23 provides information regarding the number of teachers by degree level for the School District of Lee County and its peers for fall 2000. The education attainment of Lee County's teachers was equal to the average attainment of bachelor's degrees for the state. Lee has similar degree attainment averages as reported by its peers and the state.

Exhibit 2-23**In Fall 2000, Lee County Schools Had the Same Percentage of Bachelor's Degrees as the State**

School District	Type of Degree (Number and Percentage of District Total)							
	Bachelor's		Master's		Specialist		Doctorate	
Lee	2,094	61%	1,244	36%	54	2%	41	1%
Brevard	2,488	60%	1,577	38%	40	1%	33	<1%
Pasco	2,163	64%	1,163	34%	34	1%	26	<1%
Polk	3,879	72%	1,392	26%	80	1%	4	<1%
Seminole	2,056	55%	1,522	40%	116	<1%	65	<1%
Volusia	2,549	60%	1,566	37%	99	2%	44	1%
State	92,053	61%	53,451	35%	4,223	3%	1,754	1%

Source: Florida Department of Education: Education Information and Accountability Services.

3

Management Structures

The School District of Lee County has many of the managerial elements it needs to create a strong organizational structure that is responsive to school needs. To reach its goals, the district should continue its efforts to realign the organizational structure, strengthen its site-based management configuration and build program accountability.

Conclusion

Armed with a new committed leadership team and a solid strategic plan based on use of *Sterling Quality Principles*, the district is improving management practices and executive oversight. However, to reach excellence in management practices, the district should continue its effective efforts to realign operations. The School District of Lee County has many elements that foster a successful, highly responsive management structure. The school board and superintendent work together effectively, based on common goals, and the district's school board demonstrates independent judgment when deciding on issues proposed by the superintendent. Additionally, the district has a reasonable system for estimating future enrollment. It also uses several practices that reduce the risk of lawsuits.

While the district continues to operate under school choice, which makes certain activities very expensive, the district needs to achieve as much efficiency as possible. In addition to completing the projects that are currently underway, the district should consider taking several other steps. For example, administrative staffing levels should be assessed periodically and the district should develop benchmarks that can be used to assess staffing on an on-going basis.

The district should clarify the authority that principals have over school operations and develop guidelines to improve functioning and accountability under a strong site-based management approach. A shared vision, supported by clear guidelines will ensure increased commonality in programs and the culture across schools, while allowing each school to retain its uniqueness. Also, the district should vest School Advisory Councils with the decision-making authority for its site-based management approach. In addition, the district will need to continue considering local options to increase revenue and assesses all available non-voted and voted options.

Still, as shown in Exhibit 3-1, the district can be justifiably proud of its accomplishments, as well as its overall compliance with the management structures best practices.

Exhibit 3-1

The District Has Had a Number of Notable Accomplishments in Management Structures in the Past Year

- The board has earned the distinction of Master Board.
 - The district has taken the first steps to obtain the Governor's Sterling Award.
 - The district uses Sterling Criteria to establish goals for district performance and drive performance improvement. School-based administrators creatively manage their schools to achieve goals outlined in their school improvement plans and the district has created a comprehensive five-year strategic plan that links district and program goals to the budget.
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

Relationship Between the Superintendent and the School Board

1. While the interaction between the board and the superintendent is supported by clear policies, a few adjustments could improve their working relationship. (Page 3-6)
2. The board and superintendent have procedures that ensure board meetings are efficient and that the process is as effective as possible. (Page 3-14)
3. The board and superintendent have established written policies that are updated regularly. (Page 3-16)
4. The district routinely obtains legal services for advice on policy and to reduce the risk of lawsuits. Steps should be taken to ensure its legal costs and performance are continually monitored. (Page 3-18)

Organizational Structure, Staffing Levels and Use of Resources

5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority at the higher level. The district can make changes that will further streamline its operations. (Page 3-23)
6. While the district's new administration is making significant efforts to establish efficient staffing levels, further analysis is needed. (Page 3-34)
7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources, but enhancements could benefit the district. (Page 3-38)
8. The district has clearly empowered school principals to direct their schools through site-based management. Some adjustments would make the process more effective. (Page 3-42)

Strategic Plan

9. The district recently developed a multi-year strategic plan using the total quality principles of the Sterling criteria. The plan includes overarching goals and measures, and the district is currently concentrating on developing a deployment plan. (Page 3-46)
10. The district effectively seeks options to increase revenues, although a few additional options remain. (Page 3-49)
11. The district does not effectively link its financial plans and budgets to its priority goals and objectives. With the utilization of the Sterling Quality Criteria, however, this task has been given the highest priority. (Page 3-52)
12. While the district generates significant revenues from external sources, additional attention should be given to exploring local sources. (Page 3-55)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

Exhibit 3-2

Implementing the Recommendations for Management Structures Will Have a Five-Year Fiscal Impact of \$4,450,000 in Cost Savings

		Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings/ Increased Revenues or (Increased Costs)				
Action Plan and Strategy	Year 2002-03	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Total
3-2 Eliminate one position of board secretary	--	--	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$150,000
3-25 Expand the grants writing activity	\$0	\$1,075,000	\$1,075,000	\$1,075,000	\$1,075,000	\$4,300,000
Total	0	\$1,075,000	\$1,125,000	\$1,125,000	\$1,125,000	\$4,450,000

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Background

Located in the southwest coast of Florida, Lee County has sustained tremendous growth in population from 1990 to 2000 increasing 32% in Lee County and 39% in the region. It has an estimated calendar year 2000 population of 454,918 and 489,918 projected for 2005.

In 2000, 78% of the population was in incorporated areas. The two incorporated places with the greatest population are Fort Myers and Cape Coral, which was the 4th fastest growing metro area in the United States from 1980 to 1990. Several unincorporated areas in Lee County have also experienced tremendous growth. For example, the population of Lehigh Acres increased from 11,785 in 1990 to 33,430 in 2000 and that of Bonita Springs increased from 11,785 to 32,797. That growth has continued in the 1990's with Lee County remaining in the top 20 from 1990 to 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Like the county, the School District of Lee County has tripled in size over the past 25 years. To accommodate the average annual student enrollment increase of 1,500, until 1998, school boundaries were changed yearly to control school overcrowding. In 1998 the district implemented a plan called School Choice that allows the district to efficiently use all of the district's facilities, stabilize student assignments, and offer parents and families the possibility to choose schools.¹ The other objective of this plan was to end the long existing court order to achieve racial and ethnic diversity.

The School District of Lee County serves the entire county and is one of the 100 largest districts in the United States serving over 62,000 students in the 2000-2001 school year. The district, by national standards, is a large public school system. The student and other demographics are diverse and considerably impacted by a steep growth rate. The district's central office is located in the city of Fort Myers.

A five member elected school board governs the district. The board has created a system of advisory committees that allows board members to concentrate on and study key issues in greater depth. Two staff

¹ Detailed information on the district's School Choice plan is presented in the Introduction section of this report.

Management Structures

attorneys handle the district's legal matters, one that advises the board and another that handles all labor matters; in special circumstances, the district also contracts for legal services. The district also has three leadership teams to create an effective working system that supports policy compliance

The superintendent is appointed by the board and serves as the chief executive officer of the district and as secretary to the board. The current superintendent has been in office since September 2001 and one of his actions was to modify the organizational structure to ensure responsiveness to district needs. The school board approved the new organizational structure in April 2002, one month after the outset of this review.

With the new organizational structure, the new administration established its executive team with five new assistant superintendents (Teaching and Learning, Instructional Support Services, Operational Support Services, Facilities and Maintenance, and Human Resource) plus one chief financial officer. The new organizational structure is presented in Exhibit 3-4.

For the 2001-02 school year, the district had over 62,000 students of which

- 1,306 were Pre-Kindergarten students
- 28,491 were Kindergarten to 5th grade students
- 15,180 were 6th to 8th grade students
- 17,646 were high school students

To deliver educational services, the district employed for the 2001-2002 year over 7,500, full and part time workers, operated 37 elementary, 12 middle, 10 high schools and 25 other educational facilities. For the same year, the district had an operating budget of over \$383 million dollars, as shown in Exhibit 3-3.

Exhibit 3-3

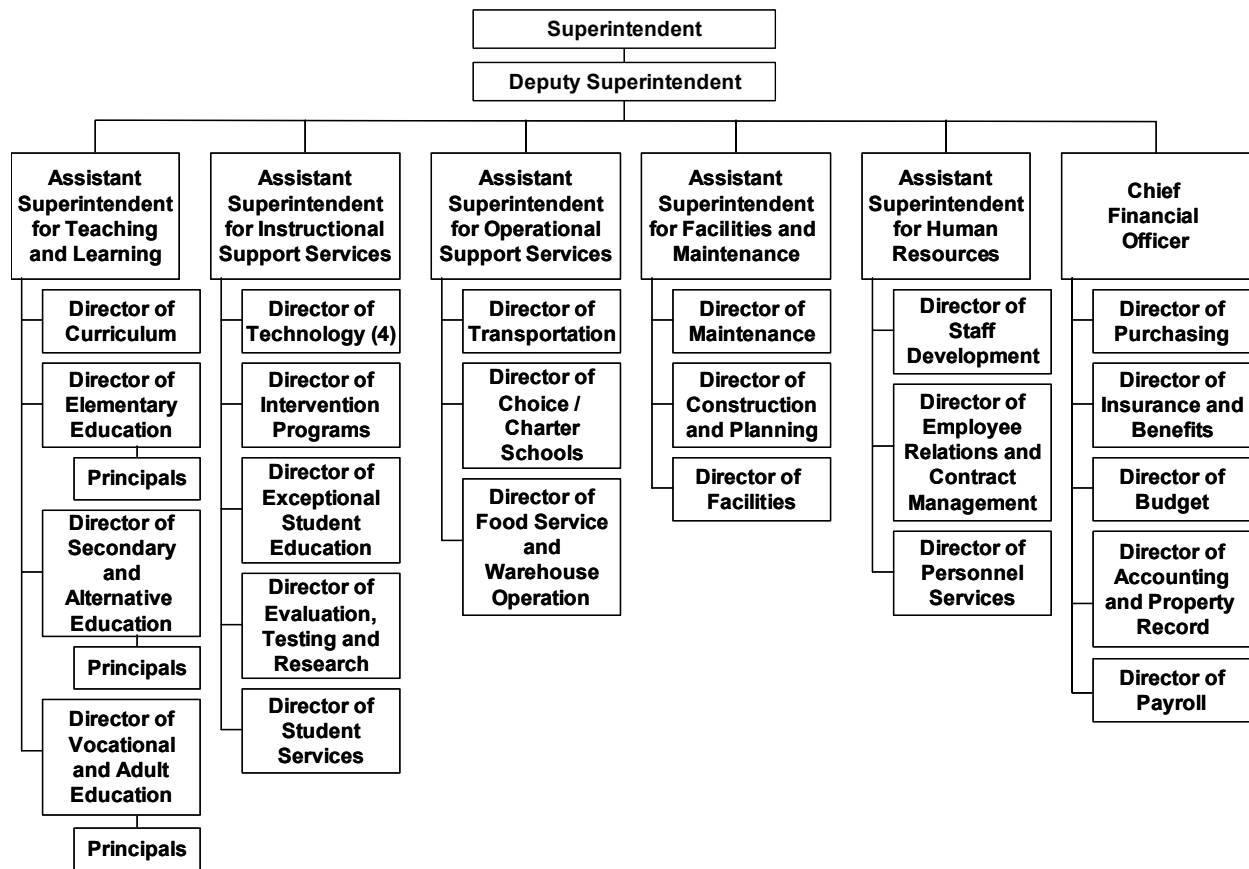
The District's Total General Operating Budget Was Within Peer Average for the Year 2001-02

District	Fund Sources						Total
	Federal	State	Local	Transfers In	Other Financing Sources	Fund Balance	
Brevard	2,229,985	239,338,112	123,279,337	0	0	32,563,567	397,411,001
Lee	272,000	131,318,769	206,044,206	3,136,653	0	42,407,850	383,179,478
Pasco	1,150,716	196,802,505	71,765,784	0	300,000	29,498,771	299,517,776
Polk	1,000,000	303,032,411	111,114,139	15,386,310	0	29,807,465	460,340,324
Seminole	900,000	196,537,531	110,439,215	5,652,507	0	18,969,050	332,498,303
Volusia	875,000	203,632,988	109,707,403	8,574,763	70,000	23,636,709	346,496,863

Source: Department of Education. Office of Funding & Financial Reporting.

Exhibit 3-4

School District of Lee County Organizational Structure, April 2002



Source: School District of Lee County.

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. used various methods in determining whether the district is meeting the best practices for management structures, including reviewing the self-assessment instruments completed by district staff, conducting interviews, and making inquiries with the superintendent, four of the five assistant superintendents, several program directors, staff attorneys, and three of the five members of the school board.

Associated evidence was examined and analyzed. Compliance with rules and regulations was assessed by looking at historical revisions of existing policies and procedures and consultation with related organizations such as the Florida Department of Education, Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) and the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA). ValienteHernandez P.A. also obtained information from the group of peer districts chosen for this project (Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia county school districts).

To receive program input from school administrators ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted a focus group for school principals and another for school teachers. Furthermore, surveys were designed and administered to 100% of school principals and teachers. Survey response levels were 75.4% and 59.0%

respectively. The questions varied according to the group surveyed and the results have been incorporated into different sections of this chapter.

Relationship Between the Superintendent and the School Board

1 While the interaction between the board and the superintendent is supported by clear policies, a few adjustments could improve their working relationship.

The School District of Lee County is governed by a five-member elected school board and administered by an appointed superintendent. Board members serve four-year staggered terms with two members elected at the time of the presidential election and three members elected during the general election for governor. The current board has been working together for four years and three of its members are up for reelection in November 2002. The current superintendent was appointed in August 2001. The board has regularly scheduled meetings on the first and third Tuesday of each month; briefing meetings for the board are held on every first and third Thursday of each month.

The new administration is taking additional steps to maintain effective working relationships between board members and county staff. For example, the school board and superintendent have jointly participated in several programs with the Florida School Boards Association such as the *Annual Board Conference* and the *Orientation Conference*. Additionally, all school board members have recently started training to attain the FSBA *Master Board Certification*.² The board received Master Board certification in October 2002.

In order to create an effective working system that supports policy compliance, the district has three leadership teams:

- Executive Team: meets weekly and is composed of the superintendent, the five assistant superintendents, the CFO, the chief of staff, and the director of public relations
- Central Leadership Team: meets monthly and is composed of the twenty department directors
- Leadership Team: meets quarterly and is composed of all district managers and all school-based administrators.

Responsibilities of the school board are clearly delineated in policy, however, steps should be taken to ensure board members clearly understand said policies

In essence, the role of the school board is to formulate policy while the role of the superintendent is to carry out those policies. The board is responsible for guiding the district's budgeting, planning, and policy-making. School board policy 1.30 clearly explains the role of the board as the maker of policy and it reads: "*School Board of Lee County is responsible for the organization and control of the public*

² The Master Board Certification is a distinction granted by the Florida School Boards Association (FSBA). The program is designed for a leadership team (i.e.: school board and superintendent) to engage in a formalized curriculum that develops skills and techniques to create and sustain an effective governance team. Skills and techniques addressed include: consensus building, managing change, team self-evaluation, ethical management, conflict resolution, listening, and team learning. The program provides leadership teams with an opportunity to discuss and improve or enhance those important interpersonal issues which are essential to team functioning.

schools of the district and is empowered to determine the policies necessary for the effective operation and the general improvement of the School System.”

The superintendent is responsible for the daily operations of the district. The school board appoints the superintendent and in turn, he selects individuals to lead the administrative divisions of the school district. Section 230.03(3), *Florida Statutes* states that the “*Responsibility for the administration and management of the schools and for the supervision of instruction in the district shall be vested in the superintendent as the secretary and executive officer of the school board, as provided by law.*”

While there are policies in place, board survey results indicate that there is room to improve the degree to which both board members and superintendent/staff adhere to policies. When given the statement: “*The school board adheres to existing policies and procedures that affect their working relationship with the superintendent and staff,*” three of the board members disagreed or strongly disagreed, while one agreed or strongly agreed and one was neutral.

The board’s opinion on the superintendent/staff adhering to policies is clearly divided, but confirms that there is room for improvement. When given the statement: “*The superintendent/staff adhere to existing policies and procedures that affect their working relationship with the board,*” two board members disagree or strongly disagreed, while two agreed or strongly agreed with one being neutral.

The district is still in a period of transition in administration, which could explain the board’s concerns. The new superintendent has significant experience and has given priority to making the board and staff work as a functional group where roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated and understood. Master Board certification will help, but steps need to be taken that guarantee an effective working relationship based on clarity of roles continues on to the new board. Implementation of Sterling quality concepts will also help strengthen the working relationship between superintendent/staff and the board.³

For example, the responsibilities of the superintendent should be clearly specified and communicated through a formal policy. Currently, the district does not have a policy that specifies the responsibilities of the superintendent. Rather, the role and responsibilities of the superintendent are explained through his employment contract and exercised according to s. 230.32, *Florida Statutes*, which explains the six essential powers of the superintendent. Having direct access to the responsibilities of the superintendent by staff members and public-at-large is of great importance and the district should include these in policy.

The district should also ensure that new board members receive orientation training when they first get elected to the board. Such training should cover clear explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent. Two board members agreed or strongly agreed when given the statement: “*New school board members receive orientation training upon being elected,*” but two disagreed or strongly disagreed and one was neutral. The district is currently developing a training package for new board members. We recommend the district complete the package by November 2002 in time for the arrival of three newly elected board members.

An unusual feature in this school district is that each board member has his/her own office space on-site. Also notable is the fact that two secretaries support the activities of the board. All the peer districts have only one office assigned to board members that is used as needed, with the board being supported by only one secretary. While having their own office on-site is convenient, it is an administrative overhead expense for the district and could jeopardize compliance with Sunshine law requirements.

³ The *Florida Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence* is a self-assessment and feedback process that improves planning and accountability by measuring program strengths and weaknesses and evaluating administrative leadership.

While procedures are in place to evaluate the superintendent's performance, procedures need to be established to evaluate the performance of the board

The board and superintendent annually meet and assess, among other things, their roles and responsibilities, the district's performance on its goals and objectives, and their future plans for improving district performance.

The district has a history of holding retreats and special workshops and, in continuing this tradition, the new administration held a workshop in January 2002. These events, however, should be scheduled on a recurring basis and be used as an opportunity to evaluate the performance of the board, and how well the board and the superintendent met common goals.

Evaluation of the superintendent is listed in the superintendent's employment contract. In November of each year, the board establishes two to five performance objectives for the superintendent and in August, the board evaluates the superintendent's performance and determines whether the objectives have been met. Evaluation of the board however, is not clearly specified. Board survey results indicate that the board needs to develop procedures for establishing its own goals and evaluating its performance, as shown in Exhibit 3-5. A procedure similar to the superintendent's evaluation should be established for the board as a group, whereby goals, objectives, and performance is measured. If this procedure is established, the district has a better chance of continuing a formal evaluation process of the board even if changes occur in both the board and in the administration.

Exhibit 3-5

Survey Points to a Need to Develop Procedures to Establish Board Goals

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
Board	The board has clear procedures for establishing its own goals.	20%	0%	80%	0%
Board	The board has established clear procedures for evaluating its own performance	0%	20%	80%	0%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

Several procedures are in place to ensure an effective working relationship between the superintendent and the board

Board survey results indicate that there are procedures that promote an effective working relationship between the board and the superintendent/staff. These results were in line with interview comments made by staff members.

As mentioned earlier, the new superintendent and his executive team have given high priority to streamlining communications and delineating responsibilities as an essential means of working effectively. For example, anything on the agenda can be discussed directly by any board member with the staff member whose name appears on the agenda item. The staff member, in turn, communicates the board member's request to the superintendent. On issues that are not agenda items, the board has to contact the superintendent directly. The superintendent gauges and prioritizes board members' requests. Through conversations held with three of the five school board members, we concluded that, in general, the board has responded positively to the new superintendent's approach and that there exists a highly cooperative atmosphere for reaching common goals. As shown in Exhibit 3-6, survey results speak positively of the relationship between the board and the superintendent/staff. For example, four of the

five board members strongly agreed or agreed when given the statement: “*Superintendent and staff are responsive to board members’ inquiries.*”

Another uncommon feature in this district is that in addition to the bi-monthly regularly scheduled school board meetings (referred to board action meetings), the board and the superintendent/staff also hold bi-monthly briefing meetings. The purpose of the briefing meetings is to provide board members the opportunity to discuss information and review documentation with district staff that will prove useful in making decisions during the next regularly-scheduled meeting. This is also an opportunity to deliberate on issues other than the ones appearing on the board agenda. Under this procedure, the district has two board meetings where they take action and another two board meetings where no action is taken. All four meetings are televised and open to the public. According to staff, this practice is carried out effectively because it clarifies matters before they go to the board. This practice however, was not found in any of the five peer districts contacted. Instead of regularly scheduled briefing meetings, other peer districts hold workshops as needed or conduct a briefing meeting with the chairperson of the board prior to the regular board meeting.

In view of the fact that the board and the superintendent have a procedure whereby board members can contact superintendent/staff on any agenda or non-agenda items, we would recommend the district discontinue the bi-monthly briefing meetings, and instead hold workshops on topics as needed. Executive staff time is valuable and redundancy of meetings is costly to school districts. The new procedure must ensure that all board members are copied with the responses provided as a result of individual requests, thus guaranteeing they are all abreast of the on-going issues and inquiries.

Exhibit 3-6

Survey Results Speak Of a Positive Relationship Between the Board and the Superintendent/Staff

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don’t Know
Board	The district’s long-range plans have been developed in consultation with the board.	80%	0%	20%	0%
Board	Superintendent and staff are responsive to board members’ inquiries.	80%	0%	20%	0%
Board	Significant comments from the public-at-large forwarded by the board members to staff are shared with the superintendent.	60%	20%	0%	20%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

Communication procedures to respond to public-at-large inquiries are adequate

The board spends an appropriate amount of time hearing from the public at meetings. The district also has a policy to hear public comments where the time allotted for each speaker is limited. Parents and public have proper channels for resolving their grievances at the administrative level before coming to the board.

Normally, the district attempts to resolve concerns directly. Parent/student/staff grievances go directly to the school principals who attempt to resolve the issue. If that fails, the next step is to resolve the concern administratively in a formal manner, usually with staff attorney involvement. The matter only goes to the

board on appeal of the administrative decision and for final resolution. Board members explained that when they received a complaint from a parent, district employee, or other community member, they instruct the person to address their concern at the first administrative level where the incident occurred.

In addition, board members should ensure that they maximize their visibility in the community by participating in community events, including Town Hall meetings. This way, if questions or critical or sensitive issues are raised, board members will have another opportunity to educate the public.

High turnover rate of senior level administrators may have had a negative impact on operational and instructional continuity

Surveyed groups generally agreed that the high turnover rate of senior level administrators in the last ten years has had an impact on educational continuity. When given the statement: *“The high turnover rate of senior level administrators has had no effect on educational continuity,”* 80% of principals and 100% of board members disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Direct impact of high turnover rate is difficult to measure, but a turnover rate that is too high can be detrimental, not so much instructionally because this district operates under school-based management, but operationally. Some examples of operational weaknesses that can be attributed in part to high turnover rate include:

- recent fire code violations where the assistant superintendent of Support Services and director of Construction Services were asked to resign after the Commissioner of Education threatened to prevent schools from opening due to large numbers of schools without fully functional fire alarm systems;
- the current shortage in classroom space has been caused in part from a lawsuit from the Builder’s Association preventing the district from collecting Impact Fees and beginning badly-needed construction;
- low public confidence due to negative reports from the media and the school board removing two superintendents from office within the last ten years;
- low cohesion on goals and objectives by not having adopted, until recently, a formal process to ensure cohesiveness throughout the district;
- lack of clarity of who holds responsibility for various tasks within the district due to the constant change of executive level staff and reassignment of responsibilities. There have been 32 different senior staff members holding 10 executive level positions over the last 10 years.

Moreover, high turnover at the senior level is costly as individuals have to be recruited, trained, and spend time gaining understanding of the operations. As shown in Exhibit 3-7, the district has had five superintendents in the last 12 years, as well as several changes of individuals occupying key administrative positions.

While the district’s strategic plan can help provide solid guidance regardless of changes in leadership the district should take preventive measures to minimize the turnover rate of key administrators that will support educational stability. For example, the district should continually emphasize the difference between the role of the board and the role of the superintendent, thus minimizing possible micromanagement by the board. Also, the district should ensure an optimal match between the responsibilities of the jobs and the capacity of the individuals occupying the positions. It is noted that the current superintendent has a vision for addressing this issue. Finally, the district also should make sure people in charge have proper training and time and opportunity to enhance their skills.

Compensation levels have to be commensurate with work. For example, the board recently approved certain changes in the organizational structure where several individuals were promoted to a higher position and at the same time, agreed to forego raises for an unspecified period of time. Individuals with

responsibilities that are not commensurate with their pay are not likely to be satisfied. The district should also ensure adequate support staff and resources to senior administrators. Proper supervision, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms should also be ensured. And most importantly, there should be clear lines of responsibilities from the board down, a clear vision of the district's strategic plan, and individual goals and objectives.

While detailed explanations and recommendations that support these observations are provided throughout this report, the district should periodically assess the condition of each of element to ensure efforts remain targeted.

Exhibit 3-7

**Turnover Rate of Selected Administrators
Has Been Significantly High During the Last Ten Years**

Superintendent	Assistant Superintendent, Instruction / Educational Svs.	Assistant Superintendent, Business and Administrative Services / CFO	Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources and Support Svs.	Admin. Asst. to Superintendent / Director, District Ops. / Exec. Dir., District Ops.
1990				
1991	X			
1992				X
1993	X	X		
1994	X	X		X
1995	X			X
1996		X		
1997	X	X		X
1998	X		X	
1999	X			
2000		X		
2001	X	X	X	
2002				

Note: "X" denotes a staff member change.

Source: "Senior Staff Changes, 1990-2002," Lee County School Board.

The district would benefit from reassessing and revising the existing board and district committees

Both the board and the district have developed and use a committee system that allows board members to concentrate on key issues. Dividing the workload into effective committees allows board members to study and discuss issues in greater depth and creates a positive working relationship between the board and district staff, fostering trust and confidence among board members. See Exhibit 15-3, Community Involvement, for a list of the committees, councils, leagues, and authorities instituted by the School District of Lee County and the board. Currently, each board member presides over one committee and serves on two others. Generally, staff members support each committee, answering questions, conducting research at the committee's request, and providing technical assistance as needed.

The board and the district, however, could improve the effectiveness of the standing committees by revising their purpose and structure. The board and district should evaluate whether the current number of committees is manageable. For example, some existing committees do not meet frequently enough to play a meaningful role in reducing the time spent discussing complicated or controversial issues prior to board meetings. Some committees, such as the Zone Advisory Councils, the Budget Advisory Committee, and the District Safety Committee, meet frequently (monthly), while other committees, like

the Professional Selection Committee and the Calendar Advisory Committee, rarely meet. Also, the district should clearly differentiate ad hoc committees from subcommittees.

The district should attempt to limit itself to those essential committees listed in policy, which include those required by Florida statutes: Finance, Benefits, Facilities Planning, Technology, Educational Planning and Evaluation, and Policy Making. Continuing other committees should be carefully considered, to ensure that these efforts do not consume too much board and staff time while allowing the district to still meet local community needs. Increased use of ad hoc committees for specific issues is recommended.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district formalize the responsibilities of the superintendent through a board policy.*

Action Plan 3-1 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district phase out the assignment of one office to each board member. The board as a whole is assigned one office that is shared among its members as needed. The district then reassigns the empty offices to other uses. At the time this transition is completed, we recommend the district eliminate one of the positions of board secretary.*

Action Plan 3-2 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district develop a procedure similar to the superintendent's evaluation for the board as a group whereby goals, objectives, and performance can be measured.*

Action Plan 3-3 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district discontinue the bi-monthly briefing meetings. In its place, the district should implement briefing meetings with the board chairperson prior to each regular board meeting. The new procedure should include steps to ensure that all feedback/responses provided by staff to individual board members' inquiries are shared with all board members. This guarantees the whole board is kept informed and shares the same information. For complicated or new issues, specific workshops can be held to educate the entire board.*

Action Plan 3-4 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district review and streamline the current list of committees.*

Action Plan 3-5 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 3-1

Formalize the Responsibilities of the Superintendent Through Policy	
Strategy	Review existing state regulations and state statutes that delineate the responsibilities of the superintendent.
Action Needed	Step 1: The state regulations and strategies are translated into school board policies. Step 2: The policies are adopted by the board.
Who Is Responsible	The chief of staff formalizes the policies, the board attorney receives them for concurrency, and the superintendent forwards them to the school board for adoption.
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-2

Phase Out Individual Board Member Offices by Combining Them into One Office; Eliminate One Board Secretary Position

Strategy	During a two-year period, the district moves from assigning one office to each board member to just one office that is shared by all members. During this period, one board secretary position should be eliminated, as well.
Action Needed	Step 1: The chief of staff develops a two-year schedule for phasing out individual board member offices and the second position of board secretary. Step 2: Over the two-year period, the members are combined into one office with one secretary.
Who Is Responsible	The Chief of Staff
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Implementing this recommendation will result in cost savings of approximately 50,000 annually in salary and benefits for one secretary, beginning in 2004-05, or \$150,000 over the next five years.

Action Plan 3-3

Develop a Procedure to Evaluate the School Board's Yearly Performance

Strategy	Develop a procedure to evaluate the school board's yearly performance.
Action Needed	Step 1: The school board holds a workshop dedicated solely to setting the group goals and objectives they wish to meet. Step 2: Goals and objectives are put in to writing with specific benchmarks and timelines identified. Step 3: An evaluation instrument is developed that will be used at the end of the evaluating period.
Who Is Responsible	The school board chairperson can oversee this process with help from the superintendent and his staff.
Time Frame	To be in place at the start of the school year 2003-2004.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-4

Discontinue the Bi-Monthly Briefing Meetings

Strategy	Replace the bi-monthly briefing meetings with briefing meetings with a briefing to the board chairperson prior to each regular board meeting. Hold workshops on special topics as needed.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Executive Team modifies policy to replace the bi-weekly board briefing meetings with briefing meetings held between the superintendent and the chairperson of the board prior to each regular board meeting. The procedure (administrative regulation) that supports this policy has to include steps to ensure that all feedback/responses provided by staff as a result of individual board members' inquiries is shared with all other board members, thus guaranteeing the board as a whole is kept informed and board members share the same information. Step 2: School board approves revised policy and procedure. Step 3: New policy is disseminated throughout the district.
Who Is Responsible	Executive team, School Board, and Chief of Staff
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-5

Streamline the Current List of District Committees	
Strategy	Review and streamline the current list of district committees.
Action Needed	Step 1: Organize a meeting of all chairpersons of existing committees for the purpose of eliminating and/or consolidating many of the committees.
	Step 2: Identify, with board input, those committees that can be eliminated or consolidated with other committees.
	Step 3: Designate some committees as standing committees or ad-hoc committees.
	Step 4: Re-define the purpose and function of the committees that will continue to exist. The district must ensure that the committees' missions are clear and precise, having the required membership, timelines, and responsibilities.
Who Is Responsible	The Chief of Staff
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can implemented within existing resources.

2 The board and superintendent have procedures that ensure board meetings are efficient and that the process is as effective as possible.

Board members are trained about Sunshine Law requirements regarding meetings and adhere to those requirements. ValienteHernandez P.A. staff verified that the district complies with the three basic principles established by law: meetings are open to the public, reasonable notice of the meeting is given to the public, and minutes of the meetings are reported.

Regular school board meetings are held twice a month on Tuesday evenings and typically last less than two hours. Action meetings are scheduled at 6:30 p.m., which is generally convenient to the public. Public briefing meetings are also held twice a month during working hours and last three hours on average (refer to best practice 1 a recommendation related to the discontinuation of board briefing meetings).

Speakers' time at regular school board meetings is limited to three minutes. At meetings, a card is available to explain how the public can speak to agenda items and presents the option to mark whether they are for or against the proposed action. There are other special cards for the public to request the board's attention. Cards have to be completed prior to the start of each session. However, if a person wants to speak to the board on a specific issue, he/she has to make a formal request 14 days in advance.

When a large number of community members are expected to speak on an agenda item at the board meeting, numbered cards are prepared and speakers sign in when they arrive at the meeting. A controlled process of calling speakers up to the podium in numerical order is utilized to ensure organized and respectful dialogue with the board.

The district has a consent agenda that helps expedite the meetings. Prior to voting on the consent agenda, board members may pull certain agenda items for discussion. This is usually done by request from members of the public who wish to speak on those agenda items. *School board policy 1.31(5)(a)* clearly explains the procedure to be followed by the public in speaking on the consent agenda. Board members confirmed that the district strives to make meetings as effective as possible; four board members agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *"Board meetings make effective use of the staff's and the public's time."*

The district also prepares a master planning calendar that shows the dates of major events. The calendar is available on the district's intranet and can be viewed and updated by key personnel. This calendar ensures that important deadlines are met.

While board members receive agenda items in a timely manner, information received could be improved and plans to effectively manage controversial issues refined

The district standard requires that materials be provided to board members five days prior to meetings and is consistently met. This was confirmed by the survey where four board members agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: *“Board members receive agenda materials in ample time before the board meeting.”*

However, survey results also indicate that the quality of information provided to support agenda items does not consistently meet board member needs. As shown in Exhibit 3-8, three board members disagreed or strongly disagreed that for each major agenda item, staff prepares a clearly written executive summary that describes how the item supports the district’s objectives. Only three board members agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Moreover, one board member indicated that staff sometimes does not communicate the fiscal impact of certain items.

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. The Executive Team reviews all agenda items two weeks prior to board meetings. When the team determines that an item may be controversial, plans are made to resolve the controversy. Currently, the superintendent and individual board members keep each other informed on controversial issues by telephone, fax, and email and take steps to resolve the controversy.

Survey results, however, indicate that communication of controversial issues could be improved. A best practice requires the board and superintendent to develop plans that effectively manage controversial issues, which include designating an individual responsible for communicating with the board and establishing timelines for communication. Formalizing the procedure will help avoid communication breakdowns, enable effective resolution of conflicts and improve accountability. The new procedure, as of August 2002, requires the chief of staff to send an email to individual board members one week in advance of the regular board meeting asking them to communicate any sensitive issues or concerns. This practice should help control the emergence of controversial issues during board meetings.

Exhibit 3-8

The Clarity of Information Provided To Board Members and Management of Controversial Issues Could Be Improved

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don’t Know
Board	Board members receive agenda materials in ample time before the board meeting.	80%	0%	20%	0%
Board	For each major agenda item, staff prepares a clearly written executive summary that describes how the item supports the district’s objectives.	40%	0%	60%	0%
Board	For each major agenda item, staff prepares a clearly written executive summary that describes how the item impacts the budget.	60%	20%	20%	0%
Board	A clear procedure is in place for the board and superintendent to keep each other informed of controversial agenda issues.	40%	20%	40%	0%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the board and superintendent develop additional plans to effectively manage controversial issues, which include designating an individual responsible for communicating with the board and establishing timelines for communication.*

Action Plan 3-6 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 3-6

Formalize Procedures to Manage Controversial Issues	
Strategy	Formalize into a written plan the existing informal procedure that is intended to manage controversial issues.
Action Needed	Step 1: A workshop with the school board and the superintendent and his top level staff is held to discuss the existing informal procedure and recommend ways to improve the process. Step 2: A policy is developed that outlines how controversial issues will be handled when they come to the attention of board members, staff, or media. A person(s) is (are) designated responsibility to communicate the controversy to board members along with actions being take to resolve the concerns. If the controversy is not resolved and is taken to the board for resolution, guidelines for board resolution should be specified in policy.
Who Is Responsible	The board attorney and the superintendent's chief of staff should collaborate in developing the procedure and seeing that it becomes board policy.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

3 The board and superintendent have established written policies that are updated regularly.

In 2000, the district hired a consultant to update the district's policies, and then discontinued the contract believing they could accomplish policy updates following each legislative session internally with the input of a recently hired district lobbyist. In 2002, Florida adopted a far-reaching new school code and the district will again evaluate and revise its policies as soon as a new chief of staff is hired. Following two successive years of significant policy review, the next comprehensive review will be scheduled for 2007 or 2008.

Written policies and procedures are available on the district's website. The district's policies are generally easy to understand and cover expected areas. The manual is organized into four chapters: Governance, Student Learning, Community Engagement/Customer Relations, and Quality Operations Management.

The district uses effective practices to ensure policies are continually developed and updated, but could annually review policies affecting some subject areas

Written policies and procedures have been developed and are available to staff and the public-at-large through the district's intranet and website. District policies do not cover procedural matters. Procedures are presented through administrative regulations, as will be explained in the next section.

The district has procedures in place to develop, update, and evaluate policies, and instead of having one committee concentrating exclusively on these tasks, the district has assigned this responsibility to various

board committees and to district directors, who are usually committee liaisons. Recommendations for policy changes do not occur annually, but rather reflect an on-going process. Staff reviews policies to determine if changes are needed and submit recommendations to the school board for approval. The committees recommend policy changes to reflect both changes in law or in district operation. Additionally, policies that have not been revised after five years are automatically submitted for review.

Revisions and updates begin when a director or committee recommends a change or new policy to the respective assistant superintendent. A draft copy is sent to all Executive Team members for discussion. Later, a second draft is sent to any administrator who may have input or be affected by the proposed change. A final draft is advertised for public hearing. The board reviews the final draft at a briefing meeting and later adopts the policy at a public hearing. After the board adopts the change or adds a new policy, the new or updated policies are formally distributed throughout the district and posted on the website.

The district's board attorney annually reviews the policies for compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. After each legislative session, the attorney also advises the board and superintendent on which require revision, addition or deletions due to statutory changes. The district's staff attorney is charged with the same responsibility, concentrating on policies that relate to labor and employment matters.

The process to update and revise policies could be further refined. Annually, the district should formally request input from the different board advisory committees to review and recommend policy changes affecting their subject areas. If implemented routinely, the district should be able to avoid hiring consultants to conduct comprehensive reviews. The chief of staff can coordinate this process.

Another possible improvement is to facilitate public access to the policies. Currently, access to the policy manual through the district's website is not direct, requiring movement through several electronic links. In addition, the district could establish a direct link to the Florida Statutes where that statute is referenced in policy. Further, the district may consider adding a search tool which would allow the user to search all policies that reference the selected terms. Volusia County has such search tool.

The district uses effective practices to ensure procedures are developed and updated, but could cross-reference procedures with policies to make them more effective

Revised in August 2000, the district's administrative regulations cover procedural matters that communicate precise guidelines for employees' daily activities.⁴ Administrative regulations are available electronically, which is a plus, and cover four areas of district-wide administrative matters: 1) Students, 2) Employees, 3) General Administration, and 4) Quality Operations.

Recommendations to change or develop new administrative regulations do not occur annually, but as with policies, the process is ongoing. Staff and committees identify a need to review procedures and develop board recommendations for change. Until April 2002, the office of District Operations was responsible for coordinating updates of administrative regulations to reflect changes in law or board action. Under the new structure, this responsibility falls under the chief of staff.

Revisions, updates, or inclusion of new administrative regulations follow the same procedure used for the policies described above. If an administrative regulation needs to be revised due to statutory changes after legislative sessions, then the board attorney develops a draft and takes it through the same channels; similarly, the staff attorney revises the administrative regulations that relate to labor and employment matters.

⁴ The district refers to its procedures as administrative regulations.

Administrative regulations that are not modified during a five-year period are not, like the policies, automatically revised. We recommend the district add automatic revisions to the five-year review process.

The district can take these processes a step further by making a few changes. For example, the district could facilitate consultation and clarification by cross-referencing the administrative regulations with the corresponding policy. Additionally, the district can facilitate public consultation of the administrative guidelines by establishing a direct link to the board manual through the home page of the website.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district expand its automatic five-year review process to include the administrative regulations. Those administrative regulations that have not been updated during a five-year period are automatically revised.*

Action Plan 3-7 shows the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 3-7

Automatically Review Non-Revised Administrative Regulations at the End of the Five-Year Period	
Strategy	Like the policies, automatically review non-revised administrative regulations at the end of the five-year period to ensure that they are updated and to comply with all recent federal, state and local rules and regulations.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Support Services assigns the Chief of Staff the responsibility of establishing a procedure by which the administrative regulations are automatically reviewed every five years.
Who Is Responsible	Board attorney, Chief of Staff, assistant superintendents, and district advisory committees
Time Frame	May 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

4

The district routinely obtains legal services for advice on policy and to reduce the risk of lawsuits. Steps should be taken to ensure legal costs and performance are continually monitored.

Legal services in the district are provided by two in-house attorneys, and by subcontracted counsel, when necessary. One in-house attorney reports to the school board (the board attorney) and the other to the assistant superintendent for Human Resources (the staff attorney).

The board attorney is responsible to the board, is supervised by the superintendent, and provides counsel to the board, superintendent, principals, and other school officials on matters affecting the school district's businesses, and on policies and regulations affecting the school system. The staff attorney provides counsel on matters relating to labor and employment matters, and student matters including custody issues, discipline, special education, etc. The district out-sources legal counsel for workers compensation, personal injury, desegregation/student assignment, real estate transactions, construction matters, and some IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act) matters. Both attorneys have assigned budgets that include their salary, the salary of one secretary and a share amount to be used to hire outside legal services as needed.

The total in-house legal expenditures for FY 2001-02 of the district are \$308,684 which includes the salaries and benefits of the board and staff attorneys, their secretarial support, and office expenses. In the same year, the district spent \$96,647 for outside counsel, to fund litigation costs and fees, hearing officers, court reporters, witnesses, court filing, etc., not covered by the risk loss fund.

When compared to the peer districts, the salary of the board attorney of Lee County is the highest (Exhibit 3-9). This difference is consistent with the fact that this district has the highest cost of living, as shown in Exhibit 3-10. We recommend the district include ongoing comparisons of salaries as part of the evaluation process recommended in Action Plan 3-8.

Exhibit 3-9

Board Attorney Salary Is the Highest When Compared To Peer Districts

District	Board Attorney	
	Base Salary	Supplemental/ Incentive Pay
Lee	\$103,629	\$0
Polk	\$89,311	\$0
Seminole	\$88,771	\$5,370
Volusia	\$89,169	\$0

Note: Brevard and Pasco were excluded from the comparison as these districts outsource their legal counsel.

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. Peer District Survey - June - August 2002.

Exhibit 3-10

Cost of Living in Lee County Is the Highest Compared To Peers

	Lee	Polk	Brevard	Pasco	Seminole	Volusia
	(Ft. Myers)	(Bartow)	(Cocoa)	(New Port Richey)	(Sanford)	(Deland)
Overall cost of living index	96.9	87.1	89.2	93.0	92.4	87.3

Source: MSM House and Home. September 30, 2002. <http://houseandhome.msn>

The district is self-insured for workers compensation under s. 440.38, *Florida Statutes*, and for general tort claims under s. 768.28, *Florida Statutes*.⁵ The district contracts with a third party administrator to manage the district's property/casualty claims, including litigated workers' compensation and general liability claims. The contract amount is \$250,000 for the year ending June 30, 2002 and will increase to \$275,000 the following year.

The third-party administrator has four adjusters on-site, housed in the Insurance & Benefits Management department. All claims expenses are tracked by the third party administrator under five categories: indemnity (lost wages), medical, legal, settlements, and miscellaneous. Legal expenses encompass attorneys' fees, paralegal fees, copying charges, transcription costs, etc. The district utilizes the services of three attorneys who specialize in workers' compensation whose hourly rates range between \$90 and \$105. When the district receives notice that a new claim is being litigated, the third party adjusters and the Director of Insurance and Benefits try to match the claim/claimant with the defense attorney best suited for the case. Each attorney submits periodic invoices with third party adjusters reviewing the invoices for reasonableness and accuracy before the bills are paid. A similar procedure exists for general

⁵ The board annually appropriates a sum of money for the risk-loss fund, as directed by the district's actuary. Workers' compensation, tort claims, and chargeable expenses associated with workers' compensation and litigation are charged to the fund as authorized by the district's chief financial officer. Usually the charges exceed the amount appropriated. The district purchases excess liability insurance for excess workers' compensation, tort, and other litigation judgments, etc.

liability claims. Total workers' compensation legal expenditures in Lee and its peer districts for the last three fiscal years are shown in Exhibit 3-11.

Exhibit 3-11

**Total Workers' Compensation Legal Expenditures
Are Comparable To Peer Districts**

District	Amount Paid By Year		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02 ¹
Brevard	Not available	Not available	Not available
Lee	\$267,728	\$212,901	\$219,276
Pasco	Not available	Not available	Not available
Polk	Not available	Not available	Not available
Seminole	\$181,232	\$171,974	\$227,480
Volusia	\$236,227	\$249,198	\$300,567

¹As of June 2002.

Source: Lee County schools and peer district survey.

The district has also outsourced counsel for construction matters, coordinated by the Construction Services department.

The district has several procedures to minimize the risk of lawsuits

Over the past five years there have been four lawsuits of significance. For example, the district paid \$150,000 for a lawsuit related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in January 2002, and in February 1998, \$125,000 was paid over a discrimination conflict. Between 1993 and 1999, the district paid approximately \$307,000 for direct settlements over the desegregation matters.

There are many variables that contribute to low lawsuit activity but the effective work of a district's legal staff can certainly minimize the risks. The skill level and response time of the in-house attorneys were recognized on several occasions during interviews held with staff as being factors that minimize the risk of lawsuits. Board members, district staff, and school principals contact both attorneys on an as-needed basis. An allocation analysis of the board attorney's time reflects that approximately 38% of his time is spent advising the board as a whole or individual board members, 18% is spent advising the superintendent/staff members, and 12% is spent advising school principals. He spends approximately 32% of his time in group-meetings with various district staff and in board action and briefing meetings.

Procedures are also in place for the board, the superintendent and other staff to confer with the staff attorney. These procedures further minimize the risk of lawsuits. According to a time-allocation analysis of the staff attorney, he constantly renders opinions to school principals, consistently gives advice to the superintendent, while conferring with the board on a moderate basis. Approximately 64% of his time is spent advising staff on labor/employment, on student matters, or on representing the school in related litigation and administrative proceedings. Approximately 6% of his time is devoted to issues such as reviewing policies and procedures for compliance. He spends approximately 30% of his time in group-meetings on matters where his participation is deemed necessary.

The district should develop consistent criteria to define when to retain outside counsel

The district has not developed consistent criteria for determining under what circumstances it should retain outside counsel other than at the request of the in-house attorneys. Such criteria would include the level of expertise needed to handle a particular type of case, the volume of legal work requiring this expertise, the legal skills and expertise of in-house staff, anticipated fluctuations in workload demand, and costs and potential conflicts of interest. While the board attorney is very knowledgeable of the

circumstances that require outside counsel (the staff attorney does not refer matters to outside counsel), the district would benefit from developing detailed criteria for this purpose.

Board and staff benefit from unique education efforts on legal issues

A unique feature of this district is a form of legal training provided by the board attorney called the School Law Minute. Started two years ago, the board attorney presents different legal issues on school law at each briefing meeting. Generally, the issues presented relate to matters the board is due to address, including parliamentary procedure training. Board members are encouraged to suggest training topics.

If the district decides to eliminate the briefing meetings, as discussed in Best Practice 1, the School Law Minute training could still continue through written publications and the website.

The district would benefit from systematically analyzing and evaluating its legal expenditures and services

As mentioned before, legal services in the district are provided by the in-house attorneys and outsourced under special circumstances. During the last three years, out-sourced services have been coordinated primarily by the board attorney, risk management, and construction services.

The district does not compile data that categorizes and tracks all legal expenses by type of legal action, nor does the district compare this data with comparable districts. By regularly reviewing its legal costs, the district could determine, for example, whether it is more cost effective to use in-house or contracted legal services. Fees paid to outside counsel should also be contrasted regularly with fees paid by other organizations to ensure compensation for outside counsel is not excessive. Taking a more systematic approach to evaluating legal costs would, in many cases, only require a more rigorous evaluation of issues that are already qualitatively considered.

The district should track legal costs and deadlines to improve effectiveness. The internal auditor should review legal costs on a monthly basis. Further, the district should establish performance measures for legal activities such as average elapsed time to final disposition, percentage dispositions within objectives, percentage of judgment settlement as a percentage of demand, and percentage of resolutions and contracts drafted on schedule.

Lastly, the district should strengthen the process by which the overall quality of all legal services provided is evaluated. Currently, some legal services are evaluated. For example, the district evaluates the performance of the in-house attorneys through an annual employee evaluation. Also, the risk management department reviews the status of claims and their attorney's defense strategy on a quarterly basis; they also check attorney invoices for reasonableness and accuracy before the bills are paid. No evidence was found, however, to demonstrate that all legal costs are systematically evaluated.

The district could build on the current evaluation system, basing performance on goals and objectives, reasonability, comparability, and quality of service. This evaluation component should be part of the tracking system described above. Examples of performance measures that the district could consider for different areas are:

- Average elapsed time to final disposition (days)
- Percentage of judgment settlements as a percentage of demand
- Percentage of resolutions and contract drafted on schedule
- Percentage of legal opinions rendered on schedule
- Level of satisfaction with the services received

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district develop the management infrastructure needed to evaluate the cost of legal services on an on-going basis.*

Action Plan 3-8 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district build on the current evaluation system by creating a performance-based process that measures goals and objectives, reasonability, comparability, and quality of service.*

Action Plan 3-9 shows the steps necessary to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 3-8

Track and Evaluate District Legal Services	
Strategy	Ensure that all district legal service costs are properly tracked and effectively evaluated for cost-efficiency and accountability.
Action Needed	Step 1: Form a small ad-hoc committee made up of the staff, school board members, staff attorney, the chief of staff, the internal auditor, and representatives from workers' compensation, real estate, and construction. Step 2: Instruct this committee to develop guidelines and procedures that will address the following concerns: • When to retain outside counsel • Possibility of consolidating legal services now handled separately in the areas of workers' compensation, personal injury, real estate, and construction. Step 3: Develop an accounting procedure that tracks legal fees by categories such as in-house counsel, judgments, etc. Step 4: Conduct an annual performance review based on goals, objectives, reasonability, and comparability with other peer districts.
Who Is Responsible	The internal auditor and the chief of staff collaborate in reviewing existing procedures to secure legal services, developing a strategy to streamline and improve the present system, and prepare an annual report for the school board.
Time Frame	May 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-9

Improve the Current Evaluation System of Legal Services	
Strategy	Build on the current evaluation system by creating a performance-based process that measures goals and objectives, reasonability, comparability, and quality of service.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop an evaluation instrument to review legal staff's performance. This instrument should consider performance measures, such as • Average elapsed time to final disposition (days) • Percentage of judgment settlements as a percentage of demand • Percentage of resolutions and contract drafted on schedule • Percentage of legal opinions rendered on schedule • Level of satisfaction with the services received Step 2: annually review legal staff performance
Who Is Responsible	Board along with the executive team.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003

Fiscal Impact

This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

5 **The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority at the higher level, however roles should be clarified and some spans of control adjusted.**

The new superintendent and the school board requested that the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) review the district's organizational conditions. The report included recommendations for to improve the efficiency of organizational alignment and management practices. As a result, the organizational structure was modified and approved by the school board in April 2002, one month after the outset of this review.

With the new organizational structure, the new administration established its executive team with five new assistant superintendents (Teaching and Learning, Instructional Support Services, Operational Support Services, Facilities and Maintenance, and Human Resources) plus one chief financial officer. Additionally, the new administration created several new positions, while eliminating others. Exhibit 3-12 shows the new organizational structure, approved in April 2002.

Organizational charts can be expanded to include functional roles

The district restructured upper management in April 2002 to improve implementation of the district's mission and goals, which effected district administrative staff and administrative functions. These changes included the addition of 12 new positions and the change in title of four others. At the highest level, five new assistant superintendent positions replaced eight executive director positions. At mid-level, ten new directors were added, including six new positions and four upgrades from managers to directors. Additionally, a position of chief of staff reporting directly to the superintendent replaced the previous position of administrative assistant. Of the six new positions, three are education directors that will serve as links between school principals, the central office, and the district's strategic plan. The fiscal impact of these changes will be incremental, since individuals whose positions were upgraded agreed to a phased-in salary increase to be applied in equal increments over a three-year period starting in the 2003-04 fiscal year. This restructuring has an initial nominal cost savings of approximately \$23,000 for fiscal year 2002-03 and an approximate annual cost (without including salary adjustments of upgraded positions) of \$130,259 thereafter. The positions that were re-titled, upgraded, or eliminated are shown in Exhibit 3-12 below:

Exhibit 3-12

Comparison of the District's Old and New Organizational Structure

Department	Current Organization Position	New Organization Position
Executive Services	Executive Director of Accountability	Position Eliminated
	Executive Director of School Operations	Position Eliminated
	Executive Director of Communications & Technology	Position Eliminated
	Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Support Services	Executive Director of Communications & Technology
	Assistant Superintendent for Instruction	Assistant Superintendent, Instructional Support Services
	Administrative Assistant	Chief of Staff
	Executive Director, District Operations	Assistant Superintendent, Operation Support Services
	Executive Director, Curriculum / School Improvement	Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning

Department	Current Organization Position	New Organization Position
	Improvement	Learning
	Executive Director, Human Resources	Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources
	Executive Director, Support Services	Assistant Superintendent, Facilities & Maintenance
	Chief Financial Officer	Chief Financial Officer, Financial Services
Instructional Support Services	Manager of Network Control & Operations	Director of Network Control & Operations
	Manager of Information Services	Director of Information Services
	Manager of Client Server	Director of Information Technology Support
	Manager of Technology Repair	Director of Technology Repair
Teaching and Learning Services	Position did not exist	Director, Elementary Education (2)
	Position did not exist	Director, Secondary & Alternative Education
	Position did not exist	Director of Curriculum
Operational Services	Program Administrator for Transportation	Position Eliminated
Facilities & Maintenance	Position did not exist	Director of Facilities
Human Resources	Contracted Services	Director of Employee Relations

Source: Lee County Internal Audit Department.

Exhibit 3-14 shows the new organizational structure. At the highest levels, the organizational chart accurately reflects reporting relationships and spans of control. However, perhaps due to the relatively high turnover rate of recent years and newness of the recent changes, survey respondents are unclear as to the actual function of each administrative unit. As shown in Exhibit 3-13, a large number of principals and teachers (28% and 34%, respectively), report that the roles and responsibilities of each organizational unit are not clearly defined. Two board members also shared this opinion. Moreover, department level organizational charts have not been updated to reflect recent changes (example: maintenance and operations), nor have the changes been widely distributed.

The district should consistently update department-level organizational charts and develop functional organizational charts for both the broad and individual levels of the organization. Exhibits 3-14 and 3-15 show the current functional chart for both the district's broad level for the superintendent's office, developed by ValienteHernandez P.A. The district should use these two examples to develop functional organizational charts for all district operational units.

Additionally, positions that were replaced or updated, along with their associated job descriptions, should be eliminated and removed from the organizational charts to eliminate the possibility that old positions are filled without directed board approval.

Exhibit 3-13

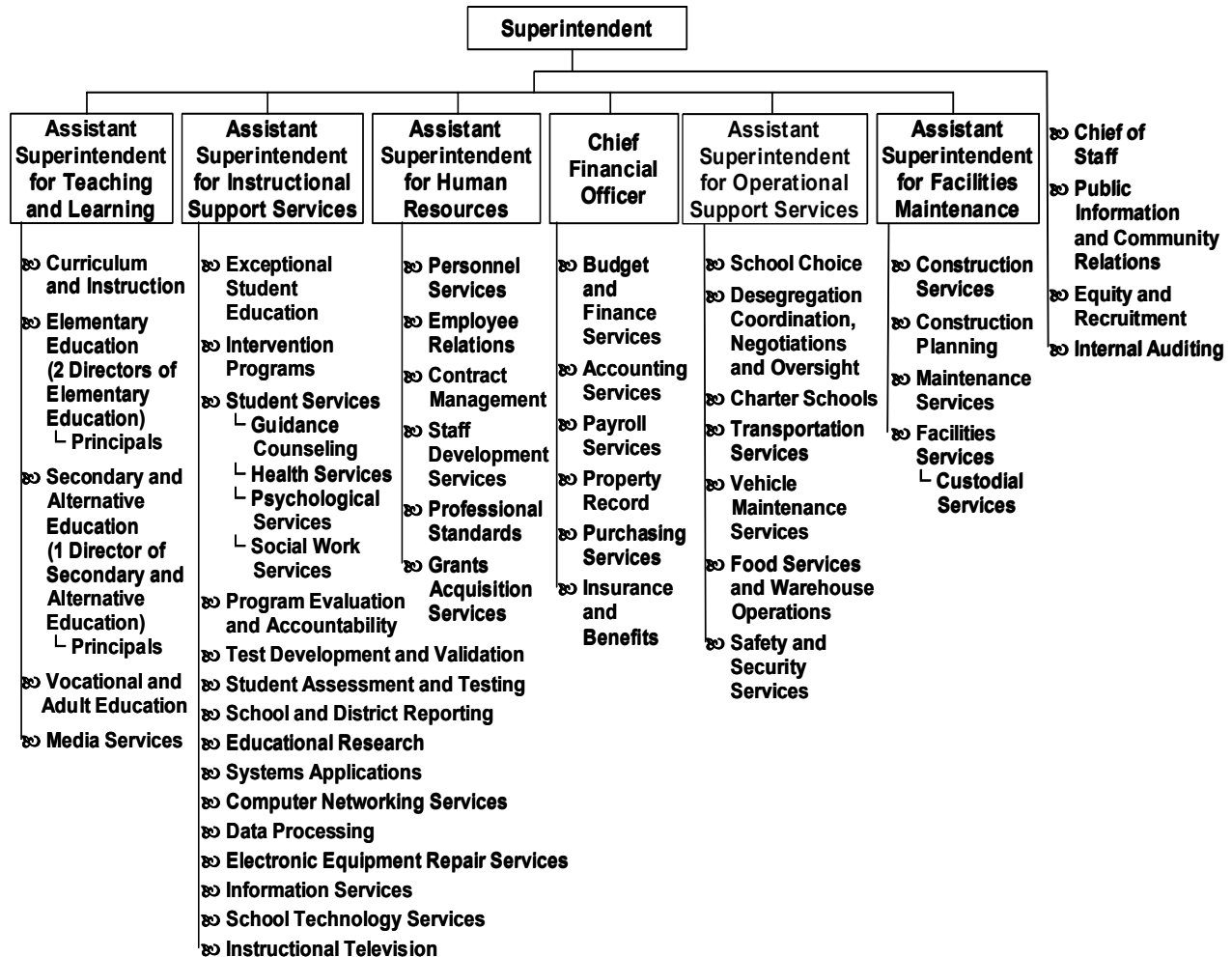
Principals and Teachers Report That the Roles and Responsibilities for Each Organizational Unit Are Unclear

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
	The roles and responsibilities of each district organizational unit are clearly established				
Principals		39%	29%	28%	4%
Teachers	(Same as above)	28%	29%	34%	9%
Board	(Same as above)	20%	40%	40%	0%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

Exhibit 3-14

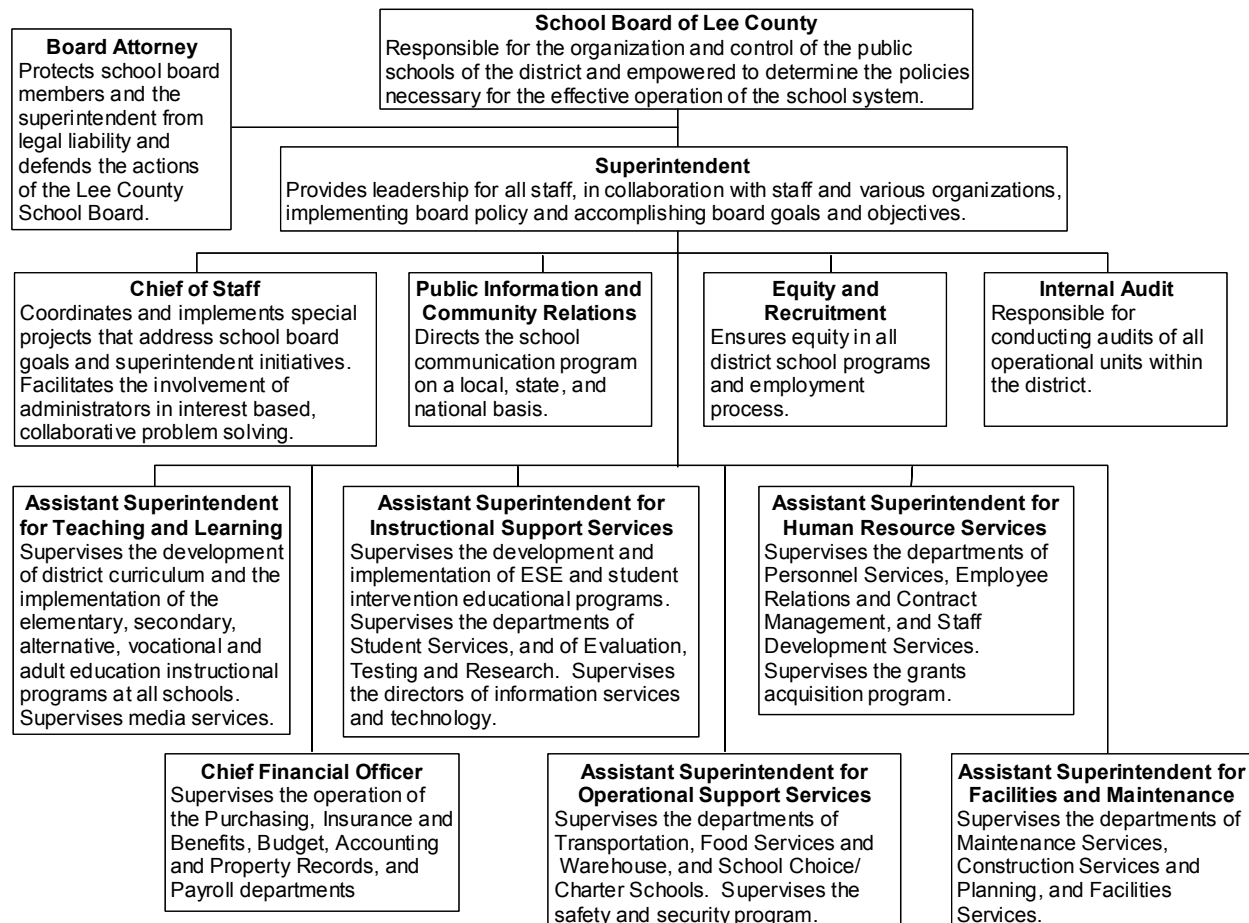
A Broad Functional Organizational Chart for the District Would Clarify Staff Roles Throughout The District



Source: School District of Lee County.

Exhibit 3-15

A Detailed Functional Chart of the Superintendent's Staff's Direct Responsibilities Would Clarify Roles Throughout The District



Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. and Lee County School District.

Responsibilities of area directors should be expanded and clearly communicated

The district's purpose in creating three directors of education positions is to have employees who concentrate on developing a strong district presence at the school level and to help the superintendent gain first-hand information regarding the condition of the district, the quality of school-based decisions, the impact of district decisions on local schools, and the degree to which schools align with the goals outlined in the strategic plan. The total quality initiative undertaken by the district also uses the directors of education to deploy and champion these quality principles to the schools.

On the other hand, school-based management, when effectively carried out, reduces the need for an administrative link between the district and principals. While the district's position that the directors of education will improve educational continuity with smaller spans of control for the superintendent and assistant superintendents is sound, the district should place greater emphasis on providing curriculum and instruction guidance under the area directors of education. Even though a new position of director of curriculum was recently added, the *Educational Services* section of this review indicates that the curriculum and instruction function is weak (see Chapter 5, Best Practice 6 for further discussion).

Adding more curricular and instructional responsibilities to the area directors of education will help remedy the gap.

If the administrative/curricular responsibilities of the area directors of education are expanded, the district should communicate these changes to all staff. Principals responding to the survey were uncertain as to whether these positions will help them improve their work. When given the statement, *“The recently approved positions of area administrators will be of significant assistance in allowing me to perform my daily activities,”* 56% agreed or strongly agreed, but 44% were neutral, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or did not know.

Improving communication between the central office and schools should be a priority of the new directors of education

As they are the strongest link between schools and district offices, these individuals’ roles in improving and streamlining communications should be clearly a priority. As shown in Exhibit 3-16, principals and teachers responding to the survey suggested communications to and from the district could be improved.

Exhibit 3-16

Communication Between The District And Schools Could Be Improved

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don’t Know
Principals	Communication from the district to the principals is satisfactory.	41%	14%	45%	0%
Principals	The district allows adequate opportunities for the principals to provide feedback.	51%	22%	28%	0%
Teachers	Communication from the district to the teachers is satisfactory.	36%	27%	36%	2%
Teachers	The district allows adequate opportunities for teachers to provide feedback.	34%	26%	39%	2%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

While the district’s organizational structure has a reasonable number of administrative layers, it does not allocate the most adequate spans of control to senior administrators

A reasonable span of control is considered to be from 1 to 7 subordinates.⁶ Two imperatives should provide the basis for the organizational structure of any large school district: (1) the superintendent should have access to and/or oversight over the functions that are most crucial in improving the district’s performance, and (2) the number of functions and units reporting directly to the superintendent should be kept to a reasonable level to ensure time to focus on issues of greatest concern to the district is available. Similar guidelines apply to senior level administrators.

As shown in Exhibit 3-17 below, the organizational structure approved in April 2002 does not strike an appropriate balance between the need for the superintendent to oversee critical operations and the need to have sufficient time to focus on issues of greatest concern to the district. The evaluation of the

⁶ *Span of control* is defined as the number of persons reporting directly to a manager. An ideal span of control has not been established, however a *span-of-control principle* has evolved: *There is a limit to the number of people one manager can effectively supervise; care should be exercised to keep the span of control within manageable limits.* (John R. Schermerhorn, Jr., Management, 5th Edition, 1996.)

organizational structure also revealed that four of the senior level administrators have inadequate spans of control, as discussed in the next section.

The superintendent has eleven key positions reporting to him:

- Chief of staff
- Deputy superintendent (currently not funded)
- Assistant superintendent for teaching and learning
- Assistant superintendent for instructional support services
- Assistant superintendent for human resource services
- Assistant superintendent for operational support services
- Assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance
- Chief financial officer
- Director of public information and community relations
- Director of equity and recruitment
- Director of internal audit

While each function is unquestionably important, not all need the direct attention and oversight of the superintendent. For example, the equity and recruitment department does not require the direct supervision of the superintendent—especially in an organization this large. Internal auditing, which is commonly a function that reports directly to the school board, can also be shifted from the superintendent's purview. The public information and community relations function is of sufficient importance to report to the superintendent, but requires so much management time and attention that it may be difficult for the superintendent to effectively oversee this function while also performing other responsibilities.

However, certain special circumstances of this district preclude the immediate adoption of these measures. For example, the court order under which the district currently operates mandates that the superintendent directly oversee the equity and recruitment function. While the district anticipates coming out from under the court order by July 2004, this date has not been formally established. Nonetheless, shortly after the court order is removed, the district should assign this function to the human resource department, and at the same time, maintain the effort and intent associated with this position.

Similarly, by the administrative nature of the existing internal audit function, it is reasonable that the internal auditor reports to the superintendent. However, as the district continues to move toward developing a true internal auditing function, as reported in Chapter 14, Best Practice 1, this position should be appropriately placed under the direct purview of the school board as soon as possible.

The public information component can be positioned either under the superintendent or under the human resources division. While currently well-placed, at a future point the board may believe the superintendent spends too much time monitoring this function. If that occurs, the board may then change the supervision of this function to the human resources division.

Moreover, the new position of deputy superintendent (currently unfunded) should be eliminated in view of the fact that the superintendent now has ample high-level administrative staff to conduct the district's business. Also, if some functions currently under the superintendent are relocated, coordination of the six senior administrators will be improved.

Exhibit 3-17**The Spans of Control of Selected Senior Level Positions Are Not Comparable With Equivalent Positions in Peer Districts**

District	Superintendent	Assistant Spdt. For Teaching and Learning or Equivalent	Chief Financial Officer or Equivalent	Assistant Spdt. For Human Resource Svcs. or Equivalent	Assistant Spdt. For Operational Support Svcs. or Equivalent	Assistant Spdt. For Instructional Support Svcs. or Equivalent	Assistant Spdt. For Facilities and Maintenance or Equivalent
Lee	11	5	5	3	3	8	3
Brevard	5	6	6	5	-	-	6
Pasco	6	9	4	-	-	-	-
Polk	3	5	5	3	3	-	3
Seminole	9		4	-	-	-	-
Volusia	7	7	5	6	-	-	6

Source: Peer district's survey, May-June 2002.

The organizational structure can be further streamlined

The district used the results of major reviews to change the organizational structure and streamline operations. The district regularly (at least once every four years) reviews its business practices and organizational structure with a consultant. In May 1997, the district's staffing was reviewed as part of a Performance Review carried out by MGT of America under contract with the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA). Four years later, in November 2001, FADSS (Florida Association of District School Superintendents) conducted an Organization and Management Review. While independent reviews are important, the district should proactively conduct regular systematic evaluations of the organizational structure to ensure it is aligned with goals and objectives and identified needs.

In the latest reorganization, the district adopted many changes recommended by the FADSS November 2001 review. While the changes simplify the organizational structure by rearranging and integrating certain functions and reducing the superintendent's span of control (school principals previously reported directly to the superintendent and now report to the directors of education), additional changes will further streamline operations.

Three primary factors to consider when determining the functions to be assigned to the same organizational units are: (1) whether the same types of management skills and expertise are needed to manage the functions, (2) whether a single entity needs to be accountable for related activities, and (3) whether functions need to work closely to be effective. In order to move into agreement with these factors and to balance spans of control, ValienteHernandez P.A. is compelled to make several recommendations to streamline the organizational structure.

While some of these recommendations can be implemented in the short term, several cannot be implemented until other management practices in various operational areas are developed and put into practice.

Actions that can be realized in the short-term are:

- All the curriculum and instruction functions should be under the same organizational unit. Under the current organization, basic, alternative, vocational, and adult education programs are under the purview of the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. However, exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services program are the responsibility of the assistant superintendent for instructional support services. The latter functions should be under the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning.

Management Structures

- The assistant superintendent for instructional support oversees eight directors and the equivalent of over 15 different functions (see Exhibit 3-12). While some of these functions need to work closely to be effective, the span of control may be too large to ensure that certain essential functions are effectively coordinated. To better align functions, exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services should be reassigned to the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, thus reducing the span of control of this division to a more reasonable five.
- The grants acquisition function currently under the assistant superintendent for human resources would better fit under the chief financial officer. Grant writing is a function that requires a great deal of financial data, thus placement of this function in this division is appropriate.

Actions to be implemented in the long-term are:

- The spans of control of the assistant superintendent for operational support services and the assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance are too small to justify two separate divisions. Moreover, both divisions carry out administrative functions and, in compliance with the three factors described above these functions should be merged into one single division. This merged division will be referred to as *Administrative Support Services*.

The assistant superintendent for operational support services essentially oversees school choice and desegregation, transportation, and food services; the assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance oversees facilities' construction and maintenance.

Although the recommendation to merge these functions into one division is clearly justified, there are several obstacles to its immediate adoption. Much of the inefficiencies found in the transportation and facilities areas require a great deal of attention from the assistant superintendent for operational support services. So, prior to any organizational changes, the district needs to successfully implement the recommendations made to gain efficiencies in transportation as described in Chapter 12.

Similarly, if the district adopts the recommendations in Chapter 11 to promote accountability in facilities construction independent from political connotations, it should eliminate the risk of incurring noncompliance issues with building codes, thus eliminating the need of having checks and balances outside the facilities functions. Currently, the assistant superintendent for operational support services spends a considerable amount of time ensuring that preventive measures in the buildings' code area are maintained throughout the district.

At such time the district implements the recommendations in Chapter 11 and Chapter 12 and the assistant superintendent for operational support services is freed of related responsibilities, the board should consider moving forward on combining operational support services and facilities and maintenance functions into the *Administrative Support Services* division.

- Equity and recruitment staff currently reporting directly to the superintendent should be moved under the assistant superintendent of human resources.

As mentioned earlier, however, the district is precluded from such a change until the court order is removed. At such time, the board should move the equity and recruitment function to be more appropriately placed under human resources.

- The internal audit function currently reporting to the superintendent would be better aligned in reporting to the school board.

However, having the internal auditing function reporting directly to the school board is only valid in an environment where a true internal audit function is in place. As mentioned before, the district has just recently started to move toward the development of a true internal auditing function, as reported

in Chapter 14, Best Practice 1, and at the time such function is solidified, the board should consider placing this function in direct report to the school board.

- The public information component can be positioned either under the superintendent or under the human resources division. If the board believes the superintendent spends too much time monitoring this function, the board may then decide to change the supervision of this function to the human resources division.
- Four directors concentrating on technology may not be necessary in the future. Also, this does not balance out with the fact that there is only one director of curriculum. Refer to Chapter 5, Best Practice 6 for details on the curriculum and instructional function.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district consistently update department-level organizational charts and develop functional organizational charts for both the broad and individual levels of the organization. When two or more units share responsibility for the same function, the district should develop written descriptions of the limits of each unit's authority and responsibility and how the units are to interact.*

Action Plan 3-10 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the position of deputy superintendent be eliminated. Additionally, we recommend the district eliminate and remove from the organizational charts the positions that were replaced or updated as a result of the April 2002 reorganization to eliminate the possibility that old positions are filled without direct board approval.*

Action Plan 3-11 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district place greater emphasis on curriculum and instruction under the area directors of education.*

Action Plan 3-12 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *(Short-term) We recommend the district execute the following changes to streamline the organizational structure and allow effective work of the superintendent and selected district senior level administrators:*
 - *Place all curriculum and instruction functions under the same organizational unit. Within the current organization, basic, alternative, vocational, and adult education programs are under the purview of the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. However, exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services are under the assistant superintendent for instructional support services, though they are better aligned under the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning.*
 - *Reassign exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services to the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, thus reducing the span of control of the assistant superintendent for instructional support services to a more reasonable five.*
 - *Reassign the grants acquisition function currently under the assistant superintendent for human resources to the chief financial officer. Grant writing is a function that requires a great deal of financial data, thus placement of this function in this division is appropriate.*

Action Plan 3-13 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *(Long-term) At such time the district successfully implements recommendations to increase accountability levels and gain efficiencies in the operational areas of facilities, transportation, and internal auditing, the board should make the following changes to further streamline the organizational structure:*
 - *Merge the function under the assistant superintendent for operational support services and the assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance into one single division named the Administrative Support Services. Currently, the spans of control of these two superintendents are too small to justify separate divisions with both carrying out administrative functions, as they are not in compliance with the three organizational factors described earlier.*
 - *Move equity and recruitment, currently reporting directly to the superintendent, under the assistant superintendent of human resources.*
 - *Place the internal audit function under the direct purview of the school board.*
 - *If at this point, the board feels the superintendent is spending too much time monitoring the public information and community relations' function, the board may decide to move it under the purview of the superintendent to the human resources division.*

Action Plan 3-14 shows the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 3-10

Revise and Update Department Level Organizational Charts	
Strategy	The district should update department-level organizational charts and develop functional organizational charts for both the broad and individual levels of the organization. When two or more units share responsibility for the same function, the district should develop written descriptions of the limits of each unit's authority and responsibility and how the units are to interact.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent assigns the chief of staff responsibility for working with the assistant superintendents and department directors to update and develop functional organizational charts. Step 2: The superintendent and assistant superintendents identify the functions of and develop an organizational chart for each unit. Step 3: The superintendent, assistant superintendents, and the chief of staff review the functional charts to ensure that they comply with the district's strategic plan and clearly delineate responsibility for implementing state directives and district initiatives. Step 4: The human resources department reviews, and if necessary revises, the job descriptions for key positions in each organizational unit to ensure that they are consistent with identified unit functions. Step 5: After correcting any inconsistencies, the superintendent submits the revised job descriptions and functional organizational charts to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent's Chief of Staff, Assistant Superintendents, and the Human Resources department
Time Frame	March 31, 2003 and on-going
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-11**Eliminate Unnecessary Positions**

Strategy	Eliminate and remove from the organizational charts the positions that were replaced or updated as a result of the April 2002 reorganization, as well as the position of deputy superintendent.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent and assistant superintendents identify the positions in the organizational chart that need to be deleted, including the position of deputy superintendent. Once identified, associated job descriptions are also eliminated. Step 2: The superintendent submits the revised organizational charts to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent's chief of staff, assistant superintendents, and the Human Resources department
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-12**Expand the Duties of the Three Area Directors of Education**

Strategy	Expand the duties of the three area directors of education with additional curriculum and instructional responsibilities, thus placing more emphasis on curriculum and instruction.
Action Needed	Step 1: Revise the job descriptions of the three new area directors of education to reflect greater responsibility to principals in providing support in curricular and instructional development and planning.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for Teaching and Learning and the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources.
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-13**Streamline the Organizational Structure to Allow Effective Work of the Superintendent and Selected District Senior Level Administrators**

Strategy	Revise and update the district level organizational chart in a way that is more consistent with peer districts in reflecting a better balanced span of control with five principal divisions: Teaching and Learning, Instructional Support Services, Human Resources, <i>Administrative Support Services</i> , and the chief financial officer.
Action Needed	Step 1: Place all curriculum and instruction functions under the same organizational unit. Within the current organization, basic, alternative, vocational, and adult education programs are under the purview of the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. However, exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services are under the assistant superintendent for instructional support services, though they are better aligned under the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning.

Step 2:	Reassign exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services to the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, thus reducing the span of control of the assistant superintendent for instructional support services to a more reasonable five. As shown in Exhibit 3-3, the assistant superintendent for instructional support oversees eight directors and the equivalent of over 15 different functions, and while some of these functions need to work closely to be effective, the span of control may be too large to ensure that certain essential functions are effectively coordinated.
Step 3:	Reassign the grants acquisition function currently under the assistant superintendent for human resources to the chief financial officer. Grant writing is a function that requires a great deal of financial data, thus placement of this function in this division is appropriate.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent and the school board
Time Frame	March 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-14

Long-Term Changes to Streamline the Organizational Structure

Strategy	Once the district successfully implements recommendations to increase accountability levels and gain efficiencies in the operational areas of facilities, transportation, and internal auditing, the board should make changes to further streamline the organizational structure.
Action Needed	Step 1: Merge the function under the assistant superintendent for operational support services and the assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance into one single division named the Administrative Support Services. Currently, the spans of control of these two superintendents are too small to justify separate divisions with both carrying out administrative functions, as they are not in compliance with the three organizational factors described earlier. Step 2: Move equity and recruitment, currently reporting directly to the superintendent, under the assistant superintendent of human resources. Step 3: Place the internal audit function under the direct purview of the school board. Step 4: Shift the public information and community relations' under the purview of human resources division, if the board considers this function is consuming too much of the superintendent's time.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent and the School Board
Time Frame	March 31, 2005, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

6 While the district's new administration is making significant efforts to establish efficient staffing levels, further analysis is needed.

As mentioned previously, the district's organizational structure and staffing have been comprehensively reviewed twice during the last six years, resulting in organizational changes. Changes have also been made as a result of administrators' turnover, budget shortfalls, and ideas produced by senior-level administrators. As described earlier, the district has recently modified its staffing levels based on a FADSS study (November 2001).

However, there is no evidence that the latest decisions were based on comparative analyses of similar districts, objective measures or stakeholder feedback. These would include performance data, goal achievement, other self-assessment information, or feedback from district and school-level administrators and school advisory councils. Staffing and organizational adjustments based on data are preferred to

wholesale or political changes that occur with changes in the superintendent. These past weaknesses are likely due to the fact that, until recently, it not been a management priority to review administrative staffing to control costs. The quality approach the district has now embraced holds cost-effectiveness as one of its premises, and should improve the district's performance in this area.

The district should establish guidelines for staffing under site-based management

In 1998, site-based management was implemented and, as a result, district responsibility to establish school staffing formulas and patterns was eliminated. Principals now have total authority to use budgets according to their needs. Once the district calculates total district staff needs through the annual budgeting process, directly linked to Full Time Equivalent (FTE) calculations, school-level staff funding is distributed through an adopted staffing system named Personnel Staffing Units (PSU). Principals receive their personnel budgets, but then have total authority and independence to allocate their budget for the number of instructional and support staff considered necessary, without district or board approval. Thus, the district does not monitor staffing levels and there is no process by which the staffing proposed by the principals is justified and approved.

Therefore, the district should implement mechanisms that ensure minimum staffing standards throughout the district. While the PSU allocation methodology seems sound, the district should have control measures and/or guidelines to ensure individual school needs are actually satisfied (i.e.: an elementary school with over a certain number of students, must have a certain number of assistant principals, media specialists, guidance counselors, curriculum specialists, school clerk, data clerk, building supervisors, etc.) Currently, the PSU process only mandates the school principals to hire three positions, school principal, school principal's secretary, and bookkeeper. It is the principal's prerogative to hire any other positions, based on what he/she perceives as needed by the student population.

Therefore, the district should implement mechanisms to ensure minimum staffing standards throughout the district. According to the school-level administrators and student population, the district should establish, for example, a minimum number of media specialists that need to be hired.

Further analysis is needed to assess the adequacy of administrative staffing levels and staff ratios

One indication of a district's management efficiency is the ratio of administrators, for both district and school operations, to teachers, students, and so forth. The Florida Department of Education groups employees into three categories, administrative, instructional, and support. Broad state guidelines exist to assist districts in accurately classifying staff into these categories. However, as general guidelines, they are subject to local interpretation, which has resulted in inconsistent reporting across districts, making comparisons difficult.

Initial review of the district's reported staffing and the Department of Education's data for peer districts and the state (Exhibit 3-18), suggests that the Lee school district has a greater percentage of staff classified as administrative. However, different reporting standards have been used. For example, Lee reports district director-level staff as administrators, but not all peer districts do. These types of reporting differences mean that accurate conclusions can not be made from this data without further analysis. The Department of Education is working to clarify its staffing reports. Revised data is expected to be available no later than December 2002. We recommend the district use this revised data to compare its administrative staffing levels to peer districts and to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) recommended guidelines. For example, SACS guidelines recommend one school administrator (in addition to the principal) per 500 students. Using more accurate data will also allow the district to accurately assess its staffing rations, currently presented in Exhibit 3-19. Once more accurate data is available, the district should regularly compare its administrative district and school-based staffing levels to peers and national standards.

Exhibit 3-18

Further Analysis Is Needed To Determine If Lee's Administrative Staffing Levels Are Consistent With Peer Districts And State Averages

District	Category			Total Employees
	Administrative	Instructional	Support	
Lee	3.60%	54.55%	42.23%	6,393
Brevard	3.22%	54.55%	42.23%	7,850
Pasco	3.27%	49.20%	47.53%	6,811
Polk	2.87%	49.89%	47.24%	10,639
Seminole	2.90%	55.57%	41.53%	6,585
Volusia	3.15%	50.65%	46.20%	8,187
State Average	3.37%	52.39%	44.24%	280,658
Average value without Lee County	3.16%	51.46%	45.38%	

Source: Full-Time Staff by Activity Assignment. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida Department of Education. Survey 2 data, October 8-12, 2001, as of December 20, 2001.

Exhibit 3-19

Further Analysis Is Needed To Determine If Lee's Staffing Ratios Are Consistent with Peer Districts and State Averages

Ratio	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole	Volusia	State	Median (Without Lee & State)
Classroom Teachers to Total Administrative Staff	14	15	14	16	19	14	14	15
Instructional Staff to Administrative Staff	15	17	16	19	20	16	16	17
Students to Total Administrative Staff	259	280	234	268	328	233	257	268
Students to Classroom Teacher	19	18	17	16	18	16	18	17
Students to Total Instructional Staff	17	16	15	14	17	14	16	15
Support Staff to Classroom Teacher	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Support Staff to Total Instructional Staff	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Students to Total Support Staff	22	23	17	17	24	17	21	17
Classroom Teachers to Teacher Aide	5	7	4	4	5	3	4	4
Students to Guidance Counselor	526	515	368	437	537	359	443	437
Elementary Students to Elementary Teacher	24	18	21	20	20	20	21	20
Secondary Students to Secondary Teacher	24	28	24	21	21	23	25	23

Ratio	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole	Volusia	State	Median (Without Lee & State)
Exceptional Students to Exceptional Education Teacher	21	24	18	19	24	14	21	19

Note: ValienteHernandez P.A. rounded the calculations of the different ratios to the nearest whole number.

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-2001 as of November 2001. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, FDOE. ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district establish guidelines for staffing under site-based management.*
Action Plan 3-15 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.
- *We recommend the district continually monitor its school-based and district-based staffing levels as they compare to similar school districts.*
Action Plan 3-16 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 3-15

Establish Guidelines for Staffing Under Site-Based Management	
Strategy	Establish guidelines for staffing under site-based management.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish a task force composed of district administrators, school principals, parents, and community leaders. Step 2: The task force conducts research with districts using site-based management on the basic staffing guidelines that must be in place. Step 3: Information gathered is reduced to a preliminary report. Step 4: The preliminary report is discussed with the school board at a workshop. Step 5: A staffing guidelines report is finalized and submitted to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Budget and Finance Director
Time Frame	May 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-16

Continually Monitor Staffing Levels	
Strategy	Monitor, and adjust, if needed, district and school-based staffing levels to keep them in-line with peer districts and the state average.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district should obtain the revised DOE staffing report when available and compare district and peer staffing levels and ratios. Step 2: The chief of staff, the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability and the Human Resources division should use this analysis, in conjunction with SAC standards, to ensure that administrative staffing levels and staffing ratios are within practice standards. Staff ratio comparisons, based on appropriate benchmarks can include:

	• Classroom teachers to district-level administrative staff • Classroom teachers to school-level administrative staff • Classroom teachers to total administrative staff • Instructional staff to administrative staff • Students to total administrative staff • Students to school-level administrative staff • Students to classroom teachers • Students to total instructional staff
	Step 3: Based on the findings, the district should adjust its administrative staffing levels
Who Is Responsible	Chief of Staff, Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, Human Resources division
Time Frame	August 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

7 The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources, but enhancements could benefit the district

Overall, the district employs several effective budget and financial management practices. Noteworthy, the district received the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Award from 1992 to 1995 and again in 1997 (the Budget department has not applied for the award since then).

The board could benefit from additional budget training

Board surveys indicate that while board members confirmed they receive training in school district budgeting and financial practices, this training does not consistently meet board members' needs. When asked: "*The content of the training in school district budgeting and financial practices meets my needs*", two board members disagreed or strongly disagreed, one was neutral and two agreed or strongly disagreed.

A number of factors may explain these divergent perspectives. For example, a board member who has a business or financial background may be able to interpret information provided to board members more easily (and need less training) than a board member who does not have a business or financial background. Alternatively, new board members may have a steeper learning curve than board members who have been on the board for a long period of time, or some board members may have come on the school board after budget training was provided. Whatever the reasons, the fact that some board members do not feel they receive the information they need to provide sound budget and financial oversight, by itself argues for the need to address these deficiencies.

The budget department holds three to five briefing sessions with the board throughout the budget development process, between October and August each year. Board members have attended Florida School Boards Association (FSBA) Master Board Training program but this program does not include specific training in district budgeting or educational funding unless districts specifically request on-site assistance.

The board's ability to oversee the district's resources could be improved with training on school district budgeting and finance, through workshops organized by the district's finance division (outside the budget workshops) in conjunction with FSBA that has that the expertise to provide specific training on oversight of the district's financial resources.

The district employs a number of effective budget and financial management practices

On a number of dimensions the district's budget and financial management practices are strong. For example, the district regularly monitors key financial indicators such as the reserve fund balance, debt ratio, inventory levels, and other relevant financial data to identify any changes in the district's financial condition. Significant declines in financial condition are reported to the board in a timely manner, and the board takes necessary corrective action. Another best practice includes established limits on how much various district staff can spend without approval and the board reviews and approves all purchases that exceed these amounts.

The district has internal audit procedures to ensure the accuracy of FTE counts which are used by the state to develop the districts' funding level. For example, an audit program is used to test schools for FTE compliance, reviewing all FTE areas and identifies areas where training is needed. Thus, testing ensures FTE-count accuracy and detects areas of the process that need to be strengthened. The process of auditing and monitoring FTEs at school sites helps assure accurate counts and reduces the potential for audit recovery due to FTE misreporting.

Unique to this district is the fact that the district's budgeting process considers the needs of individual schools through site-based management budgeting. The district uses site-based management for school budgeting. Schools receive an allocation also called PSUs (Personnel Staffing Units) and use this allocation to "purchase" staff and operating supplies according to their school's needs.

The district also maintains a reserve fund that began the 2001-02 fiscal year at \$11.8 million or 3.13% of the total budget. A portion of this reserve fund, \$1.7 million, is the district's shortfall reserve, used to cover expenses in the event the district overestimates the amount of funds it will receive from the state based on projected student enrollment. Another portion of the reserve fund is used for contingencies and is currently at \$5.9 million, as shown in Exhibit 3-20.

The reserve fund should average from 3% to 5% of the total budget. The district's reserve fund is currently at 3.13% of the total budget, closer to the lower limit of the standard, and has averaged 1.51% of the total budget over the past five years. The district's contingency fund has averaged 0.76% of the total budget over the past five years.

To be able to fiscally respond to errors in the enrollment projection, emergencies, or changes in the industry, we recommend that district administration continue the conscious effort to maintain the reserve fund from 3% to 5% of its total budget. The fund balance and contingency reserves for each of the past five fiscal years are presented in Exhibit 3-20.

Exhibit 3-20

The District's Reserve Fund Balances Now Comply with Established Standards

Fiscal Year	Total Budget (millions)	Ending Reserve Balances (millions)*	Ending Reserve as a Percentage of Total Budget	Contingency Fund (millions)	Contingency Fund as a Percentage of the Total Budget
1997-98	304.6	5.7	1.87%	2.9	0.95%
1998-99	317.71	2.0	0.63%	0.6	0.19%
1999-00	327.23	2.8	0.86%	2.0	0.61%
2000-01	366.83	3.9	1.06%	1.8	0.49%
2001-02	376.93	11.8	3.13%	5.9	1.57%

Source: School Board of Lee County.

The budgeting process is effective and the board is informed of needed modifications, however, the district should link budget changes to district long term plans

The proposed budget is presented to the board in an easy-to-read, understandable, and concise format. The district has a structured timetable for the budget process that includes the board in all the stages. In October the district adopts the budget priorities based on its strategic plan; in March the board confirms said priorities and sets expectations of how funds are committed in the budget; in April the preliminary revenue projections are updated to board; in May the board is updated on additional revenue sources; in June the Budget department presents the board the tentative budget which reflects the district's goals and priorities; in July the Budget department presents the board the tentative budget and advertises for the first public hearing; in July the first public meeting is held and the board is briefed as to the final budget in September.

The board also has established procedures for managing budget reductions and, when necessary, implements these procedures. For example, the board used the Interest Based Process to solve the 2001-2002 state revenue shortfall. Through this process, the board develops their interests, and then turns those interests over to several district committees a plan that embraces their interests.

Budget amendments are also managed effectively and 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. This condition was confirmed with the board surveys where four members agreed or strongly agreed when asked: *"The board is informed of the short and long-term fiscal implications of proposed budgets or budget amendments"*.

One improvement that can be made to the information the board receives is on how budget increases impact the district's long term plans. While requests for budget increases are made in easy-to-read formats, two board members disagreed or strongly disagreed that those requests are tied to priorities established in the board's long-term plan for the district, as shown in Exhibit 3-21.

Exhibit 3-21

Survey Results Indicate That the Information Linking Budget Changes to District Long Term Plans Can Be Enhanced

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
Board	The proposed school district budget is presented to the board in an easy-to-read, understandable, and concise format.	80%	0%	20%	0%
Board	The board is informed of the short and long-term fiscal implications of proposed budgets or budget amendments.	80%	0%	20%	0%
Board	Requests for budget increases are made in easy-to-read, understandable, and concise formats.	60%	20%	20%	0%
Board	Requests for budget increases are tied to priorities established in the board's long-term plan for the district.	40%	20%	40%	0%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district provide training to the board on district budgeting and finance. The district should hire the Florida School Board Association (FSBA) to conduct the training. FSBA can provide the training in a one or two-day workshop. School board members should also avail themselves to other FSBA services and meetings in which financial and budgeting information are covered*

Action Plan 3-17 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the Budget department continue to conduct workshops to the school board as a group and on a one-to-one basis with the purpose of clearing up information on budgetary issues such as:*
 - *a summary of the district's operations;*
 - *historical information on revenues, expenditures and fund balance by major function over the past two or three years;*
 - *information about the district's FTE calculations;*
 - *millage information;*
 - *budget calendar;*
 - *use of lottery funds, etc.*

Action Plan 3-18 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 3-17

Improve the Board Member's Understanding Of District Budgeting and Finance	
Strategy	Secure board members training in budgeting and finance
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine the specific areas in which the board should receive training. Step 2: Contact the FSBA or another suitable organization to schedule training. The next day training is scheduled for February 2003. Step 3: Complete board training. Step 4: School board members should also avail themselves to other FSBA services and meetings in which financial and budgeting information are covered.
Who Is Responsible	Director of the Budget Department and school board members.
Time Frame	April 30, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be completed existing resources, as training registration fees are nominal.

Action Plan 3-18

Continue To Conduct Presentations to the School Board as a Group and On a One-To-One Basis	
Strategy	Continue to conduct presentations to the school board as a group and on a one-to-one basis.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Budget Director organizes presentations to board members on issues such as: • the district's operations; • historical information on revenues, expenditures and fund balance by major function over the past two or three years; • information about the district's FTE calculations; • millage information;

Action Needed	• budget calendar; • use of lottery funds. Step 2: Board members agree to take part in the presentations.
Who Is Responsible	Director of the Budget Department and school board members.
Time Frame	June 30, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be attained with existing resources.

8 **The district has clearly empowered school principals to direct their schools through site-based management. Some adjustments would make the process more effective.**

The district has assigned authority to school administrators through its site-based management approach and school of choice plan

The district has used a strong site-based management approach since 1996. By decentralizing management to schools, principals in Lee County have the authority to make decisions about how money should be spent at the school site, what the staffing levels should be and what should be taught in classrooms. During focus groups, principals appeared to be satisfied with the authority given to them through site-based management.

School-level staffing in the district is accomplished through a system called Personnel Staffing Units (PSU). Through this process, school principals have total authority to allocate their budget and have the number of instructional and support staff he/she considers necessary. Because the district operates with PSU budgeting, there is great interest on the principals' side to constantly monitor FTEs, as the higher the FTE number, the more PSUs allocated to the school.

While site-based management has been fairly implemented, adjustments are needed

Site-based management is beneficial in several ways. For example, having budgetary flexibility (through PSU) is beneficial from the instructional perspective as it allows schools to recruit staff and establish funding priorities according to their particular needs.

Despite these opportunities, site-based management also poses many challenges. For example, site-based management within a school choice program means principals must also promote their school, developing programs to attract parents and students in order to ensure high enrollment.

Several studies conducted in the area of site-based management⁷ report that the most successful plans in improving performance were those that, like the School District of Lee County, not only empower school employees to make decisions, but also train people for their new roles, provide information to guide decision-making, and reward people for performance. These studies conclude that the most successful principals were effective in moving four resources—power, knowledge and skills training, information and rewards - to teachers and community members. Thus, the key elements in making site-based management work include:

- Empowering school-based staff to make decisions
- Training school-based staff on their roles and continually provide information to guide sound decision-making
- Strengthening accountability

⁷ The work consulted is part of the Studies of Education reform program supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Office of Research.

- Rewarding school-based staff for performance
- Developing district-wide parameters to which principals must adhere

In addition, one key to successful site-based management is having a great deal of stakeholder involvement. Since the central office no longer directs school management and operations, principals can improve the school's responsiveness to stakeholders by sharing decision-making among constituents (e.g.: teachers, parents, community members). However, ensuring that these varied stakeholders have the information needed and the opportunities to provide guidance is extremely challenging. Generally, increased participation from stakeholders is needed and the School Advisory Council (SAC) is the appropriate structure to facilitate the process. Teacher survey results and interviews conducted with district-level administrators indicate the district generally does not use SACs for participative decision-making. As shown in Exhibit 3-1, 40% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement: *"The PSU process at my school includes teacher input."* Stakeholder input is an area where improvement is needed.

As mentioned in Best Practice 5, the district should also establish staffing guidelines to support site-based management and overall additional direction from the district. While the PSU allocation methodology seems sound, the district should have control measures and/or guidelines to ensure individual school needs are actually satisfied (i.e.: an elementary school with X number of students needs X assistant principals, X media specialists, etc.).

The district should also be responsible for curriculum (what students should know and be able to do) while letting schools decide how best to teach. Without adequate monitoring and guidelines, the district cannot guarantee student, employee, and program equity throughout the district. The district needs to have mechanisms in place to ensure curricular equity and other standards and expectations are met throughout the district. See Chapter 5, Best Practice 1 for additional discussion on this issue.

The district acknowledges that the assessment process for principals (and consequent reward for successful performance) needs adjustment to fit the site-based management approach⁸. Staff report that the assessment tools currently used are not effective and the data collected not accurate. Revising the assessment process will start next year. The district should be aware of whether principals achieve school, district and state educational goals; principals' effort should also be evaluated from a financial perspective. Refer to Chapter 7, Best Practice 7-9 for additional information.

The district provided information on principals' training that included courses in the following subject areas: Peer Mentoring and Coaching, Effective School Administration, School Policies and Procedures, and Instructional Improvement. Site-based management however, requires additional special training. Individuals must learn how to make the best participative decisions. This aspect is currently lacking in the district, but the total quality rules the district has decided to follow will help incorporate the training component. Additionally, the district should incorporate an interest-based decision-making model into the site-based management approach. The district should also ensure that the three new directors of education have an active role in the improvement of site-based management. For example, they should coordinate needed training on the new decision-making model.

⁸ Currently, the district has a policy described in their Teachers' Association of Lee County (TALC) contract that addresses the district's instructional "continuous improvement performance pay" system, in effect since 1998-99. Pay is based on school-wide progress toward meeting expectations and on an individual teacher's progress toward meeting expectations. Ratings are (1) below expectations, (2) meets expectations, and (3) exceeds expectations. A pay unit matrix that considers both the school and individual expectations determines performance pay. An individual's expectation rating is based on their annual final performance assessment, which is based on observed teacher competencies. Also, the district has a performance pay plan for administrators for 2001-02. The model resembles the instructional plan, but is based on approved individual goals. However, because of the district's strong school-based management approach, there may be high variability on the goals from school to school.

Principals' job descriptions should be updated

Principals in Lee County district have unique sets of responsibilities. Besides their natural role as the schools' instructional leaders, principals must have full management skills and are subject to the demands of school choice. They have to be financially savvy, good facility administrators, and have excellent public relations abilities. Current job descriptions of Lee County school principals do not accurately reflect all duties and responsibilities. The district should evaluate the discrepancies and revise the job descriptions accordingly. For example, revised school principal job description could include the following essential managerial functions:

- Decision making (in the areas of personnel and school procedures)
- Proactivity (in planning, directing, and leading)
- Management Control (in supervising, evaluating, and delegating authority)
- Communication (providing leadership in school relations)
- Achievement and development orientation
- Facilitative leadership
- Commitment to vision and mission
- Organizational skills
- Judgment and analysis/critical thinking skills

As mentioned in Chapter 7, the district is working on a comprehensive plan and schedule to update job descriptions. The district must ensure this includes revising school principal's job description to clearly reflect their duties under site-based management.

The recently approved director of education positions should also provide more support for site-based management

As mentioned earlier, the responsibilities of the new positions of directors of education heavily concentrate on administration and should be expanded to place more emphasis on curricular and instructional functions. According to the district, these directors will also be in charge of improving communication between school-based administrators and central offices.

Prior to the recent reorganization, school principals reported directly to the superintendent. In addition, the executive director for School Operations was responsible for leadership, assistance, and support to principals, and aided the superintendent in principals' annual appraisal. The latter responsibility was shared with the executive director for Accountability and Planning. Under the new organizational structure, the directors of education will evaluate principals' performance. The district also needs to ensure that the directors of education have an active role in improving site-based management efforts and will facilitate implementing the quality objectives at the school level. Action Plan 3-3, Best Practice 5 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

The district has some mechanisms to ensure school administrators adhere to district policies but strategies to enhance decision-making could be added

The district utilizes internal audit reviews to ensure principals adhere to policies and procedures, and principals' employee evaluations to check compliance. In addition, there is a principals' advisory council. The district also uses the *Unique Schools Process* and the Waiver Review Committee to enhance decision-making.⁹ The Unique Schools Process details which school-based initiatives principals need

⁹ Under the authority of Section 229.592(9), *F.S.*, schools can seek approval of waivers from those statutes that relate to instruction and school operation. This process allows the district to monitor school decisions and at the same time encourage schools to be innovative.

school board or assistant superintendent for Educational Services approval, and on which initiatives they are allowed to proceed independently.

Survey results, however, indicate that there is room for improvement, as shown in Exhibit 3-22. When given the statement: “*The district regularly looks for ways to enhance school-based decision-making,*” only 49% agreed or strongly agreed. These results confirm the need to develop district-based guidelines and impart added training, as described previously.

Exhibit 3-22

The district could improve guidelines and supports for site-based management

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
Principals	The district regularly looks for ways to enhance school-based decision-making.	49%	22%	26%	4%
Principals	The district regularly evaluates the authority assigned to school administrators.	47%	26%	14%	14%
Principals	The district provides adequate training for principals on their role within school-based management.	65%	10%	26%	0%
Principals	The district provides adequate (sufficient) information to guide sound school-based decision-making.	62%	20%	16%	2%
Teachers	The district regularly evaluates the authority assigned to school administrators.	23%	30%	13%	34%
Teachers	The Personnel Staffing Unit (PSU) process at my school includes teacher input.	34%	18%	40%	9%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district strengthen its site-based management approach.*

Action Plan 3-19 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation. Action Plan 13-1 shows additional measures related to the principals' role under site-based management.

Action Plan 3-19

The District Should Strengthen Its Site-Based Management Approach	
Strategy	The district needs to strengthen its site-based management approach.
Action Needed	Step 1: Reinstate SACs as the key structures that facilitate site-based decision-making. Step 2: Devise, a survey method that ensures that instructional staff have input in the site-based decision-making process. Step 3: Develop adequate district-based staffing and curricular parameters and guidelines to which principals should adhere. Action Plan 3-12 shows the

	steps necessary to implement this step of the recommendation.
Step 4:	Revise performance-pay system and strengthen accountability. Action Plan 7-9 shows the steps necessary to implement this step of the recommendation.
Step 5:	Impart interest-based decision-making to principals and assistant principals.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent's Executive Team
Time Frame	October 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Strategic Plan

9

The district recently developed a multi-year strategic plan using the total quality principles of the Sterling criteria. The plan includes overarching goals and measures, and the district is currently concentrating on developing a deployment plan.

The strategic plan is an essential part of the accountability system. It represents the collective effort of the school community to reach state and local educational goals. This plan is based on an analysis of student achievement and other school performance data and includes each school's needs assessment, activities to address state goals and performance standards, evaluation methods, definitions of adequate progress, and requests for waivers.

The district maintains and publishes a clearly written five-year strategic plan to provide vision and direction for the district's efforts

During the course of this review, the district discontinued its 2000-05 strategic plan and produced the 2002-07 version, approved by the board in mid June 2002. The driving basis for this decision was the district's aspiration to include total quality principles of the *Florida Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence* (herein "Sterling criteria"). The initiative of implementing Sterling criteria in the district was initially presented to the board during the last transition between superintendents by two of the senior level administrators and the Chamber of Southwest Florida. In fact, one of the criteria for the selection of the new superintendent was that he/she have previous experience in implementing quality concepts.

The 2000-05 strategic plan articulated five goals, eight priorities and close to 100 related key indicators. The 2002-07 strategic plan was significantly reduced to three major goals. The Strategic Plan Taskforce spearheaded the process and used the existing goals as a starting point and discussed them with district instructional and non-instructional staff and with the community in several town-hall sessions. A climate survey was also conducted of numerous public school stakeholders representing various groups including community-based organizations, businesses, parent/citizen groups, students, public school unions/employee organizations, school principals, and teachers. As the last step, the board discussed the existing goals publicly and gave direction to reduce the number of goals and measures in the plan.

Notable is the fact that in the new plan does not specify district priorities thus goals are not developed around known priorities. Instead, the district's approach is to anchor the plan on the three goals, which are interpreted as the district's priorities.

The three goals are: *Improved Learning, Safe and Healthy Environments, and Efficient and Effective Operation*. Learning gains will be measured using state and national test scores, promotion and

graduation rates, increased enrollment in upper level programs, career preparatory programs and more rigorous mathematics curriculum, while reducing the gap between majority and minority students. Safety will be measured against state and federal life safety standards, state building capacity requirements, and by reducing injuries, drug use at school, and violent incidents. Efficiency and effectiveness will be measured by seeking recognition through the Florida Sterling Council for efficient and effective operations

While goals, objectives and strategies are clearly delineated we noted the following instances where the strategic plan can be strengthened:

- A priority level is not established for the goals and objectives.
- No evidence was found that in developing the plan, the board considered issues such as fund balance levels, teacher salary increases, health and benefits levels and class size reductions. In addition, there was no evidence that the board instructs staff on how the priorities should be considered in making program and budget decisions.
- It is not clear how the district will report progress made towards the accomplishment of goals and objectives. Under the previous plan, the district produced quarterly summary reports of the progress made. It is not clear at this point whether this practice will be carried over to the new plan.

Several district areas are not addressed through a strategic plan objective or receive attention in the plan

The district is currently working towards developing a deployment plan for the three overarching goals. According to the district, all departments and schools will develop deployment plans during the summer and early fall of 2002.

The district must ensure that goals for the plan are included for important operational programs such as personnel, technology, community involvement, facilities, transportation, student nutrition, finance, and risk management. Similarly, the strategic plan must have goals for instructional programs such as ESE and ESOL. Inclusion of goals pertaining to the mentioned operational and instructional programs in the strategic plan drives a performance measurement system and allows the board and the public to evaluate said programs.

Objectives in the strategic plan are measurable but adding standards and annual targets would promote accountability

Goals and objectives in the plan are measurable and the district has been able to establish baseline data most objectives. The district has established that progress will be measured annually and the five-year targets updated. The district's goals, objectives and targets are based on past performance and identified needs.

Currently the plan does not have annual targets for its objectives. After data is generated, the district must develop annual standards for each objective for at least five years into the future. Adjustments are made to the targets as necessary. We also noted that the plan does not clearly delineate the entities responsible for implementing the strategies in the plan. Specifying responsible parties provides higher levels of accountability. Utilization of projected enrollment and revenues as a basis for goal/objective development could not be confirmed.

The current strategic plan does not reference the resources needed to accomplish the goals

Cost estimates for each goal and objective are not provided in the strategic plan. The plan should include cost estimates and identify the sources of the funds to be used. Additionally, a global summary of the

costs linked to the different goals and objectives would support a review of the financial feasibility of the strategic plan and reflect to what degree certain elements are subject to additional funding sources.

The district has demonstrated that it has committed resources to the priorities identified in the strategic plan through its budget and underlying financial analyses. These priorities are also reflected in school improvement plans. The strategic plan however, does not include fiscal impact and funding sources for each goal/objective, and does not summarize the fiscal impact of the plan, nor its impact on the fund balance. This issue is discussed further in Best Practice 11.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district carry out certain related activities to support and enhance the strategic plan and to contribute to creating a solid and significant documented process for the allocation of resources and improvement of the entire planning system. These activities could include:*
 - *adopting annual priorities*
 - *prioritize its objectives and assign responsible parties*
 - *writing and updating school improvement plans*
 - *following a program development cycle to review programs in all subjects*
 - *developing a program evaluation system*
 - *completing and monitoring existing administrative work plans (i.e. Technology Plan, Facilities Construction Plan, etc.), and developing or reactivating work plans for those administrative areas that currently do not have one in place*
 - *maintaining an updated personnel evaluation system*
 - *using a management information system to track and record district progress*

Action Plan 3-20 shows the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district calculate the cost of implementing its strategic plan and include a summary of the fiscal impact and the fund sources for the different goals/objectives.*

Action Plan 3-21 shows the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 3-20

Enhance the Strategic Plan	
Strategy	The district should enhance its strategic plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent and executive team discuss different activities that should be undertaken to enhance the five-year strategic plan and develop the entire planning system of the district. These activities could include: • prioritize its objectives and assign responsible parties; • writing and updating school improvement plans; • following a program development cycle to review programs in all subjects; • completing and monitoring existing administrative work plans (i.e. Technology Plan, Facilities Construction Plan, etc.), and developing or reactivating work plans for those administrative areas that currently do not have one in place; and • maintaining an updated personnel evaluation system.

Action Needed	Step 2: Once the group of strategic plan-related activities that will be undertaken is chosen and mechanics finalized, the superintendent submits to the board for approval.
	Step 3: Results are communicated to stakeholders.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent's Executive Team
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 3-21

Calculate the Cost of Implementing the Strategic Plan

Strategy	The district should calculate the cost of implementing the strategic plan and includes a summary of the fiscal impact and the fund sources for the different objectives.
Action Needed	Step 1: The executive team assigns staff from various departments and schools to work with the budget director to calculate the incremental costs of implementing the strategic plan and the impact on the fund balance.
	Step 2: The budget director and the CFO identify which strategies are dependent on additional funds versus those that can be funded through reallocations in the existing budget. One-time investments should be clearly distinguished from recurring expenditures.
	Step 3: The CFO summarizes the impact of the strategic plan. The result is included in the strategic plan document.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent's Executive Team and the director of budget
Time Frame	April 30, 2004
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

10 The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.

The School District of Lee County uses an open-enrollment student assignment system that obliges staff to constantly monitor enrollment. The essence of the School Choice plan is to maintain adequate racial balance throughout the district therefore administration places great effort on obtaining and maintaining accurate enrollment data, based on continuous demographic analyses.

The district projects student enrollment from two perspectives. The student assignment office (led by a full-time consultant) projects enrollments based upon actual students the district expects to be enrolled within a grade level or within special program within zones. The budget office projects enrollments based upon FTEs (Full-Time Equivalent) which averages the two enrollment counts collected by the state with appropriate weights. Constant interaction and cooperation exists between the two offices and the information generated at the student assignment office level is used in the FTE projection process.

The district strives to provide accurate student enrollment forecasts

The district periodically conducts a district-wide demographic study to identify current and potential future growth in the district. The student assignment office reconciles school and grade level enrollments every twenty days during the school year and collects growth statistics.

The district also employs MapNet™, a mapping software system which allows staff to further segment students into smaller planning areas within each of the three school choice zones. MapNet™ files are updated annually during the first and fourth cycles to provide consistent statistical demographic benchmarks. Additionally, historical grade-level and educational program enrollment data is analyzed and loaded into a cohort survival projection model.

Student enrollment projections are of great importance in establishing capacity needs. If extra students turn up for example, class size is affected. Even if small, unexpected students can be problematic from the resource need basis. As shown in Exhibit 3-23, student enrollment projections have been fairly accurate for the last four years.

Exhibit 3-23

Student Enrollment Projections Have Been Within Acceptable Limits

Year	Projected Enrollment	Actual Enrollment	Difference over/(under)	Percentage Difference
2001-02	60,034	60,450	416	0.69%
2000-01	57,667	58,373	706	1.29%
1999-00	55,561	56,012	361	0.65%
1998-99	55,346	54,605	(741)	(1.34%)

Source: School District of Lee County.

The district strives to provide accurate FTE enrollment forecasts

The district annually projects student FTE counts for the next school year by grade and by FTE program number. The Budget Department begins the process by making a preliminary projection for student enrollment based on prior year student count information. Then, it uses the state projection program to forecast student growth for the next year. These two forecasts plus a projection prepared by the student assignment office are taken to the FTR Projection Committee for discussion. The committee uses the three projections to develop the official student FTE projection for the next fiscal year.

The Budgeting Department considers its past performance in projecting FTE counts and in an effort to improve the accuracy of the current projections, the department also compares actual to projection numbers. The budget director performs the FTE projections by accepting one of the Computerized Projection Models provided by the Department of Education that best fits Lee County

FTE projections are of crucial importance to the district because they determine the weighted and unweighted FTE dollars that the district can claim from the state.¹⁰ When FTE projections are not met in the unweighted programs the district does not lose or gain additional revenue. When FTE projections are overestimated or underestimated in weighted FTE programs, the result could cause a financial shortfall of FTE revenue to the district from the state. If FTE projections are overestimated, the board, based on an over inflated budget will make plans for new programs, salary raises with money that will not materialized. Over projecting has a deeper impact on the state's education budget especially if many districts tend to over project because it may ultimately affect the revenue per FTE each district is assigned.

An analysis conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A. for four consecutive years shows that the district's FTE projections have been within acceptable limits established by DOE, as shown in Exhibit 3-24.

¹⁰ The unweighted FTE is the base allocation given by the state to a basic unit (\$3,278.35 for each student for the year 2000-01, for example). The weighted FTE is the basic unit amount multiplied by a multiplier factor the state assigns to certain programs. The reason the state assigns this multiplier factor is because some programs cost more to operate than the normal basic unit.

Exhibit 3-24**FTE Projections Have Been Within Acceptable DOE Limits**

Year	Unweighted FTE		Difference Over/(Under)	Percentage Difference
	Projected	Actual		
2001-02	58,949.20	59,584.65	-635.45	-1.07%
2000-01	56,644.04	57,231.88	-587.84	-1.03%
1999-00	55,425.55	54,906.41	519.14	0.95%
1998-99	54,382.81	54,006.55	376.26	0.70%

Source: School District of Lee County.

Several procedures help the district produce accurate projections, more complete FTE reporting, and effective FTE-related functions

The district's budget director is also the FTE coordinator responsible for preparing annual FTE projections. An FTE Projections Committee supports the FTE projections process. The committee is formed of representatives from the district's intervention programs, ESOL, ESE, FTE accounting, accountability and planning, charter Schools, facilities planning, and instructional services, the chief financial officer, the director of student accounting, and the coordinator of school choice.

The district primarily bases its enrollment projections on statistical enrollment techniques, such as a cohort survival methodology, that can detect turning points due to changing demographics. Historical grade-level and educational program enrollment data is analyzed by the student assignment office and loaded into a cohort survival projection model. Increases or decreases in each grade level, from one year to the next are averaged for one, two and three year scenarios. High and low projections are then analyzed against other relevant information such as changes in private and charter schools, mobility within the zone and district, permitted developments, and grade retentions.

The state projection model utilized for FTE projections also uses a cohort model. The FTE Projection Committee includes individuals that provide input on factors such as planned enrollment, changes in private schools, new developments, etc. For example, the district's planner is on the committee and gives input on city and county plans and new development for the district.

The district also uses historical data it obtains from DOE or its records in developing enrollment forecasts. The district also checks the accuracy of the data. For example, in the initial phases of the FTE projection process, the district ensures that the data in the state's projection model is accurate based on DOE or district records. The district documents the methodologies and processes for key areas of its forecasting process.

The district also makes long-range enrollment projections. Long-range projections are completed in both the Budget Department and the Student Assignment office. The projection uses growth and birth rate trends in its analysis. No solid evidence was found however, that the district uses other specific factors such as changes in land use (residential, commercial, industrial, urban renewal, and agricultural), geographical limitations on 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, and major highway and street networks and their probable future development.

Enrollment projections for individual schools consider many conditions that may effect student assignment in each school

The student assignment office makes enrollment projections by grade level and educational program for each of the three school choice zones. Projections for individual schools result from the pro-rata share of the zone enrollment projection based upon each school's FISH (Florida Inventory of School Houses) capacity, special programs housed at each school, the number of students expected to matriculate in-place, the availability of transportation services, any other special conditions that may enhance or restrict student assignments. Projections by individual schools represent the proposed maximum number of students (i.e.: caps) by grade and program that are projected for the school. The student assignment office then administers student assignments to the schools based on these caps.

The budget department prepares projections for individual schools considering existing populations plus the information generated by the student assignment office for the capacity and mobility elements. Before the allocations are prepared, the budget department releases individual school projections to school principals for input.

Additionally, because the district operates with PSU budgeting, there is great interest on the principals' side to constantly monitor FTEs. A unique thing being done in this district is a "mock" FTE every Friday at the individual school level. This has two advantages: a) cuts down on the errors during FTE week and b) helps the principals know whether they will meet their FTE projections. Principals appreciate this process as it helps them obtain all the FTE's they are entitled to.

FTE training is also effective. At the beginning of the school year there is a mandatory training for all school data processing clerks; school administrators are invited.

Also, as the district moves to a 'true' internal audit function, the internal audit department should share the responsibility of monitoring the FTE counts. Action Plan 14-1, Chapter 14, shows the detailed steps needed to implement this recommendation

11 The district does not effectively link its financial plans and budgets to its priority goals and objectives. With the utilization of the Sterling Quality Criteria, however, this task has been given the highest priority.

The link between the district's budget and the strategic plan is not specified

As previously discussed, the district's strategic plan does not include a cost estimate or cost summary, making it difficult to reflect the link between the strategic plan and the budget. As is, the strategic plan provides little guidance for establishing budget priorities. No evidence was found that the district, even from a conceptual perspective, explains how the district's priorities are translated into spending priorities in the budget.

A review of the 2001-02 fiscal year budget document does not reference the district's financial plans and budgets to the district's priority goals and objectives. Additionally, the district did not demonstrate that it assesses performance and adjusts its financial plans and budgets to improve its ability to meet district goals.

Still in the initial phases, the district currently is obtaining baseline data to support the strategic plan. With a new "deployment plan" being created as part of the implementation for every program of the Sterling Quality Criteria, the district will be able to specify how each program's goals and objectives will be achieved within the district's budget and explain the program's fiscal impact.

The district expects that the district's strategic planning and its link to the budget will be greatly improved by incorporating the Sterling criteria. With this, the district will be able to rethink and redesign fundamental business processes. Under this approach, the district also plans to emphasize performance measures of cost and quality; and of efficient use of resources.

While senior staff directs efforts to achieve the district's goals and objectives, added communication with school-based staff would be beneficial

The district has articulated one priority named "Fiscal Responsibility" that states "business and administrative systems throughout the district will monitor expenditures in a commitment to spend resources in a cost-effective manner" that could be used as a starting point.

During conversations with senior level administrators, we noted they have good understanding of how their work is aligned with and contributes to the achievement of the district's strategic plan goals and objectives. While this observation in itself does not obviate our earlier critiques of the strategic plan, it does speak to the commitment of senior staff to the plan.

The district can improve by increasing school based staff awareness and familiarity with district strategic goals and objectives. While the school improvement plans can be one evidence that school based staff focuses on the strategic plan, results of teacher surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A. indicate that instructional staff is not familiar with the district's strategic planning approach. When given the statement: "*The district's top level administration leads with a solid vision of quality education,*" only 30% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed; 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed, 31% were neutral and 4% did not have an opinion.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district continue the process to link the budget to the district's goals and objectives and thus, be able to clearly identify how financial resources support the district's priority goals and objectives.*

The five-year strategic plan becomes the natural starting point for the district's planning and management system. In developing budgets for upcoming years, the district should allocate resources according to the priorities developed in the planning process, thereby enabling the district to meet its objectives through available district funds. Expenditures also should be tracked and reported according to each priority.

Action Plan 3-22 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that once the major educational and operational programs have developed goals and objectives, the district strengthen its budgetary development process by including links with programmatic goals, including student achievement.*

Action Plan 3-23 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 3-22

District Budgets Formally Reflect the Goals and Priorities Articulated In the Strategic Plan

Strategy	Identify in the budget the dedication of resources to priority goals and objectives in a clearer manner.

Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent and the executive team employ the strategic plan as the starting point for the district's planning and management system and allocate resources according to the priorities developed in the strategic planning process. Step 2: The Superintendent and the Chief Financial Officer and the executive team device the procedure needed to track strategic plan priorities and associated expenditures. Step 3: Procedure is finalized, tested and implemented. Step 4: The superintendent assigns the budget and finance director the responsibility of monitoring the process once a year, during the budget approval process, and any time there is a significant amendment or change to the budget. Step 5: The superintendent and the executive team take the steps necessary to ensure district directors and school administrators are responsible for ensuring their goals and objectives stay in line with the budget.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Executive Team, and budget and finance director
Time Frame	April 30, 2004
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-23

Link Financial Planning With Programmatic Goals and Student Achievement

Strategy	Identify in the budget the dedication of resources to priority goals and objectives in a clearer manner.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent and the executive team assign the budget and finance director the responsibility of strengthening the budgetary process by including links with programmatic goals. Step 2: The budget and finance director obtains information from other districts regarding how they specifically link programmatic goals to financial planning and budgeting, including student achievement. Districts that currently link programmatic goals to financial planning and budgeting include Alachua, Manatee, Polk and Leon. Step 3: The budge and finance director assess the current budgeting process in light of the process followed by other districts. Step 4: The budget and finance director prepares recommendations for board consideration that would alter the current financial planning and budgeting process to include linkage to district goals and objectives, including student performance. Step 5: The superintendent and the executive team select financial planning and budget development process alterations that suit the needs of the district, provide clear links to district goals and objectives, and provide opportunities to adjust financial planning and budgeting when warranted to meet goals. Step 6: The superintendent and the executive team implement a financial planning and budget development process that is linked to the district's goals and objectives, including student performance. Step 7: The superintendent and the executive team adopt a regular assessment process of the district's goals and objectives that includes adjusting financial planning and budgeting when warranted to meet goals. Step 8: The superintendent reviews and approves the process and submits to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent's Executive Team and the budget and finance director
Time Frame	April 30, 2004
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

12 The district effectively seeks options to increase revenues, although a few additional options remain.

Financial support for public school education in Florida comes from three sources: state, local and federal. For the 2001-02 fiscal year the School District of Lee County budgeted 62.5% of its support from local sources, 28.2% from state sources, and 9.3% from federal sources. Local sources include the required local effort portion of the FEFP (Florida Education Finance Program) as will be explained later in this section.

Funds for federal support have their source in several agencies such as the Department of Labor, Veterans Administration, Department of Interior, Department of Education, Department of Defense, and Department of Agriculture. Districts receive funds from the federal government directly and through the state as an administering agency.

Funds for state support to school districts are provided primarily by legislative appropriations. The major proportion of state support is distributed under the provisions of the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). FEFP is the primary mechanism for funding the operating costs in public schools. On funding for capital outlay, the CO&DS (Capital Outlay & Debt Service) constitutional provision provides for the calculation of the district's allocations each year; additionally, the PECO (Public Education Capital Outlay) constitutional provision provides a funding source with allocations addressed each year by the appropriations process.

Funds for local support are derived almost entirely from property taxes and Florida law requires that each school board participating in the state allocation of funds for current operations of schools must levy the millage established for its required local effort from property taxes (s. 236.25, *Florida Statutes*) Each district's share of the state total of required local effort is determined by statutory procedure and varies based on the differing levels of property appraisal in the counties. Exhibit 3-25 shows the millage rates for Lee and its peers.¹¹

In addition to the required local effort, school boards may also set discretionary tax levies for 1) current operation and for 2) capital outlay and maintenance. For current operation, the legislature set the maximum discretionary millage at 0.510 for 2001-2002. Districts however, may set an additional supplemental discretionary millage, not to exceed 0.250 mills that will raise an amount not to exceed \$50 per FTE student.

For capital outlay and maintenance, school boards may levy up to 2 mills under what is commonly referred to as the *non-voted improvement millage* (s. 235.25(2), *Florida Statutes*) without regard to prioritization in the use of this revenue. Lee, as most Florida districts, has set this non-voted improvement millage at 2.0.

¹¹ Millage rate is the ad valorem tax rate expressed in terms of the levy per thousand dollars of taxable assessed value established by the state each fiscal year. Ad valorem taxes are taxes levied based on the assessed valuation of real property.

Exhibit 3-25

2001-02 Millage Rates

District	Required Local Effort Portion of FEFP	Basic Discretionary Millage	Supplemental Discretionary Millage	Non-voted Improvement Millage	Interest Sinking Fund¹	Total Millage²	Gross Taxable Value (millions)
Brevard	5.962	0.510	0.202	2.000	0.000	8.674	18.241
Lee	5.870	0.510	0.098	2.000	0.000	8.478	31.820
Pasco	5.631	0.510	0.241	2.000	0.643	9.025	10.962
Polk	5.962	0.510	0.250	2.000	0.000	8.772	16.238
Seminole	5.822	0.510	0.191	2.000	0.639	9.162	16.970
Volusia	5.712	0.510	0.184	2.000	0.609	9.015	17.461

¹ The district interest and sinking fund of any school district comprises the proceeds of the tax levied for the purpose of paying the principal and interest of bonds outstanding against the district as provided in this chapter and in addition such funds as may accrue to the credit of the district interest and sinking fund from interest on deposits, investments or other sources.

² ValienteHernandez P.A. calculation.

Source: Florida Department of Education, Division of Support Services, Bureau of School Business Services. Office of Funding and Financial Reporting.

The school board establishes the levies mentioned so far by means of their legitimate power. In addition to those levies, school districts have constitutional authority to establish additional millage. Thus, qualified electors, through a local referendum or in conjunction with a general election, may vote, for the following:

- An additional millage levy for operations and capital outlay purposes, for a period not to exceed two years [Article VII, Section 9(b)];
- An additional levy for operational purposes, not to exceed four years [authority was provided under Section 236.25(6) by the 2001 legislature];
- A school capital outlay tax (commonly referred as a sales surtax) of up to 0.5% for capital outlay purposes [Section 212.055(6)];
- Issuance of local bond issues [Article VII, Sections 9(b) and 12].

It is noted that in December 2001 the government of Lee County passed an ordinance to collect school impact fees. These impact fees are being collected but are not being released to the school district pending resolution of an existing lawsuit. Legal proceedings are likely to begin by the end of 2002.

The district assesses all available non-voted options to increase funding for capital projects and should consider increasing revenues from voted funding options

Within the next five years, the district expects to grow by 11,000 to 12,000 students and it currently faces a \$300 million deficit in funding approximately to build the needed 25 schools by 2006. Thus, the district needs to find additional sources of revenue. The district consistently considers several of its taxing options to increase revenues. For example, each year the district levies the maximum discretionary and supplemental millage for general operating expenses such as salaries, teaching supplies, equipment and utilities. The district also levies the full 2 Mills of non-voted discretionary capital.

A review of the district's capital budget for revenue type showed the district has maximized non-voted local revenue sources to the extent the law allows. Most state sources have been used and the district

then, needs to turn its attention toward pursuing additional local revenues for increases, including voted funding options. Based on the experience of other Florida school districts, the Lee County district can theoretically pursue various local options. If for example, the district pursues the half cent sales tax option, it stands to receive as much as \$35 million per year that can be used for capital projects.

The district generates significant income from other sources

The district generates revenue through several forms of discretionary funding such as grants, the effort of the Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, Inc. and fundraisers. Exhibit 3-26 summarizes the grant revenues that have been received during the last five fiscal years. These revenues contribute an amount that is approximately equal to five percent of the district's 2001-02 total budget.¹²

The district can further improve if it chooses to pursue Medicaid Reimbursement for direct services as another form of funding. Medicaid can reimburse the district for physical, occupational and speech therapy, behavioral health services, mental health services and transportation services for eligible exceptional students. (Best Practice 3, Chapter 5 provides detail information on this subject).

Exhibit 3-26

Grant Revenues Were Approximately 5% Of Total District Revenues For Fiscal Year 2001-02

Source of Grant	Fiscal Year		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Federal	\$23,438,397	\$29,635,814	\$35,676,078
State	2,293,174	2,224,974	3,335,438
Foundation	43,395	49,736	42,038
Business/Corporate	86,112	1,500	26,500
Other	8,845	61,141	45,574
Total	\$25,869,528	\$31,973,166	\$39,125,629

¹ The year-to-year fluctuations in the *Business/Corporate* and *Other* categories are caused by a small number of comparatively larger grants. The district only competed for 14 business grants in FY 1999-00, 5 in FY 2000-01, and 18 in FY 2001-02. The aggregate trend however, is significantly positive, increasing grant funding in more than 50% over the three years.

Source: Lee County School District. Grants tracking data.

The district's process for applying for grants is successful

The district has taken steps to facilitate the efforts of district staff to access grant revenue. For example, the district maintains a web site and produces a grant writing manual that provides information on grant opportunities from private, state, and federal sources.

The district has also developed procedures for obtaining information about funding opportunities from private, state, and federal sources. These procedures are featured on the grant notices page at <http://learn/dept/gpd/notices.htm>. The written procedures for actually applying for such grants are featured on the district's grant procedures page at <http://learn/dept/gpd/proc.htm>.

The district has one full-time program administrator to pursue federal, state and local competitive grants. While the effort of this position is noteworthy, if the district were to expand the grant-writing activity by one secretary and at least one teacher on assignment, revenues could be increased even more. The teacher on assignment could, for example conduct the research needed to apply for program-specific grants that may otherwise be missed. Moreover, while the additional staff has an initial fiscal impact, usually these positions are self-paid by the fund-seeking nature of the job.

¹² The table contains data that is a measure of competitive success and should not be expected to align with the actual budget.

An analysis of 2001-02 grant activity conducted by the program administrator, found that the district has passed at least 25 funding opportunities due to lack of time, data and/or personnel. The analysis shows that the district had the opportunity to seek additional funds between \$2.5 and \$5.4 million during 2001-02, but chose not to do so. The current grants strategy of the district emphasizes competition for areas where the district has the greatest need and highest chance for success.

ValienteHernandez P.A. estimates that the district could stand to receive an annual \$1.2 million approximately, in additional revenue from other sources of funding, which would more than offset the cost of additional personnel for this area.¹³ Thus, we recommend the district expand the grants writing activity by one secretary and at least one teacher on assignment. Over the next five years, the district could net after expenses approximately \$4.3 million, as shown in Exhibit 3-27. Implementing this recommendation will require the investment of approximately \$110,000 during the first year for salaries and benefits for the two additional staff members.

Exhibit 3-27

**The District Could Receive an Additional \$4.3 Million
from Other Sources of Funding Over a Five-Year Period**

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Savings	\$0	\$1,075,000	\$1,075,000	\$1,075,000	\$1,075,000
Cumulative Savings	\$0	\$1,075,000	\$2,150,000	\$3,225,000	\$4,300,000

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Another possible improvement is to develop an online training program that could be used (1) when a new employee is hired mid-year; (2) when a new grant opportunity becomes available that attracts new would-be grant writers; (3) when calendar conflicts make scheduling difficult; and (4) as a refresher for previously-trained grant writers. The district holds a grant writing training annually, which was further improved last year to make it easier for employees to participate. The implementation of school-based grants is of generally better quality when instructors write the proposals, and with a larger number of trained teachers, this is much more likely to happen. The online program would be an alternative to traditional training.

Overall, this action would allow a new group of people access to grant writing training, adding capacity and expanding the community partnership possibilities. While there are some costs associated with the development of the program, it can also help contain training costs once established.

Recommendations

- We recommend the school board discuss the possibility of a referendum for a half-cent sales tax.*

Action Plan 3-24 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- We recommend the district expand the grants writing activity by one secretary and one teacher on assignment. This action will secure significant additional funds that more than offset the cost of the additional staff.*

Action Plan 3-25 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

¹³ Calculated as approximately on third or \$1.2 million, of the median value (\$3.95 million).

Action Plan 3-24

Pursuit of Local Voted Funding Sources	
Strategy	Review local referendum sources which may include local bond referendum, increased millage, or a half-penny sales tax.
Action Needed	Step 1: Consider referendum alternatives and pursue alternative selected. Step 2: Establish a taskforce of community leaders that support public education and have them conduct a comprehensive study of the district's needs. Step 3: When the taskforce concludes its study, disseminate the information as widely as possible to all stakeholders of the entire district. Step 4: Work with community taskforce to identify publicity strategies and actions including funding and timelines. Step 5: Work closely with other district governmental agencies that will have to support any initiatives in this area. Step 6: Encourage Foundation or another outside group to promote community awareness of need. Step 7: Prepare referendum for ballot.
Who Is Responsible	Board, superintendent and staff
Time Frame	September, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Pursuit of a local voted funding option can be completed with existing resources. If implemented and voters approve, the district could receive \$35 million from a half-cent sales tax. Other referendum sources would increase revenues available for capital expenditures. The amounts would be determined in the referendum.

Action Plan 3-25

Expand the Grants-Writing Activity	
Strategy	Hire additional staff to expand the grants-writing activity.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent secures approval from the school board as to the additional positions Step 2: The positions are advertised and applications reviewed by human resources in conjunction with the grants Program Administrator. Step 3: Staff is hired and trained. Step 4: Staff begins to conduct research and to apply for grant.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for human resources and the grants' program administrator.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	If implemented, the district could receive an additional \$4.85 million from other sources of funding over a five-year period, as shown in Exhibit 3-3.

4

Performance Accountability Systems

While the district has begun using performance information and accountability criteria, additional efforts are needed. The district needs to implement specific accountability mechanisms to ensure the efficient and effective performance of its major educational and operational programs.

Conclusion

The School District of Lee County (the district) has begun using performance information to strengthen basic educational programs (K-12). For example, performance goals and program objectives have been established in the district's strategic plan and are linked to the district's overall goals. However, the district needs to take further steps to build accountability mechanisms that ensure the cost-effectiveness of its major educational and operational programs.

Exhibit 4-1

The District Has Had Notable Accomplishments in Performance Accountability Over the Past Two Years

- The district uses Sterling Criteria to establish goals for district performance and drive performance improvement.¹
- School-based administrators creatively manage their schools to achieve goals outlined in their school improvement plans.
- The district has created a comprehensive five-year strategic plan that will link district and program goals to the budget.
- Student performance has generally improved.
- The district has no critically low-performing schools, based on state minimum standards for student performance.

¹ The Sterling 2003 Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence are designed to assist organizations to continually improve how they do business.

Source: The Lee County School District.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

Educational and Operational Accountability

1. The district is beginning to establish goals and measurable objectives for educational and operational programs that link to the budget. (Page 4-7)
2. The district has established performance measures for some basic educational and operational programs, and will establish adequate cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks to evaluate these programs. (Page 4-23)
3. While some mechanisms have been established to analyze ways to reduce costs, the district is just beginning to institutionalize this process and extend it to all educational and operational programs. (Page 4-28)

4. The district plans formally to evaluate whether the efforts to assess the performance and costs of its major educational and operational programs meet the district's needs. (Page 4-29)
5. In general, the district should report additional information about the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers. (Page 4-32)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

Implementing these recommendations has no direct fiscal impact, however, by improving accountability, the recommendations should improve the district's educational and operational program performance.

Background

School districts are accountable to parents and other taxpayers for the performance and costs of academic programs and support services. In addition, an effectively managed school district has an administrative team that provides leadership and accountability through an efficient, responsive organizational structure that oversees fund allocation to the district's instructional and operational programs. To accomplish this, district management must provide direction by establishing goals, objectives, and measures--not only overall, but also for each significant educational or operational program.

Exhibit 4-2 shows the district's major educational and operational programs. This chapter addresses the performance accountability of these programs.

Exhibit 4-2

The District Has 16 Major Educational and Operational Programs

Major Educational Programs	Major Operational Programs
• Basic Education • Exceptional Student Education (ESE) • Drop-out Prevention and Alternative Education • Vocational Education; • Student Support Services • Instructional Support Services	• Facilities Construction • Facilities Maintenance • Transportation • Food Services • Safety and Security • Asset and Risk Management • Media and Technology • Information Systems • Evaluation Testing & Research • Personnel

Source: Compiled by ValienteHernandez P.A. based on information obtained from district operational divisions.

A performance accountability system is effective if it helps school districts answer two questions: "*How well is each major program performing?*" and "*How can we improve program performance and cost efficiency?*" Additionally, an effective performance accountability system offers clear direction and context for the program staff's daily activities by providing the following:

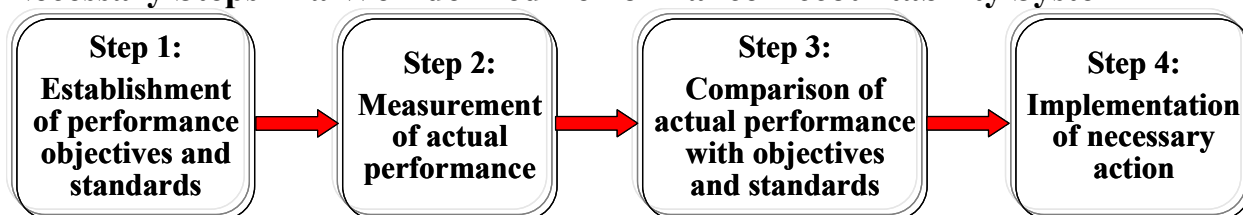
- Clearly stated goals and measurable objectives

- Appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures, including appropriate standards from comparable school districts, government agencies, and private industry
- Evaluation of performance and cost efficiency, including potential cost-saving alternatives
- Public reporting of performance and cost-efficiency information
- An effective management information system to support district accountability

Performance accountability systems examine the extent to which a school district has implemented a comprehensive accountability system for each major educational and operational program. The steps in a well-defined performance accountability system are illustrated in Exhibit 4-3.

Exhibit 4-3

Necessary Steps in a Well-defined Performance Accountability System



Source: The Florida Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence.

Lee County district and school performance accountability systems are designed to ensure the district meets the state's educational goals outlined in Exhibit 4-4.

State educational guidelines for accountability

Florida's eight education goals (Exhibit 4-4) are general statements of intent and were revised in 1999 to reflect increased emphasis on collaboration and accountability. The state legislature established these goals as a framework for individual school improvement. Goal 3, Student Performance, for example, drives school improvement and accountability efforts to transform schools into centers of excellence.

Exhibit 4-4

Florida's Education Goals

Goal 1: Readiness to Start School	Communities and schools collaborate in a statewide comprehensive school readiness program to prepare children and families for children's success in school.
Goal 2: Graduation Rate and Readiness for Postsecondary Education and Employment	Students graduate and are prepared to enter the workforce and postsecondary education.
Goal 3: Student Performance	Students make annual learning gains sufficient to acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to master state standards, successfully compete at the highest levels nationally and internationally, and are prepared to make well-reasoned, thoughtful, and healthy lifelong decisions.
Goal 4: Learning Environment	School boards provide a learning environment conducive to teaching and learning, in which education programs are based on student performance data, and which strive to eliminate achievement gaps by improving learning for all students.

Goal 5: School Safety and Environment	Communities and schools provide an environment that is drug-free and protects students' health, safety, and civil rights.
Goal 6: Teachers and Staff	Schools, districts, colleges of education, postsecondary institutions, and the state work collaboratively to provide professional teachers and staff who possess the competencies and demonstrate the performance needed to maximize learning among all students.
Goal 7: Adult Literacy	Adult Floridians are literate and have the knowledge and skills needed to compete in a global economy, prepare children for success in school, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
Goal 8: Parental, Family, and Community Involvement	Communities, school boards, and schools provide opportunities for involving parents, families, guardians, and other community stakeholders as collaborative partners in achieving school improvement and educational accountability.

Source: Florida Department of Education, Office of Evaluation and Research.

The district's strategic plan was developed using "Sterling Criteria"

The district's 2002 strategic plan was developed using Florida's Sterling Criteria. The *Florida Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence* ("Sterling Criteria" or "the Criteria") is a self-assessment and feedback process that improves planning and accountability by measuring program strengths and weaknesses and evaluating administrative leadership. Using the Sterling Criteria system, leaders use planning strategies and input from customers to align staff efforts and adjust management practices to generate improved results.

The Sterling Criteria are based on the *Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award* standards for organizational excellence. Founded in 1992, the Florida Sterling Council is a public/private partnership supported by the Executive Office of the Governor. The criteria are continually revised and updated to ensure they offer organizations the most comprehensive way to "assess and improve performance within a results-oriented framework." Florida's Sterling Council also notes: "*The Sterling 2003 Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence are designed to assist organizations to continually improve how they do business. The criteria are based on an integrated set of basic values, requirements, and processes aimed at increasing customer value and driving organizational effectiveness. It is a self-assessment tool to help organizations determine their current capabilities, including their strengths and opportunities where improvement is needed.*"

The Sterling Criteria assessment processes offer three assessment tools designed to help organizations move toward performance excellence. To achieve maximum results, each tool becomes increasingly rigorous and detailed. By providing ever-more challenging performance assessments, this process enhances an organization's performance management systems. The Sterling Award is granted to the highest-achieving organizations, recognizing those businesses that can serve as role models for organizational performance excellence.

The district has completed the first level of self-assessment

The district has completed the first level of self-assessment and improvement using Sterling Criteria. In January 2002, non-instructional employees received a one-day training on Sterling Criteria and completed the Sterling Navigator self-assessment review. The Navigator provides the district with a snapshot of its current situation by surveying a cross-section of employees. The Sterling Council analyzed the data, noting district strengths and opportunities for improvement. The results are being used to plan future

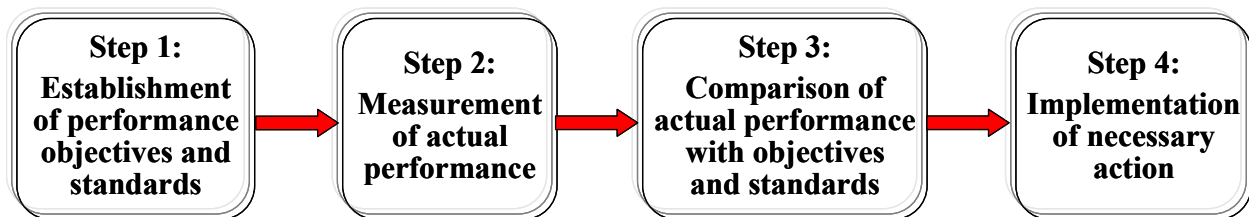
training for non-instructional employees. To complete the Navigator process, the district will move through a series of management steps from awareness to improvement (Exhibit 4-5). As of September 2002, the district is still completing the initial step of *Awareness*, which covers the following:

- Leadership awareness and commitment
- Partner orientation
- Strategic alignment
- Operation planning and deployment

By September 30, 2002, the district will begin creating customer matrices, communication-plans, personal mission statements, a list of data requirements, and an action plan to complete the subsequent steps.

Exhibit 4-5

Steps to Implement Sterling Criteria



Source: The Florida Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence.

The district's new strategic plan

By September 15, 2002, the district will adopt a new five-year strategic plan designed to support the district's vision, mission, and core values. The plan has three goals: improved learning, safety and health, and organizational efficiency and effectiveness (See Exhibit 4-6). Progress toward these goals will be assessed annually using 21 measures. One-year and five-year goals will be updated as data is generated. Based on the new strategic plan, the district's revised vision, mission, and core values are as follows:

Vision: To prepare every student for success

Mission: To provide a quality education in a safe and well-managed environment

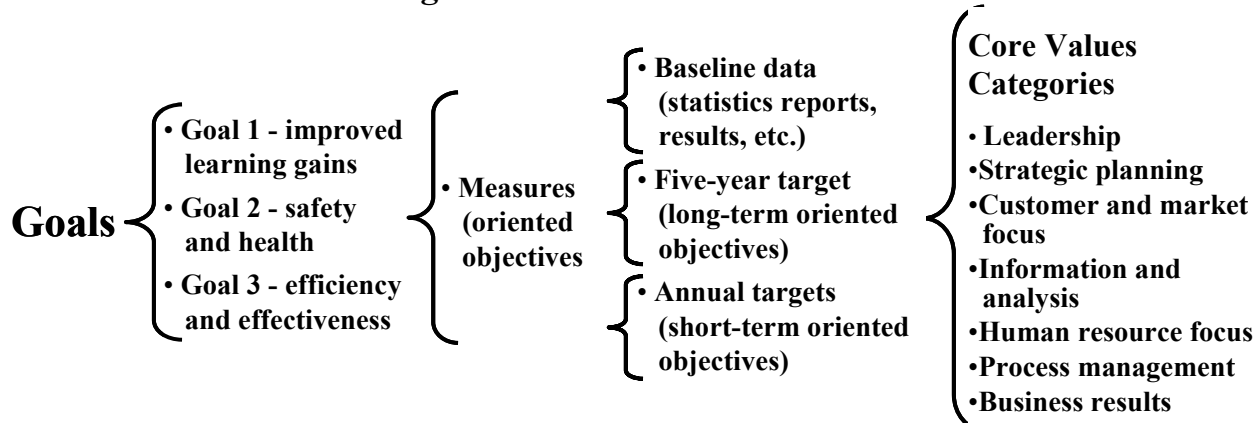
Core Values: We believe that all students can learn and staff can perform best in an organization that practices:

- Accountability for all
- Community and parental involvement
- Data-based decision making
- Differentiated instruction
- Effective communication
- Equity
- Engaging teaching and learning
- Life-long learning
- Participatory problem-solving
- Respect for diversity
- Strategic plan for continuous improvement

- Visionary leadership

Exhibit 4-6

The District's 2002 Strategic Plan Structure



Source: School District of Lee County 2002 Strategic Plan.

Additional aspects of the district's accountability system

Operational-level accountability

The Operational Support Services division in the district is responsible for operational accountability practices which include:

- Communicating to the community about, and successfully implementing, school choice.
- Developing estimated growth patterns and monitoring student distribution to ensure compliance with the district's desegregation court order.
- Coordinating the data across all measurable performance areas to support the district's application for unitary status and school choice.

School-level accountability

In an effort to ensure higher levels of accountability, the state of Florida required schools to develop school improvement plans (SIPs) starting in 1991. This initiative gives schools greater control to develop plans to meet local needs. At the same time, school advisory councils (SACs) serve as the decision-making body for school improvement and accountability at the school level. The primary function of each SAC is to assist in the preparation and evaluation of the school improvement plan.

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. used various methods for determining if the district is meeting the best practices for performance accountability systems. ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed the self-assessment instruments completed by seven staff members, conducted interviews, and made inquiries with key staff members.

Educational and Operational Program Accountability

1 The district is beginning to establish goals and measurable objectives for educational and operational programs that link to the budget.

To effectively operate school districts, the proper information is needed to evaluate activities, make informed decisions, and assess the impact of those decisions. The district's educational and operational programs lack this type of accountability mechanism, but have the opportunity to expand and integrate current management practices to establish an active and effective performance accountability system.

The district is beginning to implement accountability mechanisms to ensure overall performance, efficiency, and effectiveness

As noted, the district has a newly-developed strategic plan, approved September 2002. Still in the initial phase, the district currently is obtaining baseline data to support the strategic plan. Exhibit 4-7 shows the link between the strategic plan and the district's basic educational goals, and Exhibit 4-8 shows these links with some of the other educational and operational programs. With a new "deployment plan" being created for every program, the district will specify how each program's goals and objectives will be achieved within the district's budget and explain the program's fiscal impact.

Exhibit 4-7

Basic Educational Goals are Directly Linked to 2002 Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented Objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (annual and five-year targets)
Goal # 1. – Standards			
<i>"The district will continually develop, implement, measure, and communicate the importance of rigorous academic standards that align with the Sunshine State Standards"</i>			
Goal No. 1: <i>Improved learning gains</i>	1. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of students in grades K-2 achieving and exceeding the state grade level expectations in reading and math.	1. Stanford Achievement Test 2002. Percent meeting/exceeding standard.	1. Annual: Stanford Achievement Test % meeting/exceeding standards for reading and math. 2. Five-year: By 2007, the percentage of students in grades K-2 achieving and exceeding state grade level expectations in reading and math, as measured by Stanford 9, will increase by 10 percentage points.

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented Objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (annual and five-year targets)
Goal # 2 – Reading			
<i>“Students will read in grade level by the end of 3rd grade”</i>			
Goal No. 1 <i>Improved learning gains</i>	1. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of students who exhibit annual learning gains on FCAT in grades 3-10 in reading and math or on assessments based on individualized educational plans (IEP).	1. Not available.	1. Using the new state definition of improved learning gains, the district will establish baseline data during 2002-03 and set annual targets to improve performance on this measure.
	2. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of students achieving a score of 3 or better on the FCAT in grades 3-10 in reading, writing, and math.	2. Percent level 3-5 (RD/MT), 3.0 or above (WT) years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01, 01-02.	2. Using the new state definition of improved learning gains, the district will establish baseline data during the 2002-3 and set a five-year target to improve performance on this measure.
	3. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of all students who meet promotion standards at the end of each grade level.	3. Students meeting promotion standards year 2001-02 = 93.5%.	1. Percent Level 3-5 (RD/MT) 3.0 or above (WT). 2. By 2007, the percentage of students who meet or exceed state standards on FCAT in grades 3-10 in reading, math, and writing will increase by 10 percentage points until 90% of students score at or above state standards. Science targets will be established after baseline data is reported by the state.
	4. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of students achieving graduation within 4 years of entering grade 9.	4. Graduation rate years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01 Lee County: 69.4, 67.8, 65.9, State: 60.2, 62.3, 63.8.	1. Students meeting promotion standards. 2. By 2007, the district-wide percentage of students meeting promotion standards will increase by 5 percentage points: using 2001-02 -3 baseline data for grade 3 and 2001-02 baseline data for all other grades.
	5. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of graduates and local employers who express satisfaction with the quality of graduates' preparedness for entry-level employment.	5. Not available.	1. Graduation rate 02-3 65.9%, 03-4 66.9%, 04-5 69.9%, 05-6 72.9% and 06-7 75.9%. 2. By 2007, the graduation rate will increase by 10% 1. The district will establish baseline data during the 2002-03 and set annual targets to improve performance on this measure.

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented Objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (annual and five-year targets)
			2. The district will establish baseline data during the 2002-03 and set a five-year target to improve performance on this measure.
Goal # 3. - Challenging courses & activities <i>"The district will increase the number of students enrolling in and successfully completing higher-level courses and related challenging activities"</i>			
Goal No. 1 <i>Improved learning gains</i>	1. The district will measure satisfaction of students, parents/guardians, employees, and the community regarding improved learning. 2. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of students in grades 6-12 successfully completing one or more higher-level courses.	1. Not available. 2. Not available.	1. The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007. 2. In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed and data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007. 1. The district will identify all courses that qualify as "higher level" courses, establish baseline data for completion rates in those courses during 2002-03, and set annual targets. 2. The district will identify all courses that qualify as "higher level" courses, establish baseline data for completion rates in those courses during 2002-03, and set a five-year target for 2007.
Goal # 4. - Achievement gap <i>"The district will reduce the gap in achievement between minority and non-minority students while showing improvement for all"</i>			
Goal No. 1 <i>Improved</i>	1. The district will improve learning as measured by elimination of the majority/minority gap in reading, math, and writing, while raising all scores.	1. Percent Level 3-5 (RD/MT), 3.0 or Above (WT) non-minority/minority years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01, 01-02, writing, reading, and math.	1. Percent level 3-5 (RD/MT), 3.0 or above (WT). 2. By 2007, the majority/minority achievement gap in reading, math, and writing will be reduced by 20% until 90% of all groups score at or above state/district standards.

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented Objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (annual and five-year targets)
Goal # 5. – Algebra			
<i>“The district commits that standard curriculum students will complete Algebra I by the end of 8th grade”</i>			
Goal No. 1 <i>Improved learning gains</i>	1. The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of standard curriculum students successfully completing Algebra I by the end of grade 9.	1. Percentage of 9 th grade standard curriculum students completing Algebra I or higher. 2. Percentage of 8 th grade standard curriculum students completing an Algebra course. 3. Years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01 percent of 8th Graders enrolled in Algebra 1.	Annual targets: A) Percentage of 9 th grade standard curriculum students completing algebra or higher 02-2 52%, 03-4 58%, 05-5 72%, 05-6 86%, 06-7 100%. B) Percentage of 8th grade standard curriculum students completing an Algebra course. Annual targets for this measure will be determined by March 2003 after identification of courses to be included in the calculation. C) Years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01, percent of 8th graders enrolled in Algebra 1 29 35 36 02-3 36%, 03-4 40%, 04-5 45%, 05-6 50% and 06-7 54%. Five-year targets: D) By 2007, 100% of 9 th grade standard curriculum students will complete Algebra I or higher. E) By 2006, 100% of 8 th grade standard curriculum students will complete an Algebra course – i.e. Algebra I, Pre-Algebra, Algebra IA. F) By 2007, the percentage of 8th grade standard curriculum students taking Algebra I will increase to 54% or higher.

Source: The district Strategic Plan 2002-07.

Exhibit 4-8**Some of the Other Educational and Operational Goals are Directly Linked to the 2002 Strategic Plan**

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-Objectives (five-year target)
1. Vocational/technical education and ESOL			
Goal No. 1 <i>Improved learning gains</i>	The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of career and technical graduates completing 3 or more	00-01; 47.9%	1. Career and technical graduates completing 3 courses. 2. By 2007, 47% of graduates will have met

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-Objectives (five-year target)
	courses in occupational preparatory programs.		the requirements to be completers in career and occupational preparatory programs.
Safety and health			
Goal No. 2 safety and health	The district will provide a safe and healthy environment as measured by maintaining compliance with life-safety standards as reported in the state requirements for educational facilities.	- Number of imminent dangers reported on SREF. - Percentage of resolved recurring fire safety deficiencies.	Annual targets: 1. Number of imminent dangers reported on SREF. 2. Percentage of resolved recurring fire safety deficiencies. Five-year targets: 3. The district will have zero "imminent dangers" or fire deficiencies as reported in the annual SREF inspection report. 4. The district will resolve 75% of the recurring fire safety incidents reported during the previous year.
	The district will provide a safe and healthy environment as measured by having adequate facilities to accommodate growth.	Current and projected enrollment vs. official building capacity. (FISH)* Years 01-02, 02-03, 03-04, 04-05, 05-06, 06-07. *Enrollment excludes magnet schools. FISH =	1. Total FISH on-line at the beginning of school year. 2. By 2007, the district will have adequate student stations to house all students as measured by the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH).
	The district will provide a safe and healthy environment as measured by reduction of the incidence of injuries to employees throughout the organization.	Violent incidents per 100 students: years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01, 9.0, 9.1, 8.9.	- Number of injuries per 100 employees. - Incidents of injuries will decrease by 10% to 8.0 per 100 employees by the year 2007.
	The district will provide a safe and healthy environment as measured by reduction of violent incident rates throughout the organization.	Years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01, *Violent incidents per 100 students: 8.8, 7.2, 4.2.	- Violent incidents per 100 students. - Violent incidents will decrease by 10% to 3.8 per 100 students by the year 2007.
	The district will provide a safe and healthy environment as measured by decreasing substance abuse incident rates at school.	Years 98-99, 99-00, 00-01, .34, .60, .57.	- Substance abuse incident rates per 100 students. - Incidents of substance abuse will be reduced by 68% to .34 per 100 students by 2007.
	The district will measure satisfaction of students, parents/guardians, employees, and the community regarding safety and health.	Not available	Annual targets: A) The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing annual

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-Objectives (five-year target)
			targets. B) In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed and data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing annual targets. Five-year targets: C) The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007. D) In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed and data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007.
-General			
Goal No. 3 efficiency and effectiveness	The district will measure efficiency and effectiveness by using the Florida Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence in: a) Leadership b) Strategies for school improvement c) Student and stakeholder focus d) Performance measurement & analysis e) Faculty and staff focus f) School process management g) Performance results The district will use the standards of best practice for efficiency and effectiveness as report.	Baseline data was collected through the administration of the 2002 Sterling Navigator survey in November 2001 to a random sampling of staff. The instrument measures an organization against the Sterling criteria. The district scored 208 points out of a possible 467 points (44.6%). Before the navigator can be administered again, it will be necessary to conduct self-evaluation of the seven categories of criteria. The first self-evaluation will be administered in fall 2002 to establish a baseline for this instrument. Available after November 2002 delivery of OPPAGA report.	- 2002-03 Navigator score 350. 03-4 Challenge – application, 2004-4 Sterling applications, 2005-6 Sterling award. - By FY 2008, the district will apply for and be awarded the Governor’s Florida Sterling Award. Annual targets: - The annual targets for this measure will be determined

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-Objectives (five-year target)
	measured by state and federal mandates and appropriate best practices.		following board adoption of the OPPAGA report. Five-year targets: - Targets for this measure will be determined upon receipt of the OPPAGA report.
Personnel			
	The district will use the standards of best practice for efficiency and effectiveness as measured by recruitment and retention of a high performing, diverse workforce.	The District has experienced a decrease in the minority percentage of instructional staff from 10% in FY 97 to 9.5% in FY 02. Additionally, the district continues to have a shortage of ESE, math, science, and secondary reading teachers. Of the 15 minority teachers recruited this school year, 13 (87%) were recommended for reappointment for the FY 03 school year. 92% of the 300 teachers hired this year, were recommended for reappointment. - Percentage of shortage are (position filled by out of field teachers) - Percentage of minority administrators. - Retention of classified personnel.	Annual targets: A) Percentage of minority instructional staff. B) Percentage of recruited teachers/all teachers retained. C) Percentage of shortage area positions filled by out of-field-teachers. D) Percentage of minority administrators. E) Retention of classified personnel. Five-year targets: F) By FY 07, the percentage of minority instructional staff will increase from 9.5% to 11%. G) By FY 07, the district will retain all recruited teachers at the same or higher rate as all teachers hired during that same period of time. H) By FY 07, the district will hire sufficient numbers of teachers in the shortage areas to fill all district vacancies in these areas. I) By FY 07, 15.5% of all administrative position will be held by minorities. J) The five-year target retention of classified personnel will be set by March 2003.
General			
	The district will measure satisfaction of students, parents/guardians, employees, and the community regarding efficiency and effectiveness.	Not available	Annual targets: A) The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing annual targets. B) In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the

Strategic Plan Goals	Strategic Plan Oriented-objectives (measures)	Strategic Plan Benchmarking (baseline data)	Strategic Plan Oriented-Objectives (five-year target)
			satisfaction of internal department customers will be developed and data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing annual targets. Five-year targets: C) The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007. D) In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed and data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007.

Source: The district Strategic Plan 2002.

The district is developing goals and objectives for the educational and operational programs included in the “Deployment Plan”

Although not all educational and operational program goals and objectives are linked to the strategic plan, the district is developing goals and objectives for the educational and operational programs that will be included in the “deployment plan.” By September 2002, the district expects to establish a district deployment plan for the areas included in the new strategic plan with annual performance targets for each major educational and operational program. Reviewed by the district’s new Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, the deployment plan will include measurable goals and program objectives. Exhibit 4-9 shows the steps that the district adopted in the 2002 strategic plan to formalize the planning of each department’s deployment plan.

Exhibit 4-9

District’s Deployment Plan Completion Timeline

Date	Plan Timeline
Prior to 9-20-02	Train staff to assist with writing departmental operational plans
09-30-02	Draft of departmental operational plans and School Improvement Plans due
Through 10-18-02	Draft plans are reviewed, edited, and resubmitted.
10-22-02	School Improvement Plans submitted to board
10-23-02	Departmental operational plans approved by executive team
11-01-02	Administration of satisfaction surveys

Date	Plan Timeline
11-05-02	School Improvement Plans approved by board
Ongoing 2002-03	Support strategic plan deployment through training in benchmarking and use of quality
03-06-03	Within the strategic plan, establish 5-year and annual targets for selected instructional, satisfaction, and safety areas
03-06-03	Mid-year progress report
10-03	End of year progress report on all 2002-03 measures

Source: Lee County School District.

With these steps, the district is establishing the framework needed to support key decisions and actions regarding operational programs and is in the process of establishing program-oriented objectives. The newly developed goals will reflect the unique intent of each major operational program since each has different purposes, state and federal mandates, and customers. Goals will clearly describe the long-range program outcomes. Developing and implementing adequate performance measures for each major program will allow the district to make informed decisions about issues such as:

- Increasing or decreasing the funds allocated to different programs
- Continuing or eliminating programs due to low performance levels
- Outsourcing programs or services under a program
- Co-locating services
- Implementing new programs
- Determining if services are being provided in the most cost-effective manner.

Expanding this process to include all of the district's major educational and operational programs is recommended. District efforts to date indicate leadership recognizes that without clear, program-specific goals staff can have difficulty establishing priorities for daily activities, identifying data needed to assess if a program or service is meeting expectations, and determining when changed strategies or activities are needed to better serve students. In addition, because each part of a school district accountability system is interrelated, in the absence of adequate program goals and objectives, it is difficult for program managers to provide direction and effective leadership. Exhibit 4-10 shows two examples of actions in two educational programs that can improve the goal-setting process.

Exhibit 4-10

Possible Actions to Improve Goals and Objectives in Two Educational Programs

Programmatic area	Actions for improvement
Exceptional student education	• Develop broad goal statements that describe how the program is intended to help students. • Develop measurable objectives that describe the specific effect the program should have on students and would answer the questions "If the district's ESE program were successful, what would one expect to be happening?" or "What would the impact be on students in the program?"

Programmatic area	Actions for improvement
Vocational	- Revise goals to describe the long-range end the program desires to achieve by implementing existing initiatives. - Develop measurable objectives for career, technical, and adult education components. - Develop measurable objectives that describe the specific effect career, technical, and adult education should have on students and would answer the questions “If the program were successful, what would one expect to be happening?” or “What would the impact be on students in the program?”

Source: ValienteHernandez, P.A. analysis.

The district is taking steps to revise the goals and objectives for most educational and operational areas

The district’s current mission, vision, goals, and objectives for most other educational and operational areas, including ESOL, transportation, facilities construction, and personnel and food services, are not measurable. While these goals provide a framework for management’s vision, they lack standards and objectives needed to assess their effectiveness. The district is in the process of creating a measurable deployment plan for each program area specified in Exhibit 4-2, including goals, objectives, accountability systems, and benchmarks. Exhibit 4-11 details the various non-measurable missions, visions, goals, and objectives the district currently uses across other educational and operational departments.

Exhibit 4-11

District’s Mission, Vision, Goals and Objectives for Other Educational and Operational Programs are not Measurable

Program areas	Department goals	Department objectives	Budget linked yes/no
Basic education	The district disseminates FCAT Reading, Math, and Writing scores to each school to utilize in developing their School Improvement Plans. Through school-based management, schools establish individual and specific goals and measurable objectives.	School-based management	No

Program areas	Department goals	Department objectives	Budget linked yes/no
Exceptional student education	1. To improve the academic improvement plan/child study team process to generate effective interventions for successfully maintaining at-risk students in general education, resulting in an 80% decrease in inappropriate referrals to the ESE program.	Strategy (1): To restructure the role of school psychologists to allow for increased participation in the child study team involvement. The personnel responsible are the assistant director of ESE and a coordinator of Psychological Services.	No
	2. To increase by 25% the number of ESE students successfully participating in inclusive learning environments for the majority of the school day. The superintendent is listed as charged with two strategies (establish a district steering committee for more inclusive schooling and identify demonstration schools for more inclusive schooling) and completed these strategies in August of 1999.	Reviews of the department's organizational structure revealed a district position of coordinator of Psychological Services does not currently exist. The progress evaluation procedures include developing of guidelines, and monitoring and comparing of the number of gifted referrals received by psychological services in the time periods of August 1999 to June 2000 and August 2000 to June 2001. The final completion frame was June 2001. The status for each strategy covering this goal is planned.	
	3. To attain or exceed the state goal of 85% of ESE students who access and participate in district and statewide testing programs with appropriate accommodations, as needed.		
	4. To increase by 20% the number of ESE students who graduate from district programs.	Strategy (2): All other strategies for this goal have blank status fields.	
	5. The ESE department will provide technical assistance and support to schools to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, cost-effective resource allocations, and comprehensive, accurate management information systems and databases, as evidenced by Department of Education (hereinafter "DOE") audits and customer satisfaction survey results.	Strategy (3): All related strategies for goals three through five are blank. While it is clear the district initiated the Four-Year Out Plan for full inclusion of ESE students with the five goals as described above, the district did not demonstrate implementation or evaluation of the plan.	

Program areas	Department goals	Department objectives	Budget linked yes/no
Technical, career and adult education department (technical, adult basic and general education, ESOL)	The mission of the department is “<i>To provide the support and assistance necessary to produce and maintain quality instructional programs</i>” and its vision is that “<i>All students will complete instructional programs with the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in society and the workplace.</i>” The goals of the department are: 1. To use funding sources to provide equipment, curriculum, software, etc. to middle, high school, and postsecondary technical, career, and adult instructional programs that are reflective of changes in technology and the workplace. 2. To seek grants that will provide a continuation of special programs that provide students with work-skill learning activities. 3. To provide curriculum and staff development activities to teachers that will encourage the use of integrated curriculum and application-based learning. 4. To seek and include business and industry partnerships in the planning and implementation process for all instructional programs. 5. To work in partnerships with local workforce development boards and councils in planning and implementing local and regional workforce development programs.	None	No

		None	Yes
Media and technology	<i>Visions:</i> The District supports myriad technologies, which will: • Promote the effective use of technology to improve student performance. • Integrate technology into all areas of curriculum, including ESOL and special needs. • Provide students with a range of technological tools to increase learning. • Ensure that students have instant access to research resources and multiple databases. • Enable students to connect to and appropriately use worldwide data resources through telecommunications. • Provide interactive, self-training technology for students and staff, which will minimize the need for instruction in the use of technology. • Enable students to understand and be able to use various computer applications.		
	<i>Mission:</i> All students and staff, including exceptional students and those with language barriers, must become lifelong learners and be able to apply technology skills personally and professionally in the 21st century workplace.		
	<i>Goals:</i> • Staff and students will be provided equitable and appropriate access to available technologies. • Through the effective use of technology, staff and students will increase productivity and support learning. • Students will use technology in ways that deepen their understanding of academic content and advance their knowledge of the world around them. • Teachers and students will be empowered to use technological tools through technology-related skill development and training. • The district will create, communicate, and enforce district-wide standards to ensure supportability and contain costs.		

Personnel	1. To become oriented to the Baldrige/Sterling Criteria as a framework for continual school district improvement. 2. To recruit and retain trained productive employees for the district. 3. To maintain an interest-based, problem-solving relationship with the bargaining associations for Lee County.	Strategies (1): 1. Attend quality training sessions presented by Jim Shipley and Associates, Inc. 2. Contribute to the district strategic plan. 3. Model the core values to departments and colleagues. 4. Assist in facilitating communication and sharing best practices within and among our schools. 5. Assist in facilitating communication and sharing best practices in the labor/management process. Strategies (2): 1. To plan with the equity and recruitment department to find competent employees, including minority employees, for all needed positions with an emphasis on critical shortage areas. 2. To develop and implement appropriate staff development training for all employees including training in the area of the Sterling Criteria and the interest-based process. 3. To provide leadership in the area of personnel services to be sure that all areas of compliance are addressed and that our employee clients are receiving excellent services from all sections of the Human Resources Division. Strategies (3): 1. Continue training in the interest-based process but move closer to the "Getting to Yes" model, rather than retelling the story each time the process is used. 2. Provide more defined timelines in interest-based process tasks. 3. Monitor the master agreements with fairness to both labor and management – a neutral but reasonable position. 4. Communicate with management and labor organizations frequently in order to understand problems and provide input for solutions.	No
	None <i>Comment:</i> The district needs to develop goals and objectives for the facilities construction program.	None	No

	None	None	No
Maintenance	Comment: the district needs to develop goals and objectives for the maintenance program. The district has not developed written goals and objectives for the maintenance department. Without established goals and objectives, the district has no basis for meaningful short and long-term plans to provide for appropriately and equitably maintained facilities.		
Transportation	1. Decreased transportation cost. 2. Decreased transportation time which causes students to lose school time. 3. Decreased state funding as average bus occupancy figures, which are used in state allocation formula.	Strategies: 1. Adding bus routes to transport students to schools. * 2. Employing and training additional bus operators to cover bus routes. 3. Employing additional departmental support staff to maintain complex routing functions, supervision, and customer service functions. 4. Purchasing and maintaining additional buses to cover bus routes.	Yes

* These are strategies not objectives

Food service	Strategies:	Yes
	1. Ensure monthly financial feedback reports.	
	2. Establish appropriate inventory levels to be maintained at schools based on average participation levels. ¹	
	3. Centralize free/reduced application management. ¹	
	4. Improve alarm systems for freezers. ¹	
	5. Implemented CAFS Ordering. ¹	
	6. Study food bid cycle for possible revisions in timing. ¹	
	7. Develop equipment replacement plan, using depreciation schedule from GASBA. ¹	
	8. Develop plan for expansion of freezer space to meet need for storage of USDA. ¹	
	9. Improve customer service.	
	10. Prepare for Sterling application.	
	11. Continue plans to implement HACCP in 2004.	
	12. Create incentives. ¹	
	13. Implement credentialing by ASFSA. ¹	
	14. Develop and implement procedure for meals for students with specials needs. ¹	
	15. Create criteria for selection of manager intern trainer. ¹	
	16. Develop a “shareholders” report. ¹	
	17. Develop a presentation for administrators. ¹	
	18. Develop marketing tools for managers. ¹	
	19. Develop “talking points” for staff to use in presentations. ¹	
	20. Create materials about the program for distribution by choice office. ¹	
	21. Develop plan to maintain fund balance within federal guidelines.	
	22. Continue best practices for food service.	

Source: The district departments, compiled by ValienteHernandez, P.A.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district complete its efforts to develop quantifiable goals and objectives for each educational and organizational unit and link these goals and priorities to the district’s strategic and other operational plans.*

Action Plan 4-1 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

¹ Will carry over in the future.

Action Plan 4-1

Continue to Establish Quantifiable Goals and Objectives for Each Educational and Organizational Unit	
Strategy	Establish quantifiable goals and objectives for each educational and organizational unit and link these goals and objectives to the strategic plan and other operational plans.
Action Needed	Step 1: Articulate quantifiable goals and objectives for each organizational unit in achieving overall district goals and objectives. Step 2: Establish performance measures that can be used to assess the extent to which each unit is achieving its goals. Step 3: Assess the strengths and shortcomings of each unit in achieving its goals. Step 4: Set priorities based on a systematic assessment of where improvement is needed most.
Who is responsible	The Chief of Staff
Time Frame	June 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

2 **The district has performance measures for some basic educational and operational programs and will establish adequate cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks to evaluate these programs.**

Performance measures provide stakeholders with information on program quality and performance to assess achievement of goals and objectives. These measures also allow the district to assess educational and operational performance and determine whether programs, and their associated costs, meet individual goals and should be continued, discontinued, reduced, or expanded. Performance tied to program-level goals and objectives also allows staff to assess a program's success in meeting specific performance and cost-efficiency expectations.

Without comprehensive performance and cost-efficiency benchmarks in the basic and other educational and operational programs, managers and school board members have difficulty linking each program's purpose, goals, and objectives with performance and cost-efficiency data. This linkage is needed to address basic questions, such as:

- Where does the district stand in relation to peer districts in delivering similar programs and services?
- Are current program performances adequate and are program or service costs reasonable?
- Has the district met program performance and cost-efficiency expectations?
- Could the program or service operate with fewer resources?
- Are peer districts using different or more innovative best practices?

The district is working to establish performance and cost efficiency measures for its educational and operational programs

Using a formal comprehensive structure based on the "*Sterling Criteria*", the district is establishing systematic performance measures for all educational and operational programs. The performance measures, including benchmarks from comparable school districts, government agencies, and private industry, will be included in the district's deployment plan. Once developed, these measurable goals, cost-efficiency measures and comparative benchmarks should be kept up-to-date in a single, accessible document. To date, the district's lack of meaningful performance measures has made it difficult for administrators to assess program performance and make informed resource allocation decisions. Once the district fully implements its plans, performance measurement is expected to improve.

Performance Accountability Systems

Some departments collect output data but this data falls short of providing comprehensive performance measurement. For example, the transportation department collects data on the number of students transported, number of transportation staff, size of school bus fleet, and annual expenditures, but does not provide the depth of information needed for decision-making about operational improvements.

To support district efforts, Exhibit 4-12 presents possible performance measures for operational programs. Staff can select the performance measures best suited to the operational division and implement measurement systems to continuously monitor performance. Once the district develops goals, objectives, and performance measurement systems for each major operational program, program leaders can accurately assess if programs meet expectations.

Once performance measures are developed for educational and operational programs, the district should ensure adequate benchmarks are also selected. Many public and private sources of information about program standards are available. In addition, while the district has made sporadic attempts at establishing cost measures, it should establish cost measurement for all major educational and operational programs.

Exhibit 4-12

Examples of Performance Measures for Operational Programs

Facilities Construction and Maintenance

- Average number of days for selection of design consultant from project assignment
- Average number of days for selection of construction consultant from project assignment
- Number of consultant engineer contracts administered
- Number of in-house designs completed
- Number of inspections completed
- Number of construction/capital projects managed
- Percent of inspection cost to project cost
- Percent of design cost to project cost
- Inspection cost per hour
- Percent of capital projects completed within estimated time
- Average number of hours required to provide preliminary planning review for capital improvement projects

Student Transportation

- Number of accidents/100,000 miles
- Number of preventable accidents/100,000 miles
- Parent complaints per week
- Percent of trips missed
- Percent of trips on schedule
- Cost per pupil trip
- Percent of breakdowns
- Number of buses arriving late

Food Services

- Meals per labor hour
- Costs per meal
- Total meal participation for breakfast, lunch, and other feeding programs
- Increase or decrease in meals purchased from the previous period

Source: OPPAGA Report No. 98-84, *Best Financial Management Practices of the Polk County School District*.

Exhibit 4-13 summarizes information related to performance accountability presented in other sections of this report but does not address all major program areas listed in Exhibit 4-2. For each area, the exhibit shows prior district efforts to establish performance measures for basic and other educational and operational programs. For additional detail, the reader is referred to each chapter. In general, ValienteHernandez, P.A. noticed that basic and other educational programs have much better performance assessment and accountability feedback than the operational areas.

Exhibit 4-13

Performance Measures Currently Used by District for Educational and Operational Programs

Basic and other education (Refer to Chapter 5, Educational Service Delivery, for details)

- Since 1999, the district has compared FCAT Reading and Writing scores to the state and to peer districts for grades 4, 8, and 10 for reading and writing and for grades 5, 8, and 10 for FCAT Math scores.
- The district calculates a “Lee Standards Index” (LSI) for district comparisons of standard curriculum students, excluding ESE, for the FCAT Reading, Math, and Writing tests, and annually completes trend analysis for each school and each grade level tested.
- School principals receive FCAT reports and share the data with instructional staff, giving each teacher performance information on the school and individual students. The teachers and administrators analyze the data and revise classroom instruction as necessary.
- The district also develops summary reports of the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) and compares the results against current state standards and past district performance.
- The district tracked cohorts of students over four years to assess reading on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test and on the FCAT Reading scores. The analysis included individual school and district-side performance. The school cohort analysis is used in developing School Improvement Plans.
- The district disaggregates FCAT data on student subgroups and completes a trend analysis to identify low performing schools. Subgroups include ESE (gifted, speech impaired, and hospital/homebound ESE), LEP, minority/non-minority, male/female minority and non-minority, and free and reduced lunch/non-free and reduced lunch students.
- The district maintains detailed nonacademic records to assess whether the number of students who enroll in and complete higher-level courses is increasing, and whether the district is reducing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students.
- The district incorporates student assessment data into principal performance evaluations.

Exceptional student education (Refer to Chapter 5, Educational Service Delivery, for details)

- The district tracks the average time between identifying a student as ESE and placement in the program.
- The district conducts alternative assessments as necessary (e.g.: Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills, Life Skills Inventory, etc.), though lacks a well-documented process for selecting ESE students to participate in alternative assessments.
- A quarterly report compiles the expenditures billable to the Agency for Health Care Administration (Medicaid Health Care Services Division) which reimburses the direct services given to eligible children such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, social work, behavior modification, guidance, psychological services, nursing, teen parenting education, migrant education, and transportation services.

Vocational and adult education (Refer to Chapter 5, Educational Service Delivery, for details)

- The district assesses the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the ESOL (English Students of Other Languages) program.
- The Office of Multicultural Student Language Education (OMSLE) evaluations, completed every four years, identify areas needing improvement. Simulated audits are conducted in off-audit years.

-
- The district reviews the number of placements, completions, and salaries of vocational and adult education programs with peer district comparisons.

Media and Technology (Refer to Chapter 6, Administrative and Student Technology, for details)

- Surveys to study the correlation of FCAT scores and technology access and use in the classroom were developed.
- Surveys were developed for administrators to establish a baseline to evaluate the perceptions of school-based leadership with regard to the student-to-computer ratio, skill level of teachers and students, professional development, and the integration of technology and technology planning.
- Surveys were developed for instructional staff to establish a baseline to evaluate the perceptions of classroom teachers relative to the frequency of application use and its importance, use of hardware, use of the internet, availability of computers at home and use for school purposes, student use of technology, technology support, and self-assessment of computer skills.
- Surveys were developed for technology specialist to establish a baseline to assess computer hardware, peripherals, and software, use of computer hardware and software, influence on decision-making in the purchase of computers, hardware, and software, instructional software ownership, school internet connectivity and internet usage, professional development, and technology and extraneous duties.
- Surveys were developed to establish a student baseline of the use and attitudes about technology.

Personnel (Refer to Chapter 7, Personnel Systems and Benefits, for details)

- The executive team (ET) reviews and evaluates programs for potential cost savings and alternatives (e.g. whether or not to contract for substitute services).
- The district periodically reviews the staffing level of the Human Resources Department.

Facilities construction (Refer to Chapter 10, Facilities Construction, for details)

- None.

Facilities maintenance (Refer to Chapter 11, Facilities Maintenance, for details)

- None.

Transportation (Refer to Chapter 12, Student Transportation, for details)

- The district's information system (IS) department regularly reviewed the efficiency and needs for transportation's computerized applications.
- Transportation staff informally compares performance and operational characteristics with up to 28 other districts, relying on DOE's annual report "Quality Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles (Q-Link)." Data includes the number of students and number of students transported, number of transportation staff, size of school bus fleet, annual expenditures, and special considerations that influence student transportation (e.g.: active court-ordered desegregation orders).

Food service (Refer to Chapter 13, Food Service Operations, for details)

- Food service reports on each school and the district-wide financial status of the food service program.
 - Finance department reports review each cafeteria's meal participation and financial status, though they are not produced in a timely way to assist cafeteria managers' oversight of daily operations.
 - A Food service management and accountability system, Computer Assisted Food Service (CAFS), is used throughout the district. With its point-of-service terminals and online capabilities, the CAFS system enables the district to:
 1. Maintain student records, with student name, ID, eligibility status, homeroom grade, and prepaid account data.
 2. Display menu selections offered at each meal service period.
 3. Perform edit checks, as required by USDA regulations.
 4. Allow students to pay for meals electronically, reducing efforts needed for cash controls.
 5. Report daily and monthly student meal activity.
 6. Summarize daily cash sales, charges collected, and student/adult-prepaid collections.
-

-
7. Produce daily and monthly summary reports of cash and meal count information, including daily reimbursable meal and a-la-carte menu sales breakdowns.
-

Source: Findings and recommendations researched and reported by ValienteHernandez P.A. in other sections of this report.

Overall, the district currently does not have a fully comprehensive accountability system for its major educational and operational programs

Exhibit 4-14 summarizes the current condition of the major educational and operational areas of the district on the different components of a sound accountability system. This exhibit is a compilation of detailed analyses made through the different review areas as reported throughout different section of this report. The compilation was made using input from the consultants working on the individual review areas. Again, the reader is referred to each area chapter for a more detailed discussion.

Exhibit 4-14

Detailed Assessment of District Accountability by Major Program Area

Area	Goals and Measurable Objectives	Benchmarks	Regular/ Formal Assessment	Report on Performance	Solicit Feedback from Stakeholders
Basic and other education	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Media and technology	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Personnel	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Facilities construction	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Facilities maintenance	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Transportation	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Food services	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓

The ✓ signifies that the district complies with the practice; the ✗ signifies that the district does not comply with the practice.
Source: The district as analyzed by ValienteHernandez P.A. individual analysis.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district develop comprehensive performance and cost-efficiency measures for major programs, including identification of basic data needs, benchmarks, assessment needs, and reporting practices and systems to solicit input from stakeholders.*

Action Plan 4-2 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 4-2

Develop Comprehensive Performance and Cost-efficiency Measures for Major Programs	
Strategy	Develop comprehensive program performance and cost-efficiency measures.
Action Needed	Step 1: The chief of staff assigns program directors and supervisors the responsibility of developing performance measures for the different programs/services. The office of Program Evaluation and Accountability is consulted as needed. Step 2: Program directors and supervisors develop a comprehensive system that: Step 3: Aligns efforts with the strategic plan Step 4: Identifies needed data, including collection time frames and format

	Step 5: Ensures performance measures link to the budget
	Step 6: Determines the critical performance and cost-efficiency measures to periodically report to school board members and the superintendent
	Step 7: Defines the specific roles and expectations for program staff in relation to a specific program's performance measurement system
	Step 8: Establishes benchmarks and selects peer comparisons, where appropriate, and identifies standards, such as trend analysis data, minimally acceptable performance, or generally accepted industry standards, to judge program performance or cost-efficiency
	Step 9: Review program director's and supervisor's recommendations with District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, the directors of MIS and Finance, and the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, assistant superintendents, superintendent, and others as needed, to ensure selected measures are appropriate and practical
Who Is Responsible	Chief of staff in cooperation with District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, assistant superintendents, Management Information Systems (MIS) Department, the office of accountability, program supervisors and directors, and appropriate program staff.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

3 While some mechanisms have been established to analyze ways to reduce costs, the district is just beginning to institutionalize the process and extend it to all educational and operational programs.

Measuring performance and cost-efficiency enables program leaders, the school board, and stakeholders to determine whether the district's major educational and operational programs are successfully achieving established goals and objectives and in the most economical way possible. Further, regular assessments of program operations and costs can be used to establish cost savings and provide a solid base to consider outsourcing.

Generally, the district does not have a mechanism in place to assess the costs of operational programs to either improve the quality of education and services or identify cost-saving opportunities. The district collects and maintains some cost data, through primarily staffing and expenditures. However, the district is beginning to use this data more effectively and will formally begin analyzing the cost effectiveness of its operations in the deployment plan implementation of the Sterling Criteria.

As Exhibit 4-7 shows, the 2002 strategic plan includes efficiency and effectiveness as a key goal, starting: "The district will measure efficiency and effectiveness by using the Florida Sterling Criteria for Organizational Performance Excellence in:

- Leadership
- Strategies for school improvement
- Student and stakeholder focus
- Performance measurement & analysis
- Faculty and staff focus,
- School process management
- Performance results

The district should expand its efforts to identify cost savings

The district has an internal audit department that audits a number of advisory committees, such as labor management committees for uniforms, job vacancy, transportation, food service, professional of teaching, teaching supplemental, class size, district safety, and insurance task force. While these groups help identify cost-savings, the district should establish a formal mechanism to encourage staff and committee members to recommend cost savings opportunities.

Ideas about cost savings opportunities could be solicited and generated at each the department level and the district level during regular decision-making meetings and budgeting processes. Certain departments, such as personnel, have systems in place which could be replicated in other areas. Encouraging a broader range of district personnel to look critically at their activities to identify even more savings could generate additional opportunities for cost savings.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district formalize the process for soliciting ideas about cost savings and alternative service opportunities and should track ideas and savings. The program could include a reward for employees whose ideas save the district money. The district must also ensure that the program is well publicized.*

Action Plan 4-3 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 4-3

Formalize the Process for Soliciting Ideas About Cost Savings and Alternative Service Opportunities

Strategy	Implement a cost savings identification mechanism.
Action Needed	Step 1: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee (DQIAC), with input from the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, develops procedures to solicit ideas for cost savings and alternative service delivery methods. Step 2: Publicize the program, including any incentives, to district employees. Step 3: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee and the office of Program Evaluation and Accountability collect, analyze, implement, and track the ideas generated. Step 4: Recognize employees whose ideas save money.
Who Is Responsible	DQIAC and the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources and has the potential of generating additional funds and/or cost savings. The fiscal impact, however, cannot be determined at this time.

4

The district plans formally to evaluate whether the efforts to assess the performance and costs of its major educational and operational programs meet the district's needs.

Evaluating school district program performance is an essential component of effective management and public accountability. Evaluations also ensure that overall efforts are consistent with short- and long-range district goals. Finally, evaluation helps maintain compliance with essential district policies.

As of September 2002, the district does not have well-defined evaluation mechanisms in place to examine whether educational or operational programs are efficiently meeting their intended purposes, goals, and objectives. Consequently, the district is not able to formally or consistently evaluate the cost-efficiency of educational and operational programs. However, as mentioned previously, the district is taking steps toward creating a formalized procedure, which will be included in the deployment plan of the Sterling Criteria Process.

The evaluation process is typically accomplished through the four steps illustrated earlier in Exhibit 4-3, while Exhibit 4-15 outlines the types of program evaluations available to the district.

Exhibit 4-15

Types of Program Evaluations Available to the District

Evaluation type	Principle
Cost – benefit	Evaluation focuses on what an alternative will cost compared to the expected benefits. Typical criteria for evaluating alternatives include: • What are the benefits of using the alternative to solve a performance deficiency or take advantage of an opportunity? • What are the costs to implement the alternatives, including direct resource investments as well as any potential negative side effects? • What is the timeliness or how fast will the benefits occur and positive impact be achieved? • What is the acceptability of the alternative? Or, to what extent will those who must work with it support the alternative? • What is the degree of ethical soundness of the alternative? Does it meet acceptable ethical criteria according to the different stakeholders?
Process	Evaluation describes the different activities related to program goals and objectives, such as: • What does the program provide? • How are the services provided? • Who receives the services? • What is the scope of delivery of the services? • To what extent are the services provided?
Outcome	Evaluation focuses on the effectiveness of the program as a whole or of specific activities within the program. Typical criteria for evaluating alternatives include: • What are the anticipated outcomes? • Are the anticipated outcomes being met? • Are they being met in a timely manner? • Are they being met with the planned resources?

Source: OPPAGA Report No. 98-84, *Best Financial Management Practices of the Polk County School District*.

The district plans to begin evaluating its educational and operational programs

The district's evaluation of programs and services is very limited. This condition is largely due to the fact that the organization has not established clear goals and measurable objectives, performance and cost-efficiency measures, or benchmarks. Evaluation efforts provide assessment against these standards.

For example, the district generally does not tie student assessment data to the achievement of program goals and objectives, does not formally evaluate whether major programs effectively increase student achievement, or whether an initiative is meeting its intended purpose. Without measurable program-level

objectives, evaluations cannot answer the broad questions of how successful the program is in meeting the district's objectives or how the program can be improved. The district anticipates including such goals and program objectives in its deployment plan, making it possible to conduct evaluations in the future.

The district is developing a process to provide school members and top-level administrators with formal evaluation reports

Currently, the data provided to school board members on performance and cost-effectiveness of programs varies depending on the type of data requested by individual school board members and the additional performance information that staff members may provide.

Critical assessment data, formal evaluation findings and recommendations, and cost effectiveness findings are crucial tools for sound decision-making. This information should be provided regularly to school board members and the superintendent, helping them set district priorities and make decisions regarding the allocation of district resources.

Periodic assessment also allows program staff to monitor and manage programs on a daily basis and make on-going midcourse adjustments. Evaluations can also regularly combine basic data, demonstrating to district management how well a program is meeting its goals and objectives. Without such information, district administrators can have difficulty determining the extent to which programs are progressing towards stated goals and objectives and identifying ways to improve.

Because the district currently lacks a comprehensive system of goals, measurable objectives, performance measures, and benchmarks, it is impossible for district staff to evaluate the performance or cost of major programs in a structured manner. Implementation of district-level accountability initiatives as recommended in Action Plan 4-1 will provide useful performance data for evaluation purposes. Once adequate performance measures and benchmarks are established (Action Plan 4-2) the district should periodically assess programs/services.

The district plans on including a formalized evaluation process in the deployment plans developed by each superintendent assistant and/or department or division director. The district anticipates evaluating all programs against minimum requirements every fiscal year.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district develop a framework for program evaluation and continue with evaluation plans for major district programs.*

The Action Plan 4-4 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 4-4

Develop a Framework and Continue With Plans to Evaluate Major District Programs	
Strategy	Develop an evaluation model to guide the review of major district programs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, continues using the Sterling process to guide evaluation efforts. Step 2: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee identifies criteria to determine when to outsource the evaluation or when it should be conducted in-house. Step 3: Establish a schedule to periodically evaluate major educational and operational programs. The schedule should consider:

	• The amount of change • Fiscal and data resources (internal and external) • Amount of information that must be accumulated • Time intervals needed to implement past recommendations and measure change • Legal requirements • Students served • Potential improvement or savings • Risk or consequences • Public concern
Step 4:	Present model to the school board for approval and communicate to district staff.
Step 5:	Conduct scheduled evaluations as planned, incorporating effort into annual work and budget plans.
Who Is Responsible	The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee in cooperation with the office of accountability and program staff, as needed.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

5 In general, the district should report additional information about the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers.

Using the internet, the district publishes student performance by school and by grades. Also, the district's web page has a link entitled "*Good things are happening in Lee County Schools,*" which describes educational program requirements. The web site also includes district quarterly progress on the strategic plan for those areas where data is available. Efforts are reported cumulatively so that the end-of-year report includes the entire fiscal year, as well as information that is collected annually only.

The district reports individual school performance to the public as required by Florida law, but should also report on its operational programs

As part of its compliance with the Florida accountability school improvement, the district publishes its strategic plan accomplishments on the web. The quarterly updates on the 21 indicators in its strategic plan and publication of FCAT results provide parents general performance data at the school, district, and state level.

However, the district should provide additional information on the performance and cost of other educational and major operational programs, which is currently unavailable. Without this information, by program area, the public cannot assess performance and accountability across district operations. Finally, when implemented, the district should also provide the public information on the results of its costs-savings programs.

The district solicits public input through a variety of techniques

The district has three main mechanisms available to secure stakeholders' input for increasing accountability levels. School board meetings are the foremost method for public input, where concerns and opinions are recorded into the board minutes. Also, board members and staff represent the district on several community committees and use those opportunities to gather public opinion. Finally, the district regularly holds public meetings, separate from board meetings, when significant amounts of public

comment are expected, this is an important source that the district have to input advices on cost-savings and accountability measures.

The district's 2002 satisfaction survey will provide baseline data for the new strategic plan

As of August 2002, most of the educational and operational programs did not have established benchmarks and baseline data defining long-term standards and target performance. To establish five-year targets for the 2002-2007 strategic plan the district will administer its revised annual satisfaction survey in November 2002. This survey information will be supplemented in the spring of 2003 with a comprehensive assessment of district staff's satisfaction.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district provide information on the performance and cost-efficiency of major district programs annually to the various district-wide committees and to other stakeholders upon request.*

Action Plan 4-5 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 4-5

Report Additional Information on the Performance and Cost-efficiency of Major District Programs	
Strategy	Publicly report additional information on the performance and cost-efficiency of major district programs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the office of accountability, ensures that annual reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of selected educational and operational programs are presented to school board, district administrators, to various district-wide committees, and to others, upon request. Step 2: Refer to Action Plan 4-1 and 4-2 for more information.
Who Is Responsible	The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee and the office of accountability
Time Frame	June 30, 2003 and yearly thereafter
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

5 Educational Service Delivery

While the Lee County School District generally offers efficient and effective educational services and programs to its students, it could improve in several areas. The district should ensure that all major programs operate from strategic plans and are periodically evaluated so that critical decisions are based on information linked to program goals and objectives.

Conclusion

The Lee County School District generally offers students efficient and effective educational services and programs and has had several notable accomplishments (Exhibit 5-1). Throughout this chapter, however, ValienteHernandez P.A. has identified a number of potential improvements that, if implemented, will bring the district into full compliance with the educational service delivery best practices established by the Florida Department of Education (DOE).

Exhibit 5-1

During the Past Two Years, the District Has Had Several Notable Accomplishments in Educational Service Delivery

- Seventy-four percent of district schools received an A or B grade from the state's accountability system.
 - In 1999, the district implemented an intensive reading program with tailored instruction to meet student needs, and improved FCAT Reading scores suggest that the program is effective at the elementary and middle school levels.
 - During the 2001-02 school year, the district established a Practical Assessment Exploration System Lab to provide on-site assistance and training to ESE instructional staff.
 - The ESOL program performs mock audits to monitor compliance with state laws and requirements.
 - The Technical, Career and Adult Education program has relatively high salary, education, and employment outcomes for postsecondary vocational education programs.
 - The district developed a new strategic plan for 2002-07 with accountability mechanisms in its quality improvement initiative.
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. developed the following conclusions in reviewing the Lee County School District.

Operations of K-12 Instructional Programs

1. District administrators analyze academic and nonacademic data to some extent but should refine the student performance review function by using assessment results to develop strategies to improve educational programs. (Page 5-8)
2. The district could improve procedures for identifying and disseminating effective instructional practices to improve student performance. (Page 5-15)

3. The district generally provides effective Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs but could improve these programs by developing formal procedures to evaluate performance regularly. (Page 5-16)
4. The district provides effective and cost-efficient instruction as part of its English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. (Page 5-26)
5. The district provides effective and cost-efficient Technical, Career, and Adult Education Programs. (Page 5-31)
6. The district's curriculum framework is aligned with Florida Accountability Standards and Sunshine State Standards. The district should develop a formal system to develop and implement district curriculum guides. (Page 5-35)
7. The district has adopted a Pupil Progression Plan for students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of the Sunshine State Standards, but could improve the plan by providing a formal mechanism for monitoring remediation programs. (Page 5-39)
8. The district's School Improvement Plans clearly list areas for improvement with measurable objectives and linked strategies. The district should continue to require each school to produce an operational plan for implementing the objectives listed in the SIP. (Page 5-41)

Acquisition, Replacement and Disposal of Instructional Materials

9. The district's process for selecting instructional materials ensures that instructional materials meet the needs of teachers and students. (Page 5-42)
10. Each student has current and appropriate instructional materials in core courses that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and the district's pupil progression plan. The district could improve the instructional materials selection process by seeking feedback from stakeholders about the usefulness of instructional materials. (Page 5-42)
11. While the district's procedures for acquiring, maintaining, and disposing of instructional materials are cost-effective, the district could improve its cost recovery for lost and damaged textbooks. (Page 5-43)

Analysis of Performance Data and Evaluation of Education Programs

12. The district needs to implement accountability mechanisms to ensure the overall performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its major educational programs. (Page 5-46)
13. The district regularly reviews the organizational structure and the staffing of the central office and schools to minimize administrative layers and processes. (Page 5-48)
14. The district does not report on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers. (Page 5-49)

Library, Media and Support Services

15. The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction but should consider assigning media specialists to all district schools. (Page 5-50)
16. The district has neither developed nor implemented a comprehensive plan to provide support services that meet the needs of students and major educational programs. (Page 5-52)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

Most recommendations in this chapter have little or no fiscal impact as they can be implemented with existing resources. Two recommendations have a fiscal impact, as this exhibit shows.

Exhibit 5-2

Implementing the Recommendations for Educational Service Delivery Would Have an Estimated Fiscal Impact of \$32,484 Over the Next Five Years

		Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings/Increased Revenues or (Increased Costs)				
Action Plan and Strategy	Year 2003	Year 2004	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	Total
5-7 Add two curriculum specialists.	\$0	\$(90,900)	\$(94,500)	\$(98,300)	\$(102,300)	\$(385,900)
5-11 Increase accountability for lost or damaged textbooks.	\$24,128	\$50,910	\$80,565	\$113,329	\$149,452	\$418,384
Total Fiscal Impact	\$24,128	\$(39,990)	\$(13,935)	\$15,029	\$47,152	\$32,484

Background

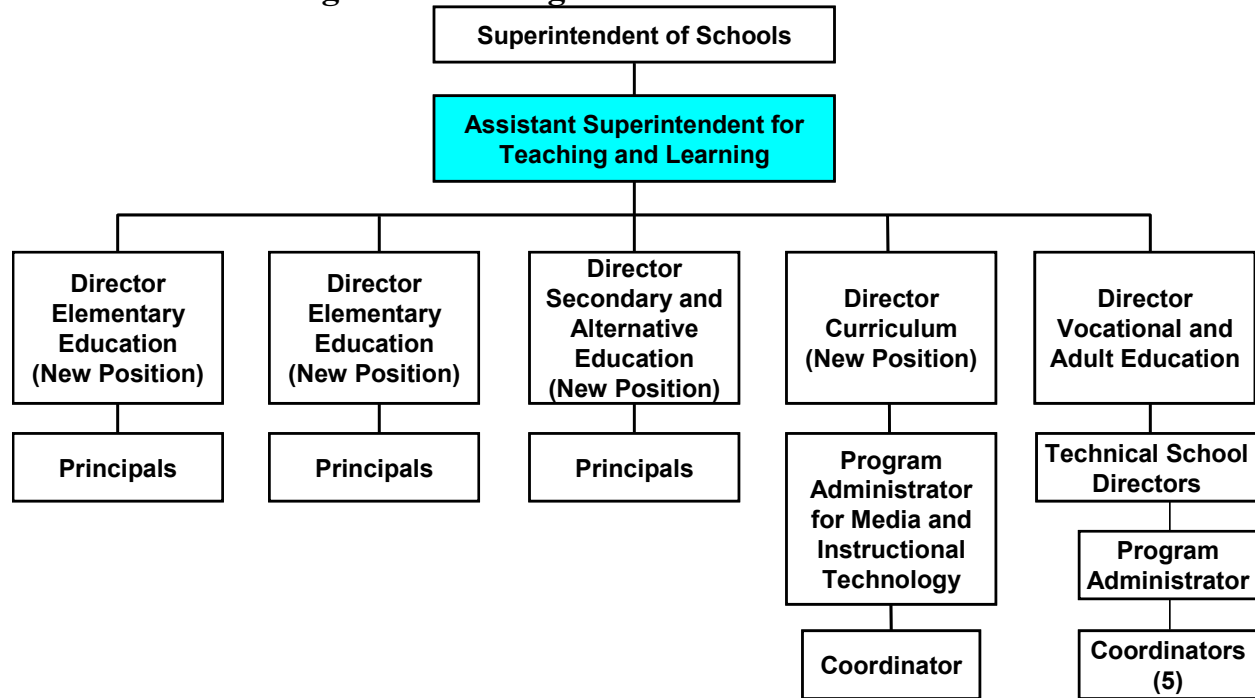
The Lee County School District is the 12th largest in Florida, and at the beginning of the 2001-02 school year, the student population was 58,384, of which 65% were white, 16% were Hispanic, 16% were African-American, 1% were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% were of other ethnic backgrounds. The special education population constituted approximately 23% of the total student population.

As of June 2002, the county has 67 schools. Of these, 37 are elementary schools, 12 are middle schools, 10 are high schools, and 8 are special schools and centers (including two charter schools). The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning and the assistant superintendent for instructional support services both oversee educational service delivery in the district.

As shown in Exhibit 5-3, the Teaching and Learning Division has five directors: two for elementary education, and one each for secondary and alternative education, curriculum, and vocational and adult education. As shown in Exhibit 5-4, the Instructional Support Services Division includes Technology, Intervention Programs, Exceptional Student Education (ESE), Student Services, and Evaluation, Testing and Research. See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the district's management structures.

Exhibit 5-3

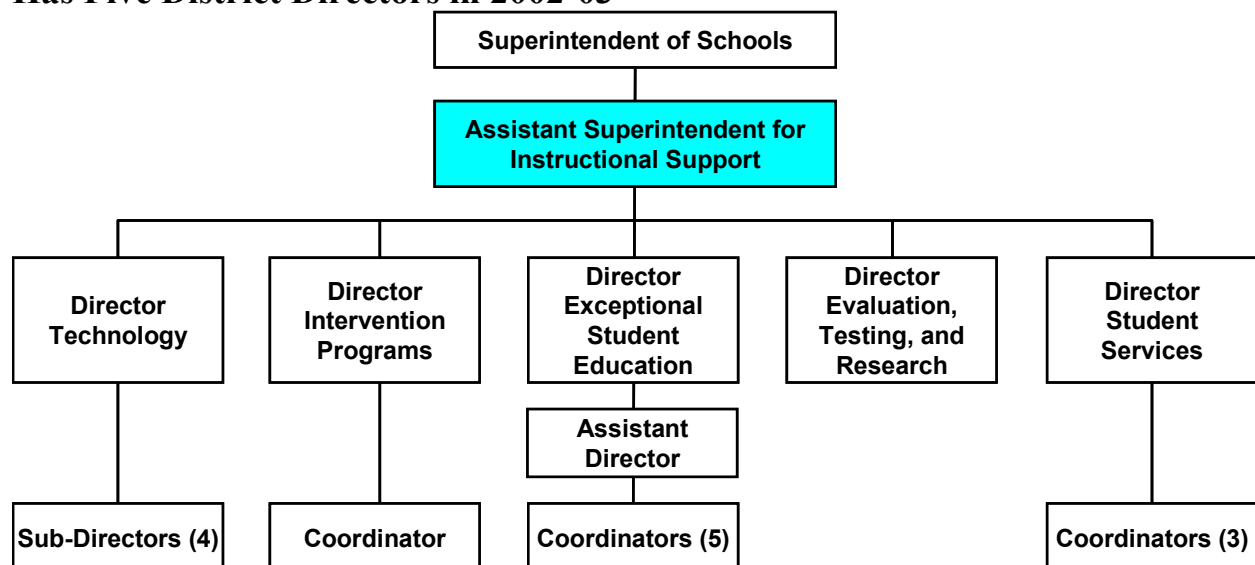
Division of Teaching and Learning Added Four New Directors in 2002-03



Source: School District of Lee County 2002-03.

Exhibit 5-4

**Division of Instructional Support Services
Has Five District Directors in 2002-03**



Source: School District of Lee County 2002-03.

Delivery of K-12 educational programs

The school district provides educational services through these five programs:

- Basic education;
- Exceptional student education (ESE);
- Drop-out prevention and alternative education;
- Vocational education; and
- Student support services.

Following is a brief overview of each program.

Basic education

Basic education refers to a wide array of curriculum and instruction offered to students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. In 1996, the State Board of Education approved the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) for student achievement in basic education. These standards apply to seven subject areas and are divided among four separate grade clusters (PreK-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12). The grade division provides flexibility to school districts in designing curricula that are based on local needs. In language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, the Sunshine State Standards are further defined to include grade-level expectations that are the basis for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

The purpose of the FCAT is to assess achievement of the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in reading, mathematics, and writing. The FCAT also includes a norm-referenced test (NRT), which reports the performance of Florida students compared to students nationwide. Currently, students in grades 3 to 10 take the FCAT (SSS) and FCAT (NRT) Reading and Mathematics tests. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take the Reading Performance Tasks and FCAT Writing, while students in grades 5, 8, and 10 take the Mathematics Performance Tasks.

Exceptional student education

An “exceptional student” is a student with disabilities or a student who is gifted and is enrolled in (or eligible for enrollment in) a district public school. The School District of Lee County offers these programs in schools and other appropriate settings, with some services provided through private contracts.

In 2000-01, the district served 13,208 ESE students, comprising 22.6% of the student population, which is higher than the state average of 19.2%. Exhibit 5-5 shows the composition of the district’s exceptional student population.

Exhibit 5-5

In 2000-01, the District Served 13,208 Students in Seventeen Exceptionalities

Primary Exceptionality	Number	Percentage of Total
Mentally Handicapped ¹	603	4.6%
Orthopedically Impaired	191	1.4%
Speech & Language Impaired ²	1,702	12.9%
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	69	0.5%
Visually Impaired	27	0.2%
Emotionally Handicapped	875	6.6%
Specific Learning Disabled	4,750	36.0%
Gifted	4,050	30.7%
Hospital/Homebound	89	0.7%

Primary Exceptionality	Number	Percentage of Total
Autistic	87	0.7%
Severely Emotionally Disturbed	154	1.2%
Traumatic Brain Injured	20	0 ³
Developmentally Delayed	325	2.5%
Other Health Impaired	266	2.0%
Total	13,208	100%

¹ The Mentally Handicapped exceptionality includes Educable Mentally Handicapped, Trainable Mentally Handicapped, and Profoundly Mentally Handicapped.

² Speech Impaired and Language Impaired are grouped under one category.

³ Less than one-tenth of a percent.

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2000-01

Drop-out prevention and alternative education programs

The School District of Lee County offers drop-out prevention programs and alternative education programs to provide additional assistance for students who are at risk of academic failure. These programs are funded both by federal and state sources and provide assistance to students in achieving local curriculum standards and acquiring the educational skills required of all children. These programs include Title I, Migrant Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Early Intervention Programs, and Drop-out Prevention/ Department of Juvenile Justice programs.

Title I programs offer ancillary support services to students who need assistance in attaining academic and social goals. These services include the Pre-kindergarten Head Start Program, the Title I Take Home Computer Program, after-school tutoring, and summer programs. Title I funding is designated to improve teaching and learning in schools with the highest concentrations of poverty (based on the number students who receive free or reduced lunch). The federal government, state government, and school district fund the program, with the federal government providing the majority of resources. For a district school to qualify for Title I services, 50% or more of its students must meet the criteria for free or reduced lunch. Twenty-three of the district's 67 schools (34%) qualify for school-wide Title I programs that serve all students in the school, and the program provides targeted assistance in the remaining schools that serve individual students who meet eligibility criteria. Of the district's 58,384 students, 24,625 (42%) of the student population receive free or reduced-price lunches compared to the state average of 44%.

The district's ESOL program serves approximately 5,526 students, which is over 9.5% of the student population. The district's ESOL program is fully inclusive, where ESOL students are placed in regular classrooms. To ensure that ESOL students receive equal access to appropriate services and understandable instruction, the district requires all regular classroom teachers to obtain ESOL teaching certification.

Vocational and adult education

The district's Technical, Career, and Adult Education department includes three program areas: secondary technical education, workforce development education (including postsecondary technical education and adult general education), and community education.

The secondary technical education program served over 17,132 students in grades 7 through 12 in various programs during the 2000-01 school year. These programs included agribusiness, health occupations, public service, television production, business technologies, technology education, and work experience. The postsecondary technical vocational program enrolled 8,254 students during the 2000-01 school year. These programs are operated through two technical centers, business and industry services, and trade extension programs. Through the adult general education program, the district offers free, individualized or self-paced instruction to individuals who do not have a high school diploma (or who test below the 9th

grade level), whether or not they are enrolled in a regular day school. The district enrolled 10,341 adult education students in 2000-01.

Student support services

In the School District of Lee County, the Student Services Department provides psychological services, social work services, guidance services and school health services. The objective of student support services is to provide support outside of the classroom, which helps students to overcome problems that could interfere with their academic success and to broaden their education experience. Further description of student support services appears later in this chapter.

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. used various methods to determine whether the district meets the best practices for educational service delivery. ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed the self-assessment instruments completed by seven district staff members and conducted interviews with the directors of the major educational programs, including curriculum services, ESE, ESOL/Intervention programs, Technical, Career, and Adult Education programs, media services, and student support services.

ValienteHernandez P.A. examined and analyzed evidence and assessed compliance with rules and regulations through reviews of existing policies and procedures and consultation with related organizations such as the Florida Department of Education and the Florida School Boards Association. ValienteHernandez P.A. also obtained information from a group of peer districts chosen for this project (Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia).

During our review, ValienteHernandez P.A. also contacted organizations that administer educational programs such as the Office of Multicultural Student Language Education (OMSLE), Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP), the Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, and the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services, Clearinghouse Information Center.

To obtain feedback from district stakeholders, ValienteHernandez P.A. held teacher and principal focus groups, as well as a public forum. OPPAGA and ValienteHernandez P.A. coordinated Lee County community input through a telephone hotline and disseminated hotline information during the focus groups, public forum, and through the district's website. ValienteHernandez P.A. also designed and distributed surveys to all district teachers and principals and incorporated the results in this chapter. The response rate was 75% for principals and 59% for teachers.

Operation of K-12 Instructional Programs

1 District administrators analyze academic and nonacademic data to some extent but should refine the student performance review function by using assessment results to develop strategies to improve educational programs.

The highest priority of a school district is to improve the performance of all students. To accomplish this objective, school districts must consider performance, as well as the academic progress of specific subcategories of students. Effective use of performance data helps districts to make sound programming and instruction decisions. In general, to use this data effectively, school districts should do the following:

- Compare student academic assessments to state accountability standards and peer districts;
- Disaggregate performance data by school, program, and subpopulations of interest;
- Track student cohorts across multiple years;
- Use performance measures and benchmarks other than student academic assessments;
- Disseminate results to stakeholders; and
- Use performance data to assess and improve the effectiveness and cost efficiency of K-12 education programs.

Our assessment of how well the School District of Lee County adheres to this process follows.

The district compares academic assessment data with peer districts and the state but should increase the training provided to school principals and program directors on using assessment data to improve educational programs

In May of each year, the district receives its results from the *Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)* from the Florida Department of Education (DOE). The district analyzes FCAT scores to identify low performing schools. At the school level, each principal receives FCAT reports for his or her school and shares the data with instructional staff. At the classroom level, each teacher also receives score sheets for the school and for their students. The teacher and school principal analyze the data and revise classroom instruction as necessary.

The extent to which data is analyzed and disaggregated, however, depends on the approach of each principal and his/her instructional team. The use of additional DOE assessment and statistical information is also up to the discretion of individual schools, which can lead to inconsistency in the use and application of such information. While some schools and programs effectively use this information to evaluate educational programs, the district should provide more direction and guidance to school principals and major educational program directors on using assessment results to make sound instructional program decisions.

To improve performance data evaluation, we recommend that the district's assessment evaluation team provide program directors and school principals guidelines for analyzing test data and for developing annual program goals. In 2000, the district implemented a coaching mechanism to improve school grades for nine failing schools, but the district should provide additional training for administrators in using student assessment data for strategic planning and program evaluation.

The district compares assessment data for cohort students to evaluate and to improve student's reading performance

The district performed a Four-Year Same-Student Study of Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test scores for grades one to three and FCAT Reading scores for grade four. The cohort study evaluates performance data for each school and for the district as a whole. Although the four-year cohort study used dissimilar tests, resulting from the FCAT phase-in, the study demonstrated a negative trend in reading scores. Based on the study findings, the district implemented an Intensive Reading Program in schools with noted reading deficiencies. The program includes administration of a reading subtest to identify students' reading levels by school and grade and students' learning rate. The district used this information to develop an instructional process for intensive reading classes tailored to each student's ability and individualized reading goals. Schools incorporate the cohort analysis into the general trend analysis for developing School Improvement Plans. The district would benefit from developing a similar cohort trend analysis to help improve student scores in math.

The district should use more disaggregated student performance data to assess the effectiveness of educational programs and to improve the performance of student subgroups

The district analyzes data through "disaggregated" reporting to identify low performing schools. District administrators consistently identify and examine test achievement data by subpopulations. However, the district did not clearly demonstrate how it uses this information to improve student performance in the student subgroups listed below.

The district disaggregates student academic assessment data by the following subgroups: Exceptional Student Education (ESE) students; Language-Enriched Pupils (LEP) students; ethnic and gender minority students; students in free or reduced lunch programs; and students in dropout prevention programs.

The district makes efforts to disaggregate assessment results for ESE and LEP students. However, the district could improve its methodology for analyzing disaggregated results. We suggest that the district make the following comparisons in conducting trend analysis.

- The district should measure the change in the percentage of students who are below standards, who meet standards, and who exceed standards from year to year. In order to lessen the influence of any external factors that might affect scores for one year in one grade level, the district may want to calculate percentages based upon all grade levels combined.
- The district should evaluate learning gains as measured by change in average test scores for a cohort of students as they progress through grade levels. This analysis would ideally be conducted for a group of randomly selected individual students who are representative of the student population, including all relevant subgroups, such as ESE and LEP.

The district also analyzes assessment data (test results for the FCAT Reading, Math, and Writing tests and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading test) by minority versus non-minority, male/female minority versus male/female non-minority, socio-economic status (free, reduced, and non-free/reduced lunch). By performing these analyses, the district hopes to reduce the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students while also showing improvement for all of its students. The district neither conducted these studies at the school level, nor was the district able to demonstrate how these data are used in analyzing individual school trends or in developing School Improvement Plans.

In general, the district did not demonstrate how disaggregated assessment data is used to improve the performance of student subgroups. The district should provide disaggregated data to school principals and program directors by major program area to improve the performance of subgroups of students and to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs consistently. Additionally, the district should utilize

disaggregated data from the Florida Information Resource Network to incorporate peer group information into disaggregated data in a timely manner.

The district should expand use of nonacademic data to improve major educational programs

Different programs within the district track and use nonacademic data to improve student performance. The use of nonacademic data, however, should be expanded and linked to a district-wide accountability mechanism to improve the effectiveness and cost efficiency of educational programs. Examples of nonacademic data tracked by the district include:

- SAT and ACT student participation and trends over multiple years by school, grades, and ethnicity;
- Percentage and trends of middle school students enrolled in and passing higher-level courses, such as Algebra and Foreign Languages by school, grades, and ethnicity;
- Percentage and trends of high school students enrolled in and passing courses in honors, dual enrollment, advanced placement, pre-IB and IB, and advanced foreign language courses by school, grades, and ethnicity;
- Attendance records by schools over multiple years;
- Promotion and graduation rates; and
- Disciplinary actions by schools over multiple years.

The district maintains detailed records of nonacademic data to meet two district goals: the district will increase the number of students enrolling in and successfully completing higher-level courses and related challenging activities; and the district will reduce the achievement between minority and non-minority students while showing improvement for all. The district could also monitor the number Bright Futures Scholarships (Academic, Merit, and Gold Seal) awarded in the district over multiple years or compared to peer districts to evaluate its progress towards meeting these goals.

The district compiles extensive nonacademic data, and some schools use this information in developing their School Improvement Plans. As with assessment results, the district, as a whole, does not use nonacademic data to improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of K-12 education programs.

The district disaggregates student assessment data to evaluate and improve school performance

The district disaggregates and evaluates assessment data for schools, including D and F schools (see discussion below of School Accountability System), alternative schools and centers, and Title I schools. The district, however, did not provide performance data evaluation of its two charter schools.

In 1999, nine of the 67 schools in the district received either a “D” or “F” grade based on the Florida School Accountability System. The district subsequently used a coaching model to work with school principals to improve student performance. A district administrator provided intensive training in using assessment data to monitor student performance, in developing new instructional techniques and strategies, and in setting measurable goals and objectives. The district’s leadership and guidance helped all nine targeted schools to achieve passing grades the following school year.

As discussed earlier, the district disseminates FCAT Reading, Math, and Writing scores to each school to use in developing their School Improvement Plans. Through school-based management, schools establish individual and specific goals and measurable objectives. In addition, the district incorporates student assessment data into principal performance evaluations.

For the 2001-02 school year, most district schools received an A or B grade

The Florida Legislature promulgated Florida's standards-based accountability system in 1999. The DOE is required to assign schools a performance grade ranging from "A" to "F" based primarily upon student achievement data from the FCAT. School grades communicate to the public how well a school is performing relative to state standards. While FCAT performance data are the primary criteria used in calculating a school's grade, other data include the percentage of students tested, attendance and discipline data, and dropout rates. The performance grade represents the school's progress, with a grade of "A" indicating excellent progress and a grade of "F" representing a failure to make adequate progress.

According to the 2001-02 School Accountability Report, 22 schools received an A, 19 schools received a B, 12 schools received a C, one school received a D, and no district schools received an F. Exhibit 5-6 compares the district's school grades to its peers. The percentage of district schools receiving an A or B is comparable with the peer districts.

Exhibit 5-6

For The 2001-02 School Year, the Percentage of District Schools Receiving an A or B Is Comparable With Peer Districts

District	Sum of A or					
	A Schools	B Schools	B Schools	C Schools	D Schools	F Schools
Lee	39%	35%	74%	23%	3%	0%
Brevard	58%	24%	82%	17%	0%	1%
Pasco	20%	33%	53%	41%	6%	0%
Polk	29%	21%	50%	46%	4%	0%
Seminole	66%	20%	86%	12%	2%	0%
Volusia	44%	27%	71%	26%	3%	0%

Source: Florida Department of Education. School Accountability Report 2001-02.

Student academic assessment results are roughly comparable to peer districts and the state average

Analyses conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A. generally reflect that the scores achieved by the district's students are roughly comparable to its peer districts and the state average. Throughout the year, the district administers a series of tests to measure student performance against the Sunshine State Standards. Primarily, these are the *Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test* (FCAT) and the *Stanford Achievement Test* (SAT9). The school district performs peer district comparisons of the FCAT assessment to evaluate student performance at least once each school year.

On the whole, Lee County FCAT scores exceeded the state average on three out of six FCAT subtests. The six subtests are FCAT Reading for grades 4, 8, and 10 and FCAT Math for grades 5, 8, and 10. The results are reported using achievement levels that range from 1 to 5 (with 1 as the lowest and 5 as highest). However, the district ranked below at least three of its peer districts on almost every FCAT assessment.

Exhibit 5-7 presents the most recent FCAT results for students in Lee County and its peer districts. The district's FCAT Reading and Math scores for grades 4 and 8 are in line with peer district scores. However, the district's FCAT Reading and Math scores for 10th grade are next to last compared to the peer districts, and are below the state average. The district should consider evaluating the effectiveness of its high school reading and math programs.

Exhibit 5-7

The District Ranked Slightly Below Most Peer Districts on Five of the Six Assessments of the 2001-02 FCAT but Remained Relatively Close to the State Average

District	Mean Scale Scores					
	Reading (Level)			Mathematics (Level)		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 10
Lee	304	299	301	293	309	318
Brevard	314	310	319	310	320	334
Pasco	294	299	306	291	311	322
Polk	292	285	294	285	296	311
Seminole	317	315	316	312	324	331
Volusia	306	298	310	302	304	322
State Average	299	295	303	294	305	319

Source: Department of Education. FCAT Reading and Mathematics Results 2001-02.

The district's FCAT Reading scores for elementary and middle school students have improved slightly over time, but FCAT Math scores have remained stable over the same period

The FCAT Reading and Math Sunshine State Standards (SSS) tests are criterion-referenced tests. The tests assess student achievement on the knowledge and skills described in the state curriculum framework, the Sunshine State Standards. The FCAT Reading assessment data suggest that the district's intensive reading program is effective at the elementary and middle school levels, as FCAT Reading scores consistently increased over the past three years. However, it should be noted that the state average also increased during this time frame. The district should consider developing a similar plan for mathematics because FCAT Math scores remained relatively stable over the same period. The assessment data also demonstrate that high school FCAT Reading and Math scores fell below the state average in 2002, while slightly improving over a three-year period. The three-year FCAT Reading and Math data illustrate that the district should consider evaluating and improving its high school reading and math programs. Exhibits 5-8, 5-9, and 5-10 show the results of the FCAT for three consecutive years for all three grades tested.

Exhibit 5-8

Fourth Grade FCAT Reading Scores Improved Over a Three-Year Period, While Fifth Grade FCAT Math Scores Remained Stable

	Reading (Level)			Math (Level)		
	Grade 4			Grade 5		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
District Mean Score	298	301	304	320	317	319
State Mean Score	293	298	299	314	314	318

Source: Department of Education. 1999 – 2002 FCAT Results.

Exhibit 5-9**Eighth Grade FCAT Reading Scores Improved Over a Three-Year Period, While FCAT Math Scores Remained Stable**

	Reading (Level)			Math (Level)		
	Grade 8			Grade 8		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
District Mean Score	295	297	299	310	308	309
State Mean Score	290	295	295	303	308	305

Source: Department of Education. 1999 – 2002 FCAT Results.

Exhibit 5-10**Tenth Grade FCAT Reading and Math Scores Improved Slightly Over the Past Three-Year Period, But Dropped Below the State Average in 2001-02**

	Reading (Level)			Math (Level)		
	Grade 10			Grade 10		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
District Mean Score	298	310	301	312	322	318
State Mean Score	298	307	303	311	321	319

Source: Department of Education. 1999 – 2002 FCAT Results

The district's FCAT Writing scores were comparable with peer districts and the state average

The FCAT Writing test measures student writing proficiency in Grades 4, 8, and 10. The test requires students to write responses to assigned topics in a single testing period. As shown in Exhibit 5-11, the most recent results for district schools are comparable with peer district results and exceed the state average for grades 4 and 10.

Exhibit 5-11**The District's FCAT Writing Results Were Comparable with Peer Districts and the State Average in 2001-02**

District	Combined Mean Score		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
Lee	3.5	3.8	3.9
Brevard	3.5	3.9	3.9
Pasco	3.2	3.8	3.8
Polk	3.4	3.9	3.9
Seminole	3.4	4.0	3.9
Volusia	3.3	3.7	3.8
State Mean Score	3.4	3.8	3.8

Source: Department of Education. 2001-02 FCAT Results.

The district's FCAT Writing scores improved for all tested grades over the past three years

The FCAT Writing test prompts students in 4th grade to explain (expository) a topic and to tell a story (narrative), while 8th and 10th grade students are tested on expository or persuasive writing. Exhibit 5-12

presents the FCAT Writing scores for three consecutive years for each test administration. District writing scores increased over this period and are in line with the state mean score.

Exhibit 5-12

**FCAT Writing Scores of All Tested Grades
Improved Over the Past Three-Year Period**

	Grade 4			Grade 8			Grade 10		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
District Mean Score	3.2	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9
State Mean Score	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.7	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.8	3.8

Source: Department of Education. 1999-2002 FCAT Results.

Recommendation

- *We recommend that the district expand its use of academic and nonacademic data to improve educational programs.*

Action Plan 5-1 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-1

Improve Use of Academic and Nonacademic Data to Improve Educational Programs	
Strategy	Establish guidelines and training to major program directors and to school principals on using assessment data for developing program improvements.
Action Needed	Step 1: Strengthen the goal setting, evaluation, and accountability components of the student performance review mechanism currently in place. Step 2: Establish guidelines and provide training to the major program directors and to school principals on using assessment data for developing program improvements and for district-wide consistency. Step 3: Compare assessment data for cohort students to evaluate and improve student performance in math. Step 4: Consistently use disaggregated student performance data to assess the effectiveness of educational programs and to improve performance of student subgroups. Step 5: Consistently use nonacademic data to improve the major educational programs. Step 6: Evaluate high school reading and math programs and develop new teaching strategies for the high school programs to improve student performance.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendents for teaching and learning and for instructional support.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

2 The district could improve procedures for identifying and disseminating effective instructional practices to improve student performance.

The district's Performance Pay Plan is designed to provide an incentive for teachers to identify and use effective teaching strategies. Through the Summer Institute for Teaching, district administrators also attempt to facilitate the sharing of effective instructional practices to improve student performance. In addition, administrators of some district schools informally disseminate successful educational practices throughout the school year, although the district does not monitor the extent of this training, and the district does not provide training throughout the school year. In general, the district does not monitor whether these methods are effective or improve student performance.

The district should establish guidelines on the performance pay plan to provide effective incentives to outstanding teachers

The district attempts to provide incentives for teachers to identify and effectively use instructional practices that meet the diverse learning needs of their students through a performance pay plan. However, ValienteHernandez P.A. determined this method is ineffective. Because of school-based management, the performance pay plan is not applied equitably. For example, schools apply performance pay differently across the same grade level, and as a result, district teachers reported the performance pay plan is not an effective incentive. The district should establish guidelines for the performance pay plan to ensure the plan's effectiveness. See chapter seven, best practice two on Personnel for a detailed discussion of the performance pay plan and the related recommendation and action plan.

The district should improve mechanisms for identifying and communicating exemplary educational strategies

The district currently offers a Summer Institute for Teaching to facilitate the sharing of instructional best practices. Participation, however, is voluntary, and the district does not evaluate the effectiveness of the program. According to teachers, the district permits most teachers who apply for instructor positions to lead the courses and does not have a stringent instructor selection process. According to district administrators, exceptional teachers are invited to instruct courses. Both groups agree the program could be improved with a mechanism to monitor participant's progress in implementing the shared best teaching practices and to evaluate the effectiveness of the new teaching strategies.

During the summer of 2002, 1,383 teachers, 125 administrators, and 72 aides attended the Summer Institute. However, these figures do not represent a non-duplicated count of participant attendance, since the district only tracks the number of courses and participant hours or points earned, not individual attendance. Thus, the district can not assess the percentage of teachers or administrators who participate. The district should begin keeping track of individual attendance in order to assess the rates of participation in all of its training programs.

The district contracts with teachers annually and only for the regular school year. This means that the district can not require teachers to attend the Summer Institute. The district should consider requiring school administrators to attend the Summer Institute, since the administrators' employment contracts are year-round. The school administrators could then share the learned best practices with teachers during the regular school year. The district should also consider including this training process in the principal evaluation process in order to ensure accountability.

In addition, the Summer Institute could develop standard course materials, and summer instructors could supplement the core material with new and relevant information. Each new teaching strategy should include measurable goals or objectives as well as implementation strategies, which would streamline the

instruction and facilitate instructor recruitment.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district improve its current mechanisms for identifying and communicating exemplary educational practices and strategies.*

Action Plan 5-2 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-2

Identify and Disseminate Exemplary Teaching Strategies	
Strategy	Develop effective mechanism for identifying and communicating exemplary educational strategies.
Action Needed	Step 1: The instructor of the summer institute and the Teaching and Learning Department develop standard course materials for summer classes to facilitate the instruction process. The director provides instructors with guidelines in supplementing course materials with current and relevant information. Step 2: The Teaching and Learning Department considers requiring school administrators to attend the summer program and to train instructional personnel with the best practices learned throughout the school year. For accountability purposes, the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning considers including attendance in the Summer Institute in the principal evaluation process. Step 3: The instructor of the summer institute and Teaching and Learning Department survey classroom instructors at least once per school year on whether implementation techniques appear effective for new teaching strategies learned at the summer institute and during school year training sessions. Step 4: The instructor of the summer institute and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning or designee evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies and course materials at end of the school year based on data obtained in Step 3. Step 5: The instructor of the summer institute and the Teaching and Learning revise the summer institute courses and school year training materials as necessary.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the director of the summer institute.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

3 The district generally provides effective Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs but could improve these programs by developing formal procedures to evaluate performance regularly.

The School District of Lee County offers Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs in all 67 schools. ESE programs give disabled and gifted students the opportunity to receive appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment possible. In 2001, the district ESE program served 13,208 students. Existing laws and regulations require schools to try to address all student needs in regular classrooms before referring students for ESE program evaluation. Further, administrators and teachers must try alternative strategies, such as modifying schedules, changing teachers, or varying instructional

techniques, before referring students to ESE eligibility evaluation.

The district identifies students who are eligible for ESE programs and provides special education programs and related services to meet each student's needs. Some students receive exceptional student services full-time, while others receive ESE services part-time and spend the rest of the school day in regular classrooms. The district uses a wide variety of settings to provide services to meet the needs of exceptional students, including ESE services in regular classrooms, separate resource rooms or classrooms, separate day schools, residential schools, hospitals, homes, or other non-educational settings. In addition, the district works with parents to determine which settings will provide students with appropriate education opportunities in the least restrictive environment.

The number of students identified for exceptional education in the School District of Lee County is higher than its peers (Exhibit 5-13). The district does not monitor pre-referral activities or evaluate placement criteria usage. The district should monitor these activities to ensure that schools are applying placement criteria correctly and are using pre-referral activities appropriately. This will help to ensure that schools attempt alternative teaching methods before referring students for ESE evaluation.

Exhibit 5-13

The Exceptional Student Membership of the District Is the Highest Of Its Peer Districts and Exceeds the State Average in 2001-02

District	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole	Volusia	State Total
Total ESE Population	13,208	15,770	11,248	15,052	10,856	12,675	467,200
Total Student Population	58,384	70,591	49,683	79,462	60,733	61,336	2,431,521
ESE As a Percentage of the Total Population	22.6%	22.3%	22.6%	18.9%	17.9%	20.7%	19.2%

Source: DOE Student Database, Survey 2 data, as of November 2001 (State Figures) and Profiles of Florida School Districts.

The district's procedures for ESE students are consistent with federal and state laws

The exceptional education programs are subject to federal and state rules and regulations that guide the delivery of educational services. To ensure that procedures are up to date and consistent with the laws, the ESE department completes the *Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students* document annually and submits it to the school board and Department of Education, as specified by DOE. School board policies and procedures are adopted, as needed, based on the latest legal advice. The director of Exceptional Student Education is responsible for this process.

The average number of exceptional students per exceptional teacher in the district is comparable to peer districts

The district should evaluate cost-efficiency measures, such as exceptional student per exceptional teacher ratios over multiple years or with peer district comparisons, so the district can ensure that the program is adequately staffed and uses resources reasonably. Exhibit 5-14 shows that, compared to its peer districts, the district has approximately 25 exceptional students for every exceptional education teacher, which is comparable to the ratios of its peer districts.

Exhibit 5-14**The District's ESE Teacher to ESE Student Population Ratio Is Comparable to the Peer Districts**

District	Exceptional Education Teachers	Exceptional Student Population	Ratio ¹
Lee	523	13,208	1:25
Brevard	577	15,770	1:27
Pasco	525	11,248	1:21
Polk	664	15,052	1:23
Seminole	403	10,856	1:27
Volusia	736	12,675	1:17

¹The ratio of ESE Students to ESE Teacher has been rounded to zero decimals.

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

During the 2000-01 school year, the regular placement of ESE students was comparable to its peer districts

The district has detailed procedures for placing students in the least restrictive environment (LRE). To the maximum extent appropriate, students with disabilities are educated with students who are not disabled. Special classes, separate schooling, or removal of students with disabilities from regular education occurs only if the nature or severity is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aides and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. The district offers a continuum of alternative placements to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The committee that develops the student's Individual Educational Plan also determines the most appropriate placement for the student in the least restrictive environment that would meet the student's needs.

The district is implementing the Quality Design for Instruction (QDI) Model. The model provides a methodology for placing students in the least restrictive learning environment. In 2001-02, seven schools in the district were in the training and design phase of the model, while seven schools had implemented the model. Currently, the district lacks a plan for implementing this model in all schools. We recommend that the district evaluate the effectiveness of the QDI Model and consider implementing it across the district.

In the 2000-01 school year, the district referred a total of 866 students for ESE eligibility evaluations. Of those students, 421 (48.6%) were ineligible based upon the results of their evaluation, compared to the best practices standard of 25% ineligible. The district had already identified this problem and incorporated the goal of reducing inappropriate referrals into its Four-Year Out Plan, as discussed below. We recommend that the district continue to review its policies and procedures to decrease the percentage of inappropriate referrals and, if needed, provide additional teacher training for identifying students who may be eligible for ESE services.

In June 2001, the district developed an Exceptional Student Education Four-Year Out Plan. This document includes five district-wide goals with detailed implementation strategies, personnel responsible for each goal, procedures to evaluate progress, a time frame for completion, and status report deadlines.

- Goal one is to enhance the academic improvement plan/child study team process to generate effective interventions to maintain at risk students in general education, resulting in an 80% decrease inappropriate referrals to the ESE program.
- Goal two is to increase by 25% the number of ESE students successfully participating in inclusive learning environments for the majority of the school day.

- Goal three is to attain or exceed the state goal of 85% of ESE students who access and participate in district and statewide testing programs with appropriate accommodations, as needed.
- Goal four is to increase by 20% the number of ESE students who graduate from district programs.
- Goal five outlines how the ESE department will provide technical assistance and support to schools. These efforts will ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, facilitate cost-effective resource allocations, and use comprehensive management information systems using DOE audits and customer satisfaction survey results.

Each strategy has a status field. All goals and strategies, except one, have no documented status update, indicating that the district has not yet implemented the plan.

The district should measure the effectiveness of its QDI Model Inclusion Model and Four-Year Out Plan for ESE students exiting the program with district data evaluation over multiple years or with peer district comparisons. The district does not currently perform such analysis. The district could conduct such reviews as illustrated below.

Regular class placement of ESE students refers to the number of students with disabilities ages six to 21 who spend 80% or more of their school week with non-disabled peers divided by the total number of students with disabilities ages six to 21. The rate of separate class placement of educable mentally handicapped (EMH) students is the percentage of students ages six to 21 identified as EMH who spend less than 40% of their days with non-disabled peers. In 2000-01, the district had a significantly higher percentage of EMH students placed in a separate classroom when compared to peer districts and the state average. Considering this, the district should evaluate its LRE criteria for EMH students and monitor implementation of the criteria for EMH students in particular.

Overall, the percentage of ESE students placed in a regular classroom has increased over the past three years, suggesting that the district is improving its efforts to place students in the least restrictive environment. This information suggests that the district's QDI Model may be effective in returning ESE students to the regular classroom when appropriate, although the district has not actually correlated the data. However, as shown in Exhibit 5-15, the district's percentage of separate classroom placement of EMH students increased from 77% to 87% over the past three years. This increase shows that the district needs a detailed assessment of the ESE program and needs to improve its monitoring of placement criteria.

Exhibit 5-15

The District's Separate Class Placement of Educable Mentally Handicapped Students Increased Significantly over the Past Three Years

Placement Setting	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Separate Class of EMH Students	77%	88%	87%

Source: Florida Department of Education, Local Education Agency (LEA) Profile, Lee County. Survey 9, December 2001.

The district's ESE program uses the Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma as the high school level academic standards for students who are unable to obtain a standard diploma. At the elementary and middle school levels, the district incorporates the regular Sunshine State Standards into the curriculum with appropriate modifications as necessary for each exceptional student. Regular and special education staff members meet regularly to plan curriculum objectives and develop cooperative activities for each ESE student during the development of IEPs. To assist in this coordination effort, the district compiles course descriptions and matches the courses with the state standards for competencies.

In 2001-02, a Practical Assessment Exploration System Lab (the "Lab") was initiated in two schools. The Lab provides on-site assistance and training specifically geared toward ESE teachers and support

personnel. The program focuses on exploration and skill practice in the independent functioning and social/emotional domains of the state standards. The district does not have a plan to assess and monitor effectiveness of the Lab in assisting ESE instructors with curriculum implementation. The district should develop a review process for the Lab and should improve the program as necessary to improve ESE student performance. The district should also develop monitoring procedures to ensure that all ESE teachers have access to the Lab.

The district should monitor the timeliness of ESE program placement

As part of ESE service provision, the district should monitor the timeliness of ESE student evaluation and of ESE student placement for qualified students. For the 2001-02 school year, 1,342 students were placed in the ESE program. The time between the referral and placement dates is as follows. (One data file had an error with a placement date listed before the referral date.)

- 430 students placed less than 31 days after referral;
- 242 students placed between 31 and 60 days after referral;
- 179 students placed between 61 and 90 days after referral of which 17 crossed school years; and
- 490 students placed more than 90 days after referral of which 109 crossed school years.

The district should analyze and monitor ESE assessments for all students, especially for students with specific learning disabilities. As illustrated in Exhibit 5-16, nearly 40% of students placed after 90 days during 2001-01 had specific learning disabilities. The review process should include evaluations by primary exceptionality, by grade level, and by school. The district should use this information to identify opportunities for improvement and to develop plans accordingly.

Exhibit 5-16

During the 2001-02 School Year, the District Placed 35.7% of Eligible Students More Than 90 Days after Their Initial Referral

Primary Exceptionality and Percentage of Students Placed After 90 days			
Exceptionality	Total Number of Students Placed	Number of Students Placed After 90 days	Percentage of Students Placed After 90 days
Educable Mentally Handicapped	47	22	46.8
Trainable Mentally Handicapped	10	7	70.0
Orthopedically Impaired	10	6	60.0
Speech Impaired	309	43	13.9
Language Impaired	175	50	28.6
Hard of Hearing	24	11	45.8
Visually Impaired	3	1	33.3
Emotionally Handicapped	99	44	44.4
Specific Learning Disabled	331	188	56.8
Hospital/Homebound	63	7	11.1
Profoundly Mentally Handicapped	3	2	66.7
Autistic	19	13	68.4
Severely Emotionally Disturbed	20	5	25.0
Traumatic Brain Injured	1	0	0.0
Developmentally Delayed	181	67	37.0
Other Health Impaired	47	24	51.1
TOTAL	1,342	490	36.5

Source: Lee County School District, 2001-02.

The district's gifted student population is the highest compared to peer districts and the state average

The percentage of gifted students in the School District of Lee County is higher than its peer districts and the state average (Exhibit 5-17). The process for identifying and serving gifted students is described in the Special Programs and Procedures for Exceptional Students manual. Because the district has the highest percentage of gifted students among its peer districts, district administrators should evaluate the criteria and evaluation procedures for gifted students and should monitor implementation of the criteria. The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure the district appropriately implements state policy and to ensure consistency in the application of eligibility criteria across the district.

Pursuant to Rule 6A-6.03019, *Florida Administrative Code*, under-represented groups are defined as those whose racial/ethnic backgrounds are other than white non-Hispanic or Asian-Pacific-Islander; who are limited English proficient (recently revised to Language-enriched Pupil), or who are from a low socio-economic status family. Exhibit 5-18 reflects the percentages of under-represented groups in the gifted program have increased over the past three years.

Exhibit 5-17

During the 2000-01 School Year, the District Had the Highest Percentage of Gifted Students When Compared With Peer Districts

District	Number of Gifted Students	Percentage of the Total Student Population
Lee	4,050	6.9%
Brevard	4,689	6.6%
Pasco	1,618	3.3%
Polk	2,895	3.6%
Seminole	3,393	5.6%
Volusia	2,434	4.0%
State Total	109,395	4.5%

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

Exhibit 5-18

The Percentage of White, Non-Hispanic Students in the Gifted Program Has Decreased Over the Past Three Years, While the Percentage of Hispanic and Multiracial Students Has Grown

Racial/Ethnic Distribution	Gifted Students (%)		
	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
White Non-Hispanic	78.3	76.6	75.5
Black Non-Hispanic	9.8	9.3	9.1
Hispanic	7.6	9.0	9.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.5	2.6	2.4
American Indian / Alaskan Native	0.6	0.6	0.7
Multiracial	1.2	1.9	2.7

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

The district files for Medicaid administrative costs reimbursement but not for direct cost reimbursement

The federal government allows school districts serving children with special needs to be reimbursed for

part of the cost of these services for two major functions. The first function, administrative services or administrative outreach, requires the identification of eligible children. The district can bill for administrative costs associated with the time that guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, nurses, and transportation route coordinators spend identifying eligible children. Most of Florida's 67 school districts bill for administrative services reimbursement. A few school districts perform the billing function themselves, while most contract for billing services using one of two major consulting firms. School staff members are usually charged with gathering the preliminary data necessary for administrative services reimbursement, while the contracted firm performs the technical and analytical billing portion.

The second function, direct services or fee-for-service, consists of providing the special services that these children are eligible to receive. Direct service billing is a more complex function, and most school districts that submit for direct services reimbursement rely on contracted firms, which may not be cost-effective for very small districts. Direct services that are eligible for Medicaid reimbursement include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and language therapy, social work, behavior modification, guidance, psychological services, nursing, teen parenting education, migrant education, and transportation services.

The School District of Lee County currently files for administrative Medicaid reimbursement but does not file for direct services reimbursement. To explore this issue, the district has contacted other Florida districts regarding their Medicaid direct services reimbursement procedures. Correspondence between district staff and a Medicaid billing consulting firm revealed that the district had difficulty providing the information necessary to determine the number of students eligible for Medicaid services reimbursement. District administrators opted not to pursue direct services reimbursement, because district analysis indicated that the cost of billing for direct services would exceed the reimbursements.

The district was unable to provide data on the number of services currently provided that would be eligible for Medicaid reimbursement. As a result, ValienteHernandez P.A. is unable to calculate the potential cost savings that the district would experience by billing for Medicaid reimbursement. Analysis of the reimbursement practices of similar school districts suggests that the district could save a minimum of \$128,000 per year. We recommend that the district's internal audit or finance office conduct a formal cost/benefit analysis and reconsider filing for direct services reimbursement. The district should consider similar counties in its analysis and should consider hiring a billing clerk to perform the clerical function instead of allowing therapists, who have significantly higher pay rates, to file claims. In addition, the district may consider hiring a part-time billing clerk or sharing the employment costs of personnel with a neighboring district. In conducting the analysis, the district should work closely with the Department of Education in estimating potential reimbursement.

District administrators should regularly assess and improve the effectiveness and cost efficiency of ESE instruction using student achievement and other performance measures

The district uses alternative assessments, such as the Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills, Life Skills Inventory, the Pasco County Alternate Assessment in Reading, Math, and Writing, PASS-D, Life Centered Career Education, Behavior Characteristics Profile, and Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills, as necessary. The district, however, does not have a formal, well-documented process for selecting ESE students to participate in alternative assessments.

Students who participate in alternative assessments are exempt from the standard FCAT tests, and their alternative assessment scores are not included in School Accountability Reports or in School Improvement Plans. Because of the incentive to administer alternative assessments to ESE students in order to bolster school-wide FCAT scores, district administrators should monitor the selection process. In addition, the district office should maintain data on students exempt from the standard FCAT exams by school. In this manner, district administrators ensure that the selection process for alternative assessment

selection is applied appropriately.

The district compiles the Florida Medicaid Administrative Costs Program Quarterly Expenditure Certification Statement, which details expenditures by personnel (salaried versus contracted) costs, materials, supplies, travel, and training, etc. A similar report would help determine the ESE program's cost-efficiency. As described earlier, the district would also benefit by performing cost-efficiency studies, such as exceptional student per exceptional teacher analysis to evaluate the program's cost-efficiency. Other measures of efficiency the district could perform peer district comparisons of per ESE pupil expenditure ratios, of costs of ESE assessments per pupil, and of FTE and OPS staffing costs.

Exhibit 5-19 illustrates the participation rates of the district's ESE student FCAT Reading and Math participation rates are comparable to peer districts and the state average. District administrators should conduct similar studies to monitor the alternative assessment selection process.

Exhibit 5-19

ESE Student FCAT Participation Rates Are Above the State Average

2000-01 ESE Student Participation Rates (%) in the FCAT						
District	Reading			Math		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 10
Lee	88	82	62	87	81	60
Brevard	83	72	61	82	72	60
Pasco	90	68	53	87	68	53
Polk	83	77	55	85	76	56
Seminole	92	88	73	88	87	73
Volusia	89	82	57	91	83	57
State	85	76	59	85	76	59

Source: Department of Education. 1999 – 2002 FCAT Results. DOE LEA Profile.

Exhibit 5-20 details the progress of ESE students graduating with standard diplomas, dropout rates, and retention rates. The district would benefit from formally using this information to measure improvement and compare against its peer districts. The district should evaluate its standard diploma graduation rate with peer district comparisons in evaluating the overall effectiveness of the program.

Exhibit 5-20

A Lower Percentage of The District's ESE Students Receive Standard Diplomas and Drop Out At Slightly Higher Rates Compared To Most Peer Districts and the State Average

Nonacademic Data 2000-01			
District	ESE Standard Diploma		
	Graduation Rate ¹	ESE Dropout Rate	ESE Retention Rate
Lee	44%	7%	6%
Brevard	64%	5%	5%
Pasco	53%	7%	7%
Polk	28%	9%	7%
Seminole	71%	1%	6%
Volusia	53%	3%	7%
State	51%	5%	7%

¹ The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education.

Source: Department of Education LEA Profile Survey 2, 9, 3, and 5, 1998-99 through December 2001.

As illustrated in Exhibit 5-21, the district's standard diploma graduation rate has decreased by twenty percent over the past three years. The department of ESE, in conjunction with the Lab, should assist ESE instructors in developing new teaching strategies to improve the program.

Exhibit 5-21

The Standard Diploma Graduation Rate For ESE Decreased Significantly From 1998-99 to 2000-01, While the ESE Dropout Rate Increased Slightly

Lee County	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Standard Diploma Graduation Rate ¹	55%	45%	44%
Dropout Rate	6%	7%	7%

¹ The number of students with disabilities graduating with a standard diploma divided by the total number of students with disabilities who completed their education.

Source: Department of Education LEA Profile Survey 2, 9, 3, and 5 1998-99 through December 2001

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district review the policies and procedures relating to the referral, evaluation, and placement of ESE students to improve the timeliness of evaluation and placement and to reduce the percentage of inappropriate referrals to the ESE program.*

Action Plan 5-3 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district assess and monitor the effectiveness of the Lab in assisting ESE instructors with ESE curriculum implementation and monitor the Lab for reasonable access to ESE instructors.*

Action Plan 5-4 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district's Internal Audit or Finance Office perform a feasibility study of filing for Medicaid direct services reimbursements and reconsider filing for Medicaid direct services reimbursement. The district should consider similar counties in the analysis and should consider hiring a billing clerk to file reimbursement claims.*

Action Plan 5-5 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-3

Improve the Timeliness of Evaluation and Placement and Reduce the Percentage of Inappropriate Referrals for Evaluation	
Strategy	Review the policies and procedures relating to the referral, evaluation, and placement of ESE students to improve the timeliness of evaluation and placement and to reduce the percentage of inappropriate referrals for evaluation.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee assesses and monitors the timeliness of ESE evaluations and student placement for the district as a whole and for individual schools.
	Step 2: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee provides clarification, guidelines, and training to school district personnel in identifying students who may be eligible for ESE services.
	Step 3: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee evaluates and monitors to ensure that the least restrictive environment (LRE) criteria are applied correctly for ESE students as a whole and for educable mentally handicapped students in particular.

	Step 4: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee evaluates the effectiveness of the QDI Model and, if it is found to be effective, develops a plan to implement the QDI Model across all district schools and to monitor its effectiveness.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of instructional support.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-4**Monitor the Effectiveness of the Lab and Reasonable Access to the Lab by ESE Instructors**

Strategy	Assess and monitor the effectiveness of the Lab in assisting ESE instructors with ESE curriculum implementation and monitor reasonable access to the Lab by ESE instructors.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of the ESE department and assistant superintendent for instructional support develop measurable goals and objectives for each new technique taught at the lab. Step 2: The director of ESE and the assistant superintendent for instructional support assess whether all ESE instructors have access to the Lab and make improvements as necessary. Step 3: The Lab instructor ensures standard course materials include strategies and examples for implementing new techniques. Step 4: The Lab instructor surveys participants at least once per school year on whether implementation techniques appear effective. Step 5: The director of ESE evaluates whether participants met goals and targets identified during course at the end of the school year. Step 6: The director of the ESE department and lab instructor revise the Lab course materials as necessary based on evaluation data.
Who Is Responsible	The director of the ESE department and lab instructor.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-5**Perform a Feasibility Study for Direct Services Medicaid Reimbursement**

Strategy	The Internal Audit Office, Finance Office, or Instructional Support Division performs a cost/benefit analysis of filing for Medicaid direct services reimbursement.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of internal audit, director of finance, assistant superintendent for instructional support or designee performs a cost study of filing for Medicaid direct service reimbursement using data from peer districts with similar ESE populations and working with the Department of Education. Step 2: The district considers whether it would be more cost-effective to hire a billing clerk or part-time billing clerk or to contract with a private firm. Step 3: The superintendent's executive leadership team provides support and information as necessary for the study. Step 4: The school board adopts a billing policy appropriate for the district and based on the study.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for instructional support.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.

Fiscal Impact	The recommendation can be completed with existing resources, and if Medicaid service billing is implemented, could generate revenues for the district. The amount of revenue can not be computed at this time because the district was unable to provide the data needed to estimate potential reimbursement.

4 The district provides effective and cost-efficient instruction as part of its English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program.

The Lee County School District has an English immersion/ESOL program for students identified as speakers of other languages or as Language-Enriched Pupils (LEP). In the immersion program, ESOL students are mainstreamed; schools accommodate and teach ESOL students in a regular classroom setting. The ESOL program strives to teach English to students while delivering comprehensible instruction in all subject areas.

As required by Florida law and the DOE, schools with more than 15 students who speak the same second language are assigned a teaching aide who speaks the second language. These ESOL instructors must complete training in the instruction of and use of ESOL strategies. To obtain ESOL training or certification, an instructor must complete, or be in process of completing, 300 in-service hours in ESOL instructional strategies, linguistics, and multi-cultural issues. The School District of Lee County LEP Plan, however, requires all district teachers to obtain ESOL certification; the ESOL program in the district is fully inclusive, meaning ESOL students are taught in classrooms with non-ESOL students as part of the district's full immersion program. In addition, the district provides specialized instruction through elective courses.

Exhibit 5-22 compares the ESOL student population of the Lee County with its peer districts. The School District of Lee County has the highest ESOL student population compared to peer districts, more than double the ESOL student population of the next most ESOL student populated district, Polk. The largest minority population in the district is Hispanic followed by Black, Non-Hispanic. Haitian students fall under the Black, Non-Hispanic population, and Haitian Creole is the second largest non-English speaking ESOL student group in the district.

Exhibit 5-22

During 2000-01, the District Had the Highest Percentage of ESOL Students Compared To Peer Districts

Number of Students	White Non-Hispanic	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other	All ESOL Students ¹	Percentage of Total Student Population
Lee	448	822	4,066	190	5,526	9.5%
Brevard	137	29	504	160	830	1.2%
Pasco	289	15	979	150	1,433	2.9%
Polk	98	298	2,651	108	3,155	4.0%
Seminole	201	44	1,192	206	1,643	2.7%
Volusia	106	13	1,376	117	1,612	2.6%

¹ There is a significant difference between these totals and the ones found in other reports such as the School Indicators and the School Advisory Department reports. The figures in the latter are from Survey 2, otherwise known as October Membership. These are snapshots of children present in October. The figures for the ESOL student population in the ESOL reports are from Survey 5 data, which is cumulative for the entire school year, i.e., any child served, for any length of time, is counted – and students that attend more than one school are counted multiple times in other words, the students 'served' by the ESOL program. Survey 5 always appears larger than the other surveys because of its cumulative nature. Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

The district's procedures for identifying ESOL students follow applicable federal and state rules and regulations

In accordance with the *LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) et al. v. State Board of Education of Florida Consent Decree* of 1999 (Consent Decree), the district has procedures in place to provide services to ESOL students. A review of the district's 2000-01 LEP Student Plan revealed the district has detailed procedures covering the various phases of the ESOL process. These procedures are aligned with the Consent Decree, Florida's framework for compliance with federal and state laws and jurisprudence regarding the education of ESOL students.

The district's LEP Student Plan outlines procedures for identifying potential ESOL students during school registration using the Home Language Survey and for assessing potential ESOL students. In accordance with the Consent Decree, the plan includes procedures for equal access to appropriate programming and provides the framework to ensure equal access for ESOL students to appropriate ESOL services and understandable instruction. The plan also details ESOL instructor's certificate coverage and the in-service training the instructor must have to qualify to instruct ESOL students. Lastly, the plan prescribes procedures for exiting students from ESOL services, for complying with post-reclassification monitoring, and for reclassification.

The district performs ESOL student assessments and classifications in a timely manner

The average length of time to classification of ESOL students was 9.13 days in 2000-01, which is slightly above the state average. The state standard for number of days from identification to classification of ESOL students is 20 days or less, and the most recent state average was 8.43 days. The time to classification reflects the average number of days between the Home Language Survey and the classification date. Exhibit 5-23 compares ESOL student assessment timelines with peer districts and the state average.

Exhibit 5-23

In 2000-01, The District's ESOL Student Assessment Timeline Was Within Peer District Averages and the State Benchmark

District	Number Classified	Average Time to Classification (days)
Lee	831	9.13
Brevard	157	11.23
Pasco	195	8.45
Polk	526	11.40
Seminole	453	7.99
Volusia	269	7.58
State	30,283	8.43

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

The average length of time that a student is served in the ESOL program in the district is longer than in peer districts and across the state

ESOL students of Lee County remain in the program for an average of 3.46 years, which is close to the state average of 3.09 years, but on the high end of the average time for peer districts. As illustrated in Exhibit 5-24, the average length of time in the program is higher for all grades when compared to peer districts. Comparisons against the state average indicate district students are enrolled in the program for a longer time in nearly all grades, except for grades 5, 7, and 10.

Although the state does not prescribe a minimum or maximum time a student must spend in ESOL, very short or long periods in the program could indicate the need for program review. A greater length of time

in the ESOL program may indicate that students receive ESOL services longer than is necessary or that students are not included in the regular classroom as soon as possible. Because the average length of time spent in ESOL was greater in Lee than in most peer districts, the district should evaluate the length of time that students remain in the program. While the length of time that a student is in the program does not apparently affect student learning, it does affect the cost efficiency of the ESOL program if a student receives services longer than necessary. Tracking the length of time in the program with periodic comparisons of peer district averages may provide opportunities for identifying areas in need of improvement.

Exhibit 5-24

For 1999-2000, The District's Length of Time for Serving ESOL Students Was Higher Than Most Peer Districts

District	Total Number of Students Exiting	Average Length of Time By Grade (years)												Overall Average
		01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	
Lee	1,065	1.24	2.84	3.10	3.20	3.48	4.26	4.33	4.86	4.81	3.88	4.54	5.84	3.46
Brevard	193	0.90	1.89	2.25	2.78	3.26	2.52	3.75	2.26	3.54	3.51	4.11	5.34	2.94
Pasco	437	1.27	2.14	2.62	3.08	3.55	4.60	4.35	4.64	4.69	4.65	4.21	3.74	3.58
Polk	1,037	1.29	1.71	2.63	2.86	3.16	3.37	3.19	2.97	3.00	2.75	2.69	3.38	2.67
Seminole	576	0.86	1.44	1.93	2.03	2.36	2.13	2.81	2.49	3.20	1.79	1.83	2.51	2.00
Volusia	502	0.82	1.55	2.30	2.85	3.73	4.22	4.03	4.07	3.57	4.36	5.80	4.42	3.29
State Total	60,024	0.96	1.71	2.58	3.10	3.54	4.00	4.34	4.41	4.55	4.00	3.72	3.69	3.09

Source: Florida Department of Education. Bureau of Equity, Safety, and Student Support. Office of Multicultural Student Language Education. 1999-00 Annual Status Report on the Implementation of the 1990 LULAC, et al. v. State Board of Education, et al. Consent Decree.

The district has a full immersion ESOL program supplemented by ESOL specialized instruction as necessary

ESOL teacher assistants work with individual students under the direction of certified teachers. The district provides a variety of text and software materials in cooperation and conjunction with individual schools and other programs. The ESOL department works collaboratively with Title I, migrant education, guidance counseling, and ESE, as frequent overlap or congruence occurs with these programs. The ESOL program acquires supplemental materials coordinated with current adopted textbooks in core courses on a continuing basis and provides the materials for use by classroom teachers, teaching assistants, and individual students.

The district uses the regular curriculum to teach ESOL students with modifications for ESOL instruction

The district has curriculum standards in place and provides teachers with sample lesson plans modified for ESOL instruction. The curriculum standards and instructional design include detailed benchmarks that correlate a variety of ESOL strategies with specific Florida Language Arts Curriculum Framework benchmarks. These benchmarks indicate in detail the outcomes expected from the students in the areas of reading, writing, listening, viewing and speaking, language and literature.

Because the ESOL program in the district is fully inclusive, the curriculum for ESOL students is the same as for non-ESOL students. ESOL students participate in regular classrooms for most of the day, and the district places students in ESOL elective courses as necessary for specialized instruction. The regular classroom teacher supplements the regular lesson plans with ESOL teaching strategies and modifications as necessary for ESOL students.

The district reviews disaggregated ESOL performance data

The ESOL program department reviews disaggregated data on ESOL students standardized test scores to evaluate student achievement over multiple years. The district also reviews the *Annual Status Report on the Implementation of the Consent Decree in the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), et al. v. State Board of Education, et al., 1990*. The DOE compiles relevant academic and nonacademic data for each district in this report. The ESOL department would benefit from using this information for peer district comparisons.

ESOL contacts at each school also monitor ESOL student report cards and individual performance. Based on the review of student performance data, ESOL staff complete a Professional Development Plan. The staff development plan cites the district goal that it is trying to achieve, outlines a goal statement based on student achievement needs, outlines detailed strategies and documentation methods, and lists proposed dates for completion and measurable objectives.

While the ESOL department uses nonacademic data in Professional Development Plan goals to evaluate progress, the department did not clearly demonstrate using performance data on a consistent basis for improving the program. See recommendation one, action plan 5-1 for detailed discussion of the district's use of performance data.

Exhibits 5-25, 5-26, and 5-27 are compilations of performance for district schools and its peer districts. Exhibit 5-25 illustrates that the district's ESOL FCAT Writing scores are comparable to peer districts and to the state average and demonstrate relatively low achievement gaps (comparison of LEP student to non-LEP student scores).

Exhibit 5-26 lists the percentage of ESOL students who achieve Level 1 (the lowest FCAT achievement level) with peer district comparisons. The district's Level 1 achievement is comparable to peer districts indicating that the district does not have a relatively high ESOL student population with below standards reading levels.

Exhibit 5-27 shows ESOL Students in the district graduate at higher rates than peer district students and at comparable rates as the state average. The district's ESOL dropout rates are slightly higher than peer districts and the state, while retention rates are lower.

Exhibit 5-25

In 2000-01, ESOL FCAT Writing Scores for All Tested Grades Were Comparable With Most Peer District Scores

District	Average Score ESOL FCAT Writing		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
Lee	3.5	3.6	3.8
Brevard	3.7	3.8	4.2
Pasco	3.4	3.5	3.6
Polk	3.6	4.0	3.9
Seminole	3.3	4.0	3.7
Volusia	3.6	3.6	3.8
State Average	3.6	3.8	3.7

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

Exhibit 5-26**In 2000-01, ESOL FCAT Reading Scores for Achievement Level One Is Comparable To Peer Districts**

District	Percentage of LEP Students Achieving Level 1		
	Grade 4 %	Grade 8 %	Grade 10 %
Lee	24.6	24.3	47.5
Brevard	19.0	27.3	40.0
Pasco	45.7	57.1	66.7
Polk	32.4	55.9	83.8
Seminole	26.2	21.6	34.8
Volusia	19.2	35.3	70.6
State Average	35.8	41.6	59.2

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

Exhibit 5-27**In 2000-01, the District's ESOL Student Performance Indicators Are In Line With Peer Districts and the State Average**

District	ESOL Graduation	ESOL Dropout Rate	ESOL Retention
	Rate Percentage	Percentage	Rate Percentage
Lee	56.0	6.5	2.5
Brevard	83.3	1.5	3.6
Pasco	28.6	6.3	4.4
Polk	31.7	10.1	7.8
Seminole	66.7	1.5	4.3
Volusia	36.4	2.7	5.9
State Average	57.5	3.8	6.0

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01.

Following the DOE monitoring report of May 1998, the district developed corrective action plans

The DOE is charged with monitoring school districts to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Consent Decree pursuant to federal and state law and regulations. This monitoring is carried out by the OMSLE every four years. The Lee County School District underwent such a review in May 1998 and subsequently developed Corrective Action Plans for each finding.

The district regularly assesses the effectiveness and cost efficiency of the ESOL program

The district relies on the OMSLE four-year evaluations to identify areas of improvement and performs mock audits of one-third of district schools during off-audit years. The program office issues mock findings in dollars, resulting from the mock-audits. While the district uses nonacademic data to monitor ESOL student progress, the district did not clearly demonstrate the evaluation process of assessment data, including peer district comparisons, to make program improvements. The district's internal monitoring system, mock audits, appears effective, but the district could also evaluate ESOL program cost-efficiency with measures, such as cost per pupil for bilingual education and cost of assessment per bilingual student. The district could use these financial measures with peer district comparisons for program productivity studies.

5 The district provides effective and cost-efficient Technical, Career, and Adult Education programs through the Workforce Development Education Program.

The purpose of the Workforce Development Education Program is to help students attain skills for gainful employment. The program provides training designed to meet local and state workforce needs and to help Florida compete in a global economy by building a broadly based, highly skilled, productive workforce.

To facilitate this discussion, we have grouped Florida's public postsecondary workforce development education programs into three categories: career and technical education programs, adult education programs, and continuing education programs. Career and technical education programs prepare individuals for entry into a specific occupation by completing an associate in science degree, a college credit certificate, an adult vocational certificate, or an apprenticeship program. Adult education programs provide courses for individuals who need literacy, basic education, and English language training to improve job performance, and/or to move into higher paying jobs. Continuing education programs are courses designed to improve skills for individuals who are already employed.

Workforce development funding is based partially on program outcomes (completions and placements). As required by Florida Statutes, at least 15% of the funds for workforce development education programs are distributed based on performance outcomes. The remaining funding is based on the prior year's funding levels.

The district's workforce development programs are implemented through the Technical, Career, and Adult Education Department under the Teaching and Learning Unit. The programs are divided into secondary technical, post-secondary technical programs, and adult education. The district offers secondary technical programs at all middle and high schools in the district. Postsecondary technical programs take place at the district's two technical centers, High Tech Central and High Tech North, and at trade extension programs, including the Southwest Florida Criminal Justice Academy and Business and Industry Services, which provides customized, short-term training for businesses. The district provides adult education through the General Educational Development (GED) program, ESOL, and the adult general education and leisure program. The district offers adult education programs separate from postsecondary technical programs at Dunbar Community High School. This school has full-time day and night adult education programs. The district also houses community-based adult education programs at eight high schools.

The emphasis of the middle and high school technical instructional, secondary programs is to provide students with learning opportunities in real world workforce applications. The 2000-01 unduplicated enrollment figure for the secondary technical program was 17,132, including 5,564 middle school students and 11,478 high school students. The secondary technical instructional program areas include Agribusiness, Diversified Cooperative Training, Health Occupations, Public Service, Television Production, Business Technologies, Family and Consumer Science, Marketing and Distribution Education, Technology Education, and Work Experience.

The post-secondary technical education programs primarily prepare students with the knowledge and skills required for entry into the workforce. The post-secondary technical program enrollment figure (duplicated) for 2000-01 was 8,254, including 3,652 at the two tech centers, 663 at business and industry services, and 3,939 in the trade extension program. Students enrolled in the following instructional delivery systems: Job Preparation, Continuing Workforce Education, Apprenticeship, Adult General Education, and On-The-Job Training.

The district continually updates courses and equipment to meet employers' needs

The district's Technical, Career, and Adult Education staff continuously review vocational enrollment reports, visit programs, and meet with teachers, administrators and advisory committee members to assure programs are at local industry standard. Additionally, the district staff upgrades the Vocational-Technical section of the local district-wide Course Code Directory as necessary to reflect industry needs and changes.

The district issues an annual request for equipment needs prioritized by program and completed by each vocational teacher. School administrators prioritize the equipment needs requests. According to the technical school directors, most (if not all) equipment requests are granted, which is indicative of the district's effective fundraising efforts.

The district formally seeks input from business and industry in planning vocational programs and makes adjustments as necessary

According to state and local figures, 34.8% of skilled occupations that employ people age 16 and older are those involving technical, sales, and administrative support (including clerical). Service-related jobs comprise the second largest occupational sector, accounting for 27% of the workforce. The ten largest employers are the Lee County School District, the Lee Memorial Health System (hospital/healthcare system), Publix, Wal-Mart, the Lee County Government, the Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center (hospital/healthcare system), the City of Cape Coral, MeriStar (resort), WCI Communities (Real estate developer, residential builder), and the Florida Gulf Coast University. The top three manufacturers are the Ft. Myers News-Press, Sims Portex, Inc. (respiratory and anesthesia devices), and Kehrling Industries, Inc. (concrete).

Ft. Myers-Cape Coral was the fourth fastest growing metro area in the country from 1980 to 1990. That growth has continued in the 1990's with Lee County remaining in the top 20 from 1990 to 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Five hundred to 1000 new residents move into Lee County per month. Local employers draw from the five-county southwest Florida region of Lee, Collier, Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades. The labor force of the region is 351,483 people and is projected to grow 24% between 2000 and 2010. Contrary to long-held perceptions of southwest Florida as a haven for retirees, by 2005 the largest segment of the population in Lee County will be adults aged 45 to 64. Currently, working age people (18 to 64) make up 56% of the population.

The district formally obtains employer feedback and evaluates the effectiveness of the district's workforce development programs. The Work Skills Program is the district's primary cooperative placement program. An extra curricular program, it is primarily for high school students interested in skilled, technical, and engineering careers related to the construction, manufacturing, and maintenance industries. It is designed to bridge the gap between employer needs and student skills by identifying transferable work skills, teaching those skills in a career-focused environment, and validating a student's mastery of those skills. During the 2000-01 school year, students completed industry-designed projects in electricity, air conditioning, plumbing, carpentry, automotive technology, commercial and residential construction, architecture, auto cad, electronics, irrigation, concrete production, marine mechanics, golf course maintenance, heavy equipment, and manufacturing. The district also uses student evaluation forms to assess whether the training effectively prepares students to follow careers in skilled trades, technology, and engineering.

The district's secondary vocational job placement and post-secondary follow up program data reveals that district graduates find employment with relatively high earnings

The district regularly compares its secondary job placement and postsecondary program completions with peer district data. The most recent follow up study conducted by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) (2001-02) revealed that when compared to peer districts, the

Lee County School District had the highest percentage of secondary technical education completers found employed, and their average earnings were comparable with those of peer districts. In addition, Lee reported the second highest percentage of secondary completers continuing their education when compared to peer districts. Exhibit 5-28 provides this information in detail.

Analysis of similar information for postsecondary education is shown in Exhibit 5-29, which illustrates that students who graduate from the district's postsecondary vocational education program had the highest percentage of employment and the highest average earnings compared to peer districts. These students also had the highest percentage of students continuing their education.

Exhibit 5-28

In 2000-01, Salary, Education, and Employment Outcomes for Secondary Technical Education Completers Are Comparable With Peer Districts

District	Total All	Total Employed	Percentage Employed	Percentage Identified as Job Related	Average Quarterly Earnings	Percentage Continuing Education
Lee	724	474	65%	49%	\$3,999	56%
Brevard	782	438	56%	66%	\$3,902	51%
Pasco	898	578	64%	69%	\$3,936	50%
Polk	1,773	1,146	65%	62%	\$4,052	51%
Seminole	-	-	-	-	-	-
Volusia	1,225	769	63%	43%	\$4,004	60%

Source: Florida Department of Education. Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

Exhibit 5-29

In 2000-01, Salary, Education, and Employment Outcomes for Postsecondary Vocational Education Completers Compared Favorably To Peer Districts

District	Total All	Total Employed	Percentage Employed	Percentage Identified as Job Related	Average Quarterly Earnings	Percentage Continuing Education
Lee	741	595	80%	65%	\$7,594	41%
Brevard	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pasco	39	25	64%	68%	\$5,276	26%
Polk	887	619	70%	57%	\$6,407	22%
Seminole	-	-	-	-	-	-
Volusia	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Refer to descriptions made in the chart immediately above.

Note: Brevard, Seminole, and Volusia County School Districts offer post-secondary vocational education through the community college system.

Source: Florida Department of Education. Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

State level data reflects the district has successful vocational and adult education programs as illustrated by completion points

The FETPIP data clearly demonstrates that the district's Technical, Career, and Adult Education programs are generally effective, with completion points increasing between 2000-01 and 2001-02, as shown in Exhibit 5-30.

Exhibit 5-30**District Completion Points for the Vocational Programs and For the Adult General Education Programs Increased Over the Past Two Years**

District	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole	Volusia
Post-Secondary Vocational Programs						
2001-02 Completion Points	9,991.75	-	1,549.25	7,785.25	-	-
2000-01 Completion Points	9727.50	-	1,074.00	7,145.75	-	-
Point Gain	264.25	-	475.25	639.50	-	-
Percent Gain	2.72%	-	44.25%	8.95%	-	-
Adult General Education Programs						
2001-02 Completion Points	6,473.50	8,405.00	8,808.50	8,835.50	-	-
2000-01 Completion Points	5,383.25	8,130.00	6,758.25	7,956.75	-	-
Point Gain (Loss)	1,080.25	275.00	2,050.25	878.75	-	-
Percent Gain (Loss)	20.07%	3.38%	30.34%	11.04%	-	-

Note: Brevard does not offer post-secondary vocational programs, and Seminole and Volusia do not offer post-secondary vocational or adult general education programs.

Source: DOE. Office of Workforce Education and Outcome Information Services. WEOIS Report (WDIS 1030).

The district evaluates the effectiveness of the Vocational Education Program

The program director reviews the number of placements, completions, funding, and salaries of Technical, Career, and Adult Education programs with peer district comparisons at least annually. The district also evaluates GED and vocational program certification and compares attainment with peer districts. The director reviews the process and shares the results with the superintendent's leadership team, the directors of the two technical schools, the program managers (adult general education, technical and career, and work skills), and with teachers on assignment. The two technical schools and the community schools use this information in developing school improvement plans and program goals. The program managers also use the performance data in developing program goals for the following school year.

According to the program director, the level of funding received from the state depends upon accurate data collection and reporting at the district level. The district uses the data to report program participation to the state and also to evaluate the program's effectiveness. The district office provides training in data collection and reporting as well as the workforce development education funding system to school directors, program managers and coordinators, and teachers on assignment. In addition, the district office has two employees who provide continuous feedback on the accuracy and reliability of data collected and reported during the school year. The training includes awareness of how occupational completion points equate to funding and feedback focuses on the completeness and accuracy of summary reports. Readily accessible data has expanded the district's ability to improve programs.

Exhibit 5-31 illustrates the district's success in receiving funds from the workforce development funding system. It is important to note that 85% of the current year's funding is based on the prior-year funding. The remaining 15% is based on the district's completion points in the post-secondary vocational and adult general education programs. As listed in Exhibit 5-33 above, the district increased its completion points from 2000-01 to 2001-02. The 2001 Special Legislative Session reduced the 2001-02 program appropriations because of statewide budget cuts. As a result of the performance increases between 2000-01 and 2001-02, the district's Technical, Career and Adult Education funding appropriations were not significantly negatively affected by the statewide budget cuts during the 2001 special sessions.

Exhibit 5-31**The District Has Received Increased Funding From the Workforce Development Funding System for the Past Three Years**

District	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Lee	\$10,483,402	\$10,483,402	\$10,469,750	\$10,922,944	\$11,317,116	\$11,322,902

Source: Florida Department of Education. Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP).

6 The district's curriculum framework is aligned with Florida Accountability Standards and Sunshine State Standards. However, the district should develop and implement curriculum guides.

A well-defined curriculum aligned with the Sunshine State Standards is essential as a systematic and logical means of constantly improving student performance.¹ A school district must have a curriculum to provide focus, to identify essential learning areas, and to provide teaching consistency across grade levels and schools. The curriculum must determine what students learn at each grade level including short and long-term goals, the hierarchy of skills, and the order in which these skills should be taught.

The district does not have curriculum guides, but instructional materials are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards

The district eliminated the director of curriculum position in 1997. Because of school-based management, school principals play an important role in ensuring that the teaching and learning process is properly executed. Principals must ensure that instruction provided by teachers is aligned with state and local standards, grade-specific and enriching the curriculum.

The district has adopted textbooks and other instructional materials that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and the district's grade level benchmarks. The district's curriculum frameworks, benchmarks, and pupil progression plans are in alignment with the Florida Standards, since they are a direct adaptation of the State's Sunshine and Accountability Standards.

The district does not have curriculum guides to ensure curriculum standardization and equity across the district. Furthermore, the district does not ensure progressive implementation of the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the State Accountability Standards. The district does not have a mechanism for school principals to monitor the teachers' progress in teaching the standards, nor does it require teachers to maintain a record of each student's progress in meeting the benchmarks appropriate to their grade level. The school principal and his/her administrative instructional staff do not periodically monitor teacher lesson plans to ensure teaching strategies are designed and implemented to meet the standards and benchmarks. We recommend that the district develop curriculum guides that clearly illustrate strands and benchmarks or teaching strategies to provide guidance resource allocation in achieving educational goals.

¹ The Florida Sunshine State Standards identify what students should know and be able to do at certain stages throughout Pre K-12 grade levels. Districts, schools and classroom teachers then identify what students should know and be able to do at certain grade levels within the broader timeframe. Standards that are clear, useful, verifiable statements of student learning outcomes contain at least three ingredients. First, they specify the learner; second, they describe an unambiguous and observable action; third, they specify the conditions under which these outcomes will be assessed.

The district recently created a Department of Curriculum; the department should add two new positions for curriculum specialists

The primary role of district curriculum staff is to provide leadership, guidance, and support to schools in order to maximize resources and to provide quality learning programs and activities for students. ValienteHernandez P.A. concurs with recommendations made by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) study conducted in the spring of 2002, which recommended that the district create a director of curriculum position under the teaching and learning area. In June 2002, the school board implemented the FADSS recommendation and created the Department of Curriculum.

By adopting the FADSS recommendation, the district can improve student outcomes and enhance learning activities and opportunities for scholars by putting to work a strong district-level instructional team that can assist teachers in successfully implementing the Sunshine State Standards. The district should also expand the Teaching and Learning Department to include curriculum specialists. The department's staff currently consists solely of a director with no support staff. These new curriculum specialists would develop the new curriculum guides, would monitor and train school personnel in the implementation of district curriculum guides, and would provide guidance and training on how to incorporate Sunshine State Standards and curricular frameworks into teaching strategies and in lesson plan development.

We estimate that expanding the curriculum resources would cost the district approximately \$386,000 over the next five years, as illustrated in Exhibit 5-32. The estimated costs of implementing this recommendation include the salary and benefits of two full-time salaried curriculum specialists with salaries totaling \$69,900 and benefits totaling \$21,000, one-third of the salaries. For each subsequent year, personnel costs calculations include a 4% increase to cover increases in the standard of living (inflation) and in salary and benefits. We recommend that the district hire curriculum specialists for the 2003-04 school year, and as a result, this recommendation would incur no costs in 2002-03.

Exhibit 5-32

**Expanding Teaching and Learning Department Curriculum Personnel
Would Cost Approximately \$386,000 Over the Next Five Years**

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Costs	\$0	\$(90,900)	\$(94,500)	\$(98,300)	\$(102,300)
Cumulative Costs	\$0	\$(90,900)	\$(185,400)	\$(283,700)	\$(385,900)

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Schools should train staff to implement curricular guides using Sunshine State Standards and frameworks

During the summer of 2002, the school board had approved hiring four new directors in the Department of Teaching and Learning. The newly reorganized department includes the following: two directors of elementary schools, one director of secondary schools, and one director of curriculum. The district should also have curriculum specialists to train principals and instructional staff in how to use curricular guides and how to incorporate the Sunshine State Standards and curricular frameworks into teaching strategies.

The district does not use an electronic curriculum planning tool

The district does not use an electronic curriculum planning tool, which would allow the district and instructional staff to link the curriculum to the Sunshine State Standards, the National Content Standards,

and any locally defined district or school-based standards. In addition, an electronic tool would allow principals and teachers to monitor and report on student performance, individually or by groups.

The state's DOE has a planning tool available, the Interdisciplinary Curriculum Planning Tool v 2.1 (CPT), which contains all benchmarks for content areas across grade clusters. CPT assists curriculum planning by supporting standards for the Florida System of School Improvement and Accountability, HSCT skills, connections to careers, and major learning themes. The district, however, does not use or train its teachers on the CPT program and should consider using this or a similar electronic curriculum planning tool.

The district should develop a formal instructional management system using an electronic planning tool

The district should develop an Instructional Management System to provide methodical guidance to instructional leaders who are responsible for curriculum development and implementation. This system would answer the following questions.

- Is there consistency in the curriculum across the district?
- Are decisions made in a systematic way?
- Is student performance evaluated?
- Is there a schedule of implementation?
- Are specific roles and responsibilities assigned?
- Is there long range planning?
- Is the delivery of instruction monitored?
- Are decisions for improving based on verified data?

Additionally, the management system would be supported by the use an electronic curriculum planning and instructional management tool. The district should consider purchasing *Abicus*, the curriculum software designed for the mainframe system that is currently in place, in order to lower start-up costs.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district formulate meaningful teaching strategies for the delivery of educational services as part of the district curriculum guides that are to be developed.*

Action Plan 5-6 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district add two curriculum specialists to the Curriculum Department to monitor and to train instructional personnel in the implementation of district curriculum guides, on using Sunshine State Standards, and on using state curricular frameworks in lesson plan development.*

Action Plan 5-7 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district consider utilizing an electronic curriculum planning/instructional management tool for district curriculum guides and in developing a formal instructional management system.*

Action Plan 5-8 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-6

Develop District Curriculum Guides That Contain Effective Teaching Strategies	
Strategy	Formulate meaningful teaching strategies for the delivery of educational service and in the development of district curriculum guides.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning oversees the development of district curriculum guides. The guides should reflect the Florida Accountability Standards and the Sunshine State. Step 2: The district curriculum guides should clearly illustrate strands and benchmarks or teaching strategies. Step 3: The Teaching and Learning Department works with the personnel from the Summer Institute in developing effective teaching strategies to include in the district curriculum guides. Step 4: The Teaching and Learning Department develops a coaching mechanism in implementing the curriculum guides with school principals. Step 5: The Teaching and Learning Department explores methods of creating a unit or lesson plan data bank to share best teaching practices between the Teaching and Learning area and the Summer Institute. Step 6: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning reviews and monitors the effectiveness of the district curriculum.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-7

Add Two Curriculum Specialists to the Curriculum Department	
Strategy	Add two new curriculum specialists to the Curriculum Department to monitor and train school personnel in the implementation of district curriculum guides, on using Sunshine State Standards and on using state curricular frameworks in lesson plan development.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the Superintendent include two curriculum specialists in the 2003-04 school year budget. Step 2: Submit budget proposal to the school board. Step 3: The Director of the Curriculum Department follows customary district procedures in hiring new personnel.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation will cost the district \$385,900 over the next five years.

Action Plan 5-8

Consider Utilizing an Electronic Curriculum Planning Tool	
Strategy	Consider utilizing an electronic curriculum planning/instructional management tool for district curriculum guides and considering developing a formal instructional management system using the electronic curriculum planning tool.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the director of the Curriculum Department conducts a feasibility study for purchasing an electronic curriculum planning tool for district curriculum guides. Step 2: The district considers purchasing <i>Abicus</i>, the curriculum software designed for the mainframe system in place, to lower start-up costs.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004.

7

The district has adopted a Pupil Progression Plan for students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of the Sunshine State Standards but could improve the plan by providing a formal mechanism for monitoring remediation programs.

The district's Pupil Progression Plan (PPP) is consistent with Florida laws and regulations, and the district provides annual reports to parents on student's progress toward meeting district and state standards. The PPP incorporates the Sunshine State Standards and provides for the evaluation of each student's performance against district and/or state standards. It is divided into separate sections for elementary, middle, and high schools, and further establishes specific performance levels for each grade in all subject areas.

Although the PPP does not specifically prohibit social promotion, it states that "students who continue to score at level one on the statewide reading assessment test in grade 4 must be retained unless there is good cause." The Pupil Progression Plan supports evaluating students' reading level in grades 1 and 2. When students are deficient, the district provides intensive reading instruction. If the student has not been remediated by grade 4, the student is retained.

The district's Pupil Progression Plan provides mechanisms to assist all students who do not meet established expectations by providing intensive remediation assistance. The plan lists several school and district level programs for remediation, intervention, and alternative education. The plan stipulates that no student can be assigned to a grade based solely on age or other factors that constitute social promotion, and there must be an appropriate alternative placement for a student who has been retained two or more years. The plan also requires that students who are considered for retention and/or placement must have an Academic Improvement Plan written. The plan must include a recommendation for differentiated instruction, including a description of what is different in the classroom that will assist the student in remedying his or her academic deficiencies.

The Pupil Progression Plan also establishes guidelines for administrative placement. Sixth and seventh grade students who have not met promotion requirements may be retained or administratively placed. Eighth grade students who are administratively placed in ninth grade are immediately identified for intensive strategies in high school. The district has procedures to provide the high school with the information needed to begin the intensive strategies when the student enters.

Finally, the plan also provides for accelerated graduation and dual enrollment at post-secondary institutions. Schools inform parents and students of these options during the academic advisement process and at parent-teacher conferences.

Several schools in the district employ student-led conferences to inform parents of their child's progress

Through student-led conferencing, each student prepares a portfolio of his/her work to present to parents during formal, scheduled sessions. The portfolio is a planned collection of students' work, reflections, and evaluations, which is used to assess students' progress and accomplishments and set future goals. During the conference, students are responsible for reporting their personal and academic progress and setting goals with their parents. This parent involvement promotes collaborative goal setting and commitment to support their child's efforts in reaching those goals.

Unlike traditional parent-teacher conferencing, with the student led conference, students are included in the assessment and evaluation process and provided an opportunity to practice significant real world

skills. Students prepare and are accountable for their school work and practice reporting their progress to their parents. With the promotion of student reflection and self-assessment, students commit to continuous improvement. Of the district's 67 schools, 18 elementary and 3 middle schools employ student led conferences.

The district should evaluate the effectiveness of remediation programs

Although the Pupil Progression Plan provides for remediation and proposes to limit administrative promotions, the district reported a significant percentage of administrative promotions during the 2000-01 school year. Of the 3,613 students who did not meet state and/or district standards, 53.4% were administratively promoted to the next grade, while 46.6% were retained. This implies that the district's remedial programs may not be functioning well. We recommend that the district evaluate and monitor its remedial programs in a focused effort to reduce the frequency of administrative promotions.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district explore avenues to enhance existing remedial programs that will help students who are having a difficult time in meeting the state standards and benchmarks.*

Action Plan 5-9 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-9

Evaluate and Enhance Remedial Programs	
Strategy	Evaluate and enhance existing remedial programs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the director of the Curriculum Department develop a research model to collect information on the effectiveness of school based remedial plans. Step 2: The Director of Curriculum collaborates with district curriculum team, school principals, and others as appropriate to design a mechanism to evaluate the long-term effects and effectiveness of remediation, intervention, and alternative education. The director consults with external sources, such as peer districts, as necessary. Step 3: The evaluation team focuses on standardized test results, academic improvement plans, and student promotion, graduation, and dropout rates. Step 4: Based on evaluation results, the team identifies effective remedial programs. Step 5: Curriculum team provides training and support to schools in implementing effective remedial programs.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the director of curriculum.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources and after addition of curriculum specialists.

8 The district's School Improvement Plans clearly list areas for improvement with measurable objectives and linked strategies. The district should continue to require each school to produce an operational plan for implementing the objectives listed in the SIP.

The district meets the statutory requirements and has a comprehensive review process to monitor the makeup of the School Advisory Councils (SACs) and to ensure that they meet the statutory requirements for SAC membership.

School Improvement Plans have been exemplary in the past and meet quality standards

Each school in Florida is required to write a School Improvement Plan (SIP) stating the school's goals, objectives, and the strategies that will be used to meet those objectives. These goals and objectives should be related, in part, to student performance data and should state how the school intends to evaluate the extent to which the goals and objectives are met. The Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) has developed criteria to review the adequacy of School Improvement Plans. Three of these criteria follow.

- What is the evidence that the SIP is based on the school's needs?
- Does the goal generally contain measurable objectives?
- Does the goal generally contain clear implementation strategies?

ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed SIPs for all district schools for the 2000-01 and 2001-02 school years. Overall, the district's SIPs meet the OPPAGA criteria for SIP adequacy. The quality of the objectives is consistently high across the district's schools, which suggests that the district has provided effective guidance in prior years. In 2002-03, the district began requiring each school to write a separate operational plan containing the actions, timelines, person responsible, and resources required and allocated for each objective in the School Improvement Plans. These operational plans were optional before 2002-03. We recommend that the district continue to require each school to develop annual operational plans to ensure that the objectives listed in the SIP are implemented.

For the 2002-03 school year, the district developed a SIP grading matrix that aligns with the district's new strategic plan

The Division of Teaching and Learning oversees the development of SIPs. The district provides training and feedback to the SACs on writing SIPs. The district requires the each SAC chairperson to attend the training workshops. Training topics include discussions of the Florida school accountability system, understanding laws, regulations, and policy that govern SACs, and writing SIPs. We encourage the district to ensure that SIP training is accessible to all SAC members, not only to the SAC chairs, as all SAC members are responsible for writing the SIP.

The district discontinued formally grading SIPs in the 2000-01 school year. Instead, district administrators provided feedback on SIPs that did not meet district standards. For the 2002-03, the district office developed a new grading matrix that aligns with the district's new strategic plan. The new grading system is expected to ensure that SIP targets are aligned with the measures stated in the district-wide strategic plan. ValienteHernandez P.A. commends the district office for incorporating the SIP writing process into the district's strategic plan.

Acquisition, Replacement and Disposal of Instructional Materials

9 The district's process for selecting instructional materials ensures that instructional materials meet the needs of teachers and students.

The district's process for selecting instructional materials ensures that student and teacher needs are appropriately met. The information is included in the Administrator handbook section on purchasing. All instructional materials purchased by the School District of Lee County have met all of the provisions of the Sunshine State Standards. The district adheres strictly to the requirement that all materials are purchased according to the state adoption schedule.

In line with state law, the district developed and approved the *Textbook Handbook* with the purpose of aligning the operation with Florida Statutes, expediting the adoption of instructional materials and ensuring the effective use of funds. The district ensures compliance with its procedures and purchasing of approved instructional materials through its software. The district's textbook ordering software does not allow unapproved texts and materials to be purchased. The district clearly identifies the flexibility schools have to make decisions regarding instructional materials. Pursuant to state law, schools may request a waiver from these procedures. For the 2001-02 school year, no district school submitted a waiver for instructional materials.

10 Each student has current and appropriate instructional materials in core courses that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and the district's pupil progression plan. The district could improve the instructional materials selection process by seeking feedback from stakeholders about the usefulness of instructional materials.

The district annually budgets for the textbooks and the cost of replenishing instructional material that contains consumables. The district's textbook budget is revised based on actual student enrollment in October of each school year. For the 2001-02 school year, the district had a budget surplus of over \$700,000. The school board allocates the funds necessary for every student to have a textbook in the four major subject areas. In addition, all but two middle schools have in-class textbooks for the major subject areas for students to use in class, and students are given a set of textbooks to take home for study. This is because all but two of the middle schools do not have lockers. The district should complete the feasibility study already in progress to determine the cost/benefit of installing lockers in the district's middle schools. This could reduce the amount of money required for instructional materials.

As described earlier, the procedures contained in the *Textbook Handbook* assure that all students have current-state adopted textbooks and other appropriate current instructional materials in core courses. The district requires that all reviews and the selection of instructional materials involve teachers and all other appropriate stakeholders. This is accomplished to a great extent through the committees appointed to review and recommend adoptions for local use and supported by school board policies.

As shown in Exhibit 5-33, many teachers did not agree that the district formally obtains feedback on the usefulness of instructional materials. We recommend the district establish a procedure to seek formal feedback from teachers and principals, who are not involved in textbook selection committees, as to the

usefulness of the instructional materials adopted locally and use this feedback in future decisions.

Exhibit 5-33

Only 31.5% of Teachers Agree That the District Formally Obtains Feedback on the Usefulness of Instructional Materials

Survey Group (N=Pop. size; s=sample size; n=respondents)		Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
Teachers (N=3,495; n=2,062)	The district formally obtains feedback from teachers and principals regarding instructional materials' usefulness.	31.5%	21.6%	34.5%	12.4%

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. Survey, June 2002

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district formally obtain feedback from teachers and principals as to the usefulness of instructional materials and use this feedback in future decisions on instructional materials.*

Action Plan 5-10 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-10

Obtain Feedback About the Usefulness Of Instructional Materials	
Strategy	Formally obtain feedback from teachers and principals as to the usefulness of instructional materials.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the director of the Curriculum Department develop a survey to obtain from teachers and principals on the usefulness of instructional materials. Step 2: The Curriculum Department administers the survey to a random and representative sample of teachers and principals at least once or twice during a textbook adoption cycle. Step 3: The Curriculum Department and instructional material personnel compile, summarize, and analyze the data and provide the instruction materials selection committee the information to use in future adoptions.
Who Is Responsible	Director of the curriculum department.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

11 While the district's procedures for acquiring, maintaining, and disposing of instructional materials are cost-effective, the district could improve its cost recovery for lost and damaged textbooks.

According to procedure, when the new materials are delivered to each school, the school administrator is responsible for exchanging all outdated materials for the new materials. The *Textbook Handbook* explains in detail the steps necessary for disposal of materials. As outlined in the Handbook, instructional

materials that are unserviceable, surplus, or no longer on state contract will be returned to the central warehouse to be sold or recycled, according to state law.

District policy stipulates that students and their parents will be charged for lost, damaged, or unreturned instructional materials. This payment schedule demonstrates that the money collected for lost, damaged, or unreturned instructional materials represents an appropriate value of the loss or the damage. However, in the past, the district has had difficulty in collecting reimbursements for lost or damaged books. Only 36% of surveyed teachers agreed that the district enforces this policy, as shown in Exhibit 5-34.

Exhibit 5-34

Only 36% of Respondents Agree That the District Enforces the Policy Governing Lost and Damaged Textbooks

Survey Group (N=Pop. size; s=sample size; n=respondents)		Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
Teachers (N=3,495; s=2,062)	The district enforces the policy governing the charges for lost, damaged, or unreturned instructional materials.	36.0%	18.2%	23.5%	22.3%

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. Survey, June 2002.

An evaluation of the current annual textbook inventory report and the documentation regarding annual credits to the district's textbook account indicates that the district recuperates only a small portion of the many lost or damaged textbooks. State laws require that school districts recover 50% to 75% of lost or damaged materials. The district reported the total cost of lost and damaged textbooks for 2001-02 to be \$438,197, but the district collected only \$49,973 for lost textbooks in that year. Assuming that the district should have collected a minimum of 50% of the total cost or \$219,099, the district only collected 22.8% of the expected amount. The district should monitor the percentage of lost and/or damaged book funds recovered over multiple years to evaluate the effectiveness of its textbook policies. The district could also reduce the amount of lost or damaged textbooks with an effective inventory and textbook tracking mechanism.

We recommend that the district increase awareness among students, parents, and teachers of the value of textbooks and the importance of preserving instructional materials for future users. For example, school administrators could disallow students who owe for lost or damaged books to attend extra-curricular activities, such as school dances or sporting events. In addition, the district should consider alternatives to strengthen accountability at the school level for lost and damaged books. For example, the district could include effective management of fiscal resources, such as textbooks, in principal evaluations to ensure that schools attempt every reasonable means to obtain reimbursement. The district could also offer guidance on effective collection practices and technical support on locating students who transferred to other schools.

The district could realize cost savings of \$418,384 over the next five years with an improved accountability system at the school level for lost or damaged textbooks, as illustrated in Exhibit 5-35. The cost savings estimate assumes that the district will increase accountability for lost or damaged books and that the district will increase its collection rate to 75% (of the amount charged to students) over the next five years.

Exhibit 5-35**The District Could Realize \$418,384 in Cost Savings Over the Next Five Years by Improving Cost Recovery**

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Cumulative Total
Estimated Cost of Lost/Damaged Textbooks ¹	\$219,099	\$231,149	\$243,862	\$257,275	\$271,425	\$286,353	
Collections at 2002 Rate (22.8%)	\$49,973	\$52,722	\$55,621	\$58,680	\$61,908	\$65,313	
Yearly Goals for Improved Collection Rates ²	22.8%	33.2%	43.7%	54.1%	64.6%	75.0%	
Estimated Collections with Improved Rate Goals		\$76,850	\$106,531	\$139,246	\$175,236	\$214,765	
Potential Cost Savings with New Collection Rates³	(NA)	\$24,128	\$50,910	\$80,565	\$113,329	\$149,452	\$418,384

¹ Cost estimated by calculating a cost-per-student for 2002 and multiplying that by the estimated student population in future years. Growth of student population estimated at (5.5%) based upon average growth rate in previous two years. Amount shown represents 50% of full value of lost/damaged textbooks.

² Straight-line collection increase from 22.8% to 75% (of the amount charged to students, which is at least 50% according to state law) over five years.

³ Estimated additional collections using collection rate goals minus collections at current (2002) rate.

Source: Lee County School District and calculations by ValienteHernandez P.A.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district strengthen accountability at the school level for lost and damaged books.*

Action Plan 5-11 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-11

Improve Accountability at the School Level for Lost and Damaged Books	
Strategy	Strengthen accountability at the school level for lost and damaged books.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team seek feedback from the district's leadership team about options to raise consciousness among students, parents, and instructional staff to preserve textbooks and other instructional materials. The group also discusses other alternatives to increase school accountability for lost and damaged books. Step 2: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team establish policies and procedures for all schools to report the dollar amount of lost and damaged books over multiple years. Step 3: The district considers improving textbook inventory method to lower the reported amounts of lost or damaged texts. Step 4: The group provides guidance to schools with dollar amounts of lost and damaged books that increase or remain unchanged over multiple years

Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team.
Time Frame	March 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Potential savings with improved collection rates of \$418,384.

Analysis of Performance Data and Evaluation of Educational Programs

12 The district needs to implement accountability mechanisms to ensure the overall performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its major educational programs.

The district has a newly developed strategic plan with clearly stated goals and measurable objectives

In June 2002, the district adopted the 2002-07 School District of Lee County Strategic Plan, which proposes administering satisfaction surveys in 2002-03 to develop five-year targets for improved learning gains, safety and health, and goals, objectives or measures, and targets for stakeholder satisfaction. The district developed the new strategic plan as part of its new quality improvement initiative using the Sterling Model. The new strategic plan includes a general district goal for improved learning gains and 11 measures or strategies for achieving the goal.

The measures include five-year targets for the areas as follows: FCAT Reading, Math, and Writing scores; students meeting promotion standards; graduation rates; standard curriculum students completing Algebra I by 9th grade; eliminating the majority/minority gap; and students completing career and occupational preparatory programs.

The district is obtaining baseline data for the measures of increasing learning gains for students who have individualized education plans; increasing completion rates for higher-level courses; improving the quality of graduates' preparedness for entry-level employment; and for improving the satisfaction of students, parents, employees, and the community regarding improved learning. Upon collecting baseline data for these areas, the district will develop five-year targets for these strategies.

The measures with available baseline data have quantified targets and outcomes, usually represented by percentage point increases rather than discrete point increases, which may be applied equitably to the various affected student groups. Although the overall district strategic plan does not list parties assigned for completing the tasks or timelines for completion by each measure, the plan does include an overall strategic plan task timeline for the 2002-03 school year. This timeline lists detailed implementation activities.

The plan notably calls for all departments and schools to assess current operations, to develop baseline data, and to develop deployment plans. The plan also directs the district to assess goal progress semi-annually on those measures with available data and annually for all other measures, followed by revisions to the one and five-year targets. Although the strategic plan is in the implementation stage, the district appears to be well on its way to quality improvement.

The district does not formally evaluate major educational programs but plans to begin the review process

The district provided evidence of evaluating the Title I program and Bridges Reading Grant. According to district administrators, the district currently does not formally evaluate the major educational programs, such as math, ESE, ESOL, Vocational and Adult Education, and student support services. The district, however, implemented an evaluation process for reviewing the reading program as discussed in best practice one of this chapter.

With the new strategic and departmental deployment plans, the district is scheduled to begin the review process at the departmental level at the end of the 2002-03 school year. The superintendent's executive leadership team will use each department's goals and targets to measure the effectiveness of each major program in improving student learning. The annual review process also includes revising targets as appropriate and providing training for program directors to meet departmental goals and the overall district strategic plan.

The district should monitor the reliability of program performance and cost data of its major educational programs

As discussed above, the district is in the process of implementing a quality improvement initiative. The district should establish procedures for monitoring the reliability of program performance and cost data of the major programs to ensure accuracy and completeness of information. The district should consider using the internal audit department to assist with this process.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district implement accountability and monitoring mechanisms for its basic education and major program areas.*

Action Plan 5-12 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-12

Implement Accountability Mechanisms for Basic Education and Major Programs	
Strategy	Implement accountability mechanisms for basic education and major program areas.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and assistant superintendent for instructional support evaluate the district's current status on monitoring its basic education and major program areas. Step 2: The assistant superintendents determine whether evaluation process is consistent and thorough across major program areas. The assistant superintendents provide accessibility to necessary data at the school level and by major program area. Step 3: The assistant superintendents utilize assessment data and nonacademic data to incorporate peer group information into its data analysis. Step 4: The Teaching and Learning and Instructional Support Departments provide each school principal and major program director with its assessment data analysis. Step 5: School principals incorporate the data analysis into their general trend analysis for developing School Improvement Plans.

Step 6:	Each major program develops and outlines specific and measurable goals and targets for the identified student subgroups in their departmental strategic plans.
Step 7:	The district monitors the reliability of program performance and cost data of the major program using procedures recommended by the internal audit department.
Step 8:	The assistant superintendents monitor district progress in improving the performance of students at least once per school year.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

13 The district regularly reviews the organizational structure and the staffing of the central office and schools to minimize administrative layers and processes.

The district regularly reviews the central office's organizational structure and staffing levels during the annual budgeting process. The school board approves the annual budget and staffing changes once per year. In the spring of 2002, the Florida Association of District School Superintendents (FADSS) conducted an intensive review and recommended a major organizational restructuring. The school board implemented the recommendations for the 2002-03 school year.

The new organizational structure includes reasonable lines of authority and spans of control given the responsibilities of each central office unit. The district added four new directors to the Teaching and Learning Unit. The new directors include two elementary school directors, one secondary and alternative education director, and a director of curriculum. The Instructional Support Services Unit was re-aligned to include the technology, intervention programs, ESE, student services, and evaluation, testing, and research departments.

As of August 2002, the district was in process of hiring new teaching and learning directors. Because the district does not have curriculum guides, we recommend that the district add two curriculum specialist positions. See best practice six of this chapter for this recommendation.

School principals determine the Personnel Staffing Units (PSU) allocation at their schools. The district budget office performs evaluations for appropriately awarding PSU based on enrollment figures at each school. This process is discussed in detail in Chapter 7, Personnel Systems and Benefits, best practice 14.

Appropriate organizational structures and staffing levels can be evaluated with peer district and state average comparisons. Exhibit 5-36 lists the staffing ratios for the district, which are comparable to peer districts and the state average.

Exhibit 5-36

The District's Staffing Levels Are Comparable to Peer Districts and the State Average¹

District Ratios	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole	Volusia	State
Classroom Teachers to Students ²	1:18	1:18	1:16	1:16	1:17	1:16	1:18
Teachers Aides to Classroom Teachers	1:6	1:8	1:4	1:4	1:6	1:4	1:4
Administrator to Classroom Teachers	1:14	1:15	1:14	1:16	1:19	1:14	1:14

District Ratios	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole	Volusia	State
Administrator to Total Instructional Personnel	1:15	1:17	1:15	1:19	1:20	1:16	1:16
Guidance Counselors to Students	1:482	1:513	1:376	1:419	1:584	1:377	1:438
School-Level Administrators to Students	1:367	1:325	1:360	1:319	1:389	293	1:357
Total Number of Classroom Teachers	3,123	3,889	2,915	4,886	3,433	3,796	134,504
Total Student Membership	58,384	70,591	49,683	79,462	60,733	61,336	2,431,521

¹ ValienteHernandez P.A. rounded the calculations of the different ratios to the nearest whole number.

² The *classroom teachers* group includes classroom teachers such as elementary school teachers, secondary school teachers, exceptional student education teachers, and other instructional staff. DOE defines *other instructional staff* as full-time teachers who cannot be easily classified in the elementary or secondary classroom teacher categories. This category includes full-time, permanent substitute teachers and adult education instructors.

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. and DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 1999-00 (Survey 2 demographic data, October 11-15, 1999, as of January 25, 2000). Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services.

14 The district does not consistently report to the public on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers.

The district reports FCAT score trends, student attendance, disciplinary records, and other relevant data through the School Improvement Plans (SIP). All SIP and School Performance Reports are made available to parents and taxpayers for review as required by Florida's System of School Improvement and Accountability. For a detailed discussion of the SIP process, see best practice nine of this chapter.

Some schools also report their performance through websites, newsletters, and flyers, and the district publishes the annual budget, which is a public document. As required by the Department of Education, all district schools compile the School Public Accountability Report. The district, however, did not provide evidence of consistently reporting on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational programs (such as ESE, ESOL, and Vocational and Adult Education) at the district level.

The district should consider publishing an "Annual Report" of the cost-efficiency of its major programs with peer district and state comparisons. The report could also highlight the district's progress in achieving the goals outlined in its new strategic plan involving academics, health and safety, and community involvement. This effort should be coordinated through the Public Information Office and the superintendent's executive leadership team for determining information to report to the public. See chapter 15 of this report on Community Involvement and the related recommendation and action plan in best practice four for a discussion on public reporting.

Schools report their performance to school advisory councils, parents, and other taxpayers in a manner that is clear and understandable

Schools publish annual performance reports, which illustrate how each school is meeting the state's major education goals. Schools may report additional information, such as progress in meeting SIPs goals and objectives and use of funds. Generally, School Performance Reports and SIPs are clear and understandable. Schools also publish School Advisory Council (SACs) Reports that compare each school to the district and to state averages and by race and gender for each of the eight statewide education goals. These goals address the following areas: readiness to start school; graduation rates and readiness for postsecondary education and employment; student performance; learning environment; school safety and environment; teachers and staff; adult literacy; and parent involvement.

While schools do an excellent job of reporting on school performance, the district did not demonstrate disseminating similar information on the district level to SACs, parents, and taxpayers. The district should report its performance in meeting the major education goals the state established on the district level, and again, this effort should be coordinated through the Public Information Office.

The district has several accountability mechanisms for receiving and responding to feedback from parents and other taxpayers

As discussed in chapter 15 on Community Involvement, the district solicits feedback from stakeholders through staff, parent, and exiting senior satisfaction surveys. In addition, the district office and all schools have hotlines and websites with contact information to facilitate communication. All school board meetings are advertised and open to the public for commenting on board policies and actions. Parents also have opportunities to meet with teachers and school administrators during annual or individual conferences.

Recommendations

See chapter 15 Community Involvement, best practice 4 and the related recommendation and action plan 15-5 to improve the district's public reporting efforts.

Library, Media and Support Services

15 The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction but should consider assigning media specialists to all district schools.

The Instructional Technology and Media Department has approved Core Media Standards for elementary, middle, and high schools. These standards provide guidelines on facilities, personnel, book collections, services to students and staff, access to media services, technical services, and the budget process for media centers. According to the district office, schools monitor compliance with most of these standards, through site-based management. During the annual budget process, schools report to the district office on whether or not they have met the core standards. This annual reporting process also serves as the justification for school budget requests.

The district office maintains an intranet site, which teachers and staff may access in providing media instruction to students. The site has links for a curriculum resource guide, Instructional Television (ITV) Programs and Schedule, the district office's newsletter, Children's Literature Center, Distance Learning information links, ITV Teacher's Choice link, vendor offers, bid lists for audiovisual equipment, and links for teachers and staff to submit in-service ideas. Students are also encouraged to submit requests for books through the students' ballots on book voting.

All of the media centers in the district are automated and provide frequent in-service training for staff development to keep media specialists and media contacts up to date in technology. A technology supervisor meets regularly with media specialists to discuss and address technology issues.

The district has and regularly uses procedures to reduce media costs

The district takes advantage of bulk rates and discounts to reduce library and media costs by coordinating the same renewal period for the maintenance agreement of the Follett media software used in all district schools. In addition, two district level media specialists are Follett certified, and as a result, the district receives a 25% discount on technical support. The district also makes group or bulk purchases of media equipment and supplies to take advantage of bulk rates. The district office also encourages instructors to access online media center materials instead of purchasing additional books when appropriate.

The district does not review library and media services to ensure that resource materials are accessible to all students but does ensure that resource materials reflect current research

The district office sponsors media workshops throughout the school year. Selected topics are based on teacher surveys administered at the beginning of the school year. The district office also monitors the addition and deletion of library books throughout the school year and recommends weeding outdated circulations as needed.

Because of the district's reliance on school-based management, the district office does not monitor the accessibility of media centers to students. For example, schools determine media center hours and assigned personnel, such as hiring media contacts instead of media specialists. According to district personnel, media standards related to collections (quantity, current books, periodicals, and selection policies), services, and access to students and staff, and budget allocations are also school-based decisions. Currently, the district office only monitors book and video usage.

The district does not have media specialists at all schools

Nearly all schools and special centers in the district have media centers. The few schools and special centers without media centers include Boca Grande Charter School, Buckingham Exceptional Center, Dunbar Community School, Ft. Myers High Edison Center, Hi-Tech North Vocational School, and the Price Halfway House. Consistent with school-based management practices, the process for media specialist selection/inclusion is up to the principals' discretion. The district does not currently evaluate whether this policy affects student learning. For example, the district office could compare media circulation or usage of schools with media specialists versus schools with media contacts. The district should conduct such a study and consider evaluating alternatives for assigning media specialists to all schools.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district evaluate alternatives for assigning media specialists to all schools. The district may consider assigning a media specialist to more than one school to oversee media contacts or media volunteers.*

Action Plan 5-13 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-13

Evaluate Alternatives for Assigning Media Specialists to All Schools	
Strategy	Evaluate alternatives for assigning media specialists to all schools.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for instructional support and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning evaluate the district's current status on media specialist assignments.

	Step 2: The assistant superintendents determine whether the assignment is appropriate for student learning.
	Step 3: The assistant superintendents establish guidelines for media specialist assignment across all district schools as necessary.
	Step 4: The assistant superintendents monitor district progress in improving the performance of students at least once per school year.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for instructional support and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

16 The district has neither developed nor implemented a comprehensive plan to provide support services that meet the needs of students and major educational programs.

The district has not developed and implemented a comprehensive plan to provide support services that meet the needs of the students and educational programs. Student support services, provided to students, families, and staff, support all areas of child development to enhance student success in school. The objective of student services is to provide support outside the classroom, to assist the student in overcoming problems that could interfere with academic success. This includes guidance and counseling services, social work services, health services, and psychological services.

The student support services department provides a variety of services to enhance curriculum and instruction. These include attendance services; code of student conduct; psychological services (coordinated through the ESE department in the Teaching and Learning Unit); social work services; dropout prevention (coordinated through the intervention programs department); expulsions; guidance services; school health services; safe and drug free schools; emergency management; and home education.

The district should develop a comprehensive plan to provide support services because current implementation is fragmented

The district does not have a comprehensive plan to provide support services, and as a result, the delivery of student support services is fragmented and uncoordinated. The district plan should include a mission statement; goals, measurable, objectives, timelines; evaluation component; specifics on goals and services related to social workers and psychologists; or a listing of services and who oversees each service. Periodic evaluations should be conducted to ensure that progress is made related to the goals, objectives, and timelines of the plan. This plan should include guidance and counseling services, social work services, health services, and psychological services.

The district does not currently have a plan for providing guidance and counseling or psychological services. The district lacks a district level guidance and counseling coordinator, and these services are monitored at the school level. Psychological services are provided through the ESE department under the Teaching and Learning Unit and primarily include ESE assessment and placement.

Pursuant to state law, the School Health Services Act, the School District of Lee County and the Lee County Health Department jointly developed a school health services plan to appraise, protect, and promote student health. County health nurses periodically review student health records for compliance with state statutes and document non-compliance issues. The nurses also provide health services to schools. The district has a School Health Committee and Health Plan as required by the State Department of Health.

As determined through interviews and a review of job descriptions, a social work coordinator oversees social worker services. The coordinator developed a Department of Student Welfare and Attendance (SWAT) Strategic Improvement Plan for social work services. This plan includes three goals: supporting compulsory attendance laws, making appropriate school attendance violations referrals, and monitoring home education program requirements. The coordinator prioritizes each goal with objectives and implementation strategies. Each social worker's effectiveness is measured against this plan by tracking worker activity against referred student progress before and after intervention. Results are used for employee evaluation and to identify training needs. The SWAT department also uses referred students' FCAT scores in determining appropriate referrals. Although the SWAT plan does not include measurable objectives, timelines, or personnel responsible, the SWAT plan is the closest the district has to a strategic plan for student support services.

Because the various support services are dispersed across several departments and divisions, the district lacks consistency in service delivery. Although the district has both a service plan and an evaluation strategy for truancy services, the district should also develop similar plans for other areas of student support services.

The district regularly evaluates social worker services for program effectiveness and to ensure efficient use of resources

Nineteen social workers provide services to 67 schools. Job assignments are coordinated by the district's zone for efficiency. Social workers submit monthly work calendars detailing weekly school visitation schedules. The alternative centers each have a full-time social worker who provides all on-site services but shares home visit referrals with social workers serving the geographic area in which the student lives.

The SWAT coordinator regularly reviews the district ratio of social workers to students with peer districts comparisons and monitors social worker referral volume as shown in Exhibit 5-37 to evaluate the effectiveness of SWAT services and to ensure efficient use of resources. The district office should perform similar analysis for all student support services including guidance and counseling services, health services, and psychological services.

Exhibit 5-37

District Ratio of Social Worker to Students Was Comparable With State Average in 2000-01, but Ratios in Peer Districts Varied Widely

District	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole	Volusia	State
Social Worker to Students	1:2,334	1:7,843	1:2,161	1:7,948	1:4,338	1:1,615	1:2,890

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts 2000-01. Full-Time Staff by Activity Assignment. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida Department of Education; Social Worker: DOE Fall 2000

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district develop a comprehensive strategic plan for student support services, including policies and procedures.*

Action Plan 5-14 lists the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 5-14

Create a Comprehensive Student Services Plan	
Strategy	Create a plan for systematically evaluating the effectiveness of its delivery of guidance, psychological, social, and health services.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for instructional support oversees the creation and implementation of a systematic plan for evaluating deliver of guidance, psychological, social and health services. Step 2: The assistant superintendent incorporates the plan into the departmental strategic plan documents for board approval. Step 3: The support services directors and coordinators implement the plan. Step 4: The assistant superintendent monitors the support services departmental progress to improving the delivery of these services at least once per school year.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for instructional support.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Can be implemented with existing resources.

6

Administrative and Instructional Technology

The School District of Lee County generally provides students, administrators, instructional, and non-instructional personnel with the tools needed to learn, instruct, administer, and work in an efficient and effective manner. However, several opportunities to improve the district's administrative and instructional technologies were noted.

Conclusion

School District of Lee County provides students, administrators, instructional and non-instructional personnel with the tools needed to learn, instruct, and administer efficiently and effectively. However, there are opportunities to improve the district's processes. ValienteHernandez P.A. (ValienteHernandez) found that in meeting the goals of the best practices, the district:

- Has appropriate planning processes for its technology acquisitions and usage
- Generally, provides “just-in-time” support for technology resources but needs to develop and fund a technology replacement policy and replace significant amounts of older/obsolete equipment
- Provides professional development in the area of technology
- Generally acquires appropriate technologies, but needs to upgrade its student workstations
- Promotes and practices safe, ethical, and appropriate uses of technology
- Generally maintains a management information system that provides needed data in a reliable, timely, and cost-efficient manner however, needs to minimize the number of databases that are independent of its core information system.

Exhibit 6-1 presents several of the accomplishments the district had in the area of administrative and instructional technology.

Exhibit 6-1

Notable Accomplishments in Administrative and Instructional Technology

- The district has developed a comprehensive internal website for its students, educators, and administrators to use, which provides immediate referencing to subjects such as current procurement information, administrative rules and other useful tools. Additionally, the district uses its external website to enhance communications between students, parents, and teachers.
 - Using the district's internal website, as described above, teachers and administrators are able to view Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores for individuals and classes, once they are released by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). This enables teachers to customize educational needs for individual students and entire classes.
 - The district has an advanced television broadcast system in place that broadcasts on four (4) simultaneous channels to all schools and broadcasts on one (1) countywide cable channel. Teachers select programs to be broadcast from the district's internal website and can choose from over 8,000 program titles that can be scheduled for transmission over a 16 hour period daily. The district also has technologically advanced video conferencing capabilities that can be incorporated into its broadcast system.
-

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- The district simulates FDOE full-time equivalents (FTE) student calculations weekly to provide school principals with better information to make staffing and other FTE-related management decisions.
 - The district has begun a process of reducing the number of computer operating systems in use, and supported through implementation of managed environments for its Windows 2000/XP and its MAC OS 9/10 systems.
 - The district has implemented school-based management for its schools. Principals have increased autonomy in the decision-making process directly related to their schools. This provides many opportunities for increased accountability and a reduction of problems inherent to bureaucracies. At the same time, opportunities exist to enhance internal controls to ensure that the education provided at each school is somewhat consistent by establishing and enforcing district standards.
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found:

Technology Planning

1. The district solicits and uses broad stakeholder input in developing an integrated learning system and in setting priorities for administrative and instructional technology decisions. (Page 6-7)
2. The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides general direction for administrative and instructional technology decision-making, but lacks measurable goals and objectives. (Page 6-7)

Technical Support

3. The district provides formal and informal support to assist educators in incorporating technology into the curriculum. (Page 6-9)
4. The district provides technical support for educational and administrative systems in the district. (Page 6-9)
5. The district provides technical support for hardware, software, and infrastructure in a timely, cost-effective manner, however lack of a funded replacement policy creates inefficiencies. (Page 6-10)

Technology Professional Development

6. The district has a professional development plan that reflects the district's vision of integrating technology to enhance and enrich the learning environment, as well as improve administrative support. (Page 6-15)
7. The district provides adequate professional development for the instructional technologies. (Page 6-16)

Cost-Effective Acquisition

8. The district does not base its technology acquisitions on instructional needs and make technology acquisitions based on those needs. (Page 6-18)
9. The district bases technology acquisitions on the results of research, planning, and evaluations of previous technology decisions to ensure technology decisions are cost-efficient. However, the district can improve its purchasing strategies. (Page 6-20)
10. The district has established standards for acquiring new programs and digital content that promote the integration of technology into everyday curricular needs; however lack equitable distribution for newer workstations. (Page 6-21)
11. The district has a stable and efficient infrastructure. (Page 6-23)

Information Management and Delivery

12. The district has established and communicated a policy stating appropriate uses of all types of technology resources including computers, video equipment, software, and the internet. (Page 6-23)
13. The district supports compliance with the established policy on the safe, legal use of technology resources. (Page 6-24)

Management Information Systems

14. The district segregates duties to reduce the risk that unauthorized transactions will be entered and not discovered quickly. (Page 6-24)
15. The district's user controls ensure authorization prior to processing transactions and ensure all output represents authorized and valid transactions. (Page 6-24)
16. The district's applications are designed to provide users with reliable data. (Page 6-25)
17. 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. (Page 6-25)
18. The district's management information systems generally provide data needed by instructional and administrative personnel in a reliable and timely manner; however some data needs are not met. (Page 6-26)
19. The district has not taken steps to minimize the number of databases that are independent of its centralized computer systems. (Page 6-30)
20. The district has established appropriate controls related to electronic data exchange transactions, other transactions processed through electronic media, and image-processing systems. (Page 6-31)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations —————

The major fiscal impacts disclosed in Exhibit 6-2 are for the replacement of student workstations and the replacement of the district's legacy system applications for its student information systems as well as its business application systems.

Exhibit 6-2

Implementing the Recommendation for Administrative and Instructional Technology Will Have a Five-year Fiscal Impact of Approximately \$200,000 in Cost Savings

		Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings/Increased Revenues or (Increased Costs)					
Action Plan and Strategy	Year 2003	Year 2004	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	Total	
6-3 Replace older/obsolete instructional workstations	\$(1,125,000)	\$(1,125,000)	\$(1,125,000)	\$(1,125,000)	\$(1,125,000)	\$(5,625,000)	
6-4 Consolidate workstation and server vendors	1,260,000	1,260,000	1,260,000	1,260,000	1,260,000	6,300,000	

Action Plan and Strategy	Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings/Increased Revenues or (Increased Costs)					Total
	Year 2003	Year 2004	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007	
6-5 Acquire additional instructional workstations	(462,000)	0	0	0	0	(462,000)
Total	\$(327,000)	\$135,000	\$135,000	\$135,000	\$135,000	\$213,000

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Background

As we move into a global economy, society in the 21st Century is becoming critically dependent on information and information systems. Our educational institutions must be at the forefront of technology. This is critical if they are to turn out men and women who are self-directed, self-motivated, lifelong learners, productive members of the workforce, and contributing citizens. The opportunities for such people are virtually unlimited; the responsibility for preparing them to meet those opportunities is enormous.

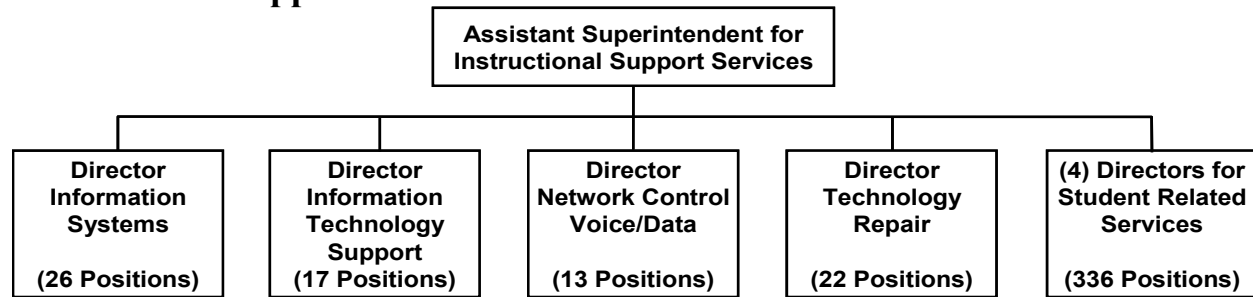
A school district's instructional technologies must meet the educational needs of its students and teachers. At the same time, their administrative technologies must also meet the needs of administrators, teachers, and non-instructional staff for efficient and effective operations.

The district's instructional technology affects student performance by enabling students to access and analyze information, solve problems, collaborate with others, and effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas. Additionally, instructional technology provides teachers with tools to provide for students' needs in computer literacy and by providing curriculum support.

The district, the U.S. Department of Education, and the State of Florida Department of Education depend heavily on the district's information systems for facts, statistics, and other data. District staff must have access to accurate and timely information in order to effectively manage and direct the district's resources by making informed decisions. The district uses its administrative technologies to obtain and analyze this information and to comply with federal and state reporting requirements.

The district has adopted a technology plan to assist in meeting its goals for technology. The responsibility for the district's technology plan is with the assistant superintendent for instructional support, formerly the director of communications and technology division.

Organizational Overview-As illustrated in exhibit 6-3, the organization of the instructional support services division is divided into departments along functional lines. The director of information services is responsible for all mainframe operations, including the student information system and the business applications systems. The director of information technology support is responsible for the district's client-server applications and the district's help desk. The director of network control voice/data is responsible for the communications infrastructure within the district. The director of technology repair is responsible for the repair and maintenance of all technology within the district.

Exhibit 6-3**Current Organization of the School District of Lee County's Instructional Support Services**

Source: School District of Lee County.

For administrative purposes, the district has internally developed student information and business applications systems operating in a mainframe environment. Instructional technologies include, but are not limited to multiple-platform computer hardware, instructional software, televisions, monitors, projection devices, video cassette recorders, satellite receiving stations, telecommunication equipment, calculators, assisted/adaptive devices, alternative input devices, scanners, voice generation equipment, video discs, compact discs (CD/CD-ROM), DVD players and recorders, video editing equipment and cable television.

School principals are empowered to make all instructional technology decisions using individual and unique technology plans for their schools. Instructional technologies currently being utilized by schools within the district include computer systems that operate in one of several Apple *Macintosh* (MAC) environments or in one of several Microsoft *Windows* (Windows) environments. Currently, district staff must support multiple operating systems within these two general categories of computer systems although the district is now working to reduce the supported operating systems in use and is moving toward a more managed environment.

The district has virtually all student and administrative workstations wired for access to the Internet and to the district's wide area network (WAN).

Technology Expenditures-For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2002, the operating budget for the communications and technology division was approximately \$12.6 million, which was 1.8% of the total district budget or \$211 for each student. This budget is further allocated to the following functional areas:

• Communication and technology	\$.9 Million
• Technology	\$3.1 Million
• Network control and operations	\$2.1 Million
• Instructional media and technical services	\$.7 Million
• Information services	\$2.0 Million
• Server and application support	\$1.3 Million
• Technology repair	\$.9 Million
• Printing services	\$1.6 Million

Peer District Comparisons-For the purposes of this report, the following Florida school districts have been used for peer comparisons:

- Brevard

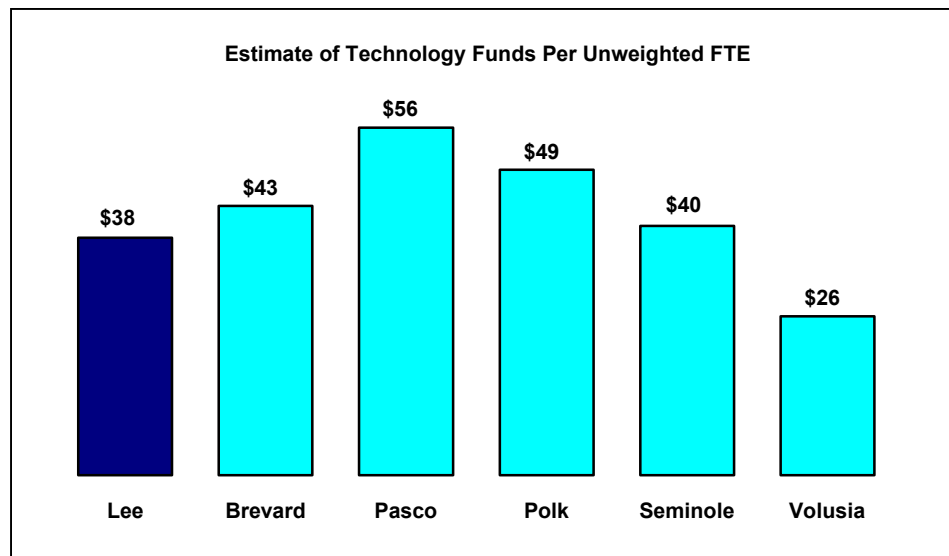
- Pasco
- Polk
- Seminole
- Volusia

The selection of these school districts is based on size and student membership.

Exhibit 6-4 illustrates the amount of technology funds distributed to school districts via Florida DOE Education Technology Allocation, Florida DOE Literacy Challenge Fund, and DOE E-rate Funding. The illustration shows that funds are not distributed evenly to districts based on membership, however each district must be proactive in pursuing these funds. It appears based on the illustration that the district can increase its share of technology funds through improving its grant writing capacity. This is a recommendation contained in the management structures section of this report.

Exhibit 6-4

Technology Funds



Source: OPPAGA, FDOE and DOE.

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. used a variety of methods in determining whether or not the district is meeting the best practices for administrative and instructional technology. ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed self-assessment instruments and associated evidence provided with these instruments, reviewed district initiated survey instruments, conducted focus group meetings, and interviewed staff members representing all functional areas of the district. Additionally, site visits were performed that included two operational locations, five elementary schools, four middle schools, three high schools, and two other educational centers. Public forums were held and public comments were solicited through the district's website as well as through OPPAGA's (Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability) toll-free community input hotline.

Technology Planning

1 The district solicits and uses broad stakeholder input in developing an integrated learning system and in setting priorities for administrative and instructional technology decisions.

The district solicits and uses broad stakeholder input in developing an integrated learning system and in setting priorities for administrative and instructional technology decisions. During the summer of 2001, the district conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of its educational technology. As part of this needs assessment process, ValienteHernandez found that administrators, instructional staff, technology specialists, and students were surveyed. Focus groups were formed to visit schools and to provide qualitative data that was not otherwise available through the survey instruments. Results of this process have been shared with the district's School Board Advisory Committee and will be reviewed in-depth by an ad hoc school-based committee. In conducting this needs assessment, the district considered national and state technology goals as well as the district's goals as stated in its own educational technology plan.

2 The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides general direction for administrative and instructional technology decision-making, but lacks measurable goals and objectives.

The district has a school board approved comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision-making. The most current three year technology plan is for the years 2002-05. Since 1998, DOE has accepted the district's technology plan, ensuring the district's eligibility for participation in the e-rate reimbursement program. The plan includes strategies for funding that are supported by line items in the district's current operating and capital expenditure budgets. Exhibit 6-5 lists the vision, mission, and goals of the district's technology plan.

Exhibit 6-5

Vision, Mission, and Goals of the School District of Lee County's Educational Technology Plan

Vision Statement

The School District of Lee County supports myriad technologies, which will:

- Promote the effective use of technology to improve student performance.
- Integrate technology into all areas of curriculum, including ESOL and special needs.
- Provide students with a range of technological tools to increase learning.
- Ensure that students have instant access to research resources and multiple databases.
- Enable students to connect to and appropriately use worldwide data resources through telecommunications.
- Provide interactive, self-training technology for students and staff, which will minimize the need for instruction in the use of technology.
- Enable students to understand and be able to use various computer applications.

Mission Statement

All students and staff, including exceptional students and those with language barriers, must become lifelong learners and be able to apply technology skills personally and professionally in the 21st century workplace.

Technology Goals

- Goal One Staff and students will be provided equitable and appropriate access to available technologies.
 - Goal Two Through the effective use of technology, staff and students will increase productivity and support learning.
 - Goal Three Students will use technology in ways that deepen their understanding of academic content and advance their knowledge of the world around them.
 - Goal Four Teachers and students will be empowered to use technological tools through technology-related skill development and training.
 - Goal Five The district will create, communicate and enforce district-wide standards to ensure supportability and contain costs.
-

Source: School District of Lee County Educational Technology Plan.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that these goals were aligned with state reporting requirements and federal initiatives. As part of the most recent needs assessment performed by the district, these goals were used as an integral part of the assessment process. The district's instructional support services division (formerly the communications and technology division) has the responsibility for the facilitation of the development of the district's technology plan. While the district can use these measures to generally assess progress, lack of specific goals, measurable objectives and progress against benchmarks can not be determined from these measures. .

Recommendation

We recommend the district develop measurable goals, objectives and benchmarks for technology services, as described in Chapter 4, Performance Accountability, Action Plan 4-1.

Technical Support

3 The district provides formal and informal support to assist educators in incorporating technology into the curriculum.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district provides many opportunities for formal and informal support that are available to educators in incorporating technology into the curriculum. However, because the district has adopted school-based management, individual schools are free to make their own choices for technology acquisitions. Therefore, technologies could be acquired that do not comply with district recommendations, and may result in a reduction in the level of formal and informal support that the district can provide.

The district has recently reorganized its management structure and created a new division for teaching and learning, which will oversee the curriculum district-wide. As part of this new division, the district has a department for instructional technology and media, which was formerly with the communications and technology division. This department exists to support teaching and learning in all district schools. This department also provides direct support to teachers as well as indirect support to teachers and students through school media specialists and school media programs. In addition, training and technical support for automated school libraries and media center networks are available through this department.

Although the district has no requirement, most schools employ technology specialists that provide primary support to assist educators in incorporating technology into the curriculum. Technology specialists are usually educators employed as full-time or part-time employees, depending on the schools' needs. Since schools make their own choices, school principals make this determination, usually based on school membership and budget. Additionally, the district has established a position of "teacher on assignment" to coordinate the findings of its most recent needs assessment for educational technology.

The district also provides many other tools to educators related to curriculum development and enhancement, which include specific professional development opportunities, staff newsletters, the district's intranet website, and in-service workshops.

4 The district provides technical support for educational and administrative systems in the district.

In addition to the formal and informal support available to educators, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district maintains a help desk, field support technicians, and a technology repair department that provide district-wide support services for all schools and administrative offices. At the school level, most schools have technology support specialists that provide the first level of support services to the schools. The district's help desk and its technology repair department serve the needs of both administrative and instructional staff. With the exception of the instructional technology and media department, all district-wide technology support services are coordinated under the assistant superintendent of support services.

5 The district provides technical support for hardware, software, and infrastructure in a timely and cost-effective manner, however lack of a funded replacement policy creates inefficiencies.

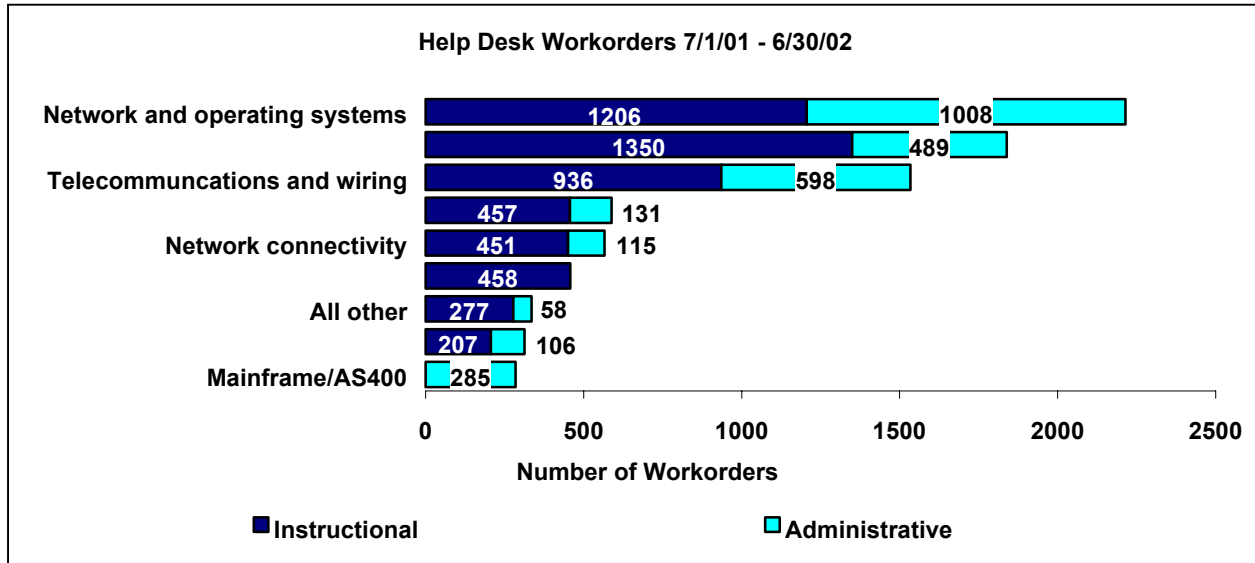
The district generally provides technical support for hardware, software, and infrastructure in a timely and cost-effective manner, however, opportunities exist to improve the district's support services and lower its total cost of ownership if a funded replacement policy is adopted.

As illustrated in Exhibit 6-6, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the help desk maintains a database that evaluates workorders district-wide. Work orders are handled by their priority, chronological order, and geographical location. The technology repair department has additionally created a database for equipment repair orders and has a similar system to prioritize repair orders in an equally efficient manner. Because of the recent reorganization within the district, staff is currently working to combine attributes of both databases into one comprehensive support database, and expects to have this project completed prior to December 2002.

Although there is no district policy regarding routine maintenance of equipment, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that routine preventative maintenance was being performed on the district's technology equipment by school-based technology specialists and by the technology repair department.

Also, as illustrated in Exhibit 6-6, the help desk demonstrates that it tracks support calls by call type and location, which enable the district to modify activities such as professional development, monitoring, and preventative maintenance in areas generating a high volume of work orders.

Specifically, Exhibit 6-6 shows that a large number of support work order incidents are networking and operating system related, which directly relates to the large number of supported operating systems. Work orders processed for school-based email issues directly relate to the number of users supported and could be reduced through directing professional development activities in this area. Telecommunications and wiring issues usually are beyond the control of end users, but may indicate that problems exist in the district's infrastructure, which can and should be analyzed by specific locations. Whereas, mainframe and AS/400 applications show a relatively low number of work orders generated, indicating a stable and efficient infrastructure.

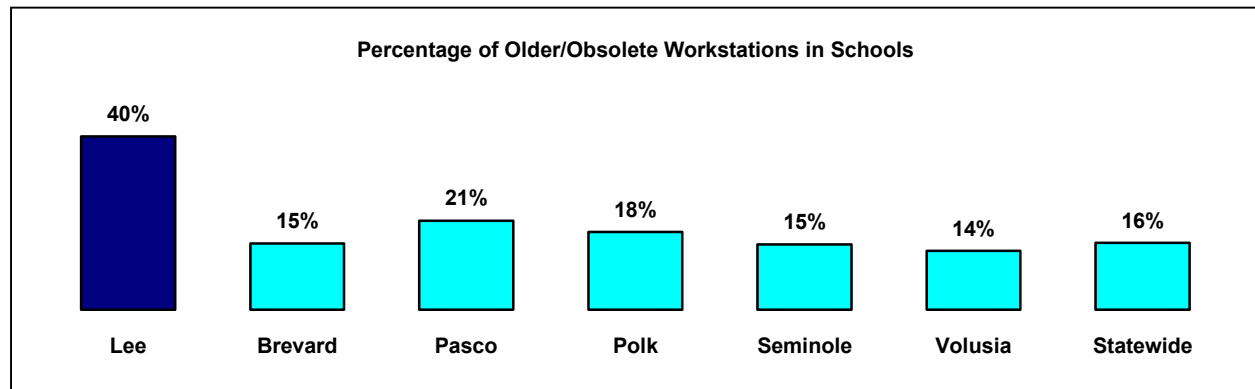
Exhibit 6-6**Support Call Analysis**

Source: School District of Lee County.

As illustrated in Exhibits 6-7 and 6-8, the district supports a high rate of older, obsolete equipment and thus must support many different operating systems and many generations of computer equipment. Hence, the district incurs a high number of support calls for network and operating system issues, as illustrated in Exhibit 6-6 above. Exhibit 6-7 illustrates that the district's percentage of older/obsolete workstations makes up 40% of its instructional computers, much higher than any of its peer districts and the statewide percentage of 16%.

Exhibit 6-7

Older/Obsolete Workstations

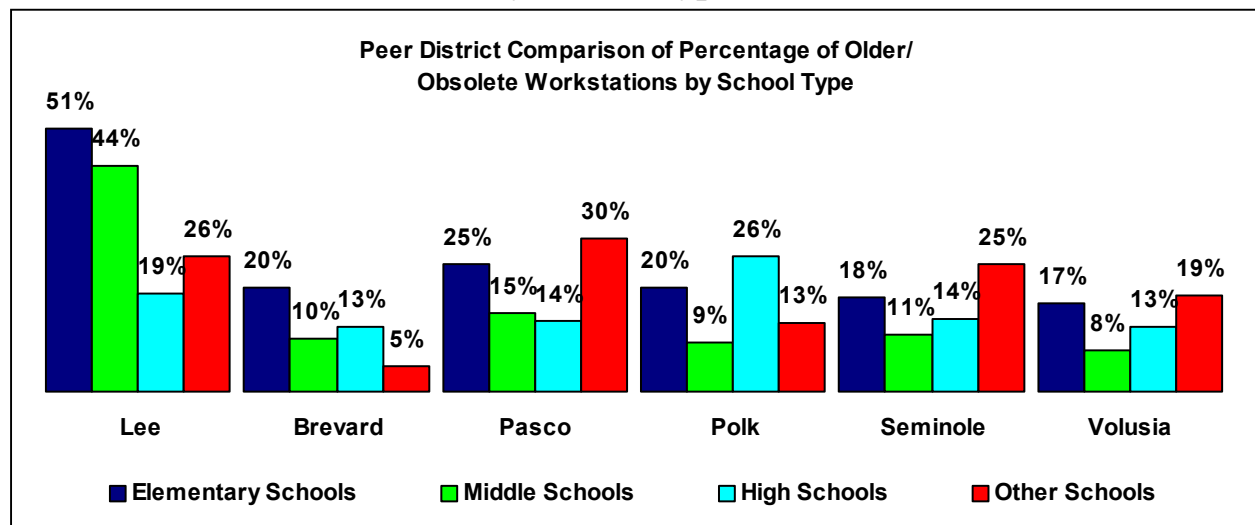


Source: Florida Department of Education Technology Resources Survey.

As illustrated in Exhibit 6-7, the district lags behind all of its peers in providing modern student workstations to be used in classrooms and libraries. In fact, more than two thirds of the district's schools have older/obsolete student workstation ratios in excess of the statewide average of 16%. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 2002, the district retired 1,350 workstations and acquired 1,695 additional workstations. As illustrated in Exhibit 7-8, this percentage of older/obsolete workstations appears to be most critical at the elementary school level where the percentage is in excess of 50%.

Exhibit 6-8

Older/Obsolete Workstations by School Type



Source: Florida Department of Education Technology Resources Survey.

A funded replacement policy will reduce repair costs from its current level of 30% of annual acquisition costs to 12%, and reduce management costs from the current level of 55% of annual acquisition costs to 32%.

As stated in its technology plan, the district is implementing a managed environment. It is expected that in addition to better support and security, this initiative will also lower the total cost of ownership (TCO)

of its technology acquisitions. It is expected that all administrative and school-based compliant systems will be included in this initiative. However, since schools are free to make technology choices, non-compliant platforms may nevertheless be acquired and not incorporated into the district's managed environment and therefore not be supported.

ValienteHernandez P.A. also found that the district disposes of its surplus technology equipment appropriately, in accordance with *Environmental Protection Agency guideline 530-F-02-018* regarding recycling and reuse for electronic wastes. The district also recycles technology equipment where possible. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that useable parts were removed from non-working items, working items were refurbished and recycled, and in some cases, older PC computers were upgraded and converted into "thin clients," providing schools with entire computer labs at a nominal cost.

As illustrated in Exhibit 6-9, the district tracks its repair costs by location, types of equipment, parts cost, and labor cost. While the exhibit shows the repair costs of MAC equipment as \$76.26 compared to PC repairs of \$56.21, ValienteHernandez P.A. also noted that the number of repair incidents for MAC vs. PC was significantly lower. Hence, repair costs alone should not be considered when acquiring new equipment.

Exhibit 6-9

District's Hardware Repair Costs-Net of Warranty

Workstation Type	No. of Repairs	Cost of Parts	Cost of Labor	Total Repair Costs	Cost per Repair
MAC	1,760	\$ 26,014	\$ 108,205	\$ 134,219	\$ 76.26
PC	7,596	105,575	321,379	426,954	56.21
Totals	9,356	\$ 131,589	\$ 429,584	\$ 561,173	\$ 59.98

¹ Does not include overhead costs such as facilities and management costs.

Source: School District of Lee County.

The equipment repair department charges repair costs related to casualties and vandalism to self-insurance funds, and the district has contingent funds available for emergency needs as part of its overall budgeting process. Technical support provided through the district's help desk and technology repair departments is funded district-wide. Generally, school-based decisions are made based on the initial purchase price of technology acquisitions. The district does not have a mechanism in place to provide school-based decision makers with a reasonable estimate of the TCO for its recommended and non-compliant platform workstations.

ValienteHernandez P.A. also found that the district, as part of its needs assessment process, considered the support mechanisms currently in place and interconnectivity issues needing enhancement or resolution prior to acquiring major systems.

Recommendations

- *In order to provide guidance to school-based decision makers and to comply with goal 5 of its technology plan (see Exhibit 6-5), we recommend that the district provide requirements for technology acquisitions and update these requirements annually.*

Action Plan 6-1 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *In order to reduce its total cost of ownership and provide students with up-to-date technology, we recommend that the district develop a funded replacement policy for its*

computer workstations not exceeding five years and that this policy also include provisions for obtaining warranties for no less than three years for computer hardware.

Action Plan 6-2 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *Additionally, we recommend that obsolete/older instructional workstations be replaced at least to the extent of statewide averages for such workstations. Based on the FDOE technology resources survey, an estimated 5,600 modern workstations will be required to meet the statewide average of 16%. A funded replacement policy will accomplish this goal within three years.*

Action Plan 6-3 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 6-1

Establish Standards for Technology Acquisitions

Strategy	Establish standards for school-based decision makers for technology acquisitions.
Action Needed	Step 1: Create an administrative policy concerning requirements for district computer workstations consistent with the district's technology plan. This policy should provide for changes in technologies by being reviewed and updated annually. Step 2: The school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent and the assistant superintendents of teaching and learning and of instructional support services should be responsible for drafting the policy. The school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 6-2

Develop and Implement a Funded Replacement Policy

Strategy	Develop and implement a funded policy for equipment replacement.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine the district's optimal replacement period, considering acquisition, warranty, support, management, maintenance, and disposal costs. Step 2: Identify both existing and new sources to fund this policy. Step 3: Draft the funded replacement administrative policy. Step 4: The school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent and the assistant superintendent of instructional support services should be responsible for drafting the policy and the school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The fiscal impact for this recommendation is included in Action Plan 6-3.

Action Plan 6-3

Replace Older/Obsolete Student Workstations

Strategy	Replace the district's older/obsolete student workstations.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine the funding source for replacement of existing older/obsolete instructional workstations. Step 2: Provide this funding based on needs to school-based decision makers for the purpose of replacement of older/obsolete instructional workstations. Step 3: Acquire the equipment necessary to meet statewide averages for modern instructional workstations. Step 4: Monitor compliance of the above described replacement policy.

Who Is Responsible	Funding sources need to be determined by the superintendent and approved by the school board. Acquisitions should be made by school-based decision makers in accordance with the guidance of the administrative policy recommended above. The assistant superintendent of instructional support services should be responsible for monitoring compliance with the replacement policy recommended above.
Time Frame	December 31, 2005
Fiscal Impact	Fiscal impact of this recommendation is approximately \$1,125,000 per year in addition to current expenditure levels. This investment is net of cost savings to be realized through reduced support and management costs. Older/obsolete equipment should be replaced over the next two years and funding for the replacement policy should be on a continual basis.

Technology Professional Development

6 The district has a professional development plan that reflects the district's vision of integrating technology to enhance and enrich the learning environment, as well as improve administrative support.

The district's technology plan provides for professional development and within the human resources department, the district maintains and funds a well-equipped staff development center. The vision, mission, and goals of the staff development center are listed in Exhibit 6-10 and are consistent with the district's strategic plan, as well as its technology plan.

Exhibit 6-10

Vision, Mission, and Goals of the School District of Lee County's Staff Development Center

Vision Statement

The School District of Lee County Staff Development Center focuses on the continuing education of the school community so that everyone has the competency, content, and confidence to ensure student learning and achievement.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to improve student achievement by providing a wide range of high-quality continuing education programs and related services to all members of our school community.

Technology Goals

In order to support the continual improvement of student learning, the Staff Development Center will:

- design, develop and implement research-based, high-quality developmental opportunities for all job categories
- provide services related to personal/professional development and certification
- support effective programs and services through responsible and cost-effective use of all resources
- develop an ongoing data collection and evaluation system
- communicate an authentic image which is customer-centered, professionally-oriented, and solution-seeking

Source: School District of Lee County.

The district uses a variety of tools to determine the professional development needs of its administrative, instructional, and non-instructional personnel. One strategy is to survey individuals to determine the

professional development needs of those respective groups. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district annually conducts a survey with its support personnel. Approximately 3,500 surveys are sent out and close to 20% of these are returned completed. For the 2001 survey, 85 subjects were identified in the areas of communications, general topics, specialized topics, instructional, and technology. In addition to the subject matter information, the survey also accumulated preferred days, times, and general locations of desired training. A similar survey is given to instructional personnel and is located on the district's intranet site. Additionally, the district has aligned itself with neighboring districts through an organization named Southwest Florida Teacher Education Center (SWFTEC). The district uses the results of these needs assessment surveys and focus groups for planning professional development activities for instructional and support personnel.

7 The district provides adequate professional development for the instructional technologies.

The district has a staff development department and provides training in instructional technologies and integrating technology into the curriculum.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district has an administrative regulation *AR-2.47* directly related to the professional development of its instructional staff, a comprehensive staff development plan, and a master in-service plan aligned with *State Board of Education Administrative Rule 6A5.071* to provide for the district's professional development needs. The general objective of the educator-accomplished practice section of the master in-service plan is to "acquire the knowledge and skills to improve student achievement through the application of technology in teaching and learning processes, and to be more efficient in clerical and record-keeping related job functions."

The district has established performance criteria in all areas of professional development and uses several tools to assess the effectiveness of its professional development offerings. Valid methods of earning in-service credits are through pre-tests, post-tests, completed projects or products, demonstrations of competency, forms verifying the achievement of intended outcomes, or through other methods as determined by in-service leaders.

ValienteHernandez P.A. further noted that before acquiring new equipment or software, the district ensures that appropriate implementation training is provided. Some recent examples include training for the new instructional management software product and the conversion of the district's student transportation system. For both implementations, training was provided in advance. The district has a professional development plan that reflects this vision of integrating technology to enhance and enrich the learning environment and improve administrative support.

Exhibit 6-11 illustrates the results of professional development in the technology area for teachers in the district in comparison with peer districts and the state. The results indicate that, in general, educators in the district are comfortable using technology in their learning environments and compare favorably to educators in peer districts and statewide.

Exhibit 6-11

Stages of Technological Professional Development

District Name	Entry: Percentage of Teachers in Stage 1	Adaptation: Percentage of Teachers in Stage 2	Transformation:
			Percentage of Teachers in Stage 3
Lee	25%	59%	16%
Brevard	26%	58%	16%
Pasco	33%	53%	14%

District Name	Transformation:		
	Entry: Percentage of Teachers in Stage 1	Adaptation: Percentage of Teachers in Stage 2	Percentage of Teachers in Stage 3
Polk	27%	55%	18%
Seminole	35%	50%	15%
Volusia	27%	57%	16%
Statewide	35%	50%	15%

- Stage I – Entry – At this stage, educators are able to operate the computer at a basic level. Instruction is mostly teacher-centered and tasks are structured as exercises. Early attempts to integrate technology are often frustrating, due to a lack of requisite skills needed to implement and sustain significant changes in practice. Educators' communications are mostly paper-based and infrequent. Educators are just beginning to learn how to use basic applications (e.g.: word processing, spreadsheets, internet skills, etc.).
- Stage II – Adaptation – Technology is integrated into the classroom in support of existing practices. Educators are comfortable with a variety of applications and consider them to be an important tool for personal and professional tasks. Technology is integrated to make instruction more engaging and for project-based learning, but seldom results in products for outside audiences. Educators at this level are successful users of e-mail and participate in some collaborative communications. They are familiar with a variety of applications and often require students to use technology to complete assignments.
- Stage III – Transformation – Educators at the transformation stage are adept at transferring skills from current technology tools to new ones and often learn independently. Instructional strategies are often altered significantly and include those which are interactive and allow students to exercise problem-solving skills and create products that are valued by audiences outside the classroom. At this stage, the educator often acts as a resource to others and uses technology for collaboration, communication, and research, and integrates it into the curriculum. (e.g.: writing technology-rich lesson plans, designing project-based learning activities, etc.).

Source: Florida Department of Education Technology Resources Survey.

The district maintains a state-of-the-art multi-channel television broadcast network that offers four channels of on-demand video programming and one cable broadcast channel for distance learning. Additionally, the district has over 8,000 titles in its video-on-demand library covering a broad range of subjects, which include professional development for instructional technologies. The district has recently added a fourth channel to its district-wide television broadcast network and is primarily devoted to professional development.

As illustrated in Exhibit 6-12, the district provides many workshop. In addition to professional development for using technology for productivity, the district also offers specific training on integrating technology into the curriculum.

Exhibit 6-12

Technology Professional Development Offered During the Spring of 2002

Course Number Course Title

- 00600 Microsoft Word 2000
 - 00817 Microsoft Word 2000
 - 00601 Beginning Microsoft Excel 2000
 - 00816 Beginning Microsoft Excel 2000
 - 00602 Beginning Microsoft Access 2000
 - 00603 Microsoft Publisher 2000
 - 00604 Advanced Microsoft Excel 2000
 - 00605 Advanced Microsoft Access 2000
 - 00603 Image Blender
 - 00631 Interactive PowerPoint
 - 00632 Introduction to Multimedia Projects
 - 00633 Exploring Curriculum Resources on the Web
 - 00634 Kidspiration - Visual Learning Tool for Students K-3
 - 00635 Getting Inspired with Inspiration
 - 00636 Getting Inspired with Inspiration
 - 00638 Creating Clay Animation in the Classroom
 - 00639 Intermediate FrontPage
 - 00640 Cool Tools for Technology
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Cost-Effective Acquisition

8 The district does not base its technology acquisitions on instructional needs and make technology acquisitions based on those needs.

The district usually bases its technology acquisitions on instructional needs and makes technology acquisitions based on those needs. However, as illustrated in Exhibit 6-8 the district has an inordinate number of older/obsolete student workstations, which demonstrates that the district needs to implement a funded replacement policy as described in Action Plan 6-2 above. Also, as illustrated in Exhibit 6-14 technology skills of district high school students needs to be improved. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district uses the results of research, planning, and evaluations of previous technology decisions to identify successful instructional strategies but is constrained by funding issues.

In the spring of 2001, the district performed a comprehensive needs assessment. This process gathered input from administrators, instructional staff, technology specialists, students, and the professional development and infrastructure areas. The assessment included a variety of tools to obtain this input, such as surveys, direct observation, and focus groups. The conclusions and recommendations were in the categories of establishment of technology competencies, technology planning, professional development, infrastructure, and future research. The assessment also considered the impact that technology has on teachers, students, and administrators.

Prior to its 2001 needs assessment, the district contracted with the Center for Educational Leadership and Technology to conduct a planning study in 1997. Exhibit 6-13 lists the functional areas covered by the planning study. The resulting report provided the district with opportunities for improvement in the most of these areas. Additionally, the district plans to implement many of the recommendations from this

report, but has been struggling to identify adequate funding sources for implementation. For example, the planned acquisition of a new student information system, replacement of the existing payroll and personnel systems, and replacement of the budget and finance systems, are needed efforts all noted in this report.

Exhibit 6-13

**Functional Areas Reviewed by Center for Educational Leadership
and Technology, Inc. for the District During 1997**

- Curriculum and assessment
 - Instructional technology
 - Staffing and organization
 - Professional development
 - Communications network infrastructure
 - School facilities design and construction
 - Administrative computing
 - Standards, procurement, and maintenance
 - Policy and procedures
 - Program monitoring and evaluation
 - School/program-level planning
 - Public awareness/benefits
 - Technology grants management
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

The district demonstrated that its technology-related instructional materials align with the Sunshine State Standards and provide opportunities for students to utilize technologies that prepare them for post-secondary education and employment in today's society.

Individual schools base their technology acquisitions on instructional needs and make technology acquisitions based on those needs. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that each of the schools visited had a technology plan. Some schools had more comprehensive plans than others, but all contained an analysis of instructional needs and used this information to apply for educational technology funds.

However, as illustrated, the district has an inordinate amount of older/obsolete instructional workstations, and while this equipment is meeting basic needs, the district needs to consider modernizing its instructional workstation base.

Additionally, Exhibit 6-14 illustrates the differences between the district and its peers on student outcomes related to technology. It appears that the district does an outstanding job in teaching students how to conduct electronic searches, but lags behind most of its peers and statewide average in the other queried technology skills.

Exhibit 6-14

Technology Skills of District High School Students

District	Percentage Of High Schools Reporting That the Majority Of Students:				
	Are Able To Use Presentation Software	Are Able To Create Web Pages, Interactivity, Or Animation	Are Able To Independently Conduct Electronic Information Searches	Use Communication Tools to Contact Resources Outside the Curriculum Regularly	Use Simulation Software Regularly In Curriculum
Lee	50%	0%	100%	13%	0%
Brevard	50%	7%	71%	21%	21%
Pasco	75%	13%	88%	50%	25%
Polk	46%	0%	85%	46%	0%
Seminole	86%	29%	100%	57%	0%
Volusia	100%	25%	100%	25%	0%
State	69%	18%	92%	46%	21%

Source: Florida Department of Education Technology Resources Survey.

Recommendations

- In order to better prepare students for skills required in today's society, we recommend that the district review and possibly update curriculum related to technology.*

Action Plan 6-4 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 6-4

Review Technology Curriculum	
Strategy	Review the technology curriculum to determine that it meets the needs for graduating students.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine what the desired technology-related outcomes for graduating students are. Step 2: Identify curriculum required. Step 3: Implement required curriculum.
Who Is Responsible	The Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning is responsible.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

9 The district bases technology acquisitions on the results of research, planning, and evaluations of previous technology decisions to ensure technology decisions are cost-effective.

The district bases technology acquisitions on the results of research, planning, and evaluations of previous technology decisions to ensure technology decisions are cost-effective. ValienteHernandez P.A. noted

that the district used a variety of organizations and national standards for technology acquisitions in its 2001 needs assessment.

The district provides schools and administrators with support in purchasing strategies. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district negotiates with many vendors to provide schools and administrators with technology choices, and also provides recommended strategies for purchasing decisions. However, as other districts have recently done, the district could benefit by pooling all of its technology purchases into one large contract. Currently, the district maintains a pricing list on its intranet site that allows schools and administrators to acquire technology items from several pre-approved vendors.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district negotiate contracts with one primary vendor to provide most of the technology items needed by the district. As evidenced by contracts negotiated in other school districts, larger contracts are generally more beneficial in obtaining pricing concessions. Additionally, if the district procures technology from a small number of vendors, its licensing, management, and support costs will also be lower.*

Action Plan 6-5 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 6-5

Negotiate One Contract for District Workstations and Servers	
Strategy	Negotiate one contract to provide all workstations and servers to the district.
Action Needed	Step 1: Create a proposal for the acquisition of the all of the district's workstations and servers, including warranties and licensing.
	Step 2: Evaluate responses and benefits to the district.
	Step 3: Award a contract to the vendor whose proposal is in the best interest of the district.
Who Is Responsible	The school board, superintendent, the assistant superintendent of instructional support services, and the purchasing division are responsible.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This action plan can be implemented within existing resources. Based on contracts awarded by other Florida school districts, the district could realize significant savings. A complete workstation, with a 3-year warranty and standard applications purchased through one single negotiated contract could result in an overall cost savings of at least \$300 per workstation or server. This cost savings considers the total cost of ownership; a key component of this calculation is management and support. Since the district acquires approximately 4,200 workstations per year, estimated savings on these acquisitions would be approximately \$1,260,000 per year.

10 The district has established standards for acquiring new programs and digital content that promote the integration of technology into everyday curricular needs; however lacks equitable distribution for newer workstations.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district's educational technology plan contains standards for acquiring software and technology based educational materials, as well as technology acquisition policies and procedures. The technology plan also provides guidance on curricular needs for each school.

However, as illustrated in Exhibits 6-14, technology does not appear to be equitably distributed to all schools.

Since school-based management is implemented within the district, individual schools are free to make technology acquisitions at their own discretion. Unfortunately, this could lead to technologies being acquired that do not meet district or other standards. By creating an administrative policy related to technology acquisitions, the district would benefit overall by providing consistent tools among students, administrators, instructional, and non-instructional staff.

Technology resources, with respect to student workstations and without regard to older/obsolete workstations, appear to be equitably distributed. The district has an overall student-to-student workstation ratio of 4.4 students per student workstation and favorably compares to a statewide average of 4.2 students per student workstation. However, as illustrated in Exhibit 6-14 there are some exceptions where additional equipment needs to be procured or relocated to achieve a more equitable distribution in line with statewide average of 4.2 students per student workstation.

Exhibit 6-14

Schools With Student-to-student Workstation Ratio Exceeding 4.2 Which Require Additional Workstations

School	School Membership	Instructional Workstations	Students Per Workstation	Workstation Shortage
Cypress Lake High School	1,982	342	5.8	130
Robinson Littleton Elementary School	939	150	6.3	74
Franklin Park Elementary School	476	45	10.6	68
Lehigh Acres Middle School	1,316	245	5.4	68
Tanglewood Elementary/Riverside ESE	1,161	208	5.6	68
San Carlos Park Elementary School	940	158	5.9	66
Gateway Elementary School	906	150	6.0	66
Lehigh Senior High School	1,529	322	4.7	42
Suncoast Elementary School	1,220	257	4.7	33
Cape Elementary School	934	199	4.7	23
Fort Myers High School	2,005	462	4.3	15
Southwest Florida Juvenile Detention Center	95	19	5.0	4
The Island School	15	1	15.0	3
Totals	13,518	2,558	5	660

Note: Workstation shortage is based on a state-wide average of 4.2 students per student workstation.

Source: Florida Department of Education Technology Resources Survey.

The district encourages partnerships between schools and outside resources for support in developing and delivering instructional applications and infrastructures. The district cited as examples of such partnerships the Cisco Academy, WeatherLink/Weathernet, and Cable in the Classroom.

The district provides opportunities for educators to preview, evaluate, and recommend acquisition of technology-based strategies through meetings, focus groups, and newsletters, although this process is not formalized.

Recommendations

- *In order to provide equitable distribution of technology to all schools, we recommend that the district procure an additional 660 student workstations for the schools listed in Exhibit 6-14.*

Action Plan 6-6 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 6-6

Acquire 660 Student Workstations	
Strategy	Acquire 660 student workstations to be placed in identified schools.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine actual student workstation needs by assessing the current situation at each of the identified schools. Step 2: Identify funding source for the acquisitions. Step 3: Acquire and install the student workstations.
Who Is Responsible	The school board, superintendent, the assistant superintendent of instructional support services, and the purchasing division are responsible.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The fiscal impact of this recommendation is a cost of \$462,000.

11 The district has a stable and efficient infrastructure.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district has a re-routable wide area network (WAN) provided by the local telephone company that provides high-speed access to each district school and administrative location. As planned for in the technology plan, this access is scaleable, routable, and fault tolerant, as the district's needs change. Operations are monitored constantly during working and non-working hours.

Information Management and Delivery

12 The district has established and communicated a policy stating appropriate uses of all types of technology resources including computers, video equipment, software, and the internet.

The district has established and communicated a policy stating appropriate uses of all types of technology resources, including computers, video equipment, software, and the internet. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district provides email access to all instructional and administrative personnel. A standard classroom configuration includes a teacher workstation with email access. An acceptable use policy AR3.41 has been established and has communicated this policy throughout the district. Additionally, each student and a parent must acknowledge this policy in writing before being granted access to the district's technology.

13 The district supports compliance with established policy on the safe and legal use of technology resources.

The district supports compliance with the established policy on safe and legal use of technology resources. ValienteHernandez P.A. noted that the district provides for compliance with its established policies through filtering techniques. These techniques, in addition to blocking inappropriate materials, automatically notify district personnel of such attempts immediately.

The district also has several strategies in place to detect computer viruses at the time of infection. The district's email server is continuously protected from viruses by utilizing three independent and up-to-date anti-virus strategies operating simultaneously. District workstations and file and application servers are set to detect viruses operating in resident memory as well as through scheduled scanning strategies. Student workstations are protected from computer viruses by a lesser known, but equally efficient scanning and detection approach. All of the district's servers and workstations have their detection and scanning software brought up-to-date through internet connections daily.

Management Information Systems

14 The district segregates duties to reduce the risk that unauthorized transactions will be entered and not discovered quickly.

The district segregates duties to reduce the risk that unauthorized transactions will be entered and not discovered quickly. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the instructional support services division is independent of the financial services department as well as from the district's individual schools. The financial services department and district's schools initiate most of the transactions that are processed by the district's information systems. Based on a review of the district's operating manuals, procedures manuals, prior audit findings and their successful remediation, ValienteHernandez P.A. also found that the district has proper segregation of all critical and most non-critical duties within its information systems. Further, the personnel policies of the district include adequate security measures that enhance the segregation of duties and corresponding internal controls. Examples of policies and procedures that enhance internal controls are potential employee background investigations, terminated employee policy, and position rotation, all of which are control strategies employed by the district.

ValienteHernandez P.A. also found that prior audit findings of the auditor general related to the ability of programmers to directly install applications in the district's main processing environment were successfully modified. Now, the district's control structure no longer allows programmers to install applications directly on its main processing environment.

15 The district's user controls ensure authorization prior to processing transactions and ensure all output represents authorized and valid transactions.

The district's user controls ensure authorization prior to processing transactions and ensure all output represents authorized and valid transactions. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that strong control procedures exist that validate transactions and that users exercise control over input. Adequate controls

exist restricting access and data entry to authorized employees. System access passwords expire every 90 days, users are not allowed to recycle passwords, and accounts are locked out after three failed login attempts. Adequate controls also exist over changes to data files that would bypass normal access controls. An example of such a process is mass changes to salary files as requested by the payroll department. Such a change request is required to be in writing with the requesting department validating results.

16 The district's applications are designed to provide users with reliable data.

The district has established application controls to help ensure data reliability. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district has been using the same major software products for many years. The system meets the district's current administrative needs and has been consistently reliable for many years.

The district provides supervision over data entry at the office and school level. The system users are responsible for the data entry process through validation and review of outputs. Context sensitive on-line help is available for many of the district's administrative applications. Help screens were found to contain up-to-date written instructions specifically developed for and by the district.

Individual district applications contain automated edit checks to pre-validate data prior to its acceptance. These checks provide validation totals for users to compare. The district's system generates log files that identify users and track detailed changes made by each user. These log files are reviewed by computer operators and the information systems manager periodically.

When necessary, the district prints audit trails for any changes made to mainframe data files. Additionally, log files can be reviewed that enable authorized personnel to trace computer output to their data sources and vice versa.

17 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.

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. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that written policies and procedures exist for all major areas of technology access, development, testing, maintenance, and security relating to the district's information systems.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that access to sensitive areas within the district's information systems operational section was blocked through the use of automated electronic access locks. Access to these areas is restricted to previously authorized individuals only. Automated logs of accesses to information system sections are created and reviewed for exceptions. Access to less sensitive information system areas is physically secured through access gates and locked doors. Individuals with business to conduct are required to log in and out when visiting these areas.

Additionally, adequate controls exist over retention of data files and media. The district has adequate data backup policies and procedures, which are tested routinely. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district's systems are fault tolerant with built-in redundancy. Full backup of all critical servers and mainframe files are performed daily. The district also has a comprehensive disaster recovery plan and

would recover its critical functions in a reasonable time frame in the event of a disaster. The district maintains self-insurance reserves to provide limited funding in the event of casualties.

Written specifications for new systems are required with users also required to approve these specifications before the district will acquire, create, or modify its applications. As an example, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district was required to modify its business applications system in order to prepare its financial statements in accordance with a newly effective accounting standard. In meeting this need, the district created a taskforce to develop specifications as well as to monitor the district's progress in modifying its business applications systems to comply with the accounting standard. Additionally, the district, prior to incorporating any new or modified application into its main processing environment, performs thorough testing and validation as also evidenced by the programming created to comply with this accounting standard.

The district processes transactions and outputs through an automated scheduling system. This system ensures that transactions and outputs are processed in a timely and efficient manner. Authorized users add tasks to the schedule which is run by the computer operators in the specified order. Supervisory personnel review the schedule prior to release. Production runs, exception reports, and distribution lists are provided to the appropriate authorized individuals upon completion of these processes.

18 The district's management information systems generally provide data needed by instructional and administrative personnel in a reliable and timely manner; however some data needs are not met.

The district's management information systems generally provides data needed by instructional and administrative personnel in a reliable and timely manner. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district has an internally developed legacy information system, which provides for most of its major data processing needs.

In order to reduce its costs and attain greater processing capacity, the district is in the process of replacing its older mainframe with a newer mainframe since it is at the end of a capitalized lease agreement for this equipment. This mainframe replacement system will be leased for a period of three years. This lease period will allow the district to continue its data processing capabilities using its current legacy software during an implementation schedule for the anticipated replacement of its student information and business applications systems.

After analyzing the district's calculations regarding the replacement of its mainframe computer system, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district will realize a nominal cost savings but will gain enhanced capacity to process and store transactions. Applications running on the legacy system include Budget/Finance, Payroll/Personnel, DOE and FTE Reporting, Student Assignment, Student Records, Testing, and Textbook Inventory. Additionally, the district uses the IBM AS/400 platform and Microsoft Windows NT/2000 platforms for certain operational functions. Ongoing training is provided to all instructional and administrative staff as required.

The district has demonstrated that the information sent to the DOE is generally accurate and that it uses the data submitted to manage its educational and operational programs at the district, school, and classroom levels. The district maintains edit reports of data sent to DOE and reviews information received back.

The district has demonstrated that its management information systems contain performance measurement data that is routinely collected, compiled, and reported in a manner such that it can be used by district administrators, school administrators, and teachers to assess program performance and results. The data on educational programs includes grades, attendance, and test scores. As previously noted, the

district has a comprehensive management information system. ValienteHernandez P.A. noted during site visits and interviews that the management information systems provide generally accurate and timely reports.

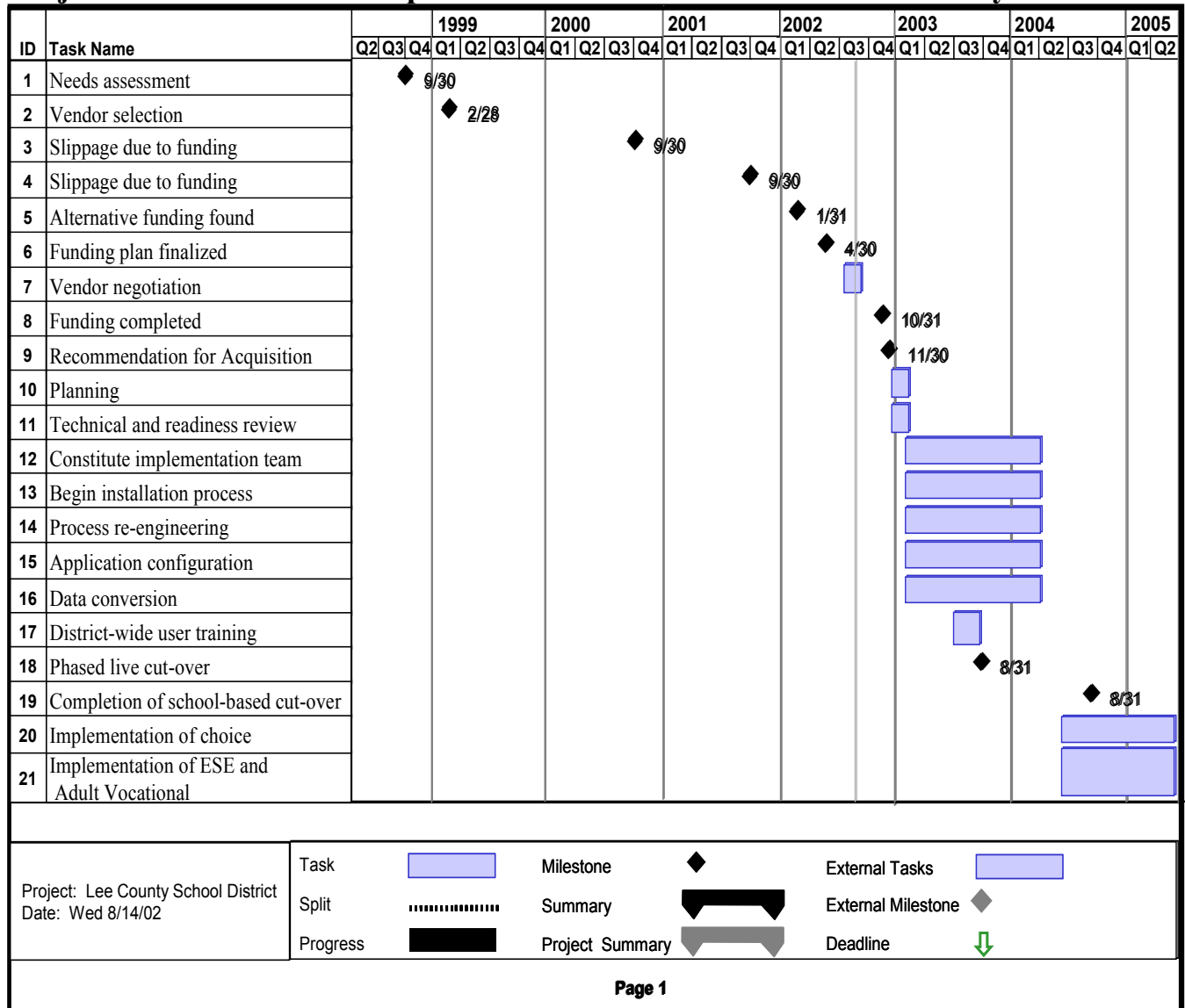
During 1997, the district performed a needs assessment related to the replacement of its legacy systems and requested and received proposals from vendors to replace its aging student information systems. We concur with the district's assessment. The district has not begun the process to replace its business applications systems, but expects that replacing both major systems will cost approximately \$8 million dollars. The replacement systems are expected to provide users of administrative and instructional systems with more useful and timely information. The district should ensure that all potential users including personnel, educational services and cost control/purchasing departments have the opportunity to ensure that their computing needs are included within the new system. The district should ensure that all potential users, including personnel, educational services and cost control/purchasing departments have the opportunity to ensure that their computing needs are included within the new system.

Additionally, it is anticipated that once fully implemented, this systems replacement will result in a cost savings on a long-term basis over current funding levels, as illustrated in Exhibit 6-17. This is based on the assumption that the district will be able to combine the two functional areas of information services, and server and application support can be combined, along with a restructuring and reduction in workforce to accomplish an overall 25% reduction in the current budget level once both major systems have been fully implemented. Exhibit 6-16 illustrates the district's implementation schedule for the replacement of its student information systems. For its business applications systems, the district has completed its needs assessment and is currently reviewing implementations in other Florida school districts. No final determination has been made regarding vendors for business applications.

The district has indicated that it intends to use the proceeds of a bond issue that pledges future capital expenditure funds to repay bonds, and will use funds from the issuance of bonds to fund the replacement of its legacy systems. The pledging of future capital expenditure funds for the next 30 years makes sense when building schools that have useful lives exceeding the bond period, but does not seem sensible for acquisitions that have useful lives between 3 and 15 years. As illustrated in Exhibit 6-16, the district will realize continuous cost savings after the implementation schedule over its current funding levels and should consider funding opportunities that are less than 10 years.

Exhibit 6-16

Projected Time Frame to Replace the District's Student Information Systems



Source: School District of Lee County.

Exhibit 6-17**District's Planned Replacement of its Core Information Systems**

Replacement of Major School District Applications with Third Party Software					
	Student Information Systems	Business Application Systems	Continued Operations	Continued Operations	Continued Operations
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Student information system:					
Software licenses	\$ 1,300,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Installation, services, hardware	750,000	-	-	-	-
Hardware	1,500,000	-	-	-	-
School-based workstation upgrades	2,000,000	-	-	-	-
Business applications system:					
Software licenses	-	1,100,000	-	-	-
Installation, services, hardware	-	1,000,000	-	-	-
Departmental hardware upgrades	-	300,000	-	-	-
Vendor annual support	250,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000
Continuing operations:					
Information services	2,000,000	2,000,000	-	-	-
Server & application support	1,300,000	1,300,000	-	-	-
Combined department (25% reduction)	-	-	2,500,000	2,500,000	2,500,000
Mainframe capitalized lease cost	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total investment	<u>10,100,000</u>	<u>7,200,000</u>	<u>4,000,000</u>	<u>3,000,000</u>	<u>3,000,000</u>
Current budget levels:					
Information services	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000	2,000,000
Server & application support	1,300,000	1,300,000	1,300,000	1,300,000	1,300,000
Mainframe capitalized lease costs	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>	<u>1,000,000</u>
Total current budget levels	<u>4,300,000</u>	<u>4,300,000</u>	<u>4,300,000</u>	<u>4,300,000</u>	<u>4,300,000</u>
District's net investment (cost savings)	\$ <u>5,800,000</u>	\$ <u>2,900,000</u>	\$ <u>(300,000)</u>	\$ <u>(1,300,000)</u>	\$ <u>(1,300,000)</u>

Source: School District of Lee County, ValienteHernandez P.A.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district proceed with its plans to replace its current student information systems and business applications systems with third party school district specific software. However, the district should reconsider its source of funding to a repayment period shorter than 30 years for technology acquisitions.*

Action Plan 6-7 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *The district should ensure that all technology user stakeholders have an opportunity to make certain that any new computer system meets their reporting and informational needs.*

Action Plan 6-8 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation

Action Plan 6-7

Consider Funding Sources for New Technology With a Repayment Period Shorter Than 30 years

Strategy	Pursue a funding source to replace legacy systems with third party software having a repayment period in line with the life of the acquisition.
Action Needed	Step 1: Consider funding sources for this project Step 2: Obtain funding for the replacement systems. Step 3: Determine system specifications required for business applications systems. Step 4: Procure major systems through the district's normal procurement process. Step 5: Proceed with implementation schedule for student information systems. Step 6: Develop implementation schedule for business applications systems. Step 7: Implement systems in accordance with above plans.
Who Is Responsible	The school board is responsible for funding the project. The superintendent is responsible for the overall success of the project. The assistant superintendent of instructional support services is responsible for the design and implementation of the project. The purchasing division is responsible for procurement.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	The district has already considered the fiscal impact of this recommendation. There is no additional fiscal impact related to this recommendation.

Action Plan 6-8

Ensure That All Technology User Stakeholders Have an Opportunity to Make Certain That Any New Computer System Meets Their Reporting and Informational Needs

Strategy	Solicit input from technology users on their reporting and informational needs.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify key technology user stakeholders in each operational unit Step 2: Solicit input from these users on data and reporting needs for decision making. Step 3: Ensure that the selected new system is capable of meeting these needs.
Who Is Responsible	The director of technology in cooperation with the directors of each functional area including, but not limited to, personnel, purchasing, food services, transportation, maintenance, construction, and education services.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be completed with existing resources.

19

The district has not taken steps to minimize the number of databases that are independent of its centralized computer systems.

The district has not taken steps to minimize the number of databases that are independent of its centralized computer systems. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that generally, the district utilizes one centralized database from its legacy system for all critical management and administration files. Information may be downloaded from this database, however, needs arise for additional information external from this central database to be accumulated by individuals and groups of users. Many of these external databases are user-created and provide the district with information for some required reports. The district was unable to provide documentation or an inventory of these external databases.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district controls its disaggregated databases and begins this process by creating an inventory of all significant databases. Additionally, the district should obtain or create documentation for each of these databases, which should include the reason for its existence, the source of its data, its location, person(s) responsible for its maintenance and backup, and an assessment of its accuracy.*

Action Plan 6-9 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 6-9

Establish Management Control Over Decentralized Databases	
Strategy	Establish management control over decentralized databases.
Action Needed	Step 1: Inventory all databases of significance. Step 2: Documents all significant databases. Step 3: Manage decentralized databases.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of instructional support services and users of the decentralized databases are responsible for documentation and management of all significant decentralized databases.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

20 The district has established appropriate controls related to electronic data exchange transactions, other transactions processed through electronic media, and image processing systems.

The district has established appropriate controls related to electronic data exchange transactions, other transactions processed through electronic media, and image processing systems. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district routinely exchanges data in the normal course of business with other government agencies, employees, and employee benefit providers. The district has demonstrated that it has appropriate controls in place over these transactions to ensure accuracy.

Examples of these electronic data exchange transactions are direct deposit of payroll, payroll tax information returns, Medicaid outreach, and employee benefit reports. Controls currently in place include verification of data by responsible departments, authorization and notification prior to transmittal, activity logs, and control totals for validation purposes.



Personnel Systems and Benefits

The district's Human Resources Division generally practices sound personnel management. Minor improvements in a variety of personnel practices are warranted.

Conclusion

The School District of Lee County (the district) provides a well-organized and highly productive staff development program for all classes of employees and has a formal evaluation procedure that rewards top-performing employees and attempts to improve poor performers. The district also takes steps to reduce costs and improve efficiencies and effectiveness in all areas, although some adjustments are necessary to make procedures more viable. The district's notable accomplishments are listed in Exhibit 7-1 below.

Exhibit 7-1

Notable Accomplishments in Personnel Systems and Benefits

- A.P.P.L.E.S. (Accomplished Professional Practices for Lee Educational System)
 - Commendable professional development organization, support, and district-wide training delivery
 - Implementation of the Sterling Criteria process
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

Human Resource Management:

1. The district could improve its recruiting and hiring procedures. (Page 7-6)
2. The district has a number of positive practices to improve workforce stability, but should also assess factors contributing to workforce instability. (Page 7-14)
3. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for non-instructional employees. However, there is room for improvement. (Page 7-23)
4. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for instructional employees, but could further improve by assuring that the new knowledge is implemented. (Page 7-25)
5. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for school-based administrators. (Page 7-31)
6. The district's system for formally evaluating employees is designed to improve and reward excellent performance and productivity, and to identify and address performance that does not meet expectations. (Page 7-33)
7. 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. (Page 7-34)

8. While the district has different ways to correspond with employees, it could use other ways to improve communications. (Page 7-37)
9. The district has efficient, cost-effective policies and practices for providing substitute teachers and other substitute personnel. (Page 7-40)
10. The district maintains accessible personnel records. However, more complete documentation is needed. (Page 7-44)
11. The district practices cost-containment in its workers' compensation program. (Page 7-47)
12. The district has taken steps to establish accountability for its human resource program. However, measures and benchmarks should be developed to ensure the program's efficiency and effectiveness. (Page 7-51)
13. The district periodically reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the Office of Human Resources to minimize administrative layers and processes. (Page 7-53)
14. The district has taken steps to reduce costs and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the district's personnel practices, although no formal reviews have been done. (Page 7-53)
15. The district has a collective-bargaining process for unionized employees. (Page 7-56)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

These recommendations for improving the district's personnel management performance will have little, if any, fiscal impact.

Background

As of fall 2001, the district has over 6,000 employees. Exhibit 7-2 shows the breakdown of the type and number of full-time district staff over the past three academic years.

District employees are grouped into three categories:

- Administrative staff -- district-level administrators and school administrators (principals and assistant principals);
- Instructional staff -- those responsible for teaching students at all levels, kindergarten through secondary education, as well as adult education; and
- Non-instructional or "support" staff -- clerical staff, food service workers, bus drivers, maintenance workers, custodians, and other support personnel.

Exhibit 7-2

The District Has Over 6,000 Full-Time Employees

Staff Categories	Fall 1999 Number of Full- Time Staff	Fall 2000 Number of Full- Time Staff	Fall 2001 Number of Full- Time Staff
<i>Total Administrative Staff</i>	229	224	225
District Level	71	64	66
School Level	158	160	159

Staff Categories	Fall 1999 Number of Full- Time Staff	Fall 2000 Number of Full- Time Staff	Fall 2001 Number of Full- Time Staff
Total Instructional Staff	3,438	3,391	3,455
Total Classroom Teachers	3,111	3,071	3,123
Elementary	1,150	1,187	1,179
Secondary	1,197	1,188	1,221
Exceptional Education	705	629	639
Others	59	67	84
Total Other Instructional	327	320	332
Total Support Staff	2,505	2,509	2,633
Professional	216	240	281
Non-Professional	2,289	2,269	2,352
Total Full-Time Staff	6,172	6,124	6,313

Source: Department of Education (Profiles of Florida School Districts 1998-1999, 1999-2000, and 2000-2001); Fall of each year.

Budget: In the 2001-02 Fiscal Year, Florida school districts suffered a state revenue shortage. The School District of Lee County lost approximately \$9 million dollars. County staff, in conjunction with the local union, used an interest-based process to evaluate money-saving options, in order to absorb the budgetary shortfall without reducing staff. One of those options was to institute an e-communications program to replace high paper usage.

The budget for salaries and benefits included in the general fund for the fiscal year 2001-02 was \$297,347,361, including funding for substitutes and supplemental contracts.

The Human Resources Division had the following budget for its operational expenses for the 2001-02 fiscal year:

Department	Actual 2000-01	Budget 2001-02
Human Resources	\$ 663,377	\$ 620,060
Professional Development	2,148,195	3,897,280
Personnel	1,192,604	1,092,351
Total	\$4,004,176	\$5,609,691

Source: Budget 2001-2002.

Policies: The district's personnel policies are intended to provide the best learning opportunities for students and establish a school environment that attracts and retains qualified, high-performing employees. Human Resources Division policies and practices are based on the tasks listed below.

- Recruit, employ, and retain the best qualified personnel to staff the district school and ancillary facilities
- Provide compensation and benefits to attract and retain qualified personnel
- Provide staff development for employees to improve desired results
- Manage employee evaluations that contribute to the continual improvement of staff performance and results
- Assign personnel to ensure that they are used as effectively as possible
- Establish and maintain the district as a learning community committed to high student achievement

The reader will find further discussion of these tasks in relation to the Best Practices in several sections of Chapter 7.

Organization—Toward the end of the 2001-02 school year, the district reorganized into major divisions, one of which is Human Resources. As depicted in Exhibit 7-3, the assistant superintendent of human resources provides the management of human resources in the School District of Lee County. The division consists of four departments: Professional Development, Program Administrator Grants, Employee Relations and Contract Management, and Personnel Services.

While school-based management principals select personnel at the school level, the Personnel Services Department assists in hiring. The professional development department is largely responsible for training district teachers and staff.

There is also an equity and recruitment director, reporting directly to the superintendent, who is responsible for recruiting minority teachers and staff and a staff attorney, trained in collective bargaining law, who serves as a negotiating team resource. The insurance and benefits department is under the supervision of the financial service division.

Recruiting Qualified Teachers—Section 231.62, *Florida Statutes*, requires the State Board of Education to annually identify areas of critical teacher shortages. The areas identified by the State Board of Education include middle and high school mathematics, middle and high school science, reading, exceptional student education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), foreign languages, school psychology, and technology education/industrial arts. The district had 97 out-of-field teachers at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year (excluding the ESOL category); however, all classrooms started the year with a certified teacher. Teachers on assignment were used, as needed, where no teacher had been hired to fill vacancies. As vacancies were filled, the teachers on assignment resumed normal duties.

Competition for qualified staff from other districts is likely to increase in coming years, especially in the areas of critical teacher shortage, so recruiting and retention will be vital to maintain a quality educational system. At the same time, demand for qualified teachers is likely to rise due in part to the aging of the current national teacher work force: The National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) reports that more than one-quarter of all teachers nationwide are at least 50 and the median age of teachers nationwide is 44, suggesting that more than half these teachers will retire in the next 10 years. Furthermore, Florida expects retirements to reach unprecedented heights in the decade following 2006, since one-third of Florida's teachers in the 1990's were born between 1946 and 1954.

In Lee County to date, teacher participation has been low in the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP), which is available to classroom teachers age 62 or with 30-years of state service. The district's retirement specialist reported that only 20 teachers enrolled in DROP in 1998. These teachers must retire during 2003. This small number should be manageable; however, personnel and recruitment staff expect DROP to create significant teacher shortages in the next five to ten years.

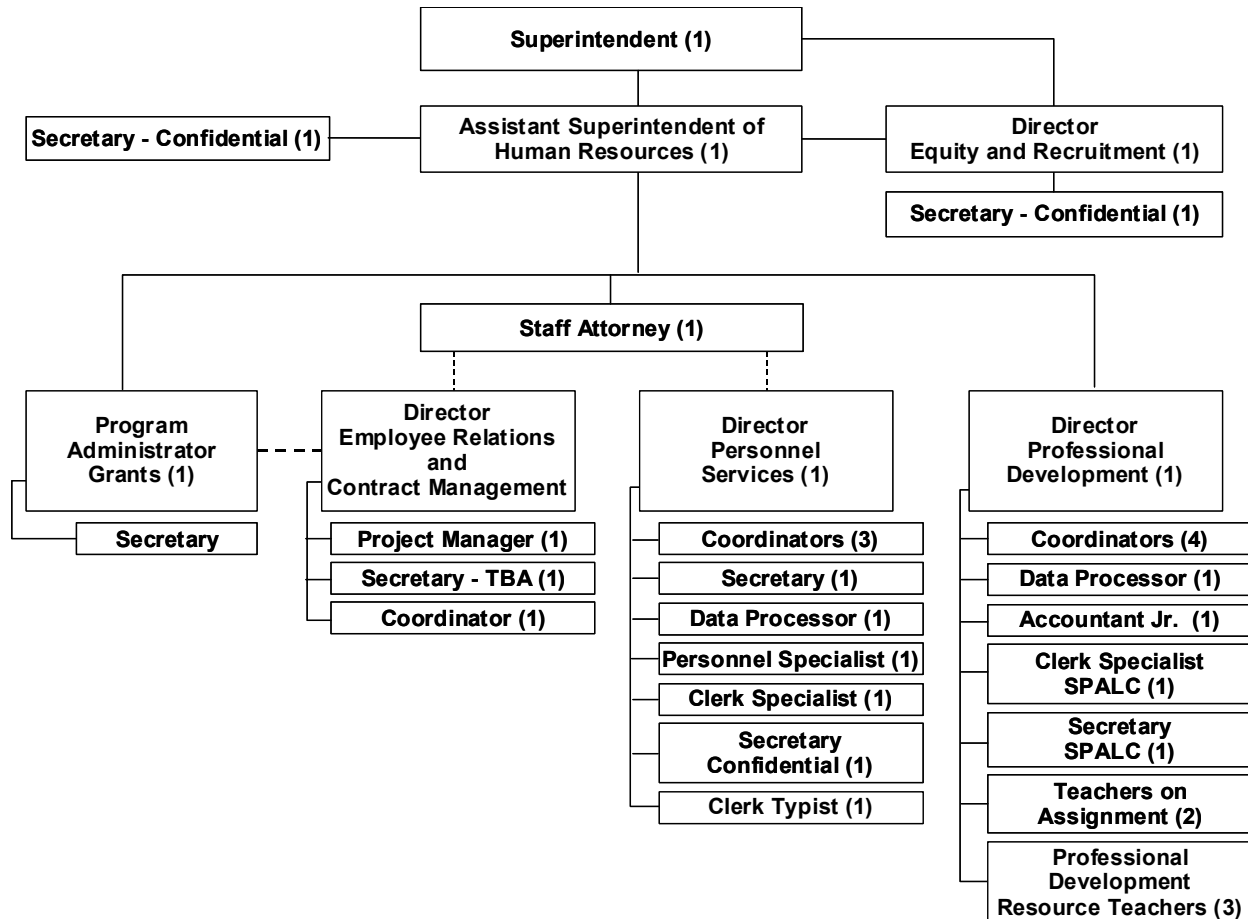
Demand will also rise due to a projected rise in public and private school enrollment, with increasing numbers of minority students creating a need for more workforce diversity. In 2000-01, Florida public school enrollments grew by 2.5% rather than the 1.8% projected by the Board of Education, chiefly because of increased immigration.

School reform efforts to reduce class size exacerbate these trends by increasing the demand for teachers. The State of Florida and the Lee County public schools are not immune. By 2010, the State of Florida is expected to need at least 100,000 new teachers to meet increased student enrollments and replace retirees. In addition, a July 1, 2002 Florida rule allows teachers to transfer to other Florida districts and be credited with all verifiable years of teaching experience. Before this ruling, the district would credit just five years of experience. With this cap lifted, districts could lose teachers to neighboring, higher-paying counties. This has had a negligible effect thus far, but as demand for teachers accelerates in the district, in Florida,

and across the nation, competition for qualified staff will increase accordingly. The importance of effective recruiting and retention strategies cannot be overstated.

Exhibit 7-3

Human Resources Division, as of September 2002



Source: School District of Lee County.

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted on-site interviews with district-level managers and gathered information on the Personnel System and Benefits and the district's human resource policies and procedures. This assessment also involved researching Florida law. ValienteHernandez P.A. surveyed principals, teachers, and school board members, as well as facilitated focus group discussions. Questions varied depending on the group and the results have been incorporated into this chapter, where applicable.

Staff Recruitment

1 The district could improve its recruiting and hiring procedures.

As part of the district's recruiting and hiring practices, personnel completes applicant background checks to ensure student safety and uses detailed job postings and employment procedures to ensure equal opportunities are provided. The district's recruiting program is designed to attract qualified teachers, but a more systematic and measurable approach would help fill vacancies more quickly and improve efforts to achieve racial balance.

The district recruits teachers locally and nationally

Although the responsibility for hiring teachers and other school based personnel lies with individual school principals, the district office assumes primary responsibility for initial recruiting and for processing applications. One staff person, who is also in charge of equity staffing, is responsible for implementing the district's recruiting plan. This plan calls for expanding recruiting efforts at local and national colleges and universities, and making more effective use of technology. The district is also developing strategies to attract new teachers from the paraprofessional ranks and from local high schools by encouraging students to become teachers. The district's recruiting strategies include:

- Alerting interested prospects in the "Grow Your Own Project: Florida Fund for Minority Teachers" (FFMT), a teaching scholarship program for minorities.
- Targeting non-teaching professionals to enter the profession and assisting them in the teacher certification process. Many education paraprofessionals and substitute teachers are already committed to the district and have a vested interest in Lee County.
- Recruiting targeted groups rather than just individuals.
- Recruiting couples and family members of current employees.
- Assisting job-hunts for trailing spouses.
- Targeting education paraprofessionals who wish to obtain degrees in one of the critical teacher shortage areas, as part of the Critical Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program. (Applications were sent in October to all school principals to make available to their education paraprofessionals on staff.)
- Arranging cooperative agreements with local colleges and universities to provide reduced tuition fees for school district employees, including education paraprofessionals, who want to obtain degrees in education and work in Lee County schools.
- Advertising in ***www.TeachInFlorida.com***. The district is set to begin posting teaching vacancies on line. The new system alerts school administrators of qualified applicants once requests are made. The district posts vacancies and indicates needed certifications. The system provides online applications which schools are able to download along with applicant resumes.
- Advertising on five websites and in the district's employment opportunity publications.
- Recruiting Level III Interns – This project is to interest Florida colleges and universities in sending students to Lee County to complete internships. Ideally, the district would recruit and hire interns in Lee County upon graduation.
- Targeting Florida's 979 Future Educators of America Clubs (FEEA) statewide. This year through FEEA the district will target their high school seniors who plan to pursue education degrees;

incentives are planned for students returning to the school district to teach after graduation (long-term strategy).

- Encouraging relevant club membership at high school and middle schools (long-term strategy).

While these are well-intentioned efforts to recruit qualified teachers, the district's recruiting plan does not measure how successful these strategies are in generating actual hires.

Recruiting from within—The district has a loosely-structured process of working with paraprofessionals (such as teacher aides or assistants) to determine their interest in becoming teachers, and in providing assistance to those who are interested. The Professional Development Department, along with other educational systems and industries, recognizes the value of recruiting from within the ranks. Paraprofessionals constitute a base of local employees interested in the educational profession. The director of equity and recruitment and Staff Development Center encourage such a program with a group of paraprofessionals. We find that the processes for recruiting from within and the subsequent training assistance can be enhanced, to encourage more paraprofessionals to participate in the program, complete education degrees, and become teachers in Lee County. With the addition of the recent requirement of training or coursework for paraprofessionals, the district has an increased opportunity to encourage interested “paras” to become teachers.

Application process—The district's Personnel Services Department maintains a complete and current list of vacancies. They place vacancy notices on the district's website, job hotline, and position vacancies bulletin. The job postings typically identify position title, contact telephone number, posting date, hourly salary, location of the position, as well as the application procedure and deadline. However, instructional and technical job descriptions do not include minimum qualifications. The hotlines do not have options for selecting specific job categories. Potential candidates must listen to all vacant positions before they can apply, which is time-consuming and confusing (Exhibit 7-4)

Exhibit 7-4

It Takes Applicants Longer to Search for Job Vacancies sing Lee County's Telephone Hotline Compared to Peer Districts

School District	Minutes to Find Specific Job Category
Lee	10
Brevard	(Out of service)
Pasco	1
Polk	1
Seminole	2
Volusia	5
State	2

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

To be considered for a specific vacancy, an applicant must provide a written application and notify the school or department to which the applicant wants to apply. The district's application packet for instructional positions solicits the essential information. The application also requests the applicant's educational background and teaching and non-teaching work experiences since initial graduation; the experience during and prior to college may be listed at the discretion of the applicant. Applicants must indicate if they have ever been arrested. The applicant must submit a copy of school transcripts, identify references on three non-confidential reference forms, a copy of the social security card and a copy of the driver's license. Although applications are submitted to the district for processing, hiring decisions for instructional positions are made at the school level. The reader is directed to best practice 10 of this chapter, pertaining to the school principals' access to applicant records for the purpose of screening and hiring.

Technological assistance—While it already makes effective use of technology in a number of areas, the district plans to enhance its use of technology to support hiring and recruiting activities. As noted, job announcements are posted on the district's website. In addition, application information can be accessed online and employment applications can be downloaded from the district's website. Once the applicant sends documentation and contacts the school or department, the principal is in charge of screening.

Although a 1997 OPPAGA review of the district recommended that the district complete a program to electronically link student class codes with teacher class codes for out-of-field teachers, it has not yet done so. The district has met with significant delays in automation, as noted in several areas of this section and report. The reader is directed to Chapter 6, the technology section of this review, for further information.

The district does not have an automated tracking system that enables school site administrators to access applicant information to identify potential candidates and schedule interviews. This system would facilitate the efforts of school site administrators to contact candidates for interviews and, subsequently, to select candidates for employment, to match applicants to other possible positions, and also to assist in notifying all principals of the applicant's status. One clerk is assigned to assist applicant status. When principals want to view applicant files, they must give 24-hours notice to the Personnel Office and travel to the district office for the review. This travel constitutes a waste of valuable time, which could be spent on more important matters, and can cause hiring delays, as addressed in best practice 7-10.

Non-instructional vacancies: Vacancies in non-instructional positions continue for paraprofessionals, clerical support, micro-system technicians, TV system technicians, vehicle mechanics, trades and bus drivers. Due to high turnover, bus driver positions are posted on an on-going basis. The Personnel Services Department has started saving approximately \$5,000 per year, after coordinating with the Transportation Department to realize that newspaper advertisements resulted in almost no bus driver hires. Instead, Internet postings and word-of-mouth were identified as the primary successful recruitment vehicles for new bus drivers. While the district's efforts to fill vacancies are certainly evident, interview findings and the results of the teacher survey strongly suggest that continued improvement is needed.

Although the district is taking steps to ensure diversity, progress is slow

The district recognizes the importance of ensuring, to the extent possible, that the racial and ethnic composition of its workforce matches the racial and ethnic composition of the student body. Minority/non-minority ratios were initially set up during a 1970-71 court case, and further addressed in 1991 and 1998-99. As a consequence, and until recently, the district was under a court-mandated Long-Range Desegregation Implementation Plan. Although the district has been released from meeting the percentages required in this plan, the regional director's report and Personnel Management and Services confirm that the target ratios in this plan continue to serve as a guide for staffing levels. Those ratios state that the minority/non-minority composition of each school should be within (plus or minus) 20% of the district-wide minority/non-minority statistics for each grade level. To track its success in maintaining a desired staffing mix, the district compiles monthly reports to the school board on the status of hiring results by race and ethnicity for new and rehired instructional staff, trades, service, and technical employees. Exhibit 7-7 shows the racial compositions of the district workforce compared to working-age population in relation to the peer districts for 2000-01.

One of the strategies to improve minority recruiting is to target colleges and universities with a 20% or more minority student population, and colleges and universities with education programs in the critical teacher shortage areas of math, science, exceptional student education and foreign languages. In 2001-02, the equity and recruitment office, along with district administrators and teachers, recruited at 22 colleges and universities in Florida, the southeastern United States, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

Racial composition of the district workforce more closely mirrors its working age population than its student population

As shown in Exhibit 7-5, in 2000-01, 35% of the district's students belong to minority groups (the sum of 15.57% of Black, 15.88% Hispanic, and 3.13% other races). Only 9% of the instructional staff belongs to minorities. Statewide, Florida has only 24% minority teachers while 47% of the student population statewide is minority. The demand far exceeds the supply, and the district is seriously considering other strategies to recruit and retain qualified minority teachers.

Nevertheless, over the three-year period shown, the district made little progress in altering the racial composition of the overall workforce to ensure it more closely matches the racial and ethnic composition of the district's student body. Exhibit 7-5 shows that the total percentage of employees classified as white has been reduced from 82.7% of the work force in 1998-99, to 81.9% of the work force in 2000-01. Currently, the number of white students that the district served comprises 65.4% of the total student population.

Exhibit 7-5

The District Has Made Little Progress in Reflecting the Racial Composition of Its Students in Its Workforce

Staff	White			Black			Hispanic			Other		
	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01	98-99	99-00	00-01
Administrative	206	196	198	23	25	24	0	2	2	0	1	1
	90.0%	87.5%	88.0%	10.0%	11.2%	10.7%	0.00%	0.9%	0.9%	0.00%	0.5%	0.4%
Instructional	3,101	3,078	3,149	192	167	165	119	117	117	26	29	24
	90.2%	90.8%	91.1%	5.6%	4.9%	4.8%	3.5%	3.5%	3.4%	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%
Other Staff	1,796	1,754	1,821	455	478	494	236	254	296	18	23	22
	71.7%	69.9%	69.2%	18.2%	19.1%	18.8%	9.4%	10.1%	11.2%	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
Total	5,103	5,028	5,168	670	670	683	355	373	415	44	53	47
Full Time Staff	82.7%	82.1%	81.9%	10.9%	10.9%	10.8%	5.8%	6.1%	6.6%	0.7%	0.9%	0.8%
Students	68.5%	67.2%	65.4%	15.9%	15.8%	15.6%	13.2%	14.4%	15.9%	2.4%	2.6%	3.1%

Source: Department of Education, Profiles of Florida School District 1998-1999, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001.

Progress also lags in adjusting the racial composition of teachers in the effort to match that of the student body. The district currently has 3,455 instructional staff members with a minority percentage of approximately 9%. Since 1996-97, the number of minority instructional staff has been on a downward trend, losing approximately 1.1% to date, as shown in Exhibit 7-6 below. The district reports that many new minority teachers recruited from other areas do not stay as teachers in Lee County. The office of Equity and Recruitment reported that many new recruits are homesick and return home; for some, the job or community is not as expected.

Exhibit 7-6

The District Has Experienced a Decline in Minority Instructional Staff for the Past Five Years

Year	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Percentage of minority teachers:	10%	9.9%	9.8%	9.2%	8.9%

Source: Department of Education, Profiles of Florida School District 1998-1999, 1999-2000 and 2000-2001

The district's workforce, however, is closer in racial composition to Lee County's working-age population as a whole than it is to its student body, as demonstrated in Exhibit 7-7, and includes a greater proportion of minorities than is found in the county's population as a whole. It also includes, generally, a

greater proportion of minorities than is found in the school staff workforces of its peer counties when compared to their racial composition.

Exhibit 7-7

**The Racial Composition of the District's Workforce
Is Comparable to that of the Working-Age Population of Lee County**

School District	Population Segment	White Population	Black Population	Hispanic Population	Other Population	Total Population
Lee	County (ages 18-65)	82.0%	6.6%	9.5%	1.9%	100%
	School staff workforce	81.9%	10.8%	6.6%	0.7%	100%
	Variance	0.1%	-4.2%	2.9%	1.2%	
Brevard	County (ages 18-65)	83.7%	8.4%	4.6%	3.3%	100%
	School staff workforce	86.9%	9.6%	2.8%	0.7%	100%
	Variance	-3.2%	-1.2%	1.9%	2.6%	
Pasco	County (ages 18-65)	89.9%	2.1%	5.7%	2.3%	100%
	School staff workforce	94.0%	2.7%	2.8%	0.5%	100%
	Variance	-4.1%	-0.6%	2.9%	1.8%	
Polk	County (ages 18-65)	74.7%	13.5%	9.5%	2.3%	100%
	School staff workforce	80.1%	16.4%	3.2%	0.3%	100%
	Variance	-5.4%	-2.9%	6.3%	2.0%	
Seminole	County (ages 18-65)	75.2%	9.5%	11.2%	4.1%	100%
	School staff workforce	76.4%	16.4%	6.1%	1.1%	100%
	Variance	-1.2%	-6.9%	5.1%	3.0%	
Volusia	County (ages 18-65)	81.9%	9.3%	6.6%	2.2%	100%
	School staff workforce	80.9%	13.5%	5.0%	0.7%	100%
	Variance	1.0%	-4.2%	1.6%	1.5%	

Source: US Census Bureau 2001 Older than 18 years old and younger than 65 years old and the Profiles of Florida School districts 2000-01.

Many new recruits need time to assimilate, and feel accepted by the school community, the minority community, and the community in general. The office has several ways of introducing recruits to the minority communities so new teachers feel part of a familiar, cohesive group. Examples include: asking recruits to consider an apartment complex where other new teachers live, sharing a schedule of planned activities where the office brings new recruits together, and providing information to Hispanic recruits about the services and scheduled events of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Other strategies to recruit and retain a diverse workforce should be considered

The district is determined to meet its goals in the minority percentage population area. However, the recruiting office should adjust its practices. For example, the district needs to find and use more updated resources. The district used an outdated 1985 "Directory of Minority Four Year Teacher Preparatory Institutions" to search the universities with at least 20% minority students.

Also, the district should identify and work to correct the reasons it hires so few people with signed letters of intent. For example, 206 applicants were on the "Recruitment Applicants With Signed Letter Of Intent

To Hire” list during a 12-month period ending December 1, 2002, but only 10 (5%) were hired. Rather than a hiring commitment, the letter merely expresses the district’s interest in having the person apply for a Lee County teaching position and begin interviewing with local school principals. At best, some prospective recruits will end up going elsewhere, but part reported problem is that some principals delay making their teaching unit decisions or don’t advertise openings until all surplus teachers are placed. Thus, qualified recruits are often lost to other states or districts that are quicker to respond.

The district uses out-of-field teachers in accordance with state laws

School board policy and the State Department of Education permit teachers to work out of their certified fields in areas where there are critical shortage of certificated teachers. Each year, the Personnel Services Department monitors each out-of-field teacher in the district. Each fall, all schools are required to report which teachers will be considered “out-of-field.” Once reported, each out-of-field teacher is reported to the school board for approval. Each teacher that the board approves to teach out of field has a code, which allows the district to track the number of out-of-field teachers, and run special reports for communicating with them.

State Board rule 6A-1.0503 requires out-of-field teachers to complete a minimum number of hours of certification coursework during the 12-month period following initial assignment to an out-of-field position. Each out-of-field teacher is required to report the status of coursework completed, and out-of-field verification requests (electronic or hard copy) are sent to these teachers each spring. Upon reporting coursework completion, these teachers are required to submit transcripts or documentation of credit applicable toward certification. The personnel office determines each individual’s reappointment eligibility for an out-of-field position in subsequent years.

Each month, the Department of Education Edit Correction Online System (DECO) Out-of-Field Report is prepared for each district. This report identifies the school, names and social security numbers, course title, and section for teachers in each region working out of field. Personnel and Management Services staff then communicates with the school site and teacher to verify the information, and report back to the Department of Education.

The district is currently reviewing and revising job descriptions

Job descriptions provide clear and succinct statements of the duties and responsibilities of each employee of the district. Up-to-date job descriptions help ensure that appropriate staff is recruited, hired, or promoted to meet current needs. The district is taking steps toward implementing a comprehensive schedule to update job descriptions which include a list of required educational qualifications, experience and desirable factors, reporting relationships, a listing of general duties, length of contract (if applicable), and salary schedule.

In May 1997, OPPAGA recommended reviewing positions every two years to maintain accurate job descriptions, but this has not been done. Although the job description/job classification study was completed in April 1998, and a Needs Assessment Survey was completed in October 2002, the district has not taken steps to finish updating job descriptions, nor has it set a schedule for doing so.

Fingerprinting

The district uses the new electronic fingerprinting process to initiate criminal background checks on all potential employees. School Board Rule 6 G X13–4C-1.021 requires that criminal background checks be completed on all newly hired personnel. Newly selected employees must be fingerprinted at the Personnel Department. Fingerprints are electronically sent to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) office for processing. This process, which includes new equipment provided by the Florida Insurance Commissioner’s office, yields a reply within approximately 72 hours. All new employees are on probationary status until their fingerprints have been processed.

Recommendations

- *Assess the effectiveness of each significant recruitment strategy. The director of Equity and Recruitment should adjust, delete, or add new strategies based on the findings and available resources.*

Action Plan 7-1 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *Implement and restructure the telephone hotline for vacancies by job categories.*

Action Plan 7-2 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *Improve the internal recruitment program to 1) recruit more paraprofessional employees to become teachers and 2) provide guidance and services, including training (addressed under Staff Development), to the paraprofessionals who enroll in the program. Apply for grants to offset related training costs.*

Action Plan 7-3 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *Finish writing, reviewing, and revising job descriptions. Once these are completed, the district should develop a schedule for updating its job descriptions at least once every two years to reflect the duties of the position, educational and experience requirements, required qualifications, supervisory responsibilities, and salary levels. Job descriptions could also be reviewed during annual employee evaluations.*

Action Plan 7-4 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *Reduce or eliminate the need for principals to travel to district offices to review applicant and personnel files.*

Action Plan 7-5 shows the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 7-1

Assess and Revise Recruitment Strategies

Strategy	As a part of its recruitment planning process, the district should use prior experience (data) to prioritize its most cost-effective recruiting strategies, including short term and long term strategies. Ineffective strategies should be revised or discontinued. Special attention should be given to recruitment of minorities.
Action Needed	Step 1: Isolate the various recruiting strategies utilized by the district. Step 2: Determine the cost of each step of each strategy for FY 2001-02 and FY 2002-03. Step 3: Determine how many teachers were hired as a result of each strategy; identify number of minority teachers successfully recruited as a result of each strategy. Step 4: Use results of analysis to improve cost effectiveness and efficiency of future recruiting efforts. Revise or discontinue ineffective steps, or ineffective strategies such as the use of signed letters of intent.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Equity and Recruitment
Time Frame	To be completed by August 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-2

Restructure the Telephone Hotline for Vacancies by Job Categories

Strategy	Organize and restructure the telephone hotline for vacancies by job categories and assess the minutes to find specific job category.

Action Needed	Step 1: Organize the hotline vacancies into non-instructional and instructional categories. Step 2: After reorganization, assess the average number of minutes to find specific job categories to ensure a more timely structure is in place.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Personnel Services
Time Frame	To be completed by June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-3

Improve the Strategy of Recruiting From Within

Strategy	After assessing the strategy of recruiting paraprofessionals into the teaching ranks, expand the scope of this campaign to include teacher aides, assistants, substitute teachers, and other support personnel.
Action Needed	Step 1: Advertise the need for more teachers, meetings, support, training, information, and other to this target group. Address school non-instructional meetings or give speeches to drawing out interested workers. Speak with principals and ask for their help getting the word out, referring effective employees or others that may be interested, and otherwise cooperating with district recruiting efforts. Step 2: Work with SDC on guidance and training needs of this group. Apply for grants that may assist in financially covering related costs. Step 3: Explore new or improved cooperative agreements with colleges and universities, and new or increased community or business assistance. Step 4: Provide forums, college/university information, regular support meetings with selected topics of interest, increased advertisements of tuition discount or reimbursement programs, and other support, as appropriate. Step 5: Assess and revise the above, as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Equity and Recruitment
Time Frame	To be completed by June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Procured grants should offset any related costs.

Action Plan 7-4

Complete Revision of Job Descriptions

Strategy	Establish a schedule for routinely updating job descriptions to reflect actual duties, educational and experience requirements, required qualifications, supervisory responsibilities, and salary levels. The district should continue recording the date of each job description review or revision.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Personnel Services Department or designee, with input from department heads and appropriate staff, should develop a schedule for reviewing job descriptions at least once every two years. In coordinating job descriptions with departments, managers should suggest pre-hiring physical requirements needed for certain duties and/or reflect each job's physical demands. Step 2: This schedule designates the process for updating job descriptions (i.e.: in conjunction with annual evaluations once every two years), and guidelines for job description format and content. Step 3: A schedule should be established before March 2003; job descriptions should be initially updated by June 2003.
Who Is Responsible	Personnel Department
Time Frame	To be completed by June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-5

Revise Inefficient Process of Principals Traveling To Personnel Offices to Review Applicant Files	
Strategy	Determine a more effective and cost-efficient process to principals to review applicant files.
Action Needed	Step 1: For six months, measure principal travel time to district offices for this purpose, estimating indirect administrative costs and direct travel reimbursement costs (including the cost of pulling files). Step 2: During July, revise this procedure to eliminate travel time. Options can include, but should not be limited to, access to electronic entries or new software, faxes, or copies by school mail of the most significant forms/information in applicants' files. Step 3: Compare new costs to former costs, determine level of satisfaction with new processes, and solicit input for revisions, as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Personnel Services
Time Frame	January 1, 2003 to July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

2 The district has a number of positive practices to improve workforce stability, but should also assess factors contributing to workforce instability.

The district has implemented a number of positive practices to promote workforce stability

The district has a number of practices designed to promote workforce stability. These practices include the district's efforts to:

- Provide support to initiatives that link pay with performance
- Clearly define requirements for supplemental pay
- Provide incentives for teachers with credentials in critical shortage areas
- Informally compare salary and benefits costs with those of competitive organizations

The district collects and maintains data on turnover rates for major classes of employees and reports this data monthly to the U.S. Department of Labor and Statistics. Data is retrieved from mainframe reports. An Access database of retirees and Deferred Option Retirement Program (DROP) participants is also maintained. The human resources assistant superintendent normally reports turnover data to the superintendent at Executive Team Meetings at least annually.

The district uses the following documents:

- Reason Codes For Termination
- Staff Termination, 2000-2001
- Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLT) Report, January 2001-January 2002
- Mainframe reports on new hires, total employees, and terminations used to prepare the JOLT Report for January 2002

However, the district may not receive most of the reasons for voluntary terminations, since exit questionnaires do not provide enough data. The most common reason departing teachers give for leaving is "personal." More specific exit data could result in better retention (as described below).

The district should analyze turnover rates

Generally, teacher turnover can be measured in two ways. The first is information received from the school district on the yearly number of teacher terminations (resignations and retiring teachers, and terminations from death or dismissal). The second is to evaluate the number of exits and/or new hires. Exhibit 7-8 shows the separation rates of the district staff compared with its peer districts for the 2000-01 school year.

The district makes no concerted effort to analyze the exit interview or turnover rates. It does not, for example, analyze the reasons most commonly given by teachers resigning their positions. The Personnel Services Department asks that each exiting teacher complete the state's exit questionnaire, a form that requests the reason for terminating employment. However, because many teachers check the "personal" category without further explanation, it is impossible to assess the true reason without further exploration. Although the exit questionnaire satisfies the state's recording and submission requirement and may be helpful for collective bargaining and recruitment purposes, it is not useful for determining the real reasons teachers leave. Because of this lack of useful data, the district does not summarize these findings into a document that can be used to manage employee turnover, especially among instructional staff. Without this information the district cannot target its efforts most effectively to retain its teachers.

Exhibit 7-8

In 2001-02, The District's Exit Turnover Rate Is Comparable to Its Peers and State Average

Month	No. of teachers	No. of Separations	Separation rate
Lee	3,111	144	4.6%
Brevard	3,993	171	4.3%
Pasco	3,094	115	3.7%
Polk	4,957	258	5.2%
Seminole	3,466	168	4.8%
Volusia	3,837	171	4.5%
Average w/o Lee	3,869	177	4.6%
State	136,951	6,704	4.9%

Source: Department of Education for the period from 07/01/01 to 06/30/02. "Teacher exit interview information" report.

Lee teacher salaries are higher than average for peer and neighboring districts

The Department of Education (DOE) collects data on the average salaries of selected positions throughout the state. While DOE does not include comparisons of duties, qualifications, or length of experience—making comparisons of individual positions inconclusive—its data can still be useful in comparing the district to its peers.

Exhibit 7-9 illustrates the average salaries of district teachers compared with average salaries of teachers in the peer districts for the 2000-01 school year (the most recent year for which data was available). The average salaries of Lee County school teachers with bachelor's and master's degrees, and those of specialists, are slightly above to moderately above the peer district and state averages. Among teachers with doctorate degrees, the district's average salary is the highest when compared to the peer districts.

ValienteHernandez P.A. also compared the average salaries of district teachers with those of competing (neighboring) districts in the Southwest Florida area, including Charlotte, Hendry, Glades, and Collier, and found that Lee's average salaries were again higher; however, in this case, they were closer to average teacher salaries in each of the competing districts, as depicted in Exhibit 7-10. District teachers perceive their salaries as good in relation to most other districts. The bargaining unit publishes

comparative salary information and requests that building representatives share this data with their teachers.

Exhibit 7-9

Lee Teachers' Average Salaries Were Higher Than Peer Districts in 2001-02

District	Bachelor's	Master's	Specialist	Doctorate	All Degrees
Lee	\$36,440	\$43,824	\$48,353	\$48,089	\$39,443
Brevard	34,776	41,313	46,430	41,664	37,436
Pasco	33,079	38,427	40,252	40,509	35,045
Polk ¹	32,882	40,094	43,142	42,134	34,917
Seminole	32,197	39,386	45,046	46,853	35,758
Volusia ¹	32,635	39,909	44,985	44,489	35,720
Average Without Lee County	\$33,114	\$39,826	\$43,971	\$43,950	\$35,775
State Average	\$36,365	\$43,059	\$50,474	\$49,420	\$39,272

¹ District has not negotiated a new salary schedule prior to reporting.

Source: Table 3 Report from the Florida School Districts 2001-2002. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida DOE.

Exhibit 7-10

Lee Teachers' Average Salaries Are Generally Higher Than Most Competing Districts

District	Bachelor's	Master's	Specialist	Doctorate	All Degrees
Lee	\$36,440	\$43,824	\$48,353	\$48,089	\$39,443
Charlotte ¹	32,844	40,968	43,925	46,763	36,994
Collier	37,973	48,008	50,939	53,999	42,511
Glades	33,767	41,813	57,098	N/A	36,437
Hendry	35,105	41,264	37,538	47,900	36,622
Average Without Lee County	\$34,922	\$43,013	\$50,654	\$49,554	\$38,141
State Average	\$36,365	\$43,059	\$50,474	\$49,420	\$39,272

¹ District has not negotiated a new salary schedule prior to reporting.

Source: Table 3 Report from the Florida School Districts 2001-2002. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida DOE.

Principals' salaries for Lee County are generally higher than the peer districts'

As shown in Exhibit 7-11, the salaries of the principals in Lee County are higher in comparison with the peer districts' average salaries in all categories, and higher also in comparison with the state average.

Although during focus groups, principals stated that the principals' salaries were lower than the neighboring districts', Exhibit 7-12 shows that Lee principals' salaries are generally higher in comparison to neighboring districts as well as peer districts. An exception is Collier, where high school principals receive 12.75% more than Lee; the middle school average in Collier is higher also. This could be a possible contributing factor for the reported high attrition to Collier.

Exhibit 7-11**Lee Principals' Average Salaries Are Higher Than Peer Districts in 2001-02**

District	Elementary School			Middle/Junior High School			High School		
	Salary	Employed	Contract Months	Salary	Employed	Months	Salary	Employed	Months
Lee	\$76,608	36	12	\$75,374	14	11.8	\$82,278	9	12.0
Brevard	\$67,281	53	12	\$69,703	14	12.0	\$78,358	13	12.0
Pasco	\$66,400	33	12	\$71,465	10	12.0	\$81,176	9	12.0
Polk*	\$63,806	69	12	\$65,160	18	12.0	\$72,164	13	12.0
Seminole	\$66,580	35	12	\$70,098	12	12.0	\$76,522	7	12.0
Volusia	\$67,752	45	12	\$73,010	11	12.0	\$78,398	10	12.0
Average W/O Lee County	\$66,364	47	12	\$69,887	13	12	\$77,324	10.40	12
State Average	\$71,980	1,608	11.9	\$73,525	495	11.9	\$79,421	377	11.9

Source: Table 3 Report from the Florida School Districts 2001-2002. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida DOE.

Exhibit 7-12**Lee Principals' Average Salaries Are Higher Than Almost All Neighboring Districts and the State Average in 2001-02**

District	Elementary School			Middle/Junior High School			High School		
	Salary	Employed	Contract Months	Salary	Employed	Months	Salary	Employed	Months
Lee	\$76,608	36	12.0	\$75,374	14	11.8	\$82,278	9	12.0
Charlotte	\$70,322	10	11.2	\$69,712	4	11.0	\$80,577	3	12.0
Collier	\$70,886	23	11.0	\$79,313	8	11.0	\$92,769	5	12.0
Glades	\$60,674	1	12.0	NA	NA	NA	\$59,823	1	12.0
Hendry	\$61,660	5	12.0	\$62,930	2	12.0	\$64,230	2	12.0
Average W/O Lee County	\$65,885	9.8	11.6	\$70,652	5	11.3	\$74,225	2.8	12.0
State Average	\$71,980	1,608	11.9	\$73,525	495	11.9	\$79,421	377	11.9

Source: Table 3 Report from the Florida School Districts 2001-2002. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida DOE.

Assistant principals' average salaries for Lee County are generally comparable to those of peer and competing districts

Exhibit 7-13 shows that when compared with peer districts, the average Lee high school assistant principals' salary is higher. In comparison with the neighboring districts, as shown in Exhibit 7-14, it was found that the high and middle school assistant principals' salaries were higher than the average in these districts; however, the elementary assistant principals' salaries were below the neighboring districts' average. Additionally, Collier pays its assistant principals an average of 9.67% more than Lee. This could be a contributing factor to turnover among administrators.

Exhibit 7-13

Assistant Principals' Average Salaries for Lee County Are Generally Comparable To Those of Their Peer Districts

District	Elementary School			Middle/Junior High School			High School		
	Salary	Employed	Contract Months	Salary	Employed	Months	Salary	Employed	Months
Lee	\$53,872	30	11.0	\$56,912	13	11.0	\$58,769	17	11.2
Brevard	\$58,834	3	12.0	\$57,876	13	12.0	\$61,432	30	12.0
Pasco	\$52,799	32	11.0	\$59,465	20	12.0	\$60,509	22	12.0
Polk	\$46,762	63	12.0	\$46,999	33	12.0	\$50,379	28	12.0
Seminole	\$44,326	36	11.0	\$50,479	31	10.8	\$50,896	26	10.7
Volusia	\$49,254	41	11.0	\$54,611	29	11.6	\$59,292	47	11.8
Average W/O Lee County	\$50,395	35	11.4	\$53,886	25.2	11.7	\$56,502	30.6	11.7
State Average	\$54,626	1,283	10.7	\$57,493	882	11.1	\$60,527	1,046	11.3

Source: Table 3 Report from the Florida School Districts 2001-2002. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida DOE.

Exhibit 7-14

Assistant Principals' Average Salaries for Lee County Are Generally Comparable To Those of Neighboring Districts

District	Elementary School			Middle/Junior High School			High School		
	Salary	Employed	Contract Months	Salary	Employed	Months	Salary	Employed	Months
Lee	53,872	30	11	56,912	13	11	58,769	17	11.2
Charlotte	55,578	9	11	58,863	4	11	58,179	8	11
Collier	60,016	6	11	62,244	8	11	63,691	5	11
Glades	0	0	0	46,497	1	10.5	0	0	0
Hendry	49,467	4	11.2	50,884	5	11.6	53,094	2	12
Average W/O Lee County	\$55,020	6.3	11.1	\$54,622	4.5	11.0	\$58,321	5	11.3
State Average	\$54,626	1,283	10.7	\$57,493	882	11.1	\$60,527	1,046	11.3

Source: Report from the Florida School Districts 2001-2002. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida DOE.

Non-instructional staff average salaries for Lee County are the highest among peer districts and generally highest among competing districts

Exhibit 7-15 illustrates that the district has the highest non-instructional staff salary among its peer districts. In comparison with the neighboring districts, as shown in Exhibit 7-16, it was found that the salaries in general were higher than the average in those districts. However, the school district of Collier County pays 15% and 2.2% more for teacher aides' and bus drivers' salaries, respectively.

Exhibit 7-15**Non-Instructional Staff Average Salaries for Lee County Were Higher Than Most Peer Districts and the State Average in the 2001-02 School Year**

District	Teacher Aide			Bus Driver			Food Service Worker		
	Salary	Employed	Contract Months	Salary	Employed	Months	Salary	Employed	Months
Lee	\$14,297	370	10.0	\$15,876	552	10.0	\$16,720	224	10.0
Brevard	\$11,724	512	10.0	\$14,145	362	10.0	\$9,760	560	10.0
Pasco	\$10,895	598	10.0	\$11,625	310	10.0	\$9,662	490	10.0
Polk	\$11,754	1,092	9.0	\$10,772	444	9.0	\$9,664	855	9.1
Seminole	\$12,791	570	9.8	\$15,603	377	10.0	\$13,378	196	9.8
Volusia	\$10,914	1,099	9.0	\$15,016	256	10.0	\$13,137	544	9.0
Average W/O Lee County	\$11,616	774	9.57	\$13,432	350	9.8	\$11,120	529	9.58
State Average	\$13,210	28,917	9.7	\$14,149	14,220	9.5	\$12,769	12,082	9.7

Source: Florida Department of Education (Education, Information and Accountability Services) "Florida District Staff Salaries of Selected Positions 2001-02."

Exhibit 7-16**Non-Instructional Staff Salaries of Lee County Were Higher Than Most Neighboring Districts' Averages and the State Average in the 2001-02 School Year**

District	Teacher Aide			Bus Driver			Food Service Worker		
	Salary	Employed	Contract Months	Salary	Employed	Months	Salary	Employed	Months
Lee	\$14,297	370	10.0	\$15,876	552	10.0	\$16,720	224	10.0
Charlotte	\$10,597	294	9.4	\$10,649	115	9.1	\$10,091	136	9.1
Collier	\$16,415	492	10.0	\$16,227	246	10.0	\$13,762	205	10.0
Glades	\$13,409	17	10.0	\$10,408	8	9.0	\$12,438	6	9.2
Hendry	\$14,096	130	10.0	\$11,009	63	10.5	\$13,272	59	10.5
Average W/O Lee County	\$13,629	233	13.1	\$12,073	108	9.65	\$12,391	101.5	9.7
State Average	\$13,210	28,917	9.7	\$14,149	14,220	9.5	\$12,769	12,082	9.7

Source: Table 3 Report from the Florida School Districts 2001-2002. Bureau of Education Information and Accountability Services, Florida DOE.

Lee's employee share of benefit premium compares favorably to peer districts but family coverage is higher for local public employers

Exhibit 7-17 shows the total annual cost of health coverage plans in the district compared to its peers. Consistent with peer districts and most local public employers, the Lee school district pays the cost of single health coverage and requires its employees to pay the additional cost of any dependent coverage (i.e., balance of: family coverage, employee plus one, or employee plus spouse). Exhibit 7-18 shows the same information for competing public employers. In this case, the district also has comparable single and family health care premiums.

The district and the bargaining team presented the health plan and the majority voted to accept the plan and premium schedule. The employees chose higher salaries rather than partial contribution of

employees' family member(s') health coverage, as evidenced by a vote for a contract ratification on the health care coverage change.

Exhibit 7-17

Lee District Health Insurance Costs For Single and Family Premiums Are Comparable To Peers Districts In 2002

District Plan	Co-Payments		Single			Family		
	Primary	Special	Employee Share	Board Share	Total Annual Cost	Employee Share	Board Share	Total Annual Cost
Lee								
PPO	\$10	\$20	0	3,878	3,878	7,410	3,878	11,288
MCP	\$10	\$10	0	3,470	3,470	6,226	3,470	9,696
Brevard								
PPO	20	20	1,968	4,140	6,108	9,252	4,140	13,392
HMO	15	15	0	4,008	4,008	4,548	4,008	8,556
EPO	15	15	216	4,008	4,224	7,133	4,008	9,276
Pasco								
POS	15	25	600	3,451	4,051	7,788	3,451	11,239
HMO	15	25	0	3,104	3,104	5,504	3,104	8,608
Polk								
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Seminole								
Choice Plus	15	30	271	2,937	3,208	7,559	2,937	10,496
HMO	-15	35	0	2,937	2,937	5,633	2,937	8,570
HMO	15	20	0	2,937	2,937	6,420	2,937	9,357
Volusia								
PPO	15%	15%	60	3,774	3,834	5,894	3,774	9,668
HMO	10	10	60	2,554	2,614	5,125	2,554	7,679
HMO	10	20	60	2,933	2,933	3,562	2,933	6,495

Source: Compiled by ValienteHernandez P.A. based on information obtained from the peer districts and Lee district.

Exhibit 7-18

During 2001-02, The District's Health Care Premium Costs For Single Coverage Is Comparable with Other Nearby Public Employers, While Family Coverage Is Higher

Employer Plan	Co-Payments		Single			Family		
	Primary	Special	Employee Share	Employer Share	Total Annual Cost	Employee Share	Employer Share	Total Annual Cost
City of Fort Myers								
PPO	20	20	335	2,235	2,570	5,515	2,235	7,750
HMO	10	15	0	2,235	2,235	4,506	2,235	6,740
School District of Lee								
PPO	\$10	\$20	0	3,878	3,878	7,410	3,878	11,288
MCP	\$10	\$10	0	3,470	3,470	6,226	3,470	9,696

Employer Plan	Co-Payments		Single			Family		
	Primary	Special	Employee Share	Employer Share	Total Annual Cost	Employee Share	Employer Share	Total Annual Cost
City of Cape Coral								
PPO	10	10	0	4,281	4,281	4,873	4,281	9,154
HMO	10	10	0	3,324	3,324	3,557	3,324	6,881
Lee County								
Point of Service	10	10	0	3,564	3,564	840	6,720	7,560
Lee Co. Sheriff								
PPO	10	10	0	3,600	3,600	0	7,200	7,200
Mosquito Control								
PPO	N/A	N/A	1,000	3,001	4,001	2,331	6,992	9,323
HMO	N/A	N/A	868	2,605	3,473	2,023	6,069	8,092

Source: Compiled by ValienteHernandez P.A. based on information obtained from the peer districts and Lee district.

The school district has selected a new health insurance provider that will reduce both board and employee premium costs

In order to improve the health insurance service, a district task force began evaluating the current services in January 2002. The district issued a request for proposals in May 2002. The district's benefit consultant firm initially reviewed the proposals, submitting its findings to the task force in July 2002. The task force provided additional analysis and considered bidder's presentations to complete the evaluation process. Some of the factors the task force considered included:

- Financial stability of the companies
- References of current and former clients
- Access to local, regional, and national health care providers
- Plan benefits and design
- Quality of customer service
- Ability of company to be responsive and flexible
- Stability of relationships with customers and providers
- Disruption factors from change of providers

In August 2002, the task force recommended that the school district change its health insurance program from the current self-insured administrative services to a fully-insured provider. The decision was based upon the following:

- Lower dependent premiums
- Improved benefits
- Increase in the Benefit Bank amount that can be applied toward dependent premiums or voluntary benefits for employees who choose the low option PPO.

The district expects to save approximately \$300,000 in 2002-2003 by changing to the fully-insured product and the employees will also see a premium savings for dependent coverage. In October 2002 both bargaining units (TALC and SPALC) overwhelmingly voted in favor of the change. Final school board ratification is expected in November 2002.

The district has developed employee pay policies intended to reward performance

The district policy is described in its Teachers' Association of Lee County (TALC) contract as the instructional "continuous improvement performance pay" system and has been in effect since 1998-99. Pay is based on school-wide progress toward meeting expectations and on individual teachers' progress toward meeting performance expectations. Ratings are as follows: (1) does not meet expectations, (2) meets expectations, and (3) exceeds expectations.

A pay unit matrix based on school and individual expectations determines performance pay ratings. An employee's expectation rating is based on the annual final performance assessment, which is based on observed teacher competencies.

The district also implemented a performance-pay plan for administrators for 2001-02. The model resembles the instructional plan; however, the individual's rating is based not on an annual assessment instrument but on approved individual goals. Because of the district's strong school-based management approach, however, there may be high variability on the goals from school to school. Concerns have surfaced about equitability and consistency from school to school. Another concern is the dollar amount of performance pay, which depends on the number of teachers receiving performance pay from the same sum set aside by the district. Though the maximum fluctuates, there is realistically about \$800 maximum pay a top performer at a high-achieving school can receive.

Union surveys indicate that the current performance-pay system may not be effective at rewarding effective teachers, and provides little incentive. In addition, approximately 60% of teachers and 62% of the principals responding to surveys distributed for this review said that the current performance-pay system was ineffective. The district should reassess the implementation and results of the system. The director of equity should become involved, since only about 26% of the teachers and principals rate the current performance pay system as consistently implemented throughout the district. At the time of this writing, the Personnel Department and Labor-Management are reviewing parts of the performance pay plan, such as the number of "Exceeds Expectations" needed to obtain higher performance pay.

The district compares selected information with its peer districts

The district periodically compares its compensation and benefit package with the same for neighboring and similar-sized districts, as well as to other public and private employers in its geographic area. The district also exchanges cost data and benefit information, including workers' compensation issues, with other districts.

Recommendations

- *Review the district's performance-pay system for equity and dissatisfaction. With teacher input, first determine whether there is an equitable system for setting goals among the schools. If not, the committee should recommend plausible ideas for revising this part of the performance pay system, and present them to the negotiation team for consideration and further revision. Second, determine why over two-thirds of teachers and principals are dissatisfied with the current performance incentive system. Follow up with revisions or replacement, to be recommended for board approval and bargaining unit votes.*

Action Plan 7-6 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-6

Review and (Revise or) Replace the Current Performance Pay System	
Strategy	After defining a process acceptable to the district and TALC administration, conduct a thorough analysis of the current performance pay system, elicit suggestions from stakeholders for revisions or replacement, and revise or replace, as needed, with principal and teacher input.
Action Needed	Step 1: Consider basing the design on a business model in which reward is contingent on performance, and high-level performance is reflected in positive changes in the district, using existing resources. Classroom teacher performance would be measured by positive measured change in student learning and possibly other factors, all of which should be consistent district-wide and equitable at each level and position. Step 2: Consider eliminating components of the current pay plan that are found to be inequitable. Step 3: Offer the opportunity for input and suggestions from stakeholders at appropriate stages, and from TALC administration or representatives throughout the process. Step 4: Jointly arrive at a consensus for a performance-pay system that would fit the budgeted amount, require a reasonable amount of time and work to implement, link reward with measured desired performance, and be acceptable to the teachers. Step 5: Share the draft, revise as needed; present and request school board approval, if ratified; offer to bargaining unit for vote; implement if ratified and approved; monitor level of satisfaction with new program. Repeat process as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents for School Administration and for Human Resource Services
Time Frame	September 30, 2002, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

3 The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for non-instructional employees. However, there is room for improvement.

Personnel Services Department – The Personnel Department’s program for non-instructional employees consists of:

- A well-defined orientation program
- Transportation department training for drivers and aides
- Training programs

The district conducts orientation programs at Central Services for all new non-instructional employees at the time of hiring. They are educated in sexual harassment and non-discrimination policies, as well as district procedures and work performance expectations. The orientation includes a payroll component, safety training, a benefits overview, and personnel processing.

During personnel processing, each new employee receives an orientation packet which includes the Support Personnel Association of Lee County (SPALC) Agreement (contract). The contract addresses performance assessments in Article 7.07; training and career opportunities, Article 8; and personnel policies regarding absences and leave approval, Article 9. New employees receive the agenda letter, orientation-training materials including packets and handouts from Personnel, Payroll, Insurance and Benefits, and Safety Departments, along with individualized orientation packets for transportation employees.

Many departments, especially those related to trades or labor, plan and conduct their own job training and other training. The Transportation Department, for example, provides its own on-site orientation sessions for newly hired operators and attendants. Once fully on board, hirees attend a one-on-one session at Central Services for information on personnel procedures, automatic deposit, retirement, and benefits by a Transportation Personnel Specialist and representative from insurance and benefits.

Professional Development Department - The district-wide training program is planned and carried out by the Professional Development Department at the Staff Development Center (SDC). Its mission is to “improve student achievement by providing a wide range of high-quality continuing education programs and related services to all members of our school community.” Its goals, for both instructional and non-instructional staff, are to:

- Design, develop, and implement research-based, high-quality developmental opportunities for all job categories.
- Provide services related to personal/professional development and certification.
- Support effective programs and services through responsible and cost-effective use of all resources.
- Develop an ongoing data collection and evaluation system.
- Communicate an authentic image which is customer-centered, professionally-oriented and solution-seeking.

Both SDC training and training programs approved at the school level provide teacher aides with skills and the 60 hours needed to complete teacher aide coursework. District-wide programs are offered three times a year: fall, spring, and summer. Principals and department managers arrange specialized training for their employees at the department or school site. All training is registered through the SDC. Employees’ in-service records are entered into the mainframe system, and the individual’s in-service report is distributed to each employee three times a year.

Training needs assessment: Each year, to determine training needs for the coming school year, support staff are asked to complete a SDC training needs assessment survey. Results are compiled and transferred to respective administrators, union officers, and directors. In 2001-02, a labor-management committee revised the survey, analyzed the data and made recommendations about which courses to offer, given the resources and requests made for each course. Also, it is common for department heads to assess their departments’ training needs.

The district advertises course offerings through paper copies posted in schools and work sites, as well as online on the Personnel Department’s website for job list/jobs. Registration is done online or by form, since not all support staff can access the Internet. Departments schedule relevant training as needed. SDC is available to assist with training arrangements and organization. Departmental training requires SDC registration. During 2001-02, only two departments provided SDC with annual training plans. However, the SDC staff has requested and will receive and maintain annual training plans for all departments for school year 2002-03 as an integral part of the unit operational planning process.

The district does not consistently mentor non-instructional personnel

Several schools and departments have informally mentored new non-instructional employees. For example, when the SDC hired a new clerk specialist in the spring of 2001, two support staff trained her until she independently followed office procedures. However, the district does not routinely provide mentoring programs for non-instructional personnel. Mentoring is not systematically encouraged from the district office, but is left up to departments, schools, and individuals. Therefore, new hires (who do not have consistent support) may take longer to acquire new job skills, learn routine policies and procedures, and become acclimated to their environment and the system, limiting early productivity.

Recommendations

- *The district should involve a cross-section of the non-instructional employees in developing a mentoring program, as appropriate.*

Action Plan 7-7 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-7

Develop and Maintain a Mentoring Program	
Strategy	Develop and maintain a Mentoring Program for non-instructional personnel to use for new hires and as appropriate.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop an infrastructure that includes a mentoring coordinator, processes, procedures, forms, and a way to measure program effectiveness. Step 2: Develop or purchase a short, online mentoring program to include goal-setting and listening skills. Step 3: Open program where all non-instructional personnel may apply for a mentor by completing the form. The coordinator will inform trained mentors in the applicant's area of work, and those interested can submit applications. Step 4: Coordinator matches mentors and mentees and arranges initial meetings. Both parties agree to monthly mentoring meetings of 60 minutes or less.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Professional Development delegates mentoring coordinator duties
Time Frame	August 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

4 The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for instructional employees, but could further improve by assuring that the new knowledge is implemented.

The Staff Development Center offers a variety of training programs to instructional staff year-round

Training is available to administrators, instructional personnel, paraprofessionals, and support personnel. This training is intended to focus on each group's learning needs and its specialized contribution to student learning and achievement. Leadership training focuses on data analysis, diversity issues, motivation, instructional strategies, conferencing and coaching techniques, and short and long-term planning. Training for instructional personnel focuses on curriculum, assessment and instruction planning and development, instructional strategies, alternative assessment measures, and reading, writing and math, as related to Sunshine State Standards, Goal Three standards, and student performance.

Orientation Program—Orientation programs are conducted for all new instructional employees at the time of hiring. The orientation includes personnel processing, a payroll component, safety training, benefits overview and training in certification. During personnel processing, each new employee receives an orientation packet, which includes the Teachers Association of Lee County (TALC) Agreement and training in important policies, such as sexual harassment and non-discrimination. The orientation also addresses procedures and work performance expectations presented in the TALC agreement and in other district policies. For example, TALC outlines performance assessments and includes a copy of the assessment form and training and career opportunities, a handout covers certification information, and personnel employees also explain the policies for absences and leave approval, in accordance with the TALC agreement.

Professional Training Program—The district has a comprehensive staff development program for instructional employees, which provides assistance to staff in achieving district goals. In-service activities planned by the Staff Development Center offer many training opportunities to enhance employees' skill, attitudes, and knowledge. Assessing and meeting instructional staff's training needs and evaluating these trainings is part of the staff development program. The SDC administered a needs assessment survey that was completed in August 2002.

SDC staff is completing development of a new teaching delivery plan, which will incorporate follow-up support, coaching, mentoring, and reflective evaluations for all instructional courses.

The district is also developing a survey that includes evaluation of staff development training, and is intended to provide data on long-term results.

Matching Funds Program—Another area that enhances training opportunities to individual schools is the matching funds program. In 2001-2002, the district contributed funds to some schools for in-service training. Each school demonstrated how the requested training fit the school-wide Professional Development Plan (PDP), and matched the amount of funds received. The program is informal. Many schools do not use it, so beginning in 2002-03, the Professional Development Department began advertising the availability of these matching funds. Some schools needing payment assistance for training needs (e.g. consultant fees) can request matching funds. In 2002-03, SDC plans to advertise the matching fund program to all schools; with advertising and an application available online. Only \$75,000 is available for any schools that apply. Schools receiving Title V money can use these for personnel, training, or materials and do not need to submit a separate school PDP, as the same information is available on Title V application.¹

School-Based In-Services—There are three school-based in-services per year that most school staff attends. Many schools are unaware of in-service topics, courses, or presentations that other schools have conducted, as the SDC and schools do not have an organized effort to share this information. The SDC functions only as a support-training center, not a clearinghouse, and thus only lists department trainings on its database, not school-based offerings. This limits the district's ability to ensure consistent learning opportunities are available throughout the district, and may result in lost time by staff that must search for training that may be developed or research the best prices for outside consultants/trainers.

The SDC is well-respected for its job of offering other training courses, such as the annual Summer Institute course and other training selected by individual teachers.

The district has taken important steps toward technology-based learning

Section 231.6(b)(8), *Florida Statutes*, states: "The professional development system must provide for delivery of professional development by distance learning and other technology-based delivery systems to teach more educators at lower costs." The district has piloted classes online as part of its assessment to meet this requirement. SDC personnel studied the effectiveness of incorporating online courses into its offerings and reviewed literature from the National Staff Development Council. Staff Development piloted an ESOL class and online courses on other subjects in 2001-02, with participants providing feedback on the online classes. A cost-benefit analysis determined that, overall, online training costs were equal to those of live training delivery.

SDC will direct-pay or reimburse participants for some online courses, provided the courses correlate with individual/school/district goals. Participants receive in-service points upon successful completion. For employee convenience, links to online workshops are provided on the SDC website, and SDC recently began offering local courses through the Blackboard software. The Staff Development Director

¹ This is a cooperative development grant received from the US Department of Education. Its goal is to assist institutions with limited resources that traditionally serve large numbers of low-income and Hispanic students to continue to serve these students, and to improve the capacity to provide on-going, up-to-date quality education.

plans to emphasize the value of online courses to prospective trainees, in lieu of offering stipends. SDC is considering longer training courses (60-90 hours) with pre- and post tests and evaluations of course effectiveness. SDC plans in 2002-03 to put the Accomplished Professional Practices for Lee Educational System (A.P.P.L.E.S.) training courses for beginning teachers (described later in this section) online.

The SDC recently made online courses available to employees at little or no cost where practical. The perceived ease and convenience of online courses may encourage greater completion of training by those preferring this method of delivery. Where costs are equal or less--and human interaction is not a necessary factor--online course delivery may be preferred for other reasons. For example, scheduling flexibility and reduced employee travel time and distances may be among those considerations.

One problem with district payment of online courses, however, is that the teacher can drop out without difficulty, even for non-emergency reasons, without completing the course. Because courses will increasingly be offered online, SDC needs to ensure that funds used to pay for courses are effectively spent.

The district uses several methods to obtain input from instructional staff about the quality of training

The Professional Development System in Lee County provides some guidance relative to the SDC training priorities. The Florida DOE approved Lee County's Professional Development System in November 2000. This system includes student achievement and other factual data that identifies student and school needs and corresponding in-service training. It also includes the district Master In-Service Plan of training activities and several other required components, all related to professional development. The data collected from school improvement plans, performance assessments, annual school reports, surveys, and student achievement data direct the professional development training options of the district. With Induction In-Services, new employees provide written feedback on content, application, presentation and follow-up. Experienced teachers serving as teacher liaisons to new teachers review training feedback and offer improvement ideas. Training is designed around learning activities, so user input is beneficial. SDC revises training plans yearly, partly based on improvement ideas from user feedback and supervisor input. Input has been requested of new-teacher supervisors in order to design a program tailored to the needs of the new teacher.

Plans are underway to send an electronic survey to all teachers in the Induction Program and their supervisors for baseline data to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Although training is based on assessed needs, teachers and staff will benefit from a more complete assessment and correlation of needs to offerings

Instructional employees use a systematic approach to determine their own training needs that starts with the development of individual Professional Development Plans (PDP).

The state of Florida requires all districts to develop a Professional Development System. Some of the required components, such as student achievement data, were mentioned in this section. Another requirement is the implementation of instructional employees' individual Professional Development Plans.

The district requires all principals or appropriate supervisors to establish and maintain these individual Professional Development Plans for all instructional personnel. Instructional employees include all personnel that the TALC represents, with the exception of school nurses. Annually, each instructional employee writes his/her professional development plan, which the principal or manager reviews, approves, and signs. This plan serves as an assessment tool and a basis for professional training for the year. At the end of the year, the principal meets with each teacher to evaluate how he/she has met, not met, or exceeded expectations in addressing the individual goals on the PDP. The district maintains plans

from prior and subsequent years in the individual's personnel file. This method and the format for the PDP document, subject to annual revision, is consistent district-wide and is part of the TALC Agreement.

Teacher Satisfaction: As required by the state, all training offered in Lee County must be aligned with district and state goals, and must support objectives in the Master In-Service Plan. Analyzing district-wide student achievement trend data, summarizing school improvement plan goals and strategies, and surveying teachers are part of determining training needs. School improvement plans are useful tools in targeting areas of school needs. Personnel surveys provide direction for focusing on individual training, as identified through professional development planning. However, a review of teacher surveys found that less than 60% of respondents agreed that the professional development programs have met their needs. It also revealed that less than half of the respondents agreed that the district effectively coordinated efforts to help those needing professional development.

Currently, the Professional Development Department determines professional needs for district-wide training. School principals ultimately decide the specific training programs for their staff on the three in-services each year, based on the school goals listed in the School Improvement Plan designed by the School Advisory Council. In the past, for district training selections, the district used the training recommendations and decisions from a group called the Instructional Council. This group was made up of Staff Development employees, department heads, ESE staff, and representatives from such areas as intervention program, testing, curriculum, and instructional support.

Evaluation: Each year, the SDC evaluates the success of Professional Development System activities. These evaluations begin after receiving district results of all available student achievement data, and are in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Department. Each evaluation consists of an analysis of student achievement data. At the start of the 2002-03 school year, for internal planning purposes, the director and her staff completed an assessment of the department using the Florida DOE Standards on the Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol form. Committed to increasing effectiveness in the district, this self-assessment helped them focus on the direction of the department.

One recognized factor missing from almost all district instructional training programs is how the trainee's newly learned skills positively affect teacher and/or student performance. Currently, SDC requires a brief "evaluation" rating form filled out by trainees at the end of each workshop. However, this short opinion survey of the training session's content and delivery does not yield information about the long-term results of the training. In an effort to address training effectiveness, the Professional Development Department is working to assess how training carries over to the classroom. These carryover assessments are intended to improve teacher performance and student achievement.

The district implements an exceptional induction program for new teachers

The district places all first-year teachers into an electronically tracked induction program called A.P.P.L.E.S. (Accomplished Professional Practices for the Lee Educational System). New teachers receive an Induction Handbook and a welcome letter with contact information for directing questions. The district assigns an experienced peer teacher as a mentor to each new teacher. In accordance with the TALC contract, peer teachers complete the Clinical Education Training (or equivalent), and receive a TALC peer teacher supplement. The course includes training in diagnosing areas for improvement through data collection, giving valid feedback based on data, and constructing effective professional development plans.

Peer teachers' responsibilities include the following:

- Conducting a minimum of 3 formative evaluations
- Assisting with the construction of the A.P.P.L.E.S. participant's Professional Development Plan
- Submitting the Peer Teacher Verification form; meeting with the A.P.P.L.E.S. participant, one-on-one, on a regular basis

- Assisting A.P.P.L.E.S. participant with scheduling and completing the A.P.P.L.E.S. requirements, and,
- Orienting A.P.P.L.E.S. participant to school logistics, procedures for cumulative folders, student populations, interim reports, report cards, Pinnacle, school incentive programs, school discipline plan, School Improvement Plan, obtaining supplies, computer access and programs, available resources (nurse, school social worker, guidance, etc.) and other helpful information.

In addition to an individual's peer teacher, the district's experienced teacher liaisons hold a monthly meeting with A.P.P.L.E.S. teachers in their geographic zone. Meetings cover specific topics of information, activities, and discussions. This networking opportunity provides first-year teachers the opportunity to talk with other new teachers and identifies other mentors outside of their school whom they can contact for assistance.

The district also uses Teacher Cadres, an internal train-the-trainer model using a group of effective, interested teachers. The SDC may consider encouraging principals to tap into these resources.

Recommendations

- *The department could continue its efforts to determine training effectiveness: whether training does or is likely to carry over into the classroom, and if it results in enhanced student achievement or improved teacher job performance.*

Action Plan 7-8 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *Formulate a process to evaluate school-based in-services, so schools can share those which are effective. Begin dialogues with schools, using in-services and program(s) where they may be beneficial.*

Action Plan 7-9 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *With the addition of more online courses and other less traditional training deliveries, develop processes where SDC communicates written expectations to trainees.*

Action Plan 7-10 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *Upon completion of the new instructional needs assessment and analysis, follow up results by selecting specific content relevant to teacher needs; base district in-service offerings on this data; train principals on how to select their schools' in-service training based on assessed needs.*

Action Plan 7-11 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-8

Develop a Process for Assessing Training Effectiveness in the Classroom	
Strategy	Follow through on Director's plans to revise training feedback forms to be results-oriented. Initiate training in which SDC monitors classroom follow-up, and trainees determine the usefulness of training by estimating its effect on student performance.
Action Needed	Step 1: Revise the training feedback forms by adding a space for trainee narrative input and by adding an evaluative component of long-term, in-depth results of how successful the trainee is implementing the newly-learned strategy.
	Step 2: Explore automation options for compiling data to determine the long-term effects of specific training.
	Step 3: Determine methods of training follow up such as mid-year and/or end-of-year

	sessions to share student work or other student evaluations.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Professional Development
Time Frame	June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. The SDC can be an informational resource of school based inservice suggestions.

Action Plan 7-9

Formulate a Process to Obtain Information About School-Based In-Services

Strategy	Formulate a process such as the one below to obtain information about school-based in-services. Provide assistance to schools by supplying a more complete database of specific training and/or recommending training, which will fit their stated needs or requests.
Action Needed	Step 1: The SDC Director, Coordinators, and Resource Teachers should meet with principals and some teachers to improve communication between schools and between SDC and schools regarding effective training, identify their school training needs and determine and share which school-based in-services, programs, or methods have yielded positive results for them. Step 2: SDC should begin to build a database of effective in-services for specific needs, and grow the database as schools continue to conduct in-services. Step 3: SDC should offer this service to schools who can access this information to select in-services, which fit their requirements.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Professional Development
Time Frame	June 2003 and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-10

Develop and Communicate Written Procedures for Online Courses, Conferences, Independent Classes, Out-Of-District Workshops, and Others

Strategy	Develop written expectations or requirements for less routine training sessions, such as online courses, conferences for in-service points, independent classes, out-of-district workshops, etc.; communicate these clearly beforehand to all employees who may expect reimbursement or in-service credit.
Action Needed	Step 1: SDC department representatives should outline additional procedures to cover training delivery options. Step 2: Publicize and post on website written procedures on such topics as: the requirements and sequence of when an online course will be reimbursed by the district, the necessity of SDC prior approval of online courses for payment or credit, the consequences of voluntarily dropping out of district-paid courses, and other less usual circumstances. Briefly review troublesome and new procedures at principals' meeting to share with faculties. Step 3: Update as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Professional Development
Time Frame	January 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Coordinate specific content training with results of Needs Analysis.

Action Plan 7-11

Follow Up New Needs Assessment of Teacher Training

Strategy	Follow up new needs assessment of teacher training with corresponding relevant training offerings.

Action Needed	Step 1: Carefully analyze teacher training needs as determined by such instruments as survey, school goals, employee input, student achievement data, teacher input (critical), and other relevant input. Step 2: Plan training offerings based on this analysis; update as needed. Step 3: Train principals on how to assess training needs and incorporate teacher input and School Advisory Council input, and how to select offerings based on assessed needs. Step 4: Reinstate the Instructional Council or a group such as this, which includes teacher representation in Steps 1 and 2 above. Also, develop a plan to increase the use of services of all building In-Service Representatives for input into Steps 1 and 2 and for two-way communication to teachers on this important issue.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Professional Development
Time Frame	June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

5 The district provides a comprehensive staff development program for school-based administrators.

Overall, the staff development program for school-based administrators supports school leadership

The district's staff development program for school-based administrators is comprehensive. The training focuses on assisting managers and potential managers to achieve overall district goals and priorities. Human Resource Management and Development is responsible for tracking the progress of potential leaders through the leadership training program. In-service activities offer varied opportunities designed to improve and augment the skills, attitudes, and knowledge of both potential and existing leaders.

Based on input from school administrators, we find that the SDC is helpful and supportive of their growth and that of their staff. The results of ValienteHernandez principals' surveys conducted in May/June 2002 indicated that 65% of the responding principals agree that the district provides adequate training on the role within school-based management, and 62% of those responding agree that the district provides adequate information to guide sound school-based decision making.

The district provides training each fall for school-based administrators and department supervisors who are responsible for establishing a teacher's Staff Development Plan (PDP). Information and support for the PDP system is available on the SDC website. In-service activities for school administrative personnel address skills necessary for effective school management and instructional leadership. Training for administrators includes training required as part of the Preparing New Principals Program. This program is part of the district plan and includes required workshops in Facilitative Leadership, Targeted Selection, Interaction Management, Employment Law, Support Services, ESOL for Administrators, and Budget. These classes are scheduled at least once a year and are held if there is sufficient enrollment.

The district's professional development programs for school-based administrators have a number of notable features including the following:

Leadership training - The assistant superintendent of Human Resources believes that leadership training, especially for managers promoted from the worker ranks, is very important. Thus, the district provides a training program for school-based (or potential) leaders.

Programs for school-based administrators are part of the district HRMD (Human Resources and Management Development) Plan. These are: Leadership Development Program for Teachers and Potential Administrators, the Assistant Principal Pool Process, the Preparing New Principal (PNP)

Program, First Year Principal Support Program, and On-going Professional Development for Administrators. In practice, district school administrators, usually the principals, or immediate supervisors, recommend some of their high-performing interested staff for leadership training and positions. It should be noted that the Leadership Development Program is a three-year program open to all employees although the SDC is not currently involved with actively seeking qualified prospects.

The Preparing New Principal program is required to be eligible for a principal position. The Assistant Principal Pool Process is required for eligibility as an assistant principal. Completion of these programs allows the candidate to receive notification of available positions and to submit an application. The district believes that the 13 candidates now in the assistant principal pool should be enough to fill future vacancies, based on anticipated attrition.

In addition to the PNP program workshops, on-going training on district initiatives, processes, and procedures occurs through regular meetings and through trainings scheduled throughout the year for principal and assistant principal groups and the district Leadership Team. Each summer, with the exception of 2001, a multi-day Administrator Institute is provided. For the 2001-02 school year, quality awareness training was the focus of district offerings and the summer institute focused on quality, the Sterling Criteria, Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria, core values, and the district strategic plan.

The mentoring efforts for school-based administrators should be strengthened

The district recognizes the importance of mentoring to the first-year principal support program. Learning from a respected, experienced peer who provides answers, support and encouragement should yield faster learning, greater satisfaction, and more success. The program objectives provide for support through networking opportunities and coaching by experienced school administrators. Presently, however, the district does not have a mentoring program for the first year, but does plan to institute one. Meanwhile, principals handle this support informally and voluntarily.

The SDC should make sure each new school administrator has a primary mentor/coach during the principal's first year. A centralized list of mentors and mentees should be maintained at the SDC and updated to reflect changes. The SDC should be made aware of the district's mentoring and coaching needs and of the successes of this informal group to better provide resources and assistance to mentors and participants.

Recommendations

- *The SDC should ensure each new school administrator has a primary mentor/coach. A current list of mentors/mentees should be maintained at the SDC offices. In addition, the SDC should consider a system that keeps it aware of the mentoring needs of new or upcoming leaders, as well as some of the challenges and successes of the people involved. In this way, the SDC personnel may obtain new skills in becoming a resource to both mentors and participants, furthering their contributions to the district's goals.*

Action Plan 7-12 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-12

The SDC Should Ensure Each New School Administrator Has a Primary Mentor/Coach	
Strategy	SDC should ensure each new school administrator has a primary mentor/coach, with an updated list maintained at the SDC office. The SDC (or Personnel where appropriate in individual cases) should also be made aware of overall mentoring needs and successes to better provide mentors and participants with resources and assistance.
Action Needed	Step 1: Provide school administrators with mentoring and coaching skills training, including mentor and participant roles, “helping” relationships, how to mentor, topics to cover, ways to resolve issues, confidentiality, among other aspects of effective mentoring programs. Step 2: Create a list of mentors, and those inexperienced administrators to be coached. Update the list, as needed. Step 3: SDC and Personnel Services should support the mentoring program, as appropriate and upon request; and SDC staff should become a resource to both mentors and participants.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Professional Development
Time Frame	April 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

6 **The district’s system for formally evaluating employees is designed to improve and reward excellent performance and productivity, and to identify and address performance that does not meet expectations.**

The district has established a sound performance evaluation system

The TALC describes procedures for assessing the performance of all instructional personnel. The district has implemented the Teacher Performance Assessment System, which “provides written information regarding the performance assessment criteria and measures used for instructional employees.” The district also uses The Assessment Timeline for Principals, which provides an outline of the principal assessment process.

The district has a system for improving employee performance

Instructional and Administrative Personnel -The district has written procedures to evaluate the performance of instructional personnel. The TALC requires that within the first 60 days of the teachers’ contract year--and before preparing the written teacher assessment required by the law--each teacher will be informed of the criteria and procedure to be used in the formal observations and evaluation. Each teacher is then assessed using the Final Teacher Assessment instrument.

The goal of the Final Teacher Assessment is “to improve student performance by formally defining the performance standards of each educator, and evaluating their performance against those expectations.” The district has guidelines for using the assessment. The assessment is aligned with the Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Conduct of the Education Profession in Florida, the Educator Accomplished Practices, and the Florida Curriculum Frameworks.

This instrument has defined 12 teaching competencies based on the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices, with several indicators for each competency identified as “essential to the effective practice”. Performance is measured in three categories: exceeds expectations, meets expectations, and below expectations. These indicators serve as a basis for professional development.

Each annual-contract teacher is subject to formal observation by an appropriate administrator at least twice each school year, the first to be completed by December 1. Each teacher completes a Professional Development Plan (PDP); the formal observations are written and discussed with the teacher within 10 days of the observation, and the teacher receives a copy within five days. If deficiencies are noted, the administrator provides written recommendations for improvement and confers with the teacher providing assistance in helping to correct deficiencies.

The district also has the continuous improvement performance pay system described in Section 7-2, which was intended to reward effective teacher performance. As noted, however, this system is under review.

Non-Instructional Personnel: The district also has written assessment forms for non-instructional staff, with employee receiving an assessment rating for each evaluation area. Most job assessments cover areas such as appearance, cooperation, dependability, health, initiative, and job knowledge, with some variance depending on the duties of the position. Because of the importance of performance evaluations, the staff attorney should complete current efforts to insert these procedures into the Employee Handbook.

The district provides training, guidance, and coaching to persons who conduct evaluations

Each year, the district trains all administrators in the evaluation process, including assessment timelines and contractual guidelines. The director of Personnel Services, assistant superintendent of Human Resources, and coordinator of Professional Standards provide individual coaching as needed. This duty will be shared with staff in employee relations.

The district maintains each teacher's annual performance assessment in the personnel file. It also maintains a precautionary file of all employees terminated due to poor performance or misconduct, which is updated regularly. Precautionary files also are maintained for people who have been denied certification by the Department of Education or denied employment due to criminal background.

Recommendations

Please refer to Action Plan 7-6 for recommendation on performance pay.

7

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.

The district has assessment procedures for instructional and non-instructional employees, and it is the supervisor's responsibility to use these procedures to monitor employee performance from year to year. It uses assessment documents to monitor staff performance.

The district ensures that employees who repeatedly fail to meet performance expectations or whose behavior or job performance is potentially harmful to students are terminated according to proper procedures in accordance with state law. For example, to ensure that teachers meet performance standards, they are placed under annual contracts for the first three years with the district. In fiscal year 2001-02, the district did not rehire 4.5% of these staff due to performance concerns. After three years, teacher's performance is reviewed in accordance with the union contract, which outlines the steps and

efforts the district must take to remediate performance prior to termination or non-renewal of appointment.

The district also provides for a prompt investigation and resolution of allegations of employee behavior that is potentially harmful to students. An employee who has been reported for behavioral or job performance that may be potentially harmful to students can be removed from student contact, as deemed necessary. The district has a draft Emergency Action Guide for use when dealing with employee misconduct, and the code of ethics is the standard for dealing with teacher misconduct.

The district has implemented a system called “Procedures for Improvement,” which is used when a teacher or other employee may not be performing job duties adequately. If deficiencies are not improved, the employee may be recommended for dismissal or non-reappointment. Also, the district provides a written notice outlining the deficiencies and expected improvement, and an evaluation date is set.

The district should complete its manual describing the employee discipline process

Disciplinary investigations are time-consuming for administrators and others, up-setting for employees, and the subject and manner of investigations can be sensitive, as allegations often involve sexual harassment or ADA violations. Therefore it is important that these matters be handled carefully and consistently. The district has drafted a manual titled “Investigation Guidelines and Employee Discipline Process,” which outlines the process that staff should follow in investigating and processing employee discipline cases. This document should assist in providing a consistent and organized approach to working through difficult situations with employees. Human Resources is currently editing this draft, with input from the staff attorney and others and expects the completed document should be available to administrators and managers by December 2002.

The district takes appropriate steps before deciding to terminate staff

The district has a suspension-with-pay policy to ensure the safety of students and staff. The district also suspends employees with pay in situations where ongoing contact with students could be dangerous.

The district does not terminate substandard employees without first trying to improve performance. In an effort to improve employee performance and relations, the newly expanded Employee Relations Department expects to send representatives to all principal meetings and provide training and mentoring as needed. Efforts will focus on working with administrators on contracts, intervention approaches for poorly performing employees or employees under investigation, assisting with coaching employees, and other related duties. In addition, the Teaching and Learning Division is working with the curriculum directors and principals in conjunction with the Personnel Department to assist struggling teachers.

The district has written policies for terminating principals, teachers, and classified staff. The district uses the NEAT procedure before determining whether a staff member should be terminated:

- N - Notice of alleged deficiencies which, if not corrected, could lead to dismissal
- E - Explanation to the teacher of alleged deficiencies and suggestions for correction
- A - Assistance rendered by the administration to correct alleged deficiencies
- T - Time for alleged deficiencies to be corrected

A principal writes a letter of concern stating the deficiencies and expectations. The employee signs the document, with a copy being forwarded to the Personnel Department.

Intensive Assistance Program—An Intensive Assistance Program is available for teachers who hold a Professional Services Contract and who are having serious difficulties carrying out their duties due to ineffective teaching behaviors. The principal discusses the situation with the teacher, designs an improvement plan, and follows up with regular and documented assistance through observations,

suggestions, and recommendations for improvement. Modeling by having the teacher observe a lesson in another class, requesting curriculum or behavioral modification assistance from district or other appropriate personnel, suggesting resources, and other techniques are utilized. The Personnel Services Director provides support to the principal and teacher in this process. During the 2001-02 school year, the Personnel Department reported that only four teachers were placed in the Intensive Assistance Program. However, this program could be more effective for the district, the schools, the teachers, and the students, if it were less restrictive and activated earlier, before problem behavior becomes critical.

Prior to reappointment, the district reviews poorly performing employees who have been in the district over three years

Poorly performing teaching and support employees who have been with the district over three years can be reappointed; however, employees with fewer than three years under annual contract can be “non-reappointed” without cause.

A Procedure for Improvement notice is given to a poorly performing support staff member. After the employee meets informally with the immediate supervisor, several steps to resolve concerns or grievances can be taken. The employee can file a formal grievance over unresolved issues, including a disagreement over a performance evaluation.

Under the TALC and SPALC Agreements, the grievance procedure directs the superintendent and grievant to try to resolve the issue. The assistant superintendent of Human Resources can serve as the superintendent’s designee. As a next step, the grievant can work informally with the Employee Relations and Contract Management Department to resolve the issue or go to formal arbitration. As appropriate, the employee relations staff can help grievants by providing counseling, coordinating remedial training with SDC or supervisors, or by developing performance improvement strategies with the respective teams or immediate supervisors.

Human Resources reports that several intervention strategies can reduce the number of grievances filed: the intensive assistance program, intervention by the employee relations and contract management director or staff, individual improvement plans, and the interest-based problem solving model described in section 15 of this chapter. The district and the TALC unit agree that interest-based discussions are very helpful and can be used at the building level for resolution or mediation. Using this method, the issues center on points of interest to both parties where it is less likely to create a division between the two parties with preconceived outcomes and hard negotiations.

Recommendations

- *Complete the Investigation Guidelines and Employees Discipline Process manual.*
Action Plan 7-13 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.
- *Explore the benefits and requirements of the Intensive Assistance Program, revising it for more frequent use, or using the program or components where needed.*
Action Plan 7-14 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-13

Complete the “Investigation Guidelines and Employee Discipline Process” Manual

Strategy	Complete the Investigation Guidelines draft with the assistance of experienced staff, including Employee Relations staff, staff attorney, and other experts. After school board approval, supervisory and managerial staff should be trained in the manual use as soon as possible, then communicate this information to all district personnel.
Action Needed	Step 1: Complete the Investigation Guidelines draft document with proper input. Step 2: Seek school board approval; train administrators in guidelines; communicate guidelines to personnel and provide access at each work site. Step 3: Update as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources
Time Frame	June 30, 2003, and ongoing.
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Action Plan 7-14

Expand the Intensive Assistance Program

Strategy	Expand the Intensive Assistance Program to help struggling or poorly performing teachers before problem behaviors become critical.
Action Needed	Step 1: Plan a program of assistance for borderline or somewhat poorly performing teachers. Include administrative assistance, training boosts, additional resources, written suggestions and follow up, and other helpful components. Step 2: Train principals and assistant principals as the instructional leaders in the schools to use this program with selected teachers. Step 3: Pilot the program with volunteer principals or open the program for voluntary use. Obtain feedback and have the feedback direct changes in the program. Step 4: Determine the cost of expansion and expand as feasible.
Who Is Responsible	Delegation by Director of Professional Development
Time Frame	December 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	Uncertain how much the program might be utilized; cost uncertain due to pilot status.

Management of Human Resources

8

While the district has different ways to correspond with employees, it could improve communications.

The district distributes written communications to newly hired employees, as noted elsewhere in this report, and has ongoing communication with all employees. The district has taken steps to reduce the costs associate with direct communications for district news, policy and personnel changes, and other relevant information.

However, principal and teacher surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez in May/June 2002, indicated that the communication from the district to each group needs improvement. Of those responding, only 41% of principals and 36% of teachers rated communications from the district as satisfactory.

Part of the problem may stem from a recent shortage of district administrators available to assist principals and teachers in the schools. For example, prior to the recent organizational changes, all principals reported directly to the superintendent. There are now new levels of administrative help (See

Chapter 3, Management Structures for more detail). The new directors have visited the schools and three new resources teachers in the Professional Development Department, have the main responsibility to assist schools. While school visits are a start, the district should continue to enhance efforts at communicating with teachers, principals, and other employees. At the same time, the revised organization may have created a new issue: some teachers now think there are too many executive administrative positions.

Another effort on the part of the district and supported by TALC is use of the Sterling Criteria and processes. The criteria focus on Organizational Performance Excellence and are designed to assist organizations to continually improve business practices. The TALC president is a trainer in this process and is on the Steering Committee. Contractually, a Professionalization of Teachers Task Force deals with teacher issues. The Sterling Process is used here as well as in some district committees, such as the Student Assignment Task Force.

The district has a number of mechanisms to communicate with employees

A monthly benefits newsletter, "Benefit Revue," is distributed to all employees. In addition, the Retirement Benefits Guide provides useful information on tax-sheltered accounts and retirement benefits, and is distributed to eligible employees each year. Seminars and email keep employees updated about various personnel subjects, such as retirement information, services, announcements, and more. Employees receive the newsletter through interoffice mail, saving postage costs.

New employees are provided with publications about insurance, retirement, worker's compensation, sexual harassment, blood-borne pathogens, and paid holidays. The board provides copies of bargaining contracts to each work site, but the union is responsible for distributing contracts to individual members.

Procedural Information Under Development- A district's employee handbook serves as a reference guide for important department information and procedures and answers frequently asked questions. However, Lee County's handbook is still in draft form and not available. Once completed and approved, all handbook sections should be reviewed at the end of each school year, and revised as needed. We recommend the handbook coincide with the upcoming strategic planning, to support the district's goals and objectives.

In addition to a handbook, the Personnel Services director and staff are compiling a written procedural manual of personnel practices. It is intended to share written operating procedures for principals, school secretaries, and directors. The director anticipates that this booklet will be completed by December 2002 and is expected to save personnel services staff considerable time.

Electronic communications channels are also used

News and information are provided to employees through a variety of media. Employment opportunities are provided via hardcopy delivered to each work location, on a job-vacancy telephone hotline, and through the district's website. The district maintains a website with a broad range of information. Also used is an Instructional Television station, which airs important announcements, school board briefings, and meetings.

The Lee County schools have both an Internet and Intranet which contain current detailed information for employees and district personnel on personnel policies, events, a district calendar, district headquarters staffing information, and other information and data. The district uses email to communicate with teachers and administrators, which saves money over mail or providing individual hard copies.

The Public Information Department maintains the Internet; the Communications and Technology Department maintains the Intranet, which can be accessed only from district schools and departments. Each district department has responsibility for maintaining its own departmental pages.

In the survey conducted as part of this review, the following percentages of respondents agreed that they have satisfactory accessibility to the district's Intranet:

- Teachers: 72%
- Principals: 88%

Although the district occasionally solicits feedback from staff and the community, more should be done

- Stakeholder feedback on attitudes, job satisfaction, benefits, support, and morale is useful to any system.

One example, where the district solicits feedback is from prospective retirees. A survey is used to assess customer satisfaction with retirement services. Another example is when the board holds public hearings before adopting new policies. In addition, district administrators and others solicit feedback on topics when using the interest-based process in working with employees and issues. This is especially true in the collective bargaining process, and especially the interest-based process, addressed in Section 7-15. Additionally, district policy 3.31 expresses the district's intent to have parents/guardians, community members, and students (where appropriate), participate in advisory functions. However, while these examples appear to show that the district is soliciting staff feedback, the latest survey indicates that these efforts are falling short. According to the teachers and principals, however, the district has provided only infrequent opportunities for staff feedback. In a May 2000 survey, conducted by the district for school accountability purposes, the following percentages of respondents stated that the district provided adequate opportunities for feedback:

- Teachers: 34%
- Principals: 51%

The school board, the recently appointed superintendent, and the school principals appear open to parents/guardians/ community members and student comments.

Assessment Strategy- The district's strategic plan, approved in July 2002, will have the district administer a satisfaction survey with the results used as baseline data to establish a five-year target for 2007. In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed, and data will be collected in Spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007.

The human resources division does not regularly visit staff at all schools

School board members are assigned schools to visit. In addition, insurance and benefits employees, while not part of human resources, annually visit all school locations during the open enrollment period. However, human resources employees do not make it a practice to annually visit all school sites to address any employee questions or concerns. During school year 2001-02, the human resources representatives visited some, but not all schools. The district should consider establishing routine visits to all schools by the human resources staff.

Recommendations

- *The staff attorney should contact those responsible for input and review of the Employee Handbook, and formulate a reasonable timeline for completion. This process will end with a*

school board presentation, possible revisions, board approval, publication (in print and online), and distributions.

Action Plan 7-15 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *The human resources department should schedule regular on-site visits to solicit input from the stakeholders (employees).*

Action Plan 7-16 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-15

Complete the Employee Handbook	
Strategy	Complete the employee handbook.
Action Needed	Step 1: Complete the process of writing an employee handbook with input from stakeholders and department heads. Step 2: Solicit suggestions from same for draft and revisions. Step 3: Seek school board approval. Step 4: Distribute hard copies to work sites and put on Intranet. Step 5: Revise as needed to update.
Who Is Responsible	Staff attorney
Time Frame	June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-16

Expand School Visiting Schedule	
Strategy	Expand the schedule of on-site school visits to include all district schools.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop a schedule for school visits, to include frequency, purpose, proposed dates, and staff members. Step 2: Arrange meetings with principals and leadership teams at each school to disseminate information, communicate the willingness to provide support, to act as liaison between administrative office and schools, and to listen to needs, and suggestions. Step 3: Follow up on results of these group meetings.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendents delegate to respective directors or staff of professional development, personnel services, and employee relations and contract management, and director of equity and recruitment.
Time Frame	January 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

9

The district has efficient, cost-effective policies and practices for providing substitute teachers and other substitute personnel.

Teacher substitution is efficient

The district has an efficient policy for arranging substitute teachers. To have enough substitute teachers to cover absenteeism, the district increased the substitute teacher daily pay rates in 2002-03 from a minimum of \$60 to a maximum of \$80. During the 2001-02 school year, the district filled 97% of instructional absences, compared to 91% in 2000-01 and 89% in 1999-2000.

The district uses an automated phone system to receive absence reports from instructional personnel. Following reported absences, the system contacts eligible substitute teachers. If the substitute accepts the

position, a number is given to the substitute to present to the school. Each work site is able to identify all absent teachers through the phone system or, at some schools, through a data screen. Substitutes are called in order of priority, first the school's "preferred" substitute list, then certification match, and finally the general pool of substitutes who have expressed willingness to substitute at the school.

Training—A potential substitute teacher must submit all required documentation to personnel and is required to complete a Substitute Teacher Training course before beginning substitute work. This course reviews job responsibilities, employment practices and procedures, the computerized Leave Management System, classroom management strategies, legal issues, district policies, and safety training.

During Fiscal Year 2001-02, the district used a team of experienced teachers to develop a classroom management workshop for substitute teachers. In addition, the SDC plans to add substitute teacher basic skills workshops, with substitute teacher representatives to provide input on the topics to be covered.

Central service administrators meet regularly with substitute teacher representatives to gather input on training program content, as well as to discuss other substitute teacher issues. As the need to incorporate new information and strategies for substitute teachers arises, the workshops can be revised or new workshops created.

To further develop the professionalism of substitute teachers, substitute teachers who are currently active on the Leave Management System may attend SDC workshops on a space-available basis. SDC courses are held in the fall, spring, and summer on various topics.

The district has an efficient system to track teacher absences

The district prepares monthly reports identifying teacher absences, by type, for the Leave Management System. These reports are provided to school board members, the executive director, human resources, personnel director, chief financial officer and the Teachers Association of Lee County. Periodically, absences are calculated by school. Each work site receives monthly attendance reports so managers can verify and monitor absences.

The district should investigate the reasons instructional staff use temporary duty leave, as it contributes to absenteeism

The following three exhibits display the district's increasing rate of employee absenteeism, reasons for instructional staff absences, and the latter's absentee rates in relation to peer districts.

Exhibit 7-19 shows the district's absentee rates for fiscal years 2000, 2001, and 2002. In addition, Exhibit 7-20, shows the reasons for absences. Illness is cited as the reason for almost half of the absences among instructional staff. Other reasons in order of frequency are temporary duty (over one-fourth); personal time; worker's compensation; jury duty, and other absentee reasons without pay. The exhibit also shows that the number of days of instructional staff absences is comparable at all grade levels.

Exhibit 7-21 shows that the district's instructional staff absence rates for elementary, middle school and high schools are near the peer group average for 2000-01. The overall rate of absenteeism is slightly below the average of Lee County's peer districts; however, district teachers have an unusually high rate of temporary duty leave compared to the peer districts. There are many reasons teachers would submit a request for this leave, but one possibility is that this type of leave is used for training programs. The Professional Development Department offers training during the school day for several reasons. For example some teachers cannot attend evening training classes, some courses last five days (sometimes three school days and a weekend), and visiting national consultants present some sessions. Schools also place teachers on temporary duty to train others, conduct assessments, write plans with teams (such as the School Improvement Plan), attend conferences, or participate in school or district committee work or district meetings.

Exhibit 7-19

The District's Employee Absenteeism Rate of Is Increasing

Month	FY 2000 Number of Absences	Average Days Absent Per Employee	FY 2001 Number of Absences	Average Days Absent Per Employee	FY 2002 Number of Absences	Average Days Absent Per Employee
August	454	0.13	770	0.22	879	0.25
September	2,568	0.76	3,024	0.88	3,799	1.10
October	3,670	1.08	3,942	1.14	4,952	1.43
November	4,285	1.26	4,277	1.24	4,268	1.23
December	2,883	0.85	2,252	0.65	2,761	0.80
January	3,917	1.16	2,875	0.83	3,209	0.93
February	4,029	1.19	3,977	1.15	4,199	1.21
March	4,844	1.43	4,873	1.41	3,339	0.97
April	3,428	1.01	3,461	1.00	5,068	1.47
May	4,678	1.38	4,783	1.38	4,241	1.23
June	643	0.19	813	0.24	607	0.18
Total	34,945	10.31	35,047	10.14	38,201	11.05

Source: Leave Management System (LMS) Statistics. The School start date was two weeks earlier in FY 2002. No. of employees 2000 and 2001 from "Profiles" and 2002 from the Department of Education (Accountability Services).

Exhibit 7-20

During The 2001-02 School Year the Biggest Reason for Absences in Instructional Staff Was Illness

Reason	Elementary	Middle	High	Special
Illness	55.57%	52.23%	57.84%	56.92%
Temporary Duty	26.43%	31.02%	27.64%	28.20%
Personal	14.96%	12.95%	11.61%	12.59%
Worker's Comp.	1.65%	1.21%	.29%	.13%
Jury Duty	.47%	.55%	.74%	.69%
Other w/o pay	.51%	1.54%	1.60%	.99%
Other	.41%	.50%	.28%	.48%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: Current Units / Leave Management System (LMS) Statistics.

Exhibit 7-21

During the 2001-02 School Year the District's Instructional Staff Absences Were Slightly Less Than the Peer Group Average

Reason for Absence	Lee	Volusia	Pasco	Seminole	Brevard	Polk	Average w/o Lee
Instructional – Elementary							
Personal Leave	1.23	1.77	1.60	0.87	1.70	1.97	1.58
Sick Leave	4.97	5.17	7.50	6.13	5.13	5.37	5.86
Temporary Duty	2.45	1.50	1.37	2.00	0.40	0.47	1.15
All other Leave	0.12	0.13	-	0.57	0.37	0.27	0.27
All Leave Types (Average)	8.77	8.57	10.47	9.57	7.60	8.07	8.85
Percentage:							

Reason for Absence	Lee	Volusia	Pasco	Seminole	Brevard	Polk	Average w/o Lee
Personal Leave	14.07%	20.62%	15.29%	9.06%	22.37%	24.38%	17.85%
Sick Leave	56.65%	60.31%	71.66%	64.11%	67.54%	66.53%	66.19%
Temporary Duty	27.95%	17.51%	13.06%	20.91%	5.26%	5.79%	12.95%
All other Leave	1.33%	1.56%	0.00%	5.92%	4.82%	3.31%	3.01%
All Leave Types (Average)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Instructional – Middle							
Personal Leave	0.93	1.37	0.40	1.07	0.77	0.77	0.87
Sick Leave	3.27	3.60	2.07	3.37	2.30	1.43	2.55
Temporary Duty	1.93	2.67	2.87	2.10	0.20	0.48	1.66
All other Leave	0.77	3.83	4.17	2.27	3.20	1.55	3.00
All Leave Types (Average)	6.90	11.47	9.50	8.80	6.47	4.23	8.09
Percentage:							
Personal Leave	13.53%	11.92%	4.21%	12.12%	11.86%	18.11%	10.79%
Sick Leave	47.34%	31.40%	21.75%	38.26%	35.57%	33.86%	31.55%
Temporary Duty	28.02%	23.26%	30.18%	23.86%	3.09%	11.42%	20.55%
All other Leave	11.11%	33.43%	43.86%	25.76%	49.48%	36.61%	37.11%
All Leave Types (Average)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Instructional – High							
Personal Leave	2.17	3.13	2.00	1.93	2.47	2.73	2.45
Sick Leave	8.23	8.77	9.57	9.50	7.43	6.80	8.41
Temporary Duty	4.38	4.17	4.23	4.10	0.60	0.95	2.81
All other Leave	0.88	3.97	4.17	2.83	3.57	1.82	3.27
All Leave Types (Average)	15.67	20.03	19.97	18.37	14.07	12.30	16.95
Percentage:							
Personal Leave	13.83%	15.64%	10.02%	10.53%	17.54%	22.22%	14.48%
Sick Leave	52.55%	43.76%	47.91%	51.72%	52.84%	55.28%	49.65%
Temporary Duty	27.98%	20.80%	21.20%	22.32%	4.27%	7.72%	16.58%
All other Leave	5.64%	19.80%	20.87%	15.43%	25.36%	14.77%	19.30%
All Leave Types (Average)	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Florida Department of Education: Average Absence during the school year (180 year calendar) School Advisory Council Reports 2000-01.

Recommendations

- Study the temporary duty rates, purposes, and policy to determine feasibility of minimizing absenteeism in that category to be in line with peer districts.

Action Plan 7-17 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-17

Study the Temporary Duty Rates, Reasons, and Policies, and Determine If Changes Are Needed	
Strategy	Analyze the Temporary Duty figure comparisons, reasons, school board policies, and operational practices to determine extent of Temporary Duty leave. The district should decide if a policy change is warranted.

Action Needed	Step 1: Analyze Temporary Duty leave and corresponding policies. Step 2: Determine leave time where teachers are away from their students and leave time where substitutes are used. Assess these “costs.” Step 3: Compare these “costs” to the benefits the teachers receive as a result of the reasons for Temporary Duty leave (conferences, workshops, assignments, etc.). Also, determine if these teachers can achieve some of the training and other benefits without the high “costs” at times. Step 4: As a district, assess whether a change in Temporary Duty leave policies or approvals is warranted in an effort to lessen teacher absences for this reason.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources
Time Frame	2002-2003 school year
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Any savings would depend on the revised policies and training or other schedules.

10 The district maintains accessible personnel records. However, more complete documentation is needed.

Personnel records are maintained in an obtainable manner, which can be accessed in accordance with state statutes. The district does not have a consolidated automated record-keeping system.

The district’s personnel records storage is efficient, as the state statutes require

Record Maintenance—The district maintains individual personnel records for all employees, as the applicable state law requires. The superintendent maintains the records of principals and directors, including employment applications, references, annual evaluations, letters of commendation, data substantiating placement on the salary schedule, teaching certificates for teachers, and other pertinent data.

ValienteHernandez P.A. noted that the district maintains a hardcopy of personnel records, including confidential records, in a file room in the personnel department. The department has a system for organizing each file, including a review log and record of review, which are maintained for tracking file reviews.

Each year, the district archives the following records to cartridge tapes: personnel/payroll master files, personnel/payroll purged records, inactive applicant files, and the position control file, which are all accessible for data analysis. A personnel file is maintained for each employee in the central administration building and the department keeps each file for two years after employee termination as required by state law.

Record Documentation—Some files do not contain complete documentation. When ValienteHernandez, P.A. examined 10 personnel files, the documentation noted in Exhibit 7-22 was missing. This suggests significant deficits in the district’s procedures and practices designed to ensure personnel files are complete. Corrective actions are needed.

Exhibit 7-22

Position	Missing Documentation
Assistant (Non-Certified Non-Instructional)	- Evidence of the principal's review, such as the telephone reference interviews. - Three non-confidential reference forms. - Completed and filed form I-9. - Evidence of probationary status for a period not to exceed 90 calendar days from the first day a new employee begins work.

Position	Missing Documentation
Teacher	Employee's certification analysis.
Teacher	- Copy of the person's driver's license. - Evidence of the principal's review. - Acceptance of appointment - Within 10 days. - Employee's certification analysis. - Completed and filed form I-9.
Principal	- Copy of the person's driver's license. - Employee's certification analysis. - Employee's statement of status of eligibility (from the Department of Education). - Completed and filed form I-9.
Teacher	- Copy of the Social Security Card. - Copy of the person's driver's license. - Evidence of the principal's review. - Acceptance of appointment - Within 10 days. - Three non-confidential reference forms. - Employee's certification analysis. - Completed and filed form I-9.
Teacher (Non-certified Instructional Personnel)	- Statement of the instructional duties performed (Non-certified Instructional Personnel = NCIP). - Evidence that the supervisor gave specific criteria, forms, and processes for evaluation to each employee within the first 30 days of employment and annually within the first 30 days of each evaluation period thereafter.
Teacher out of field	- Employee's certification analysis. - Employee's statement of status of eligibility (from the Department of Education). - Out of field verification request (electronic or hard copy).
Teacher	- Acceptance of appointment - Within 10 days. - Employee's statement of status of eligibility (from the Department of Education).

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Although the current mainframe may be useful in automating some records and generating some reports, more functions are needed

The districts mainframe stores automated personnel records such as personal information, payroll information, and position-related information. This serves as the basis for several but not all necessary reports needed for payroll and personnel functions. Currently, the district maintains approximately 11,000 employee files and approximately 14,000 employee and teacher application files with nine personnel specialist positions.

The personnel department uses a complex (non-mainframe) PC-based database system to complete necessary functions such as mail correspondence, process leave requests, track retirement data, maintain course codes, and a variety of other tasks. Web-form or Active Server Page technology integrates with the current database system for data gathering and automatic updating of databases. However, many functions performed by district or school staff could be performed in a fraction of the time by specialized computer programs, limiting the districts current effectiveness and efficiency.

For example, principals and others often need to retrieve data for reports or for hiring. Although the personnel department pulls applicant and personnel files for principals on a priority basis, principals state that this method is inefficient due to travel and wait times. To review files, many principals have to travel from schools at the far end of the county, which is a waste of valuable administrative time, as described in best practice 7-1. While the personnel department is helpful, the process is inefficient. Immediate access is impossible because personnel needs 24-hour notice for file viewing and principals must schedule travel time away from their schools. Both personnel staff and principals agree that automation would greatly increase efficiency, but view the cost and unresolved former system issues as roadblocks. The personnel department lacks software programs to link the databases so that principals (and others needing access) can read applicant or personnel files on their desktop computers. Useful software for personnel should also provide links with payroll services.

Under the current system, personnel specialists perform time-consuming yet necessary tasks, such as collecting data on out-of-field teachers, certification tracking and reporting requirements, and changing personal employee information. The personnel office favors remote access to the Intranet so that employees can change their own personal information. In addition, the personnel office and some principals agree that the recently changed certification requirement allowing Florida to accept some out-of-state certificates will relieve some of the tracking and reporting burden. Certification tracking should also be part of the automated system.

Tracking ESOL and other out-of-field teachers is an additional time-consuming chore that can and should be automated. However, the information systems department has not had the opportunity to coordinate with the personnel department to automate tracking teacher progress in meeting ESOL requirements, but should be made a priority.

Please refer to Section 18 of Chapter 6 (Administrative and Instructional Technology) of this report for a discussion of the district's plan to replace its mainframe computer system with one which better meets the district's instructional and administrative needs, including those of the personnel services department.

Recommendations

- *Revisit and revise procedures that support complete personnel files and meet current file requirements by replacing missing documentation.*

Action Plan 7-18 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-18

Revisit and Revise Procedures to Ensure Personnel Files Are Complete and Meet the Current Personnel File Requirements

Strategy	Revisit and revise procedures to ensure personnel files are complete and meet the personnel file requirements to ensure that all documentation is in each personnel file.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review and adjust procedures for completing personnel files so ensure that all files will be completed correctly and thoroughly. Step 2: Request and replace the missing documentation of audited files and other files where missing documents are evident. Step 3: For new hires, personnel specialists should match a checklist of required documents of each category of positions with the incoming documents, and follow up where needed to complete a file.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Personnel Services
Time Frame	December 31, 2002 and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

11 The district practices cost-containment practices in its workers' compensation program.

The district self-insures workers' compensation claims for up to \$200,000. It contracts for claims administration services with McCreary Employers Mutual, Inc. (EMI), its third-party administrator (TPA). EMI places claims adjusters and clerical support on-site in the Insurance and Benefits Management Department, and provides detailed claims and expense reports. EMI subcontracts with CorVel to provide managed medical care services. The director of Insurance and Benefits Management meets bi-weekly with the on-site EMI staff to review the following: new accidents, discuss claim strategies, and improve workers' compensation communication and procedures. This group also discusses issues requiring immediate attention as needed. Representatives from EMI's corporate office conduct quarterly meetings with the director and EMI's on-site staff regarding program management, to review worker's compensation reports and to discuss strategies for handling major claims.

TPA Evaluation—The district has not formally evaluated the performance or cost of its TPA. The district has retained the same TPA based on the director's view that a change would be disruptive, that the current TPA may charge less, and that the current on-site service model that EMI uses is superior to another off-site claims service model with which the director has had experience. While on-site claims adjusting staff may be more accessible to department personnel and injured employees, and it may be easier for on-site contracted staff to become familiar with related functions such as payroll and district processes, other factors should also be considered.

Without a systematic review, the district does not know whether contracting with another TPA could result in cost savings, improved services, or both. The last comparison of TPA services was done in 1991, when EMI was selected at district's TPA for property/casualty services. The director plans to issue a Request for Proposal for property/casualty TPA services during 2002-03, outlining the scope of services required. The Insurance Task Force subcommittee could assist the department in analyzing the proposals, interviewing prospective service providers, and making a recommendation.

Claims—Workers' compensation claims could result in significant costs to districts extending over several years, especially when more serious injuries are involved. Typically it takes several years to identify all costs associated with a claim. The district's expense history, depicted in Exhibit 7-23, shows that the costs of workers' compensation claims are increasing principally under the settlements expense section. The number of employees consists of regularly scheduled workers, regardless of hours; the number of claims is counted only when the district incurred a medical or other expense for an individual. The amounts incurred in Exhibit 7-23 are amounts paid out for open claims in each year listed.

Exhibit 7-23

Costs of Workers' Compensation Claims Increased Over the Past Three Years

Expense Section	Workers' Compensations Costs by Fiscal Year					Percentage of total	'99-'02 Growth Rate
	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	4-year total		
Indemnity	393,744	466,326	352,688	494,692	1,707,450	16%	8/5
Legal	218,346	267,728	212,901	303,845	1,002,820	10%	12%
Medical	1,258,998	1,194,569	1,219,401	1,846,118	5,519,086	53%	14%
Expense	150,838	91,101	64,692	146,246	452,877	4%	-1%
Settlements	231,606	746,399	340,137	406,899	1,725,041	17%	21%
Total Amount Incurred	\$2,253,532	\$2,766,123	\$2,189,819	\$3,197,800	\$10,407,274	100%	12%
Total Open Claims		1,713	1,575	1,102			

Personnel Systems and Benefits

Source: Workers Compensation Report done by EMI.

EMI reports that cost increases are caused by the following:

- Overall cost increases (wages, legal, healthcare, etc).
- The addition of new accident-years into the payment stream.
- Payment timing.

In the last four fiscal years the district's incurred claim average has been about \$2.6 million, as shown in Exhibit 7-23.

The district has established an on-going review of its workers' compensation program to serve as a basis to evaluate how and why claims arise, and to monitor expenses. The district uses the results of its evaluations to produce a plan aiming at reducing exposure to workers' compensation claims and expenses. Also, the district compares the workers' compensation results with peer and neighboring districts, which helps to evaluate district results. See Exhibit 7-24.

Exhibit 7-24

Over The Last Three Years Lee Averaged Fewer Workers' Compensation Claims Per Employee Than Several Neighboring Or Peer Districts

School District	Employees/Claims	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Lee				
	Number of employees	9,225	9,300	9,375
	WC Claims	663	662	753
	WC Claims per 100 Employees	7.20	7.10	8.0
Charlotte				
	Number of employees	2,150	2,150	2,150
	WC Claims	123	170	305
	WC Claims per 100 Employees	5.7	7.9	14.2
Collier				
	Number of employees	6,200	6,200	6,200
	WC Claims	654	672	737
	WC Claims per 100 Employees	10.5	10.8	11.9
Polk				
	Number of employees	11,800	11,800	11,800
	WC Claims	1,248	1,308	1,198
	WC Claims per 100 Employees	10.6	11.1	10.2
Sarasota				
	Number of employees	4,900	4,900	4,900
	WC Claims	608	656	618
	WC Claims per 100 Employees	12.4	13.4	12.6
Volusia				
	Number of employees	7,354	8,130	8,745
	WC Claims	702	730	702
	WC Claims per 100 Employees	9.5	9.0	8.0

Source: Compiled by ValienteHernandez P.A based on information obtained from the district.

One indicator that frequency of claims is a problem is the annual claims count. District claims increased in 2001-02, but had remained relatively stable for the prior two-year period. Over the three-year period ending 2001-02, however, Lee County had fewer claims in relation to number of employees than several peer and neighboring districts.

Results of evaluations are used to make changes and reduce costs

The district has a document, "All Workers' Compensation Claims," which organizes claims by fund, year, and division, and permits the district to track the number of claims during the fiscal year. See Exhibit 7-25.

Exhibit 7-25

All Lee Workers' Compensation Claims

	Fiscal Year of Date of Injury			
	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Number of cases with expenses	716	679	683	753
Remaining reserves	337,759	397,821	443,503	1,017,725
Total payments	2,033,781	1,694,724	1,778,618	960,198
Total incurred	2,371,541	2,092,545	2,222,121	1,977,923

Source: Compiled by ValienteHernandez P.A based on the workers' compensation claims report.

The district uses the results of its evaluation of worker's compensation claims and expenses to reduce its costs. It implements prompt on-site TPA/district staff communication, places injured workers in light duty and alternate duty programs, holds regular meetings and reports, trains Transportation Department bus drivers in bus safety, has a managed medical care arrangement and a physical therapy contract, engages in communication with safety departments, and holds departmental safety training and adjustments. These cost reduction and injury prevention methods are explained below.

On-site communication: To reduce claims costs, district and EMI staff meets once or twice a week. Frequent communication leads to in timelier handling of medical, legal, and employment-related issues involving injured employees. Long-term cases with medical or legal complications are reviewed every 60 days, six months, and annually, EMI generates reports of complex and lost-time cases, which are presented to the director for comment. During their bi-weekly and quarterly meetings, district and EMI staff uses the improved procedures (three-point contact guidelines) for timely communications with employees, supervisors, and medical providers. The director schedules quarterly meetings with the TPA and defense attorneys on litigated files. The district has improved workers' compensation file set-up, litigation, and investigation guidelines.

Light and alternate duty: Another cost-reduction effort is the district's light duty program, which ensures employees return to work as soon as they are released by their treating physicians to perform limited duties. The Insurance and Benefits Management Department works with the injured employee's supervisor to tailor duties to the employee's physical restrictions. Returning injured employees to work as soon as possible reduces workers' compensation indemnity payments.

The district's alternate duty program retrain injured employees who reach maximum medical improvement and will no longer be able to do their old jobs or puts them in new jobs they can perform. The director and staff meet daily with EMI about complex claims and light or alternate duty assignments. This coordination facilitates retraining and finding new positions for injured employees, and significantly reduces worker's compensation claims costs.

Bus driver and other training: One example of cost-savings produced by loss-preventive measures is bus driver training and new bus models being purchased. Bus drivers have a high number of workers'

compensation injuries. The Department of Transportation's safety department now trains drivers in the correct way to get on and off busses and how best to open and close the bus doors; the two most common causes of injuries to bus drivers. The department is also buying new buses that have automatic doors, which will eventually replace the buses now used.

Typical of workers' compensation claims, back injury is the district's largest claims category, thus improper lifting is a major target area for worker loss-prevention education. District staff, in conjunction with TPA loss-prevention and education staff, identify types of injuries by department, and educate district employees in loss prevention and safety measures.

Managed medical care and physical therapy: To help contain the rising cost of workers' compensation medical care, EMI contracts with CorVel for its Managed Medical Care Arrangement, which includes: the CorCare Preferred Provider network, quality assurance, case management, employee education, and grievance resolution. The department identified high cost cases meeting established criteria and transfers those cases to medical case management. EMI also subcontracts with Network Synergy to manage physical therapy for injured workers. A maximum cap of \$650 per injured body part for therapy also produces documented cost savings.

Safety: The Safety Department (under District Operations) receives notice of work-related injuries from the TPA. The TPA works with the Safety Department's inspection division to point out safety problems and recommend physical plant remedies or corrective procedures. The Safety Department may make changes to the facilities, as warranted. Examples are mat placements and mirrors strategically placed at corners. The Safety Department also provides training on proper lifting, or slip-and-fall prevention for cafeteria workers.

In addition, a number of changes are scheduled to support the new district strategic goal of providing a safe and healthy environment as measured by injury reduction. For example, the director is working with representatives from the safety, transportation, food service, and maintenance departments to review accident reports and develop appropriate training programs. District-wide support of this strategic goal and implementation of the new safety training programs to safeguard district employees and reduce workers' compensation claims is encouraged. In addition, immediate supervisors at each injured worker's work site, typically school principals, will be accountable for the results of injury reports. EMI plans to provide a certified instructor in OSHA safety procedures to train district staff.

Employee feedback: Since there is no formal feedback sought from workers' compensation claimants, the director is now planning a survey to determine the level of satisfaction among employees who have been through the claims and treatment process. For evaluative purposes, the district should collect responses about medical care management, timeliness of departmental response (such as whether the employee received the workers' comp. kit promptly), treatment at work (upon return or in light/alternate duty programs, etc.). Only one formal grievance has been filed (with CorVel July, 2001).

Premiums— The "manual rate" is the maximum workers' compensation premium that an employer of a given size would pay. The manual rate for the district, based on workers' compensation rates approved for use in Florida, would be \$5.69 million. A number of discounts are available to eligible employers to reduce this amount, and the district receives a discount from the straight manual rate.

Teamwork and coordination implement the district's light and alternate duty programs

The light duty and alternate duty programs try to keep employees in the same work locations. Employing teachers on light duty can be less expensive than hiring substitute teachers. Alternate duty jobs not only promote an early return to work but also benefit the district through reduced workers' compensation claims payments and fulfill important duties.

An alternate duty worker may take vocational testing or classes; doctors may approve the worker to perform a wide variety of jobs. Match-ups are made based on work that is needed with duties the injured

worker is able to do. The worker applies to the supervisor, and if hired, remains at the pre-injury same pay grade. The director reports that twelve workers are on alternate duty at this writing.

The district has a well-written, informative monthly “Benefit Revue” newsletter

The director writes a monthly newsletter with useful benefits information and health and safety tips. Since some claims may be associated with out-of-shape workers, the director has written newsletter articles about fitness and health issues, including smoking. Workers are informed of discounts for fitness classes at local hospitals and free stop-smoking programs. We commend this on-going effort to keep employees informed of benefits changes and provide important health and fitness information.

Recommendations

- *Issue a Request for Proposal to compare costs of the current TPA with others, conduct a thorough review of qualified vendors in the customary prescribed manner, and make the most appropriate selection.*

Action Plan 7-19 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-19

Issue a Request for Proposal for Third Party Administration of Workers’ Compensation Claims	
Strategy	Issue a RFP for TPA of workers’ compensation claims to assess the comparative cost and services of current and interested vendors; select the best vendor.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop measures to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the present TPA, managed medical care program, and light and alternate duty programs. Select performance goals; decide on prioritized target areas to measure; select the measurement; plan data collection; gather data and compare to performance goals. Step 2: Coordinate with the Task Force to write the RFP requirements. Ensure that responses to RFP will allow comparison with performance of present TPA. Step 3: Coordinate with the Purchasing Department to issue the RFP. Step 4: Objectively assess all eligible respondents in terms of costs and services and fulfilling the requirements stated in the RFP. Step 5: Select the best choice on behalf of the district. Include effectiveness measures in contract with TPA.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Insurance and Benefits
Time Frame	December 31, 2002 through May 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

12 The district has taken steps to establish accountability for its human resource program. However, measures and benchmarks should be developed to ensure the program’s efficiency and effectiveness.

The district is establishing annual objectives for the Human Resources Division, which will include measures and benchmarks that can be used to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the Human Resources Division from year to year. The timeframe for completion is September 2002.

The district needs to develop and implement goals and measures for the Human Resources Division

At this writing, the school district was initiating a new strategic planning process. Using information gathered from the district, two programs will spearhead efforts to form missions, goals, and implementation processes. One is the Baldrige-based Self-Assessment for District Leadership Teams Quality, and the second is the Sterling Process, which initially will assist the district in goal-setting and determining expected outcomes. All employees will participate in achieving the same overall goals and those pertinent to their areas. We commend the district for the decision to implement systems that will facilitate staff inclusion and general consistency.

The district has concluded that, due to the budget shortfall, the district and the Human Resources Division need to address the fiscal impact of personnel matters, including responses to litigation, supplies, and travel. The board requires the fiscal impact plan to reduce costs. The Human Resources Division will use the interest-based system eliciting input from stakeholders to ensure responsible decisions expand the descriptions.

To ensure efficiency and effectiveness of the Human Resources Division, and also to help to identify and analyze possible cost savings, the executive team (ET) reviews and evaluates programs for potential cost savings and alternatives, such as in the case of the substitute program. In an effort to compare privatization of this program through Kelly Services, the director of Personnel priced the amount of administrative time, leasing agreement cost, direct costs, and other for consideration by the Team. In this example, the district concluded that the district administration of the substitute program was more cost-effective than contracted services.

Recommendation

- The district should complete the process of goal-setting and implement performance measures and benchmarks to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of Human Resources Division functions. The use of standard measures and benchmarks can facilitate the comparison of department performance from year to year, as well as the comparison of district performance with the peer districts.*

Action Plan 7-20 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-20

Use Performance Accountability and Benchmarking	
Strategy	Establish and implement accountability mechanisms to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the Personnel Department through a formal plan of action and subsequent evaluation. Select and utilize appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and benchmarks, including comparisons to adjoining districts. The same should be done for the other departments within the Human Resources Division. This can be achieved through the new Strategic Plan and implementation process.

Action Needed	Step 1: The Assistant Superintendents for Teaching and Learning and Human Resources should work with Personnel Department staff to identify the most important functions that the department performs, and then to identify possible output and outcome measures of these functions. Step 2: By June 2003, the Personnel Services Department should identify measures to determine appropriate performance benchmarks. Step 3: By December 2003, the Personnel Services Department should develop a set of performance measures that will be used to evaluate the performance of the department. Step 4: At least annually, the Personnel Services Department should report its performance based on its measures to the school board. Step 5: Repeat process for other departments within the Human Resources Division.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendents for Teaching and Learning and for Human Resources
Time Frame	December 31, 2002, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	Can be implemented with existing resources. Efficiency creates potential savings.

13 **The district periodically reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the office of Human Resources to minimize administrative layers and processes.**

The district periodically reviews the staffing level of the Human Resources departments. The annual budget process requires that all positions be justified or eliminated. New positions have recently been added and some positions have been upgraded as shown in Exhibit 7-3.

The district periodically revises Human Resources' organizational structure and staffing levels

The district's Personnel Department (see Exhibit 7-3) consists of 17 staff members who perform a wide-range of duties. To ensure the department is responsive to district's changing needs, it assesses its staffing and makes changes as necessary. For example, the Professional Development Department also expanded its staff and services, adding three Professional Development Resource Teachers whose duties include reinforcing teaching skills, coaching, training reading and math, assisting teachers one-on-one, demonstrating lessons, and following up training sessions. These duties may eventually increase, as needed and as the program grows.

The staff numbers in the Personnel Services Department appear reasonable based on current workload and responsibilities. However, additional automation and the increased use of electronic filing, tracking, and other tasks will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Human Resources Division departments. When a new computer system is in place, staff numbers and duties should be reviewed.

14 **The district has taken steps to reduce costs and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the district's personnel practices, although no formal reviews have been done.**

The district does not have a standard schedule or plan for reviewing and adjusting its personnel practices. However, several examples of efforts to identify practices that were not cost effective, efficient, or effective were noted. Most significantly, the district recently has adjusted its practices for cost efficiency. The district has initiated district-wide strategic planning, which currently involves departmental planning and a review of current practices, as described in section 12 above.

The district does not routinely evaluate the overall efficiency and effectiveness of its personnel practices

After the Personnel Services Department has established performance measures and benchmarks, as discussed in Action Plan 7-20, it is necessary to establish a system for periodically reviewing the department's performance. These periodic reviews would be designed to determine how the department can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its practices and how operational costs could be reduced.

Although as a part of its district-wide strategic planning process the Human Resources Division is expected to conduct standard periodic evaluations of its practices, however, the division does not currently evaluate its general practices in a structured, scheduled manner. In lieu of a system of performance measures and benchmarks, the district has taken steps to identify and address selected issues of improvement in terms of efficiency and costs:

- Personnel Department is integrating Web-form or Active Server Page technology with its current database system for faster data and significant reduction in paper.
- Personnel Department operates a system that electronically transmits large amounts of report data to school sites via email (instead of interoffice mail) again reducing paper usage, cost, and space.
- Personnel Department is initiating placement of employment applications into "Portable Document Format," on the district's website.
- Personnel Department is working on an online applicant tracking system.
- Personnel has created an electronic board agenda and an internal system to produce "new employee packets" (for orientation). Electronic production allows greater speed and accuracy.
- During the 2001-02 school year, Personnel Department implemented a new system to pay teacher bonuses, checking for eligibility and automatically forwarding information to payroll for processing. A similar system is being used for the pay out of "Teacher Performance Pay" each spring.
- In the past, Personnel Department produced in excess of 7500 copies of the "Employment Opportunities" weekly. Due to the online version of district employment opportunities, updated weekly, locations receive only 1100.
- Recently, a secure process was created to allow employees the change their address information via the Web and the district's intranet, eliminating personnel time, forms, and paper.

The district should review the school-based management practice whereby principals decide the Personnel Staffing Units for their schools

Under school-based management, each principal can decide how to staff his or her school, within a given amount budgeted for personnel. This staffing practice has the potential of working well, but may have undesirable as well as desirable consequences, as in the following examples. A principal at an elementary school can decide to "purchase" another classroom teacher instead of a Media Specialist, and have an aide or parent volunteer to check out books to students. However, a Media Specialist can be a special resource for teachers by enhancing the classroom curriculum or for children by stimulating the love of reading. An elementary school principal could decide not to hire a music, physical education or art teacher. Besides the lack of specialized training for the children, this usually affects classroom teachers negatively because they receive less planning time during the student school day since there is no staffed alternative class for their students to attend.

Across the district, services, planning times, and educational opportunities can be very inconsistent. This practice can have serious implications for teacher morale, equitability of educational services, quality of educational delivery, and the consistency of educational programs throughout the district. If not

implemented appropriately, this practice has the potential for significant conflict and a lack of equal opportunity.

The district has not reviewed the agreement under which instructional staff voluntarily transfer among schools during the school year

For over 17 years, pursuant to TALC contractual provisions, classroom teachers have been able to transfer to other schools after the opening of the school year at any time, as long as an appropriate position is open and the receiving principal accepts the transfer. Rarely do principals deny these requests, and the teachers may appeal if transfer requests are denied. The usual reason given for these transfers is the desire to work closer to home.

The normal cutoff date for voluntary transfers is July 1, but transfers may be made after this if the principals involved agree. During the 2001-02 school year, 80 certified teachers transferred: 56% did so in September and 36% in October.

Information gathered by the reviewing team suggested that in some cases teacher transfers may disrupt schools. The district cannot alter the program unilaterally since it is part of the district's contract with the teacher's union. Change would require an amendment to or change in the union-district contract. Even so, the district does not appear to have analyzed the effects of this practice on students, teachers, staff, or programs to determine whether the provision requires revisiting at some future renegotiation of the TALC contract. Nor does it appear to have considered policy alterations that might be within its capacity. It might, for example, request that principals also consider the effect that a mid-semester transfer would have on the school the transferring teacher would be leaving before approving the transfer request.

The district does not routinely solicit feedback from staff to evaluate the overall efficiency and effectiveness of its Human Resources program

The department currently is working on quality improvement processes and plans to develop surveys to determine developmental areas. A periodic review should systematically gather input from staff and other stakeholders associated with the Human Resources functions. It should consider suggested alternate methods of achieving the desired goals.

The district has encouraged use of direct deposit, which remains optional

The district prints payment data on a paper distributed on pay dates to each employee on direct deposit. Therefore, the district would not realize a cost savings from employees' direct deposits.

Recommendations

- *The district should develop and implement a formal plan to assess the effectiveness of the district's personnel practices, training programs, and employee relations/contract management functions, and recruitment and retention procedures with emphasis on staff feedback.*

Action Plan 7-21 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 7-21

Periodic Evaluation of Personnel Practices	
Strategy	Develop and implement a formal plan and schedule periodic assessments to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the district's personnel practices, including the teacher transfer policy and school-based management.

Action Needed	Step 1: After it has established performance measures and benchmarks as set forth in Action Plan 7-20, the district should establish a plan for periodically reviewing its personnel practices to ensure that services are being delivered efficiently, effectively, and cost-effectively. Step 2: Such a plan should identify who would be responsible for these periodic reviews, whether by standing committee, special task force, or other entity. The plan should include soliciting, analyzing, and using feedback from staff representatives of the district staff composition. Step 3: Evaluation should become a part of the district's policy manual that the superintendent and school board approve. Step 4: Identify areas of concern and implement changes to policies and practices as required. Step 5: Repeat process for each department in Human Resources Division, and for Office of Equity and Recruitment.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Human Resources Division Directors, Principals. Reporting to and approval by the School Board
Time Frame	July 1, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	Can be implemented with existing resources.

15 The district has a collective bargaining process for unionized employees.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district has well-trained personnel responsible for labor relations and contract negotiations. Team members include a staff attorney, an assistant superintendent who is a former attorney trained in collective bargaining law, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and other trained professionals with experienced in collective bargaining and in seeking interest-based solutions. The CFO is on both bargaining teams and various subcommittees, and attends meetings with financial impact. One of his main duties is to compare costs and cost savings, and present data to the teams in relation to the interests under discussion. For the past two years, the district has contracted for labor relation services with Florida School Services and Damas and Associates, Inc.

The district has managers on the two bargaining teams (TALC and SPALC) representing teachers and support personnel. Team members are trained in the Interest Based Process (IBP) as trainers, and are encouraged to attend the annual Florida Educational Negotiators (FEN) Conference to increase negotiating skills and stay abreast of current issues. The district provided outside consultant training to its bargaining teams in using the interest-based process.

Interest-based bargaining is based on interests, not positions. The interests of involved groups become the basis for negotiations. Interests are shared with various labor/management subcommittees representing both groups. This provides representation and the opportunity for input and shared perspectives about topics under discussion. These groups include subcommittees, joint bargaining agreement committees and the Labor/Management Committee. Employees have the right to contact their collective bargaining units or subcommittee representatives to express opinions or offer suggestions.

Two bargaining manuals have the records of each bargaining session dealing with the 2000-03 contracts for both bargaining units. An interest-based training manual is available. This process is helpful in selecting critical interests, which become topics of negotiation. In 2000, using the interest-based model, three-year contracts for each Association were finalized to present to members. Both the Executive Team and the teacher bargaining unit's administration report that the interest-based process has been helpful in contract negotiations. The district implemented this successful process at a critical time when there was high teacher dissatisfaction but before the district and the TALC negotiated the current three-year contract.

Another use of the interest-based process reported by some teachers, union leaders, and administrators is with district committees and task forces where all participants start with the data and without taking sides, share information and have an open interchange of ideas—a process that is more likely to result in mutually beneficial outcomes.

The most organized approach may be the interest-based process, which focuses on interests, not positions of the groups, and these interests become the basis for negotiations. Interests are shared with various labor/management sub-committees representing both groups. This provides representation and the opportunity for input and shared perspectives about topics under discussion. These groups include sub-committees, Joint Bargaining Agreement Committees, and the Labor/Management Committee. Employees have the right to contact their collective-bargaining units or sub-committee representatives to express opinions or offer suggestions during this policy-making stage.



Use of Lottery Proceeds

In general, the district spends lottery proceeds for purposes that enhance education. The district should report how lottery proceeds have been spent each quarter.

Conclusion

The School District of Lee County is using four of the five best practices for the use of lottery proceeds received from the state. The district's definition of enhancement is similar to that used by peer districts, and its use of lottery proceeds is consistent with the established definition.

The district has processes that provide information on the expenditure of lottery proceeds to school board members and School Advisory Councils (SACs); however, the district should establish procedures to communicate quarterly to interested stakeholders in the community how lottery proceeds have been used to enhance education.

Overview of Chapter Findings

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

1. The district defines "enhancement" in a way that the public clearly understands. (Page 8-3)
2. The district uses lottery moneys consistent with its definition of enhancement. (Page 8-4)
3. The district allocates lottery moneys to SACs as required by law. (Page 8-5)
4. The district accounts for the use of lottery moneys in an acceptable manner. (Page 8-9)
5. The district annually evaluates and reports how lottery expenditures have enhanced student education; however, it should also provide the public with quarterly reports of lottery expenditures. (Page 8-9)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

The recommendations in this report are fiscally neutral and can be implemented with existing resources.

Background

The Florida Legislature's intent is for the net proceeds of lottery games to be used to support improvements in public education, and that such proceeds not be used as a substitute for existing educational resources.

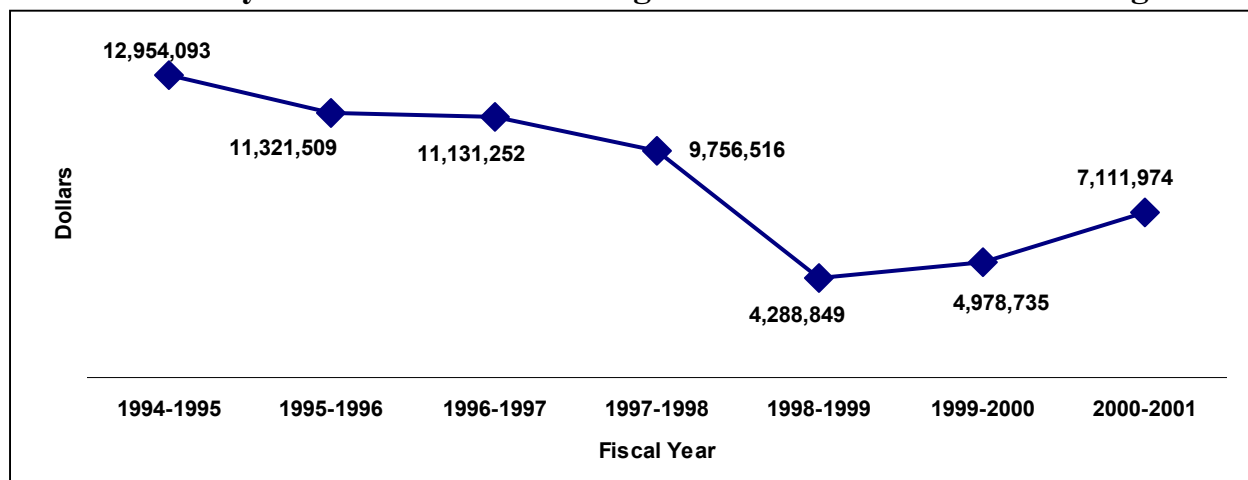
Each fiscal year, at least 38% of the gross revenue from the sale of lottery tickets and other earned revenue, excluding application-processing fees, is deposited in the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund, which is administered by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE). The Florida Legislature apportions moneys in the trust fund among public schools, community colleges, and universities. The Legislature allocates lottery proceeds to school districts by prorating each district's base funding to the amount of the appropriation.

Use of Lottery Proceeds

Although the district received an increase in lottery proceeds between 1999-2000 and 2000-01 fiscal years, overall lottery proceeds decreased significantly from the funding level during the 1994-95 fiscal year. Exhibit 8-1 shows the changes in lottery proceeds received by the district.

Exhibit 8-1

District Lottery Proceeds are Increasing but are Short of Historical Highs



Source: Superintendent's Annual Financial Reports.

Using the 1994-95 fiscal year as the base, the district's allocation of lottery proceeds has decreased 45.10% during the seven-year period ending with the 2000-01 fiscal year. All school districts in Florida have experienced similar decreases. The decreases result primarily from the implementation of other programs (i.e., Bright Futures College Scholarship). Also, there has been a decline in the amount of instant game ticket sales since the 1996-97 fiscal year. During the 1996-97 fiscal year, these sales reached an all-time high of \$707,424,000. During the 2000-01 fiscal year, instant game ticket sales totaled approximately \$647,108,000 and accounted for 28% of all lottery sales.

School district lottery expenditures

Each year the General Appropriations Act has consistently required each district to establish policies and procedures that define enhancement and the types of expenditures that are considered consistent with that definition.

Each district is also required to use a unique fund source code to account for the receipt and expenditure of all lottery moneys. Each district's expenditures are to be reported to the FDOE within 60 days following the end of the fiscal year. Each school district is also required to make available to the public and distribute in an easy-to-understand format, quarterly reports on lottery expenditures.

SAC lottery expenditures

The law requires that a portion of the lottery proceeds that the district receives be allocated to the SAC at each school. As shown in Exhibit 8-2, during the 2001-02 fiscal year \$597,823 in lottery proceeds was distributed to schools for the 59,782 full-time equivalent (FTE) students in the district. Each school received \$10 per unweighted full-time equivalent (UFTE) student, as required by law.

Allocations to schools ranged from \$380 for a non-personnel staffing units special school with 38 UFTE, to \$19,820 for a high school with 1,982 UFTE. The General Appropriations Act provides that funding for use by the SACs should be allocated directly to the councils, clearly earmarked for their use, and not be subject to override by the principal or interim approvals by school district staff. A portion of the moneys

should be used for implementing the school improvement plan, which must be based on the school's needs. The results of our interviews, reviews of district financial reports and information provided to SAC members, indicate that the district has complied with the provisions of the General Appropriations Act.

Methodology

To receive program input, ValienteHernandez P.A. held one teacher focus group and one principal focus group. We also conducted one public forum. Community input was secured through the activation of a telephone hot line coordinated by OPPAGA and the firm, and advertised on the district's website. ValienteHernandez P.A. distributed a survey to 100% of the teachers in the district and an electronic survey to 100% of the district's principals.

To determine whether the district is meeting the Best Financial Management Practices in the Use of Lottery Proceeds, ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted three site visits and interviewed the Finance Director, the Budget Director and the Teacher on Special Assignment-Curriculum. Information on the use of lottery proceeds by the SACs was obtained from the Budget Department and Curriculum and Instruction Department.

Issues identified through interviews, site observations, focus group, and forum results were used to obtain comparable information for the use of lottery proceeds in the five peer districts: Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia.

Use of Lottery Proceeds

1 The district defines “enhancement” in a way that the public clearly understands.

The district has defined enhancement

According to the General Appropriations Act, a school district must:

- establish policies and procedures to define enhancement;
- identify the types of expenditures that are consistent with its definition; and
- provide the Florida Department of Education with a copy of all procedures that relate to the use of enhancement moneys.

The district has complied with all of these requirements.

The definition contained in the district's policy manual as approved by the school board on August 7, 2001, states:

Enhancement is defined as the expenditure of the district discretionary lottery dollars for the following:

1. *The development and implementation of School Improvement Plans as required by the Accountability Law of the State of Florida.*

2. *Funding for school-based educational paraprofessionals and helping teachers.*
3. *Funding for instructional support services such as: Pupil Personnel Services, Attendance and Social Work, Guidance Services, Health Services, Psychological Services, Instructional Media Services, Instruction and Curriculum Development Services, and Instructional Staff Training Services.*

The district's definition of enhancement has been used since its adoption in 1992 and is the one currently on file with the Florida Department of Education. The district's definition was reviewed during an August 2001 board meeting and input from interested stakeholders in the district was solicited. The definition as previously adopted was again approved at the August 7, 2001, school board meeting.

The School District of Lee County defines educational enhancement as a series of goals and accomplishments as do most of its peer districts. Funding for educational support services and instructional personnel are common goals in Lee County and its peer districts.

2 The district uses lottery moneys consistent with its definition of enhancement.

The district demonstrates that it uses lottery moneys consistent with its definition of enhancement

The district has defined enhancement as the development and implementation of school improvement plans as required by the Accountability Law of the State of Florida, funding for school based educational paraprofessionals and helping teachers, and funding for instructional support services. Expenditures from the educational trust fund have conformed to the definition of enhancement established by the district.

Although the district does not have a conceptual definition of enhancement, its use of lottery proceeds conforms with its definition of enhancement. During the 2001-02 fiscal year, the amounts budgeted for student development services by the district have been for educational paraprofessionals and helping teachers.

Lottery proceeds allocated to the SACs for school improvement activities and SAC use have been spent for salaries, supplies, and capitalized and non-capitalized equipment.

The majority of lottery trust fund expenditures by the district and its peer districts during the fiscal year ending June 30, 2001, were for additional instructional personnel and other salaries.

Lottery proceeds are used to implement school improvement plans

The district allocates the entire \$10 per unweighted FTE to school improvement plans.

Exhibit 8-2 shows the breakdown of lottery moneys received by each of the district's SACs for school improvement plans for the year ending June 30, 2002.

School board members and appropriate district administrators receive reports on the expenditure of lottery enhancement moneys

District staff provides board members with annual reports of lottery expenditures. Also, information summarizing each school's use of lottery proceeds can be found in the school public accountability reports maintained at the school district headquarters in Ft. Myers.

3 The district allocates lottery moneys to the SACs, as required by law.

Each school in the district has an approved school improvement plan

The Florida Department of Education will not release moneys from the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund to any district in which a school does not have an approved school improvement plan after one full school year of planning and development, or which does not comply with SAC membership composition requirements. Each district school has an approved school improvement plan.

Chapter 230.23(16)(a), *Florida Statutes*, requires school boards to annually approve and require implementation of a new, amended, or continuation school improvement plan for each school in the district. The plans should be designed to achieve state education goals and student performance standards. Each plan shall also address issues relative to budget, training, instructional materials, technology, staffing, student support services, specific school safety and discipline strategies, and other matters of resource allocation, as determined by board policy. The district has established effective mechanisms to ensure that school improvement plans translate identified needs into activities with measurable objectives and clear implementation strategies.

Each SAC receives \$10 UFTE per student

As shown in Exhibit 8-2, the SAC at each district school received \$10 for each UFTE student to be used at the discretion of the SACs during the 2001-02 fiscal year.

Each SAC spends lottery proceeds without impediment from the school district and many SACs carry forward unspent allocations to subsequent school years

Each SAC spends lottery proceeds without impediment from the school district, and are not required to spend this allocation within one fiscal year. Unspent proceeds may be carried over to the next year. This flexibility allows the SACs to spend allocations, as they believe necessary, without the constraint of an annual deadline.

As illustrated in Exhibit 8-3, many SACs in the district have taken advantage of this flexibility by carrying over unspent moneys from prior years. These carry over amounts are included in the 2000-01 fiscal year budgetary numbers.

The majority of lottery expenditures by a sample of district SACs during Fiscal Year 2001-02 were for enhancing student skill levels.

The district has provided timely, clear, and correct information to SAC members regarding their roles and responsibilities for the use of lottery proceeds, including the legal expenditure of these moneys

The district conducts budget workshops and training schedules for SAC members regarding their roles and responsibilities related to the use of lottery proceeds. The district has also published a school improvement handbook to assist SAC members.

Exhibit 8-2

**The Lee County School District Allocated \$597,823
in Lottery Proceeds to SACs in Fiscal Year 2001-02**

Schools	School	Number of Students (UFTE)	SAC Allocations 2001-02
Elementary	Allen Park	794.67	\$7,947
	Alva	379.13	3,791
	Bonita Springs	382.56	3,826
	Cape	923.81	9,238
	Edgewood Renaissance	857.05	8,571
	Edison Park Creative	525.93	5,259
	Fort Myers Beach	193.02	1,930
	Franklin Park	470.00	4,700
	J. Colin Eng	738.12	7,381
	Lehigh	938.66	9,387
	Orange River	765.22	7,652
	Orange Wood	754.50	7,545
	Pine Island	459.65	4,597
	The Sanibel School	464.00	4,640
	Mirror Lakes	823.59	8,236
	Tice	672.02	6,720
	Tropic Isles	917.88	9,179
	Villas	822.47	8,225
	Michigan Montessori	750.46	7,505
	Heights	817.00	8,170
	Pinewoods	931.47	9,315
	Bayshore	541.87	5,419
	Tanglewd/Riverside	607.00	6,070
	Caloosa	994.09	9,941
	N.Ft. Myers Arts	1,082.00	10,820
	San Carlos Park	972.36	9,724
	Pelican	1,041.69	10,417
	Gulf	1,000.38	10,004
	Spring Creek	922.03	9,220
	Sunshine	943.27	9,433
	Three Oaks	941.00	9,410
	Skyline	1,017.21	10,172
	Diplomat	1,024.08	10,241
	Colonial	791.73	7,917
	Littleton	940.14	9,401
	Hancock CK	939.08	9,391
	Gateway	938.30	9,383
Middle	Alva	653.00	6,530
	Cypress Lake	1,175.00	11,750
	Dunbar	1,103.90	11,039
	Fort Myers	734.03	7,340
	Lee	942.00	9,420
	Caloosa	1,269.08	12,691
	Bonita Springs	1,050.00	10,500
	Gulf	1,206.93	12,069
	Lehigh	1,090.12	10,901
	Trafalgar	1,392.66	13,927

Schools	School	Number of Students (UFTE)	SAC Allocations 2001-02
	Diplomat	1,227.54	12,275
	Three Oaks	1,100.65	11,007
	Riverdale "Middle"	379.00	3,790
	Lehigh SR "Middle"	366.15	3,662
High School	Fort Myers	1,982.00	19,820
	Lehigh	1,564.00	15,640
	North Ft. Myers	1,877.00	18,770
	Cypress Lake	1,804.00	18,040
	Center for Arts	167.34	1,673
	Riverdale	1,274.00	12,740
	Cape Coral	1,895.00	18,950
	Mariner	1,932.57	19,326
	Estero	1,840.00	18,400
	Dunbar	646.00	6,460
Other	Edison Center	147.00	1,470
	New Directions	457.04	4,570
	Buckingham	90.44	904
	Lamp	183.00	1,830
	High Tech Central	215.35	2,154
	Trade Extension	39.00	390
	ALC-High	250.24	2,502
	ALC-Middle	252.88	2,529
	High Tech North	70.33	703
	Royal Palm	187.49	1,875
	Detention Center	101.92	1,019
	Price Halfway House	38.00	380
	Total	59,782.10	\$597,823

Source: School District of Lee County.

Many of the SACs in the district have chosen to spend less than 75% of the available lottery proceeds in Fiscal Year 2000-01

The Florida Legislature intended that the SACs have full discretionary control over the spending of the money and as such, it is the prerogative of the individual SACs to decide how and whether to spend the lottery proceeds. As noted in Exhibit 8-3, not all of the district's SACs spent their educational enhancement allocations during the 2000-01 fiscal year.

Exhibit 8-3

Many of the SACs in the District Have Chosen to Spend Less than 75% of the Available Lottery Proceeds in Fiscal Year 2000-01

Schools	Schools	2000-01 SAC Funds Available	2000-01 SAC Expenditures	Percentage of Available Funds Spent
Elementary	Allen Park	12,273	9,971	81.24%
	Alva	7,522	4,074	54.16%
	Bonita Springs	5,238	3,951	75.43%
	Cape	11,154	11,097	99.48%
	Edgewood	18,491	19,741	106.76%
	Renaissance			

Use of Lottery Proceeds

Schools	Schools	2000-01 SAC Funds Available	2000-01 SAC Expenditures	Percentage of Available Funds Spent
	Edison Park Creative	5,057	5,055	99.95%
	Fort Myers Beach	5,027	2,187	43.50%
	Franklin Park	8,139	6,095	74.88%
	J. Colin Eng	7,938	7,023	88.47%
	Lehigh	9,729	9,240	94.97%
	Orange River	14,757	4,639	31.43%
	Orange Wood	9,817	9,782	99.64%
	Pine Island	8,558	9,754	113.97%
	The Sanibel School	5,355	2,786	52.02%
	Mirror Lakes	13,002	12,320	94.75%
	Tice	21,717	3,411	15.70%
	Tropic Isles	18,090	10,517	58.13%
	Villas	12,184	1,238	10.15%
	Michigan Montessori	6,180	5,593	90.50%
	Heights	21,345	8,812	41.28%
	Pinewoods	14,940	9,491	63.52%
	Bayshore	9,152	6,908	75.48%
	Tanglewd/Riverside	6,200	2,009	32.47%
	Caloosa	14,636	5,787	39.53%
	N.Ft. Myers Arts	17,420	2,176	12.48%
	San Carlos Park	12,400	4,075	32.86%
	Pelican	24,502	4,302	17.55%
	Gulf	15,489	14,293	92.27%
	Spring Creek	10,676	10,433	97.72%
	Sunshine	4,126	-2,791	0.00%
	Three Oaks	18,803	12,662	67.33%
	Skyline	29,354	13,528	46.08%
	Diplomat	20,139	13,442	66.74%
	Colonial	27,175	19,700	72.49%
	Littleton	15,063	8,976	59.58%
	Hancock CK	15,211	855	5.61%
	Gateway	10,820	10,245	94.68%
Middle	Alva	8,271	8,778	106.13%
	Cypress Lake	13,729	11,732	85.45%
	Dunbar	20,325	6,824	33.57%
	Fort Myers	15,058	9,307	61.80%
	Lee	16,276	4,266	26.20%
	Caloosa	17,327	11,357	65.54%
	Bonita Springs	16,855	3,382	20.06%
	Gulf	26,111	21,143	80.97%
	Lehigh	17,960	13,187	73.42%
	Trafalgar	26,117	22,472	86.04%
	Diplomat	10,995	5,384	48.97%
	Three Oaks	18,327	9,121	49.77%
High	Fort Myers	18,180	2,062	11.34%
	Lehigh**	15,930	0	0.00%
	North Ft. Myers	29,481	31,025	105.23%
	Cypress Lake	44,162	27,013	61.16%
	Center for Arts	2,550	2,004	78.58%
	Riverdale**	22,732	16,353	71.93%

Schools	Schools	2000-01 SAC Funds Available	2000-01 SAC Expenditures	Percentage of Available Funds Spent
	Cape Coral	25,699	12,961	50.43%
	Mariner	19,698	19,604	99.52%
	Estero	22,856	17,621	77.09%
	Dunbar	3,000	465	15.50%
Other	Edison Center	3,701	3,130	84.57%
	New Directions	10,725	2,685	25.03%
	Buckingham	2,217	793	35.79%
	Lamp	5,513	3,423	62.09%
	High Tech Central	9,140	4,089	44.73%
	Trade Extension	3,590	3,108	86.57%
	ALC-High	6,311	3,687	58.42%
	ALC-Middle	1,620	16.25	2.00%
	High Tech North	3,480	3,109	89.32%
	Royal Palm	4,304	0	0.00%
	Detention Center	2,093	295	14.08%
	Price Halfway House	1,212	515	42.50%

Note: Includes carryover moneys not spent in Fiscal Year 1999-2000.

** Expenditure information includes middle school and high school information.

Source: School District of Lee County.

4 The district accounts for the use of lottery proceeds in an acceptable manner.

The district has conformed to Blueprint 2000 goals, which requires each school to have a school improvement plan. Along with the school improvement plan, procedures are to be developed for measuring desired improvements.

The district uses account codes as prescribed in the Red Book to account separately for the receipt of educational enhancement revenues and expenditures, as required in the General Appropriations Act. The district can demonstrate that it properly accounts for the receipt and expenditures of all lottery proceeds. The receipt of lottery proceeds is coded to a unique revenue account. Expenditures of lottery proceeds are coded to one of two expenditure accounts. Expenditure of enhancement moneys is further identified by the function of the expenditure (i.e., educational paraprofessionals, support staff). Expenditures are also identified as to the type of expenditure (i.e., supplies, capitalized and non-capitalized equipment).

5 The district annually evaluates and reports how lottery expenditures have enhanced student education; however, it should also provide the public with quarterly reports of lottery expenditures.

Within sixty days of the end of each fiscal year, the district submits a report to the FDOE showing the actual expenditures of all enhancement moneys. The report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2001, was filed August 29, 2001, which meets the filing requirement.

Each school must annually evaluate the effectiveness of its school improvement plan and report if adequate progress has been made, as defined in its plan. Each school improvement plan evaluates the benefits of active projects and the extent that student education has been improved by lottery expenditures.

The district should ensure that it reports lottery expenditures to the public on a quarterly basis, as required by law

The law requires that easy-to-understand reports of lottery expenditures are made available to the public each quarter. However, the district is not distributing this information, as required. The district needs to comply with this law by distributing the required information using its parent newsletters, for example, or by making the information available on its website.

Recommendation

- *We recommend that the district report on a quarterly basis how lottery proceeds are used. This report should be distributed beyond school district staff and parents of students to include other stakeholders in the community.*

Action Plan 8-1 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 8-1

Quarterly Reports to the Public on the Extent to Which Lottery Expenditures Have Enhanced Student Education	
Strategy	Distribute financial and other information to the public on a quarterly basis showing how lottery proceeds have been used.
Action Needed	Step 1: Compile financial information relating to the expenditure of lottery proceeds and distribute this information to all interested stakeholders on a quarterly basis. The community relations officer should ensure that this financial information is distributed to the community by: • Including these reports with other information sent to parents. • Posting this information on the district's Web site.
Who is responsible	Director of Budget
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

9

Use of State and District Construction Funds

The School District of Lee County uses state and local construction funds in a lawful manner. The district faces a severe shortage of student stations based on current growth. Significant outlays are needed for new construction to meet this growth.

Conclusion

The School District of Lee County (the district) uses state and local construction funds in a lawful manner. It could, however, significantly improve its compliance with construction fund best practices by applying recommended cost-saving measures, conducting pre-construction analyses of alternatives, and more efficient use of existing resources. The district currently needs to add student stations to meet current and expected growth.

Due to significant repairs required at existing facilities, the district has not constructed needed schools and, as a result, finds itself at maximum capacity at most schools. Significant outlays are needed for new construction, as well as for other needs, such as remodeling, preventative maintenance of existing facilities, transportation, and planning; additional funding will be required.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

Use of State and Local Construction Funds

1. The district uses construction funds lawfully. (Page 9-4)
2. The district uses capital outlay and operational funds in a lawful manner. (Page 9-12)
3. The district minimizes construction costs by using appropriate measures from the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards. (Page 9-14)
4. When designing and constructing new educational facilities, the district should incorporate life-cycle costs into the planning process to minimize maintenance and operations requirements. (Page 9-14)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

The recommendations in this chapter will strengthen the district's use of construction funds and are fiscally neutral.

Background

As with other Florida school districts, the Lee County School District's challenge is to operate effectively within the realities of today's complex public education system.

Use of State and District Construction Funds

A “five-year facilities work plan” is a list of local construction projects for a five-year period that is updated annually and approved by the school board. The Lee County School District has not had a comprehensive facilities work plan since at least 1998. During that time, the district has faced many challenges, including loss of two key administrators responsible for facilities planning. Additionally, fire safety compliance at 35 schools and other “safety-of-life” issues have diverted resources away from planned school construction, necessitating significant adjustments to the district’s facilities plan. Yet, just when funds available for construction were decreasing, the demand for new schools was exploding.

Lee County has grown tremendously, especially in the southern part of the district. An increase of approximately 11,500 students is expected in the next five years, with similar numbers projected in the subsequent five-year period. Countywide growth patterns show that the district’s three school zones will need 21 new schools by the 2006-07 school year. However, in view of overcrowding and limited funds, the district’s resources are stretched thin.

At one time, the district would understandably look for alternatives to building new school facilities. However, this resulted in high plant capacity usage compared to the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students. This has had a negative impact on current operations and obviously cannot continue. Thus, the new five-year facilities work plan is the district’s opportunity to set priorities for its finite resources and document school construction requirements to meet current and future demand.

School districts use several documents to plan and report the use of construction funds:

- The Educational Facilities Survey, which is required at least every five years by the state, defines five-year facility needs based on state standards and state enrollment projections. This document is prepared with assistance from the Florida Department of Education’s (DOE) Office of Educational Facilities. It presents the facility needs of the district for the next five years.
- The Five-Year Facilities Work Plan is a comprehensive list of local construction projects for a five-year period that is updated annually and approved by the board.
- The Project Priority List, a subset of the Facilities Work Plan, covers a single year and includes projects funded by specific sources of funds.
- The Truth in Millage Advertisement List details projects that will be funded with a 2.0 mill property tax. Publication of the list satisfies a legal disclosure requirement.
- The Capital Budget is based on the first prospective year of the Facilities Work Plan, plus or minus any adjustments approved by the board. Upon approval of the capital budget by the board, a district can assign project numbers to individual projects.

The School District of Lee County manages state and local construction funds through the Budget Office and through the Construction and Planning Office. These offices control and track construction funds needed to finance the five-year facility work plan. The district projects that it will have \$134 million in state and local capital outlay funds during the 2001-02 fiscal year. This plan does not provide sufficient funding to meet the school district’s anticipated need for additional student stations by Fiscal Year 2006. (See Exhibit 9-1)

Exhibit 9-1**Lee County Schools Capital Outlay Budget—Revenues 2001-02**

State	
CO & DS Distribution ¹	604,299
Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO)	9,289,447
Deferred Revenue (PECO) ²	388,723
Total State	10,282,469
Interest on Investments	3,033,000
Miscellaneous	384,394
Total Local	3,417,394
Taxes³	60,458,620
Fund Balance	
Fund Balance-Allocated ⁴	52,413,739
Fund Balance-Unallocated	7,320,503
Total Revenue⁵	\$ 133,892,725

¹ CO & DS Distribution are monies that were bonded in the past so cash is not available for use.

² PECO funds are allocated more to maintenance than construction funds.

³ Taxes are used as a base for obtaining debt and to service the debt.

⁴ Fund Balance-Allocated represents funds that have been previously committed to a program/project.

⁵ Total revenue represents total revenue to the district, however, debt service obligations have to be paid from this amount.

Source: School District of Lee County.

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed the district's use of state and district construction funds using the Best Financial Management Practices and associated performance indicators developed by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) as adopted by the State Commissioner of Education.

ValienteHernandez P.A. used a number of methodologies to develop chapter conclusions and action plans. One teacher focus group and one principal focus group were held, as was one public forum. Community input was secured through the activation of a telephone hot-line coordinated by OPPAGA and the firm, and advertised on the district's Web site. Additionally, ValienteHernandez P.A. distributed a survey to all of the district's teachers and an electronic survey to all of the principals in the district.

To determine whether the facilities construction program is meeting the Best Financial Management Practices in the use of construction funds, ValienteHernandez P.A. interviewed the Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance, director of construction and planning, budget director, facilities planner, and additional support staff. This assessment also involved research of Florida law and industry information.

Issues identified through interviews, site observations, and focus group and forum results were used to collect comparable information about the use of construction funds in five peer districts: Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia County.

Use of State and Local Construction Funds

1 The district uses construction funds lawfully.

The district takes an appropriately analytical approach to assessing its facilities construction needs, and before approving any new spending, the budget director carefully determines the lawfulness and cost-effectiveness of the project. The district has completed detailed analyses of student capacity needs and alternatives available to meet those needs. See the next section for additional information.

The district has built five schools and renovated or replaced one other in the last four years. These costs are shown in Exhibit 9-2.

Exhibit 9-2

Costs and Other Relevant Information on Schools Built Since 1998

School Name	Construction Type	Contractual Cost	Number of Student Stations	Cost per Student Station	Educational Facility Cost
Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle	New	\$ 15,528,823	1,298	11,067	\$ 14,365,134
Diplomat Middle	New	15,562,920	1,157	12,807	14,817,647
Caloosa Elementary ¹	New	15,562,920	989	11,438	11,312,292
Caloosa Middle	New	15,562,920	1,269	11,588	14,705,719
Mirror Lakes Elementary	New	7,660,200	759	10,092	7,660,200
High Tech North	New	4,491,721	367	12,239	4,491,721
Lehigh Senior High	Buildout	\$ 943,750	367	2,572	\$ 943,750

Note: The *Educational facility cost* for Minor Lakes Elementary, High Tech North, and Lehigh Senior High were not available, therefore, the *contractual cost* figure was utilized for the calculations.

¹ Caloosa Elementary could not be considered for a SIT award due to shared facilities with the middle school. This prohibited savings from being considered in the SIT application process.

Source: School District of Lee County.

Three of the middle schools were under the statutory maximum (as shown in Exhibit 9-2) and were granted SIT awards for frugal and thrifty facilities construction. Caloosa Elementary was not considered for a SIT award because of shared facilities with the middle school. However, by sharing facilities with the middle school, the district was able to significantly decrease construction costs.

The district approved a new Educational Facilities Survey on July 18, 2002, and no new construction projects will be started until the DOE accepts the new survey. Exhibit 9-3 lists current projects.

Exhibit 9-3

Projects Under Way As Of August 2001

School Description	Contractual Cost	Type of Project
North Fort Myers Academy for the Arts	\$ 21,435,000	New Construction
Lee Middle School	1,176,500	Building Addition
Dunbar High School	16,683,839	Building Addition
Transportation South	Not Available	New Construction

Source: School District of Lee County.

Upon inquiry from ValienteHernandez P.A., the finance director stated that the district has used the district school tax as prescribed by Florida law (“two mill” money) for construction and renovation, or other lawfully designated purposes; no indications to the contrary were found. ValienteHernandez P.A. also reviewed the district’s financial statements and annual budget to measure compliance with Florida Statutes, concluding that the district has properly designated funding. For additional information, please refer to Chapter 3, Best Practice 10.

The district has adequately analyzed construction alternatives

The district is continually analyzing alternatives to new construction, and considers all options before committing funds. Although some alternatives are clearly better than others (there are pros and cons to each), the district’s current list includes:

- Using relocatable classroom facilities to meet short-term needs
- Revising the school day and school year to include extended-day schedules and year-round schooling
- Using non-traditional grade configurations, multi-track school calendars, extended-day schedules, double sessions, redistricting or changing attendance boundaries
- Converting under-used properties to alternate uses, such as changing elementary schools to K-8 schools
- Remodeling or resizing facilities to increase student stations

The district’s most commonly used alternative to new construction has been leasing relocatable classrooms to meet short-term facility needs. In fact, 135 such units are in place throughout the district. Relocatable classrooms are a general concern of education, however, and one of the district’s goals is to reduce its inventory of these buildings. According to the Texas Education Agency, for example, overuse of relocatable buildings negatively affects instruction, and in communities throughout Florida relocatable classrooms are barely tolerated as a temporary solution to overcrowding.¹ The district has been able to reduce the number of relocatable classrooms by 50% in the last year.

The district uses zones, rather than school boundaries, to move students to available stations. Extended-day schedules, year-round schools, and changes in grade configurations are also being considered to make the best use of existing facilities.

The district has explored non-traditional grade configurations, multi-track school calendars, extended-day schedules, double sessions, and remodeling and resizing of existing facilities. For example, non-traditional grade configurations are a way to delay the need for new high schools. The size, general configuration, and additional structures required by high schools makes them the most expensive facilities to build; elementary schools can be built on much less land and are the least expensive facilities to build. By keeping 9th graders in the middle/junior high level and keeping 6th graders in the elementary level, the district could meet the immediate need for new high schools by building elementary schools. This alternative may have additional benefits as well since keeping 9th graders in the more nurturing environment of the middle/junior high school reduces dropout and attrition rates.

The multi-track school calendar involves breaking up the summer vacation into shorter, more frequent vacations throughout the year. Students attending year-round schools go to the same classes and receive the same instruction as students on the traditional calendar, however, the year-round calendar alleviates overcrowding. It also incorporates the educational values of single-track, year-round education, and “intersessions” (intersessions are the blocks of time created by breaking up the long summer vacation into a series of shorter vacations).

¹ Examples of educational articles relating to the relocatable classroom issue are: *Florida's School-Crowding Woes Offer Fodder for Ongoing Debate*, September 24, 1997; and *Lawmakers Act To Ease Crowding* educational article by Kerry A. White, November 12, 1997. Both articles are by Kerry A. White and can be viewed in the website of *Education Week on the Web* at www.edweek.org.

The multi-track calendar avoids double sessions and an extended school day, alleviating the need to build and operate costly new schools. Multi-track divides students and teachers into groups, or “tracks,” of approximately the same size, with each track following its own schedule. Implementing a four-track year-round calendar extends a school’s capacity by 33%. For example, under the multi-track system, a school with the capacity of 750 students can accommodate 1,000 students, since three tracks with 250 students each would always be in school and one track would always be on vacation or intersession.

The district believes that implementing a multi-track, modified, year-round calendar would also require an approximate \$8 million upgrade to central computer hardware and programming. In addition to this, the district estimates an impact on the cost of transportation of \$12 million (calculated as \$200 for the current expenses per bus per day, times 50 additional transportation days required for the multi-track system, times 20 buses at each of the 60 choice schools). ValienteHernandez P.A. estimates the transportation cost would only be \$5 million which is considerably less than the district’s estimate.² However, the final figure largely depends on whether the district continues school choice plan and the residences of students enrolled in the different multi-track schedules.

An additional consideration is that public generally doesn’t like a multi-track, modified year-round calendar because of childcare, other extracurricular activities, and disruptions to family schedules, so this change would require community- wide planning to ensure public support.

Extended-day schedules increase the capacity of individual schools by lengthening the school day for the facility, but not for the individual student. For example, an extended-day school may have nine periods of instruction, with one group of students attending school for periods one through six and another group attending from period three through nine. Implementing extended-day schedules at schools experiencing substantial increases in student enrollment could prevent overcrowding and eliminate the need for new school construction. Again, the public does not like this option because of interruption for childcare, extra curricular activities, and work schedules for older teens.

Another alternative the district explored in the capacity needs study was double sessions. Double sessions let the district temporarily accommodate influxes of students while new facilities are being built. Typically, double sessions are used when enrollment at a particular facility becomes so great there is no option other than starting one group of students early and another group later in the school day until a new facility is ready. The district has concluded that double sessions are a last resort that would be difficult to implement in Lee County because of the school-of-choice program. Increased transportation costs are also a factor, since the district estimates additional costs of \$720,000 annually for each school on double sessions.

The final alternative explored by the district involves converting under-used properties to alternate uses, such as changing elementary schools to middle schools, and remodeling or resizing facilities to increase student stations. The district analyzed its 67 regular and special education centers, and identified 12 sites with varying potential for expansion. The proposed projects require comprehensive cost/benefit analyses to determine feasibility, however, this alternative has some potential for meeting increased student capacity needs. In total, these projects can provide 1,350 elementary, 706 middle, and 1,995 high school seats at a cost of approximately \$25 million. One drawback to this alternative is that impact fees could not be used to fund the projects. Exhibit 9-4 describes these opportunities.

² There are 527 buses in daily service on a normal school day. ValienteHernandez estimates the additional cost would be \$200 for the current expenses per bus per day, times 50 additional transportation days required for the multi-track system, times 527 buses.

Exhibit 9-4**School Addition Opportunities and Time Frames**

Zone	School	Classrooms	Capacity	Cost	Timing
East	Bayshore Elementary	6	150	\$ 950,000	18 Months
	Mirror Lakes Elementary	10	250	1,600,000	24 Months
	Lehigh Senior High	15	399	2,300,000	30 Months
	East Zone Subtotal	31	799	4,850,000	
South	Franklin Park Elementary	10	250	1,600,000	24 Months
	Pinewoods Elementary	12	300	1,900,000	24 Months
	Villas Elementary	8	200	1,300,000	18 Months
	P.L. Dunbar Middle	14	353	2,100,000	24 Months
	Esterio High	30	798	4,600,000	30 Months
	South Zone Subtotal	74	1,901	11,500,000	
West	Caloosa Elementary	8	200	1,300,000	18 Months
	Trafalgar Middle	14	353	2,100,000	24 Months
	Mariner High	30	798	4,600,000	30 Months
	North Ft. Myers Academy for the Arts	110	1054	1,200,000 ¹	Available August
	West Zone Subtotal	162	2,405	8,000,000	
TOTAL		267	5105	\$ 24,350,000	

¹ Annual cost to maintain the portable campus at North Ft. Myers Academy for the Arts is not included in West Zone total.

Source: School District of Lee County, "Ten-Year Projection and Alternative Responses."

While the district has prepared thorough analyses of these alternatives, it has not determined which approach or combination of approaches best meets its needs. The district should continue to analyze alternatives to construction before committing funds. Alternatives could include, but are not limited to: revising the timing of the school day and school year to include extended-day schedules and year-round schools, changing how existing facilities could be used more efficiently to include revising grade-level configuration, re-districting or making changes in attendance boundaries, using relocatable facilities (relocatable classrooms) to help smooth out the impact of peaks and valleys in projected future student enrollment, and conversion of under-used properties to alternate uses, such as changing elementary schools to middle schools. Further, we recommend the district establish procedures to ensure proposed new construction or major renovations of facilities are in compliance with the district's five-year plan.

The district has recently completed a new Educational Facilities Survey (Plant Survey) to replace the one conducted in 1998

The educational facilities survey is a systematic study of educational and ancillary facilities to determine future needs. The construction of new educational facilities is a major undertaking even in school systems where such construction is on-going. If a 50-year capital investment is to be protected, the location, size, type of materials, arrangement of spaces, etc., for each new facility or addition to an existing facility must be based on reliable, factual data.

The purpose of an educational facilities survey is to help formulate five-year plans for housing the educational activities of the district's students and staff. The plan should be based on a careful study of all available data on the current status of educational and ancillary facilities in relation to a) Capital Outlay Full Time Equivalency (CO-FTE) student membership and b) DOE-projected changes in CO-FTE student membership.

By law, the district is required to conduct formal educational facilities surveys every five years, but these can be done as often as necessary. It is sometimes prudent to update survey recommendations between

regularly scheduled district-wide surveys. Local school administrators are responsible for examining survey recommendations and making necessary revisions.

The Educational Facilities Survey for School District of Lee County was conducted in December 1997 and updated in June 1998. The district has just completed a new Educational Facilities Survey, which was approved by the board on July 18, 2002. Exhibit 9-5 is based on this survey, and compares projected CO-FTE membership for the year 2006-2007 to the number of existing student stations:

Exhibit 9-5

Comparison of Projected Capital Outlay to Existing Student Stations

School Center	FTE Student Membership 2000-01	Projected FTE Student Membership 2006-07	Existing Student Stations	Utilization ¹		Capacity Over (Under)
				Percentage	Stations	
<i>ELEMENTARY-East</i>						
Alva		379	390	100	390	(11)
Bayshore		523	536	100	536	(13)
Gateway		909	921	100	921	(12)
Lehigh		916	930	100	930	(14)
Mirror Lakes		869	882	100	882	(13)
Orange River		923	936	100	936	(13)
Sunshine		909	923	100	923	(14)
Tice		754	765	100	765	(11)
Total East		6182	6283		6283	(101)
<i>ELEMENTARY-South</i>						
Allen Park		927	938	100	938	(11)
Bonita Spring		445	454	100	454	(9)
Colonial		918	929	100	929	(11)
Franklin Park		818	830	100	830	(12)
Heights		926	937	100	937	(11)
Orangewood		912	922	100	922	(10)
Pinewoods		917	929	100	929	(12)
San Carlos Park		903	915	100	915	(12)
Spring Creek		925	939	100	939	(14)
Tanglewood		822	837	100	837	(15)
Three Oaks		913	925	100	925	(12)
Villas		900	912	100	912	(12)
New Elem. "A"		930	0	100	0	930
Total South		11256	10467		10467	789
<i>ELEMENTARY-West</i>						
Caloosa		882	896	100	896	(14)
Cape Coral		901	915	100	915	(14)
Diplomat		920	934	100	934	(14)
Gulf		926	941	100	941	(15)
Hancock Creek		914	929	100	929	(15)
J. Colin English		909	924	100	924	(15)
Littleton		919	934	100	934	(15)
Pelican		905	919	100	919	(14)
Skyline		826	841	100	841	(15)
Tropic Isles		875	890	100	890	(15)

School Center	FTE Student Membership 2000-01	Projected FTE Student Membership 2006-07	Existing Student Stations	Utilization ¹		Capacity Over (Under)
				Percentage	Stations	
Total West		8977	9123		9123	(146)
<i>ELEMENTARY-Magnet</i>						
Edgewood		911	921	100	921	(10)
Edison Park		545	555	100	555	(10)
Total Magnet		1456	1476		1476	(20)
<i>ELEMENTARY-Island</i>						
Ft. Myers Beach		289	288	100	288	1
Pine Island		544	549	100	549	(5)
Total Island		833	837		837	(4)
<i>SUBTOTAL ELEMENTARY</i>		28704	28186		28186	518
<i>MIDDLE-East</i>						
Alva		1041	1173	90	1056	(15)
Lehigh Acres		1043	1174	90	1057	(14)
New Middle "AA"		1046	0	90	0	1046
Total East		3130	2347		2113	1017
<i>MIDDLE-South</i>						
Bonita Springs		1036	1162	90	1046	(10)
Cypress Lake		1050	1178	90	1060	(10)
P. L. Dunbar		1122	1258	90	1132	(10)
Three Oaks		1039	1169	90	1052	(13)
New Middle "BB"		905	0	90	0	905
Total South		5152	4767		4290	862
<i>MIDDLE-West</i>						
Caloosa		1036	1162	90	1046	(10)
Diplomat		1071	1196	90	1076	(5)
Gulf		1063	1187	90	1068	(5)
Trafalgar		1060	1187	90	1068	(8)
Total West		4230	4732		4258	(28)
<i>MIDDLE-Magnet</i>						
Ft. Myers Academy		1035	1162	90	1046	(11)
Lee		1030	1161	90	1045	(15)
Total Magnet		2065	2323		2091	(26)
<i>SUBTOTAL MIDDLE</i>		14577	14169		12752	1825
<i>HIGH-East</i>						
Lehigh Senior		1819	1928	95	1832	(13)
Riverdale		1487	1581	95	1502	(15)
New High "EEE"		1820	0	95	0	1820
Total East		5126	3509	285	3334	1792
<i>HIGH-South</i>						
Cypress Lake		1815	1923	95	1827	(12)
Dunbar		1280	1433	90	1290	(10)
Estero		1782	1889	95	1795	(13)
Fort Myers		1762	1865	95	1772	(10)
Total South		6639	7110	375	6684	(45)
<i>HIGH-West</i>						
Cape Coral		1822	1928	95	1832	(10)

School Center	FTE Student Membership 2000-01	Projected FTE Student Membership 2006-07	Existing Student Stations	Utilization ¹		Capacity Over
				Percentage	Stations	(Under)
Mariner		1811	1918	95	1822	(11)
North Ft. Myers		1796	1902	95	1807	(11)
New High "FFF"		674	0	80	0	674
Total West		6103	5748		5461	642
SUBTOTAL HIGH		17868	16317		15479	2389
OTHER SCHOOLS						
Buckingham		90	84	90	76	14
Dunbar Community		0	236	120	283	(283)
FM Edison Center		0	160	90	144	(144)
High Tech Central		0	665	120	798	(798)
High Tech North		0	367	120	440	(440)
Michigan K-08		1044	1164	90	1048	(4)
New Directions		1067	1174	90	1057	10
N. Ft. Myers Academy		1393	1560	90	1404	(11)
Royal Palm		200	215	90	194	6
Sanibel K-08		471	532	90	479	(8)
SUBTOTAL OTHER		4265	6157		5923	(1658)
GRAND TOTAL		65414	64829		62340	3074

¹ The total satisfactory student stations at a given school center are indicative to the capacity of the center. The following utilization factors have been established by State Requirements of Educational Facilities (SREF). Elementary 100%, Middle 90%, High School 70%-95%

Source: The July 2002 Educational Facilities Survey.

The total number of existing, satisfactory student stations, taking into account the appropriate usage factor, of 62,340, is below the projected CO-FTE for the year 2006-07 of 65,414 by 3,074 student stations. The district justifies the need for additional student stations through new construction.

In conjunction with the Educational Facilities Survey, the district is developing the five-year facilities work plan. As discussed, this document is a comprehensive list of local construction projects for a five-year period that is updated annually and approved by the school board. The capital planning committee is responsible for prioritizing the capital projects identified in the Plant Survey. See Chapter 10 for further discussion of the five-year facilities work plan and the role of the capital planning committee.

The district has entered into an interlocal agreement with the Lee County Commission and the City or Town Council of the municipalities of Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, and Sanibel to:

- Better coordinate new schools in time and place with land development
- Improve efficiency of the school board and local governments by placing schools to take advantage of existing and planned roads, water, sewers, parks, and drainage systems
- Improve student access and safety by coordinating construction of new and expanded schools with the road and sidewalk construction programs of local governments
- Locate and design schools so that they serve as community focal points
- Locate and design schools with parks, ballfields, libraries, and other community facilities to take advantage of joint use opportunities
- Locate new schools and expand and rehabilitate existing schools to reduce pressures contributing to urban sprawl and support existing neighborhoods

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district continue to analyze alternatives to construction before committing funds. Alternatives could include, but are not limited to: revising the timing of the school day and school year to include extended-day schedules and year-round schools, changing how existing facilities could be used more efficiently to include revising grade-level configuration, re-districting or making changes in attendance boundaries, using relocatable facilities (relocatable classrooms) to help smooth out the impact of peaks and valleys in projected future student enrollment, conversion of under-used properties to alternate uses, such as changing elementary schools to middle schools.*

Action Plan 9-1 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We further recommend the district establish a procedure to ensure compliance of proposed new construction or major rehabilitation of facilities in accordance with the district's five-year plan.*

Action Plan 9-2 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 9-1

Formal Evaluation of Different Alternatives to New Construction Prior To Committing Funds

Strategy	Implement procedures and develop a formal policy to ensure existing resources are used and to evaluate alternatives to new construction in order to select the most cost-efficient options.
Action Needed	Step 1: The school board sets a clear policy to document this recommendation. Step 2: The district develops a mechanism to implement the school board policy. Step 3: The superintendent creates a team led primarily by the Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance and secondarily by the Assistant Superintendents for Curriculum and Instruction and for School Administration and Human Resource Services. Step 4: Additionally, the team should include the planning section, transportation supervisor, fiscal director, instructional staff representation, representatives from the communities that will be affected, and representative from the Lee County government's planning department (anticipated needs should include projected growth). Step 5: The purpose of the team is to methodically analyze all possible alternatives to new construction. Alternatives include, but are not limited to: • Revising attendance boundaries and grade configuration • Revising the timing of the school day and school year (i.e.: extended day schedules and year-round schools) • Using relocatable facilities (relocatable classroom units) • Conversion of underutilized properties to alternative uses (i.e.: changing elementary schools to middle schools) Step 6: The team reports the results of the analyses to the superintendent who approves or rejects the proposed changes. Step 7: The final result is communicated to the school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, and Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance
Time Frame	March 30, 2003 and on going.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Possible savings cannot be determined at this stage.

Action Plan 9-2

Establish A Procedure To Ensure Compliance Of Proposed New Construction Or Major Rehabilitation Of Facilities In Accordance With The District's Five-Year Plan	
Strategy	As required under Ch. 235.185, <i>Florida Statutes</i> , establish a procedure to ensure compliance of proposed new construction or major rehabilitation of facilities in accordance with the district's five-year plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish procedures to ensure that any proposed project is evaluated as to compliance with the district's five-year plan. Step 2: Secure the involvement of the capital planning committee in monitoring the district's compliance with its five-year-plan. Step 3: Establish necessary procedures to ensure that the Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance, or his designee, who is independent of the process of selecting construction projects, acts as evaluator of compliance with the district's five-year plan. This person is designated as having ultimate authority in the approval of the project. Step 4: Report results through established channels.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance, Director of Construction and Planning, Director of Facilities, Director of Finance, and the Director of Maintenance.
Time Frame	March 31, 2003 and on going.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

2 The district uses capital outlay and operational funds in a lawful manner.

Educational facilities construction funds are used only for new construction, renovation, or upgrading existing facilities

The district uses capital outlay funds for new construction, renovation, and to upgrade and maintain existing facilities. During the past five years, the district completed a significant renovation program; for the next several years, the district anticipates using the majority of capital outlay funds for renovations.

The district's construction funds are expended only for capital outlay projects that have been approved by the district school board.

The district develops a five-year facilities work plan that is updated and approved annually by the board. Each year, district staff prepares a capital budget for expenditures planned for the following year; projects cannot be assigned project numbers until the board approves the capital budget.

As part of the budget preparation process, the budget department conducts workshops for the board, including a workshop on capital outlay. The board is presented with and reviews all items in the district facilities work plan during the workshop.

The district uses a variety of methods to determine facility needs

The district uses state enrollment projections to develop the Educational Plant Survey submitted to the DOE, as required by law. The district uses the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) data to determine a baseline estimate of facilities capacity. (See the discussion on FISH Data in Chapter 10.) The district also prepares its own enrollment projections using models developed by the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR). The district has recently completed work on a comprehensive report, *Student Capacity Needs, Ten-Year Projection and Alternative Responses*,

which analyzes student capacity, district capacity needs, and alternatives to construction. Excerpts from this report will be found throughout this chapter, in Chapter 10, Facilities Construction, and Chapter 11, Facilities Maintenance. The district has historically grown faster than state projections.

The district should maximize local revenue alternatives to increase construction funding

State law requires local districts to maximize their local efforts. Each school board wishing to participate in the state allocation of funds for current operation shall levy on the taxable value for school purposes of the district, a millage rate not to exceed the amount certified by the Commissioner of Education as the minimum millage rate necessary to provide the district-required local effort for the current year. A review of the district's capital budget for revenue type noted that the district has not maximized local revenue sources to the extent the law allows.

The county passed an ordinance, effective December 1, 2001, for the collection of school impact fees. The impact fees have been challenged and are tied up in litigation. (See Chapter 1 for additional information on impact fees.)

The district has also used Certificates of Participation (COPs) to finance various construction projects. COPs, which can be used for new construction that qualifies for leasing, are long-term financing vehicles similar to bonds. The state has set a new limit on COPs debt service at an amount equal to 75% of the local capital tax revenue. In Fiscal Year 2002, the district's anticipated COPs debt service will be at 42.7% of the local capital tax revenue.

The district has not considered requesting an optional 2-mill levy, Capital Outlay Bond Issues (COBI), or general obligation bonds as additional sources of revenue.

Recommendation

- We recommend that the district maximize the use of local alternatives as revenue sources of funds for capital outlay projects.*

Action Plan 9-3 lists the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 9-3

Maximize the Use of Local Sources of Revenue for Capital Projects	
Strategy	Maximize the use of local alternatives as revenue sources of funds for capital outlay projects.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review current facility needs and determine additional revenue needed to fund necessary projects. Step 2: Review local revenue options and determine amounts available to fund capital projects. Step 3: Determine best local revenue options for capital projects funding. Step 4: Approve revenue options and perform necessary steps to obtain funding. Step 5: Establish guidelines that require the use of local comprehensive plans.
Who Is Responsible	School board
Time Frame	August 31, 2003 and on going.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

3 The district minimizes construction costs by using appropriate measures from the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards.

The district uses locally produced design prototypes that incorporate SMART design guidelines

The Florida Legislature, during its 1997 special session, established the Soundly Made, Accountable, Reasonable and Thrifty Schools Clearinghouse (SMART) to be responsible for administering several programs designed to assist and encourage Florida school districts to build SMART schools. (Please see Chapter 10 for additional discussion on the SMART Schools Clearinghouse.)

By having a straightforward approach to designing and building SMART schools, Florida's school districts can significantly reduce the cost of building and maintaining schools while continuing to provide a high-quality learning environment for students.

As part of the SMART schools initiative, the Legislature directed SMART to develop Frugal Construction Standards to develop appropriate industry standards and optimal life cycles, and these may include, but are not limited to: standards for optimal size of core facility space, design-build, performance-contracting, energy efficiency, and life-cycle systems costs. SMART encourages school districts to consider these recommendations and adopt as many as practical and possible.

The construction department does not regularly use school designs included in the SMART school design directory. The department believes its own design prototypes are less expensive and better suited to the area than the state prototypes. The district validated that view when its middle school design was added to the SMART prototypes, and by receiving SIT awards for three of its most recently built schools.

It should be stressed that while the district does not use SMART school prototype designs to build new facilities, it does use these concepts in its own design practices. The DOE has evaluated the SMART school guidelines for frugal and thrifty building; the district frequently compares district design standards to the SMART school standards to ensure that the district designs remain thrifty.

4 When designing and constructing new educational facilities, the district should incorporate life-cycle costs into the planning process to minimize maintenance and operations requirements.

The district has not adequately considered life-cycle costs for efficiencies

Chapter 235.26(2)(f)(1), *Florida Statutes*, states that the district shall evaluate the performance of life-cycle cost analyses on alternative architectural and engineering designs for energy efficiencies. The life cycle cost analyses must be the sum of:

- The reasonably expected fuel costs over the life of the building that are required to maintain illumination, water heating, temperature, humidity, ventilation, and all other energy-consuming equipment in a facility, and
- The reasonable costs of probable maintenance, including labor and materials, and operation of the building.

From ValienteHernandez P.A.'s discussions with the district's responsible personnel, we have concluded that the district:

- Does not use life-cycle cost analyses to identify factors that are reasonably related to the maintenance and operations costs of new facilities. Life-cycle cost analyses include acceptable industry standards, such as the district's established maintenance standards, and the district's analyses of maintenance and operations costs.
- Does not use the results of the life-cycle cost analyses to design, construct, select equipment for, and furnish new facilities to minimize maintenance and operations costs.
- Does not regularly assess and revise relevant factors to ensure the district minimizes maintenance and operations costs based on appropriate standards from comparable school districts, government agencies, and private industry.

For computation of the life-cycle costs, standards must include, but need not be limited to:

- The orientation and integration of the facility with respect to its physical site
- The amount and type of glass employed in the facility and the directions of exposure
- The effect of insulation incorporated into the facility design and the effect on solar utilization of the properties of external surfaces
- The variable occupancy and operating conditions of the facility and sub-portions of the facility
- An energy consumption analysis of the major equipment of the facility's heating, ventilating, and cooling system, lighting system, hot water system, and all other major energy-consuming equipment and systems, as appropriate

The district is faced with addressing the contradiction between an SIT award and life-cycle costing. SIT awards are based on the district building thrifty, frugal facilities. Life-cycle costing involves selecting the materials that best meet the long-term maintenance and operational requirements of the facility. The best material under life-cycle analyses is not usually the most frugal or thrifty.

Recommendation

- *We recommend the district formally incorporate life-cycle costing as part of its overall construction, maintenance, and operating budgets.*

Action Plan 9-4 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *Further, we recommend enhancing factors for reducing maintenance and operational costs as a requirement when planning new facilities.*

Action Plan 9-5 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 9-4

Incorporate Life-Cycle Costing	
Strategy	Incorporate life-cycle costing into the overall construction, maintenance, and operating budgets.
Action Needed	Step 1: Life-cycle costing is defined and incorporated into the planning process of new facility construction. Step 2: The superintendent and school board approve the concept and incorporate it into the district's written policies and procedures. Step 3: Incorporate life-cycle costing into the five-year planning process. Step 4: Utilize current information as to design, systems, materials, construction processes, and labor techniques that, when used as part of the planning process, and if approved and implemented, will reduce future maintenance and operating costs.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance, Director of Construction and Planning, Director of Maintenance Services, and maintenance supervisors.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003 and ongoing.
Fiscal Impact	Possible major savings, presently undeterminable, at little or no additional cost.

Action Plan 9-5

Enhance Factors That Minimize Future Maintenance and Operational Costs of a Planned New Facility	
Strategy	Enhance factors that minimize future maintenance and operational costs of a planned new facility by including life-cycle costing into the process.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify specific, proven, and reasonable factors related to the maintenance and operations costs of new facilities. Step 2: Incorporate the results of the life-cycle analyses in design, construction, equipment selection, and furnishings to minimize maintenance and operational costs. Step 3: Quantify the future costs savings vs. additional construction costs to evaluate the feasibility of implementing the particular suggestion. Step 4: Regularly (i.e.: annually) assess and revise the factors identified above against actual results and compare to other districts.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance, Director of Construction and Planning, Director of Maintenance Services, and maintenance supervisors.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003 and ongoing.
Fiscal Impact	Possible major savings, presently undeterminable, at little or no additional cost.

10

Facilities Construction

The School District of Lee County has grown tremendously, especially the southern portion. With growth comes the need for additional facilities. Planning is key if the district is to have the facilities to meet its educational needs. A long-term facilities work program is needed to design, construct, and maintain quality facilities for the county's public school students.

Conclusion

The School District of Lee County is experiencing tremendous growth and anticipates this trend to continue. With growth comes the need for additional facilities. Due to significant repairs required in existing facilities, the district has not constructed needed schools, and as a result, finds itself at maximum capacity at most schools. Significant outlays are needed for new construction, as well as for other needs, such as remodeling, preventive maintenance of existing facilities, and planning; additional funding will be required.

Over the last two years, the district has implemented effective project management procedures and explored various approaches to product delivery. The delivery approaches range from construction-management-at-risk to design build. During the course of this review, ValienteHernandez P.A. identified a number of district accomplishments in the area of facilities construction, as shown in Exhibit 10-1.

Exhibit 10-1

The District Has Had Notable Accomplishments in Facilities Construction in the Last Two Years

- By applying frugal construction standards and management practices, the district has been awarded School Infrastructure Thrift (SIT) awards for three of the last four schools built.
 - The district has expanded construction management capabilities by introducing construction-management-at-risk and design build to the repertoire of construction management approaches.
 - The district has formalized the construction process to ensure best practices are met.
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

There are six major elements to a well-managed capital program: good information systems, comprehensive planning, a clear decision-making process that involves the public, expert project management, stable and sufficient funding, and regular monitoring and oversight. While the School District of Lee County has many of these elements in place, it needs to formalize the process and improve long-range planning.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

Five-Year Facilities Work Program

1. The district has established a facilities planning committee. (Page 10-6)
2. The district is improving its strategic planning based on steps currently underway. (Page 10-7)

Facilities Construction

3. The five-year facilities work plan should reflect input from the facilities planning committee and fit within the district's master plan. (Page 10-9)
4. The five-year facilities work program has incorporated thorough demographic studies into enrollment projections. (Page 10-12)
5. In the past, the five-year facilities work program was not based on an evaluation of physical conditions or the ability of facilities to meet educational needs. (Page 10-14)
6. The district evaluates alternatives to new construction when developing the annual five-year work program. (Page 10-16)
7. District planning does not prioritize construction needs. (Page 10-18)
8. The district demonstrates that its construction program complies with Florida law. (Page 10-19)
9. For all projects with dates of construction contracted after March 1, 2002, the district can demonstrate that the construction program complies with the Florida Building Code, however compliance should be assured in the five year plan. ¹ (Page 10-20)
10. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work program. (Page 10-21)

Educational Specifications

11. The district develops educational specifications for each individual construction project. (Page 10-21)
12. Educational specifications for new construction, remodeling, and renovations include most, but not all, descriptions of activity areas. (Page 10-22)
13. Architectural design fulfills building specification needs as determined by the district. (Page 10-23)
14. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features. (Page 10-24)

Selection and Acquisition of School Sites

15. The district needs to begin school site selection well in advance of future needs based on expected growth patterns. (Page 10-24)
16. The board considers the most economical and practical locations based on current and anticipated needs, including such factors as needed to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to developments, and agreements with adjoining counties. (Page 10-26)

Construction Cost

17. The district has not established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance efficiency, and effectiveness of its construction program. (Page 10-26)
18. The district implemented the general requirements recommended in the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards. (Page 10-28)
19. The district minimizes construction costs through the use of prototype school designs and frugal construction practices. (Page 10-30)
20. The district secures appropriate professional services to assist in facility planning, design, and construction. (Page 10-31)
21. Funds collected for school projects are raised appropriately. (Page 10-33)

¹ The original compliance date of January 1, 2002 was delayed for three months.

Completion of Projects on Time and Within Budget

22. The district has provided realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools. (Page 10-34)
23. For each project or group of projects, the architect and district facilities planner develop conceptual site plans and building specifications. (Page 10-34)
24. The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs. (Page 10-35)
25. The district has assigned one person with the authority and responsibility to keep facilities construction projects within budget and on schedule. (Page 10-37)
26. The board minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to minimize project costs. (Page 10-38)
27. The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed, with a percentage of the payment withheld pending project completion. (Page 10-39)
28. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects. (Page 10-39)

Construction Program Training and Evaluation

29. The district should conduct a comprehensive orientation for a new facility prior to its opening so users better understand the building design and function. (Page 10-40)
30. While there is an informal walk-through at the completion of the first year of operation, the district does not perform comprehensive evaluations regularly during the next three to five years to collect information about building operation and performance. (Page 10-41)
31. The district does not analyze new building evaluations to determine whether facilities are fully used, operating costs are minimized, or changes in the district's construction planning process are needed. (Page 10-42)
32. The district has no process in place for comparing maintenance and operations costs of recently completed projects for the purpose of identifying and implementing cost-saving measures on a district-wide basis. (Page 10-43)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations ---

The recommendations for improving the district's facilities construction program will have an anticipated cost of \$100,000.

Exhibit 10-2

Implementing the Recommendations for Facilities Construction Will Have a Five-year Fiscal Impact of \$100,000 Investment for a One-time Cost

Action Plan and Strategy		Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings/Increased Revenues or (Increased Costs)					Total Cost
		Fiscal Year					
		2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	
10-6	Conduct a facilities audit	\$(100,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$(100,000)
Totals		\$(100,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$(100,000)

Background

The district has 37 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, 10 high schools, 4 exceptional student schools, 4 vocational schools, 15 other education centers, and 8 auxiliary buildings. The district's schools cover approximately 7.8 million net square feet and serve a population of 54,906 students, for about 142 square feet per student. The district's square foot per student ratio is close to the averages of the peer districts. (See Exhibit 10-3).

Exhibit 10-3

Square Feet Per Student is Comparable to Peer Districts

School district	Total net square feet	Total students	Net square feet Per student
Lee	7,849,961	54,906	142
Brevard	9,396,580	68,469	137
Pasco	6,723,255	46,458	145
Polk	12,370,238	77,353	160
Seminole	7,512,994	58,457	129
Volusia	7,507,249	59,406	126
Peer Average (without Lee)			140

Source: Florida Inventory of School Houses, June 11, 2002.

In 1999, the district ended a 35-year-old federal desegregation order by implementing a school choice program. Required until at least 2004, the school choice program divides the district into three large geographic choice zones. Students' home residence determines which zone among the three zones is available for parental choice of schools.

The district has faced many challenges in preparing its five-year work plan. In 1999, the district lost two key administrators. Fire safety compliance issues at 35 schools, along with many other safety-to-life issues, added further complications and led to significant adjustments to the plan.

Another major challenge for the district has been the area's rapid growth rate and the widening gap between DOE enrollment projections and the number of new students in the district. The district has grown tremendously, especially in the southern portion. An increase of approximately 11,500 students is expected within five years, with a similar number of new students anticipated during the following five-year period. This growth rate has significantly expanded the need for additional school facilities.

Exhibit 10-4 shows the planned expenditures for renovations, remodeling, and new construction projects for the district through 2005-06. New construction complies with small school requirements of Florida Statutes.

Exhibit 10-4

Planned Expenditures for Renovations, Remodeling and New Construction

Year	Project	Planned Cost	Student Stations	Gross Square Footage	GSF/per Student Station
2002/2003	East Zone Elementary	6,571,000	500	55,000	110
	South Zone Elementary	6,571,000	500	55,000	110
	South Zone Middle	10,547,600	700	90,000	129
	West Zone Middle	10,547,600	700	140,000	200
2003/2004	East Zone High School	18,425,700	900	140,000	156
	South Zone Elementary	6,747,000	500	55,000	110

Year	Project	Planned Cost	Student Stations	Gross Square Footage	GSF/per Student Station
2004/2005	West Zone High School	18,906,300	900	140,000	156
2005/2006	East Zone Middle	11,400,000	700	90,000	129
	South Zone Elementary	7,100,000	500	55,000	110
	West Zone High School	18,710,100	900	140,000	156

Source: School District of Lee County Facilities Five-Year Work Program.

Strategic planning to coordinate the design, construction, and maintenance of quality facilities are critical if the district is to meet the educational needs of Lee County's public school students. At the same time, a mission and goals establish the framework through which the district's facilities construction department operates.

The mission of a typical construction department is to provide new and modernized facilities at the lowest possible cost. Specific goals may include:

- establishing policies and a framework for long-range facilities planning
- providing valid enrollment projections to estimate future facilities needs
- selecting and acquiring proper school sites and timing their acquisition to coincide with anticipated needs while not wasting space
- assessing the capacity and adequacy of existing facilities and to evaluate alternatives to new construction
- developing educational specifications architects can use to design facilities for the intended uses
- securing architectural services to assist in planning and constructing facilities
- developing a capital planning budget that balances facility needs and costs, and determining how those costs will be financed
- translating architectural plans into quality school buildings, on time and within the budget
- conducting orientation programs for new facilities so that users will better understand how the buildings are supposed to work

The remainder of this chapter evaluates the district's facilities construction program and recommends improvements.

Methodology

To determine if the facilities construction program is meeting the Best Financial Management Practices, ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted seven site visits, interviewed the assistant superintendent of Support Services, the director of Construction, the facilities planner, and support staff. Research also included Florida law and industry information.

ValienteHernandez P.A. surveyed board members, district staff, school principals, teachers, School Advisory Committee (SAC) members, parents, and students to receive program input. Questions varied depending on the group, and the results have been incorporated into this chapter, where applicable.

Five-Year Facilities Work Program

1 The district has established a facilities planning committee.

The facilities planning committee can be the most valuable resource a district has in its facilities construction function. District-wide standing committees like these typically include members of the business community, parents groups, city and county authorities, and district staff. Such committees provide a base of support for the district's long-range planning and enhance community understanding of educational facility needs.

The district has three standing committees that deal with long-range facilities planning and budgeting for capital improvement projects.

The "Capital Planning Committee" assesses the district's long-range facility needs and makes recommendations to the school board. The committee is made up of school board members, the construction director, a facilities planner, a demographer, and budget director, among others.

The "Projects Committee" monitors capital projects from inception to completion. The design team, made up of a representative from the construction and planning department and the contractor begins work after the school board has approved a project, and meets weekly to review project status and budget-to-actual expenditures.

Additionally, the district has a "Construction Advisory Committee," which offers suggestions and support for the five-year capital plan, reviews proposed new construction and renovation projects, and advises on safety-to-life compliance. This committee has 15 members from across the county with building and trades industry experience.

The district needs to document the role of the capital planning committee in developing long-range construction plans. The committee's planning tools should include the plant survey, facilities priorities, maintenance needs, and budgets. The district also needs to document the relationship between the capital planning committee, the projects committee, and the construction advisory committee, as well as the role of each committee in construction planning. Additionally, the planning process needs to be formalized.

At the same time, the district lacks a long-term strategic plan that focuses district goals and resources on meeting future student capacity needs. As recommended in Action Plan 10-3, the plan should anticipate the locations of new facilities, consider joint-use options, population growth forecasts, sources of capital funds, number of student stations created, and projected construction dates.

To accomplish all that, the district should be certain the committee:

- Has a written charter, along with goals and reporting procedures so members understand their responsibilities
- Has board-established goals and interim reporting targets
- Documents its decisions and reports to the board
- Addresses future business needs and the resulting educational program requirements
- Addresses alternative solutions and the feasibility of each
- Periodically reviews the status of the long-range plan for the previous year to consider changing parameters, and recommends necessary adjustments to the school board
- Can appoint ad-hoc members to work with subcommittees thus keeping the permanent membership smaller and more manageable

- Ensures all stakeholders, including students, parents, and teachers, are represented as both permanent and ad-hoc members

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district establish written criteria and procedures that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each committee and the relationships between committees. This recommendation should be presented to the school board for approval.*

Action Plan 10-1 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-1

Define Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships Between Committees	
Strategy	Establish written procedures defining the committee's roles and responsibilities. Clearly define the relationships between committees.
Action Needed	Step 1: Assistant superintendent develops written criteria and procedures for the committee, to include: • Committee member roles and project responsibilities • Board-established goals and interim reporting targets • Procedures for documenting decisions and reporting to the board • Periodic status reviews of long-range plan of the previous year to consider changing parameters, while recommending school board adjustments to the long-range plan Step 2: Present proposed policy to the board for approval. Step 3: Superintendent directs capital planning committee activities. Step 4: Director of Construction and Planning coordinates committee activities.
Who Is Responsible	assistant superintendent for Support Services, director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

2 The district is improving its facilities planning based on steps currently underway.

Effectively managing a school district's facilities planning requires a solid framework, which includes:

- A standing capital planning committee made up of a broad base of stakeholders
- Written procedures for developing an organizational chart
- Clearly defined responsibilities and lines of authority

The district's organizational chart (Exhibit 10-5) provides for a director of Construction and Planning who reports to the assistant superintendent of Support Services, and construction managers and facilities planner who report directly to the director. Long-range facilities planning and budgeting for capital improvement projects are the shared responsibilities of the district's director of Construction and Planning and the facilities planner. As other district staff members are assigned planning duties, their job descriptions should be revised to include those new responsibilities.

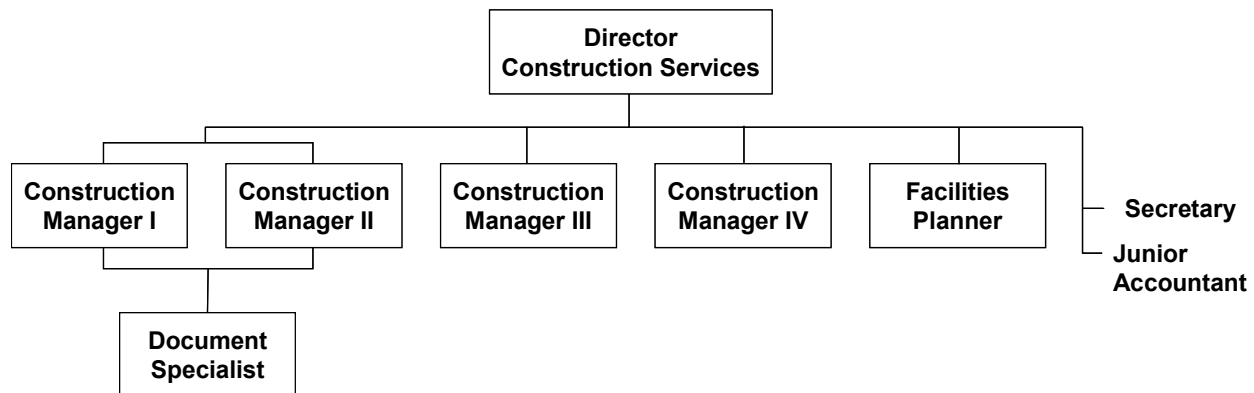
While lines of communication and authority are clearly defined, no formal procedures are in place for developing the district's long-range facilities plan. It is very important to establish written facilities planning procedures since a number of school officials are involved and significant resources are at stake. Among other issues, these procedures should address assessing facility needs, site selection, and communicating and coordinating with other government and public agencies. Moreover, establishing these procedures will:

- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the planning function
- Activate the lines of authority established in the organizational chart
- Open communications among the district's facilities planners

As recommended in Action Plan 10-1, the district needs to document that a responsibility of the capital planning committee is to develop long-range construction plans. The committee's planning tools will include the plant survey, facility priorities, maintenance needs, and budgets.

Exhibit 10-5

Construction Services Organizational Chart



Source: School District of Lee County.

The district lacks a long-term strategic plan that addresses future student capacity needs. The strategic plan should be comprehensive and include the anticipated general location of new facilities, joint use considerations, population growth, sources of capital funds, number of student stations created, and projected construction dates. The plan should focus district goals and resources on meeting future student capacity needs. Action Plan 10-3 addresses this issue.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district establish written procedures for the facilities function, as shown in the organizational chart, and update job descriptions to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each position.*

Action Plan 10-2 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We also recommend that the district develop a comprehensive long-term strategic plan for facilities construction.*

Action Plan 10-3 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-2**Update Organizational Chart and Establish Written Procedures for Facilities Planning**

Strategy	The district needs to update its organizational chart, and job descriptions to accurately reflect the desired design of the facilities planning process. Establish procedures that will provide a desired framework for carrying out the facilities planning function of the district.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish an organizational chart that considers facilities planning and accurately reflects the framework of the function. Step 2: Prepare written procedures that will: • Clarify the role and responsibilities of the planning function for both staff and the school board • Provide for the implementation of the lines of responsibility as show in the organizational chart • Provide for regular lines of communication among the managers that report to the director of facilities • Provide for regular lines of communications among the directors and supervisors that report to an assistant superintendent Step 3: Periodically review policies in order to keep them current and eliminate any that are outdated.
Who Is Responsible	assistant superintendent for Support Services
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 10-3**Develop a Comprehensive Long-term Strategic Plan for Facilities Construction**

Strategy	Develop a comprehensive long-term strategic plan for facilities construction.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review long-term student capacity needs for the district. Step 2: Prepare a long-term strategic plan that: • Identifies growth areas and student capacity needs by area • Identifies future sites for building facilities • Identifies how capital funding will be obtained and used • Identifies number of new student stations that will be created • Identifies joint use considerations • Projects construction dates for new facilities Step 3: Periodically review the strategic plan to keep it current.
Who Is Responsible	assistant superintendent for Support Services, director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

3

The five-year facilities work program should reflect input from the facilities planning committee and fit within the district's master plan.

Previous five-year work program was not based on input from the facilities planning committee

A school district needs to have an educational facilities program that provides an integrated long-range facilities plan, including a survey of projected needs and a 5-year work program. The purpose of the educational facilities program is to keep the school board, local governments, and the public fully

Facilities Construction

informed as to whether the district is using sound policies and practices that meet the essential needs of students and that warrant public confidence in district operations. The educational facilities program will be monitored by the Office of Educational Facilities and SMART Schools Clearinghouse, which will also apply performance standards pursuant to s. 235.218, *Florida Statutes*. The educational facilities program includes long-range planning for facilities needs over 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year periods. The program must be developed in coordination with the general-purpose local governments and be consistent with local government comprehensive plans. The school board's plan for provision of new schools must meet the needs of all growing communities in the district. The program must include:

- Projected student populations apportioned geographically at the local level
- An inventory of existing school facilities, identifying anticipated expansions or closures over 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year periods
- Projections of facilities' space needs, which may not exceed the norm space and occupant design criteria established in the State Requirements for Educational Facilities
- Information on leased, loaned, and donated space, as well as relocatables used for conducting the district's instructional programs
- The general location of public schools proposed to be constructed over the 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year time periods, including a list of the proposed schools' site acreage needs and anticipated capacity and maps showing the general locations
- The identification of options deemed reasonable and approved by the school board which reduce the need for additional permanent student stations
- The criteria and method, jointly determined by the local government and the school board, for determining the impact of proposed development to public school capacity

The program must also include a financially feasible district facilities work program for a 5-year period. The work program must include:

- A schedule of major repair and renovation projects necessary to maintain the district educational and ancillary facilities
- A capital funding plan that establishes not-to-exceed spending levels consistent with each particular project and with state standards for construction.
- A schedule of capital outlay projects necessary to ensure the availability of satisfactory student stations for the projected student enrollment in K-12 programs, including locations, capacities, and planned utilization rates of current facilities, proposed locations of planned facilities, and recommendations for infrastructure, as well as other improvements to land adjacent to existing facilities
- Plans for the use and location of relocatable, leased, and charter school facilities
- Plans for multitrack scheduling, grade level organization, block scheduling, or other alternatives that reduce the need for additional permanent student stations
- Information concerning average class size and utilization rate by grade level, which will result if the tentative district facilities work program is fully implemented
- The number and percentage of district students planned to be educated in relocatable facilities during each year of the tentative district facilities work program
- Plans for the closure of any school
- Projects for which capital outlay and debt service funds accruing under s. 9(d), Art. XII of the State Constitution are to be used shall be identified separately in priority order on a project priority list within the district facilities work program

The current program, covering the period of September 29, 2000 through the 2004-05 school year, was impacted by the loss of two key administrators. Fire safety compliance issues at 35 schools, along with many other safety-to-life issues, further complicated this process. A major challenge for the district has been the rapid student growth rate and the dissonance between DOE enrollment projections and the actual number of students migrating into the district. In 1999, the district ended a 35-year-old desegregation order by the Federal Court by implementing a school choice program. The program requires the district to maintain three separate zones until at least 2004. There is unequal growth among the zones, resulting in schools being over capacity in two zones, with student stations available in the other.

While the district has a five-year work program, it is not the result of long-range planning. For the 1999-2000 report, the district team assigned to produce the report did not have the expertise or the tools needed to produce an accurate report. As previously discussed, the involvement of a facilities planning committee is important to effectively plan for the future needs of the district. The development of the five-year work program, based on a long-range plan, must be a top priority of the capital planning committee. The plan needs to be updated annually based on the committee's input regarding the district's evolving needs.

Recommendations

- We recommend the district use the facilities evaluation process and the district's facility planning committee to assist with the setting of priorities within the five-year work program. Further, the district should establish 10- and 20-year plans in addition to the five-year work program (capital plan).*

Action Plan 10-4 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- We recommend the school district establish not-to-exceed spending levels that are consistent with each particular project and with state standards for construction.*

Action Plan 10-5 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-4

Development of the Five-year Work Program	
Strategy	Use the facilities evaluation process and the district's facility planning committee to assist with priority setting within the five-year work program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish a committee to develop long-range facility plans.
	Step 2: Committee should utilize new plant survey and district's assessment of needs to develop five-year work program.
	Step 3: Present new five-year plan to the board for approval.
	Step 4: Develop a ten- and twenty-year facilities plan using the same evaluation process.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 10-5

School Board Should Establish Not-to-exceed Spending Levels	
Strategy	The board should establish not-to-exceed spending levels that are consistent with state standards for construction.

Action Needed	Step 1: Develop proposed “not-to-exceed” spending levels that are consistent with state standards for construction. Step 2: Draft policy establishing spending levels that are consistent with state standards. Step 3: Submit policy to board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, assistant superintendent for Support Services, director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

4 The five-year facilities work program has incorporated thorough demographic studies into enrollment projections.

Thorough demographic studies are conducted as a part of the five-year facilities work program

The Educational Plant Survey (the survey) is the primary facilities planning document prepared by the school district. The State of Florida requires that this type of survey be conducted at least once every five years. The district’s newest plant survey is due in April 2003. The state maintains the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) report based on the surveys from this and other districts.

The 1998 survey includes enrollment projections that were used as the basis for facility needs between the 1998-99 and 2002-03 school years. The DOE provided the projected enrollment. The method used to predict the capital outlay full time equivalent (COFTE) student membership for the next five years is an adaptation of the “cohort survival technique” used by the United States Census Bureau (US Census). Research evidence and experience support this technique as the best method of predicting future COFTE student membership, which incorporates the number of live births, and uses historical trends to project enrollment by grade, or cohort, for Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) through Grade 12.

The DOE projections are not based on a thorough demographic study or on city/county comprehensive plans. For instance, migration is not factored into the enrollment projections, neither are demographic characteristics such as ethnicity and economic status. The district has addressed this by hiring a demographer as a consultant to assist the district with demographic and planning analyses. The district also employs its own staff to gather information about current and projected enrollments. Factors considered include data provided by the Florida Department of Education, migration, demographic characteristics, and city/county comprehensive plans.

The district created the Student Capacity Needs Committee to assess the current situation and to report its findings and recommendations for housing the 2,400 to 2,900 additional students expected in the 2002-03 school year. In November 2001, the committee reported its findings and recommendations. Those recommendations essentially suggest that there was neither time nor capital funding available to make significant changes to school capacity, therefore, schools would be asked to accommodate the increased enrollment within the existing facilities.

In January 2002, the committee reconvened to study possible solutions to the student capacity needs for years 2003-04 and beyond. The committee divided into five sub-committees to conduct in-depth analysis of the following issues:

- Projecting the student station and capital funding needs of the district by zone and level for the 10-year period, 2003-04 through 2011-12
- Opportunities and constraints associated with restructuring the current K-5, 6-8 and 9-12 grade level groupings into K-6, 7-9, and 10-12 grade groupings

- Opportunities and constraints associated with employing a multi-track, year-round calendar to accommodate more students within existing facilities
- Opportunities and constraints associated with remodeling and/or resizing facilities to increase student stations
- Opportunities and constraints associated with employing double sessions as a method for accommodating more students in targeted (zone, timing, level) circumstances

The findings of the committee were presented to the board while this review was being conducted, and the board is expected to accept the report. While the committee did an excellent job of analyzing the issues mentioned above, it was not able to reach a consensus on recommending an approach that best meets the needs of the district and its students. Exhibit 10-6 is a summary of the committee's findings under the traditional grade groupings and calendar.

Exhibit 10-6

Student Projections Compared to FISH (Florida Inventory of School Houses) Capacity

District Zone	FISH Capacity 2001-02	Net Enrollment 2001-02	Utilization Rate	Projected Enrollment 2006-07	Five-Year School Needs¹	Projected Enrollment 2011-12	Ten-Year School Needs¹
EAST							
Elementary	4,780	4,992	104%	6,662	4	7,406	1
Middle	1,779	2,515	141%	3,000	2	3,471	0
High	3,466	2,950	85%	4,221	1	4,867	1
WEST							
Elementary	10,002	9,931	99%	11,622	3	13,722	5
Middle	4,980	5,563	112%	6,108	2	6,978	1
High	5,588	5,923	106%	7,771	3	8,597	1
SOUTH							
Elementary	9,768	8,821	90%	10,511	2	12,108	3
Middle	4,336	4,397	101%	5,396	2	6,062	1
High	6,100	6,446	106%	8,042	2	9,221	2
District Total	50,799	51,538	101%	63,333	21	72,432	15

¹ Based on small school legislation, requiring districts to build schools at the following capacities: 500 elementary, 700 middle, 900 high school.

Source: School District of Lee County, Ten Year Projection and Alternative Responses, 2002.

Zones are used for planning

In 1997, the school board adopted a controlled open-enrollment method of student assignment. It is designed to give parents an opportunity to select appropriate educational program options for their children and to promote stability of assignments for students. School Choice differs from the traditional boundary method of student assignment in two important ways. First, School Choice assures parents that once students are enrolled in a school, they may remain in that school to the highest grade available unless: 1) they choose to leave, 2) they move out of the zone, or 3) they require placement in an alternative program. Second, School Choice promotes academic improvement and accountability through constructive competition.

The School Choice Plan divides the district into three large geographic choice zones. Students' home residence determines which set of schools, among the three zones, are available for parental choice.

Student zone identifiers are used to estimate the number of students that must be accommodated in each zone, by level. Additional information about school choice may be found in Chapter 1.

Enrollment projections are based on comprehensive plans for land use and development

Local comprehensive plans are utilized in projecting enrollment for facilities. The facilities planner is responsible for tracking new residential development in rapidly growing metropolitan areas and assessing the impact upon the district. This planner also acts as the liaison between the district and the county, state, and regional planning councils, as well as the five area municipalities. The facilities planner reviews and makes recommendations to the district on the following:

- Land use
- Geographical limitations and developable land
- Local ordinances that regulate the growth of the area
- Forecast 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

In accordance with ss. 235.193 and 163.3177(6)(h)1 and 2, *Florida Statutes*, the district has entered into an interlocal agreement with the Lee County Commission, and the City or Town Council of the municipalities of Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, and Sanibel. The agreement develops procedures that will be utilized to improve and coordinate public school facilities planning and land use planning through joint meetings, student enrollment and population projections, coordinating and sharing information, school site selection, supporting infrastructure, comprehensive plan amendments, rezonings, and development approvals, the educational plan survey and five-year facilities work program, and co-location and shared use.

As discussed in Best Practice 1, the district lacks a long-term strategic plan that addresses future student capacity needs. The strategic plan should be a comprehensive plan including the anticipated general location of new facilities, joint use considerations, population growth, sources of capital funds, number of student stations created, and projected construction dates. The plan should focus district goals and resources on meeting future student capacity needs. The long-term plan will also be needed to satisfy requirements of the educational facilities plan. Action Plan 10-3 addresses this issue.

5 In the past, the five-year facilities work program was not based on an evaluation of physical conditions and the ability of facilities to meet educational needs.

The district is currently completing its plant survey to update and validate the district's FISH data. To ensure optimal use of building capacity, FISH data, in conjunction with facility site reviews, needs to be used to analyze and identify instructional areas or teaching stations and to identify buildings and/or spaces that do not count as "satisfactory areas," or, areas in which the space of a station does not exceed the normal space and occupant design established by the State Requirements for Educational Facilities (SREF).

The district conducts a 5-year plant survey and annual safety inspections. However, these processes do not collect the types of information that would be available through a formal evaluation of existing facilities (also referred to as facility audits or facility appraisals). A facilities audit applies a formal

methodology in evaluating and grading all aspects of facilities, including the school site, structural and mechanical features, plant maintainability, school building safety and security, educational adequacy, and a proper environment for education.

These audits are useful in identifying facility needs that are not defined through current inspection and survey programs. A facilities evaluation will provide district staff with more specific information on facility needs for each school in the district, and allow for a better information base to use in planning future maintenance projects. More frequent facility audits or assessments based on formal evaluation criteria will also provide the district with a more comprehensive list of its facility needs.

An evaluation commonly used is the *Guide for School Facility Appraisal*, adopted by the Council of Educational Facility Planners International. This evaluation instrument assigns a score of 1 to 100 to each facility based on detailed analyses of the five categories previously mentioned.

As discussed in Best Practice 1, the district lacks a long-term strategic plan that addresses future student capacity needs. The strategic plan should be a comprehensive plan including the anticipated general location of new facilities, joint use considerations, population growth, sources of capital funds, number of student stations created, and projected construction dates. The plan should focus district goals and resources on meeting future student capacity needs. Action Plan 10-3 addresses this issue.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district conduct a complete evaluation of facilities using a comprehensive format, to include, as a minimum:*
 - *Structural design and integrity*
 - *Mechanical systems*
 - *Electrical systems*
 - *Finishes*
 - *Safety*
 - *ADA requirements*
 - *Educational suitability*
 - *Utilization/satisfaction*
 - *Technological readiness*
 - *Site adaptability*
 - *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*

Facilities Construction

- Hazardous materials
- Maintenance
- Structural adequacy
- Future expandability (including adaptability to change)
- Fire safety
- Any other health, sanitation, safety issues
- Future operational and maintenance costs considerations

Upon completion of the district-wide evaluation of all facilities, we recommend the district prioritize their needs and compile a district-wide ranking for replacement and/or renovation to be included in the five-year work program.

Action Plan 10-6 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-6

Comprehensive Evaluation and Ranking of Facilities	
Strategy	Conduct a complete evaluation of facilities using a comprehensive format and develop a detailed, uniform checklist of the evaluation criteria, and utilize the results of these evaluations to prioritize needs to be included in the five-year work program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Update and verify FISH data. Step 2: Conduct a complete evaluation of facilities using a comprehensive checklist. The list should include items listed in the text. Step 3: This evaluation instrument should assign a score of 1 to 100 to each facility based on detailed analyses. Step 4: Utilize this information in preparing five-year work program.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	We estimate a cost of approximately \$100,000, based on a similar evaluation study conducted in another school district (Martin).

6 The district evaluates alternatives to new construction when developing the annual five-year work program.

The district has had to implement many alternatives to new construction. As a result, school's are near capacity or over capacity in all three zones. These alternatives, including extended day schedules, year-round schools, and changes in grade configuration are being examined in order to fully utilize existing facilities. The district has relied heavily on alternatives to construction. Current projections show the district needing 21 additional schools by 2006 (see Exhibit 10-6).

The district's prime alternative to new construction has been the utilization of relocatable classrooms, having used up to 200 such units in the recent past. The district has established a goal of eliminating the number of relocatables. As noted in its strategic plan, the district wants to reduce the leased relocatable inventory completely by July 1, 2001. However, as of the completion of this report (October 2002), the leased relocatables were not completely eliminated. The district is revisiting its position on relocatables, which would provide a short-term solution to capacity problems at select schools.

The district should give consideration to the use of multi-track year-round programs in its schools as one method to address student growth. Research in the field clearly reveals that school districts can save

construction funds through multi-track year-round schooling. The research regarding the educational impact of year-round schooling reveals somewhat less clearly that it can have a positive impact on student achievement or at least no negative impact.

Major costs are avoided by using a year-round multi-track approach. If the district does not have to build a new school, it avoids the cost associated with building design, engineering, construction, furnishing, as well as infrastructure. There are, however, additional costs associated with operating a year-round school. The district has recently completed a study on student capacity needs, called the *Ten-Year Projection and Alternative Responses*. The district team has estimated that, in addition to feasibility studies, administrative planning time, and teacher in-service training, a multi-track, modified year calendar would also require an \$8 million upgrade to the central computer system to accommodate more complicated processes.

In a typical multi-track school operating four tracks on a 45/15 schedule (students attend for 45 days, then have a vacation for 15 days, with one-fourth of all students on vacation at any one time), the school is in operation 242 days each year, as opposed to the 180 days for a regular school. Thus, maintenance, repair, and utility expenses increase; secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, counselors, bus drivers, and other staff must be available for the full 12 months, with proportionate increases in salaries. Consideration must also be given to increased transportation costs, calculated to be an annual increase of approximately \$720,000 per school (this figure was extracted from the Lee study mentioned previously).

Extended-day schedules increase the capacity of individual schools by lengthening the school day for the facility, although not for the individual student. An extended-day school may have nine periods of instruction; with a group that attends school for periods one through six and another group that attends from three through nine. Implementing a version of extended-day schedules at schools experiencing substantial student enrollment increases could reduce the need for new school construction.

The district is also reviewing opportunities and constraints associated with remodeling or resizing facilities to increase student stations. An analysis of the district's schools identified 12 sites with varying potential for expansion. The analysis estimates additional student stations of 1,350 elementary seats, 706 middle school seats, and 1,995 high school seats. The district currently has a relocatable campus at North Ft. Myers Academy that could contribute additional student stations of 1,054 seats in the West zone if the campus was maintained in the short-term. The relocatable campus was installed while the new permanent campus is being constructed.

All of the alternatives to construction would provide the district with a short-term solution to overcrowding. But, these alternatives do not correct the problem. The district needs to ensure that permanent student stations are added in the long-term strategic plan. As discussed in Best Practice 1, the district lacks a long-term strategic plan that addresses future student capacity needs. The strategic plan should be a comprehensive plan including the anticipated general location of new facilities, joint use considerations, population growth, sources of capital funds, number of student stations created, and projected construction dates. The plan should focus district goals and resources on meeting future student capacity needs. Action Plan 10-3 addresses this issue.

Additional discussion on relocatable classrooms, multi-track calendar, and extended-day schedules is presented in Chapter 9, Best Practice 1.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district thoroughly review the alternatives to new construction, including an analysis of the short-term and long-term cost implications and the overall advantages and disadvantages, which were presented to the school board in June 2002. The alternatives*

include extended-day schedules, changes in attendance boundaries, year-round schools, and changes in grade configuration.

Additional information on this issue is presented in Chapter 9, Use of Construction Funds.

Action Plan 10-7 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-7

Examine Alternatives to New Construction	
Strategy	The district needs to examine the alternatives to new construction, including an analysis of short-term and long-term implications.
Action Needed	Step 1: Conduct a complete evaluation of different alternatives, giving weight to pedagogical, operational, and fiscal factors. Step 2: This evaluation should be conducted by senior personnel and professionals. Step 3: Utilize this information in preparing the five-year work plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendents, Director of Construction and Planning, Finance Director. Approved by the school board.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The district may defer the cost of construction of additional student stations.

7 District planning does not prioritize construction needs.

Like a blueprint that guides construction, a well-conceived plan is a critical component of the construction process. The plan must take into account the existing infrastructure, funds, staff, time constraints, and other changes required to make the district's vision of the future a reality. A good plan identifies all construction needs, estimates costs to complete, and prioritizes needs based on district goals.

As discussed in Best Practice 1, the facilities planning committee can be the most valuable resource a district has in its facilities construction function. Such committees provide a base of support for the district's long-range planning and enhance community understanding of educational facility needs. The district's planning committee is the capital projects committee. Although the capital projects committee meets weekly to review projects and prioritize construction needs, the district has not documented the process in place to prioritize projects.

The district was able to demonstrate through the five-year work program and the annual safety inspections that:

- Projects including instructional capacity are given higher priorities than administrative or support projects
- Construction and renovation priorities are established to ensure equitable treatment of all areas within the district. The five-year work program and other priority listings clearly show a district wide equitable approach to construction. Growth is occurring in all zones with major growth in the east and south zones; the district has included projects for schools in all zones.
- All available capital resources are applied toward the five-year work program and limited use capital funds are not diverted to other lower priority allowable uses

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district develop a formalized process for prioritizing construction needs. The process needs to record the needs by school, including budgeted amount for the project.*

Action Plan 10-8 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-8

Develop Formal Process for Prioritizing Construction Needs	
Strategy	The district needs to develop a formalized process for prioritizing construction needs. The process needs to record the needs by school, including budgeted amount for the project.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop a method to record all construction needs by school site, such as a facilities needs table. Step 2: Budget amount for each project. Step 3: Evaluate and prioritize needs so that projects including instructional capacity are given higher priority than administrative or support projects. Step 4: This evaluation should be conducted by senior personnel and professionals. Step 5: Utilize this information in preparing the five-year work plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendents, director of Construction and Planning, finance director. Approved by the school board.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources..

8

The district demonstrates that its construction program complies with Florida law.

The district is required to submit annual reports to the DOE. The following requirements are met and reports are submitted to demonstrate the district's compliance with DOE's requisites:

- Survey of validation
- Project implementation for projects over \$200,000
- Certification of occupancy and final inspection
- Project priority list for use of bonds
- Twelve-month capital outlay projection and request for encumbrance authorization.
- Report of cost of construction
- FISH update (It is the responsibility of the district to update FISH online each time a new facility is added or altered.)
- The district must also comply with DOE and the SREF in regards to the following three issues, which are addressed in the plant survey that is required once every five years:
 - Identify the number of teaching stations in the schools
 - Determine that the number of student stations assigned to a teaching station agrees with legal requirements
 - Determine that the proposed costs of construction do not exceed the amount legally allowed per student station

Facilities Construction

The plant survey is the responsibility of the facilities planner. The survey, which is due in April 2003, has been completed. The school board approved the plant survey on July 18, 2002.

As seen in Exhibit 10-7, the district has exceeded SMART school requirements for schools built since 1998.

Exhibit 10-7

Cost and Other Relevant Information on Schools Built since 1998

School Name	Educational Facility Cost	Number of Student Stations	Cost per Student Station	SMART Cost per Student Station ¹
Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle	14,365,134	1,298	11,067	13,875
Diplomat Middle	14,817,647	1,157	12,807	13,300
Caloosa Elementary	11,312,292	989	11,438	12,382
Caloosa Middle	14,705,719	1,269	11,588	14,197
Mirror Lakes Elementary	8,879,831	739	12,016	12,784
High Tech North ²	4,491,721	367	12,239	19,396
Lehigh Senior High	943,750	Not available	Not available	19,396

¹ Section 235.216 (2)(a), *F.S.* states the annual cost per student station shall be adjusted using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI, as published by the Office of Economic and Demographic Research, was projected on 2/27/2002 at 1.024%. Based on this percentage, the dollar amount projected for January 2003 is used as the State's "not to exceed amount" for a SIT Award.

² The educational facility costs for High Tech North were not available, thus, the contractual cost was utilized for the calculation.

Source: Lee County School District.

9

For all projects with dates of construction contracted after March 1, 2002, the district can demonstrate that the construction program complies with the Florida Building Code, however compliance should be assured in the five year plan.²

The district demonstrates that staff has knowledge and understanding of the Florida Building Code. District staff documented attending a regional workshop hosted by the DOE, designed to show the difference between the Florida Building Code and the Uniform Building Code. Under the FBC, the district is responsible for:

- Plan review
- Construction inspections
- Document control/recordkeeping

For the short term the district's plan is to utilize its own staff to perform certain functions, but to hire consultants for the next year's major projects and a few smaller projects, as needed. The district estimates that thirteen positions would be required to perform plan review and construction services in-house. As the district works to improve its five-year facilities plan as discussed in best practice one of this chapter, it should include strategies that support long-term compliance with the FBC. However, the district's long term five year facilities plan does not ensure compliance with the Florida Building Code, which should be included as part of the district's effort to develop a comprehensive long term strategic construction plan.

² The original compliance date of January 1, 2002 was delayed for three months.

Recommendations

We recommend the district ensure that compliance with the Florida Building Code be included in the district's comprehensive long-term construction plan, outlined in Best Practice 2, Action Plan 10-3.

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

The board provides open communication with the community

Board minutes of open hearings illustrate that regular community meetings are held to discuss information regarding construction programs. The school board provides timely notice to the public of dates and agendas for upcoming meetings. During these meetings, the district provides a clear explanation of each construction project in a format that allows for public response.

The district also meets monthly with the Zone Advisory Councils and informs them when a new project is being proposed to solicit community input. The purpose of the Zone Advisory Council is to communicate information to the groups they are representing, as well as to provide opportunities for input, suggestions, and support for issues that have an impact upon the schools in the zone or that have district-wide impact. The Zone Advisory Council is comprised of one staff member and two parent/guardian members from each school in the school choice zone.

As discussed in Best Practice 1, the capital planning committee determines facility needs, the capital projects committee monitors projects, and the construction advisory committee reviews educational specifications and construction plans. The district needs to ensure that the business community, parent groups, city and county authorities, and district staff are represented on these committees, thus gaining a broad base of support for the long-range plans and help with the overall community understanding of district facility needs. Action Plan 10-1 addresses this issue.

Educational Specifications

11 The district develops educational specifications for each individual project.

The district has a unique set of educational specifications for each new school, project, or renovation. The primary purpose of the educational specifications is to relate to the design professionals what programs are to be housed in the facility and what the design implications of those programs may be.

Many of the essential components are discussed by district personnel and ultimately included in the project; they are formally documented in the educational specifications. For all projects, there are educational specifications that:

- State the project rationale
- Provide a narrative description of the project

- State the program goals and instructional philosophy
- Addresses school-community relationships
- State whether the project will serve all or parts of the district on a open enrollment basis
- State whether the new facility will be a “magnet” or other special school

The district has developed a set of standardized educational specifications for the various types of school plant facilities within the district, i.e.: elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Standardized specifications augment uniformity of program from school to school within the district and eliminate some effort duplication. A standardized specification, however, cannot eliminate the need for an individually considered specification for specific projects, as each project will have its own unique characteristics. The district begins the planning process with standardized specifications and makes adjustments to these plans based on the needs the school is trying to address. The educational specifications document provides the district with an opportunity to customize the specifications for the school’s particular purpose. Once the final design is complete, the educational specifications can be compared against the final product to determine if all needs are addressed. By performing this activity, the district has been able to minimize the need for change orders once construction has begun.

12 The educational specifications for new construction, remodeling, and renovations include most, but not all, descriptions of activity areas.

The district completes formal educational specifications for each project. As a result, the district includes the necessary components that define a project’s needs. The district is likely to include many of the criteria in various documents such as the plant survey or building specifications, which are included in the educational specification document.

The criteria listed below have been included in the educational specifications:

- The number of areas to be constructed, their size, spatial relationships, purpose, and staff who will utilize the space
- The description of space relationship requirements for the separation of large- and- small group areas and for convenient student and staff circulation
- Furniture and equipment needs
- Environmental variables such as acoustical needs, visual needs, thermal requirements, and special aesthetic concerns
- Utility needs including water, sewer, drainage, electrical, gas, compressed air, telephone, fire alarm, conduit cable for advanced technology, and satellite dish
- Storage requirements for individual activity areas and teacher stations
- Display areas for chalkboards, tack boards, and displays
- Instructional support and co-curricular facilities have been addressed
- The program facilities list includes a schedule of spaces and variances, as applicable
- Specifications address curriculum and support services

The criteria listed below, however, have not been included in each of the completed educational specifications:

- A planned expansion (relocatables) strategy
- Joint-use design concepts to accommodate security, energy conservation, and citizen safety

- Emergency shelter accommodations

Including the aforementioned criteria is important because it provides a complete picture of the facility's planned uses. The development of the education specifications enables the district to consider how a facility will be used early on in the project and make adjustments as needed. For example, identifying facilities as joint-use may initiate the need to use a different type of flooring--to take into account fewer hours of cleaning time, additional wear due to extended facility use, and tear due to increased foot traffic.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district include an expansion strategy, joint-use design concepts, and emergency shelter accommodations for each project to form a complete set of educational specifications.*

Action Plan 10-9 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-9

Include Expansion Strategy, Joint-use Design Concepts, and Emergency Shelter Accommodations for Each Project

Strategy	Include expansion strategies, joint-use design concepts, and emergency shelter accommodations, as applicable, to each project.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop criteria for the following, as they apply to a specific project: • Expansion strategies • Joint -use design concepts • Emergency shelter accommodations
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent of Support Services, Director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

13 Architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.

Architectural plans meet the district's building needs

The district provided a copy of the architectural drawings for the new high school being built. The facility's plans verify that the architect has drawn schematic layouts of buildings, roads, etc. that ensure:

- There is a description of how students, staff, and visitors will arrive at and depart from the school
- Parking requirements are defined
- There are provisions for emergency vehicle and service access
- There is a provision for access by disabled persons
- Bus loading and unloading is separate from other vehicle traffic
- Circulation patterns, both within classrooms and between activity areas, are well planned
- District security considerations have been incorporated into the design
- Potential community use of the building has been considered

- Future expansion possibilities are included
- Descriptions of the public address, closed-circuit television, telephone, computer networking, and security systems have been included

Architectural plans for construction are matched against educational specifications

The educational specifications provide a complete description of the project that includes the previously discussed criteria. The district ensures that all stakeholders are given an opportunity to review the plans verifying that the final plans are representative of the district's educational program goals. This is done through meetings with the Zone Advisory Council. The Construction Advisory Committee also matches the educational specifications to the plans. Members of the construction team—construction manager, architects, and engineers—are involved in these meetings.

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

Safety features are incorporated into new construction

Maintaining a safe and secure environment for students and employees is a primary responsibility for a school district. The district has demonstrated in its architectural plans that appropriate safety features are incorporated into the design of construction. The plans included items such as fences, exit signs, lighting, security systems, etc. To ensure safety conditions, the district performs a substantial and final inspection on new construction to discover any issues that would not pose even a minor safety threat. Furthermore, the district's safety inspector conducts annual safety inspections of all facilities to discover the existence of any deficiencies.

Selection and Acquisition of School Sites

15 The district needs to begin school site selection well in advance of future needs based on expected growth patterns.

The district has a site selection committee

The site selection committee is comprised of a variety of district stakeholders. These stakeholders, including administrators, principals, instructional staff, local government officials, architects, real estate officials, and community members, bring a wealth of information to the process that the district may not otherwise consider. The purpose and role of this committee is to assist in selection of potential sites, help evaluate identified sites, and recommend identified sites to the board. The committee process will incorporate the requirements of Florida Law and the state requirements for educational facilities concerning site acquisition. These requirements consider the most economical and practical locations and the minimum site size needed by type of school. Due to the high amount of public funds spent, participation in the site selection and acquisition process by representatives of various stakeholders is essential, and practical, to earn necessary recognition of public accountability.

With a long-range planning committee and a site selection committee, the school district would be in a better position to purchase land for construction well in advance of the need. For example, if the district is aware that it will need to build an elementary school in the south end of the district in the next 3-5 years, the site selection committee can begin to consider locations now. This may enable the district to have more choices and pay a lower price for the piece of land. It would also enable the district to start building early should the need arise. Evaluating potential sites will be a responsibility of the site selection committee.

The site committee should be a sub-committee of the capital planning committee discussed earlier in Best Practice 1. Action Plan 10-1 addresses this issue.

The district demonstrates compliance with all legal requirements for site selection

The district was able to demonstrate that it complies with all legal requirements for site selection. Since site purchases represent major financial and long-term planning commitments for a school district, it is important that their evaluation and selection meet all legal requirements. Applicable legal requirements are defined in *SREF Section 1.4*. Chapter 235.054, *Florida Statutes*, which requires that all sites with an estimated value between \$100,000 and \$500,000 have one independent appraisal, and that sites with an estimated value exceeding \$500,000 have two independent appraisals. The district provided the following documentation to demonstrate their compliance with this requirement:

- Under \$500,000: The district provided an appraisal for the Diplomat Elementary School site.
- Over \$500,000: The district provided two appraisals for a site that will eventually hold a new high school.

Chapters 235.19 and 235.193, *Florida Statutes*, define requirements for coordination with local governing bodies in site selection and require school districts to select sites that meet the educational need parameters established by the state. The district has a facilities planner on staff that is responsible for identifying potential sites, verifying that the site meets selection criteria, and is the board contact in site acquisitions. She also assists with school site location decisions and analysis of district land use issues. Additionally, the facilities planner tracks new residential developments in rapidly growing metropolitan areas to assess impact on the district, and acts as the liaison between the district and Lee County, the State of Florida, the Regional Planning Council, and the five area municipalities, their growth plans, and educational elements.

In accordance with ss. 235.193, and 163.3177(6)(h)1 and 2, *Florida Statutes*, the district has entered into an interlocal agreement with the Lee County Commission, and the City or Town Council of the municipalities of Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, and Sanibel. The agreement develops procedures that will be utilized to improve and coordinate public school facilities planning and land use planning through joint meetings, student enrollment and population projections, coordinating and sharing information, school site selection, supporting infrastructure, comprehensive plan amendments, rezonings, and development approvals, educational plan survey and five-year facilities work program, and co-location and shared use.

Environmental studies are conducted

Environmental studies are conducted before site acquisition. The district provided a preliminary environmental assessment conducted by Environmental and Permitting Services. The district also provided evidence of a subsurface investigation conducted by Central Testing Laboratory on the proposed site of the new high school. The conclusion of this study was that the site was suitable for construction of a new school.

The district currently has a number of sites available for construction. In addition, the planner has conducted a study that has identified additional sites that would meet the needs of the district. The department is awaiting board approval to proceed.

As discussed in Best Practice 1, the district lacks a long-term strategic plan that addresses future student capacity needs. The strategic plan should be a comprehensive plan including the anticipated general location of new facilities, joint use considerations, population growth, sources of capital funds, number of student stations created, and projected construction dates. The plan should focus district goals and resources on meeting future student capacity needs. Action Plan 10-3 addresses this issue.

16 The board considers the most economical and practical locations based on current and anticipated needs, including such factors as needed to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to developments, and agreements with adjoining counties.

The district has established site selection criteria

The district demonstrated that, for a newly acquired site, an analysis was performed comparing characteristics of different appraisals. School board minutes and the content of the appraisals demonstrate that the district considers obstacles when selecting sites. These include issues such as transportation plans, zoning, environmental concerns, and neighborhood concerns for each site selected.

As noted in the previous section, legal requirements require two appraisals for property with a value exceeding \$500,000. Furthermore, if the contract price exceeds the average of the two appraisals, then the school board must vote unanimously to proceed with the purchase. The district provided two appraisal reports for the future site of a high school. The appraisals provided information on factors such as location, site, size, land use, and land value comparisons. The district paid above fair market value for this site; the appraisals suggest a value of \$ 1.26 million and \$1.258 million. The actual price paid was \$ 1,486,635. School board minutes suggest a complex and lengthy negotiation process for this site purchase. The negotiation involved several issues including the construction of a road by the county to provide access to the property. The board voted unanimously to accept the \$228,000 excess.

Construction Cost

17 The district has not established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its construction program.

The district recently established a construction process checklist. Each shaded square on the flowchart (Exhibit 10-8) represents a section of the construction process checklist. The checklist has been designed to monitor the construction project. For example, Phase II, Design Developments requires that the maintenance foremen and technical departments review and approve construction plans. By signing the checklist, the foremen and technical departments agree that materials and design are acceptable. Each

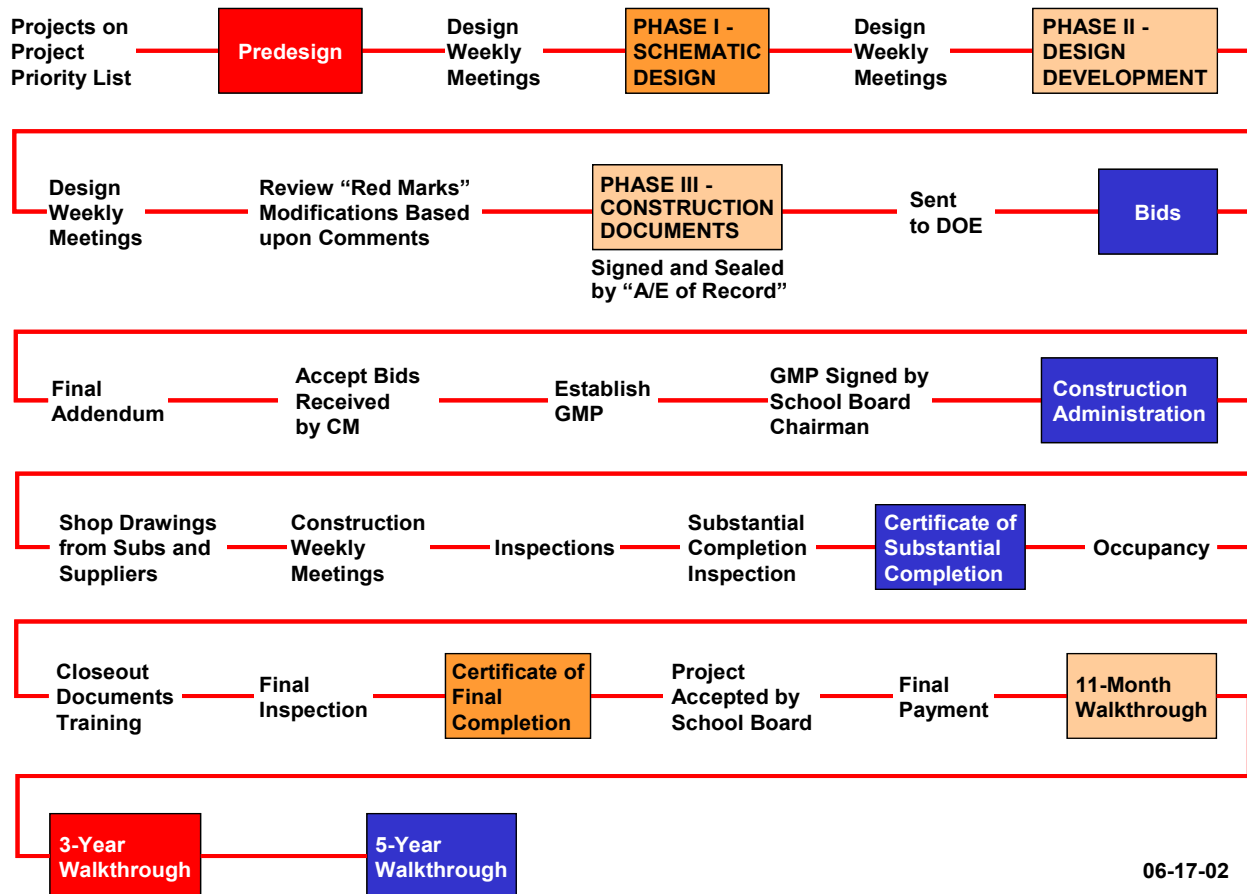
section requires specific sign-offs that work being reviewed meets district specifications. The capital projects committee meets weekly during this phase to monitor costs.

The construction process checklist is new for the district, and has not actually been used as a tool on a construction project. The district is excited about this tool, and is looking forward to implementing it during its next project.

The flowchart in Exhibit 10-8 presents the district's construction program.

Exhibit 10-8

Construction Process



Source: School District of Lee County.

The district, however, does not have formal accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its construction program.

These mechanisms are essential for the district to improve its facilities construction program. Accountability mechanisms will ensure that the district is building facilities in locations that best meet the need of the district. They can also ensure that the district is building in the most cost effective manner. The process to establish accountability mechanisms needs to include, as a minimum:

- Development of goals and objectives to implement accountability to the public at large, to improve the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the district's construction program

- Development of performance benchmarks and cost-efficiency measures, including comparisons to similar adjoining districts, to evaluate the program and use these tools to improve management decision-making
- Set up procedures to evaluate the performance and cost of the program, to analyze the data to recognize potential cost savings, and to consider the implementation of alternatives, such as outside contracting and privatization
- Development, establishment, and implementation of strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data

Recommendations

We recommend the district develop measurable performance goals, objectives, and benchmarks for the construction program, as described above and in Chapter 4, Performance Accountability, Action Plan 4-1.

18 The district implemented the general requirements recommended in the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards.

The Florida Legislature, during its 1997 Special Session, established the Soundly Made, Accountable, Reasonable, and Thrifty (SMART) Schools Clearinghouse as the agency responsible for administering several programs designed to assist and encourage Florida school districts to build SMART schools. As of June 30, 2001, the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Board was sunset. However, the district is still encouraged to apply the Frugal Construction Standards that ensure appropriate industry standards and optimal life cycles and that may include, but are not limited to, standards for optimal size of core facility space, design-build, performance contracting, energy efficiency, and life cycle systems costing.

The SMART Schools Clearinghouse encourages school districts to consider the recommendations and incorporate as many as practical and possible into their schools. By following a determined and straightforward approach to designing and building SMART schools, school districts can make a significant impact on reducing the cost of building and maintaining schools while continuing to provide a high quality learning environment for students.

Per ValienteHernandez P.A., discussions with the district's director of Construction and Planning, the district:

- Has evaluated the SMART school guidelines in writing
- Has received SIT awards for 3 of the last 4 projects
- Has had middle school plans created by the district included in SMART school designs

Although the school district supports the implementation of Frugal Construction standards as part of the design and construction of educational facilities, the district does not have a written policy that encourages the design team to comply with SMART school design philosophy. The design team is encouraged to comply with the practical design solutions that are functional and cost-effective. The design team, construction manager, and district facilities staff help control construction costs by:

- Being involved in development of the educational specifications and monitoring the cost implications of decisions made by the district's educational specifications committee
- Studying the educational specifications and helping translate them into a precise program

- Being involved in site selection and helping determine the best utilization of potential school sites
- Questioning the Occupant Design Criteria Tables and looking for better and more efficient ways to allocate space within the school
- Seeking simple and straightforward architectural, civil, structural, mechanical, and electrical design solutions
- Monitoring the architectural, civil, structural, mechanical, and electrical planning and design solutions to control costs
- Producing complete, high quality construction documents

Applying such procedures led to the qualification for a School Infrastructure Thrift Award (SIT award). The intent of the legislature is to provide SIT award money for school districts that use due diligence and sound business practices in the design, construction, and use of educational facilities. A school district may seek the SIT award provided that the cost per student station for new construction of educational facilities does not exceed the amounts shown in Exhibit 10-9.

Exhibit 10-9

Cost Per Student Station Limit for SIT Award

School level	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Elementary	\$11,600	\$11,865	\$12,102	\$12,382	\$12,784
Middle	\$13,300	\$13,604	\$13,875	\$14,197	\$14,657
High	\$17,600	\$18,003	\$18,631	\$18,786	\$19,396

Source: Chapter 235.216, *F.S.* and http://smartschools.state.fl.us/smartschools/sit_student_station.html.

The cost per student station is determined by either the Construction Contract award date or the date the Construction Manager (CM) gave a signed Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) to the school board. If granted a SIT award, the district shall receive up to fifty percent of such savings. The district was awarded SIT awards for three of the last four schools it built, or 75% of new construction. The fourth school, Caloosa Elementary, was not eligible for an SIT award due to shared facilities with the middle school. Additional information about facilities construction may be found in Chapter 9, Best Practice 1. Exhibit 10-10 shows district schools that have received SIT awards, amount of award, and date approved.

Exhibit 10-10

District Schools Receiving SIT Awards

School Year	School	Award Amount	Date Approved
1997-98	Diplomat Middle School	\$1,267,913	January 23, 2002
1999-00	Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School	434,589	January 23, 2002
2000-01	Caloosa Middle School	\$1,014,801	February, 19, 2002

Source: Smart Schools Clearinghouse, June 2002.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district formalize the recommendations of the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards into construction planning and development operations.*

Action Plan 10-10 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-10

Implement Recommendations of Frugal Construction Standards	
Strategy	Adopt the SMART Schools Clearinghouse Frugal Construction Standards that are considered appropriate and endorse/support the “team building” program.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district weighs the positive effects of the SMART Schools Clearinghouse and the Frugal Construction Standards. A mechanism to obtain accurate and well-developed information is established. Step 2: The desired information is gathered, analyzed, and reported to the superintendent and, ultimately, to the school board. Step 3: The school board decides whether the SMART Schools Clearinghouse and the Frugal Construction Standards are to be made part of the district’s operating policies. Step 4: After board approval, a system is developed to incorporate the SMART concepts into action.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Director of Construction and Planning. Approval by school board.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

19 The district minimizes construction costs through the use of prototype school designs and frugal construction practices.

The intent of the legislature is to provide school prototype design for all new public schools to reduce the time and cost of developing new facilities needed to alleviate the overcrowded conditions in the public school systems. The district has used the prototype school designs to build elementary schools and middle schools, and also for a new high school, which is in the process of being built. Prototype designs were used for the schools and additions illustrated in Exhibit 10-11.

Exhibit 10-11

District Utilizes Prototype Building Design

Schools Built Using Prototype Design

- Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle
- Diplomat Middle
- Caloosa Middle
- Caloosa Elementary
- Lehigh Senior High

Source: School District of Lee County.

Exhibit 10-12 compares total construction costs from 1996 to 2000 by school type to the peer districts and the state average. The district compares favorably to the peer district average for middle schools, and is slightly higher than the peer group average for elementary schools. The district did not build any new high schools during this period. As these are the most expensive schools to build, this fact should be considered when comparing the district average to peer districts for all school types.

Exhibit 10-12

Construction Cost Comparisons to Peer Districts^{1, 2}

School Level	District	No. Schools	Student stations	Square Footage	Total Cost	Total Cost/Stusta	Total Cost/Sqft
Elementary	Lee	2	1,439	184,739	18,474,124	12,838	100.00
	Brevard	6	4,449	518,501	\$46,008,855	9,627	88.73
	Pasco	7	5,259	619,752	65,919,144	12,535	106.36
	Polk	6	4,950	560,062	58,602,140	11,839	104.64
	Seminole	4	3,523	451,205	40,490,278	11,493	89.74
	Volusia	2	1,440	164,277	18,744,383	13,017	114.10
Elementary	Total Peer	25	19,951	2,313,797	229,764,800	11,516	99.30
Middle	Lee	1	1,157	146,352	14,052,256	12,145	96.02
	Pasco	2	1,816	260,141	26,093,139	14,368	100.30
	Seminole	1	1,556	143,110	17,040,604	10,952	119.07
	Volusia	2	2,823	336,675	39,032,321	13,827	115.93
Middle	Total Peer	5	6,195	739,926	82,166,064	13,263	111.05
High	Lee	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Brevard	1	1,600	233,298	25,918,000	16,199	111.09
	Pasco	2	2,694	380,000	41,860,142	15,538	110.16
	Seminole	1	2,271	217,055	25,855,412	11,385	119.12
High	Total Peer	4	6,565	830,353	93,633,554	14,263	112.76
All	Lee	3	2,596	331,091	32,526,380	12,529	98.24
	Brevard	7	6,379	751,799	71,926,855	11,276	95.67
	Pasco	11	9,769	1,259,893	133,872,425	13,704	106.26
	Polk	6	4,950	560,062	58,602,140	11,839	104.64
	Seminole	6	7,350	811,370	83,386,294	11,345	102.77
	Volusia	4	4,263	500,952	57,776,704	13,553	115.33
	Grand Total	34	32,711	3,884,076	405,564,418	12,398	104.42

¹ Does not include design-build construction contracts.

² Any district not included in a chart-section did not build any schools during that period.

Source: Department of Education, Construction Costs 1996-2000.

20 The district secures appropriate professional services to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.

Appropriate professional services are employed for facilities planning

The district demonstrated that procedures for the selection of appropriate professionals to assist in the process of facility planning, design, and construction were in compliance with legal requirements. The district uses an architectural selection committee to screen written applicants and identify and evaluate finalists. Chapter 287.017, *Florida Statutes*, establishes a threshold for determining the need for architectural selection committee. The district demonstrated its compliance by producing an architectural planning document listing the names of the members of the selection committee. The committee is created as needed and reports to the capital planning committee. The following outlines the process followed in the selection for services:

- The district forms an independent selection committee, which includes:
 - School board member

Facilities Construction

- Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
 - Director of Construction and Planning
 - Principal
 - Assistant Principal
 - Building Supervisor
- A public advertisement for professional services is made and proper bid documents are sent to at least three prospective bidders
- During the committee meeting each proposal is discussed and scored based on the following criteria:
 - Letter of Interest
 - Staffing disciplines of local office
 - Related experience
 - Proximity to project
 - References
 - Construction administration experience and capability
 - Total current and projected workload
 - Fee volume with the district
 - Past record and performance with the district
 - Financial responsibility
 - Liability insurance
 - Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
- The three proposals with the highest point totals are short listed and invited for an interview
- During the interview the applicants are questioned in more detail about items listed above and samples of previous work are presented to the committee
- A firm is selected and awarded the opportunity of contract negotiations with the school district

Upon board approval, a contract for services is signed. The contract form is the standard American Institute of Architects (AIA) contract, along with the specific requirements of the project being completed. Those requirements include the time frame for completion, the allowable reimbursable expenses, the degree of construction supervision that will be required, and verification of the absence of contingent fees. The fee agreed to in the contract is a total fixed fee plus approved reimbursable expenses.

The district demonstrated that professionals were used early in the planning process helping to define project goals and needs, assisting with site selection, and helping to clarify educational specifications and facilities lists.

The district has a formal process of evaluating architects; the architect's quality of work is considered in future selections. Given the amount of current and future new construction and major renovations in the district, it is important to have a formal evaluation process in order to use the information to ensure quality with future projects.

The district applies frugal and life-cycle cost analyses to project goals and needs, site selection, and educational specifications and facilities list, but needs to formalize the process. See Chapter 9, Use of Construction Funds, Best Practice 4 for additional discussion of life-cycle costing.

21 Funds collected for school projects are raised appropriately.

The district needs to utilize local sources of revenue for school projects

The School District of Lee County has maximized use of the regular funding sources that are available. They have fully utilized six common sources of funding capital projects: Classroom First Lottery Bonds, State Capital Outlay Bond Issue Funds, Public Education Capital Outlay Bonds, Capital Outlay and Debt Service Funds, Local Capital Improvement Funds, and Certificates of Participation.

While the district has fully utilized these regular sources of revenue and provided new construction in a cost-efficient manner, they have not fully utilized the potential for other sources of funding. Past efforts suggest there is generally a negative attitude toward general obligation bonds or a sales tax initiative. The district has assessed impact fees as a way of providing revenues for facility needs, but has not been able to use these funds due to litigation. The district can reasonably expect to grow by 11,000 to 12,000 students within the next five years, with a similar increase in the subsequent five years. The district has over-relied on alternatives to building, and currently faces a \$300 million deficit in funding needed to build 25 new schools by 2006. See Chapter 9, Use of Construction Funds, Background and Best Practice 2, for further discussion on sources of revenue.

Recommendations

- *In addition to fully utilizing the regular sources of revenue available to school districts, we recommend that the district identify advantages and disadvantages of each capital construction-funding alternative and determine viable sources.*

Action Plan 10-11 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-11

Identify Advantages and Disadvantages of Each Capital Construction-funding Alternative and Determine Viable Funding Sources	
Strategy	Identify advantages and disadvantages of each capital construction-funding alternative and determine viable funding sources.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review all available construction funding alternatives. Step 2: Identify advantages and disadvantages of each alternative. Step 3: The school board decides which funding alternatives are obtained.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Director of Construction and Planning, Director of Budget. Approval by the school board.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Completion of Projects on Time and Within Budget

22 The district planning has provided realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.

Each project manual clearly states the time frame as of when construction shall be completed. The time frame usually states the number of days beyond the “notice to proceed.” In some situations, a specific date is identified for completion. Completion dates are implemented to coincide with the start of the school year or semester to minimize the impact on students.

The board receives updates on major construction projects after each phase is completed. Any amendments to the original budget are presented to the board for approval. Although completed construction coincides with the opening of schools, the district often has a “punch list” of items remaining to complete after the opening of new schools. Although punch list items tend to be minor, there may be construction type activities occurring during/after school hours that interrupt student learning. These interruptions are not major, with most activity taking place prior to or after school hours.

23 For each project or group of projects, the architect and district facilities planner develop conceptual site plans and building specifications.

The district demonstrated that plans and building specifications were developed for each project by providing a set of architectural plans for four major school projects (Lee Middle School, Bayshore Elementary, Riverdale High School, Lehigh Senior High). The plans showed the existing layout of buildings and grounds, parking and roads, and playfield areas. The plans also showed the areas where the school could expand to accommodate each site's maximum proposed enrollment.

The district develops building specifications for each construction project. The district provided a project manual for each of the major school projects mentioned earlier. The manual is comprised of the necessary information needed for the construction of this project.

The manual included information such as:

- Bidding and contractual requirements
- General conditions for construction
- Site work (cleaning, termite control, etc.)
- Concrete, masonry, metals, woods, plastics, doors, and windows
- Thermal and moisture protection, finishes, specialties (such as chalkboards and tackboards)
- Equipment (such as projection screens)
- Furnishings (such as vertical blinds)
- Mechanical information (such as plumbing fixtures)
- Electrical information (such as conductors, grounding, wiring, and etc.)

This information is essential in the design, planning, and building phases of construction. The building specifications and architectural plans together are the basic framework for a construction project.

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

The district has considered alternatives to the traditional bidding systems

When making a decision to build, the district is faced with the choice of the type of contracting method to use. The district has considered alternatives to maximize efficiency or effectiveness of the construction project, saving costs, making the project flow without delays, and, in general, to improve documentation of management decisions. As an alternative to the hard-bid approach, the district is currently researching design/build as a contract option. The traditional approach plus alternatives are discussed below.

Traditional Design-Bid-Build (Hard-Bid)—Using this methodology, the owner retains an architect through a qualification-based selection process who designs the project based on the owners' programmatic requirements (educational specifications). Upon approval of the owner, the architect prepares contract documents for bidding purposes that consist of plans and specifications. The owner then directs the architect to put the project out for bid and a general contractor is selected based upon the lowest responsive bid.

Design/Build—The design/build process offers a single source of responsibility for both design and construction phases. In most cases, the owner will contract with a general contractor, which, in turn, subcontracts its architectural work to an independent architect. In some cases, however, the architect is an employee of the general contractor. The process involves the owner advertising for design/build teams to submit total cost bids to design and construct a building based on a program and criteria established by the owner. Design/build is most often used for simple uncomplicated projects that have pre-determined functional requirements or projects that are designed and constructed the same way many times.

Construction Management—Construction management brings professional rather than entrepreneurial direction to the entire design and construction process. With this process, the district hires a construction manager based on qualifications who then provides services before, during, and after the actual construction process.

After selection of the construction manager, he makes significant input to the architect during the design process relating to cost, quality, and time. Competitive bidding is still employed for what are traditionally the subcontracts to the general contractor.

Under typical construction management, these become prime contracts to the owner. The various contracts may be bid at once, but are often phased or bid at different times. This is particularly true when time is short and fast-track scheduling techniques are employed to complete the project.

Certain contracts are then bid in advance of others, so that work can get underway on construction elements that must be completed first. This type of construction management is commonly referred to as agency construction management. Recently, many construction management contracts are "at-risk" where the district negotiates a maximum price with the construction manager who contracts directly with the subcontractors. The construction manager is then "at-risk" to complete the project within the agreed-upon maximum price.

Board policy does not include provisions for using innovative methods of construction. In April 2001, it was the consensus of the board to accept the following recommendations made by the Construction Advisory Committee:

- Continue to use both hard bid and construction manager at-risk processes
- Offer opportunities to participate to as many potential construction managers as possible
- Create formal evaluation processes

Facilities Construction

- Offer coaching/direction to general contractors who want to be construction managers
- Research design/build process as a possible option

The school board needs to approve the construction management approach for each school so that the decision is justified from a cost-benefit standpoint. Different management techniques work more effectively for different school systems depending on the availability of contractors and the quality of in-house staff. The board's decision to formally approve specific options will require the district to prepare an analysis of alternatives and justify a recommended option. This exercise will ensure that the district is using the management approach that is the most effective and efficient alternative.

The district uses generally accepted bidding procedures

SREF 4.2(2)(e) requires that an employee of the board or other appointed individual publicly open bids and read and tabulate the bids at a designated time and place. This ensures that the competitive bid process is fair and open to public scrutiny, and that no individual bidder has any advantage other than what is contained in their respective bid.

Based on inspection of the advertisement and the bid tabulation form for the classroom additions and remodeling at J. Colin English Elementary School, the district opens bids as required. A signed bid form was provided to show compliance with legal requirements. The bid form included a dollar amount, bid bond, designation of sub-contractors, and certificate of worker's compensation and liability insurance.

SREF Section 4.2(2)(h) requires the school district to select the lowest qualified bidder, considering base bid and accepted alternates, and award a contract for a fixed fee. Based on a review of a contract award, the district recommended the lowest bidder on this project, and the board voted to accept the recommendation.

The district can demonstrate that necessary legal documentation is provided in the contract

Applicable state statutes require adequate documentation from contractors. This is intended to protect the district from certain risks associated with construction contracts. Based on inspection of a recent construction contract (renovations, remodeling, and new construction at J. Colin English Elementary), the following are included as part of the contract:

- A signed owner-contractor agreement
- Workers compensation insurance certificate—this form is attached to the contract
- Payment bond—this form is attached to the contract
- Performance bond—this form is attached to the contract
- Certificate of liability insurance
- Guarantee of completion—this date is defined in Article 2 of the contract. Dates for substantial completion and final completion are established, and liquidating damages are provided on a daily basis for each day that (1) the actual date of substantial completion exceeds the scheduled date of substantial completion—\$500 plus the difference between the contract amount and \$750,000 times .01% per day—and (2) the actual date of final completion exceeds the scheduled date of final completion—\$200 per day

Recommendations

- *The district should evaluate alternative construction management techniques to improve management and control over construction projects while minimizing costs.*

Action Plan 10-12 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-12

Continue Evaluating Alternative Construction Management Techniques	
Strategy	The district needs continue to evaluate alternative construction management techniques to improve management and control over construction projects while minimizing costs.
Action Needed	Step 1: Assign task to capital planning committee or a sub-committee of the capital planning committee. Step 2: The committee should consider construction management options available under the law. Step 3: The committee should evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches to contract management available. Step 4: The committee should recommend an approach to the board.
Who Is Responsible	School board
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

25 The district has assigned one person with the authority and responsibility to keep facilities construction projects within budget and on schedule.

The district's definition for the position of director of Construction and Planning includes the authority and responsibility to keep facilities construction projects within budget and on schedule. The job description for the director of Construction and Planning includes:

- Responsible for long-range planning and budget development for capital improvement projects in the district
- Prepare and submit reports regarding the status of capital improvement projects as required by the district
- Prepare, coordinate, and implement plant survey
- Administer applicable rules, regulations, policies, and procedures set down by the DOE, superintendent, and Lee County School Board
- Organize, promote, administer, evaluate, and direct all activities and aspects of construction services
- Coordinate the development of design and construction documents for all school system facilities and review all design and construction documents for compliance with all applicable laws
- Supervise the activities of contracted professionals
- Prepare, submit, and present board agenda items for professional services
- Submit and present construction documents to the DOE for approval
- Serve on the professional services committee
- Hold weekly staff meetings with subordinate department supervisors

These responsibilities indicate that the director of Construction and Planning will be responsible for construction projects.

26 The board minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to minimize project costs.

District's school board policy states that the superintendent is authorized to approve and execute any construction contract change order which will decrease the construction contract amount, or which will increase the construction contract amount by twenty-five thousand five hundred dollars (\$25,000.00) or less, provided the approval is in the best interest of the school board.

To assure that the board receives quality work and maximum value, changes in the work are put out for bid, whenever practical or feasible. Each approval shall be reported by the superintendent to the school board and entered in the official minutes at the next regular board meeting.

The following is the district's board policy for change orders:

- A Change Order, which will increase the construction contract amount by more than twenty five thousand dollars (\$25,000.00) is to be submitted by the superintendent to the school board for review and action thereon. No such Change Order shall be binding until it is approved and executed by the school board.
- With all Change Orders, the contractor will provide, prior to commencing the work involved, accurate cost data in sufficient detail to enable any architect or engineer to evaluate and confirm its accuracy and the fair market value of all labor, materials, equipment, and incidentals required to accomplish the change.
- With all requested Change Orders, the architect of record for the project will certify in writing to the superintendent and the school board that the cost of the requested change is fair, reasonable, and in proper proportion to the cost of the original work of the contract and shall recommend action thereon.
- The designee of the superintendent may serve in the superintendent's capacity for Change Order authorization whenever the superintendent is absent or is ill. It is the intent of the school board that this provision be used sparingly. When construction changes can wait for the superintendent's return, without undue harm or project delay, the approval shall wait for the superintendent's personal review and signature.
- All Change Orders will comply with Florida Statutes, DOE publication titled "State Requirements for Educational Facilities", or any successor statute or rule.

The district provided change order documentation for Dunbar High School and North Fort Myers Academy to show compliance with board policy. Any change order that exceeded the threshold amount stated above was submitted to the board for approval.

27 The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed, with a percentage of the payment withheld pending project completion.

Construction projects are paid based on a percentage of work completed and upon approval that includes recommendation for payment from the project architect

Payment records reflect that the architect recommends payment based on the percentage completed (as verified by the architect) and that a percentage is withheld until final completion. Payment is made based on a pay request signed by the architect and project manager ensuring that the payment is based on work complete.

This procedure is essential because prudent business practices, as well as common sense, indicate that a contractor may fall into adverse financial conditions making the completion of the project questionable. The approval by the project architect of “construction draws” is a standard business practice found throughout the country.

Retaining a percentage of the final payment until the certificate of occupancy is issued, and until the district accepts the site as being complete, is important to ensure that the project is completed.

In terms of efficiency, effectiveness, and cost savings, the procedures outlined above are essential parts of a control mechanism to ensure best practices in this area.

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

The district requires and obtains appropriate inspection for all school construction projects

The district demonstrated that the final inspection report and certificate of occupancy were conducted on the new Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle School before it was occupied. This provides assurance that the building will be safe and is ready to meet the needs of the students and staff. DOE verifies that a certificate of occupancy was filed before the building was occupied. District building inspectors, certified under the Florida Building Code, complete the inspections.

The district, via the facilities planner, is responsible for updating its FISH data online. FISH information is verified during a plant survey that is required every five years. The district is required to submit a new plant survey in April 2003. During this process, the party conducting the plant survey independently verifies the number of student stations and teaching stations in the new schools FISH document.

Training and Evaluation for the Construction Program

29 **The district should conduct a comprehensive orientation for a new facility prior to its opening so that users better understand the building design and function.**

The district does not conduct a comprehensive orientation program for a new facility

At the opening of each new school, the district has conducted a walk-through for both maintenance and instructional staff, but there is no comprehensive orientation program established for staff, students, parents, and the general public. The absence of a comprehensive orientation program results in a lack of understanding by the persons responsible for the building operation. For example, staff might not know the location of all exits or how to properly evacuate during an emergency.

The district needs to create a “School Opening Committee.” This committee should be responsible for overseeing the opening of new schools and ensuring that the transition into the new school is a success. Another responsibility for this committee should be to aid in the development of a standardized comprehensive orientation program that can then be tailored to specific schools. The provision of such a program will:

- Provide the building users with a better understanding of the design and how it is intended to be most optimally utilized
- Provide the general public with an overview of the programs that can be implemented in the new facility and how they can have access to the building
- Assist the district with ideas for future facility planning
- Provide for a more meaningful transition into a new building
- Provide administrators with guidelines for ensuring that all relevant material is presented to the appropriate user

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district create a school opening committee to develop and implement comprehensive orientation programs for all new facilities and major renovations.*

Action Plan 10-13 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-13

Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Orientation Program

Strategy	Develop and implement comprehensive orientation programs for all new facilities and major renovations, and create a committee to oversee the project.

Action Needed	Step 1: Create an opening coordinating committee for AAA elementary school to develop an orientation program. Step 2: Identify and prepare a prototype orientation program to include modules for: • Maintenance personnel, architect, contractor(s), facilities department personnel, and the site administrator in attendance that involves the specifics of the mechanical systems • Instructional staff • Students, parents, and the community that includes a walk-through conducted by the site administrator Step 3: Prepare prototype user manuals for both teachers and maintenance staff that can be adapted for individual schools. Step 4: Create a district-based committee to oversee the implementation of the program.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be accomplished within existing resources

30 While there is an informal walk-through at the completion of the first year of operation, the district does not perform comprehensive evaluations regularly during the next three to five years to collect information about building operation and performance.

The district construction process doe not include routine comprehensive evaluations

The district construction process calls for an 11-month walk-through prior to the completion of the first year of operation and expiration of the warranty period, a three-year walk-through, and a five-year walk-through. There is no documentation that the district periodically conducts evaluations of new facilities, follow-up utilization analysis, or an analysis of building operation and performance beyond the 11-month walk-through. Conducting evaluations at three years and five years would provide the district with important information about the facility. It would enable the district to compare the finished product with the educational and project specifications to determine if changes need to be made. Other issues such as safety, operations, and performance might surface as a result of routine evaluations. Once deficiencies are discovered, necessary action could be taken to eliminate the problem.

These evaluations also would enable the district to build a database on what equipment lasts longer and needs fewer repairs over time. This would provide facilities management with valuable information when making equipment purchase decisions.

Recommendations

- *The district needs to develop and implement a post-occupancy evaluation of all major projects completed.*

Action Plan10-14 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-14

Post-occupancy Evaluations	
Strategy	Regularly conduct post-occupancy evaluations.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop procedures to ensure that post occupancy evaluations regularly occur. These procedures should include educational adequacy, function, safety, efficiency, and suggestions for future improvements. Step 2: The evaluation should include: • An analysis of the educational program improvements for consideration by future educational specification committees • An operational cost analysis • A comparison of the finished product with the educational and construction specifications • Recommendations for future changes
Who Is Responsible	Director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

31 The district does not analyze new building evaluations to determine whether facilities are fully used, operating costs are minimized, or changes in the district's construction planning process are needed.

Formal post occupancy evaluations are not conducted

The district utilizes a user questionnaire for post-occupancy evaluations, but does not have a formal analysis of the questionnaires, nor documents that the feedback is compared to the educational specifications or shared with the construction manager or the architect. The purpose of formal post-occupancy evaluations is to determine whether:

- The design meets the educational, service, community and administrative needs of the building's users
- Facility use is as intended and operating costs minimized
- End product met specifications, and that the district received the product desired
- The district still needs the product it built

A post-occupancy evaluation (POE) should be conducted on every new facility. The POE should be conducted no earlier than one year and no longer than 3 years after occupancy. This window of time allows for a full school year to occur in the new facility and the POE to occur before any functional design changes or remodeling might take place, which would change elements of the original design. The focus of the POE should be to determine how well the design meets the educational, service, community, and administrative needs of the building's users. Users, including students, parents, district- and school-based maintenance and food service personnel, teachers, administrators, and bus drivers should be surveyed to determine their attitudes about the design. The design professional for the new facility and a representative of the contractor should also be given the opportunity to provide input on the evaluation. The goal is to learn what works well and what does not for each group.

As suggested by the documentation, the district does not review operating costs. The purpose of reviewing operating costs is to determine whether the facility's design is effective in minimizing operating costs, and to identify design flaws that can be corrected on future plans. Formal post occupancy evaluations would also enable the district to:

Formal post occupancy evaluations would also enable the district to:

- Provide the architect with corrective feedback to be used in the next building cycle
- Ensure changes are made, if necessary, to the district's construction planning process for facilities to be built in the future
- Minimize future cost by eliminating equipment that requires more upkeep or that is not as efficient, enabling the district to accomplish its objectives in a more efficient manner

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district utilize the results of the post-occupancy evaluations to assess operating costs, provide feedback to the architect, and make changes in the construction planning process.*

The steps needed to implement this recommendation are included in Action Plan 10-14.

32 **The district has no process in place for comparing maintenance and operations costs of recently completed projects for the purpose of identifying and implementing cost-saving measures on a district-wide basis.**

Due to the absence of a process to compare maintenance and operations costs of recently completed projects, and the district's inability to identify possible improvements to the planning process, implementing cost-saving measures on a district-wide basis is not done utilizing empirical data. Therefore, the district has not identified:

- Analytical measures of maintenance and operations costs
- Improvements that need to be made to its construction planning process based on its analysis of maintenance and operations costs
- Cost saving actions that are consistently used on a district-wide basis
- Implemented changes that have resulted in documented cost savings

As a result, the district has not been able to recognize any potential cost savings or avoidance.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district develop a formal process of analyzing maintenance and operations costs and new and renovated facilities for the purpose of implementing cost-saving measures district-wide.*

Action Plan 10-15 provides the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 10-15

Analyze Maintenance and Operating Cost	
Strategy	Analyze maintenance and operations costs at recently completed facilities.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop a procedure to ensure that post-occupancy evaluations include an analysis of the maintenance and operations costs.
	Step 2: Compare these costs with other district facilities.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

11

Facilities Maintenance

The School District of Lee County has an experienced and dedicated facilities maintenance staff. The district has many opportunities to improve maintenance services, including: establishing a long-term plan that relates to the five-year facilities work plan, establishing standard operating procedures, establishing a preventive maintenance program, and reorganizing the department to provide more efficient service.

Conclusion

Observations and survey results indicate that the facilities at the School District of Lee County (the district) are properly and equitably maintained, however, many procedures are not aligned with the five-year Facilities Work Plan.

Several practices are in place that minimize costs and ensure maintenance activities are appropriately implemented however clear standards have not been communicated to all staff. Although the district utilizes sound hiring procedures, proper training is not conducted through an organized staff development program. The district uses computerized tracking for work orders and inventory control, although no system for prioritizing needs is in place. Staff has developed procedures to ensure that necessary facility inspections take place as required.

The following is a review of the district's facilities maintenance practices, processes and procedures, along with specific recommendations for improving this function.

Overall ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

Compliance with Standards, Five-Year Facilities Work Plan, and State Laws

1. The mission statement and organizational structure of the Maintenance Department are established in writing, but operating procedures are not. (Page 11-5)
2. Although schools are appropriately and equitably maintained, the district has not established maintenance standards in its short-term and long-term plans within the annual budget and in accordance with the district's five-year facilities work plan. (Page 11-13)
3. The district has not clearly identified and communicated performance standards and expected outcomes to maintenance and operations staff. (Page 11-16)
4. The district does not ensure that maintenance and custodial standards are regularly updated to implement new technology and procedures. (Page 11-17)
5. The district does not obtain and use customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements. (Page 11-20)
6. The district has not established and implanted accountability mechanisms to ensure adequate performance and efficiency of the maintenance program. (Page 11-21)
7. The district projects cost estimates of major maintenance needs, however, it should adopt a more formalized approach. (Page 11-23)

Adequate Facilities Maintenance Budget

8. The administration has developed an annual budget with spending limits that comply with the lawful funding for each category of facilities maintenance and operations. (Page 11-24)
9. The school board keeps a maintenance reserve fund to handle one-time expenditures necessary to support maintenance and operations. (Page 11-24)
10. The Maintenance Department does not evaluate maintenance activities regularly to determine the most cost-effective method of providing services. (Page 11-25)
11. The district has several practices that minimize equipment costs through purchasing practices and maintenance, however, there are areas that could be improved. (Page 11-26)
12. The district does not use proactive maintenance practices to reduce maintenance costs. (11-28)

Qualified Personnel and Professional Development

13. The district needs to formally and regularly review the organizational structure of the maintenance and operations program to minimize administrative layers and processes. (Page 11-31)
14. The maintenance and operations departments do not regularly review staffing levels to maximize the efficient use of personnel. (Page 11-34)
15. The maintenance and operations departments ensure qualified staff by using appropriate hiring practices. (Page 11-36)
16. The Maintenance Department has a written job description for each position within the department. (Page 11-36)
17. The district provides appropriate supervision of maintenance and operations staff, however, it can further improve maintenance supervisory activity. (Page 11-37)
18. The district needs to create a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff to enhance job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety. (Page 11-37)
19. The district provides Maintenance Department staff the tools and equipment required to accomplish their assigned tasks. (Page 11-39)

Computerized Maintenance Management System

20. The district has a computerized control and tracking system to accurately track work orders and inventory. (Page 11-40)
21. The maintenance and operations departments do not have a system for to uniformly prioritize maintenance needs throughout the district. (Page 11-42)

Compliance With State and Federal Regulatory Requirements

22. District policies and procedures clearly address safety conditions of facilities. (Page 11-43)
23. The Maintenance Department does not identify and implement strategies to contain energy costs. (Page 11-44)
24. Although, the district does not have an energy management system in place, it has a position it has a position for an energy manager. (Page 11-45)
25. The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health, safety, and energy efficiency conditions. (Page 11-45)
26. The district is aware of and prepared for permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code. The district has developed procedures to ensure these inspections take place as required. (Page 11-46)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

- ValienteHernandez P.A. recommends three actions in the facilities maintenance area that would have a fiscal impact. However, other recommendations have been made that, when implemented, will have a beneficial fiscal impact for the district that could not be estimated at this time. For example, while implementing a district-wide energy management program is very likely to reduce energy costs, these savings cannot be readily calculated without specific information about selected strategies.
 - Decentralizing the maintenance function into three maintenance zones would enable the district to improve service by reducing unproductive time. We estimate that the district would save approximately \$60,000 over the next five years. (Action Plan 11-5)
 - Developing uniform construction standards and establishing a uniform building management system will reduce the labor and inventory cost realized in the thirteen systems currently utilized. We estimate the district could save \$15,000 per year in inventory cost and \$40,000 per year in labor cost. (Action Plan 11-9)
 - Implementing a preventive maintenance program would help the district reduce maintenance repairs and extend the life of existing facilities and equipment, thus saving approximately \$1.7 million over the next five years. (Action Plan 11-19)

Exhibit 11-1 shows the estimated fiscal effect of these recommendations.

Exhibit 11-1

Implementing the Recommendations for Facilities Maintenance Will Have a Five-year Fiscal Impact of Approximately \$2.0 Million in Cost Savings

Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings							
Action Plan and Strategy		2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	Total
11-5	Create three maintenance zones	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$60,000
11-9	Establishing a uniform building management system.	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	55,000	275,000
11-19	Implement preventive maintenance	325,400	325,350	341,850	361,000	375,600	1,729,200
Total		\$380,400	\$395,350	\$411,850	\$431,000	\$445,600	\$2,064,200

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Background

The primary role of the district's maintenance function is to meet the maintenance needs of the 37 elementary schools, 12 middle schools, 10 high schools, 4 exceptional student schools, 4 vocational schools, 15 other education centers, and 8 auxiliary buildings. A maintenance need is defined as "anything having to do with keeping a building in a satisfactory state of repair."¹ The director of maintenance services oversees this function.

¹ The School District of Lee County, "Maintenance Department Guide," 1995-96.

Facilities Maintenance

Maintenance services are divided into three separate sections (referred to as “zones”) each overseen by a zone manager who reports to the program administrators (See Exhibit 11-3).

The plumbing section has approximately 44 staff members responsible for the following:

- Plumbing
- Welding
- Commercial food equipment
- Refrigeration
- Fire extinguisher service
- Stockroom supervision/EMS
- Purchasing materials, supplies, and services for the district

The carpentry section has approximately 54 staff members responsible for the following:

- Carpentry
- Masonry
- Roofing
- Pest Control

The electrical section has approximately 43 staff members responsible for the following:

- Electrical
- Painting
- Electronics

The remainder of this chapter is an assessment of the maintenance function, with specific recommendations for improvements.

Methodology

To determine whether the facilities construction program is meeting the Best Financial Management Practices, ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted seven site visits, interviewed the assistant superintendent of support services, director of maintenance services, program administrator, zone managers, and additional support staff. This assessment also involved research of Florida law, as well as industry information.

ValienteHernandez P.A. surveyed board members, district staff, school principals, teachers, Student Advisory Council (SAC) members, parents, and students to receive program input. Questions varied depending on the group surveyed, and the results have been incorporated into this chapter where applicable.

Compliance with Standards, Five-Year Facilities Work Plan, and State Laws

1 The mission statement and the organizational structure of the Maintenance Department are established in writing, but operating procedures are not.

The Maintenance Department's mission statement can be further improved

The district's Maintenance Department (the department) has a mission statement that is very general and does not reflect the unique goals or challenges facing the department. Thus, the department's mission statement can be improved by clearly defining its purpose, thereby focusing its activities. In addition, the departments' goals should be closely tied to the strategic plan recommended for the Facilities Construction Department in Chapter 10.

The department has allocated its resources primarily to capital projects, both remodeling and major repairs. As a result, fewer resources are available for preventive maintenance that would extend the useful life of district facilities. Establishing a departmental mission statement will document management's intent to distribute resources in an optimal manner. The mission statement will help the department by driving goals, performance measures, and plans. It will, in effect, be a statement of purpose that will help employees focus on the department's priorities and make them feel an important part of the district team. A maintenance department's mission statement that clearly defines purpose and helps focus activities might read as follows:

The Maintenance Department will provide competent, responsive, and efficient services to users of facilities in order to operate and maintain a safe and functional environment for students, staff, and the community.

The school board is the appropriate body to approve the mission statement, ensuring that it is consistent with the district's mission and school board policy. Thus, once the mission statement is approved it should be submitted to the board for approval.

The maintenance function is in organizational transition

The Maintenance Department, responsible for the upkeep and repair of school facilities, is in the process of updating job descriptions and its organizational chart. The maintenance function is divided into three sections:

- Plumbing, refrigeration, purchasing, and stockroom
- Carpentry, masonry, roofing, and pest control
- Electrical, painting, and electronics.

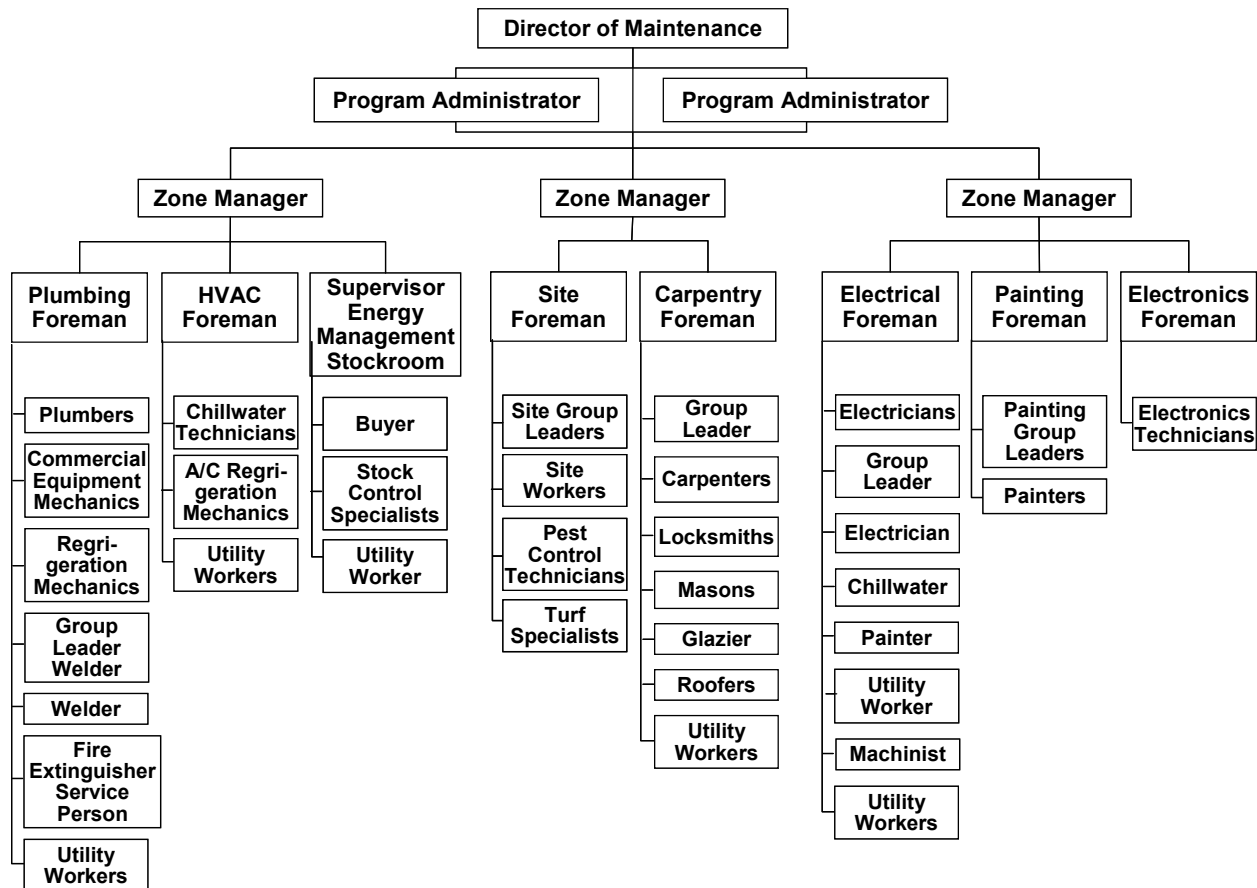
Exhibit 11-2 shows the Maintenance Department's current organizational structure. The director of maintenance services leads this department, assisted by two program administrators. Three zone managers, who supervise all of the foremen, follow the program administrators. The department has 144 full-time employees.

Building supervisors and custodians are not reflected on this organizational chart because they report to the school principals. The Maintenance Department however, is responsible for training these individuals.

Best Practice 13 presents more detailed explanations of staffing levels and recommendations to streamline the maintenance function.

Exhibit 11-2

Maintenance Department Organizational Chart ¹



¹ Does not include clerical staff.

Source: School District of Lee County.

The district would benefit from decentralizing the maintenance function

The school district covers an area of approximately 834 square miles. The maintenance department is based at one central location, near downtown Fort Myers. Under the current system, technicians take from 30 minutes to 2 hours to respond to maintenance calls, depending on whether the area is “in season.” “In season” is October through Easter, when seasonal residents increase the population leading to increased traffic. An analysis conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A. demonstrates that if the district were to decentralize the maintenance function into three zones, the average travel distance and time could be

reduced by approximately 39% and 36%, respectively.² With a decentralized maintenance structure, maintenance technicians could be assigned so that each zone has a full complement of trades.

Exhibit 11-3 presents the distance and time required to travel to the different school locations, by zone, under the current centralized structure compared to a proposed decentralized structure consisting of three separate zones. To calculate and compare distance and travel time under the current and the proposed system, ValienteHernandez P.A. used the existing locations of the transportation hubs in the eastern and southern zones, as well as the current maintenance office (proposed west zone) as the proposed headquarters of the three new maintenance locations.

We estimate that decentralizing the maintenance function into three maintenance zones would save approximately \$60,000 over the next five years, as illustrated in Exhibit 11-4.

The proposed decentralized system would translate into savings related to the mileage saved plus labor costs associated with the reduced time necessary to complete the work. The savings associated with less travel distance, by school, was calculated as the distance saved (current “centralized” distance minus proposed “decentralized” distance), times the average number of trips per year per school (total number of work orders divided by 2.75 work orders per trip), times the federal mileage rate of \$0.365 per mile. Similarly, the savings associated with the reduced traveled time was calculated as the time saved (current “centralized” time minus proposed “decentralized” time), times the average number of trips per year per school, times the average labor rate of \$12.75 per hour.³ Then, the total annual savings (\$15,000) was calculated as the sum of the mileage and time cost savings applied to each school.

Exhibit 11-3

Maintenance Travel Analysis

School Centers	Centralized Operation (Current)		Decentralized operation (Proposed)	
	Distance	Time	Distance	Time
East Zone				
Alva Elementary	18.3	29	8.5	13
Alva Middle	19.98	35	8.6	13
Bayshore Elementary	8.68	22	10.4	15
Gateway Magnet School	11.77	22	11.9	22
Lee Middle*	3.24	11		
Lehigh Elementary	18.9	42	14.8	33
Lehigh Acres Middle	17.38	32	12.0	24
Lehigh Senior High	11.71	19	5.9	11
Michigan Montessori Academy*	3.04	10		
Mirror Lakes Elementary	21.2	38	14.6	29
Orange River Elementary	5.32	17	6.9	10
Riverdale High	12.69	23	0.7	1
Sunshine Elementary	13.23	21	16.0	26
Tice Elementary	4.15	14	7.9	12
Average	13.60	26.08	10	17.67

² Subtracting the average travel distance in the proposed system (8.63 miles) from the total average travel distance under the current system (14.11 miles) equals a distance difference of 5.48 miles, or a 39% reduction in average travel distances.

³ The average number of trips per year by school was calculated based on the total number of work orders per year by school divided by the average number of work orders per visit. For this analysis, the average number of work orders per visit was established as 2.75, based on the assumption that the Maintenance Department does not respond to a work order individually and the district estimates that between two and four work orders are completed per site visit.

Facilities Maintenance

School Centers	Centralized Operation (Current)		Decentralized operation (Proposed)	
	Distance	Time	Distance	Time
West Zone				
Caloosa Elementary	8.98	20	3.9	8
Caloosa Middle	8.96	20	3.9	8
Cape Elementary	9.9	21	9.1	20
Cape Coral High	10.72	18	7.3	16
Diplomat Elementary	10.31	20	1.4	3
Diplomat Middle	10.45	20	1.5	3
Gulf Elementary	13.82	22	10.1	22
Gulf Middle	14.33	23	8.1	18
Hancock Creek Elementary	5.94	15	4.6	10
J. Colin English Elementary	5.45	13	4.6	10
Littleton Academy	5.1	8	3.2	7
Mariner High	14.27	25	6.1	13
North Fort Myers Academy	7.85	20	5.9	12
North Fort Myers High	6.63	17	3.9	8
Pelican Elementary	12.09	21	9.3	20
Pine Island Elementary	21.92	48	13.9	31
Skyline Elementary	12.77	21	7.5	16
Trafalgar Middle	14.2	23	8.3	18
Tropic Isles Elementary	6.54	17	3.8	8
Average	10.54	20.63	6.13	13.21
South Zone				
Allen Park Elementary*	2.65	9		
Bonita Springs Elementary	27.83	37	9.6	16
Bonita Springs Middle	28.78	40	8.6	16
Colonial Elementary	2.78	9	16.2	27
Cypress Lake High	8.63	17	12.6	23
Cypress Lake Middle	8.5	16	12.4	23
Dunbar High*	1.11	4		
Edison Park Creative and Express Arts Magnet School*	2.82	10		
Estero High	17.43	28	1.7	3
Fort Myers Beach Elementary	17.44	35	18.8	38
Fort Myers High*	2.83	10		
Fort Myers Edison Center*	2.87	10		
Fort Myers Middle Academy*	1.47	5		
Franklin Park Magnet*	.17	3		
Heights Elementary	11.5	21	13.0	25
Orangewood Elementary*	4.44	11		
Paul Laurence Dunbar Middle*	4.99	10		
Pinewoods Elementary	19.49	28	1.7	3
San Carlos Park Elementary	15.77	25	5.3	11
Sanibel School	26.07	62	27.5	57
Spring Creek Elementary	20.59	31	10.2	17
Tanglewood/Riverside Elementary*	6.57	18		

School Centers	Centralized Operation (Current)		Decentralized operation (Proposed)	
	Distance	Time	Distance	Time
Three Oaks Elementary	17.51	29	2.1	4
Three Oaks Middle	17.12	28	3.1	7
Villas Elementary*	5.88	12		
Average	18.20	30.54	9.74	18.69

*School is best maintained from central office, not included in the calculation of the different averages.

Source: Lee County Schools for school and transportation hub locations, and Map Quest for travel distance and time.

Exhibit 11-4

Decentralizing the Maintenance Function Into Three Maintenance Zones Would Save Approximately \$60,000 Over the Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual cost savings	\$0	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$15,000
Cumulative cost savings	\$0	\$15,000	\$30,000	\$45,000	\$60,000

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

The district needs to develop and adopt written operating procedures

The maintenance, purchasing, grounds, stockroom, and property management sections have no written operating procedures, other than those provided for building supervisors and custodians. The *Building Supervisor's Operations Manual* was created to standardize procedures in the schools. The manual is available to all building supervisors, but the procedures are not enforced because building supervisors and custodians do not report to the Maintenance Department. The decision to use the manual's procedures is entirely up to the school principals. The *Building Supervisor's Operations Manual* clearly describes procedures for the following:

- Daily inspections
- Ordering custodial supplies
- Playground inspections
- Parking Lot inspections
- Mechanical Rooms
- Fire extinguishers
- Roof inspections
- Monthly duties
- Annual duties
- Required inspections and reports

The *Building Supervisor's Guide to Custodial Services* covers these additional subjects:

- Floor care procedures
- Restroom cleaning procedures
- Carpet care procedures
- Water fountain cleaning

Facilities Maintenance

- Food service area cleaning
- Miscellaneous procedures
- Training
- Reports

The maintenance director explained that a standard operating procedures manual for the maintenance section is being developed and will be made available to all staff. The manual will be updated as procedures are written and implemented. However, the maintenance director has not set a deadline for this project.

At present, the following procedures have been implemented and are in the current draft manual:

- Work order protocol
- Warehouse parts and distribution
- Non-stock special order for parts and materials
- Replacement or obsolete part distribution

However, the following should also be included:

- Purchase of equipment, supplies, and materials
- Establishing a level of maintenance expectations and maintenance standards
- Maintenance and budget criteria
- Management of facilities
- Facilities standards
- Personnel staffing policies
- Use of facilities and equipment

Written operating procedures are essential for several reasons. Specifically, they:

- facilitate efficient and effective employee training
- promote work consistency
- provide assurances that tasks are done in compliance with school policies and other legal regulations, and
- ensure institutional knowledge is retained when employees retire or leave the district.

Additionally, the school board should establish accountability measures for site-based managers and hold administrators accountable if they don't meet these standards. Refer to Best Practice 29, Chapter 10, for additional comments about basic facilities management training for the site-based administrators.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district update the mission statement for the Maintenance Department.*

Action Plan 11-1 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district decentralize the maintenance function into three maintenance zones, and that technical staff and equipment be assigned to each zone so that all skills are represented.*

Action Plan 11-2 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district evaluate and realign the organization chart for the Maintenance Department, streamline reporting, and clearly define job responsibilities and reporting.*

Action Plan 11-3 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district adopt the Building Supervisor's Operations Manual as standard operating procedures for the schools, and that the school board approves these procedures.*

Action Plan 11-4 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district document procedures for the Maintenance Department, and that the school board approve these procedures.*

Action Plan 11-5 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-1

Update Mission Statement

Strategy	Update a Maintenance Department mission statement.
Action Needed	Step 1: As part of its strategic planning, district staff should establish a mission statement for the maintenance function. See sample on page 5. Step 2: Present the mission statement to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-2

Create Maintenance Zones

Strategy	Decentralize the maintenance function into three maintenance zones; assign technical staff and equipment so that all skills are represented in each zone..
Action Needed	Step 1: Select locations for maintenance zone offices Step 2: Review current staffing and determine staffing needs so that all skills will be represented in each zone. Step 3: Adapt building/portable for stockroom and office space Step 4: Assign staff to zones Step 5: Review staffing and equipment requirements in six months, and annually thereafter to ensure zones have adequate tools
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance; zone managers
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The district could save \$15,000 per year, net office expenses, if maintenance staff are decentralized.

Action Plan 11-3

Streamline Organization Chart

Strategy	Reevaluate the Maintenance Department's organization chart, streamline reporting, and clearly define job responsibilities, and reporting.

Facilities Maintenance

Action Needed	Step 1: Review current organization chart and job descriptions for clarity and definition Step 2: Review number of supervisory tiers, eliminate unnecessary tiers Step 3: Realign positions to create well-defined reporting Step 4: Review job descriptions and that organization chart annually, and update as needed
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services; zone manager.
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-4

Adopt Operating Manual for Schools

Strategy	Adopt the <i>Building Supervisor's Operations Manual</i> as standard operating procedures for the schools with school board approval.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review the <i>Building Supervisor's Operations Manual</i> and revise applicable sections Step 2: Develop measures of performance, indicate accountability Step 3: Train building supervisors on operating procedures Step 4: Certify building supervisors on operating procedures Step 5: Develop review process for measuring performance Step 6: Put the procedures manual on the server, allowing access by maintenance and campus staff. Step 7: Revise applicable sections as needed over one-to-two years
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and zone manager
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-5

Document Policies and Procedures

Strategy	Document Maintenance Department policies and procedure.
Action Needed	Step 1: Research through national organizations to identify sources for procedures manual components. Step 2: Develop table of contents for maintenance procedures manual Step 3: Prepare a written draft of the maintenance procedures manual Step 4: Incorporate and update building supervisor's manual into maintenance procedures manual Step 5: Put procedures manual on server, allowing access by maintenance staff and campus staff. Step 6: Revise applicable sections as needed during a one- to two-year period.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services; zone manager.
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

2 Although schools are appropriately and equitably maintained, the district has not established maintenance standards in its short-term and long-term plans within the annual budget and in accordance with the district's five-year facilities work plan.

The district needs to develop goals and objectives for the Maintenance Department

The district has not developed written goals and objectives for the Maintenance Department. Without established goals and objectives, the district has no basis for meaningful short and long-term plans to provide for appropriately and equitably maintained facilities. Established goals and objectives are critical because they:

- Communicate management expectations for performance to personnel
- Provide information that enables management to make decisions, develop plans, and revise plans, as needed
- Provide standards against which results can be measured

These elements, along with a mission statement, are essential to provide direction to the facilities maintenance function, and to ensure that the department is operating efficiently and meeting or exceeding industry standards and user expectations. The department's goals and objectives need to be tied closely to the district's strategic plan, as outlined in Best Practice 2, Chapter 10.

The Maintenance Department needs to establish maintenance standards for assessing needs

The Maintenance Department identifies maintenance needs through: the plant survey, annual inspections, and input from district staff. These processes however, do not collect the types of information that would be available through a formal evaluation of existing facilities (also referred to as "facility audits" or "facility appraisals"). A facilities audit applies a formal methodology in evaluating and grading all aspects of facilities, including the school site, structural and mechanical features, plant maintainability, school building safety and security, educational adequacy, and a proper environment for education. For a more detailed explanation of a facilities evaluation see Chapter 10, Best Practice 3.

The educational plant survey is conducted once every five years, with the most recent study being done in 1998. These surveys identify State Requirements of Educational Facilities (SREF) compliance deficiencies and other major maintenance and repair needs, and incorporate them into a five-year facilities work plan.

SREF requires the district to inspect facilities every year to be sure they are maintained in accordance with regulations. The district safety officer and other qualified personnel conduct these inspections and issue reports identifying necessary repairs or renovations. Summaries of these reports are delivered to the superintendent through established supervisory channels. During the annual inspection, the safety officer confirms that the district has remedied the previous year's deficiencies.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that a significant number of deficiencies had not been corrected from the prior year's report. These were primarily preventive maintenance items, such as heat and smoke detection in kitchens and cafeterias.

Through work orders, maintenance receives input from other employees on the condition of facilities. However, the district does not evaluate work order trends. The district's manual work order system is used for maintenance transaction purposes, not for reporting or planning. Evaluating work order trends can help identify major maintenance needs and avoid costly repairs. For example, recurring work orders

to repair a standard piece of equipment at several schools could mean that preventive maintenance is needed. This same analysis could suggest the need for different equipment or new or remodeled facilities.

The district does not document specific goals and objectives for the maintenance function. Maintenance standards define procedures for maintaining facilities and equipment to maximize their useful lives. Long-term, consistent maintenance standards mean lower maintenance costs and equipment replacement costs. For example, the district could implement standards for the major components of facilities such as roofs, HVAC, exterior of buildings, and others. During facilities assessment, each major component is examined and its condition ranked as “good,” “not urgent,” “potentially urgent,” or “urgent”. With an assessment of this type, the district could identify needs based on predetermined standards.

Schools are maintained equitably

ValienteHernandez P.A. visited three elementary, two middle, and three high schools to determine if maintenance was being conducted equitably at schools throughout the district. The schools are, indeed, being maintained equitably. Overall, the cleanliness and general maintenance are comparable. Nonetheless, the district does not have well-documented maintenance standards, which would ensure equitability.

No long-term plan projects maintenance needs

As noted in throughout Chapters 9 and 10, the district’s long-term facilities planning has been ineffective. Maintenance needs should be incorporated into long-term facilities plans along with new construction and renovation projects. The district does not have a five-year maintenance plan that identifies long-term manpower, budget, equipment needs, or building repair. Although the district has a five-year plan based on historical costs, adjusted for inflation, no comprehensive five-year planning has been done for:

- Manpower
- Budget
- Equipment
- Facility repair or replacement requirements, including:
 - Paint
 - Roofs
 - Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment (tracking age and repair history)
 - Grounds (including paving)
 - Electrical service
 - Plumbing

The district needs a five-year plan that projects annual manpower, budget, and equipment needs, as well as 10-year and 20-year plans that are incorporated into the district’s long-term plans. As will be discussed in Best Practice 13, the district needs to develop a staffing formula to project long-term staffing needs. Additionally, the district needs to review the current information technology system to ensure that it can support this type of planning. This will help the district forecast future financial needs and identify funding sources.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district develop specific goals and objectives for the Maintenance Department consistent with its new mission statement.*

Action Plan 11-6 shows steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district develop maintenance standards for its short-term and long-term plans and that the district use written comprehensive projections when preparing its five-year (capital) plan. Projections should include:*
 - *Manpower requirements*
 - *Equipment requirements*
 - *Physical condition*
 - *Budgetary constraints*
 - *Manpower and equipment requirements will need longer than five-year projections, and should be part of the district's long-term (i.e., 5-10-20 year) planning.*

Action Plan 11-7 shows steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-6

Develop and Document Goals and Objectives	
Strategy	Develop and document specific goals and objectives consistent with the Maintenance Department's mission statement.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services and zone managers need to analyze the department's mission statement and write specific goals and objectives. These goals and objectives need to be communicated through proper channels to the superintendent, who will approve or amend them. Step 2: The superintendent approves the long-range plan, which is then presented to the board. Step 3: The board reviews and considers approving the plan.
Who Is Responsible	School board; superintendent; assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance; director of maintenance services; zone managers
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-7

Develop Five-year Plan of Projected Needs	
Strategy	Develop a long-range (five-year) plan that identifies staff, budget, and equipment needs to meet the district's goals and objectives.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services and zone managers analyze the existing list of facility improvements. The director projects manpower, budget, and equipment needs to complete the necessary facility improvements. Step 2: The director prioritizes maintenance needs identified in the previous steps, and develops a five-year plan with annual goals and objectives. Step 3: The director researches organizational publications and other sources for information to use in developing maintenance standards and procedures to accomplish the department's goals and objectives. Step 4: The director researches appropriate sources and prepares short-term and long-term standards. Step 5: The director and assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, develop projections for the five-year plan considering resources needed to meet the department's objectives and comply with approved standards. Step 6: Prepare a written proposal including, at a minimum: • Desired levels of physical conditions

	• Manpower requirements • Equipment requirements • Priorities based on budgetary constraints.
	Step 7: Obtain approval from superintendent and school board.
	Step 8: Document current year's budget in the five-year plan.
	Step 9: Annually revise applicable plan sections, as needed.
Who Is Responsible	School board; superintendent; assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance; director of maintenance services; director of finance; zone manager.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

3 **The district has not clearly identified and communicated performance standards and expected outcomes to maintenance and operations staff.**

The district has not developed performance standards for the maintenance and operations staff based on appropriate industry standards. This includes work standards, quality levels, completion schedules, and other job standards the department relies on supervisory personnel (leads, foremen, and managers) to communicate to subordinates what is expected of them.

Without objective standards it is difficult to hold maintenance staff accountable for their performance or to ensure work is done efficiently and effectively. Written standards promote efficient performance by ensuring the work quality is consistent throughout the district. They promote effective performance by ensuring that management expectations are communicated and providing a benchmark against which work may be evaluated.

Performance standards should not be viewed as rigid rules, but as guidelines for setting work expectations, and as management tools for planning work schedules and evaluating employee performance. Identifying specific performance standards involves examining past work orders to identify appropriate tasks. Zone managers and staff will share thoughts on this process to develop suitable standards for the district. Examples might include:

- emergency work orders that will be completed within a certain time period
- school exteriors that will be painted on established schedules
- amount of time certain jobs/tasks should take to accomplish

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district establish performance standards for the maintenance and operations staff. These standards should be based on frequently repeated tasks. They can be used to schedule workloads and evaluate staff with the added benefit of improving employee productivity.*
- *See Chapter 3, Performance Accountability for sample performance measures.*

Action Plan 11-8 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-8

Develop Performance Standards	
Strategy	Develop performance standards for frequently repeated maintenance tasks. The standards shall clearly define the task and the number of staff hours necessary to complete the task in an efficient manner.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director, program administrators, zone managers, and foremen shall identify tasks that are appropriate for departmental performance standards, using existing industry/military standards that are applicable. One resource that is available is the R. S. Means Manual. Step 2: Utilizing the work order tracking software, the supervisors and their lead forepersons will develop employee performance standards for the most commonly repeated tasks. Step 3: The supervisors and the lead forepersons shall hold staff meetings to explain the performance standards. The standards shall be made available to all staff members. Zone managers should communicate the performance standards for building supervisors and custodians to the site administrators. Step 4: The supervisors shall track the performance of their staff as measured against the performance standards and correct deficiencies through retraining or by following district guidelines for unsatisfactory work performance. Step 5: The director shall review the performance standards with the board. Step 6: The board shall approve the use of the performance standards for the performance evaluations of staff.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

4 The district does not ensure that maintenance and custodial standards are regularly updated to implement new technology and procedures.

The district needs to develop and implement construction standards

The district needs to design and implement a set of construction standards for facilities. This process will establish and define the design, products, materials, and systems used in facilities. These standards will increase staff efficiency and improve productivity. Instead of learning to repair many different types of the same product, maintenance staff would need to know how to repair a limited number, perhaps only one or two different types of products. Also, uniform standards result in a standardized inventory allowing the district to minimize cost associated with housing fewer parts, materials, and tools for performing the maintenance function.

For example, the district currently has nine different building management systems throughout the district. As new schools or classroom wings are built, the selected mechanical contractor looks for a system that closely relates to the building specifications. Due to the number of systems utilized, the district must keep inventory of the most critical components in order to make timely repairs. The district must have an access cable for each system in order to connect remotely on-site with the controllers. Additionally, having nine different systems requires the district to house a variety of controllers in order to service one classroom or building. The extra inventory and cables needed to supply each of the air-conditioning technicians for on-site repair of the building management systems create not only frustration among district staff, but also higher operating costs.

Facilities Maintenance

The district does not have a position for a “Building Management Controls Operator.” Consequently, every technician may be required to know each system and the intricacies of operational control. Also, with the complexity of some of the systems, the maintenance technicians can only make repairs up to a certain level of complexity. Often the vendor must be contracted to repair, update, and upgrade the various systems. Hiring outside help for troubleshooting and repair can cost between \$75 and \$100 an hour. Overall, the characteristics of the various systems can create an environment that is not cost effective and processes that are not efficient. Provided that future district efforts implement one standard building management system, the following cost savings may be realized:

- Eliminating quantity of inventory
- Reducing labor time

There are other areas that are in need of uniformity when designing and constructing buildings. A district-wide set of construction standards may also include, but not be limited to:

- fire alarm systems
- windows and doors
- locks on doors
- lighting fixtures
- roofing

Implementing a standard building management system would eliminate both the inventory and labor cost associated with operating the number currently being used in the district. If the nine systems currently in place were reduced to one system, the district could save approximately \$55,000 for a full year (\$40,000 for reducing labor time plus \$15,000 for reducing/eliminating inventory). Any incremental costs on the first year of implementation are considered to be negligible. Furthermore, there also may be additional cost savings in other areas as a result of utilizing construction standards, which have not been herein quantified.

The Maintenance Department does not subscribe to trade publications

The Maintenance Department does not subscribe to trade publications. The department does subscribe to a variety of free publications. These publications are put in one location where the maintenance staff has access to them. School staff does not have access to these publications. Custodial staff has access to a variety of trade publications. The department should also consider subscribing to a variety of trade publications to stay abreast of trends in the industry. The following are some examples of trade publications:

- Maintenance Solutions
- Phillips Consumer Electronics
- Coastal Safety Environmental
- Thomas Regional Newsletter
- Florida Turf Digest
- Betrock’s Plant Finder

District staff needs to participate in additional professional organizations

Active participation in state and national organizations enables district personnel to remain current with maintenance issues, new technology, equipment, materials, and procedures. The Maintenance Department employees belong to the following organizations:

- American Society of Heating Refrigeration and Engineering
- Electrical Council of Florida
- Cape Coral Construction Industries
- Building Code Officials of Florida
- Florida Water and Pollution Control Operators Association
- Florida Equipment Dealers Association.

The district needs to encourage membership in trade organizations by the appropriate levels of Maintenance Department employees, including:

- Florida Department of Education Trade Associations
- Florida Plant Management Association
- Pest Control Association
- Florida Rural Water Association
- Florida Rural Wastewater Association

However, the district needs to ensure participation, not just membership, in these organizations. The district should participate in additional professional organizations only after determining if the cost justifies the benefits.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district develop a set of construction standards for facilities. One set of construction standards will yield a standard building management system to be used throughout the district.*

Action Plan 11-9 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-9

Develop Construction Standards and Implement One Standard Building Management System	
Strategy	Develop a set of construction standards to be used throughout the district.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of construction, the director of maintenance services, zone manager, and the architect should develop a uniform set of construction standards and adopt a standard building management system. Step 2: Consider construction products, materials, and systems that create an efficient and user-friendly environment for maintenance staff. Step 3: Have the construction standards approved by the board. Step 4: Update construction standards for new and implemented technology.
Who Is Responsible	Director of construction and director of maintenance services.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	If the nine systems currently in place were reduced to one system, the district could save approximately \$55,000 for a full year (\$40,000 for reducing labor time plus \$15,000 for reducing/eliminating inventory). Any incremental costs on the first year of implementation are considered to be negligible. Furthermore, there also may be additional cost savings in other areas as a result of utilizing construction standards, which have not been herein quantified.

5 The district does not obtain and use customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements.

There is no planned customer feedback policy or program; customer surveys are not conducted

Currently the only feedback the maintenance function receives is through the work order process, complaints, and the annual custodial survey administered by ServiceMaster. Customer feedback is not used to conduct a self-analysis to improve the performance and productivity of the Maintenance Department. Customers are not regularly surveyed using a written instrument to determine strengths and weaknesses of the Maintenance Department service or to identify major maintenance needs. Consequently, the Maintenance Department is not afforded the opportunity to use feedback information from its customers in making process improvements.

A survey process will allow constituents and interested community members to express their opinions, perceptions and concerns. The maintenance function will be more complete as district personnel will be able to analyze this feedback to identify opportunities to improve operations and enhance customer service. For example, if customer feedback from surveys suggests that school activities are negatively impacted by repairs not being made in a timely fashion, management would be made aware that a problem exists and that further investigation into the matter is necessary. Surveys should be developed to include all stakeholders: teachers, students, parents, and community members.

The Maintenance Department communicates with customers through its staff and steps are in place to efficiently assign, schedule, and complete work

The district communicates scheduled responsibilities to staff through the use of the work order system. After work orders are input and reviewed by the zone managers, they are disbursed to the staff for completion. The foreman tracks the daily performance of personnel assigned to him/her. However, there is no evidence that the district analyzes effective work hours or hours worked versus hours scheduled. The district needs to perform weekly analyses of work orders to more efficiently assign and schedule work. Performing such analyses will enable management to:

- develop trends of work performance
- determine employee strengths and weaknesses
- identify training needs
- determine average time spent on certain projects for future planning
- determine the volume of the different categories of work orders (routine, emergency, and vandalism) for future resource planning

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district, through its Facilities Maintenance Department, establish a mechanism to annually survey its customers. The results of the survey will be used to improve the department's operations.*

Action Plan 11-10 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district analyze the efficiency of its maintenance personnel by comparing actual time worked to complete a work order against the time scheduled for the same work order.*

Action Plan 11-11 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-10

Conduct an Annual Survey of Customers

Strategy	Develop and implement an annual customer survey for the Facilities, Maintenance, and Operations Department.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services shall oversee the development of a customer survey. Step 2: The director will implement the necessary mechanism so that a responsible designated staff person conducts an annual survey at approximately the same time every year. Step 3: The results of the annual surveys shall be reported to the superintendent and the school board, and be used to plan operational improvements.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-11

Analyze Performance Data

Strategy	Develop and implement procedures to measure the efficiency of maintenance personnel by gathering and comparing performance data.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services develops an evaluation form to measure actual time versus scheduled time for a particular work order. Step 2: The director will implement the necessary procedures to ensure work orders are reviewed. Step 3: The result of these analyses will be periodically conveyed by each supervisor to the director (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, but not any longer), who investigates actions taken to improve performance. Step 4: The director will report to the assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance achieved, or unachieved, improvements in productivity.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance and director of maintenance services.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

6 The district has not established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure adequate performance and efficiency of the maintenance program.

The district has not established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the maintenance program. These mechanisms are essential for the district to improve its facilities maintenance program. The process to establish accountability mechanisms should include the following:

- Develop goals and objectives to guide program improvements in performance, efficiency, and effectiveness
- Develop performance benchmarks and cost-efficiency measures, including comparisons to similar peer or neighboring districts for program evaluation and improved decision-making
- Develop procedures to evaluate the performance and costs of the program, and analyze the data for potential cost savings and possible service alternatives, such as outside contracting and privatization
- Develop, establish, and implement strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data

Refer to Chapter 4, Performance Accountability Systems, of this report for more information on performance accountability in the operating programs.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district establish and implement accountability mechanisms to ensure high performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the maintenance program. Further, we recommend that the following criteria be considered while establishing accountability mechanisms:*
- *Develop 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*
- *Utilize appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks, including comparisons to neighboring districts, to evaluate the program and use these in management's decision making*
- *Evaluate the performance and cost of the program and analyze potential cost savings of alternatives, such as outside contracting and privatization*

Action Plan 11-12 shows steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Also, please refer to Chapter 4, Performance Accountability Systems, for additional information on operational program's accountability.

Action Plan 11-12

Implement Accountability Mechanisms	
Strategy	The district needs to implement accountability mechanisms to ensure the maintenance programs' performance, effectiveness, and efficiency.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for business and support services, the director of maintenance, and assigned subordinates ("the implementation team") develop goals and objectives based on criteria developed from surveys and their own knowledge of the department's mission and resources available.
	Step 2: Performance data will be periodically conveyed by each supervisor to the director (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, but not any longer), who investigates actions taken to improve performance.
	Step 3: Based on the applicable goals and objectives, the director of maintenance services oversees development of a stakeholder (customer) survey.
	Step 4: The director ensures an annual survey (conducted at approximately the same time every year) is conducted by a responsible staff person.

Step 5:	The results are reported to the assistant superintendent for business and support services, the superintendent, and the school board.
Step 6:	The survey results and other performance measures will be used to plan operational improvements
Step 7:	The implementation team will also identify appropriate and acceptable cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks to evaluate the program on an on-going basis.
Step 8:	The director of maintenance services periodically reports to the assistant superintendent for business and support services of achieved, or unachieved, improvements in productivity, potential cost savings, alternatives, and recommended course(s) of action.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for support services, director of maintenance services, and zone managers.
Time Frame	October 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Adequate Facilities Maintenance Budget

7

The district projects cost estimates of major maintenance needs, however, it should adopt a more formalized approach.

When developing the district's five-year facility work plan, the district identifies major maintenance needs. The department uses historical cost, adjusted for inflation to create its five-year plan. Prior experience with similar projects and the district's knowledge of costs are used to provide estimates of major needs. However, there is no written documentation that indicates any type of formal evaluation is performed on cost estimates or to suggest that market conditions are used in estimating future maintenance costs. As a result, the department's management does not have the necessary tools to assist in effectively planning or budgeting. Although the district has been accurate with estimates of project costs in the past, a more formalized approach can provide better justification for funding needs of the districts.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district develop a procedure for estimating costs for major projects.*
- Action Plan 11-13 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-13

Develop Guidelines for Estimating Costs

Strategy	The district should develop guidelines for estimating cost for major projects.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop guidelines for estimating cost that should include: • Past experience • Professional cost standards • Market conditions Step 2: Periodically evaluate cost estimates to improve future estimates.

Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and project administrators
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

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

The district's budget does not permit unlawful use of taxpayer dollars

The district restricts the use of spending funds and this policy is reflected in the annual budget. The budget clearly outlines all expected revenues and expenditures for the district. The budget is submitted to the school board each year for approval. Once the budget is approved and implemented, the school board must approve any amendments.

The annual budget does not address long-term goals for maintaining and operating district facilities

The department does not currently have specific written long-term goals. The department does not have a comprehensive plan that establishes long-term priorities and guides budget decisions. As a consequence, it has made budget decisions without consensus on whether these decisions will meet goals and objectives of the department. Thus, the department needs to develop a strategic plan.

Strategic planning will allow the maintenance function to establish a long-range view toward management of resources to effectively execute the department's programs and activities. A strategic plan will also enable the department to focus on priorities and be proactive in addressing problems.

For example, the district has not established a goal for preventive maintenance and therefore spends most of their funding on repairs and renovations. If this goal was established and the budgetary process was tied to the goals and objectives of the department, there would be more resources allocated to a proactive/preventable type of approach. Correlating the budget to strategic planning is essential to ensure that spending is consistent with the department's mission, goals, and objectives.

Budget processes include routine evaluation of actual vs. planned expenditures

Each month the district presents to the school board an outline of the current budget situation. The district prepares a general operating fund summary by object. A schedule analysis of all funds is also prepared. A "resolution to change" is presented to the board if the district determines the need for a change. If the board approves the resolution, a budget amendment is created. During the fiscal year 2000-01 the district had five amendments to the budget.

Resources to correct safety, casualty, and fire deficiencies are budgeted

The district safety officer conducts evaluations on all schools in the district each year. This inspection is detailed and performed in accordance with SREF. The evaluation lists all conditions that create a safety problem or that do not comply with SREF. The budget provides a line item that is used for the correction of deficiencies identified in this report. The district has used this line item exclusively for the correction of deficiencies.

Recommendations

- To coincide with long-term plans, we recommend the district develop guidelines for maintenance budgeting, which identify funding levels for recurring or routine maintenance, major maintenance, preventive maintenance, school improvements, staffing levels, and training.

Further, we recommend that these guidelines reflect industry standards, comparisons with peer districts, and historical data for the district.

Action Plan 11-14 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-14

Implement Guidelines for Budgeting Maintenance	
Strategy	The district should develop guidelines for maintenance budgeting.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop guidelines for budgeting of the maintenance function that identify • Funding levels for recurring or routine maintenance • Funding levels for major maintenance • Funding for preventive maintenance • Funding for school improvements • Staffing levels • Training Step 2: These guidelines are to be made reflecting • Industry standards • Comparisons with peer districts • Historical data from the district. Step 3: Periodically re-evaluate the guidelines for adjustments or improvements.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, zone manager.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

9

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

The district maintains a reserve, “district contingency fund” that may be used only in extreme circumstances. In the 1998-99 Fiscal Year the reserve was approximately one percent of that year’s budget. By the end of fiscal year 2001-2002 the reserve is expected to increase by one half of a percent. The district plans to increase this reserve to a level between three and five percent over the next four years. Policy states that the reserve fund should be used only for extreme circumstances. The district has not needed to use the district contingency fund for maintenance needs.

10 The Maintenance Department does not evaluate maintenance activities regularly to determine the most cost-effective method of providing services.

The district's objectives are not clearly related to the budget

The budgeting process does not identify the objectives and responsibilities of the facilities maintenance function nor does it demonstrate that the budget is responsive to those objectives and responsibilities in a cost-effective way.

Cost-effectiveness measures have not been established for all general support activities. Although the district is not clearly identifying cost-effective measures for each support activity, it is informally experimenting with different ways to provide maintenance services and reduce costs.

The district does not evaluate existing services to determine those suitable for privatization

The district privatizes and outsources some of the activities performed by the maintenance function on an as-needed basis. Some of these include, but are not limited to:

- Electrical work
- Carpentry
- Painting
- Roofing
- Irrigation
- Landscaping
- Equipment and vehicle repair

According to zone managers, the work is privatized or outsourced primarily because of the inadequate allocation of maintenance staff or because the location is in an outlying area. However, there is no coordinated procedure to ensure that the district performs a detailed cost/benefit analysis of existing activities to determine if privatization is suitable. The district should undertake an analysis of each trade within the maintenance function to determine whether cost efficiencies can be accomplished by outsourcing to private companies. The evaluations should be ongoing and continuous for all services.

For example, the district may find that outsourcing lawn maintenance would be beneficial. This outsourcing could eliminate current employee benefits, eliminate the need for the purchase of lawn maintenance equipment, and eliminate the need for transportation and maintenance of this equipment.

The district does not evaluate all contracted or privatized services to verify effectiveness and cost savings

There is no coordinated procedure in place to ensure that the Maintenance Department regularly evaluates all contracted or privatized services to verify effectiveness and cost savings. An analysis of all trades currently contracted to private companies should be conducted to determine whether cost efficiencies are being accomplished. The district has contracted with a vendor to supply custodial equipment and supplies.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that each budget item be supported by an objective that clearly supports the goals of the maintenance and operations departments and the district. The objective should contain or refer to standards for determining whether the budget item is cost effective.*

Action Plan 11-15 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district formally evaluate existing services to determine those suitable for privatization or if privatize services should be continued.*

Action Plan 11-16 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-15

Document Goals and Objectives	
Strategy	The district's budget for the Maintenance Department should be supported and tied to goals and objectives for the Maintenance Department as reflected in the district's five-year plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district's budget needs to tie each budget item to the corresponding goals and objectives. Step 2: The district's finance department ensures that these goals and objectives are reflected in the annual budget. Step 3: The Maintenance Department periodically reports on results comparing actual versus budget items, and whether the actions being reported are cost effective.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, zone manager; budget director or CFO.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-16

Privatizing Maintenance Services	
Strategy	Formally evaluate existing services to determine if any are suitable for privatization or if privatization should be continued.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify maintenance trade functions that could be privatized. Step 2: Identify criteria for use in determining cost to privatize these functions. Step 3: Perform analysis comparing vendor cost to in-house cost. Step 4: Consider non-monetary variables when performing this evaluation. Step 5: Determine feasibility of privatizing or continuing privatizing maintenance trade functions based on the results of the comparison.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and zone manager; CFO.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

11

The district has several practices that minimize equipment costs through purchasing practices and maintenance, however, there are areas that could be improved.

The district does not periodically conduct cost comparisons to determine whether purchasing practices have minimized cost

There is a board policy that requires the district to receive a minimum number of bids to ensure that it obtains the lowest possible cost on the goods and services purchased. However, the Maintenance Department has not conducted any follow-up analyses to determine if the lowest bid provided the lowest long-term cost as well.

The lowest bid might mean a lower up-front cost, but the operating and maintenance costs could be considerably higher. Without a formal procedure of conducting an analysis of cost comparisons, the district is unable to determine if the purchasing practices have resulted in lower overall costs. The district should complete life-cycle cost analyses for all major equipment purchases. It would be beneficial for the district to go back two to three years and conduct a cost comparison to determine whether the purchase price and the operating costs have resulted in the best value at the lowest cost. This information would enable the district to make better-informed decisions in the future.

Volume purchases are considered

The purchasing department buys most of the parts and materials and regularly makes volume purchases. However, analyses are not performed in determining when these type purchases are beneficial.

Volume purchasing is an important concept to consider because of the potential cost savings resulting from discounts commonly offered by vendors. Also, processing costs can be decreased because fewer transactions occur with volume purchasing.

There are also costs associated with volume purchases that should be taken into consideration. For example, the district will have to take into account the shelf life of certain products and the possibility of some products becoming obsolete. Another example is the cost of warehousing the increased volume of inventory.

Equipment purchases are based on operating costs and repair feasibility, but not on projected needs

The Maintenance Department reports it considers operating cost when purchasing new equipment, although this is not documented in policy. Based on interviews, zone managers, with input from staff, make purchasing decisions only after considering all operating costs on all purchases. Decisions are strictly made using the knowledge gained from prior experience.

Equipment refurbishing and/or repair are considered in lieu of new purchases. The Maintenance Department attempts to repair tools and equipment before a decision is made to purchase a replacement. The district makes decisions based on prior experience. If the staff's knowledge and experience indicates that the equipment is not repairable, then new equipment is purchased.

The district does not project equipment needs and therefore does not project inflationary costs. Also, zone managers indicate that the budget process does not facilitate replacement projections. If the district were to formalize operating costs, the district could project equipment needs. Older equipment may result in higher costs due to inefficiency.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district develop projections for needed equipment for five-year periods. These projections need to include an inflation factor and should be added to the long-range plan.*

Action Plan 11-17 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district periodically conduct cost comparison studies for purchasing materials and equipment. The goal of the studies is to ensure that the district is obtaining the best value for the money spent.*

Action Plan 11-18 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-17

Conduct Equipment Cost Projections

Strategy	The district needs to make projections for needed equipment for five-year periods. These projections need to include an inflation factor and be part of the long-range plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district prepares a list of needed equipment for a five-year period. Step 2: The district's budget should include an inflation factor for each year. Step 3: The district's finance department determines whether these inflation factors are reasonable and reflected in the annual budget.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, zone manager, finance director.
Time Frame	July 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-18

Conduct Cost Comparisons

Strategy	The district should periodically conduct cost comparison studies for purchasing materials and equipment. The goal of the studies is to ensure that the district is obtaining the best value for the money spent.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify materials and equipment where a cost comparison is applicable to determine whether the district received the best value for money spent. Step 2: Conduct a detailed and documentable comparison of the items selected under Step 1 above, as to the best value for the money spent. Step 3: Comparisons are to be for identical items (no substitutes).
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and program administrators and purchasing department.
Time Frame	July 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

12 The district does not use proactive maintenance practices to reduce maintenance costs.

The district does not have a preventive maintenance program

According to supervisors interviewed by ValienteHernandez P.A., the department spends a considerable amount of time repairing facilities on a "fix-it-when-it-breaks" basis, rather performing on-going preventive maintenance. Although the district does perform limited preventive maintenance on the

HVAC and boiler systems, the district does not have a comprehensive preventive maintenance program leading to higher repair costs in the long run.

A preventive maintenance program is an investment to the district in that, by definition, it reduces the number and frequency of repairs and the associated costs. The costs include labor, parts, and downtime. A comprehensive preventive maintenance program would assist in reducing long-term repair cost and service outages in all areas.

We estimate that implementing a preventive maintenance program would save an estimated \$1,729,200 over the next five years, as illustrated in Exhibit 11-5. This calculation is based upon an annual reduction of 5% in maintenance expenditures from budgeted amounts over a five-year period. The estimated 5% saving was obtained from the Plant Maintenance Resource Center, a nationally recognized source.⁴

Exhibit 11-5

Implementing a Preventive Maintenance Program Would Result in Cost Savings of \$1,729,200 Over the Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual cost savings	325,400	325,350	341,850	361,000	375,600
Cumulative cost savings	325,400	650,750	992,600	1,353,600	1,729,200

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Procedures for the disposal of equipment is being revised

The district has procedures to dispose equipment that is no longer usable. In preparation for their GASB 34 implementation, the district is reviewing and revising current procedures to comply with the new GASB requirements. The district has not indicated a completion date for the review or implementation of the new procedures.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district take necessary measures to create, and implement, a program to use preventive maintenance practices to reduce costs.*

Action Plan 11-19 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- We recommend that the district periodically conduct a review its preventive maintenance practices to ascertain whether costs are being successfully reduced, and at desired levels.*

Action Plan 11-20 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-19

Implement a Preventive Maintenance Program

Strategy	The district needs to undertake measures to create and implement a program to use preventive maintenance practices to reduce costs.

⁴ Mather, Daryl, "Calculating the Savings from Implementation of CMMS", *Plant Maintenance Resource Center*, September 2002 http://www.plant-maintenance.com/articles/CMMS_savings.html (September 18, 2002).

Action Needed	Step 1: The district prepares a list of potential areas where preventive maintenance is attainable and projects attainable costs reductions. Step 2: The district, through its Maintenance Department, dissects the list into logical components and designates a lead person for each category. Step 3: The district's Maintenance Department prioritizes the projects and assigns target dates for accomplishing them.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, program administrators and zone managers.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Implementing a preventive maintenance program would save approximately \$1,729,200 over the next five years, as illustrated in Exhibit 11-5.

Action Plan 11-20**Preventive Maintenance Practices**

Strategy	The district periodically reviews its preventive maintenance practices to ascertain whether costs are successfully and systematically reduced as a result of this program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify how the measurement of items to be compared will take place (dollars, efficiency, postponement of adverse conditions when major repairs take place). Step 2: Compare the added costs of preventive maintenance, after considering the time lapsed during which the preventive maintenance needs to take place, versus the costs of replacement and the costs of disrupting operations when major repairs take place. Step 3: Prepare a detailed listing of items selected under Step 1 above. Step 4: Determine costs savings by category or projects. Step 5: Inform assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, superintendent, and school board.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent; assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, director of maintenance services, zone manager, and finance director.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Qualified Personnel and Professional Development

13 The district needs to formally and regularly review the organizational structure of the maintenance and operations program to minimize administrative layers and processes.

There is no documentation that indicates the maintenance function formally reviews its organizational structure and staffing levels with the objective of minimizing administrative layers and processes. The district is currently reviewing job descriptions to ensure that an accurate reflection of performance expectations is maintained, in accordance with an agreement with Support Personnel Association of Lee County. The district is also not reviewing the alignment of the department to ensure that a clearly defined reporting system is in place. A comprehensive review needs to include feedback from staff and the

public. It would also include a comparison of the program's structure and staffing levels as compared to other districts.

Exhibit 11-6 compares staffing levels for the district to the peer districts.

Exhibit 11-6

The District's Maintenance Staff is Responsible for More Square Feet Than Most Peer Districts

District	Maintenance Staff	Net Square Feet	Square Feet Per Maintenance Staff
Lee	120*	7,853,212	65,443
Brevard	Not Available	9,396,580	Not Available
Pasco	120	6,761,953	56,266
Polk	158	12,341,945	78,114
Seminole	154	7,512,994	48,786
Volusia	179	7,507,249	41,940

*Does not include 64 building supervisors.

Source: Florida Inventory of School Houses, Lee County Human Resource Report, and peer districts.

Currently, maintenance crews work out of a central warehouse. Each time a call is made for a repair or other type of maintenance need, staff must travel from the central location to the other destination. Lee County is geographically a large county and the distance from one facility to another is often considerably long. Refer to Best Practice 1 for additional information on distance and travel time.

The district does not have a formal process of reviewing the maintenance function organizational structure and staffing levels. Consequently, the Maintenance Department cannot report these findings in writing to the school board or members of the public-at-large.

It is essential that the school district decentralize the maintenance staff to accommodate the needs of all campuses in a timely manner. In order to accommodate decentralization into three geographical maintenance zones, job functions and responsibilities should be re-evaluated with the subsequent issues in mind.

Streamline supervisory level

Currently, three zone managers oversee the foremen and the general maintenance staff based on work area (e.g. one manager for carpentry, one for plumbing, etc.). In addition, two program administrators report to the director and perform executive-level tasks such as department updates and budget monitoring.

To reduce a layer of management and to accommodate the department's decentralization, the responsibilities of the zone managers and the program administrators may be combined, resulting in one zone manager for each geographical zone. This would reduce head count by two and streamline the reporting structure to the director.

The zone managers would report directly to the director, sign off on major purchases, prioritize major repairs, and negotiate vendor contracts for their respective zones.

Eliminate redundant positions

Based on the reporting structure provided, the foreman and group leader positions appear to be redundant in their responsibilities. Both the foreman and the group leader supervise work being performed by staff members, sometimes supervising only one individual (e.g. one welder and one group leader for welders).

To reduce a layer of management and accommodate the department's decentralization, the responsibilities of the foremen and the group leaders may be combined, resulting in at least one foreman for each zone.

The foreman would travel throughout his/her zone and supervise the status and quality of work being performed by various staff members. In addition, the foreman would assist in scheduling tasks, approve adjustments to scheduled tasks, and assign personnel during repair emergencies.

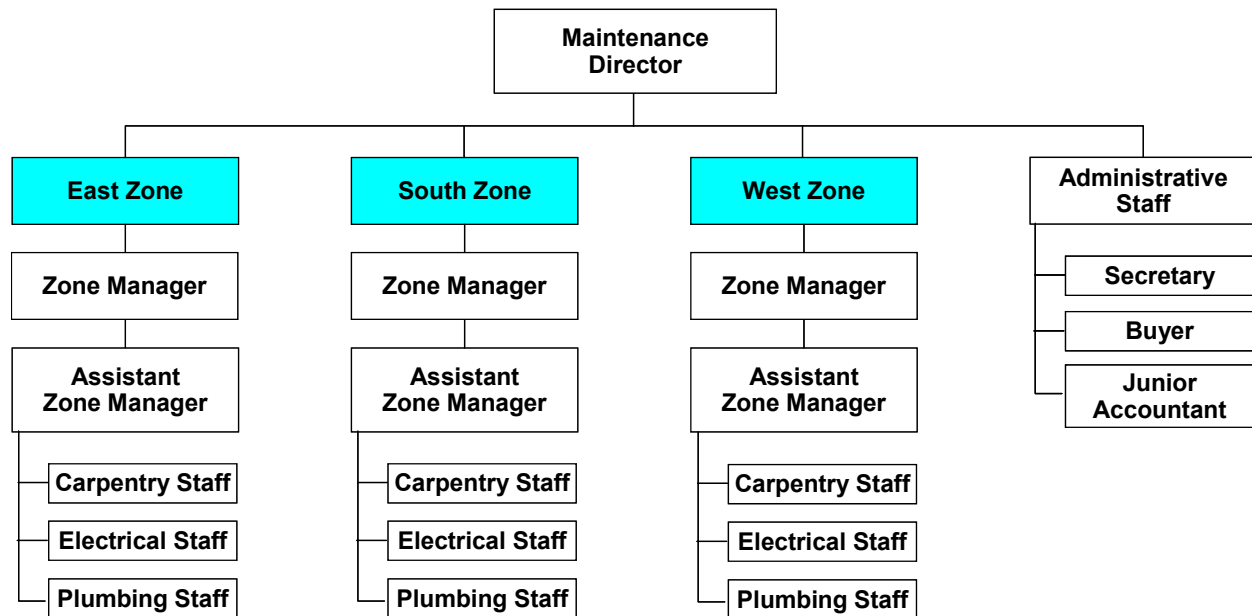
Establish zone staffing

A base crew that consists of members from all three of the core specialty areas (Plumbing, Electrical, and Carpentry) should be assembled for each zone. The volume of staff for each position within each zone can be adjusted as project-tracking becomes more refined. While a majority of the work performed by a zone's maintenance team will be completed within their geographical zone, staff members should be prepared to assist other zones when necessary, particularly for repair emergencies. Exhibit 11-7 shows the recommended organization chart for maintenance services.

The maintenance and operations departments have not regularly reviewed the staffing levels of the maintenance and operations program to maximize the efficient use of personnel.

Exhibit 11-7

Proposed Maintenance Organization Chart



Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district formally and routinely review the maintenance organizational structure.*

Action Plan 11-21 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-21

Review Organizational Structure	
Strategy	Routinely perform a formal review of the maintenance organizational structure.
Action Needed	Step 1: Assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, director of maintenance services, and zone managers shall identify ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the maintenance structure. Step 2: Research the industry and other districts to gather ideas on ways of improving current structure. Step 3: Clearly define any structural changes in writing. Step 4: Submit to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and zone managers.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003 and ongoing.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

14

The maintenance and operations departments do not regularly review staffing levels to maximize the efficient use of personnel.

The district does not have staffing formulas for maintenance functions other than custodians

The district has developed a staffing formula for the custodial function. However, the district has not developed a staffing formula for most Maintenance Department employees. Staffing formulae are important to determine proper staffing levels and to ensure adequate allocation of staff resources to meet needs. DOE recommends a maintenance staffing formula that is based on on total square footage, and should be used as a guide for creating a district staffing formula.

A staffing formula needs to be developed for the maintenance function

The district does not apply staffing formulae for maintenance trades. The zone managers stated that there has not been an increased staffing for the corresponding district growth. The tendency has been to maintain staff levels based on the previous year. Staffing formulae are important to ensure adequate and equitable allocation of staff resources to meet needs. Yet, maintenance staff has spent the most time on major repairs or renovations, not preventive maintenance. Consequently, preventive and corrective maintenance has not been sufficiently staffed. To ensure preventive maintenance needs are addressed, the district should reassess maintenance staffing levels using a staffing formula to develop a solid base for a preventive maintenance program.

Exhibit 11-9 presents a comparison of Lee County staffing levels to peer districts. Lee County should evaluate outsourcing painting when considering privatization options as discussed in Best Practice 10.

Exhibit 11-8

Comparison of Staffing Levels by Trade With Peer Districts

Trade	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole ¹	Volusia
Air Conditioning	14	NA	19	24	-	15
Boiler Mechanic	-	-	-	3	-	1
Carpenters	15	NA	17	23	-	20
Communication and Fire Systems	-	-	-	3	-	18
Electricians	9	NA	11	20	-	12

Trade	Lee	Brevard	Pasco	Polk	Seminole ¹	Volusia
Electronics	10	NA	6	4	3	-
Fire Extinguisher	1	NA	-	3	1	-
Food Equipment	6	NA	2	3	-	2
Glazier	1	NA	-	-	-	-
Grounds	-	NA	10	-	17	18
Locksmith	2	NA	-	4	-	2
Mason	3	NA	9	-	-	-
Painters	14	NA	10	18	-	16
Pest Control	2	NA	-	4	1	-
Plumbers	11	NA	9	10	-	6
Refrigeration	-	-	-	3	-	3
Roofer	4	NA	7	5	-	2
Water	-	NA	6	1	-	-
Welders	2	NA	14	7	-	2
Utility	26	NA	-	23	132	62
Totals	120	NA	120	158	154	179
Net Square Footage/Trades staff	65,443	NA	56,349	78,293	48,786	41,940

¹ Seminole County Schools does not identify staffing levels by trade

Source: Florida Inventory of School Houses, Lee County Human Resource Report, and peer districts.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district develop a staffing formula for the maintenance trades.*

Action Plan 11-22 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the following strategies to achieve the recommended staffing patterns:*
 - *Rather than fire or demote zone managers, program administrators, foremen or group leaders, reduce the head count gradually by*
 - *Replacing an employee's existing responsibilities with an obligation to assist with the creation of thorough Standard Operating Procedures and*
 - *Offering some employees early retirement.*
 - *Due to a combination of seniority and status, a significant savings could be achieved by trimming the layers of management. Re-invest any savings generated from reducing management head count to employ more Plumbing, Carpentry and Electrical staff and/or increasing the salaries of existing staff members to compete with area salaries for similar workers.*

Action Plan 11-23 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-22

Maintenance Staffing Formula	
Strategy	The district should develop a staffing formula for each job category in the maintenance function.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services, assisted by the zone managers in the Maintenance Department, research different staffing formulas, including comparisons with peer districts.

	Step 2: This group will obtain industry information related to staffing levels for various maintenance trades, including published materials, periodicals, and internet sites.
	Step 3: The director and supervisors will develop a staffing formula that will enable the district to maintain the facilities with good quality, but at minimal cost.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and zone managers.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Can be accomplished from existing resources.

Action Plan 11-23

Eliminate Redundant or Unnecessary Positions

Strategy	The district should review management layers and job descriptions, and eliminate redundant layers to streamline reporting and increase operational efficiency.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review organizational chart and job descriptions for maintenance services. Step 2: Eliminate excessive administrative and supervisory positions. Step 3: Create new organizational chart and job descriptions for maintenance services under a decentralized structure.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for support services, assistant superintendent for human resources, director of maintenance services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be attained within existing resources but will also result in significant savings to the district that cannot be calculated at this time.

15 The maintenance and operations departments ensure qualified staff by using appropriate hiring practices.

The district has procedures for attracting qualified applicants based on the district's size, location, and needs. Job announcements identify the job description, required qualifications, and salary. These jobs are often advertised in the school newspaper, the local area newspaper, and at local supply shops. The maintenance and operations departments have a written job description for each position within the department.

16 The Maintenance Department has a written job description for each position within the department.

The Maintenance Department has job descriptions for all positions, including head trade positions and staff trade positions. These descriptions define job goals, qualifications needed, specific job responsibilities, and supervisory responsibilities. Supervisory staff is given the opportunity to provide input in the development and revision of job descriptions. A copy of each Maintenance Department job description is located in the maintenance office and is accessible to employees.

The district reviews and updates the job descriptions every two years to ensure that the responsibilities of the employees are appropriately reflected in the descriptions. The job descriptions are currently being reviewed to ensure that they accurately describe the duties and responsibilities of each position. Accurate and up-to-date job descriptions are needed to establish accountability and evaluation processes in the district.

17 The district provides appropriate supervision of maintenance and operations staff, however it can further improve maintenance supervisory activity.

Levels of authority, responsibility, and supervision have been assigned to each position, but need to be refined to improve reporting

Levels of authority are not clearly indicated by the current organizational chart (see Exhibit 11-2). Areas of responsibility are identified in the job descriptions. Each trade has group leaders that supervise staff. The group leaders report to the trades foreman, who in turn reports to the zone manager. The zone managers report to both program administrators, who in turn report to the director. As discussed below, there is adequate supervision for employees in each of the trades. The district needs to review the levels of authority, streamline, and realign reporting.

The district does not calculate supervisor/employee ratios

Supervisor/employee ratios have not been established for the district's maintenance function. Without established ratios, supervisors may be required to supervise more employees than they can effectively monitor. Best practice reports of other school districts state that a range between twenty and twenty-five employees for every lead position is within industry practices. Lee County is clearly within this acceptable range.

Refer to Best Practice 13 and its related action plans for additional details on staffing and reorganization of the maintenance function.

Employees have the opportunity to review their performance evaluations

Employees have the opportunity to review their performance evaluations. The zone manager conducts evaluations on an annual basis. The parties meet and discuss the evaluation and the employee signs the evaluation form to indicate that he or she has read the form.

Recommendations

The steps needed to implement this recommendation are included in Best Practice 13, Action Plan 11-21.

18 The district needs to create a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff to enhance job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.

The district has a formalized training program

The district has a formalized training program that begins when a new employee is hired. The safety director conducts safety training for topics that pertain to all employees (i.e., blood borne pathogens) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) training. The department conducts job specific including safety training, safety hazards, vehicle safety, employee safety in hot weather, and boiler operations and maintenance. Vendors that supply equipment and chemicals for the district address many

other needs. The district has also implemented an apprenticeship program for the following trades: electrician, plumber, heating and air conditioning technician, and building supervisor. Employees are given the opportunity to enter the apprenticeship program.

There are no written training goals

There are no written training goals for the maintenance and operations staff. Training by manufacturer's representatives is offered as needed for new materials, tools, or systems. The trade staff receives no training in interpersonal team skills, time management, or district policy awareness. Written training goals are important in establishing the purpose for the training program. Without goals, the training received by the staff may not serve the district's needs. Training goals should identify how the training will benefit the district's effectiveness of operations. These goals should be communicated to supervisors and staff so they are aware of their specific training responsibilities.

The zone managers should work closely with human resources to develop a structured, sequential training program

The zone managers receive input from staff and vendors on needs for skill development, but do not work with the human resources department to ensure a planned, sequential program for personal skill development. The human resources department needs to be directly involved in the development and refinement of training programs for each maintenance position since this department is responsible for the coordination of all district training. This department also has the technical skills and resources to identify and fill training needs.

Training programs should include interaction strategies

As stated above, there is evidence of some technical training to meet specific trade needs, and skill sets. According to the zone managers, the district has not formally trained maintenance staff on personal interaction strategies. Since maintenance is a customer service function, personal interaction is a major component of the job. All Maintenance Department employees should receive training on personal interaction strategies.

The district has an apprenticeship program

The district has an apprenticeship program for maintenance employees. These programs are effective in identifying and training future employees and providing a less expensive way to provide training to newly hired employees. Apprenticeship programs also improve a district's ability to recruit and maintain a qualified workforce over the long-term.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the facilities, maintenance, and operations departments develop a comprehensive training program that is aimed at improving the staff's technical skills, job satisfaction, efficiency levels, and safety. This program should include regularly scheduled training sessions and should not be limited to sessions offered by manufacturer's representatives.*

Action Plan 11-24 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-24

Create a Staff Development Program	
Strategy	Develop a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff in the areas of job skills, job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.

Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services and the supervisors will meet with their respective staffs to determine the types of training that are needed.
	Step 2: The director and supervisors shall meet with the staff development team and develop staff training at the least in the following areas: • job safety • team work • use of tools • interpersonal communications • work habits • job skills
	Step 3: Staff development shall prepare a training schedule, which allows for all Maintenance and Operations staff to receive at least two training sessions per year.
	Step 4: The director of maintenance services shall ensure the training budget conforms to the needs and training schedule prepared by staff development.
	Step 5: The director of maintenance services and the director of staff development shall present the training curriculum, schedule, budget, and expected outcomes to the board.
	Step 6: The board shall review, revise, and consider the approval of the training program.
	Step 7: The program will be evaluated annually. Staff feedback will be part of the basis for the evaluation.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and director of staff development
Time Frame	August 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

19 The district provides Maintenance Department staff the tools and equipment required to accomplish their assigned tasks.

Maintenance personnel are equipped with all necessary tools, equipment, and materials

The Maintenance Department personnel are provided the necessary tools to perform a given task. These tools are assigned to the employee and replaced only upon providing a broken tool or police report. Tools that are not used frequently or would be cost prohibitive are rented on an as-needed basis.

There is a procedure to acquire parts and materials not generally stocked

The maintenance function has procedures for acquiring parts, materials, and equipment that are not stocked. When stock parts and materials are available from the warehouse, they are matched against specific work orders and delivered to the maintenance employee designated on the work order form. A blanket purchase order is required when parts and materials are not available in the warehouse. Special order parts and materials received through the warehouse require two signatures on the receiving document for payment. The required signatures are: warehouse receiving staff, and the employee requesting the part.

Computerized Maintenance Management System

20 The district has a computerized control and tracking system to accurately track work orders and inventory.

The district generates reports showing work orders requested in comparison to work orders completed. The district uses these reports for decision-making purposes. The current system enhances management capability, but could be expanded to improve the available information. For example, the current system does not allow supervisors to continuously monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of their crews. With the establishment of a new work order system, the district would benefit from designing the system in a way that would ensure the ability to routinely produce certain reports. Some examples of reports that could be utilized include, but are not limited to:

- hours worked by trade
- completion times versus deadline
- effective work hours- hours incurred as compared to established budget
- work order history of a school
- work order activity by type
- parts usage analysis

The district should analyze such information on a bi-weekly or monthly basis to improve decision-making and to plans to optimize available resources. For example, if analysis determines that backlogs at certain schools have increased, supervisors could take action quickly correct the problem. In another example, management could use the reports to identify repairs or maintenance that cost more in parts and/or labor than suggested by the manufacture of the particular equipment or by the district budget. That circumstance could identify the need for more staff training in the subject task.

The current system does not include an inventory-tracking component of commonly used parts, materials, and equipment, including those carried on the maintenance vehicles. With a tracking function, the district could more efficiently control and manage inventory. This would also assist in the periodic inventory count performed by the internal audit function. The district has approved a new system that will improve inventory tracking that it is scheduled to be implemented in November 2002.

The current system does not include an automatic reorder mechanism. With an automatic reorder mechanism, the district could manage inventory more efficiently. With this mechanism the district will be able to set lower inventory levels, thus enabling the district to save costs associated with warehousing of parts, materials, etc. Once these products drop below a set quantity, an automatic reorder mechanism would initiate the purchase of that product. This would also eliminate the risk of down-time of waiting for parts or materials. Again, in purchasing a new work order system, the district should ensure that the system includes a mechanism for automatic reordering.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district prioritize the establishment of an inventory tracking system for the Maintenance Department when the new software is installed. The inventory tracking system should*

- Track all inventory in the warehouse, shops and on trucks
- Tie all inventory used to a specific work order
- Automatically trigger reorders for materials that are low in stock

Action Plan 11-25 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the district routinely generate reports from the new work order system to analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance crews.*

Action Plan 11-26 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

- *We further recommend that supervisors need to meet monthly to discuss productivity levels and expectations of their staff.*

Action Plan 11-27 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendations.

Action Plan 11-25

Establish Inventory-tracking System

Strategy	Develop a plan to prioritize the establishment of an inventory tracking system.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services, program administrators, zone managers, and director of MIS should meet to determine necessary steps in the establishment of an inventory tracking system. Step 2: Utilize appropriate resources determined in Step 1 to implement the system.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, director of MIS
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-26

Analyze Productivity of Maintenance Crews

Strategy	Routinely generate reports from the new work order system to analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance crews.
Action Needed	Step 1: Have procedures in place where work order reports are routinely generated and analyzed. Step 2: Area supervisors meet monthly to discuss results from report analyses. Step 3: Supervisors should troubleshoot and discuss ways to be more efficient and effective with productivity.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing recourses.

Action Plan 11-27

Routinely Discuss Productivity Levels

Strategy	Supervisors meet monthly to discuss productivity levels and expectations of their staff.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish a procedure for supervisors to meet monthly meet to discuss productivity levels and expectations of their staff.

	Step 2: Area supervisors meet monthly to discuss results from report analyses.
	Step 3: Supervisors discuss with their staff expectations and ways to be more efficient and effective with productivity.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and supervisors.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

21 The maintenance and operations departments do not have a system to uniformly prioritize maintenance needs throughout the district.

The district does not have formal guidelines

The district does not have formal guidelines to prioritize maintenance needs. Lead supervisors rank work orders as: *routine*, *emergency*, or *vandalism*. However, the district has not developed formal guidelines to determine priorities of on-going maintenance needs. On-going maintenance priorities are not tied to educational program needs, changing enrollment projections, or long-range facility planning. As discussed in Best Practice 2, the district's long-range planning has been inadequate. By prioritizing maintenance needs, the district will improve its ability to develop long-range facilities plans.

Work orders are prioritized

The zone manager assesses each work order and assigns a priority ranking. The following are some examples used when prioritizing work orders:

Routine—Day-to-day work required to maintain or repair facilities such as:

- Defective light switch
- Leaky faucet
- Painting
- Ceiling tile replacement
- Room air conditioning
- Reach-in refrigerator or freezer
- Typewriter repair
- Printer repair

Emergency—Unexpected, serious occurrence requiring immediate attention such as

- Fire hazard/ fire alarm
- Walk-in refrigerator
- Sanitary health hazard (sewer line backing up)
- Chiller/ boiler system
- Broken window posing security risk
- Broken lock posing security risk

Vandalism—Disruption of normal operations by acts of vandals are treated with different degrees of priority, depending on the severity of the exposure to students, staff, and the general public to dangers associated with this type of situation.

The district staff determines when emergency maintenance is necessary based on the criteria list above. This has provided for effective emergency repairs. Items determined to be emergency or life/safety receive first priority.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district develop formal guidelines to prioritize maintenance needs. On-going maintenance priorities should be tied to educational program needs, changing enrollment projections, or long-range facility planning.*

Action Plan 11-28 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-28

Establish Guidelines to Prioritize Maintenance Needs	
Strategy	Develop formal guidelines to prioritize maintenance needs. Ongoing maintenance should be tied to educational program needs, changing enrollment projections, or long-term facility planning.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish written guidelines to prioritize maintenance needs. Step 2: This should include criteria to rank on-going maintenance needs. The criteria used for ranking should be more specific than routine, emergency, and vandalism. Step 3: Guidelines need to consider educational program needs, changing enrollment projections, and long range-facility planning to determine the priorities.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, program administrators, and zone managers
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Compliance With State And Federal Regulatory Requirements

22 District policies and procedures clearly address safety conditions of facilities.

The district has written safety standards

A copy of the district's *Employee Workplace Safety Program* manual is provided to each employee. This manual includes safety components such as first aid procedures, proper use of tools, proper use of machinery, roofing safety, science lab safety, etc. There are also procedures in this document that address the responsibilities of the district's supervisors relating to the proper orientation of the safety program, job-specific training, and periodic retraining of employees.

The district needs to update this program regularly to incorporate the evolving needs of the district. When doing so, they should use appropriate external benchmarks to evaluate the cost effectiveness of health and safety standards.

Evaluations are made and documented for the condition of buildings and of each new school

Legal requirements require there to be a plant survey every five years. During this process, the district conducts evaluations of the condition of the buildings and documents the results of these evaluations. As discussed in the facilities construction chapter, this survey does not represent a complete facilities audit, whereby each building component is evaluated based on standard facilities evaluation form. However, it does provide a general assessment of the condition of each building.

The district's safety officer conducts evaluations each year on all schools in the district. This inspection is detailed and is based on SREF. The evaluation lists all conditions that create a safety problem or that do not comply with SREF.

23 The Maintenance Department does not identify and implement strategies to contain energy costs.

Without an energy management and accountability program, the district is not able to conserve energy and is faced with high costs. The district does not communicate with utility providers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), local industry experts, or other organizations to identify energy efficient benchmarks and to implement actions to increase cost efficiency. Research has shown significant cost savings in the existence of such programs. A program of this nature would include criteria such as:

- Conducting an energy audit to determine ways of reducing energy consumption and cost
- Energy management training for students, teachers, administrators, and maintenance workers
- Energy conservation checklist for students, teachers, administrators, and maintenance workers
- Incentive programs for schools to promote and reward student and staff for participation
- Plans for improving HVAC systems
- Monitoring and improving indoor quality

In addition, energy improvements often result in better lighting, temperature control, indoor air quality, and reduced ambient noise. Such improvements promote the general well being of students, teachers, and administrators, and may help improve student performance. Development of an energy management plan is recommended.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district develop a comprehensive energy management plan.*

Action Plan 11-29 shows the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 11-29

Develop Energy Management Plan	
Strategy	Develop a comprehensive energy management plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: Director of maintenance services and zone managers should conduct research on different energy management programs. This would include communication with different organizations.

Step 2:	Review qualifications energy manager position and update criteria as needed.
Step 3:	Develop a comprehensive program that would include: - conducting an energy audit to determine ways of reducing energy consumption and cost - energy measures to be tracked by facility - energy management training for students, teachers, administrators, and maintenance workers - energy conservation checklist for students, teachers, administrators, and maintenance workers - incentive programs for schools to promote and reward student and staff for participation - plans for improving HVAC systems - monitoring and improving indoor quality
Step 4:	Present this plan to the superintendent for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Director of facilities and energy manager.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation may result in future energy savings. However, until an assessment of the district's current situation is completed, savings cannot be reasonably estimated.

24 Although the district does not have an energy management system in place, it has a position for an energy manager.

As discussed in Best Practice 23, the district has no energy management system. The district has an energy manager/stockroom supervisor but the energy program in the district has not been a priority.

The district should consider energy management programs that provide incentives for energy reductions. The Energy Star Building Program that the Environmental Protection Agency has developed, for example, allows a school district to be compared against national benchmarks and gives them an opportunity to apply for the “Energy Star Label”—a sign that the district’s buildings are top energy performers.

Recommendations

The steps needed to implement this recommendation are included in Best Practice 23, Action Plan 11-29.

25 The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health, safety, and energy efficiency conditions.

The district has an employee workplace safety program reaching and covering all employees. This program addresses safety-related issues, and was developed within the following authoritative parameters:

- Keller’s Official OSHA Safety Handbook
- Occupational Safety and Health Standards for General Industry (29CFR Parts 1910 and 1926)
- The 1994 Workers’ Compensation Manual
- The Florida Industrial Arts Safety Guide

There is documentation supporting the existence of additional technical and safety training for maintenance staff. For example, the zone manager provided evidence of staff participation in “bucket truck training.” Other examples include safety equipment training, safety hazards, vehicle safety, employee safety in unusually hot weather, and boiler operations and maintenance. Vendors that supply the district with equipment and chemicals address other needs.

26 The district is aware of and prepared for permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code. The district has developed procedures to ensure these inspections take place as required.

The department’s staff is trained for the new code

The original date of implementation of the Florida Building Code was extended from July 1, 2001 to January 1, 2002. The district has developed procedures to ensure the necessary inspections and permitting takes place. They have privatized this procedure by contracting with a local vendor on a project-by-project basis, with the understanding that the district would assume the responsibilities in the near future. The vendor is responsible for all inspections and permits. The district has developed procedures to ensure these inspections take place.

The appropriate management staff has been trained for the newly adopted Florida Building Code. The district staff provided documentation indicating their attendance at a regional workshop hosted by the DOE. These workshops are focused on explaining the new code requirements in terms of facility condition, as well as inspections and permitting.

Procedures have been developed that ensure necessary inspections and permitting under the Florida Building Code take place

The district has established procedures for implementing the new building code. The district has contracted with a consultant to ensure that the Florida Building Code inspections and permitting take place, as required. The district intends to bring the program in-house after a formal procedure is developed. Maintenance and operations departments know what the procedures are to ensure that all permitting and inspections are obtained.

12

Student Transportation

The School District of Lee County generally provides appropriate transportation to and from school to some 32,000 students each day, but needs to establish better accountability mechanisms and improve efficiency.

Conclusion

Student transportation in Lee County Public Schools faces several operational difficulties. These include minimizing transportation costs while functioning as an operational medium to promote equity and create a unified school system. The use of bussing to transport students to their school of choice is inherently expensive. While there are several opportunities to improve operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness of student transportation services in Lee County Public Schools, the district will not be able to address these opportunities unless it first addresses a more fundamental deficiency: the general absence of a system of public accountability based on measurable goals and objectives. Without a system of accountability the director of transportation will have neither the information needed to analyze improvements opportunities, nor a way to evaluate changes.

Areas in which efficiency and cost-effectiveness can be improved include bus route scheduling practices, unexpected bus driver absenteeism, bell schedules, magnet school transportation, staffing formulas, bus purchases, and vehicle retention.

During the course of this review, ValienteHernandez P.A. identified a number of district accomplishments in student transportation, some of which are included in Exhibit 12-1 below.

Exhibit 12-1

The District Had a Number of Notable Accomplishments in Student Transportation in the Past Two Years

- The district has implemented an automated routing system to improve the complex routing and scheduling needed to transport students in the school of choice program.
 - The district has reduced the number of courtesy riders.
 - The district has effective safety and training practices, which have resulted in comparatively low accident rates.
 - The district has cost-effective fuel procurement practices while its automated fueling system has resulted in enhanced fuel management.
 - The vehicle maintenance operation has taken steps to reduce costs by outsourcing many maintenance and repairs that can be performed more cost-effectively by outside contractors than by in-house staff.
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found:

Safety and Operational Efficiency

1. The district's efforts to ensure the safety of bus routes are generally effective, although efforts to ensure cost efficiencies in school bus routing are not. (Page 12-10)

Student Transportation

2. The district has established strategies to deal with unexpected contingencies, which promote safety and prompt response. However, district policies and administrative guidelines for activity trips need to be revised. (Page 12-28)
3. The district effectively and efficiently recruits and retains the bus drivers and attendants it needs. (Page 12-33)
4. The district trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers to enable them to meet bus-driving standards and maintain acceptable student discipline on buses. (Page 12-36)
5. The district coordinates transportation for exceptional students minimizing hardships to the students, and accurately reports exceptional students transported. (Page 12-38)
6. The district responds promptly and appropriately to all accidents. (Page 12-42)
7. The district ensures that appropriate student behavior is maintained on its buses at all times. (Page 12-44)

Acquisition and Maintenance of School Buses

8. The district has more school buses than it needs, and does not have an adequate, cost-efficient replacement policy. (Page 12-44)
9. The district provides timely routine service for buses and other district vehicles, as well as prompt response for breakdowns and other contingencies. (Page 12-51)
10. The district ensures that fuel purchases are cost-effective and that school buses and other vehicles are efficiently refueled. (Page 12-52)
11. The district maintains facilities that are conveniently situated to support vehicle maintenance and other student transportation functions. However, some facilities are inadequate for efficient maintenance operations. (Page 12-55)
12. The district maintains effective vehicle maintenance staffing levels and provides skills-training support for maintenance personnel. (Page 12-58)
13. The district maintains the inventories of parts, supplies, and equipment needed to support student transportation functions, balancing immediate need and inventory costs. (Page 12-61)

Management Oversight and Accountability

14. The technological and computer support for student transportation has improved significantly, but management oversight and efficiencies could also be improved. (Page 12-63)
15. The district has not established benchmarks needed to introduce a student transportation accountability system. (Page 12-65)
16. The district does not adequately coordinate long-term planning and budgeting for student transportation. (Page 12-68)
17. The district monitors the fiscal condition of student transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and comparing them to the budget. (Page 12-70)
18. 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. (Page 12-71)
19. The district has not studied the advantages of privatizing some or all student transportation functions. (Page 12-71)
20. The district annually reviews the student transportation program's organizational structure and staffing levels, but administrative layers and processes need re-evaluation. (Page 12-72)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations

ValienteHernandez P.A. recommends nine action plans in the student transportation area that would have a fiscal impact on the district. If these recommendations are implemented, we anticipate that over the next five fiscal years the district will realize an additional \$12,516,100 savings, recovered costs and increased revenues. Other recommendations have been made that, when implemented, would have a beneficial fiscal impact for the district that cannot be estimated at this time. Our recommendations include:

- Eliminating unnecessary courtesy rides. We estimate this would save the district \$38,000 annually. (Action Plan 12-4)
- Restructuring the district's full-time and substitute bus driver ratios and wage structures. We estimate the district would save \$141,500 annually. (Action Plan 12-6)
- Developing a plan to increase bus occupancy, starting in the 2005-06 school year when the current court ordered system can be modified. We estimate the district could save \$3,874,400 annually, starting in the 2005-06 school year. (Action Plan 12-7)
- Charging school groups for field trips to recover the full cost of these trips. We estimate the Transportation Department could annually generate an additional \$292,000 in funding. (Action Plan 12-10)
- Collecting Medicaid reimbursement for the portion of costs associated with transporting exceptional students who are eligible for Medicaid and receiving medical services or treatments. We estimate the district would receive \$50,034 annually in additional net revenue. This projection considers the cost of employing a contractor charging 55% of the \$111,186 in revenue generated. (Action Plan 12-14)
- Reducing the spare bus ratio to 16% of established routes. We estimate the district would receive \$428,400 in a one-time cost recovery. (Action Plan 12-15)
- Selling 1988 special reserve buses at auction. We estimate the district would receive a one-time cost recovery of \$153,000 (Action Plan 12-15)
- Formalizing and adhering to a 12-year bus replacement policy. We estimate the district would save \$871,350 annually. (Action Plan 12-16)
- Reviewing current staffing levels of safety and training department, routing and scheduling unit, and regional transportation centers. Minimizing administrative layers and staffing levels could save the district \$433,166 annually (Action Plan 12-30)

Exhibit 12-2 shows the estimated fiscal impact of these recommendations.

Exhibit 12-2

Implementing the Recommendations For Student Transportation Will Have a Five-Year Fiscal Impact Of \$16,555,700 in Savings

Action Plan and Strategy		Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings/ Recovered Costs/Increased Revenues				
		Year 2002-03	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07
12-4	Eliminate unnecessary courtesy rides.	\$38,000	\$38,000	\$38,000	\$38,000	\$38,000
						Total
						\$190,000

		Fiscal Impact: Cost Savings/ Recovered Costs/Increased Revenues				
Action Plan and Strategy	Year 2002-03	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Total
12-6 Restructure the district's full-time and substitute bus driver ratios and wage structures	\$141,500	\$141,500	\$141,500	\$141,500	\$141,500	\$707,500
12-8 Develop a plan to increase bus occupancy, starting in the 2005-06 school year	-	-	-	\$3,874,400	\$3,874,400	\$7,748,800
12-10 Charge school groups for field trips to cover the full cost of the trip.	\$292,000	\$292,000	\$292,000	\$292,000	\$292,000	\$1,460,000
12-14 Pursue reimbursement from Medicaid for eligible transportation.	\$50,034	\$50,034	\$50,034	\$50,034	\$50,034	\$250,170
12-15 Reduce spare bus ratio to 16%	\$428,400	-	-	-	-	\$428,400
12-15 Sell 1988 special reserve buses in an auction	\$153,000	-	-	-	-	\$153,000
12-16 Formalize and Adhere to 12-year bus replacement policy	\$871,350	\$871,350	\$871,350	\$871,350	\$871,350	\$4,356,750
12-30 Possible savings from minimizing staffing levels	\$433,166	\$433,166	\$433,166	\$433,166	\$433,166	\$1,744,664
Total	\$2,407,450	\$1,826,050	\$1,826,050	\$5,700,450	\$5,700,450	\$17,460,450

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Background

Lee County, covering 803 square miles, is located in southwestern Gulf Coast of Florida. It is the tenth most populated Florida county and the third largest Florida county in district road demographics, totaling 4,854 miles. The district transports an average 55.58% of the enrolled student population, thus transporting the ninth largest student population in Florida. The School District of Lee County's transportation fleet is the seventh largest in Florida, maintaining 527 buses in daily service. The buses travel 12.6 million miles per year, or 75,000 miles per day, on an average school day.

Besides the county's size and coastal nature, the district's Transportation Department faces even more significant challenges and operational difficulties due to the implementation of the open enrollment or "school of choice" program.

Lee County uses what is commonly referred to as a controlled choice method of student assignment. Implemented during the 1998-99 school year, this is a plan to promote desegregation and achieve unitary status, and thereby comply with a court desegregation order. The school of choice program divides the county into three large geographic regions or choice zones. Existing and planned transportation networks, topographical constraints and efficient school groupings were considered in developing the choice boundaries. In accordance with Florida law and district policies, the school of choice plan requires all students to be provided with transportation within the boundaries of their choice zone. Additionally, transportation to multi-zone magnet schools is provided countywide. If a student moves from one zone to another and is granted a waiver for continuation of assignment in accordance with the school of choice plan, the child's parents must provide transportation to their assigned school or to an existing bus stop where space is available for the assigned school in that zone.

District policy requires that bus stops be provided to eligible students, in proximity to their residence, for all students within the following parameters:

- Elementary school – 0.5 miles
- Middle school – 1 mile
- High school – 1.5 miles

Florida law requires the school district to provide bus stops to all students requiring transportation within 1.5 miles of their residence.

The school of choice program has created the following operational difficulties and challenges for the district's Transportation Department:

- Increased transportation cost due to:
 - Adding bus routes to transport students to schools
 - Employing and training of additional bus operators to cover bus routes
 - Employing of additional departmental support staff to maintain complex routing functions, supervision and customer service functions
 - Purchasing and maintaining additional buses to cover bus routes
- Decreased state funding as average bus occupancy figures used in the state's allocation formula have declined

Exhibit 12-3 represents selected student transportation data for the district and five peer districts for the 2000-01 school year. Listed below are several conclusions that may be drawn from this data:

- Slightly more than half of the students in the district (32,434 of 58,351, or 55.58%) required student transportation services. This percentage ranks highest when compared with the five peer districts (which range from 37.22% to 52.09%).
- Although the number of students transported by the district was midrange in comparison to its peers, the district used significantly more buses and drove more miles compared to its peers. The ratio of school centers to number of buses serving the district was 7.75, which was significantly higher than all of the peer districts (which range from 3.22 to 5.61). This difference is due, in large part, to the current school of choice program instituted by the district, as more buses are needed to transport students to a school from any particular area without excessive ride times.

Student Transportation

- Student transportation staff as a percentage of all district staff was 12.72%, which was significantly higher than all of the peer districts (which range from 5.70% to 9.18%).
- Student transportation expenditures as a percentage of all district expenditures are 6.98%, which was significantly higher than all of the peer districts (which range from 3.63% to 5.25%). This difference is mainly due to the current school of choice program instituted by the district and to a lesser extent the result of several other factors including the size of the district, distribution of the population, services provided, percentage of students transported, and costs reported by each district. The student transportation expenditures as a percentage of all district expenditures is also the highest percentage for all mega districts and is well above the statewide average of 4.81%.
- The district has a lower percentage of its transportation cost funded by the state, as compared to peer districts, primarily because of the impact that the district's low bus occupancy has in the state funding formula calculations. As the table shows, only 48.90% of transportation costs are funded by the state, which was the lowest when compared to the five peer districts (which range from 54.57% to 85.16%).
- The district's transportation expenditure per student was \$775.29, which ranked the highest when compared with the five peer districts (which range from \$500.32 to \$683.57).
- The district's annualized per-mile operating expenditures were \$1.75, which ranked it the lowest compared with the five peer districts (which range from \$2.04 to \$2.82).

Exhibit 12-3

Comparative Student Transportation Data for Lee County and Peer Districts for 2000-01

Measure	Lee	Brevard	Volusia	Polk	Pasco	Seminole
Square Miles	803	995	1113	1823	738	298
Busing for desegregation	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Number of Students Enrolled	58,351	70,590	61,351	79,479	49,703	60,729
Number of Students Transported	32,434	26,277	23,639	41,403	25,461	24,771
Percentage of Students Transported	55.58%	37.22%	38.53%	52.09%	51.23%	40.79%
Number of School Centers Served	68	86	74	124	56	61
Number of Buses (Daily Service)	527	354	239	469	301	342
Ratio of number of school centers to number of school buses	7.75	4.11	3.22	3.78	5.38	5.61
Number of Annual Route Miles	12,633,902	6,360,082	5,118,042	6,394,199	5,927,101	7,552,914
Average bus occupancy	61.54	74.33	99.11	88.28	84.73	72.53
Number of Bus Maintenance Facilities	4	4	4	3	4	1
Number of Student Transportation Staff	803	489	457	745	499	582
Total of all District Staff	6,313	7,569	8,018	10,394	6,497	6,335
Percentage of Student Transportation Staff	12.72%	6.46%	5.70%	7.16%	7.68%	9.18%
State Allocation	12,296,794	9,934,804	9,982,121	17,640,272	10,970,916	9,240,776
Percentage of Student Transportation Funding by State	48.90%	66.08%	76.92%	85.16%	72.01%	54.57%
Student Transportation Operating Expenditures	22,080,888	12,960,001	11,477,529	18,001,323	13,356,634	15,784,094
Student Transportation Operating Expenditures per Annual Mile	1.75	2.04	2.24	2.82	2.25	2.09
Bus Purchases	3,064,799	2,074,145	1,499,792	2,713,575	1,879,107	1,148,579
All District Expenditures	360,479,648	396,542,134	357,506,864	476,709,747	290,200,558	335,492,153
Total Student Transportation Expenditure as a Percentage of Total District Expenditures	6.98%	3.79%	3.63%	4.44%	5.25%	5.05%
Student Transportation Expenditures Per Student	775.29	572.14	548.98	500.32	599.00	683.57

Source: Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles 2002, for 2000-2001. Department of Education Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2000-2001. ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

As Exhibit 12-4 shows, the impact of implementing the school of choice program since the 1998-99 school year has been significant. Operating expenses increased annually by 5-15% while a larger percentage of these costs were funded by the district. The district is also spending more of its budget on student transportation costs each year as total transportation expenditure as a percentage of all district expenditures increased from 5.76% to 6.98% over the past five years. If plans are not implemented to curb costs, the current trend is expected to continue, due to the current growth and expansion occurring in Lee County. The court desegregation order ends during the 2004-05 school year, thus any noticeable changes in transportation policies are only possible beginning with the 2005-06 school year.

Exhibit 12-4

Transportation Expenditures for the Last Five Years Have Increased

Item	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01
Operating expenditures	16,416,046	16,943,205	19,464,444	20,371,470	22,080,888
Total Expenditures	17,537,402	17,665,989	19,955,577	20,414,0561	25,145,687
Percentage Of All District Expenditures	5.78%	5.61%	5.94%	6.17%	6.98%
State Allocation	9,809,444	10,325,000	11,379,109	11,832,131	12,296,794
Percentage of Student Transportation Funding by State	59.76%	53.84%	58.46%	57.96%	48.90%
Average Bus Occupancy	56.70	55.76	56.24	62.99	61.54
Percentage increase in operating expenditures	10.18%	3.21%	14.88%	4.66%	8.39%

Source: Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles 2002, for 2000-2001, School District of Lee County

Exhibit 12-5

One-Fifth of Students Transported In Lee County Are For Special Programs

Category	Number transported per day	Percentage	Number of buses ¹	Number of runs	Average runs per bus	Average miles per run	Average minutes per run	Average cost per student per day	Total cost per day
Regular Students	30,175	80.0%	393	1,102	2.8	18	28	2.43	73,325
Magnet Students	4,018	10.6%	213	213	1	25	38	3.53	14,184
International Baccalaureate Gifted Students	2,058	5.4%	296	296	1	17	28	9.59	19,736
Exceptional Students	1,051	2.7%	110	199	1.8	20	31	22.09	23,217
Alternative Education Students	490	1.3%	41	41	1	31	45	5.58	2,734
Total	37,792	100%	1,053	1,851	1.52	22.2	34	8.64	133,196

¹ These are the amount of buses used per category. Buses can be used to transport more than one category.

Source: School District of Lee County 2002/2003

As Exhibit 12-5 shows, the district currently transports more than 37,000 students. Four out of every five students are transported either because they live more than two miles from their schools, or because they are elementary students who, if required to walk to school, would encounter certain state-defined hazards (and who are termed “regular students” under Florida law). In addition, 13.3% of students are transported

Student Transportation

because they participate in either Magnet Programs or Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs. The district also transports vocational students, alternative education students and gifted students.

As shown in Exhibit 12-5, regular students transported in the school of choice program account for 55% of the total cost of daily transportation, although they constitute 80% of the total daily riders. The transportation of students participating in magnet school programs accounts for 11% of the district's total daily transportation expenditure. The cost of transporting a magnet school student is \$3.53 per day, which is higher than the cost of transporting regular students. This is because most magnet schools are countywide and transportation is provided across zones. The transportation of international baccalaureate gifted students account for 15% of total daily expenditures. Considering that only 5.4% of the total daily transported students are international baccalaureate gifted students, the cost of transporting these students is very high. An average of only seven gifted students is transported to their schools per bus.

The district had an operating budget of approximately \$21 million for student transportation services during the 2001-02 school year with an additional \$3.2 million allocated for school bus purchases. See Exhibit 12-6 for more details on the 2000-01 and 2001-02 Student Transportation Services budget and actual expenditures.

Exhibit 12-6

The District's Student Transportation Expenditures For 2000-01 And Budget For 2001-02

	Expenditures 2000-01	Budget 2001-02
Student transportation operations	\$ 22,080,889	\$ 20,869,767
School bus purchases	3,064,799	3,234,750
Total Student Transportation	\$ 25,145,688	\$ 24,104,517

Source: Q-Link: *Florida School District Transportation Profiles 2002*, for 2000-2001, School District of Lee County.

Organization of the transportation function

Organizationally, the director of transportation reports to the assistant superintendent for Operational Support Services. As illustrated in Exhibit 12-7, the director of transportation oversees five major functional areas: Safety and Training Operations, Garage Operations, Payroll and Administration, Routing and Scheduling Operations, and Regional Operations.

Safety and Training Operations are led by the supervisor for Safety and Training, who oversees three Road Safety Supervisors as well as a Safety Coordinator and Trainer. The main activities performed by Safety and Training personnel include hiring, training and managing bus drivers and implementing the safe driver program.

Garage Operations are led by the supervisor for Garage Operations, who oversees the activities in the four regional maintenance facilities. Four regional service shop foremen supervise a total staff complement of 46 consisting of chief mechanics, mechanics, service mechanics and custodians. A centrally located parts and supply depot disburses parts and supplies to the four regional parts and supply storage offices, each staffed with a store clerk. The Foreman for Shipping and Receiving reports to the supervisor for Garage Operations and supervises two stock control specialists at the central depot and the regional parts and supply storage. Garage Operations is responsible for maintaining and repairing the more than 800 buses owned by the district, the district's support vehicles and all other district small engine equipment.

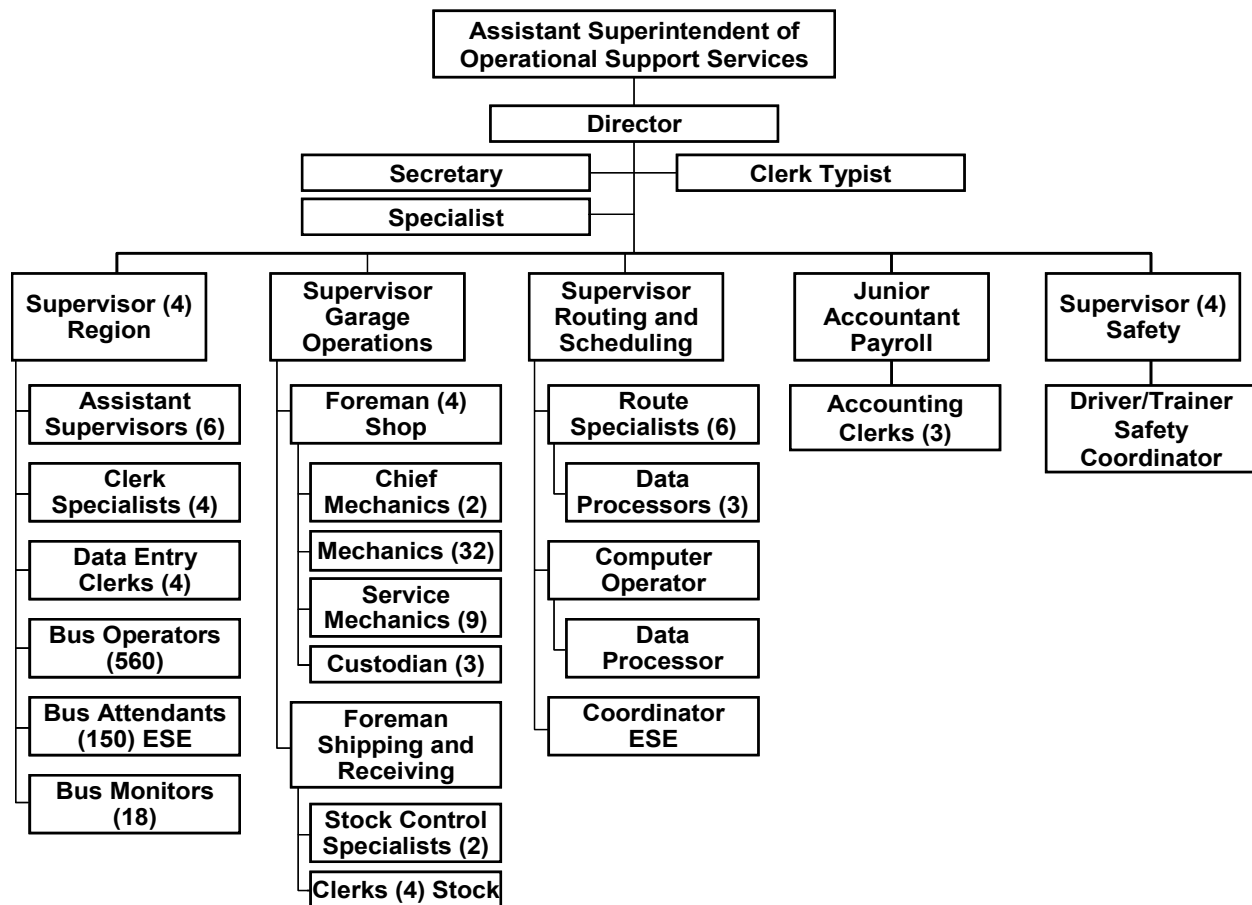
Payroll and Administration is headed by the junior accountant for payroll, who oversees three accounting clerks. The purpose of this function is to account for the salaries, wages and regulatory expenses of the 832 transportation employees.

Routing and Scheduling Operations are centralized and headed by a supervisor who oversees four route specialists, a computer operator, and the ESE coordinator. The route specialists are assigned to four geographic areas: north, south, central and east. The route specialists are assisted by three regional data processors located at the north, south and central regional offices. The route specialists and data processors are responsible for coordinating and creating the current 516 bus routes. The ESE coordinator supervises two route specialists, who deal exclusively with ESE student transportation.

Regional Operations are organized into four decentralized units: the north, east, south and central transportation centers. Each transportation center is managed by a transportation supervisor who is assisted by one or two assistant supervisors to oversee the daily dispatching of school buses, monitoring of bus routes, responding to and coordinating bus operators and attendants, and communicating with schools. The offices also coordinate efforts for field trips and extracurricular activities.

Exhibit 12-7

Organizational Chart of Transportation Services



Source: School District of Lee County (obtained from administrators at district headquarters).

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed the district's student transportation operations using the Best Financial Management Practices and associated performance indicators developed by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) as adopted by the State Commissioner of Education. ValienteHernandez P.A. used a number of methodologies to develop chapter conclusions and

action plans. For instance, consultants conducted on-site visits and interviews with School District of Lee County transportation staff at many levels and locations, and gathered and reviewed documentation of their activities. The consultants held a teacher and a principal focus group discussion about their views and experiences with the district's pupil transportation operations. The results of these interviews were supplemented by the results of a survey distributed to district teachers and principals. The consultants also received input from parents and other citizens on transportation issues during a public forum. Additionally, Lee County community input was secured through a telephone hotline coordinated by OPPAGA and the consultants, and advertised on the district's Web site. These inquiries and observations were supported by an analysis of district records and supporting documentation.

Safe and Efficient System

1 The district's efforts to ensure the safety of bus routes are generally effective, although efforts to ensure cost efficiencies in school bus routing are not.

Transportation staff reviews safety of all new bus routes and stops

Road safety supervisors review safety at bus stops and loading zones, and when a safety hazard or other problem is identified, change bus stops, re-route buses, or take other appropriate corrective action considered necessary. All safety reviews are documented and substantiated with digital pictures of the scene. This review considers several factors affecting student safety, including:

- presence and condition of local walkways
- condition and size of the street
- traffic intensity in the area

No formal schedule or systematic approach is used to evaluate existing bus stops every year. Reviews of existing bus routes are initiated by parental complaints or ad hoc requests by safety department supervisors and drivers. Route planning staff and safety representatives react promptly to all complaints and suggestions of concerned drivers, parents and the general public regarding placement of bus stops, safety issues and driver behavior.

The route supervisor and safety supervisors personally review all walking areas within two miles of schools on a quarterly basis according to criteria set by FTE for hazardous walking. The district works with other local governmental agencies to mitigate hazardous conditions. The following hazardous walking areas have been cleared due to the districts efforts:

- Hancock Bridge Parkway – City of Cape Coral added guided sidewalks and fixed bridges
- Crossing Ortiz Avenue – Crossing guards were added

The department uses an automated routing system that creates and updates routes within the limitations of the approved school of choice plan

The department uses a computerized mapping program called Mapnet NT. This program functions as a database that includes current information on student profiles, residences, existing bus stops and routes, mileage, expected time of travel, schools and hazardous areas.

Route planning staff uses a systematic approach to create bus routes every year. The automated system generates detailed student bus route maps and automatically plots the bus routes that are the most cost-efficient means of transporting students to a particular school on a school-by-school basis. Overlapping routes are identified and eliminated during “master-building” of routes, which is conducted by route planning staff, regional supervisors and the director of transportation on an annual basis.

The Mapnet NT system has an ‘auto routing’ function that can flag overlapping routes however the current software cannot handle routes when an area, such as Lee County, has a lot of channels and rivers. An improved software update is expected in November 2002, and thereafter the district expects to use this function after adequate training. Using this function would improve the efficiency of routing and scheduling, make better use of existing staff, and could yield additional cost savings.

Requests for new routes and bus stop locations are placed at the school of choice office or Routing Department. Bus routes are updated during the year as changes are approved. The mandatory school of choice program allows students to change schools twice a year, and this increases the call for new routes and bus stops. Additionally, requests are received from parents who have moved or want bus stops closer to their residence. So many change requests are received every month that the Routing Department is hard-pressed to deal with them all in accordance to district policies. ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed requests received from the school of choice office indicating that the Routing Department received an average of 66 change requests per month. While no log exists for requests placed directly to the Routing Department, the routing supervisor estimates that an additional 300 requests are received at the department per month. Fortunately, the automated mapping system helps process change requests by analyzing the most cost-effective and cost-efficient routes and bus stops.

The route planning staff prepares report summaries of all routes at the start of the year, as well as at the time of route changes. These reports show the exact location and time of the stop, hazardous areas, and the number of students to be picked up. Regional routing staff ensures that all dispatchers, bus operators, substitute bus operators and schools receive the latest schedules and maps.

Despite major reductions in courtesy riders over the past five years, the district continues to provide service to many courtesy students contrary to established and communicated policies

The district has established policies to govern student eligibility for bus transportation. The Lee County School Board has established policy AR3.60 part 1 (c), which states:

- All students living within the District or who are assigned to a school in accordance with cooperative agreements and who live two (2) miles or more from their assigned school are eligible for transportation to and from school. The following conditions apply:
 - The most direct traveled route measures the two-mile distance to and from the school. Such distance shall be measured from the closest pedestrian entry point of the assigned school building. The pedestrian entry point of the residence shall be where private property meets the public right-of-way. The District shall determine the shortest pedestrian route whether or not it is accessible to motor vehicle traffic.

Although the district had publicly announced that courtesy busing would be eliminated after August 30, 2001, courtesy students are still transported to schools. However, as Exhibit 12-8 illustrates, the district has drastically reduced the transportation of courtesy students over the past five years. At the same time, as shown in Exhibit 12-9, courtesy riders constitute 4.02% of all students transported, which places the district fourth highest among the six peer group districts considered.

The district receives no state funding for courtesy riders thus, the district bears 100% of the cost. It is the district’s position that courtesy riders are transported on as space available basis on an existing route and that this does not significantly add to transportation cost. ValienteHernandez P.A. found that, as at June

Student Transportation

2002, the West Zone had 37 additional bus stops to accommodate these courtesy riders. Transporting courtesy students adds to transportation costs during the life cycle of a bus as parts wear and tear increases when a bus makes additional stops. Additionally, by providing courtesy ridership, ride times increase.

Assuming that a bus makes an average of 15 stops per day, that the average cost of a making a stop is 32 cents, and that South and East Choice Zones also have 37 additional bus stops each, the approximate annual cost of transporting courtesy students are \$38,000.^{1,2} Discontinuing bus service to students who could walk to school could save the district \$190,000 in the next five years as illustrated in Exhibit 12-10.

Exhibit 12-8

Lee County Has Reduced the Transportation of Courtesy Riders Over the Last Five Years

	October/ February 1996-97	October/ February 1997-98	October/ February 1998-99	October/ February 1999-00	October 2001	February 2002
Number of Courtesy Students Riding Bus	3,416	2,604	2,006	2,753	1,141	1,520

Source: Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 DOE, School District of Lee County.

Exhibit 12-9

Despite Reductions, Lee County Still Has Many Courtesy Riders

	Lee	Brevard	Volusia	Polk	Pasco	Seminole	Peer District Average
Total Number Riding Bus	37,792	26,276	23,639	41,403	25,461	24,771	28,310
Number of Courtesy Students Riding Bus	1,520	1,055	477	1,801	1,956	3,436	1,745
Courtesy Students as a Percentage of All Bus Riders	4.02%	3.86%	1.98%	4.17%	7.13%	12.18%	6.16%

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations, School District of Lee County and Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles, 2002, for 2000-2001, DOE.

Exhibit 12-10

Discontinuing Bus Service to Students Who Could Walk To School Could Save the District \$190,000 in the Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Savings	\$38,000	\$38,000	\$38,000	\$38,000	\$38,000
Cumulative Cost Savings	\$38,000	\$76,000	\$114,000	\$152,000	\$190,000

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

¹ \$451,741 (2001 total parts cost – School District of Lee County) / 527 buses in daily service (Q-link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles 2002, for 2000-2001) x 15 stops per day (assumption) x 180 days (assumption) = 32 cents per stop.

² 37 bus stops x 3 Choice zones x 3 tiers x 2 (pick up and drop-off) x 32 cents per stop x 180 days = \$38,362.

The district's transportation operation is comparatively inefficient, in large part because the school choice program limits efforts to increase bus occupancy

As part of the district's efforts to ensure operational efficiency, Lee County has established staggered school start/close times, thus enabling buses to run multiple routes each day. This enhances the use of district buses and increases the efficiency of bus routing. The district changed from a modified three-tier system to a two-tier system in July 2002. With the modified three-tier staggered system, approximately one-third of the buses made three separate runs per day, one-third made two runs and the other third made one run. The following schedules were consistent throughout the district, within certain time frames:

- High schools generally begin from 7:10 AM to 7:20 AM and dismiss from 2:00 PM to 2:15 PM.
- Elementary schools generally begin from 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM and dismiss from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM.
- Middle schools generally start from 9:30 AM to 9:45 AM and dismiss from 3:45 PM to 4:00 PM

Average bus occupancy is a measure of how many students ride a bus daily. It is recognized as a standard measure, both in Florida and across the nation, of the relative efficiency of student transportation operations. The more efficiently a transportation department is managed, the greater number of students will be accommodated on a given bus and the fewer number of buses the district will need. Thus, fewer buses will be purchased, fewer drivers are needed, and fewer vehicle maintenance and support staff hours are needed. Therefore, average bus occupancy is a direct reflection of how efficiently a transportation department is managing its operations.

Bus occupancy is not only indicative of the number of buses and drivers required for transporting students, it also affects the state funding the district receives for student transportation. The Department of Education, school transportation management section estimates that for each increase or decrease of 3.3 students in the average bus occupancy, state funding is changed by 1%.

As shown in Exhibit 12-11, the district has the lowest average bus occupancy compared to its peer districts, making it the 30th lowest in the state.

The reasons for the district's low bus occupancy are two-fold: the demographics of Lee County and the school of choice plan. As mentioned, Lee County covers 803 square miles, (including three islands) divided into three large geographic or "choice" zones. The school of choice plan requires the Transportation Department to provide transportation to 37,434 students (see Exhibit 12-5) to and from disparate locations. Approximately 80% of these students are transported to schools within their assigned zones, while approximately 20% of the students are transported to countywide school programs (multi-zone magnet schools, international baccalaureate schools and ESE student centers). The district uses 393 buses to transport 30,175 students within their assigned zones, which is an average occupancy of 76.78 students per bus (see Exhibit 12-5). The district also uses 296 buses to transport 4,018 magnet school students and 2,058 international baccalaureate students to countywide magnet schools, which is an average occupancy of 20.53 students per bus.

Exhibit 12-11

**Lee County Public Schools Average Bus Occupancy
Is the Lowest Among Peer Districts**

	Lee	Brevard	Volusia	Polk	Pasco	Seminole	Peer District Average
Bus Occupancy Rate	61.54	74.33	99.11	88.28	84.73	72.53	83.80

Source: Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles, 2002, for 2000-2001, Department of Education.

Student Transportation

The school of choice plan was approved by a court order and will therefore only come up for review during the 2005-06 school year once the court order ends.³ This does not leave the Transportation Department many options to implement cost savings in the short term.

The district introduced the two-tier system both to alleviate the high transportation costs, associated with the current school of choice plan, as well as to reduce the ride times of students.⁴ In March 2002, the Lee County School Board approved this two-tier system by approving the change in the bell time of schools, so that middle and high school students are transported on the same tier. In arriving at that plan, the district conducted a cost-benefit analysis as of February 2002, and a feasibility study with input from parents, students, teachers and other district staff. These efforts suggested savings of approximately \$1.4 million a year. As of September 2002, the district cannot make a reliable estimation on whether the projected March 2002 savings are attainable due to several factors included in the calculation that have changed.

The district's original projections were that, by transporting middle and high school students on the same tier, bus driver's cumulative daily route times would be reduced. This would result in a reduced overtime wages paid to bus drivers by limiting the average workday to seven hours. Under the modified three-tier system, approximately 50% of bus operators had cumulative route time of over 8 hours. This was the result of buses making multiple daily runs and approximately 30% of buses having ride times of between 60 and 90 minutes per run. The total bus driver and attendant overtime expense, incurred by the Transportation Department, for the 2002 school year, amounted to \$1,402,246.⁵

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the longer ride times and higher overtime amounts are mainly caused by the countywide magnet programs. The magnet programs also result in:

- The district's student transportation department receiving less state funding, because the lower ridership in magnet buses diminishes the district's overall bus occupancy
- Additional costs, because 40.4% of the total daily buses in service are used to transport magnet students

Although the district, as of March 2002, estimated that it would eliminate 10 magnet school bus routes by introducing the two-tier system, it also estimated that 29 regular routes would have to be added in order to transport middle and high school students on the same tier. This amounted to a net gain of 19 buses and bus drivers to cover the additional new routes. Although the district had included the cost of these additions in arriving at the \$1.4 million savings, as of March 2002, ValienteHernandez P.A. recommends the district reassess the cost-benefit and feasibility of the approved two-tier plan because:

- The district estimated gross savings of approximately \$2.3 million (before cost additions from routes and drivers) based on the calculated savings of limiting drivers' cumulative daily route times to a 7-hour day. However, the savings were calculated using the highest pay roll of the year and then projected over the whole school year.⁶ ValienteHernandez P.A. recalculated gross savings of all the pay periods and found that limiting bus driver's cumulative daily route times to 7 hours would only realize \$1,707,252 in gross savings.^{7,8}

³ The district has assigned the responsibility to review student assignment policies to a student assignment task force.

⁴ Exhibit 12-4 indicates the rise of transportation expenditure due to the implementation of the school of choice plan in school year 2000-01.

⁵ Based on a eight-hour workday.

⁶ A school year consists of 20 pay periods.

⁷ Using all district pay rolls and on the same assumptions used by the district.

⁸ This figure was calculated over all 20 pay periods for the 2001/ 2002 school year, and is before cost additions and drivers.

- The district added 37 additional routes and driver positions, 18 above the original estimate of 19 routes and driver positions, in the June 2003 school year to accommodate the two-tier system. These additions resulted in a further decrease of \$428,400 in estimated savings.⁹
- On the two-tier system elementary school students are transported on the first tier. Initially some elementary school students would have had to be at their bus stops at 05:30AM-06:00 AM, which could have compromised students' safety. During August 2002, the school board decided that all elementary school start time would be moved to ensure that all students would not be picked up before 06:00 AM.¹⁰ This effectively reduces the buses' turnaround time to 55 minutes. The original cost savings were based on an optimum turnaround time of 90 minutes. When turnaround time for buses is reduced; additional routes, drivers and buses will have to be added. The director of transportation estimates this 35 minute reduction in turnaround time requires that an additional 20 routes and drivers will have to be added, which would result in a further decrease of \$476,000 in estimated savings.¹¹ Additionally the district
- The plan's effect on the district's average bus occupancy, and therefore receipt of state funding, was not included in the initial cost-benefit analysis. If 37 buses are added to accommodate the same number of students, the overall bus occupancy of the district will diminish by 6.47, which equates to a funding loss of approximately \$241,000 per year from the state.^{12, 13}
- The parent and teacher survey conducted by the district was quick and the response received was insignificant to draw any conclusions.¹⁴ A teacher forum, held June 2002, indicated that all the teachers present were opposed to having the elementary school students on the first tier. This finding is also supported by the results of a teacher survey, held in June 2002, conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A. in which fewer than three in 10 survey respondents (24.3%) "strongly agree" that transporting elementary school students on the first tier will have a positive effect on learning. Moreover, slightly more than four in 10 respondents (46.8%) "strongly disagree" with that statement.
- The savings are based on the district's full-time and substitute bus driver and attendant staff ratios, as well as the current excessive spare bus ratio. In the long-term, the two-tier system will compound the addition of routes to cope with the growth in student populations in the district. Although the district currently has an excessive spare bus ratio that can accommodate the increase in routes within the short term, these buses will have to be replaced in the future, which will result in additional capital expenditure. Generally, capital outlays play a much larger role in a transportation department's budget than overtime costs. Replacing these buses will require an additional capital outlay of approximately \$179,110 per year over the next five years.¹⁵
- The district could realize greater savings by implementing transfer points or "corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing" for magnet programs and transportation to and from remote areas.
- Overtime costs incurred on activity trips are not adequately recouped from the schools, thereby further eroding the Transportation Department's income and expenditure position.
- The cost benefit analysis did not include an analysis of the two-tier system over a 5-year fiscal period, or the long-term effects of introducing the system. Factors such as student growth, increases in costs of buses and future state funding were not considered.

⁹ Salary costs for additional 18 drivers: 18 drivers x \$17,000 average salary per annum x 140 % benefits = \$428,400.

¹⁰ A petition with 10,000 parent signatures were delivered to the school board in objection to the school start times for elementary school students.

¹¹ Salary costs for additional 20 drivers: 20 drivers x \$17,000 average salary per annum x 140 % benefits = \$476,000.

¹² Current bus occupancy is approximately 37,000/518 bus routes = 71.42; Projected bus occupancy is 37,000/570 routes = 64.94 This equates to a loss of 6.47 bus occupancy.

¹³ $6.47/3.3 = 1.96\% \times \$12,296,794$ (2001 state funding – Exhibit 12-3) = \$241,190.

¹⁴ The survey was conducted in February 2002 and the board decision was taken in March 2002.

¹⁵ 37 buses over 12 year replacement cycle = 3.08 buses x \$58,090 (average purchase price per bus in previous purchasing cycle) = \$179,110.

Full-time operations staff vs. substitute drivers

As Exhibit 12-12 illustrates, the district has long used full-time bus operators for its regular bus routes and to cover unexpected absenteeism, breakdowns and accidents. During the 2000-01 school year the district had 574 full-time bus operators and 527 buses in daily service. During the 2001-02 school year, the district had 561 full-time bus operators, 29 substitute drivers (TBU – “trained but unassigned regulars”) and 518 routes. This equates to an extra 43 full-time bus operators and 29 substitute drivers (TBU – “trained but unassigned regulars”) that cover routes for unexpected absenteeism, breakdowns and accidents.¹⁶ Full-time employed bus drivers earn benefits and are guaranteed six hours pay each day. Substitute drivers do not receive benefits, but are guaranteed four hours pay. When substitute drivers are not required to cover a route for absences, they are assigned to other support tasks. The district however believes that substitute drivers are used to full capacity as they are experiencing high absenteeism rates of 18%-21%. Transportation staff believes that the high absenteeism rate is a result the district not having an attendance incentive program.

Exhibit 12-12

The District Uses Full-Time Operations Staff to Cover Unexpected Vacant Routes (in Ascending Order)

School District	Substitute Drivers			Bus Attendants		Total Drivers,	Buses in Daily Service	Full-Time Drivers in Excess of Buses in Daily Service
	Drivers	Number	Percentage of Drivers	Number	Percentage of Drivers	Substitutes and Attendants		
Volusia	242	25	10.33%	125	51.65%	392	239	3
Pasco	298	38	12.75%	83	27.85%	419	301	-3
Brevard	368	48	13.04%	3	0.81%	419	354	14
Seminole	388	38	9.79%	91	23.45%	517	342	46
Polk	472	81	17.16%	106	22.46%	659	469	3
Lee	574	6	1.05%	123	21.43%	703	527	47
Peer Average	354	46	12.99%	82	23.16%	238	341	13

Source: Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles, 2002, for 2000-2001; DOE; and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

ValienteHernandez P.A. believes that the department’s operation staff ratios and pay structures could be restructured as follows:

- 518 full-time employed bus operators covering the district’s 518 bus routes
- 10 full-time employed substitute drivers (two regular substitute drivers per zone), receiving 4 hours guaranteed pay per day, to cover last minute unexpected absences, breakdowns and accidents
- As many substitute drivers that are on call as the district can employ
- Implementing an attendance incentive program for full-time bus operators, whereby they would receive \$100 per quarter and \$500 at the end of the year for perfect attendance¹⁷

As a result of this restructuring, the district can expect to save approximately \$141,500 annually¹⁸

¹⁶ 561 Full-time bus operators covering 518 bus routes.

¹⁷ The director of transportation has indicated that \$180,000 should be sufficient to implement such a program.

¹⁸ Assuming a 180-day school year, \$9.40 per hour for bus drivers and substitutes, 40% benefit package for full-time bus drivers, 10% absenteeism rate after incentive attendance program. Restructuring so that there are 518 full-time bus drivers to cover 518 routes and 20 full-time substitutes would result in the following annual savings:

Exhibit 12-13**Restructuring the District's Full-Time and Substitute Bus Driver Ratios and Wage Structures Could Save the District \$707,500 in the Next Five Years**

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Savings	\$141,500	\$141,500	\$141,500	\$141,500	\$141,500
Cumulative Cost Savings	\$141,500	\$283,000	\$424,500	\$566,000	\$707,500

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Transfer points and “corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing” could improve magnet school transportation efficiency

The district has assigned the responsibility to review student assignment policies and transportation policies in view of the 2005-06 school year, to a student assignment task force. New policies may only be implemented during the 2005-06 school year, after a court order ends. The student assignment task force recommendations are expected in October 2003.

As mentioned, a district's bus occupancy generally indicates how cost-effectively its students are being transported. The School District of Lee County provides transportation to approximately 4,018 magnet school students and 2,058 international baccalaureate students on a countywide basis. The district uses 296 buses to transport these students, which equates to an average bus occupancy of 20.53 per bus (Exhibit 12-14). The low bus occupancy indicates that these programs are very costly to the district.

A transfer point system can be very effective in transporting students to and from disparate locations. Under the current discrete routing system, magnet school and international baccalaureate school buses are sent to a geographical area to only pick up students needing transportation to a particular magnet or international baccalaureate school. Thus, several buses are sent to that area if the students need to go to different magnet or international baccalaureate schools. With a transfer-point system, all students are picked up by a bus and transported to a central transfer point.¹⁹ From here, students are grouped by school and transferred to buses going to their schools.^{20, 21} Thus, a larger area can be served by fewer buses.

The district has previously used a transfer program, but stated that the transfer-point system was abandoned due to problems supervising students at transfer points on non-school property. *Florida Statutes*, 1003.21, requires students be supervised while being transported. Responsibility is generally placed on school principals, but district school boards have rule making authority on this matter. We believe supervision can be successfully performed using qualified transportation personnel, school support staff or staff employed by a school's before/after school program.

Several counties use transfer-point systems to transport students in the public school system in the State of Florida. ValienteHernandez P.A. sent questionnaires to all 67 school districts in Florida and from the 36 responses received, 16 school districts utilized a transfer point system to transport students to

- 561-518=43 full-time positions; results in savings of \$611,150 (\$9.40 x 6 hours x 140% benefits x 180 days x 43 bus drivers)
- 29-20= 9 full-time substitutes; results in savings of \$60,912 (\$9.40 x 4 hours x 180 days x 9 substitute drivers)
- Daily unexpected absenteeism at 10% will now cost \$350,582 (518 routes x 10% absenteeism x \$9.40 x 4 hours x 180 days)
- An annual incentive attendance program is expected to cost \$180,000

Net savings = \$611,150+\$60,912-\$350,582-\$180,000 = \$141,480

¹⁹ The amount of buses used depends solely on the capacity of the bus and the number of students to be picked up in that particular area.

²⁰ School ground or other district owned property.

²¹ A transfer time is established and all buses transfer at the same time within a specified timeframe.

Student Transportation

countywide schools. Hillsborough County has one of the largest and most successful transfer-point magnet programs in Florida, with its program having worked successfully for at least eight years. Hillsborough County believes that the transfer-points model is the most cost effective and efficient way of transporting such a large volume of students in countywide programs.

In Lee County, 9 of 11 magnet schools are centrally located and in close proximity.²² This facilitates the use of transfer points as they can be set up close to the surrounding perimeter. Lee County's magnet and international baccalaureate programs include six elementary schools, three middle schools and two high schools. ValienteHernandez P.A. studied the routes and number of students transported from outlying areas in the magnet and international baccalaureate programs of Cypress Lake High School and Ft Myers High School, and found that the district would be able to reduce several buses, if transfer-points were used. For instance as of September 2002:

- The district uses three buses to transport 82 students to and from the Cape Coral Area between Veteran's Parkway and Pine Island Road, and Ft Myers High School, and another two buses to transport 54 students from the same area to Cypress Lake High School. The district also uses four buses to transport 103 students to and from the Cape Coral Area south of Veteran's Parkway, and Ft Myers High School, and another two buses to transport 78 students from the same area to Cypress Lake High School.

Assuming type C buses (65 passenger capacity) buses are used, the district would be able to use only 8 buses to transport students to and from a transfer points and the schools. This would equate to a reduction of three buses and therefore substantial cost savings. All eight buses would be used to round up students to the transfer point. After the transfer, five buses would transport 185 students to Fort Myers High School and the other three buses transport 132 students to Cypress Lake High School.^{23, 24}

- The district uses four buses to transport 104 students to and from the Lee High Acres area and Ft Myers High School, and another two buses to transport 38 students from the same area to Cypress Lake High School.

Assuming type C buses and one type D (75 passenger bus) bus are used, the district would be able to use only three buses to transport students to and from a transfer point and the schools. This would equate to a reduction of three buses and therefore substantial cost savings. All three buses would be used to round up students to the transfer point. After the transfer, one type C and one type D bus would transport 104 students to Fort Myers High School and the other bus transport 38 students to Cypress Lake High School.²⁵

When the transfer-time, scheduling and supervision of transfer point are adequately monitored a transfer-point system can also be very efficient in reducing the ride times of routes to disparate areas.²⁶

"Corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing" is also an effective method of transporting students in countywide programs. Under such a program, central pick-up points are set and parents transport their children to and from these bus stops. Escambia County implemented "corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing" in the 2001-02 school year and estimates that they saved approximately \$963,000 in the first year. These savings were due to the reduction of 11 buses from daily service and substantial elimination of driver's overtime. Savings in overtime wages culminated from reductions in cumulative daily route times of bus drivers and bus ride times. Escambia County also believes that "corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing" is a sound savings

²² Surrounding Dr Martin Luther King Road and Ortiz Avenue.

²³ 185 students with five buses = 37 average bus occupancy.

²⁴ 132 students with three buses = 44 average bus occupancy.

²⁵ 59 students in the Type D bus & 45 students in the type C bus = average bus occupancy of 52.

²⁶ Hillsborough County schedules transfers to a 7-minute time limit.

model, as the addition of buses in periods of growth, is more than offset by the reduction in miles, hours and fuel relative to a district-wide discrete route system.

Exhibit 12-14, compares the ratio of students per bus of Lee County, Hillsborough County and Escambia County countywide programs. If it were possible for the district to attain the average bus occupancy of Hillsborough County and Escambia County, that is 36.45 students per magnet and international baccalaureate bus, the district would be able to use 167 buses to transport the same number of students. This district would therefore be able to reduce their buses by 129 buses in daily service.²⁷

Exhibit 12-14

Students Transported and Number of Buses Used In Magnet and International Baccalaureate Programs of Lee County, Hillsborough County and Escambia County

School District	Students Transported in Magnet Program and International Baccalaureate Programs	Buses Used in Programs	Ratio of Students Per Bus
Lee	6,076	296	20.53
Hillsborough	7371	201	36.67
Escambia	758	22	34.45
Totals (2) and Average	8129	223	36.45

Source: District questionnaires and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Due to a court order, the district will have to continue providing countywide transportation to magnet and international baccalaureate students from bus stops located no more than 0.5 to 1.5 miles from their residence to their assigned choice school until the 2005-06 school year. As transportation under a “Corridor/ Arterial/ Trunk routing” system is from central pick-up points, this system can only be implemented beginning with the 2005-06 school year. A transfer-point system can be implemented before the 2005-06 school year, as it is allowable under the current school of choice plan.

We recommend that the district evaluate the feasibility and cost savings of both the transfer-point system and “Corridor/ Arterial/ Trunk routing” system for transportation of magnet school and international baccalaureate school students in countywide programs.

By increasing the magnet school and international baccalaureate bus occupancy, the district could reduce the number of bus routes operated, which would reduce the number of buses needed, number of drivers needed, and reduce maintenance and fuel costs. This would equate to an approximate reduction in annual operating costs of \$3,293,400 estimated as follows:

- Wages \$2,444,600²⁸
- Wages of maintenance staff \$201,600²⁹

²⁷ 6,076 students/ 35.56 = 166.45 buses.

²⁸ Assuming a 180-day school year, average bus driver salary of \$9.40 per hour, benefit package of 40%; This equates to savings of approximately 129 drivers x \$9.40 x 8 hours x 1.40 x 180 days = \$2,444,601.

²⁹ Reduction of 129 buses indicates that, per current staffing levels, 10 mechanics will be considered redundant (129 buses / 12.25 (mechanic staff per bus in Exhibit 12-34) = 10.53 mechanic staff.

Assuming a 180-day school year, average mechanic starting wage salary of \$10 per hour, benefit package of 40% this equates to savings of approximately 10 mechanics x \$10 x 8 hours x 180 days x 1.40 = \$201,600.

Student Transportation

- Repairs, maintenance and parts \$109,800³⁰
- Fuel \$537,400³¹

Additionally, the reduction in the fleet would result in savings in the annual capital outlay cost as 129 buses less would have to be replaced over a 12-year replacement cycle, which equates to approximately 10 buses per year and an annual saving of approximately \$581,000.³²

In total, ValienteHernandez, P.A. believes that a minimal or conservative estimate of cost savings resulting from increased magnet school bus occupancy can save the district approximately \$3,874,400 annually in increased funding and cost efficiencies.

Exhibit 12-15

Developing a Plan to Increase Magnet School Bus Occupancy from the 2005-06 School Year Could Save the District \$7,748,800 in the Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Savings	-	-	-	\$3,874,400	\$3,874,400
Cumulative Cost Savings	-	-	-	\$3,874,400	\$7,748,800

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Review overall transportation policies and develop a plan to increase bus occupancy

As shown in Exhibit 12-4, transportation expenditures have increased by 5%--15% per year due to the implementation of the school of choice plan. A student assignment task force has been given the responsibility to evaluate and recommend possible student assignment policies during October 2003, in view of implementing these policies once the court oversight ends in the 2004-05 school year. However, these policies may only be implemented beginning in the 2005-06 school year. The district should consider options to increase overall average bus occupancy, thereby realizing increased state funding, reducing the number of bus routes operated, which would reduce the number of buses needed, and also reduce maintenance and fuel costs. The feasibility of some of the following options should be considered:

- Reducing the size of the choice zones
- Amending school bell schedules to increase bus turn around times
- Limiting the number of schools to which student may change during the school year
- Limiting transportation to magnet schools to within a choice of zones
- Requiring parents to transport or pay for transportation to magnet schools outside of choice zones
- Ensuring that each zone has sufficient magnet schools to serve the surrounding areas through long term planning
- Ensuring that each zone has sufficient ESE schools to serve the surrounding areas through long term planning

³⁰ According to the Elke Fleet Maintenance system the average parts cost per bus is approximately \$851 (\$451,741/ 527 buses) per annum, the cost savings are calculated as 129 buses x \$851 = \$109,779.

³¹ 129/ 527 buses x \$2,193,655 (Total motor fuel for 2001- *Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles*, 2002, for 2000-01; DOE) = \$537,445.

³² 10. buses x \$58,090 average purchase price of buses in previous purchase cycle = \$580,900.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district establish a formal, systematic approach to reviewing every bus stop every year, instead of only relying on complaints and requests from parents, the safety department, supervisors and drivers.*

Action Plan 12-1 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district provide MAPNET.NT training for routing specialists to make better use of existing resources.*

Action Plan 12-2 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district log all requests for bus stop changes, reasons for the request, as well as the changes made throughout the school year. This information can be used when existing policies are up for review.*

Action Plan 12-3 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district evaluate the use of courtesy bus service. This service should be discontinued unless courtesy riders can be accommodated on routes already being used to transport other students. Discontinuing the courtesy service to students who can walk to school, for example, could save approximately 190,000 annually (see Exhibit 12-10). If the reasons for transporting courtesy students are safety-related, a study should be done in conjunction with other governmental agencies (i.e. Florida Department of Transportation, Lee County government, the Sheriff's Office and other law enforcement agencies) to determine alternate solutions, such as additional crosswalks, sidewalks, and/or crossing guards. The district should complete this study by March 31, 2003, and submit it to the school board for approval by April 30, 2003. Public notices should be posted by May 31, 2003. The community should be notified by June 30, 2003, to allow a reasonable period for public input and parental concerns. Changes for the next school year should be decided by July 31, 2003, and be ready for implementation by the start of the next school year. This recommendation does not imply that the district should discontinue courtesy ridership in cases where no alternatives are available to address safety concerns.*

Action Plan 12-4 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district reassess the cost-benefit and feasibility of the two-tier system.*

Action Plan 12-5 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district reassess its current full-time bus operator and substitute bus driver ratios and wage structures, and implement a bus driver attendance incentive program.*

Action Plan 12-6 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend that the district evaluate the feasibility and cost savings of both the transfer-point system and "Corridor/ Arterial/ Trunk routing" transportation systems especially for county-wide programs such as magnet schools and school and international baccalaureate school student, with the goal of increasing bus occupancy in the 2005-06 school year..*

Action Plan 12-7 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district review school of choice policies within the continuing operational constraints, to develop a plan to increase overall bus occupancy starting in the 2005-06 school year.*

Action Plan 12-8 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 12-1

Develop a Formal and Systematic Approach to Review Every Bus Stop on an Annual Basis	
Strategy	Establish a formal schedule to evaluate the safety and hazardous conditions of existing bus stops. This schedule should include the review of each existing stop at least every 12 months.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation for setting standardized criteria and a formal schedule to review the safety of all existing bus stops. Step 2: The director of transportation, supervisor of safety and training, and the supervisor of routing and scheduling coordinate efforts to establish benchmarks to which bus stops should conform, criteria for evaluating the safety of bus stops, develop standardized forms to document reviews and setting a schedule to perform the reviews. Step 3: The supervisor for safety and training delegates and instructs the appropriate safety and training personnel to perform the reviews, in accordance with the established schedule, on a weekly basis. Step 4: Reviews and findings are documented on standard forms and reported to the supervisor of safety and training. The supervisor of safety and training reports all evaluations and findings per summarized format to the director of transportation and supervisor of routing and scheduling. Step 5: The supervisor of routing and scheduling informs the supervisor of safety and training of any additions/ amendments to the current bus stop listing for incorporation into the schedule. Step 6: Based on evaluations, the director of transportation and supervisor of safety and training take appropriate action to ensure that all bus stops conform to the established safety benchmarks.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor of safety and training; supervisor of routing and scheduling
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 12-2

Provide Training to Routing Staff on All the Mapnet NT Functions	
Strategy	Provide training from the product supplier on the use of coordination functions and “masterbuilding” of routes on the MAPNET.NT system to improve the efficiency of bus routing.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to facilitate the training of the supervisor of routing and scheduling and routing specialists. Step 2: The director of transportation and supervisor of routing and scheduling negotiate training packages with the product supplier. Step 3: The director of transportation delegates the coordination of training sessions and training curriculum to the supervisor of routing and scheduling. The supervisor of routing and scheduling schedules training sessions for routing specialists. Step 4: Provide staff quizzes and questionnaires to receive feedback on training curriculum, training usefulness. The supervisor of routing and scheduling reports back to the director of transportation. Step 5: During the next masterbuilding session staff and supervisors are to apply the all applications of the MAPNET.NT system.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor of routing and scheduling

Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-3**Keep a Log of All Requests for Bus Stop Changes, Reasons for Changes and Changes Made**

Strategy	Maintain a log and document all requests for changes, reasons for changes and actions taken in order to evaluate the feasibility of current school of choice policies
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to maintain a log and document all requests for changes received, reason for changes, actions taken. Step 2: The director of transportation delegates the supervisor of routing and scheduling to instruct all routing specialist and data-processors to log and document all request for changes received, reasons for each request and action taken. Step 3: All requests for changes should be documented on existing request for change forms and filed per month per receiving staff member. The routing staff prepares a monthly summary report of all requests received, reasons and action taken. Step 4: The supervisor of routing and scheduling reports monthly analysis to the director of transportation. Reports are delivered to the superintendent when the current school of choice policies are reviewed.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor of routing and scheduling
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-4**Eliminate Unnecessary Courtesy Rides**

Strategy	Eliminate the bus transportation of students who live within two miles of their school and can safely walk to school.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation for compiling a list of all courtesy rides, citing reasons and indicating in each case if courtesy bus service is provided using existing resources and established routes. Step 2: In addition, the study should determine if courtesy service was provided without re-routing buses or creating additional capacity. Step 3: Determine which courtesy riders create additional capacity needs or result in re-routing buses. Determine why these students are receiving courtesy bus service, including safety and other issues. Step 4: The director of transportation contacts other agencies (i.e., Lee County Sheriff's Office; city Police Departments; Florida Highway Patrol; Lee County government; Florida Department of Transportation) that can help in decreasing or eliminating hazards that necessitate courtesy rides. Present the results of these contacts to the assistant superintendent for operational support services to formalize communications and obtain the other agencies' cooperation in dealing with these hazards. Step 5: Evaluate the cost/benefit of implementing this program. Step 6: Outline the program's benefits and suggestions, bringing to the superintendent for approval before submitting strategies to reduce courtesy ridership to the school board.

	Step 7: With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period (and when any changes have been made), bring strategies to the school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; interaction with external agencies; approval by the superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	Complete the study by March 31, 2002; School board approval by April 30, 2003; Community outreach and input completed by June 30, 2003; Implementation by July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Future savings: up to \$38,000 annually.

¹ This recommendation does not imply that the district should discontinue courtesy ridership in cases where no documented alternatives exist to address significant safety concerns.

Action Plan 12-5

Reassess the Cost-Benefit and Feasibility of the Two-Tier System

Strategy	Reassess the cost benefit and feasibility of the two-tier system
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation for reassessing the assumptions and recalculating the cost savings of the two-tier system. Step 2: In performing the analysis the following cost and opportunity cost must be included: • Recalculating the saving estimate, based on total 2002 bus driver and attendants wages and overtime costs (include all pay periods). Do not include overtime expended on activity trips, • Additional fuel and maintenance cost of buses that will be required as a result of the addition of buses in services, • A closer approximation of additional routes and drivers costs based on a range of expected outcomes and current information, • Effect of two-tier bussing on the district bus occupancy figure and estimation of State funding foregone. (Every 3.3 difference in bus occupancy results in a 1% difference in funding) • Factoring the replacement costs of the additional buses used, on a 12-year replacement cycle • Sensitivity analysis on savings based on possible scenario's and unexpected occurrences that can significantly influence costs under the new system, such as adjusting bell times by 15 minutes • Evaluating any alternatives to the possible two-tier system and calculating and including opportunity savings foregone. Step 3: Perform a feasibility study by allowing sufficient time for parent, teacher, and district staff feedback. Surveys should include, but need not be limited to, Internet polls, distributed questionnaires and setting a phone hotline. Step 4: Analyze 2002-03 transportation expenditure with prior years to determine if expenditure under the two-tier system indicate that cost savings are attainable. Step 5: The director of transportation and the assistant superintendent for operational support services evaluate the results of the cost benefit analysis, feasibility study and interim cost statements and propose actions that will lead to the most cost effective long-term solution. Step 6: Solutions and alternatives indicating costs implications are recommended to the superintendent. Outline each alternatives benefits and suggestions, bringing to the superintendent for approval before submitting an Action Plan to the school board.

	Step 7: With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period, bring the Action Plan to the school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; approval by the superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	Complete the study by February 28, 2003. Community outreach and input completed by May 31, 2003; School board approval by June 31, 2003 and implementation by July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-6

Reassess Full-Time Bus Operator and Substitute Bus Driver Ratios and Implement a Bus Driver Attendance Incentive Program

Strategy	Change full-time and substitute bus driver ratios and implement an attendance incentive program, thereby minimizing unexpected absences and saving costs
Action Needd	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to reassess bus driver ratio's and to implement an attendance incentive program Step 2: The director of transportation, assistant superintendent for operational support services, chief financial officer, director of human resources, assistant superintendent of human resources negotiate with the SPARC labor union to implement changes in staff structures and on the implementation of attendance incentive program Step 3: The district establishes benchmark wage structures and tries to maintain an established balance: • Full time staff should cover the districts regular routes • Additional 4% of full time staff to cover unexpected emergencies at various regional compounds • Employ as many substitute drivers on call as possible Step 4: Benchmark wage structures and alternatives, indicating costs implications are recommended to the superintendent. Outline each alternatives benefits and suggestions, bringing to the superintendent for approval before submitting an Action Plan to the school board. Step 5: With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period (and when any changes have been made), bring the Action Plan to the school board for approval Step 6: The district advertises for bus driver and substitute positions for the forthcoming school year Step 7: The director of transportation and human resources department monitors staff structures to ensure compliance Step 8: The regional transportation supervisors report expected and unexpected absences to the director of transportation on a monthly basis, who analyzes the cost-effectiveness of current staff structures, wage and benefit structures and attendance incentive program in relation to prior years. Step 9: The director of transportation and assistant superintendent for operational support services reports to the superintendent the costs effectiveness of structures on a quarterly basis.
Who Is Responsible	The director of transportation, assistant superintendent for operational support services, chief financial officer, director of human resources, assistant superintendent of human resources, with approval by the superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	July 2003, with proposed reassessment of two-tier system
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources; Future savings: up to \$141,500 annually

Action Plan 12-7

Evaluate The Feasibility And Cost Savings Of Both The Transfer-Point System And “Corridor/ Arterial/ Trunk Routing” System Especially For County-Wide Programs Such As Magnet Schools And International Baccalaureate Students, With The Goal Of Increasing Bus Occupancy Starting In The 2005-06 School Year.

Strategy	Evaluate the feasibility and cost savings of both the transfer-point system and “corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing” system to increase bus occupancy, especially for county wide programs such as magnet school and international baccalaureate programs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district assigns the responsibility to the assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation and student assignment task force to evaluate the feasibility and cost savings related to transfer-point systems and “corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing”. Step 2: The director of transportation, supervisor for routing and scheduling, regional supervisors and the student assignment task force combine efforts to evaluate the feasibility of a transfer point system and corridor/arterial/trunk routing. This should include drafting a plan for transporting students to countywide magnet programs, taking the following into consideration: • Contacting Hillsborough County School District student transportation to discuss its transfer-point model/ plan and to consider implementing its practices. • Establishing possible sites for transfer points. This should be done so that travel time between magnet schools, area of pick-up and transfers point is minimized and uses existing district owned structures (ramps etc.). • Considering the number of buses needed to transport students to transfer points, and from the transfer points to the different magnet schools. Calculations should be based on available student data from MAPNET systems and maps, bus capacity and ride time limitations. All eleven magnet schools should be evaluated. • Considering adequacy of student safety through supervision and monitoring. • Establishing possible arrival and departure cut-off times to project ride times and number of routes. • Considering the number of spare buses needed to minimize delays, (i.e.: Buses that travel in proximity to each other, can be assist each other in emergency situations, rather than delay transfer beyond cut-off times) • Considering the feasibility of supervision i.e.: I. Senior supervisory transportation staff adjusts daily functions to supervise a particular transfer point. II. Senior bus driver at each transfer point could be designated as a supervisor at that location and paid a small stipend (cost to district is minimal). III. Other school support or care personnel. • Making capacity buses available to be used to pick up students in close proximity. Step 3: Outline the plan structure, benefits, cost savings and operational difficulties to be eliminated before bringing to the student assignment task force for evaluation. Step 4: The director of transportation, supervisor for routing and scheduling and the regional supervisors combine efforts to evaluate the feasibility of a “corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing” system. This should include drafting a plan to transport students to countywide magnet programs. The plan should be developed taking the following into consideration:

	• Contacting Escambia County School District's student transportation offices to discuss its "corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing" model/ plan and to consider implementing its practices. • Establishing possible sites for central pick-up points. This should be done so that travel time between magnet schools and area of central pick-up is minimized; and that the pick up points are centrally located so that the buses attain a high bus occupancy. • Considering the amount of buses needed to transport students from each central pick-up point to the different magnet schools. Calculations should be based on available student data from MAPNET systems and maps, bus capacity, ride time limitations and students located in the vicinity of the pick-up point. All eleven magnet schools should be evaluated.
Step 5:	Outline the plan structure, benefits, cost savings and operational difficulties to be eliminated before bringing to the student assignment task force for evaluation.
Step 6:	The student assignment task force, assistant superintendent for operational support services and director of transportation evaluate the most cost-effective and efficient system and recommends the system with an action plan to the superintendent.
Step 7:	With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period, bring the action plan to the school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor for routing and scheduling; regional supervisors; student assignment task force, superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	October 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	By increasing magnet school bus occupancy, the district could reduce the number of bus routes operated, thereby reducing the number of buses needed, number of drivers, maintenance needs, and fuel costs. This could lead to an annual reduction in operating expenditure and capital outlay of approximately \$3,874,400 per year, beginning in the 2005-06 school year.

Action Plan 12-8

Review school of choice policies within the continuing operational constraints, to develop a plan to increase overall bus occupancy starting in the 2005-06 school year.

Strategy	The district should analyze options to increase overall bus occupancy within operational constraints, for all transportation efforts.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district assigns the responsibility to the assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation and student assignment task force to review transportation policies in line with student assignment policies. Step 2: The assistant superintendent for operational support services and director of transportation working with the student assignment task force, should develop a plan for increasing bus occupancy from the 2005-06 school year. Step 3: Identify transportation policies and options that have the greatest impact on increasing overall bus occupancy. These options should include, but are not limited to: • Consideration of continuing school of choice and effects on transportation costs; • Reducing the size of the choice zones; • Amending school bell schedules to increase bus turn around times; • Limiting the number of schools to which student may change during the school year; • Limiting transportation to magnet schools to within a choice of zones;

	• Requiring parents to transport or pay for transportation to magnet schools outside of choice zones; • Through long term planning ensure that each zone has sufficient magnet schools and ESE schools to serve the surrounding areas.
Step 4:	Conduct cost- benefit analysis of policy options.
Step 5:	Produce a report and present it to the student assignment task force for evaluation. The student assignment task force, assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation recommends an action plan to the superintendent and school board to make a decision on how to increase bus occupancy from the 2005-06 school year.
Step 6:	Implement school board decision.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; student assignment task force, superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	October 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resource, but has the potential for significant cost savings, depending on the operating constraints and the selected strategies.

2 The district has established strategies to deal with unexpected contingencies, which promote safety and prompt response. However, district policies and administrative guidelines for activity trips need to be revised.

Procedures are in place to respond to bus breakdowns

The district has established effective, standardized procedures to respond to bus breakdowns, accidents and other unexpected events. These procedures are outlined in the district's driver's manual, and are reinforced during driver training sessions and via memos. During breakdowns, the school bus driver uses the on-board radio to call the regional transportation center dispatch operator, who in turn notifies the service shop. A replacement bus and mechanic are sent to transport students and make repairs.

Policies and procedures help prevent students from riding overcrowded buses, encountering excessive ride times and ensure that students are discharged only at their designated bus stop

The district has set clear guidelines for the Routing Department to avoid overcrowding. These include:

- Limiting the proximity of stops to each other to not less than half a mile
- Limiting to 20 the number of students assigned to any stop
- Controlling on the number of high school, middle school and elementary school students to be transported on a bus

Bus overcrowding is immediately addressed, and, when appropriate, longer-term solutions, such as a redesign of affected bus routes, are also initiated.

Additionally, the district tries to limit the one-way riding time on school buses to less than 60 minutes. The state standard is 50 minutes for elementary students and 60 minutes for secondary school students. Exhibit 12-16 shows standard ride time for students transported on the previous three-tier system (2001-02 school year) and the current (2002-03 school year) two-tier system. While these represent the scheduled times for these routes, variances do occur. The frequency and extent to which these scheduled times are not achieved is unknown because the district does not maintain "on-time" data for its school

buses. Currently, 97.18% of students ride the bus for less than 60 minutes. By moving from a three-tier system to the two-tier system, in the 2002-03 school year, the district has reduced the number of students transported more than 60 minutes from 6.78% to 2.82% of total students transported. The reason for the longer ride times is that the 803 square-mile district is divided into only three choice zones in which students are provided transportation to any school within that zone. Additionally, 20% of all students transported are in special countywide programs.

Exhibit 12-16

Average Scheduled Ride Times For Students

Three-tier system (2001-02)	Less than 30 minutes	31-60 minutes	61-90 minutes	91-120 minutes	121-160 minutes	Total
Number of students	20,532	9,931	1,867	311	40	32,681
Percentage of Total	62.83%	30.39%	5.71%	0.95%	0.12%	100%
Two-tier system (2002-03)	Less than 30 minutes	31-60 minutes	61-90 minutes	91-120 minutes	121-160 minutes	Total
Number of students	22,088	9,808	852	68	4	32,820
Percentage of Total	67.30%	29.88%	2.60%	0.21%	0.01%	100%

Source: School District of Lee County 2002-03.

Bus route times and numbers of students per bus are monitored by route planning personnel and regional operational staff to avoid overcrowding and ride times in excess of established standards. Computer-generated exception reports are used to identify routes with excessive ride times, and all complaints of excessive ride times and overcrowding are investigated.

The school board has adopted a policy on discharging students to bus stops other than their assigned bus stops, which states that:

- The parents or legal guardians of the student must submit a written request to the school
- The school approves the change in bus stop by issuing a bus pass to the bus operator notifying him/her of the change

The district enforces the policy by documenting requests for changes in bus stops and communicating driver responsibilities via written instructions, operator manuals and during training sessions.

Although the district has established guidelines on driver absenteeism, they do not have incentive packages to discourage unexpected absences

The district has set clear and concise guidelines to bus operators to report absences either via:

- Leave request forms (for long-term scheduling).
- Call to dispatchers office one hour before route departure time

These guidelines are included in the job descriptions, which are signed on commencement of employment.

Dispatchers keep a daily attendance log of all drivers reporting to work. Several substitute drivers are pre-assigned to buses and are notified if a driver reports his/her absence or does not physically report to the dispatcher at the scheduled time.

The efficiency of this process depends on drivers reporting absences to the dispatcher in a timely manner. District staff has indicated that they do have a high unexpected absences rate, which they believe are due to:

Student Transportation

- The district not having an attendance incentive program

Not only does unexpected driver absence disturb the overall day-to-day operational flow of the transportation department, but it has also led the district to employ several substitute drivers on a full time basis. As these substitutes receive a four-hour pay guarantee, irrespective whether they actually cover a bus route or not, cost inefficiencies result. As mentioned earlier (Action plan 12-1, Recommendation 7) if staff ratios and an attendance incentive program were introduced, the district could expect operational efficiencies and annual cost savings of \$141,500.

In order to improve employee accountability and on-time arrivals, the Transportation and Information Systems (IS) Departments are planning to implement an automated payroll system. Testing this system in parallel to the current manual system began in June 2002, and implementation is planned for December 2002.

The director of transportation believes that this system will increase the district's efficiency in allocating substitute drivers because it will automatically notify dispatchers of bus operators that have not logged on the system seven minutes before their route departure time. This notification supplements the current policy that all drivers are to report to the dispatcher at their scheduled times.

The transportation department could recover up to \$292,000 by charging school groups full cost to cover activity trips

The district has administrative guidelines governing activity trips and has established standardized procedures for ordering field trips, assigning drivers and billing these services to the appropriate school accounts.

These administrative guidelines outline the classification of activity trips, and the procedures used to fund these trips, based on their classification. However, the administrative guidelines are outdated as all athletic trips, arts performance and school articulation trips are billed back to the schools.

In accordance with the ordering procedures, field trips are requested by each school principal on standardized forms and have to be submitted by the 15th of the month preceding the field trip.

Drivers are assigned to the field trips based on seniority and in accordance with the provisions of the union contract, which provides for the rotation of these assignments.

Current charges for field trips are based on a sliding scale of the total round trip mileage. As outlined in Exhibit 12-17, a fixed cost is set at each tier of mileage driven. Additionally, all operator charges for meals and accommodation are charged for all trips requiring overnight stays. The charge to external users is \$19.75 per hour and \$1.10 per mile.

Exhibit 12-18 shows the totals and average mileage, hours, actual revenue generated and estimated costs of field trips, as presented by the district's transportation department. The billing structure and rates charged are inadequate in recovering the full cost of the activity trips from schools, as only 55.80% (on average, only \$79.53 of an estimated cost of \$142.51 per trip) of the cost is recovered.

Exhibit 12-17 shows that the five peer districts have very different approaches to charging schools and outside users for activity trips. Each of the peer districts recoup field trips costs with a charge-out structure that is based on the hours spent by the driver on the field trip and on the actual field trip mileage. These charge-out structures incorporate the major costs that influence costs associated with field trips.

Exhibit 12-17**Rates Charged For Activity Trips Vary Among School Districts. 2001-2002 School Year**

	Lee	Brevard	Volusia	Polk	Pasco	Seminole
Rate Charged External Users	\$1.10 per mile, plus \$19.75 per hour	\$.85 per mile, plus \$15.00 per hour	\$.75 per mile, plus \$21.00 per hour	\$.85 per mile, plus \$13.61 per hour	\$1.00 per mile, plus \$12.08 per hour	\$17.36 per hour
Rates Charged Schools	Fixed cost: <11 miles \$50.00 11-20 miles \$60.00 21-40 miles \$70.00 41-60 miles \$80.00 81-100 miles \$105.00 101-120 miles \$135.00 121-150 miles \$150.00 >150 miles \$175.00	\$.85 per mile, plus \$15.00 per hour	\$.75 per mile, plus \$21.00 per hour	\$.85 per mile, plus \$13.61 per hour	\$1.00 per mile, plus \$12.08 per hour	\$25.00 per hour

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. questionnaires to peer districts.

An analysis conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A. demonstrated that most of the field trips conducted resulted in bus operators earning overtime and that the average pay rate is estimated at \$18.53 per hour. The director of transportation has indicated that an overtime pay rate of \$22.80 per hour and a mileage rate of \$1.25 (excluding administration costs and wear and tear) is a better approximation of the costs involved for a field trip. Assuming a driver's pay rate for field trips of \$19.00 and a cost per mile rate of \$1.25, the district could improve cost allocations by approximately \$292,000. (Base year 2001-02 district information as per Exhibit 12-18 ³³ - 161,083 field trip miles and 19,323 field trip hours during the 2001-02 school year times \$1.25 per mile and \$19.00 per hour respectively.)

Exhibit 12-18**Total And Average Field Trip Mileage, Hours, Revenue And Costs For The 2001-2002 School Year**

	Field Trips	Miles	Hours	Revenue	Costs
Total	3,467	161,083	19,323	275,755	494,085
Average per field trip	-	46.46	5.57	79.53	142.51

Source: School District of Lee County 2001-2002; ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

As a percentage of total miles, activity trip miles for the district were lower than all but one of its peer districts during the 2000-01 school year. The district recorded 175,987 activity trip miles. Compared with the six peer districts, the district's percentage of activity trip miles (1.39%) was the lowest (range: From 1.39% to 9.01%). Exhibit 12-19 demonstrates how the district compares with its peers and the peer average.

³³ Annual Field Trip mileage over the past three years was 175,987, 183,419, 153,748 miles respectively and an annual average of 171,000. The 2001-02 statistics are used as a prudent estimation of annual future mileage and field trip hours.

Exhibit 12-19

Activity Trip Miles for Lee Are Similar To Those of Peer Districts (In Ascending Order)

District	Total Miles	Activity Trip Miles	Percentage of Activity Trip Miles
Lee	12,633,902	175,987	1.39%
Brevard	6,360,082	146,281	2.30%
Pasco	5,927,101	155,518	2.62%
Seminole	7,552,914	300,175	3.97%
Polk	6,394,199	266,963	4.18%
Volusia	5,118,042	461,065	9.01%
Peer Average	6,270,467	266,000	4.24%

Source: Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles 2002, for 2000-20001; DOE; and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Exhibit 12-20

Charging School Groups Full Cost to Cover Activity Trips Could Improve Cost Allocation by \$1,460,000 in The Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Savings	292,000	292,000	292,000	292,000	292,000
Cumulative Cost Savings	292,000	\$584,000	\$876,000	\$1168,000	\$1,460,000

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Recommendations

- We recommend the district proceed with the planning, implementation and parallel testing of the automated payroll system.

Action Plan 12-9 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- We recommend the district should recover the full activity trip cost from the requesting entity including bus operating cost per mile, driver salary and administrative cost.

Action Plan 12-10 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation

Action Plan 12-9

Proceed With Planning, Implementation and Testing Of the Automated Payroll System	
Strategy	Plan, test and implement the automated payroll system
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to assist the MIS department in the planning, testing and implementation of the automated payroll system Step 2: The director of transportation and IS project coordinator should determine the needs of the transportation department in recording driver and employee time. This determination should include, but is not limited to, the following: • Monitoring and reviewing of driver overtime • Timeframe for notification of unexpected absences • Driver accountability for unexpected absences • Reports on employee attendance and sick leave • Input from employees on payroll system

	Evaluation of MIS capabilities and generation of management reports that can be useful in decision making
Step 3:	Parallel testing should not only consider the necessary accuracy of time keeping, but also determine additional areas where the system can be helpful in improving MIS and management reporting.
Step 4:	Testing should be coordinated to ensure that all needs are addressed before final authorization of implementation
Step 5:	Produce a test report and present it to the superintendent and school board for a decision regarding the final implementation of the system. All estimated cost savings and additional operational efficiencies, as well as possible drawbacks, should be re-addressed
Step 6:	Implement school board decision
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; IS project coordinator; approval by the superintendent and school board
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-10

Charge Full Cost for Activity Trips

Strategy	The school board establishes a policy for the full recovery of transportation costs when school buses and other district vehicles are used for purposes other than transporting students to and from school. Activity trip costs should be periodically analyzed to maintain full cost recovery.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the Finance Department (with assistance from the director of transportation) for capturing the full cost per mile (including bus operating cost per mile, driver salary and administrative costs) driven by district school buses and other vehicles. This may be based on empirical information derived from previous fiscal years, or from the current year's budget. Step 2: Once the per-mile cost is established, notify the superintendent of the potential reductions in operating expenses from charging the full cost per mile for activity trips, rather than the current fixed charge-out structure Step 3: Evaluation and approval by the superintendent is suggested, since this action may impact other policies being considered. Step 4: School board action may be required.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; finance director; possible delegation to subordinates; assistance from the director of transportation. Involvement and approval by the superintendent; consent or action by the school board.
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Additional annual Transportation Department revenues of approximately \$292,000

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

Effective recruitment efforts

In response to the continuing need for bus drivers, substitute drivers and bus attendants, the district publicizes job opportunities to the general public by using various low cost advertising campaigns including:

- Advertising in local newspapers

Student Transportation

- Placing banners on buses in school parking lots
- Placing magnetic “help wanted” signs on buses
- Posting bulletins in supermarkets and in various other stores

Interview documentation requires the applicant to indicate which form of advertisement prompted them to apply for their prospective position. However, this information is not summarized and therefore the district does not know which recruitment techniques are most effective.

Job applications are completed and interviews are conducted at the centrally located safety and training department. Interviews are conducted in the second week of the month and are well documented. Applicants who complete the interview process successfully are intensively screened. Applicants with a clean driving record are given a state mandated dexterity test, physical examination and a substance abuse test as required by federal law.

The district provides an added financial incentive in their quest to effectively recruit applicants by maintaining a policy of reimbursement for physical examinations and training stipends for recruited employees.

The district has not compared its driver turnover rate to rates in peer districts

The Transportation Department does not maintain detailed turnover data for bus drivers and other employees. Employees leaving the department indicate their reasons for leaving by ticking the appropriate box on their personnel action forms. These reasons are not detailed enough, nor are they summarized to be used as a indicator or as a tool in retaining employees.

ValienteHernandez P.A. calculated the approximate turnover among bus drivers and attendants to be about 16% per year, or 115 employees annually based on the number of employees that have left as documented on the personnel action forms.³⁴

While the department has made some efforts to determine the reasons for employee turnover, it has not systematically analyzed its findings over time or compared employee turnover trends in comparable districts.

Driver salaries are higher than peer districts, and local salary comparisons are not conducted

As outlined in Exhibit 12-21, bus drivers’ starting wages are above those of their peer districts. This data show that Lee County’s starting pay rate for bus drivers, \$9.49, is above the peer average of \$8.67. Additionally, full-time drivers are guaranteed six paid hours per day, while substitute (“Trained but unassigned regulars” – TBU) drivers are guaranteed four paid hours per day. Due to high wages and guaranteed hours, the district has stated that they have not experienced any problems with retaining valued employees. The district does not collect 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. Therefore, no comparisons are done in measuring relative competitiveness when recruiting replacement drivers and attendants or during contract negotiations.

³⁴ Current 2001-02 base used 724 bus drivers and attendants. During the 10 months 1 July 2001 to 1 May 2002 there have been 85 terminations of employment. During 2000-01 school year there were 127 bus driver and attendants that terminated their employment.

Exhibit 12-21**Bus Driver Hourly Starting Wages, School Year 2000-2001**

District	Starting Hourly Wage	Amount Higher or Lower than Lee
Lee	\$9.49	\$ ---
Peer Districts:		
Brevard	8.78	(0.71)
Volusia	9.13	(0.36)
Polk	9.00	(0.49)
Pasco	7.08	(2.41)
Seminole	9.35	(0.14)
Peer Average	8.67	(0.82)

Source: School District of Lee County Transportation Department, peer district questionnaires

In addition to regular pay, the district has established a financial incentive of \$75.00 to bus drivers for maintaining an accident free school year in accordance with the safe driver program.

Recommendations

- We recommend the district maintain turnover statistics for bus drivers and other job classifications in order to measure its effectiveness in retaining trained and experienced employees.*

Additionally, we recommend the district conduct exit interviews with terminating employees to determine their reasons for leaving the district. From this information, programs should be developed to improve employee retention in order to improve efficiency and safety, and reduce cost of training and recruitment.

Action Plan 12-11 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- We recommend the district collect 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 in the district. This information should be used in comparing the district's relative competitiveness when recruiting replacement drivers and attendants, and during contract negotiations.*

Action Plan 12-12 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 12-11

Improve Ability to Track Driver Vacancy Rates and Reasons for Turnover	
Strategy	Improve procedures to track and determine reasons for driver vacancies.
Action Needed	Step 1: The personnel department develops an exit interview form that requests from the driver the reasons for resigning. Step 2: The director of transportation, in conjunction with the personnel department, establishes procedures to analyze trends for losing drivers. Step 3: The director of transportation and the assistant superintendent for operational support services periodically evaluate the reasons for losing drivers and propose solutions to correct imbalances. Step 4: The director of transportation and the assistant superintendent submit these recommendations to the superintendent for approval. Any fiscal consequences should, after approval by the superintendent, be included in the proper budgetary process.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; personnel department; superintendent.

Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 12-12

Collect Wage Information from Surrounding Districts and Peer Districts to Improve Efficiency of Recruitment and Wage Negotiations

Strategy	Collect wage information from surrounding and peer districts, to aid in contract negotiations and recruitment efforts of drivers
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility of collecting wage information to the director of transportation. This includes driver turnover statistics and wages per seniority. Step 2: The director of transportation, in conjunction with the personnel department, contacts surrounding districts, peer districts and local businesses to request wage structures, statistics and wage rates Step 3: All information is summarized and analyzed to determine trends over time. Wage information should be made readily available to the director of transportation, assistant superintendent for operational support services, chief financial officer, director of human resources and assistant superintendent of human resources during union contract negotiations and recruitment efforts.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; director of human resources
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

4 The district trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers to help them meet bus-driving standards and maintain acceptable student discipline on buses.

The district provides in-house driver training

The Safety and Training Department provides comprehensive training programs that encompass the needs of both new and continuing employees. Formal training classes are supplemented by behind-the-wheel assistance to drivers in need of skills improvement. Training classes for new employees are held when there are enough attendees (usually 8 to 10), and are provided by four certified trainers every second week of the month. The use of qualified in-house instructors reduces the districts training costs. This district's training program covers the curriculum set by the Florida State Board of Education, additional topics such as ESE education and first aid, and provides actual driving instruction. The training course consists of a 40-hour training program held over ten days and additional 20-hour training is provided to students requiring additional attention.

The initial training for a commercial driver's license (CDL) is free to potential bus drivers. In an effort to effectively recruit employees, the district reimburses drivers for their required physicals examinations and pays a training stipend of 40 hours times the minimum wage after the completion of 45 working days.

The district also provides a minimum of eight hours of in-service training workshops each year for school bus drivers. These are usually conducted once a year during August. The workshop consists of a four-hour defensive driving course presented by in-house training staff or the National Safety Council and a four-hour classroom course in the responsibilities related to driving. These classroom topics include:

- Managing and reporting student conduct
- CPR and first-aid refresher
- Communication skills

- Blood-borne pathogens and wellness
- Rules of the road including safe driving skills

The department solicits input from drivers and attendants regarding their needs, concerns and grievances by holding labor meetings between regional supervisors and bus drivers and attendants. However, the Safety and Training Department has not received any request to use these discussions to help plan curricula for in-service training sessions.

Supervision

The department provides extensive supervision over bus drivers by regularly evaluating performance. Regional supervisors annually assess the performance of bus drivers and all other employees. These evaluations are well documented and used to assign special training. The bus drivers are evaluated on:

- Job knowledge
- Safety
- Dependability
- Quantity and quality of work
- Work conduct
- Initiative
- Stress tolerance

Regional supervisors and the Safety and Training Department also monitor drivers' performance daily by performing random route surveys to evaluate basic handling techniques, safe-driving skills and student management techniques. These surveys are documented and are used to make recommendations to the director of transportation for drivers that require training in a particular area.

Additionally, regional supervisors and the Safety Department perform regular random radar observations. The Safety Department has clear and concise instructions for performing the radar observations. All observations are documented, co-signed by the observer and bus operator, and filed for 12-months. Bus operators are allowed one warning, depending on the severity of the violation. Thereafter, any additional radar observed violations are handled in accordance with the safe driver program and progressive disciplinary procedures. The director of transportation reviews all radar observed violations monthly. The district has also installed video cameras in most buses to monitor student discipline and to evaluate bus driver's student management techniques

Safe driver plan

The school board policies also include a safe driver plan, establishing safe driver standards in order to:

- Prevent hiring unqualified applicants
- Prevent drivers with poor driving records from operating a school bus
- Provide safe driving instruction
- Provide counseling for operators in borderline situations

The plan includes the following:

- Organizational structure and duties of the Safe Driver Review Committee
- Accident review procedures to be taken by the Safe Driver Review Committee
- Definition of points to be assigned for violations.

Student Transportation

- Stipulation of the range of points accumulated and disciplinary action to be recommended to the director of transportation.

The Safety and Training Department tracks the assessment of infraction points under the Safe Driver Plan. When a bus driver accumulates 10 or more points, the driver must participate in driver improvement programs with the National Safety Council or employment will be terminated.

The district regularly reviews all drivers' records to ensure that qualifications remain up to date. Each driver's personnel file includes training documentation, commercial driver certification, copies of annual physical reports (drivers are required to have an annual physical examination, dexterity and reaction tests, and maintain a valid commercial driver's license), motor vehicle reports, speeding violations from in-house radar observations and annual performance reviews.

As part of department policy and the Safe Driver Plan, drivers and other transportation personnel know they are required to report any tickets, citations, or convictions for speeding, driving under the influence, or any other type of motor vehicle violations within two working days of the incident, regardless of the vehicle operated during the time of the incident. The Safety Department Supervisor reviews the state traffic violations database on a weekly basis for any violations, convictions and accidents involving the district's bus drivers. All incidents are reported to the Safe Driver Review Committee.

District's substance abuse policy is clear and enforced

The district has clearly communicated a substance abuse policy to student transportation employees. All new employees must submit to a drug test before employment. Any employee who carries a commercial drivers license and operates a district vehicle is also subject to random drug testing. The district conducts alcohol and drug testing on employees upon any reasonable suspicion and following any qualifying incident. The district has a zero tolerance policy: If an employee fails a drug test, the employee is immediately terminated.

Additionally, the district's drug and alcohol policy includes an employee assistance program. This program is included under the district's group health insurance coverage. Appropriate treatment can be provided to employees who voluntarily report themselves in need of assistance. In such cases, the employee is removed from active driver status until completion of the program.

5 The district coordinates transportation for exceptional students minimizing hardships to the students and accurately reports exceptional students transported, in order to receive state funding.

Procedures guide staff in providing transportation services to exceptional students

The district has established procedures to guide decisions regarding transportation services for students with special educational needs. The 1975 federal law entitled "*Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*" (IDEA) largely controls the decision-making process for exceptional students.

IDEA requires an individual education plan (IEP) be developed for every exceptional student, and those plans control which services, including transportation, the exceptional students receive. The intent of the IEP is to determine how best to serve exceptional students in the least restrictive environment. Participants in the IEP process typically include the classroom teachers, parents, exceptional student education (ESE) teachers, psychologists, and guidance counselors.

The key to strong support services for ESE students is good communication with the ESE instructional staff and parents. To that end, the district has created a liaison position to assist schools and parents with

ESE transportation issues. Although the ESE transportation coordinator does not have a role in creating IEPs, she does occasionally participate in IEP meetings. As the title suggests, the ESE transportation coordinator is responsible for coordinating with ESE staff to make the most appropriate and cost-effective decisions for meeting the transportation requirements of ESE students.

The ESE transportation coordinator receives a Special Needs Transportation Form and IEP from ESE staff that identifies the individual's transportation needs. These forms stipulate whether individual special transportation is required. In situations when individualized transportation is not required, the special needs of the student are noted for accommodation on a regular bus. Although the district does not have a formal policy regarding mainstreaming ESE students, the ESE transportation coordinator verifies the need for specialized transportation and tries to mainstream ESE students on regular buses when possible. ValienteHernandez P.A. investigated a random sample of IEP and Special Needs Transportation Forms to determine whether ESE students are mainstreamed when possible. No exceptions were noted.

The district transports some 5,600 ESE students, of which 1,560 students require specialized ESE buses. While students needing specialized ESE transportation account for only 4.81% of all students, the routes account for about 23% of all routes.

The district owns 154 buses with various capacity and amenities to accommodate the special needs of ESE students requiring transportation.³⁵ Additional amenities such as safety harnesses, toddler seats, infant's seats, fabricated padded barriers and leg rests are installed, when needed, by the regional service shops. These school buses are sufficient in servicing a 119 ESE bus routes each day.

The transportation staff reports that working relationships with the ESE staff has been good, but that communication could be improved. One area of importance for the transportation staff is their inclusion in selecting schools to become ESE centers. (See Recommendation 1, Action Plan 12-12) As will be discussed later in this chapter, this is problematic because transportation can be a major cost in school operations. For example, locating an ESE program at just one site may appear to be cost effective if only facility needs are considered; but those savings may be offset by the high cost of transporting students to a single location.

State reporting and state supplemental funding

Twice a year, the number of students transported is collected for the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). During this process, the drivers collect the names of all students receiving transportation services, which are validated by transportation center support staff. In addition, drivers note special needs students on their survey forms. This information is cross-referenced to the MAPNET.NT and Student Information System by transportation center support staff to ensure proper coding of ESE riders for the state survey. The special needs student counts are also used for planning when acquiring new buses.

Some exceptional students who require special transportation arrangements are eligible for state supplemental funding. DOE has identified five eligibility criteria for this supplemental funding, as shown in Exhibit 12-22.

Exhibit 12-22

State Criteria for Exceptional Student Eligibility for Supplemental State Funding

-
- Medical equipment required. (Medical equipment is defined as wheelchair, crutches, walkers, cane, tracheotomy equipment, and positioning or unique seating devices.)
 - Medical condition that requires a special transportation environment as per physician's prescription (Such as tinted windows, dust-controlled atmosphere, and temperature control).
-

³⁵ These include medical equipment, wheelchairs and lifts.

- Aide or monitor is required due to disability and specific need of student.
- Shortened day required due to disability and specific need of student.
- School assigned is located in an out-of-district system.

Source: Florida Department of Education.

Exhibit 12-23 indicates the district receives supplemental funding for approximately 21% of transported ESE students. Generally, the majority of ESE students do not qualify for supplemental funding according to state criteria and funding formulas. Because the district attempts to mainstream ESE students as much as possible, only approximately 1560 ESE students are transported in specialized ESE buses. Thus, the district therefore receives supplemental funding for 77.24% of ESE students transported on specialized ESE buses.³⁶

Exhibit 12-23

Percentage of Exceptional Students Eligible for Supplemental State Funding Varies Widely Among the Peer Districts (In Descending Order)

District	Total Number of ESE Students Transported on regular buses and individualized special transportation	Adjusted ESE Students used in state funding formula	Adjusted ESE Students as Percent of Total Transported
Polk	1,896	1571.27	82.87%
Pasco	1703	909.76	53.42%
Brevard	1098	569.22	51.84%
Lee	5612	1204.94	21.47%
Volusia	4652	868.74	18.67%
Seminole	5108	471.14	9.22%
Peer Average	2891.40	878.03	30.37%

Source: District FEFP as reported to the Florida DOE 2001, and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

The district does not obtain reimbursement for services provided to Medicaid-eligible students

The district does not identify ESE students who qualify for Medicaid eligible transportation reimbursement funding, as they believe the administration of Medicaid reimbursements outweighs the returns. However, no formal cost-benefit analysis has been performed. This relatively new program would reimburse the district a set rate of \$4.87 for each one-way trip for each eligible exceptional student receiving any medical treatment or service. The district will receive the federal portion (58.83%) of the rate, or \$2.87 per trip. For example, the district is eligible for partial reimbursement of bus trips to and from school for a Medicaid-eligible exceptional student receiving physical therapy at school as part of the IEP.

DOE documents indicate that 32% of exceptional students requiring specialized individual transportation are also eligible for Medicaid, and those students receive at least four eligible trips per month. Using the ratio of 32% of exceptional students being eligible for Medicaid, approximately 539 district students would qualify for Medicaid eligible trips. If these students use school transportation for this service over 180 school days (nine calendar months) at four trips per month, times \$2.87, times two for round trip, the district could receive approximately \$111,186 a year from this funding source. Considering the cost of

³⁶ 1204.94/ 1560

employing a contractor charging 55% of the revenue generated, the net revenue to the district is of approximately \$50,034 annually or \$250,170 over a five-year period as illustrated in Exhibit 12-24.

Exhibit 12-24

Claiming Medicaid Reimbursement for Eligible Exceptional Student Bus Runs Could Increase Revenues by \$146,250 in the Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Recovered	\$50,034	\$50,034	\$50,034	\$50,034	\$50,034
Cumulative Impact	\$50,034	\$100,068	\$150,102	\$200,136	\$250,170

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district establish a formal policy on transporting ESE students on specialized buses only when needed and appropriate.*

Action Plan 12-13 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- We recommend the district make every effort to collect Medicaid reimbursement for all qualifying student transportation trips. The district could receive approximately \$29,250 annually from this new funding source.*

Action Plan 12-14 provides the steps to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 12-13

Establish A Formal Policy On Transporting ESE Students On Specialized Buses Only When Needed And Appropriate

Strategy	Establish and enforce a formal policy of transporting ESE students on specialized buses only when needed and appropriate.
Action Needed	Step 1: Assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns the responsibility director of transportation to determine guidelines and procedures whereby ESE transportation staff should evaluate whether specialized individual transportation is needed. Step 2: The assistant superintendent and director of transportation submits proposal of school board policy to the superintendent and school board for approval. Step 3: Once approved, the mainstreaming policy and guidelines are communicated to ESE transportation staff.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; superintendent and school board for approval.
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-14

Collect Medicaid Reimbursement for Qualifying Students' Transportation

Strategy	Revive the district's efforts to collect Medicaid reimbursement for all qualifying student transportation trips.

Action Needed	Step 1: Assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns the responsibility to determine the appropriateness of obtaining reimbursement from Medicaid for transportation services related to qualified students to the fiscal director, assisted by the director of transportation Step 2: The fiscal director, or subordinate, contacts the appropriate person who can provide billing information for Medicaid-reimbursable expenses. Step 3: Once Medicaid billing information has been determined, the fiscal director and/or subordinate(s), assisted by Transportation Department personnel, establish procedures to capture this information in an auditable fashion. Step 4: The fiscal department bills Medicaid using the proper form and/or format required for expedient reimbursement.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; fiscal director; subordinate personnel; director of transportation
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Net revenue of \$50,034 annually. This impact considers the cost of employing a contractor charging 55% of the \$111,186 in revenue generated.

6 The district responds promptly and appropriately to all accidents.

Accident response

The district has well-defined written procedures in the case of a bus accident. These procedures are communicated to bus drivers and other transportation staff in their annual renewal training so that each staff member is acquainted with his/her role and responsibilities in emergencies.

The initial report of a bus accident normally comes into the regional dispatch unit of a transportation center via the district radio network. Each school bus is equipped with a two-way radio. All accidents, regardless of the severity, must be reported. Failure to report an accident can result in the driver's dismissal.

Upon receipt of an accident call, the dispatch unit notifies the appropriate resources to respond, which may include: emergency 911 and police; school principals; road safety supervisors trained in accident investigation and garage personnel to deal with the damaged bus. The dispatch unit must also notify the director of transportation and risk management.

All accidents are investigated, documented and reviewed by the Safe Driver Review Committee under the Safe Driver Plan. Road safety supervisors and regional supervisors have clear and concise procedures to follow upon arrival on the accident scene. These procedures include:

- Photographing the entire accident scene, nearby intersections, and points of impact
- Demarcating the accident scene with measuring tape, markers and spray paint for further evaluations
- Documenting interviews and observations on accident and injury forms

The district also complies with state accident reporting requirements. Student transportation staff routinely reports to DOE on school bus accidents in the district, meeting the state's reporting criteria.

State rules require districts to report to DOE all school bus accidents involving \$500 or more in damage, including the type of accident (such as another motor vehicle, pedestrian, fixed object, etc.), the location of the accident's impact on the vehicle, roadway types and conditions, light and weather conditions, and the bus driver's experience level. As illustrated in Exhibit 12-25, the district reported the third highest number of accidents per million miles driven in its peer group.

Exhibit 12-25**The District Has More Accidents, Per 100k Miles Driven, Than Most Peers (In Descending Order)**

District	Total Number of Accidents	Total Miles Driven	Reported Accidents per 100,000 Miles
Polk	48	6,394,199	7.51
Volusia	37	5,118,042	7.23
Lee	78	12,633,902	6.17
Pasco	29	5,927,101	4.89
Brevard	30	6,360,082	4.72
Seminole	19	7,552,914	2.52
Peer Average	32.6	6,270,468	5.20

Source: *School Bus Accident Summary Report*, Florida Department of Education, 2000-2001, *Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles*, 2002, for 2000-2001, DOE and, ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations, excluding Polk, number not reported.

The state also requires school district to have a process to determine the cause of each school bus accident and how the accident can be prevented in the future. The district has adopted a safe driver plan establishing a Safe Driver Review Committee that meets monthly to review all accidents involving district-owned vehicles. Committee members include a union representative, two supervisory transportation staff and two members of the community with prior school bus driving experience. At each meeting, the committee reviews any convictions for driving violations and assesses points in accordance with the district-imposed point system. Points are assessed against the driver as violations occur, according to the committee's findings. An accumulation of accident/violation points may result in verbal or written reprimands, suspension without pay, or termination of employment.

Emergency bus evacuation drills are conducted regularly

The district has adopted a policy that requires each school to hold emergency evacuation drills during the first six weeks of each semester. All evacuation drills are documented and reviewed by the regional supervisors in that particular zone. The regional supervisors coordinate with all schools in their zone to ensure that these drills are conducted.

Drivers are instructed how to conduct emergency evacuations during their training. Before drills are conducted, all drivers receive a memorandum from the Safety and Training Department reminding them of emergency evacuation drill procedures.

Daily pre-trip forms are completed by drivers

Drivers are required to complete a daily pre-trip inspection form. Drivers must inspect their buses twice daily, just before starting their morning and afternoon routes. These forms are turned-in to the respective route managers at the end of each week. ValienteHernandez P.A. investigated a random sample of pre-trip inspection forms and subsequent work orders to determine whether pre-trip inspections are completed and monitored according to district policies. No exceptions were noted.

Driver-conducted inspections help ensure the safety of pupils and drivers, and decrease maintenance costs. If a driver determines that equipment warrants attention, a repair request form is completed and reported to the service shop on the bus radio. During their initial training, drivers learn how to complete the inspection form, as well as inspection requirements and procedures.

7 The district ensures that appropriate student behavior is maintained on its buses at all times.

Policies govern pupil rider-ship

The Lee County School Board has adopted policies emphasizing appropriate student behavior. The district Student Code of Conduct clearly outlines the expectations, offences and disciplinary procedures for student behavior on school buses. School bus drivers can only discipline a student using reasonable verbal reprimands or by initiating disciplinary referral procedures. Drivers, attendants, monitors, transportation supervisors and school administrators use the following methods, as outlined in Administrative Guidelines, to resolve acute student discipline problems on school buses:

- When a student misbehaves on a bus, the driver completes a parent notification form and gives the completed form to the school principal to notify the student's parents or guardian
- For second offences, students receive a written first referral and a conference is held with the parents or guardian
- Third offences lead to a second written referral, parent conference and a one-day bus suspension
- Fourth offences are considered very serious, and result in a third written referral and three day bus suspension

After four offenses or serious offenses, students can be suspended from the bus for the remainder of the school year and can be referred to behavior improvement programs. School principals are responsible enforcing discipline on students.

The district has made several efforts to respond to disciplinary issues. For example, all buses are equipped with video cameras that can record both student and driver behavior, and provide good documentation supporting any allegation. The transportation staff states that the cameras have reduced the number of problems on district buses.

Assertive training and pupil management techniques are part of the regular initial training curriculum for bus drivers and are also covered during in-service classes. The driver's handbook provides several pages of discussion and guidance on disciplinary issues for bus drivers' subsequent reference.

Adequate Transportation

8 The district has more school buses than it needs, and does not have an adequate, cost-efficient replacement policy.

Purchasing and assigning of buses

The district minimizes costs and maximizes value when purchasing vehicles. The district acquires all new school buses through the state purchasing pool, which allows participating districts to receive some of the most competitive school bus prices available.

All new buses are thoroughly inspected for defects, in accordance with the Florida Specifications Manual, before they are put into service. The director of transportation, regional supervisors, supervisor for vehicle services and the routing and scheduling supervisor collectively assign new buses to routes and

geographical areas with the greatest need, based on the age of the existing fleet and growth of the area. Older buses are rotated to shorter or smaller routes, used as spare buses, or removed from service.

The district has not systematically evaluated spare bus needs

The district set its spare bus ratio at 10% of all routes. As Exhibit 12-26 shows, the district has 52 buses immediately available for assignment, with 20 of those buses pre-assigned to substitute drivers. These buses are kept as daily spares to cover unexpected breakdowns, downtime and buses on the 20-day inspection cycle. In addition to its daily spare buses, the district keeps 147 emergency buses that can be brought into service within 3-4 days. Although the buses are not in daily use, the value of these buses declines over time, thus reducing the amount the district can receive for them at auction. Furthermore, when added to the district number of spare buses, the district spare bus ratio shoots up to 38.41% (see Exhibit 12-26).

The goal of any school district transportation department should be a 10% spare ratio. As of September 2002, the district states it lacks sufficient maintenance support to operate at a 10% spare bus ratio, due to the inadequate maintenance facilities at Transportation East (See Action plan 12-18). For the short-term, the district should therefore operate a spare bus ratio not to exceed 16%, which will cover unexpected breakdowns, downtime and buses on the 20-day inspection cycle. (The district was unable to furnish sufficient unscheduled out-of-service data to effectively evaluate the spares need.) Once adequate maintenance facilities are constructed and support improves, the district should strive to reduce its spare bus ratio to the recommended 10% standard, based on an evaluation of the frequency of breakdowns, the average downtime of buses, the average buses on a 20-day inspection cycle and the peak demand for activity buses. If the district immediately reduces its spare bus ratio to only 16% of its routes, it could recover approximately \$428,400.³⁷

The district also has 85 buses that are 14 years old and ready for sale by sealed bid. The director of transportation believes that approximately \$1,000 per bus would be recovered through a sealed bid sale, while substantially more could be salvaged by auction. If the district decides to sell these buses on auction, it could recover approximately \$153,000.³⁸

Exhibit 12-26

The District Maintains a Large Inventory of Spare Buses

Category	Bus Inventory
Buses in daily service	518
Spare buses assigned to substitute drivers	20
Regular spare buses	32
Emergency spare buses/ reserve fleet (1990 and 1991 buses)	147
Buses up for bid/ Special reserve fleet (1988 buses)	85
Total district buses	805
Regular spare bus ratio (excluding special reserve and emergency buses)	10%
Spare bus ratio (excluding special reserve fleet)	38.41%

Source: School District of Lee County 2002.

³⁷The average sale price for 38 buses aged 12 years old that the district sold in a joint auction with Lee County in November 1999 was \$2,500. A sales price of \$4,000 is deemed achievable if the district holds a private auction, as buses are between 11 and 12 years old.

$(805 - 85 - (518 \times 1.16) = 119 \text{ buses}) 119 \text{ buses} \times \$4,000 \times 90\% (10\% \text{ private auction fee expenses}) = \$428,400.$

³⁸ The average sales for 69 buses over 12 years old that the District sold in an auction held together with Lee County in November 1999 were \$1,600. A sales price of \$2,000 is deemed achievable if the district holds a private auction.

$85 \text{ buses} \times \$2,000 \times 90\% (10\% \text{ private auction fee expenses}) = \$153,000.$

The district should implement a standard bus replacement schedule

The school board has not set a clear policy on the replacement of school buses. Risk Management and the Finance Departments have requested a replacement policy of 10 years which is in agreement with DOE's recommended 10-year bus replacement cycle, and typical of Florida school districts. The Department of Education's recommended 10-year replacement cycle was based on three reasons: safety, specification and design, and economy and efficiency. However, many school districts in Florida have extended their bus replacement schedule beyond 10 years, based on the fact that new buses have longer operating lives due to improvements in the design and durability of major components (engines and transmissions).³⁹ For example, in 1996 the Hillsborough District School Board adopted a 15-year bus replacement cycle (12 years regular use and three years use as a daily spare).

District staff reported that the Transportation Department keep buses in service for 10 to 12 years, with older buses used as spares. As illustrated in Exhibit 12-27, the district has a significant number of buses (316 or 39.4% of the bus fleet) that are 10 years or older. Only 29 of these buses are used in daily service to cover regular routes and another 47 are used as ready spares. Buses between 11 to 12 years old are classified as reserve fleet; that is, they are available to be used as spares, or they can be sold. Buses that are older than 14 years are not used and are currently up for auction. (See action plan 12-6 for reducing of spare bus ratios)

The director of transportation believes that setting a 12-year replacement schedule would be cost efficient to the district while sufficient maintenance and safety policies will ensure the buses can transport safely. ValienteHernandez P.A. estimates that setting a 12-year replacement schedule would be cost efficient as district buses average approximately 17,000 miles annually. By keeping buses on a 12-year replacement cycle, the district would utilize close to 80% of the bus engine life capacity.⁴⁰ The district should also review their replacement policies and schedule every three years, as the buses with improved engine and transmission life cycles are phased into service.

Exhibit 12-27

School District of Lee County's Bus Fleet Has Many Overage Buses

Age in Years	Number of Buses	Percentage of Total	Usage
14	85	10.56%	Special reserve fleet
12	110	13.66%	Reserve fleet
11	48	5.96%	Reserve fleet
10	76	9.44%	47 spares; 29 in daily service
9	104	12.92%	In daily service
8	0	0.00%	In daily service
7	139	17.27%	In daily service
6	0	0.00%	In daily service
5	28	3.48%	In daily service
4	18	2.24%	In daily service
3	55	6.83%	In daily service
2	26	3.23%	In daily service
1	57	7.08%	In daily service
<1	59	7.33%	In daily service
Total	805	100%	

Note: Number of Buses includes daily service and spares and the Age in Years is established by the year they were purchased.

Source: Lee County Transportation Department, Inventory Listing May 2002.

³⁹ Expected engine life cycles (DT-Ford 466 engines) of large diesel transit type C and D buses, purchased during the last five years, are estimated at 400,000 to 450,000 miles. Prior to that expected engine life cycles of these buses were estimated at 250,000-300,000 miles.

⁴⁰ 17,000 miles x 12 years / 275,000 miles engine life = 74.18%.

If the district sets a formal 12-year replacement schedule, the district must strictly adhere to this policy to be cost effective. The district will only have to replace 216 buses over the next five years, at rate of 43 buses a year. Considering that the average number of buses replaced during the last two years is 58 ($57+59=116/2=58$), and that budgeted capital outlay for the next four years is equal to the previous two years (approximately \$3.9 million per year), the district plans on replacing 15 buses more than necessary. If the district strictly adheres to a 12-year replacement policy, the district can save approximately \$871,350 in capital outlay each year over the next five years.⁴¹ For the ensuing five years, the district will then replace only 240 buses at rate of 48 buses a year. Alternatively, if the district set a formal 10-year bus replacement policy, the district will have to replace 319 buses over the next five years. This equates to approximately 64 buses per year or an additional annual capital outlay of \$348,540.⁴²

We recommend the district consider setting a formal replacement policy, and consider the cost-effectiveness of a 12-year replacement cycle. Additionally, the district should review their replacement policy and schedule every three years, to possibly extend the replacement schedule as buses with improved engine and transmission life cycles are phased into service. Extending the replacement schedule can produce substantial savings by reducing the number of buses purchased each year. As part of the evaluation, the district would need to analyze the different variables that impact the life cycle of the current fleet such as safety, specification and design, and economy and efficiency. Alternatively, if the district decides to retain its 10-year usage plan, it will need to increase funding to approximately \$348,540 annually over the next five years.

Exhibit 12-28

Formalizing and Adhering To 12-Year Replacement Policy Could Save the District \$4,356,750 in the Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Savings	\$871,350	\$871,350	\$871,350	\$871,350	\$871,350
Cumulative Cost Savings	\$871,350	\$1,742,700	\$2,614,050	\$3,485,400	\$4,356,750

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Long-term growth projections are not used in determining bus purchases

As shown in Exhibit 12-27, bus purchases during previous cycles (as evidenced by large purchases in one year and none in the next) were not based on a systematic method, which evaluated the needs and future growth projections of the district. Over the past three years, improvement can be seen.

Projected student population by school is used to determine the demand for transportation services and the number of buses to be purchased. The amount of buses required to transport the projected student population is calculated based on current bus occupancy rates and current percentages of students requiring transportation. These calculations are only done on a year-to-year basis and multi-year projections are not used in determining bus purchase needs.

⁴¹ Assuming that the district will purchase the same mixture of buses (by capacity) in the last purchase cycle, of which the average cost of a bus was \$58,090 (\$3,195,000/55 buses), the district could save 15 buses x 58,090 = \$871,350 per year.

⁴² An additional $64-58=6$ buses will have to be purchased at \$58,090 (The average purchase price of a bus from the previous purchasing cycle) per bus; $6 \times \$58,090 = \$348,540$.

Repair cost thresholds should be set for buses and used with additional information for repair vs. replacement decisions

The Transportation Department maintains accurate records of its bus inventory, including the age, size, and type of buses in its existing fleet. Details of repairs performed on vehicles are maintained on a computerized system and are easily accessible to service shop staff. The district regularly reviews the condition and status of buses during the 20-school day inspection. Decisions on whether to maintain a bus in service are based on recommendations from the service shops after review of the age of the bus, frequency of repairs and estimated costs of repair.

The regional supervisor and supervisor of vehicle services must approve any district support vehicle facing major repairs above \$500 before the work is done. Although the district has established a threshold for repair costs on district support vehicles, no similar threshold has been set on school buses. We recommend the district establish a reasonable threshold which, in conjunction with the age of the bus, frequency of repairs and estimated costs of repair, can be used to alert the appropriate supervisor to review whether to retain a bus for daily service. We recommend a threshold of \$2,500, as this figure generally indicates significant repairs.

When a decision has been made to remove a bus from service, the district makes every effort to recover as much of the cost as possible. In some instances, buses are disassembled (“cannibalized”) for usable parts. Buses removed from service are then either sold at auctions or by bid process.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district reduce its spare bus ratio to no higher than 16% of its daily routes and sell the 1988 buses in an auction. Striving to achieve a spare bus ratio of no more than 10% of its daily routes, the district should also annually review of the ratio of needed spare buses, taking into consideration the frequency of breakdowns, the average downtime of buses, the average buses on a 20-day inspection cycle and the peak demand for activity buses once improvements are made to Transportation East.*

Action Plan 12-15 shows the necessary steps to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district sets a formal policy on the replacement of its buses and then strictly adhere to the policy. As part of this strategy, we recommend the district consider the cost-effectiveness of a 12-year bus replacement schedule. Additionally, the district should review their replacement policy and schedule every three years, in view of the possible extension of the schedule as buses with improved engine and transmission life cycles are being phased into service. Extending the replacement schedule can produce substantial savings by reducing the number of buses that need to be purchased each year. As part of the evaluation, the district would have to analyze the different variables that impact the life cycle of the current fleet such as safety, specification and design, and economy and efficiency.*

Action Plan 12-16 shows the necessary steps to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district coordinates efforts with the student assignment office to project the number of additional buses needed to accommodate future growth, the purchase of these buses, and their incorporation into the Transportation department’s five-year plan.*

Action Plan 12-17 shows the necessary steps to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district establish a reasonable threshold, which, in conjunction with the age of the bus, frequency of repairs and estimated costs of repair, can be used to alert the appropriate supervisor to review retention of buses for service.*

Action Plan 12-18 provides the steps to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 12-15**Immediately Reduce The Spare Bus Ratio To No More Than 16% Of Daily Routes. Targeting A 10% Spare Bus Ratio, Perform Annual Reviews To Identify Efficient Operating Levels**

Strategy	Set an immediate cap of 16% of daily routes for the number of spare buses maintained by the district. Target a 10% reserve and review spare bus ratios annually.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of transportation and assistant superintendent for operational support services should formulate the new policy and submit new policy wording to the superintendent and school board for approval. Step 2: Change standard operating procedures to reflect immediate changes in the reserve ratio. This should include an evaluation of all the buses in the reserve fleet and buses used on routes to determine the estimated future useful lives of each bus. Preference should be given to keeping buses with low repair frequencies, low mileage and superior physical condition. Step 3: Plan a scheduled reduction in the new school bus purchases to reflect the change without radically increasing the spare fleet. Step 4: Auction off the districts special reserve buses and reserve buses (as determined above) on a private auction. Step 5: Auctions should be widely advertised to maximize returns. Extend invitations to known buyers could also be effective. Step 6: Perform annual evaluations of the spare bus ratio needed to operate current and expected routes. This evaluation should include estimating the following: • The frequency of breakdowns • The average downtime of buses • The average buses on a 20-day inspection cycle • The peak demand for activity buses effective • Maintenance support capacity from Transportation East Step 7: Revise operating procedures and follow actions as indicated in steps 2 to 6
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; superintendent and school board
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation could result in a one-time cost recovery of \$428,400. Additionally, the district would recover approximately \$153,000 by selling the special reserve buses on a private auction. Additional annual savings will accrue to the district in reduced maintenance costs.

Action Plan 12-16**Establish A Formal Bus Replacement Policy and Adhere To the Scheduled Purchases**

Strategy	Consider the cost/ benefit of a 12-year replacement schedule. Establish a formal replacement policy, also requiring a review of bus replacement schedules every three years, and adhere to the scheduled purchases.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns to the director of transportation and the chief financial officer the responsibility of carrying out a cost-benefit review of a 12-year bus replacement schedule, and to perform review of the schedule every three years. Step 2: Part of the assessment should include an analysis of all the variables that impact the life cycle of the current fleet such as safety, specification and design, average expected life cycle of engines and transmissions and economy and efficiency. The assessment could also include consultations with the Hillsborough and the Miami-Dade school districts, and with DOE

Student Transportation

	Step 3: If a 12-year bus replacement schedule results more cost-effective, the director of transportation and assistant superintendent for operational support services prepares a report including the cost savings and presents to the superintendent and school board for approval. Maintaining a 10 year replacement cycle will require the district purchase an additional 6 buses annually (in addition to the ones already budgeted), funding would have to be increased to approximately \$348,540 annually over the next five years. Step 4: The related school board policy is modified contingent upon Step 1. Step 5: As mentioned in action plan 12-6, recommendation 1, as buses are removed from service and replaced, they should go to auction to recover as much cost as possible. Step 6: The director of transportation and director of purchasing department should review the purchasing schedule on yearly basis and schedule replacement purchases accordingly.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; chief financial officer; director of purchasing, superintendent and school board
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Future annual savings over the next five years, based on 12-year replacement schedule, could amount to \$4,356,750.

Action Plan 12-17

Coordinate efforts between student assignment office and transportation department to incorporate long-term growth projections into future bus purchase plans

Strategy	Coordinate efforts with the student assignment office to project the number of additional buses needed to accommodate future growth, the purchase of these buses, and their incorporation into the Transportation department's five-year plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns to the director of transportation the responsibility coordinate the projection of the number of additional buses needed to accommodate future growth with the student assignment office. Step 2: The director of transportation obtains future student growth projections from the manager of the student assignment office and estimates the additional buses needed to accommodate the future growth. In estimating future buses purchases for growth the following should be considered: • Current and future bus occupancy benchmarks • Future % of student population requiring transportation • Additional schools and their locations Step 3: The director of transportation includes bus purchases for growth in the transportation annual budget and 5 year projections and after approval by the assistant superintendent for operational support services presents budgets and projections to the capital planning committee. Step 4: The capital planning committee reviews all budgets and projections feasibility and plans budgeting requirements before submitting these to the superintendent and school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; manager of the student assignment office; capital planning committee; superintendent and school board
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-18**Establish A Reasonable Threshold That, In Conjunction With The Age Of The Bus, Frequency Of Repairs And Estimated Costs Of Repair, Can Be Used To Alert The Appropriate Supervisor To Review Buses In Service**

Strategy	When a bus nears two years to the end of its life cycle (replacement cycle) major repairs exceeding \$2,500 must be approved by the director of transportation and supervisor of garage operations
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of transportation establishes a policy that all bus repairs, greater than \$2,500 and the bus is within two years of its replacement date, need to be approved by both the supervisor for garage operations and director of transportation Step 2: The internal policy should be properly communicated to the regional service shops via memos, maintenance staff manuals and in existing training sessions Step 3: The director of transportation and supervisor of garage operations should follow the following steps as part of the ultimate decision to repair or remove a bus from service: Step 4: Review historical data including: • Mileage • Physical condition • Fuel consumption as compared to other buses in its class • Frequency of repairs • Nature of previous repairs Step 5: Other costs incurred on the bus remove a bus from service: Step 6: Projecting the expected increase in life cycle or longevity of the bus if said repairs are in fact made:
Who Is Responsible	Director of transportation; supervisor of garage operations; maintenance staff
Time Frame	February 28, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

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

Bus safety inspection records are complete and accurate, and ensure that 20-day and pre-trip inspections are conducted on every bus

The district's buses in service are inspected every 20 working days in accordance with the Florida School Bus Safety Manual, and in compliance with Rule 6A-3.017, Florida Administrative Code (FAC). Full-time certified inspectors, working from a standardized checklist from FDOE, perform these inspections. Since all buses are kept at bus compounds, scheduling the inspections is not a problem. They are performed during the day before morning runs and also between morning and afternoon runs. The district ensures that all 20-day inspections are performed on time, by distributing schedules to service shop personnel and installing them on the school bus. Drivers are also reminded of an upcoming inspection date by service shop staff and the regional dispatch unit.

Any problems identified by an inspector are referred to the maintenance staff for needed repairs. Department staff maintains and reviews the inspection records for completeness and accuracy. The most recent review of the district's 20-day inspections by FDOE was in the 1997-98 school year. The student transportation department had met 3 criteria out of the five reviewed, and has made appropriate corrective action on the remaining two.

Student Transportation

The district has implements a preventive maintenance program for timely routine servicing based on the vehicle's mileage. As part of every 20-day inspection, the service record and mileage for the last preventive maintenance service are reviewed.

Drivers perform the pre-trip inspection prior to leaving the compound and report any deficiencies to service shop for repair. The district has outlined clear and concise procedures for pre-trip inspections to bus operators in its driver's handbook. Daily pre-trip inspection logs must be turned into the regional office before the start of the following week.

The student transportation department employs several quality control procedures for vehicle maintenance, including the use of quality control staff to spot-check a selection of work orders. Additionally, shop foremen and chief mechanics perform random quality reviews on the service and repair work done at other regional service shops. All quality reviews are documented and maintained at the regional service shops.

Maintenance costs are charged back to other district departments

The student transportation department adequately tracks and charges back maintenance costs attributable to work performed for other district departments. The district uses a computerized Fleet Maintenance Program to document repairs and vehicle information. The system comprehensively analyzes the cost of repairs, parts usage, inventory control, stock levels and labor reports. Additionally, the program tracks the performance of school buses and other district vehicles based on year, make and model, engine size, and component usage. Printed reports of parts and labor usage, by department, for all maintained vehicles are used to bill services back to the appropriate departments.

Staff respond to bus breakdowns

The district has procedures to respond promptly to bus breakdowns. In the event of a breakdown, drivers call in to service using two-way radios. One mechanic takes a spare bus and switches buses with the driver so the route can be completed. Another mechanic follows in a service truck equipped with tools and parts. If the repair can be done on location, it is. If not, an approved towing company tows the bus to the main garage for repair.

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

The district's approach to fuel procurement and management is generally effective

The district has established several effective practices to manage the use and procurement of fuel. These practices include:

- effective fuel procurement practices
- fuel usage is carefully tracked
- fuel expenses are charged back to the user department
- fuel inventories are maintained at appropriate levels
- inspections of fuel tanks are regular and timely

A discussion of each of these issues follows.

Fuel procurement: The district purchases fuel through a competitive bid process that is re-bid annually, and is coordinated by the Procurement Department. Current purchasing arrangements are negotiated so

that all fuel rates are fixed for one year with an option to renew for an additional two years. The district also purchases and dispenses fuel to all other district vehicles and the Fire Department, Police Department and Emergency Medical Services, thereby ensuring savings through bulk discounts. Effective fuel procurement has assisted the district in arranging very favorable rates and the district also receives additional security at fueling sites, during early morning and night fueling.

Fuel-use tracking: The district uses the Petrol Vend System #2, a fully automated fuel system to track usage by vehicle and department at its four fueling stations spread geographically throughout the district. The fueling stations are accessible and conveniently situated. Two fueling stations are located at the regional bus compounds while two fueling tankers are stationed in areas where school buses perform daily runs. As the mobile tankers are in transit and in close proximity to most of the major routes in their zone, considerable time is saved with fueling between runs.

Bus drivers are assigned customized fueling cards and personal identity numbers (PIN). Fuel is dispensed only if the bus driver has entered his card and furnished all the details required by the screen prompts, which require the driver to enter:

- PIN
- Bus number
- Odometer reading
- Pump number

The following controls are also in place to ensure the security and accuracy of the systems records:

- Time limits are set for data capture and the dispensing of fuel
- All entries at the fueling stations are logged
- The system is separated from the district's mainframe and access is limited to the automation specialist. The director of transportation and regional supervisors have only "read alone"-access
- Secured cabling
- Effective logical access controls

Mobile tankers manually log all fuel dispensed to buses. Odometer readings, gallons, time and bus drivers' signatures of buses have to be completed. All mobile tanker sheets are reviewed and reconciled to daily measurements before the automation specialist enters the data in the system.

Although the computerized system does not automatically calculate miles per gallon or flag vehicles with excessive fuel consumption, an automation specialist manually reviews monthly fuel usage per vehicle and all abnormal fluctuations are investigated and reported to the Director of Transportation. Monthly data is exported to separate spreadsheets to perform the analysis. The automation specialist and Information Systems Department indicated that they expect to expand the systems capabilities to include fuel usage exception reports. Additionally, the automated fueling system is not integrated with the departments fleet maintenance system, which deters the use of annual fuel consumption per bus, in conjunction with maintenance costs and frequencies in repair, when disposal decisions are made.

Although daily measurements are taken from fuel tanks, they are only used for re-ordering and monitoring of environmental contamination at the district's one underground tank. Tank measurements, for the districts other three above-the-ground fuel tanks, are not reconciled to the computerized tracking system, on a daily basis.

Charge backs. All fuel usage is charged back to the user department. Doing so helps to prevent excessive fuel consumption because the managers of the using department have a strong incentive to

monitor fuel usage. If fuel usage for their departments exceeds an appropriate amount, the department's budget will be adversely affected.

Fuel inventories: The daily monitoring of usage and tank levels facilitates the management and timing of fuel purchases. Fuel stations have not run out of fuel, nor have deliveries been curtailed because tanks were too full. While the district has experienced low tank levels periodically, this has generally resulted from problems with tankers and delivery, not poor planning on the transportation department's part.

Inspections: The transportation department staff conducts routine inspections of all wells near their fuel tank to determine if fuel is leaking from tanks. Records of these inspections are documented and readily accessible on site. Additionally, the actual fuel tank measurement from the underground fuel tank is reconciled to the computerized tracking system, on a daily basis. Variances above a certain EPA prescribed limit are investigated.

Staff also cooperates with the state environmental officials who inspect each of the maintenance facilities, including the fueling stations, twice per year. The district has responded appropriately to issues raised during these inspections as evidenced by paperwork reviewed by the consultant.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district take steps to improve the computerized fuel tracking system to include daily exception reports on fuel consumption per bus to improve the tracking of fuel on a daily basis.*

Action Plan 12-19 shows the necessary steps to implement the recommendation.

- *We recommend the district integrate annual fuel consumption data with the Elke Fleet Maintenance database to assist with making bus disposal decisions.*

Action Plan 12-20 shows the necessary steps to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 12-19

Expand the Computerized Fuel Tracking System to Calculate Miles per Gallon per Bus and Compilation of Exception Reports on a Daily Basis	
Strategy	Expand the Petrol Vend System#2 to calculate miles per gallon per bus and compile daily exception reports of buses with unusually high fuel usage .
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns to the director of transportation the responsibility to coordinate the expansion of the Petrol Vend System#2 with the IS department. Step 2: The director of transportation, the automation specialist and the IS project coordinator establish the criteria that the Petrol Vend System#2 requires to track fuel usage and compile exception reports. The following should be considered: • Mileage per gallon • Mileage per gallon at which a bus (per certain type) will be flagged in an exception report • Information required on compilation of exception report Step 3: Planning and testing done by the IS department should be reviewed by the director of transportation and automation specialist, before implementation, to ensure all the objectives of the system expansion have been addressed Step 4: System and database information should be properly saved and monitored during implementation. The director of transportation and IS project coordinator should review final testing before closing the project.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; automation specialist and IS project coordinator

Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-20

Integrate Annual Fuel Consumption Data with the Elke Fleet Maintenance Database to Assist With Bus Disposal Decisions

Strategy	Integrate the annual fuel consumption data per bus with the Elke Fleet Maintenance database to assist with decisions for removing a bus from service.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns to the director of transportation the responsibility to coordinate the integration of fuel consumption data and the Elke Fleet Maintenance database with the IS department. Step 2: The IS project coordinator reviews the specifications and design of both the Petrol Vend System#2 and the Elke Fleet Maintenance System to determine compatibility Step 3: If it is determined that the data can be integrated (either manually or automated) into the Elke Fleet Maintenance database, the director of transportation, supervisor for garage operations and the IS project coordinator devise a plan for integration, including specification of data, planned testing and implementation. IS project coordinator implements integration plan. Step 4: If it is determined that the data cannot be integrated into the Elke Fleet Maintenance database, the director of transportation, supervisor for garage operations and IS project coordinator devise a plan to combine maintenance data and fuel consumption data which could assist the supervisor for garage operations and director of transportation in bus disposal decisions, i.e.: • Combination of annual data on spreadsheets • Filing of fuel consumption reports per bus at various the regional service shops that information can be readily available Step 5: The director of transportation and supervisor of garage operations reviews fuel consumption data in conjunction with age of the bus, frequency of repairs and estimated cost of repair, once a bus is flagged for a disposal review (per action plan 12-6, recommendation 4)
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor for garage operations and IS project coordinator
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

11

The district maintains facilities that are conveniently situated to support vehicle maintenance and other student transportation functions. However, some facilities are inadequate for efficient maintenance operations.

The district has an adequate number of bus compounds and garages. However, the district needs to assess the condition of some facilities.

The district stores all buses at six efficiently located compounds throughout the county. Four compounds are at the regional transportation offices, which have maintenance facilities. The other compounds are parking locations on two separate school sites, used to improve service to surrounding areas and save ride time and costs. The major advantage of this arrangement for mechanics and maintenance staff is that between morning and afternoon runs, the buses are easily accessible for inspections and other

Student Transportation

maintenance functions. As Exhibit 12-29 shows, the number of work bays to mechanics in Lee County is comparable to the peer districts.

The district has reviewed the transportation facilities in relation to the current growth projections. The district recently built an excellent facility that includes regional transportation offices, a training department, “state-of-the-art” maintenance facilities, fueling stations and a large bus compound.⁴³ It is located in the north-western part of the Lee County to adequately serve this expanding area. The district has also decided to expand facilities in the southern part of Lee County, which is projected to experience the highest growth and development in the next decade, by acquiring a large area near Six-Mile Cypress Parkway. Although development is not expected to start soon, this site is efficiently located to serve the area in the future.

Site visits to all four garages were conducted. As noted above, the Northwest garage has excellent service facilities available for the mechanics and support personnel. There are eight covered bays in the facility and a spare bay with a canopy when additional maintenance work is required. The facility is “state-of-the art” with cost saving equipment, including:

- A recycling area for all metals
- A recycling areas for all tires
- Antifreeze drums within EPA regulations
- Oil and water separator to recycle oils and fluids

ValienteHernandez P.A. observed the facility to be clean and very well managed. As noted, the service shop has implemented several procedures to extract harmful chemicals from waste and adequately store hazardous wastes in accordance with EPA requirements. A vendor retrieves and disposes waste oil, filters and contaminated fluids. The Transportation Department maintains procedures related to environmental compliance and clean-up procedures for spills. This information is readily available to all employees. Specialized tools were available to all mechanics and they were adequately stored.

The other garages, except for the service shop Transportation East, are adequate in all the areas indicated above.⁴⁴ Although the Transportation East site is permanent and centrally located to serve the needs of the service area, it consists of temporary structures and large metal storage containers, making the working conditions inadequate. The work bays are not covered with asphalt and consist of 5 canopies over dirt and gravel. The working areas are not sufficiently covered and transportation staff reports that maintenance operations cease for safety reasons during inclement weather. Safety features, such as eyewashes and oil grates, were inadequate, which present added safety risks to maintenance staff. Due to the lack of adequate facilities, some buses serving the surrounding area have to be maintained at other service shops. The service shops staff does an excellent job in servicing the buses at the compound, within these limitations.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the inadequate facilities were due not to a lack of effort by the Student Transportation Department to improve working conditions, but to the lack of funding. Florida law and governmental policies only allows upgrades to current support facilities after targeted student to classrooms ratios are achieved. The district has acknowledged the inadequate facilities and recently included approximately \$2 million funding, in their five-year capital budget (2003-08), to upgrade the facility. Despite the budget allocation, the district had not yet developed a detailed construction plan to ensure this repair facility is properly upgraded.

⁴³ During the 1996 -1997 school year.

⁴⁴ 3291 Buckingham Road, Ft Myers 33905.

All the districts service centers, except for Transportation East, have adequate personnel to perform data entry, and documentation and record storage.⁴⁵ All work orders, detailing the date and time, parts, labor hours and location are entered and maintained on computerized database (Elke Fleet Maintenance System) at the various sites. Parts, tires and other stored equipment are also electronically documented.

Exhibit 12-29

Number of Work Bays to Mechanics Is Comparable To Peer Districts (In Descending Order)

School District	Total Number of Mechanics	Number of Work Bays	Ratio of Work Bays to Mechanics
Polk	33	35	1.06
Lee	37	39	1.05
Pasco	21	22	1.05
Brevard	22	21	0.95
Seminole	22	19	0.86
Volusia	20	16	0.80
Peer Average	23.6	22.6	0.94

Source: *Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles*, 2002, for 2000-2001, Department of Education, peer district questionnaires, and ValienteHernandez P.A.

Bus compounds are securely fenced and vehicle routing and parking options are clearly marked

All vehicle centers are securely fenced and locked. Vehicle routing and parking options are adequately marked. The Northwest and Central bus compounds are adequately lighted and equipped with loudspeakers. The service center at Transportation East is not adequately lighted. The district has experienced problems with theft at this center, which was resolved by locking all tires and tools in metal containers. Bus operators, as instructed, securely park their vehicles in designated areas within the compounds. Operators who wait outside a compound for their next run are required to securely park and lock the vehicles at designated schools, satellite compounds or safe locations along the route.

Bus compounds located at school sites are patrolled by security personnel during the day, while the bus compound at Transportation Central is patrolled on weekends.

Recommendations

- *We recommend working conditions at the service center Transportation East be improved. The district needs develop a plan to build adequate facilities, within their limited funding, which should include:*
 - *Asphalt paving of the entire area*
 - *Adequate roof shelter or other rain, sun and wind protection*
 - *Metal insulated structures to cover the full working area*

Action Plan 12-21 provides the steps to implement these recommendations.

⁴⁵ Due to inadequate facilities, all support functions are performed at the Central transportation center.

Action Plan 12-21

Develop a Plan to Improve Working Conditions at Service Center Transportation East	
Strategy	Develop a plan to improve working conditions at service center Transportation East
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns the responsibility to establish a plan to improve working conditions at the service center, to the director of transportation. Step 2: The director of transportation, supervisor of garage operations and head mechanic of Transportation East devise a short-term and long-term plan to improve the working conditions at the service center. The plan should outline all expenditures and justification thereof. Step 3: The short-term plan should include: • Increasing the length of concrete work pads to accommodate the full length of a bus • Extension of the metal shelters to cover the entire bus • Installation of new safety features, such as eyewashes and oil grates. • Securing a surplus portable with restroom facilities to be used as an office and break/lunchroom for mechanics. Use existing building strictly for parts and storage. • Paving of parking lot Step 4: The long-term plan should include a site needs assessment and design to accommodate current and anticipated needs including garage bays, parts storage and employee facilities. Step 5: The plan should then be reviewed by the assistant superintendent and capital planning review committee before submitting these to the superintendent and school board for approval. The plan should stress the urgent need for a facility upgrade and all improvements and costs involved.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation, supervisor for garage operations, capital planning committee, superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	Development of plan: December 2002; Implementation of short-term phase: January 2003; Finish long-term plan: June 2004.
Fiscal Impact	The planning can be accomplished with existing resources. The district has budgeted for the facility in its five-year capital outlay projections.

12 The district maintains effective vehicle maintenance staffing levels and provides skills-training support for maintenance personnel.

Vehicle maintenance staffing ratios is among the highest compared to peer districts.

The district's staffing, measured by the number of buses in daily service divided by the number of employees in the vehicle maintenance function, has a higher ratio when compared to peer districts.⁴⁶

As shown on Exhibit 12-30 below, data from 2000-2001 indicates that the district's maintenance workers serviced an average of 12 buses per worker. The lowest in the peer group was 8.24, the highest 13. This ratio indicates that district maintenance staff maintain more buses than its peer district counterparts. In addition to buses, the district's personnel also maintain all district-owned vehicles.

⁴⁶ These figures received from DOE do however not reflect the number of spare buses that the maintenance employees must service.

Exhibit 12-31 shows the district's staffing ratios per vehicle service center if spare buses and other district vehicles are included. A reasonable total bus ratio to mechanics is 20:1, and 40:1 for all other vehicles.⁴⁷ As shown in Exhibit 12-31, based on these standards, the district's maintenance staffing levels are generally adequate. The district is clearly understaffed at the Transportation East service center, with a bus to mechanic ratio of 35:1. This is due to the lack of adequate facilities, as previously mentioned, which cannot accommodate more than four mechanics.

The director of transportation has indicated a current shortage of mechanics, due to high staff turnover, as wages are insufficient to accommodate escalating medical insurance premiums and in comparison to surrounding districts and industry. Due to vacancies, there are currently 32 mechanics on staff compared to 37 in 2000-01. The district compares wage information for service mechanics in adjacent school districts and for local industry and is currently using the information in negotiations. As Exhibit 12-32 shows, the district's starting wages are below those of its peers, surrounding districts and local industry.

Exhibit 12-30

Maintenance Staffing Ratios In 2000-01 Are Among The Highest Compared With Peer Districts (In Ascending Order)

School District	Buses in Daily Service	Mechanic Positions	Other Fleet Maintenance Positions	Buses Per Maintenance Employee
Volusia	239	20	9	8.24
Pasco	301	21	13	8.85
Polk	469	33	14	9.98
Brevard	354	22	12	10.41
Lee	527	37	6	12.25
Seminole	342	22	4	13.15
Peer Average	341	23.6	10.4	10.49

Source: *Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles* 2002, for 2000-2001; DOE; and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Exhibit 12-31

Current Maintenance Staffing Levels for Each Vehicle Service Center

Vehicle Service Center	Total Buses Per Maintenance Employee	Total Buses and Other District Vehicles Per Maintenance Employee
Transportation Northwest	22.88	24
Transportation East	35	37.5
Transportation Central	15	38
Transportation South	22	24.5

Source: School District of Lee County 2002 and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

⁴⁷ These standards were developed by Charles Long of Common Sense Management, a consulting firm that focuses on school bus fleet maintenance systems.

Exhibit 12-32

Starting Wages For Entry-Level Service Mechanics Are Low Compared To Peer Districts, Surrounding Districts and Local Industry (In Ascending Order)

School district	Starting wage per hour
Lee	8.18
Brevard	8.78
Pasco	9.25
Volusia	10.65
Seminole	12.31
Polk	16.35
NEIGHBORING DISTRICTS	
Charlotte	8.95
Collier	12.95
LOCAL INDUSTRY	
Firestone	9.00
Sam Galloway	9.00
Peer District, Surrounding Districts and Industry Average	10.80

Source: School District of Lee County 2002, Peer District Questionnaire.

Limited incentive plans exists

Mechanics that are certified in more than one area receive an annual supplement of \$186.17, but do not receive pay class increases based on additional certifications. The district also does not reimburse mechanics for additional certifications. Maintenance workers are required to furnish their own hand tools. The district does not provide an annual allotment for these tools, but does replace them if stolen on district property.

Vehicle maintenance staff receive training

The district requires all mechanics to have the five-year FDOE School Bus Certification. As mentioned, mechanics with more than one certification are paid an annual supplement, but do not receive any further incentives for self-improvement and resulting increased productivity.

The district encourages all maintenance staff to improve current skills and familiarize themselves with emerging technology and techniques. The district sends all vehicle maintenance staff for training workshops conducted by the FDOE and the Florida Association for Pupil Transportation. (FAPT). These workshops are normally held in the summer and provide invaluable training and additional skills to employees. Additionally, mechanics also attend workshops organized by various companies such as bus manufacturers *International*, *Thomas* and *Blue Bird*. Participation is rotated among the mechanics.

The district also provides regular in-service training to vehicle maintenance staff on district maintenance policies and topical maintenance procedures in a multitude of ways, such as:

- Training workshops
- Distribution of district inspection, safety and hazard policies
- Distribution of DOE technical assistance notes
- On site re-inspections by district trainers
- Internal training memos
- District newsletters

- Employee quizzes and tests

Employees can also complete voluntary questionnaires to provide feedback on training and suggest future training topics.

13 The district maintains the inventories of parts, supplies, and equipment needed to support student transportation functions, balancing immediate need and inventory costs.

Parts inventory is adequate and secure

Student transportation staff has an inventory system that ensures the security and the adequacy of stock levels. The district attempts to maintain a “just in time” inventory of all parts and supplies. This inventory system helps to minimize storage costs, costs of investment in inventory and technical obsolescence.

Due to the lack of facilities, only minimal parts are kept at the Transportation East service shop, while all inventory records are maintained at the Transportation Central. The parts room at all four facilities have controlled access to keep inventory secure, and the parts and supplies foreman regularly monitors parts room operations and inventory records at all four locations. The district’s fleet maintenance software includes information on parts room inventory. When parts are released for use, they are checked out and tracked through the system and recorded on the vehicle work order. Monthly reports are generated detailing inventory on hand.

As previously mentioned, the district tracks monthly fuel inventory and has a schedule for fuel purchases. The amount of fuel dispensed is recorded on a fully automated fuel system, and fuel usage per vehicle is tracked.

The department uses state purchasing pool

The department participates in the State of Florida Department of Education’s School Bus Transportation Bus Purchase Program. This pooled purchase of buses allows the district to obtain a lower price than if bus prices were independently negotiated with vendors. The district also purchases its tires and oil filters under the state contract.

District utilizes competitive bids for some parts

The district requires three price quotes for expenditures greater than \$5,000. The district solicits competitive bids for purchases over \$25,000. District staff conducts an annual competitive bid for most high usage parts and supplies, such as batteries, brake shoes, brake linings, brake drums, recapped tires, seat covers, OEM parts, seat foam, petroleum products, injectors and pumps, strobes and bulbs, alternators and starters, seals, recycled antifreeze, and waste disposal.

Student transportation staff coordinates this process with the purchasing office. When the bid has been awarded, the parts and supplies foremen maintain a bid book that identifies all sources accepted through the bid process. Negotiated discounts and pricing are made as part of the process prior to signing an agreement with the selected vendor. The district has the option to extend the contract for an additional two-year period or to solicit new bids from vendors. The district informally conducts price comparisons for some services, such as towing, calling vendors and determining the best price.

Items are reviewed for price and performance, but warranty tracking and recovery could be improved

Vehicle maintenance staff evaluates purchased items for compliance with bid price, specifications and vendor performance. The parts and supplies foreman reviews all orders received to ensure that the correct parts were delivered and that the bid price agrees to the price on the invoice. When vehicles are sent to private vendors for repair, the work is inspected when the vehicle is returned.

One way to hold vendors accountable for satisfactory performance is by submitting warranty claims. However, warranty information is not maintained in the fleet maintenance system. This reduces the likelihood that all appropriate warranty claims are made. Instead, tracking parts under warranty on newly acquired buses is done by comparing the age of the bus to a list of standardized warranties. However, parts bought on bid or previously replaced are not easily tracked because a manual review of purchase history and possible warranties is required. It is therefore incumbent upon the mechanic and parts and supplies foreman to determine whether an item needing repair is under warranty. Despite department efforts to have appropriate warranty work performed, there is no assurance that cost of items under warranty are recovered by the district. Warranty work is performed at the district service shops after the dealer sends replacement parts. The dealer is then billed or credited for any in-house labor costs. For large parts, such as engines and transmissions, the bus is sent to the appropriate vendor for warranty repairs.

Recommendations

- We recommend the district expand the current fleet maintenance systems capabilities or develop a separate automated system that can track warranty information and life cycles of all parts purchased, to ensure that all possible warranty claims are processed*

Action Plan 12-22 provides the steps to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 12- 22

Expand current fleet maintenance systems or develop an automated system to track parts life cycle and warranty information	
Strategy	Expand the fleet maintenance system or develop an automated system to track parts life cycle and warranty information
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns to the director of transportation the responsibility to coordinate the expansion or development the fleet maintenance system to track parts life cycle and warranty information. Step 2: The IS project coordinator reviews the specifications and design of the Elke Fleet Maintenance System to determine if modification is possible. Step 3: If it is determined that the system can be modified, the director of transportation, supervisor for garage operations and the IS project coordinator devise a plan for modification, including specification of data, planned testing and implementation. The IS project coordinator implements modification plan. Step 4: If it is determined that the system cannot be modified, it should be researched whether cost efficient to: Develop a separate software system or maintain a basic spreadsheet to track parts life cycle and warranty information over a multi year period (this will require additional manual data input above the current fleet maintenance system); or

	Replace the current work order system that allows scheduling, life cycle cost tracking and complex queries and reports (Action plan 12-7 Recommendation 1 and 2 should also be considered in researching new system capabilities).
	Step 5: Dependant on which system is introduced, code and convert historical information into the new system
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; IS project coordinator
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The fiscal impact will depend upon whether the current system can be modified, or if a parallel warranty tracking system or replacement system is required.

Appropriate and Cost Effective Transportation

14 The technological and computer support for student transportation has improved significantly, but management oversight and efficiencies could also be improved.

Management information system produces reliable and timely expenditure information

Budget and expenditure information are received from the district's financial and accounting software, which maintains all transportation costs and are reported under a separate cost center. The student transportation staff reports that this information is received within seven days after month-end in a cost per code report. This provides a basis to develop the district's annual budget and for a monthly review of actual expenditures vs. budget information. The district's mainframe budget and purchasing files do not have a real-time electronic interface with the student transportation department's programs, but reports are downloaded and incorporated into word processing and spreadsheets to prepare the department's annual budget. The transportation budget includes student transportation costs for several cost categories: employee salary and benefits; insurance; travel; repairs and maintenance; fuel; tires; buses; etc.

The student transportation department also receives fleet maintenance reports payroll reports, and fuel reports from the various cost centers within the department, which it uses to reconcile to monthly cost per code reports.^{48, 49, 50} From the reports mentioned above, budget status reports are compiled by the director of transportation and transportation administrator and average monthly expenditure, cumulative monthly expenditure to date and action plans per cost center needed to maintain their budgets, are detailed.

Student transportation staff generates inter-departmental billings every month, which represent reimbursable costs for the student transportation budget. Typically, these charges are for vehicle maintenance and fuel expenses.

Recording and tracking staff data not computerized

The district does not maintain a computerized database that would enable it to record and track information related to transportation personnel. Performance data, such as employee evaluations, driver turnover and information on most successful recruiting mediums are also not tracked and summarized for

⁴⁸ These reports include: Parts and labor costs per bus (age, engine type, capacity type), other district vehicles, and credits charged to other departments.

⁴⁹ The student transportation department maintains its own payroll for the 803 staff it employs; reports include: wages per cost center, wage rates and hours worked by per employee, overtime wages and wages paid for activity trips trip.

⁵⁰ These reports include: monthly fuel usage per bus, fuels usage per department and credits charged to other departments.

management reporting. Most information related to training and certifications and personnel performance is manually recorded or maintained on spreadsheets. The department maintains a personnel file on each employee, which has sections for certifications, Florida Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) reports, required medical physicals, and annual evaluations.

Review of technological and computer needs not formalized

Although the student transportation department does not have a formal technology plan, the department and the district's Information System (IS) regularly review the efficiency of computerized applications within student transportation and assess the need for improvements within budgetary constraints.

The district successfully coordinated and implemented an automated routing and scheduling system during the past five years, necessitated by the increased complexity of routing resulting from implementing the school of choice plan. Due to an increasing overtime bill, inadequate payroll system to track overtime hours, and insufficient processes to manage driver absenteeism, the transportation department re-evaluated its payroll and tracking system. The department then implemented an automated payroll system in conjunction with the IS Department. This project is serving as a test for further automation of payroll systems within other district departments.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the student transportation department develop a technology plan that includes budget reporting, parts and fueling reporting and tracking of warranty information. This plan needs to be reviewed, updated and revised annually.*

Action Plan 12-23 provides the steps to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 12-23

Update Technology Plan	
Strategy	Develop a formal technology plan for the transportation department, which details current applications and future needs for specifically budget reporting, recording and tracking staff data, fuel reporting and warranty tracking.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation and director of IS department collaborates to develop an individual technology plan for the transportation department. Step 2: The technology plan should also specifically address the following areas, where technology improvements are needed: • Expansion of Petrol Vend#2 system to calculate miles per gallon and compile daily exception reports (Action Plan 12-7 Recommendation 1) • Integration of fuel consumption data with Elke Fleet Maintenance data to assist with bus disposal decisions (Action Plan 12-7 Recommendation 1) • Modification, addition or replacement of Elke Fleet Maintenance system to track parts life cycle and warranty information • Integration of budgetary reporting to the districts mainframe • Recording and tracking of staff data Step 3: The technology plan should include the following: • Measurable goals • Needs assessment • Funding plan • Technology acquisition plan

	• Staff training • Program evaluation
	Step 4: The technology plans are reviewed by the capital planning committee before submitting these to the superintendent and school board for approval
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; director of IS department; capital planning committee, superintendent and school board
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

15 **The district has not established benchmarks needed to introduce a student transportation accountability system.**

Mission statement and goals are defined, but the district has not developed these goals into measurable outcome-orientated objectives

The district has a clearly defined mission statement and goals for the student transportation program, but has not developed these goals into measurable outcome-oriented objectives. The mission statement and goals reflect the intent of the program but do not address appropriate benchmarks to measure the efficiency and expenditures of the program. District staff indicated that it measures its goals by responses from parents, the community, and staff. However these responses are not logged and summarized as part of management information.

The district should improve its selection of comparison districts

Student transportation staff makes informal comparisons of their performance and operational characteristics with those of other districts that the staff considers similar to the district.

The FDOE annually compiles uniform information on all districts and issues a report called: *Quality Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles* (generally referred to as *Q-Link*), which makes comparison and rankings of districts possible. *Q-Link* provides many vital statistics about the districts, including, but not limited to: the number of students, number of students transported, number of transportation staff, size of school bus fleet, and annual expenditures. It also provides useful background information on factors that influence student transportation (such as number of special schools, or whether court-ordered desegregations orders are in effect). For many of the information fields, *Q-Link* also provides ranking information, making it particularly useful for comparison.

Student transportation staff has identified 28 peer school districts for comparisons with Lee County. Staff selected these districts primarily because these districts all have similar court ordered or school of choice programs. Transportation department staff compares the district to its selected peers on data reported in the *Q-Link*, such as occupancy rate, funding levels, expenditures per mile, etc. on an informal basis. However, by selecting all districts with court ordered or school of choice programs, the district is comparing their transportation data to peer district averages that include districts with other very dissimilar traits to Lee County. Dissimilarities include:

- The geographic size of the district (square miles that school buses have to travel)
- The size of the school bus fleet
- The total number of employees in the transportation department
- The district's total population and student enrolment

The transportation department should select comparable districts not only in terms of court ordered and school of choice programs, but also in terms of number of students served, bus fleet size, geographic size

and challenges (coastal nature). The district should also select at least two peers that operate exemplary transportation programs.

Benchmarks not established

Benchmarks are expectations of how well an activity or function, such as student transportation, should perform. When a public entity tracks its actual performance over time against a benchmark, it can use this information to monitor performance, improve program operations, and to provide accountability to the public. The district has not adopted any cost-comparison or other performance benchmarks for student transportation. Although the district does compare *Q-link information* to selected peer districts and peer district averages, the district has not developed separate justifiable benchmarks based on the different characteristics of Lee County.

One of the results of omitting such an important element of managerial responsibility is that key information on performance and costs are not monitored consistently over time. This condition limits the staff's ability to provide decision-makers, such as the superintendent and members of the school board, with objective information on the performance and cost-efficiency of the student transportation program.

The absence of benchmarks to evaluate program performance and cost is a district wide issue that is not limited to the student transportation area. Reporting on performance indicators should be an annual exercise and presented to the school board in a "report card" format. Doing so would provide the school board detail on how well the department is performing in comparison with the established benchmarks.

Recommendations

- We recommend the transportation department should be more selective in choosing comparison peer districts, looking not only for districts that operate court ordered or school of choice programs, but also looking for districts that are demographically similar to Lee County. Additionally the transportation department should choose comparison districts that engage in exemplary transportation practices that the department can adopt. This will ensure that the department is not only measuring itself against districts with similar characteristics, but it will also give the department insight into new commendable practices that have been implemented in similar districts.*

Action Plan 12-24 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations

- We recommend student transportation staff, in consultation with the Superintendent and approved by the members of the school board, develop a list of performance indicators that would provide management, members of the school board and general public with a broad, "big picture" understanding of student transportation performance for the year.*
We further recommend that for each performance indicator, a performance target should be identified against which actual performance will be compared. Periodic reporting on these performance indicators is required, at least annually, and presented by the Superintendent to the school board in a "report card" format that would identify each performance indicator, briefly describe its significance, identify both the performance target and the actual performance, and include additional comparisons and comments as appropriate.

Action Plan 12-25 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations

Action Plan 12-24

Select peer districts that are more demographically similar to Lee County to compare transportation operations

Strategy

Select peer districts that are more demographically similar to Lee County to compare transportation operations.

Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns the responsibility of selecting peer districts that are similar to Lee County to the director of transportation. Step 2: Review other school Florida school districts to identify those that have court ordered bussing or school of choice programs and are demographically similar to Lee County. This criteria should include at least: • The number of students served; • The size of the bus fleet; • The average bus occupancy; • The population density of the district; • The size and nature of the County (coastal); and • The average mileage per year. Step 3: Review other Florida school districts to identify those that are performing at a exemplary level. Select at least two that are similar to Lee County. If no districts are found to be at an exemplary level, the district may wish to consider exemplary districts in other states. Step 4: Begin collecting and monitoring data related to transportation from existing data on comparison and exemplary districts
Who Is Responsible	Director of transportation, in consultation with assistant superintendent for operational support services
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-25

Develop performance indicators, benchmarks, and a “report card” style annual report for the school board

Strategy	Develop a list of performance indicators that would be useful to the school board and general public to provide accountability for student transportation performance. Each performance indicator should be associated with a performance target to evaluate performance, and a “report card” style annual report should be made to the school board.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review benchmarks that are appropriate, feasible, and useful for both student transportation operations and vehicle maintenance. Selected benchmarks should support the district strategic plan. Staff should consider the following list of performance measures for student transportation operations: • Cost per mile for school bus operations • Average bus occupancy for regular, ESE and magnet transportation • Percentage of buses that are spare buses • Percentage of courtesy students served • Ratio of bus drivers to substitute drivers, bus attendants and number of routes served • Driver and other employee turnover • Failure to comply with pick-up or delivery schedules within prescribed time ranges (late arrivals), measured as incidents per month • Customer service evaluation rating as good, as measured by routine customer service surveys of principals and parents • Number and percentage of students who have scheduled bus ride times that exceed the district’s standards • Number of all accidents, measured as incidents per 100,000 miles • Parent complaints, measured by number of phone calls and categorized by type of complaint (on-time, discipline, safety concerns, vehicle maintenance, driver performance, etc.)

	Step 2: For vehicle maintenance staff should consider the following performance measures. • Down time of buses, measured as days out of service • Number of breakdowns per 100,000 miles • Maintenance cost for each vehicle, measured against average for all comparable vehicles • Turnaround time for scheduled and corrective maintenance by type of vehicle • Vehicle maintenance hours as a percentage of total hours charged • Vehicle to mechanics ratio • Average maintenance cost per mile by type of school bus • Safety inspections, measured as a percentage of all repair work time. Other performance indicators may be selected based on local interest and data availability. Step 3: For all performance measures that are selected, devise a reporting mechanism and frequency appropriate for that particular measure. Step 4: Collect information on actual performance and report on it at selected intervals. Step 5: Establish performance standards for future school years.
Who Is Responsible	Director of transportation, in consultation with assistant superintendent for operational support services
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

16 The district does not adequately coordinate long-term planning and budgeting for student transportation within the district.

Budget planning

Student transportation staff conducts a meticulous review of all budget categories, including an analysis of prior budget variances, as part of the budget development process. Interviews with student transportation managers and a review of budget documentation indicate that the impact of decisions made is considered as part of the district's decision making and long-term school planning process.

Program growth projections are coordinated with appropriate instructional offices in projecting transportation needs for the coming year. These programs include the various magnet programs, ESE, opportunity scholarships, and others.

The potential of budget reductions is systematically considered as part of the budget process, but the cost implication of current and alternative transportation policies are not presented to the board.⁵¹ Although recommendations such as moving from a "three-tier" to a "two-tier" transportation system have been made to the board, alternatives suggestions for recommendations are not systematically analyzed and presented to the board.

Operational planning does not adequately consider transportation issues

According to transportation staff, the district's planning staff does not regularly consult with transportation when planning for future schools.⁵² Although student transportation effects safety areas,

⁵¹ Example: cost implications of the current school of choice program, magnet school transportation and reimbursement of transportation costs to parents of isolated areas.

⁵² The transportation department had only two meetings to plan for future schools, with district staff over the past 10 years.

such as bus ramps and traffic flow, the department's needs, concerns, opinion and costs are not considered. As previously mentioned (Best Practice 5), transportation staff is also not included in the long-term planning and selection of potential ESE centers.

Transporting students to and from school is a major activity and significant expense to the district. When planning for school locations and similar considerations, the opinions of the transportation management need to be considered. For example, allocating a school in a rural area may be more cost effective for land costs; however, these cost savings may be quickly overcome by high transportation costs.

Transportation staff consults with community planners to identify the impact community growth and development will have on transportation dues to attendance boundary changes. Transportation staff consults with local community and law enforcement officials to determine the most appropriate loading/unloading zones, school bus routing issues and minimizing hazardous walking conditions.

Recommendations

- We recommend the district ensure that the Transportation Department is actively involved in planning for new school locations and design (prior to construction), selection of schools to become ESE centers and other actions the district takes to deal with significant changes in enrollment. The department needs to use the information it gathers from this process in its analysis of student transportation costs.*

Action Plan 12-26 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations

- We recommend the district should perform annual reviews of the cost implications of transportation policies and their alternatives. The policies for review should include the school of choice plan (in lieu possible amendments for the 2004-05 school year), ESE transportation, Magnet student transportation (including evaluation of the transfer-point system, reimbursement of transportation costs to parents), bell schedules (re-evaluation of "two-tier" system), and potential cost saving alternatives.*

Action Plan 12-27 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations

Action Plan 12-26

Involvement in District Planning	
Strategy	Involve Transportation Department management in the planning of new school locations and construction, selection of schools to become ESE centers and other actions the district takes to deal with enrollment changes.
Action Needed	Step 1: Include department management in school planning so they can provide input from a transportation point of view and be able to take planning assumptions into account in planning for future transportation needs.
Who Is Responsible	The director of transportation, ESE transportation supervisor (for selection of ESE centers) and those involved in district planning
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-27

Board Review of Transportation Policies and Alternatives	
Strategy	The district performs annual reviews of the cost implications of transportation policies and their alternatives.

Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services and the director of transportation annually prepare a report of the cost implications of transportation policies, all cost saving alternatives and their recommendations. Recommendations should include detailed justification. Step 2: The report should include the cost implications of the school of choice plan, ESE transportation, Magnet school student transportation and evaluate all possible cost saving alternatives. Step 3: The report and recommendations are presented to the superintendent and school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation, superintendent and school board
Time Frame	June 30, 2003, with Action Plan 12-1 Recommendations 4 – 9
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

17 The district monitors the fiscal condition of student transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and comparing them to the budget

Reviewing expenditures against budgets

According to transportation staff, reports are received from the finance department within seven days after the end of the month. The department can then respond promptly to all cost control issues identified from a review of the actual vs. budgeted expenditures. Reports generated by the department's various cost centers are used to review the reliability and accuracy of reports received from the finance department.⁵³ Thereafter, a budget status report is compiled, detailing comprehensive action plans for cost centers to maintain their budgets. Budget adjustments, when needed, are performed in accordance with the policies established by the chief financial officer.

The categories by which expenditures are reported are useful in decision-making analysis, as they are conducive for measuring costs, subdivision into cost drivers and proposing action plans based thereon.

The department reviews vehicle maintenance costs

Vehicle maintenance staff maintains "job cost" and "work orders" on an automated fleet maintenance program. This system is updated daily and generates reports detailing expenditure that is useful in analyzing and monitoring vehicle maintenance costs and maintenance activity.⁵⁴ Additionally, each district vehicle and bus has an individual folder detailing all the repairs and maintenance performed.

Reports are reviewed for unexpected maintenance activity, excessive costs and high costs associated with a particular age or type of bus. If further investigation is required, vehicle folders and physical conditions of buses are evaluated.

⁵³ Fleet maintenance reports, Fuel usage reports and payroll reports.

⁵⁴ The reports indicate parts and labor cost per bus for each make, model, engine and capacity type.

18 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.

FTE reporting is performed

Full time equivalent (FTE) counts of students transported are conducted twice during the school year, in October and February. Results of the surveys are summarized and reported to the state.

Several weeks prior to the counts, instructions and forms are sent to all bus drivers, monitors and their substitutes. After the counts, drivers hand their paperwork into their regional supervisors who review the counts for completeness and accuracy. The Internal Audit Department performs spot checks and reviews actual counts to ensure the information reported is accurate. Thereafter, the Routing Department compares counts to the students riding the particular buses, as indicated on the computerized routing and mapping program to validate the information.

19 The district has not studied the advantages of privatizing some or all student transportation functions.

Some vehicle maintenance services are contracted to outside vendors

Transportation Department staff informally compares their own costs with those of private vendors to identify maintenance activities that can be performed at a lower cost elsewhere. However, no formal and routine analysis is conducted.

The supervisor for vehicle support services indicated that he knows which services can be done at a lesser cost if outsourced. The district has concluded that certain repair and maintenance jobs, including transmission work and radiator rebuilding, are more cost effective when conducted through local vendors than performed in-house. In most instances, the Transportation Department does not have the facilities, equipment or know-how to perform those services. In addition, the district outsources towing services and hazardous waste disposal.

District staff conducts an inspection of any vehicle maintenance work performed by a private vendor to ensure quality control. These inspections are completed prior to authorization for payments for services rendered.

Although transportation managers assert that they know which services are more cost effective, no written cost comparison or savings estimates exist. During the past year, the district was approached by private vendors, *Laidlaw Education Services*, for privatization of transportation services. According to transportation staff, privatization was not deemed to be cost effective and no study has been performed since.

A cost analysis of the district's bus operations and maintenance function would provide the district with information to decide whether or not to outsource any bus operations, partially or completely. The district should conduct a thorough examination of the costs and benefits of contracting. Such a study should not only include an accurate computation of the costs of the in-house transportation services, but should also include a thorough market analysis to determine the availability and commitment of outside firms with the capital and expertise needed to provide a significant portion of the district's bus services. It would be appropriate for the district to develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to determine the market of

viable contract bus operation providers followed by a bid process for bus operations. Costs obtained from bids should be compared to the cost of in-house services on an on-going basis.

Recommendations

- *Develop key cost information and prepare a cost comparison of contracted vs. in-house bus operations and services to use as a basis for decision-making regarding the expansion contracted bus services. This analysis should include a request for qualifications (RFQ) to determine the market of viable contract bus operation providers followed by a bid process for bus operations and services to establish the costs of contracting.*

Action Plan 12-28 provides the steps needed to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 12-28

Compare Cost of District vs. Private School Bus Operations and Services	
Strategy	Develop key cost information and prepare a cost comparison of contracted vs. in-house bus operations and services to use as a basis for decision-making regarding the expansion contracted bus services
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent of operational support services assigns the responsibilities for the development of comparative cost information to the director of transportation Step 2: Develop a comprehensive analysis of the cost of district in-house bus operations. Step 3: Conduct a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to determine the market of viable contract bus providers followed by a bid process for bus operations. Step 4: Conduct a comparison of the cost of in-house bus operations to contracting for these services Step 5: Use the comparative analysis as a basis for expansion or contraction of contracted operations and services
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

20 The district annually reviews the student transportation program's organizational structure and staffing levels, but administrative layers and processes need re-evaluation.

The department's organizational structure is periodically is reviewed, but staffing levels and regional transportation center's administrative layers need to re-evaluated

The transportation department formally reviews its internal organizational structure and staffing levels during each budgetary process. The supervisors of each organizational unit within the transportation department provide feedback for the review. There is no evidence that transportation staff reviews and presents options to further flatten the department's organizational structure, nor does the staff compare itself with peer school districts or other benchmark organizations.

The director of transportation indicates that he compares the district's staffing levels with its peer districts using the *Q-Link* report. However, *Q-Link* data is always several years behind and it does not always provide enough detail to enable a proper assessment of staffing levels and organizational structure.

The organizational structure includes reasonable lines of authority and span of control given the responsibilities of each organizational unit, but staffing levels and the regional transportation centers' administrative layers needs to be re-evaluated. Exhibit 12-33 shows that student transportation has more supervisors in relation to employees to its peer district average. ValienteHernandez P.A. compared the organizational and staffing structure of the district's transportation department to its peers and found that the following areas should be evaluated for any duplication of function or under utilization of staff:

- Training and safety staff⁵⁵
- Routing specialist and data processors⁵⁶
- Assistants to the regional supervisors⁵⁷

Although the district has to evaluate staffing levels and job functions in the above areas, a reduction of staffing levels to peer district organizational structures, could result in annual savings of \$273,000 to the district.⁵⁸

Exhibit 12-33

The District's Ratio of Employees Per Supervisor Was Slightly Lower Than Its Peer Districts Average (in Ascending Order)

School District	Primary Supervisors	Clerical	Non-Supervisory Operations	Operations	Vehicle Maintenance	Total Staff	Total Employees per Supervisor
Volusia	15	10	11	392	29	457	30.47
Pasco	15	8	23	419	34	499	33.27
Lee	24	10	41	703	43	821	34.21
Brevard	13	10	13	419	34	489	37.62
Seminole	15	24	0	517	26	582	38.80
Polk	17	15	7	659	47	745	43.82
Peer Average	15	13.4	10.8	481.2	34	554.4	36.80

Source: Q-Link: Florida School District Transportation Profiles, 2002, for 2000-2001; DOE; and ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

Exhibit 12-34

Minimizing Administrative Layers and Staffing Levels Could Save the District \$1,365,000 Overt Next Five Years

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Saved	\$436,166	\$436,166	\$436,166	\$436,166	\$436,166
Cumulative Impact	\$436,166	\$436,166	\$872,332	\$1,308,498	\$1,744,664

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

⁵⁵ The Safety and Training department consists of five personnel, while most peer districts had two full-time staff, to train bus drivers and address safety concerns of students.

⁵⁶ The Routing and Scheduling Unit has four routing specialists and three data processors. Considering that the automated routing and mapping program has been working efficiently for the past three years, the district has to evaluate whether the reason for additional staff is because of the many requests for bus stop changes that the unit has to investigate throughout the whole school year.

⁵⁷ Four Regional Supervisors, are supported by six Assistant Supervisors.

⁵⁸ Possible reductions could account to: \$104,485 + \$123,690 + \$207,991 = \$436,166.

Safety and training department: two safety supervisors x \$39,280 x 1.33 x 2 = \$104,485.

Data processors: three staff x \$31,000 x 1.33 x 3 = \$123,690.

Assistants to regional supervisors: four transportation specialists \$39,096 x 1.33 x 4 = \$207,991.

Recommendation

- *We recommend a written review of the Transportation Department be conducted annually. This review needs to include comparisons of the district's staffing levels to selected peer districts and with established benchmarks. The results and findings of the review are to be reported to the school board.*

Action plan 12-29 provides steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district evaluate the current staffing levels in the Safety and Training Department, routing and scheduling unit and administrative layers of regional transportation centers. This evaluation should include analyses of workloads, duties, and responsibilities, and should include the use of staff questionnaires and interviews.*

Action plan 12-30 provides steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 12-29

Review of the Department's Organizational Structure	
Strategy	Conduct an annual review of the student transportation program's organizational structure and staffing level to minimize administrative layers and process.
Action Needed	Step 1: Update organizational chart to include all positions and lines of authority. Also review and update job descriptions. Step 2: Establish criteria and benchmarks to base review on. Step 3: Conduct annual review of department.
Who Is Responsible	The supervisor of transportation and assistant superintendent for business and support services.
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-30

Review of the current staffing levels of Safety and Training Department, Routing and Scheduling Unit and Regional Transportation Centers

Strategy	Review current staffing levels of the safety and training department, routing and scheduling unit and regional transportation centers to recommend minimizing of administrative layers
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent of operational support services and director of transportation review current staffing levels to determine whether administrative levels are minimized. Step 2: This analysis should include: • Evaluation of workloads, duties, and responsibilities of each staff member in the safety and training department, routing and scheduling unit and regional transportation centers; • The use of staff questionnaires and interviews to evaluate daily job functions and workloads; • Comparison to organizational structure and staffing levels of peer districts. Step 3: The assistant superintendent of operational support services and director of transportation prepare a report on staff structures and recommendation to minimize administrative layers and staff levels. The report is submitted to the superintendent and school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent of operational support services; director of transportation; superintendent and school board
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Minimizing administrative layers and staffing levels by eliminating two safety supervisors, three data processors and four transportation specialist could result in possible savings of \$436,166 annually

13

Food Service Operations

The food service program operates as a fiscally sound and generally efficient system. Its commitment to providing good nutrition for the district's students is perhaps best exemplified by the department's sanitation conditions, food handling staff training programs, and its sincere efforts to serve only top-quality food.

Conclusion

The School District of Lee County Food Service Department operates within its own resources and without financial assistance from the general fund. Program management has kept up with the latest trends in food service, federal regulations, and management practices and as such, has had several accomplishments during the last three years as shown in Exhibit 13-1. For example, management reviews cafeteria performance three times a year for every school. However, there are areas where the district can realize improvements. For example, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) evaluations have concluded that the district needs additional frozen food storage space. This problem still persists, since the district awarded an annual contract for approximately \$31,000 to store USDA donated foods. Indeed, food storage is one area that would benefit from a cost analysis. Also, the department's recent operating fund balance of \$7,697,211, while exemplary, is greater than the Florida Department of Education's guideline of a three month operating budget. District management has plans to address this issue.

Exhibit 13-1

The District Had Several Notable Food Service Accomplishments in the Past Three Years

In the past three years, the district has:

- Developed, tested, and implemented a food service manager's performance review program that monitors cafeterias and promotes continual improvement (tested in 2000, implemented in 2001, refined in 2002).
 - Established performance levels for school food service programs to use in areas such as meal participation and labor costs (completed in April 2002).
 - Installed the Computer Assisted Food Service (CAFS) program (completed in September 2001, networking completed in May 2002). This is used for point-of-sale and has potential to be used for other areas of food service.
 - Trained staff in the Serve-Safe sanitation program (August 2001).
 - Passed the School Meal Initiative review, which assesses compliance with nutritional standards (January - April, 2002).
 - Developed a Five-Year Strategic Plan for food service (completed August 2001, first stage implemented July 2002).
 - Established kitchen equipment standards and implemented a plan to bring schools into full compliance with these standards within five years (plan completed in 2001, budgeted funds increased in 2002).
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that:

Efficient and Effective Operation

1. The food service program is clearly defined for school staff and customers with a mission statement, operating policies, procedures, and performance expectations. (Page 13-7)
2. The district regularly reviews the food service program's organizational structure, however, program authority does not conform to federal law, state rule, and school board policy. (Page 13-8)
3. Food service employees receive comprehensive on-going training, which the department continually evaluates and updates. (Page 13-9)
4. While the district has taken steps to identify barriers to the food service program, action is needed to comply with competitive food sale rules. (Page 13-9)
5. The district has established cost-efficiency benchmarks to evaluate its food service program. (Page 13-11)
6. The district regularly evaluates the food service program based on established benchmarks, and implements improvements to increase revenues and reduce costs. (Page 13-12)
7. The district regularly evaluates the benefits of its food service operation and assesses alternatives for service delivery. (Page 13-12)

Financial Accountability and Viability

8. The program's budget is linked to and reflects departmental goals and projections. (Page 13-14)
9. The district's financial controls include on-going reviews of the program's financial and management practices. (Page 13-15)
10. The district accurately reports meals served by category. (Page 13-16)
11. The district regularly evaluates purchasing practices to decrease costs and increase efficiency. (Page 13-17)
12. The district has developed an effective inventory control system that is appropriate for its food service program, however, methods of delivery and storage of food items should be reviewed. (Page 13-17)
13. The district has a system for receiving, storing, and disposing of food, supplies, and equipment. (Page 13-17)
14. The district has a long-range plan for replacing equipment, but the program does not pay for all repair and maintenance costs. (Page 13-18)

Meal Preparation and Service

15. The district provides school meals designed to meet the nutritional needs of students. (Page 13-19)
16. The district's food production and transportation system ensures the service of high-quality food with minimal waste. (Page 13-20)

Safe and Sanitary Food Service Environment

17. The district follows safety and environmental health practices and regulations. (Page 13-20)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations —————

Implementing these recommendations has no direct fiscal impact, but will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the district's food service program.

Background

The School District of Lee County's (the district) food service program had total revenue of approximately \$18 million during the 2001-2002 school year, and served approximately 5.5 million lunches and 1.2 million breakfasts. The district manages the food service program at all 67 schools and provides services to three satellite locations. All students have an equal opportunity to participate in the program depending on their economic need as determined by USDA eligibility guidelines. Students either obtain their meals free, at a reduced price, or at full-price. The district participates in the *offer versus serve* option, giving all students the opportunity to select individual meal components while including minimum food components required as part of the USDA-approved program for reimbursable meals.

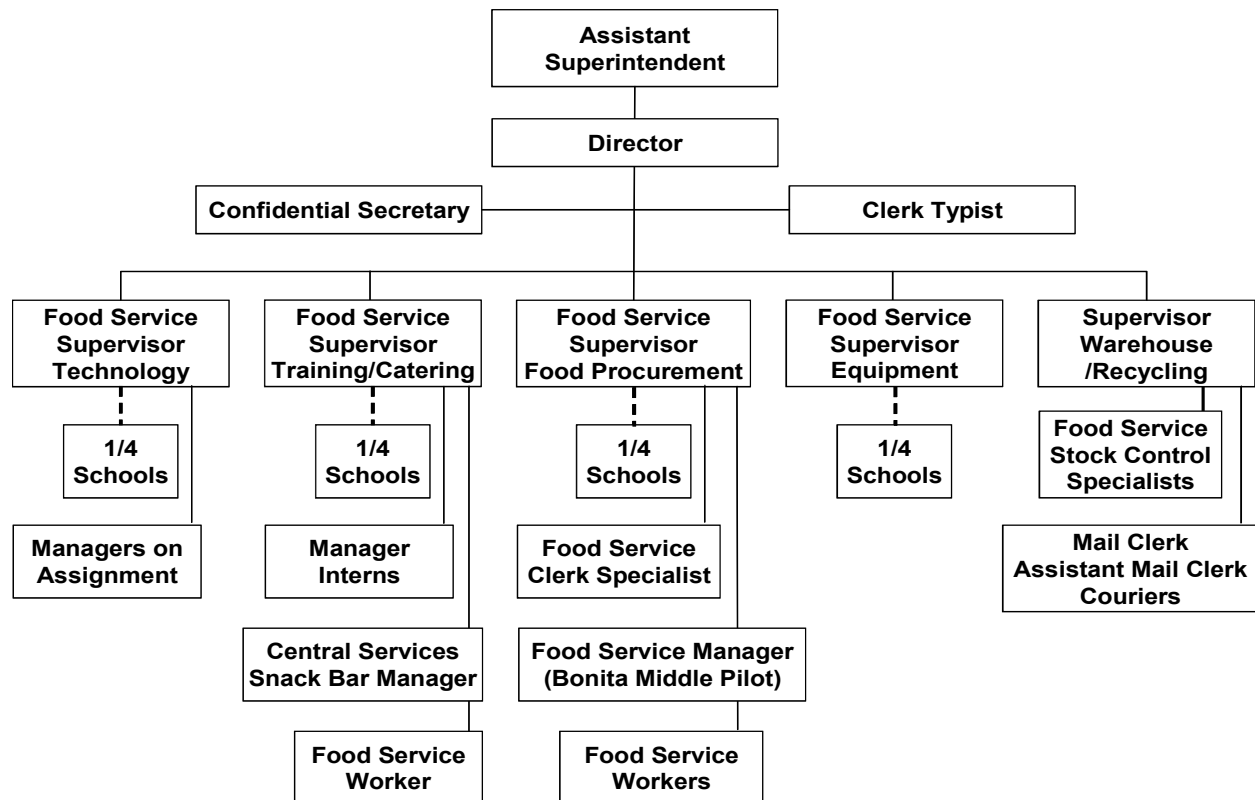
The district's food service program is funded for an average of 46,266 meals per day, which is equivalent to \$78,414 in federal reimbursement revenues. Exhibit 13-3 illustrates the food service program's revenues and expenses for the last three fiscal years.

Organizational Structure

As illustrated in Exhibit 13-2, the Director of Food and Nutrition Services manages the department's supervisors in five key areas: technology, training/catering, food procurement, equipment, and warehouse/recycling. With the exception of one pilot school, cafeteria-level food service managers and assistants have been hired by, evaluated by, and report to each respective school principal.

Exhibit 13-2

Food Service Organization Chart



Source: School District of Lee County.

Sources of Revenue

The food service program is funded through a combination of federal and state reimbursements, federally donated foods, and cash sales. As shown in Exhibit 13-4, for fiscal year 2000-01, federal and state reimbursements accounted for 56% of total program revenue. Cash sales represented 43% of revenue, with interest adding 1%. Food accounts for 37% of total expenditures and salaries and benefits account for 47% of total expenditures. These are generally accepted percentages for the school food services industry.

Fund Balance

According to the food service director, over the past twenty years, the food service department's leadership team has worked to ensure that the program is self-sufficient and has gradually added to the fund balance, increasing it from \$666,000 in 1982 to \$7,697,000 at the end of 2001. This fund balance represents a reserve that would cover 4.7 months of operation. The allowable fund balance amount by federal rule is three months of operating expenses or about \$4.9 million for this district. The district plans to reduce its fund balance by investing in food service equipment, professional and technical services, and several other projects to improve operations.

Exhibit 13-3

The School District of Lee County Food Service Department's Financial Statements

	FY ending June 30, 1998		FY ending June 30, 1999		FY ending June 30, 2000		FY ending June 30, 2001	
	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue
Revenues								
National School Lunch Act	\$8,039,559	51%	\$8,282,786	48%	\$8,540,007	48%	\$9,201,538	50%
USDA donated food	685,469	4%	752,518	4%	628,388	4%	747,191	4%
State Breakfast Supplemental	220,583	1%	187,764	1%	169,332	1%	169,706	1%
State School Lunch Supplement	213,117	1%	213,132	1%	209,890	1%	205,961	1%
Miscellaneous state sources	7,280	0%	7,150	0%	7,150	0%	7,280	0%
Interest, including profit on investments	78,298	0%	147,263	1%	195,544	1%	269,675	1%
Student lunches	3,004,781	19%	2,994,002	18%	3,169,943	18%	498,008	17%
Student breakfasts	117,835	1%	133,067	1%	140,976	1%	141,360	1%
Adult breakfast/lunch	460,401	3%	509,216	3%	493,876	3%	498,008	3%
Student and adult a-la-carte	2,995,876	19%	3,755,047	22%	3,955,382	22%	3,969,777	22%
Other Food Sales	26,520	0%	110,899 ¹	1%	108,935	1%	69,108	0%
Total revenue	\$15,849,720	99%	\$17,092,843	100%	\$17,619,422	100%	\$18,460,197	100%
Expenditures								
Salaries	\$5,152,740	35%	\$5,455,256	34%	\$5,619,885	35%	\$5,973,675	36%
Employee benefits	2,128,594	14%	2,125,822	13%	1,764,854	11%	1,757,626	11%
Purchased services	115,874	1%	90,035	1%	90,549	1%	100,173	1%
Energy services	2,809	0%	2,729	0%	4,077	0%	4,381	0%
Material and supplies ²	6,848,181	46%	7,572,868	47%	7,357,753	46%	7,602,960	46%
Capital outlay	48,656	0%	123,079	1%	28,486	0%	122,956	1%

	FY ending June 30, 1998		FY ending June 30, 1999		FY ending June 30, 2000		FY ending June 30, 2001	
	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue	Dollars	Percentage of Revenue
Other expenses	511,079	3%	769,481	5%	924,260	6%	787,168	2%
Other capital outlay	101,291	1%	82,504	1%	275,561	2%	159,297	1%
Total expenditures	\$14,909,223	100%	\$16,221,773	100%	\$16,065,425	100%	\$16,508,235	100%
Net operating income (loss)	940,497		871,070		1,553,997		1,951,962	
Fund balance, end of year	\$3,319,931		\$4,191,251		\$5,745,248		\$7,697,211	

¹ Includes cash in lieu of donated foods and miscellaneous local sources of revenues.

² Includes food.

Source: School District of Lee County Comprehensive Annual Financial Report as of June 30, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001.

Nutritional Programs

The district participates in the National School Breakfast and National Lunch programs, which are regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These programs assist states through grant-in-aid and other means, such as menu design, and in establishing, maintaining, operating, and expanding school feeding programs. The purpose of these federal programs is to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's children, as well as to provide and encourage the consumption of nutritious domestic agricultural commodities (USDA donated foods).

These breakfast and lunch programs are administered through Florida's Department of Education and Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Each school district executes an annual agreement with these state agencies to operate the programs at the local level. The school board, superintendent, and the food service department share local responsibility for program administration within the district.

As a participant in these programs, the district receives monthly federal reimbursement income for the free, reduced, and paid breakfast, lunch, and snack meals it serves. Quarterly, the state of Florida also adds required partial matching funds to supplement breakfast and lunch meals. Exhibit 13-4 shows the federal reimbursement rates for the National School Lunch Program for School Year 2001-02. Based on relative economic need, districts either receive a standard reimbursement of \$0.20 or \$0.22 for each lunch meal served, plus additional monies based on the number of free and or partially paid (called "reduced") meals served. Lee County receives the \$0.22 reimbursement rate. Students pay the full, reduced, or free meal rate based on family economic conditions as set by the USDA.

Exhibit 13-4

Meal Reimbursement Rates and Fees for School Year 2002-03

Meal	Federal Assistance	Fees Paid by Student	Program Total Revenue ¹
<i>Elementary School</i>			
Full price			
Breakfast	\$0.22	\$0.55	\$0.77 ²
Lunch	\$0.22	\$1.60	\$1.82
Reduced price			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.65	\$0.30	\$1.17 ²
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.54	\$0.40	\$2.16
Free			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.95	0	\$1.17 ²
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.94	0	\$2.16

Meal	Federal Assistance	Fees Paid by Student	Program Total Revenue ¹
Middle and High School			
Full price			
Breakfast	\$0.22	\$0.60	\$0.82 ²
Lunch	\$0.22	\$1.85	\$2.07
Reduced price			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.65	\$0.30	\$1.17 ²
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.54	\$0.40	\$2.16
Free			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.95	0	\$1.17 ²
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.94	0	\$2.16

¹Quarterly, the state pay pays partial matching funds to the district. For School Year 2001-02 this approximated \$0.07 per lunch served.

²In schools classified as severe need, the federal program provides an additional \$0.23.

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Although somewhat different rules apply, breakfast meals are similarly funded based on each school's participation rates and the economic need of its students. The state requires that all elementary schools provide a breakfast opportunity to students while supplementing some of this cost.

Exhibit 13-5

The District Has a High Percentage of Students Receiving Free and Reduced Meals Compared With Peer District Averages

School District	Student Population	Schools Serving Student Lunches	Free/Reduced Participation	Overall Participation
Lee	54,906	68	45.8%	68.5%
Brevard	68,469	102	35.5%	64.2%
Pasco	46,458	59	49.9%	62.8%
Polk	77,354	130	54.1%	64.9%
Seminole	58,458	60	43.8%	41.5%
Volusia	59,407	73	43.3%	61.3%
State average	-		45.9%	66.5%

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts 1999 - 2000, Florida Department of Education student database.

In addition to federal meal income reimbursements, the district also receives free food through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Donated Food program. The USDA issues dollar allocations of free surplus food items, which the district then orders from the USDA catalog. Available in commercial-sized packages, commodities are classified into two categories:

- Group A commodities: meat, fish, poultry, fruits, and vegetables
- Group B commodities: grains, oil, shortening, cheese, and peanut products

Receipt and storage of goods

USDA ships foods to its regional storage facility. The district is allowed free storage at this facility for thirty days. As space becomes available or need occurs, the district transfers the food to their warehouse for further distribution to the schools.

Most purchased food is received at the central warehouse or a district's leased facility based upon warehouse space availability. Dairy and vegetable vendors deliver directly to each school.

Methodology

To determine if the district's food service program meets the Best Financial Management Practices, ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted seven school site visits, reviewed program documentation and self-assessments completed by the Food Service Director and supervisors, and interviewed the director, supervisors, managers, and support staff.

To receive program input, ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted a teachers' focus group as well as a principals' focus group. A public forum and telephone hotline were useful in receiving community input. Additionally, surveys were sent to teachers, principals, and board members with questions geared to the specific group surveyed. The results are used in this chapter, where applicable.

Based on district size and student characteristics, the peer districts selected for comparative purposes are Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia.

Efficient and Effective Operation

1 The food service program is clearly defined for school staff and customers with a mission statement, operating policies, procedures, and performance expectations.

The mission of the Lee County Food Service Program is *"to provide meals that nourish children, enhancing their readiness to learn within federal and state guidelines and without the use of district funds"*. This message appears on the district's web site, internal correspondence, and school menus. The mission guides program management in a clear direction.

A comprehensive food service policies and procedures manual is available to school cafeteria managers, principals, and the director of every department that interacts with food services. Updated annually, the manual clearly states what is expected of food service personnel and has background information about the National School Lunch Program, general policies, meal and cash accountability procedures, purchasing and inventory procedures, training, and equipment and facility management. During site visits, food service managers stated that the manual is very useful. Observations also confirmed that managers use the manual on a routine basis.

The food service program has clear goals, measurable objectives and performance expectations. For example, the department assesses fiscal performance, record keeping compliance, customer service satisfaction and food storage and handling. Each of these areas is assessed using an established performance review, mechanism that includes expected performance standards.

The district tracks management data, such as the program's financial status at the school and district level, and student participation rates, meals per labor hour and other related indices to ensure the program's performance meets established expectations and uses this information to set and track performance expectations.

2 The district regularly reviews the food service program's organizational structure, however, program authority does not conform to federal law, state rule, and school board policy.

The district's food service department staff is well qualified to manage the program. The director has over 20 years experience in school food service and holds an Ed.D. from University of South Florida in Educational Leadership, an MS from Florida State in Home Economics Education and a BS from Milwaukee-Downer College in Food and Nutrition. She is certified in School Food Service from the Department of Education and from the American School Food Service Association. She has also served as President of the Florida School Food Service Association. The supervisor of food procurement is a Registered Dietitian with an MS in Human Resources from Barry University. Supervisors of training and technology have BS degrees from accredited institutions. The supervisor of equipment is a certified chef. All school-based managers have high school diplomas or GEDs and have completed the internship-training program.

The food service organizational chart accurately represents the department's structure and authority levels, however roles and responsibilities need to be changed to conform to federal laws, state rules, and school board policy

Participating schools must comply with National School Lunch Program regulations. If districts do not comply, there is a risk of losing federal funding. Although the district's food service director is ultimately responsible for compliance with federal law, state rule, and school board policy, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that principals have assumed authority over food services employees. The district needs to reinforce food service director authority and clarify school principal responsibilities to support the food service program and procedures. The authority described in the district job descriptions are in compliance with federal law, state rule, and school board policy, but are not followed in practice. For example, several principals have hired unqualified cafeteria managers despite objection by the food service director. In addition, principals have directed on-site food services staff to violate food program policies and procedures.

Staffing adjustments are made early in each school year to prevent overstaffing

Food service supervisors review staffing levels for each school during the first and fourth months of the school year, making adjustments as needed. School districts usually estimate enrollment at the beginning of the school year (typically these estimates are on the high end). Food service staff uses this information to estimate staffing levels needed to start the new school year (typically on the low end). In October, enrollment and meal participation stabilize, giving the district the opportunity to adjust staffing levels. Peer districts surveyed also had this practice in place.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district comply with federal laws, state rules, and board policies by reinforcing appropriate authority over the program.*

Action Plan 13-1 describes the steps necessary to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 13-1**Establish Compliance with Federal Laws, State Rules, and Board Policies by Reinforcing Appropriate Authority Over the Program**

Strategy	Comply with federal laws, state rules, and board policy by reinforcing appropriate authority over the program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Conduct a meeting with the Food Service Director, Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services, and the superintendent to delineate food service program authorities, responsibilities and requirements. Step 2: Communicate authorities, responsibilities and requirements for food service positions to the principals and to the personnel officer. Step 3: The Food Service Director, Assistant Superintendent of Operational Support Services, and the superintendent take steps necessary to ensure that district management actively supports food service program policy.
Who is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services, and the Food Service Director.
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Can be attained within existing resources. When implemented, the district will be assured that schools are in compliance with the federal regulations for NSLP funding, the loss of which would have substantial negative financial impact.

3 Food service employees receive comprehensive on-going training, which the department continually evaluates and updates.

Training is an important aspect of any food service organization. To fulfill this need, the district has established and follows a formal food service staff-training plan. The program begins when an employee is hired and continues throughout his/her career with training, including: new employee training, all employee in-services, manager in-services, manager meetings, intern program, intern follow-up program, culinary techniques for healthy school meals, ServSafe training, ASFSA Healthy Edge series, Computer Assisted Food Service (CAFS), AFS training, and other courses developed with the district's staff development department. Each training component has clear objectives, activities, and outcomes. Competencies are clearly defined for new employee training, intern training, intern follow-up training, in-services, and manager meetings. Each training component uses a form of evaluation to document its effectiveness. The comprehensive training provided for all employees has been developed to include all of the essential components required. The training is on-going relative to the employee's need and position. Specialized training is provided for manager interns.

4 While the district has taken steps to identify barriers to the food service program, action is needed to comply with competitive food sale rules.

The district has identified meal participation barriers such as long waiting lines, lunch period times, bussing, food preferences, and quality. To help reduce barriers during the school year, advertisement promotions and surveys are used to encourage feedback about students' meal preferences. Food service administrators also encourage students to have healthy eating habits and to participate in the school food service program. The department promotes and communicates the food service program and good nutrition habits to parents using billboards, the district's web site, by sending menus home with students, and during open house at the schools.

Although the district lunch participation rates are the highest compared to peer districts as shown in exhibit 13-6, the district can further improve by considering additional methods to help identify barriers

and increase student participation. Suggestions include forming student committees to assist with menu planning, seeking media exposure, and seeking input from parents and other interested persons at parent-teacher meetings.

Exhibit 13-6**The District's Lunch Participation is the Highest Compared to Peer Districts**

School District	Student Population	Average Daily Lunch Participation Rates
Lee	54,906	68%
Brevard	68,469	64%
Pasco	46,458	62%
Polk	77,354	64%
Seminole	58,458	41%
Volusia	59,407	61%
Peer Average	62,029	59%

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts 1999 - 2000, Florida Department of Education student database.

Sufficient neutral and negative results of the surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A. indicate the district should continue to identify meal participation barriers (Exhibit 3-7) since teachers can have an effect on student participation and also reflect student opinion.

Exhibit 13-7**Survey Results Indicate the District Should Continue to Identify Meal Participation Barriers and Eliminate Them**

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
Teachers	Students usually have positive opinions regarding the meals served	41%	22%	29%	9%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

The district promotes balanced meals through its pricing policy

Food prices in school cafeterias give students the incentive to buy complete meals rather than buying a-la-carte items. A-la-carte items such as cookies, ice cream, and potato chips are priced substantially higher to discourage students from purchasing one item instead of buying one full meal. This arrangement also financially benefits the district since it is not reimbursed for a-la-carte items through federal and state programs.

Barriers to meal participation violate board policy at one school

ValienteHernandez P.A. visited seven district schools during site visits. Six of the schools visited appeared to be following procedures to minimize competition to reimbursable school meals. One high school operates soda vending machines near the cafeteria during the meal period. This is not only a barrier to meal participation, but does not offer nutritional value to students. When available, students may prefer carbonated drinks over nutritious beverages.

During the course of this review, the school board approved a competitive food policy for the district. The policy prohibits the sale of all competitive food or beverages on school premises except food or

beverage items that make a nutritional contribution to the reimbursed meal. Sale of competitive foods or beverages by other than food service is prohibited until after school hours. The new policy will reduce at least one of the major barriers to meal participation and protect the nutrition integrity of the program.

The program has made sufficient efforts to get customer feedback

The School District of Lee County seeks district-wide customer feedback about its food service operation. Some cafeteria employees stated that customer feedback is only informally solicited. One method the district uses to seek customer feedback is a website that encourages questions, comments, and suggestions.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district ensure compliance with its own policy and eliminate competition with the food service program and encourage nutritional foods choices for students. Non-nutritious carbonated beverages should only be sold in vending machines when allowed, and should be placed away from the cafeterias.*

Action Plan 13-2 describes the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 13-2

Eliminate Competition With the School Lunch Program and Bring the District Into State and Federal Compliance

Strategy	To eliminate competition with the school lunch program and bring the district into district compliance.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify schools with vending machines containing unauthorized foods and beverages. Step 2: Food Service Director meets with school principals and cafeteria managers to arrange for removal or proper operation of the machines. Step 3: Periodically review policies and procedures relating to vending machine access and inspect facilities for compliance.
Who is Responsible	Food Service Director
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

5

The district has established cost-efficiency benchmarks to evaluate its food service program.

The district has established benchmarks with exemplary school districts that are appropriate, reasonable, well-defined, and based on high standards, including cost-per-meal and overall reduced, and free meal participation for breakfast and lunch programs. The district also uses benchmarks to evaluate program labor costs. Participation levels (i.e. breakfast, lunch, a-la-carte) for each school are compiled and reported to management for comparisons. The district also developed internal standards to evaluate its performance. These standards are used in conjunction with each school cafeteria performance review and communicated to the food service managers. Benchmarking results are evaluated by the food service program personnel, but are not communicated to board members. Board members should be provided an annual update on program performance to complete the accountability cycle.

The district continually assesses program performance

The district has established and implemented strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data. Reliability of meal count and participation data comes from daily comparison of plate counts and meals served at the school level, edit checks via CAFS program at the school level, monthly edit checks in the district's office, and edit checks by financial accounting. These assessments ensure no more meals than allowable are claimed.

6 The district regularly evaluates the food service program based on established benchmarks, and implements improvements to increase revenues and reduce costs.

Designated district supervisors conduct scheduled performance reviews of each cafeteria in January, April, and September. Annually, for each school managers complete facilities' rating charts used for feedback on equipment performance and collect data for budgeting. School management reviews school lunch applications to ensure compliance with federal ratings charts completed by managers, as well as for useful feedback. The Lee County Department of Health Services inspects school cafeterias four times a year. Monthly management reports assess productivity and meal service, benchmarking performance with similarly sized districts, and with privatized districts. Lee County averages 15 meals per labor hour, which is comparable to the other peer districts. The annual budgeting process also uses annual district wide performance information to establish new budgets, along with updated goals and objectives, and uses this information combined with benchmarks, to guide needed operational changes.

The district should ensure that policies and procedures meet school's varied needs

Site visitors observed several schools using disposable plates and utensils. The food service managers explained this was because of staff shortages. According to the department's ServiceWare policy, disposables should only be used when dishwashers break down for meals served in the cafeteria. The schools indicated violated policy although dishwashers were operable. Management is advised to reconsider its policy and allow cafeteria managers discretion under such circumstances.

7 The district regularly evaluates the benefits of its food service operation and assesses alternatives for service delivery; however, methods of delivery and storage of food items needs further review.

The food service department has assessed product delivery alternatives such as contracting and privatizing services

Generally, the district has developed alternatives to ensure continued service delivery instead of eliminating services. Analysis of operational alternatives is important to ensure efficient operations. For example, during the remodeling of North Fort Myers Academy of the Arts, its food program was continued with the cooperation of two other schools, each school preparing specific components of the breakfast and lunch for the academy. During that time, the district was able to maintain the expenses for the academy as a separate school so financial data could be tracked.

The district has also added revenue to its program from several service delivery alternatives. For example, the district became a sponsor of the Summer Feeding Program in the summer of 2001. This program focuses on providing low-income children adequate meals during the summer months. Through

sponsoring the program, participation has grown and revenue increased. District schools also provide catering services for school-based functions and the district's central service snack bar. School-based catering has declined slightly over the past three years, but central facility catering has increased. Additionally, school programs provide food for after-school programs through the federally-funded snack program and to Child Care of South West Florida which operates on days regular school is not in session.

The district periodically completes analysis studies of the privatization of food service management. Results have consistently reflected that the program can be more economically managed in-house than by contract.

However, ValienteHernandez P.A., in conjunction with the food service director, determined that the district may not have adequate warehouse space in the central warehouse for frozen food items. The district's five-year strategic plan recognizes the need for additional freezer space in the central warehouse and budgets for additional frozen storage space, but the staff has not conducted a recent and thorough cost analysis of the food program warehouse and delivery system. Prior to 1998, the district conducted an analysis to determine if the district could more efficiently purchase and deliver all non-refrigerated food items from the warehouse to the cafeterias, however, this analysis did not address refrigerated and frozen food item storage and delivery. Such an analysis should be conducted before fund expenditure to evaluate short- and long-term needs, as well as to determine if contract storage is a viable option.

Recommendations

- *We recommend a comprehensive cost analysis to determine the most cost-effective methods for the storage of frozen and refrigerated food items.*

Action Plan 13-3 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 13-3

Complete a Comprehensive Cost Analysis to Determine the Most Cost-effective Methods for Storage of Frozen and Refrigerated Food Items	
Strategy	Complete a comprehensive cost analysis to determine the most cost-effective methods for storage of frozen and refrigerated food items.
Action Needed	Step 1: Food service management and staff should forecast future frozen and refrigerated foods storage needs and estimate equipment and construction to meet identified needs. Step 2: Food service staff should solicit estimates for contracting refrigerated and frozen food storage. Step 3: Food service staff should estimate and evaluate food delivery implications and costs associated with each option. Step 4: A committee comprised of the Food Service Director, Food Procurement Supervisor, Warehouse Supervisor, and Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support should meet, compare alternatives, and select the most efficient and effective long-term method of service delivery, and to consider equitable funding of any investment using all or some food service and general funds. Step 5: Obtain board approval through the budgeting process.
Who Is Responsible	Food Service Director
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources, however, program changes have the potential to minimize operational costs.

Financial Accountability and Viability

8 The program's budget is linked to and reflects departmental goals and projections.

Food service budgets are based on goals, projected school enrollments, anticipated revenues from local, state, and federal sources, anticipated food and supply costs, and identified equipment and supply needs. Trend information is reviewed and anticipated numbers of economically needy students in each school are considered. The food service supervisor maintains the budget and makes projections for school cafeterias, which are occasionally reviewed, but not by anyone outside of the department. Without regular monitoring, however, budget adjustments cannot be anticipated and must be made as needed after-the-fact, rather than as a result of planning.

Timely financial reports are essential to evaluate the program's budget and make the necessary adjustments

Food service management reports reflect the overall financial status of the food service program as well as limited information about each school's food program status. The finance department generates an overall financial report that is utilized by the food services department to develop the management reports for individual cafeterias. Supervisory staff uses these individual reports as a tool to review each cafeteria's meal participation and financial status. Also, cafeteria managers use this report to manage daily operations. Cafeteria managers have expressed concern over the lack of timeliness of these management reports (should be no later than 1 month old). This lack of timeliness limits management's ability to make informed decisions and operate an efficient program.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the finance department provide financial reports to the food service department in a timelier manner to ensure that cafeteria managers have an opportunity to review and utilize the information for efficient management of daily operations.*

Action Plan 13-4 shows the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 13-4

Food services department and the cafeteria managers receive timely financial data	
Strategy	Ensure the food services department and cafeteria managers receive timely financial data to assist with review of meal participation and financial status, as well as to manage daily operations.
Action Needed	Step 1: Form a committee with the Finance Director, Food Service Director, food service supervisory staff, and a cafeteria manager representative Step 2: Develop a timeline for submission of management reports by the Finance Department Step 3: Develop a timeline for submission of financial status reports by the Food Services Department to be sent to the cafeteria managers Step 4: Supervisors schedule meeting with all cafeteria managers to clarify the use of the financial status report in their daily operations.

Who Is Responsible	Food Service Director
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

9 **The district's financial controls include on-going reviews of the program's financial and management practices.**

The program has internal financial controls in place

Protection and accountability of program assets, especially cash, is an important management responsibility. The district's internal financial controls include written procedures for collecting, depositing, and disbursing money. The district also has written procedures to account for reimbursable meals and other sales. The district holds performance reviews three times per year. Additionally, every week a food service clerk checks the number of meals served, calculated receipts, and daily deposits against cash and meal summaries and deposit slips from the schools.

The program has automated data processing for financial reporting

A food service management and accountability system, Computer Assisted Food Service (CAFS), is used throughout the district. With its point-of-service terminals and online capabilities, the CAFS system enables the district to:

- Maintain student records, with student name, ID, eligibility status, homeroom grade, and prepaid account data
- Display menu selections offered at each meal service period
- Perform edit checks, as required by USDA regulations
- Allow students to pay for meals by entering their ID numbers on a keypad
- Display the purchase price and change due are displayed on a screen
- Report daily and monthly student meal activity
- Summarize daily cash sales, charges collected, and student/adult prepaid collections
- Produce daily and monthly summary reports of cash and meal-count information, including daily reimbursable meal and a-la-carte menu sales breakdowns

Other features could be added to the CAFS system to increase the efficiency and accuracy of food service operating systems and activities. For example, the district could implement features such as the recording, processing, and summarizing of data related to inventory activities.

The district uses the DOE annual cost report and district staff pre-cost menus to assist in establishing meal prices and to ensure those prices cover expenses of food and other costs related to meal production.

The district has not increased meal prices in over eight years and profits are favorable

The district has not increased meal prices in over eight years. Exhibit 13-8 shows a comparison of the district's meal prices versus the peer districts selected for this review. As illustrated, the district currently charges more for its full-priced lunch than the peer-district average. In contrast, the district breakfast prices are much lower than its peers.

These peer comparisons should be continued in the future while considering future budget needs, as the district is growing and may need to invest in equipment replacement soon. Thus far, management has focused on student nutrition and participation rather than covering breakfast meals and other costs.

Considering the district's current surplus of funds, plans for this surplus use, relatively high lunch prices, and relatively low breakfast prices, the district should analyze its pricing policies and monitor its financial conditions annually. Price adjustments will likely be warranted in coming years.

Exhibit 13-8

Overall, the School District of Lee County's Meal Prices are Comparable to Peer Districts for School Year 2001-02

	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Full-priced Lunch			
Lee	\$1.60	\$1.85	\$1.85
Brevard	1.40	1.50	1.50
Pasco	1.60	2.00	2.00
Polk	1.40	1.65	1.65
Seminole	1.60	1.75	2.00
Volusia	1.35	1.45	1.50
Peer average	\$1.47	\$1.67	\$1.73
Full-priced Breakfast			
Lee	\$0.55	\$0.55	\$0.55
Brevard	0.60	0.60	0.60
Pasco	1.00	1.15	1.15
Polk	0.80	0.80	0.80
Seminole	1.00	1.00	1.00
Volusia	0.75	0.75	0.75
Peer average	\$0.83	\$0.86	\$0.86

Source: Per school districts listed above.

10 The district accurately reports meals served by category.

The district uses the CAFS system's point-of-service program to report meals served by category. Cash and meal reports, edit check reports, and participation reports are generated and forwarded to the finance department for review. A daily report is generated comparing eligible students per category, multiplied by the attendance factor, thus catching any irregularities. To comply with federal and state regulations, the department must accurately report the number of paid, free, and reduced-price meals served.

In addition, to ensure federal compliance, district personnel perform edit checks verifying that the number of meals claimed for reimbursement are equal to or less than the number of approved applications of students eligible to receive free or reduced-price meals. These checks and balances also are included in each cafeteria's performance review. Florida's Department of Education also checks this information in compliance audits. However, the latest Coordinated Review Effort (CRE) conducted in the district by the Florida Department of Education in January 2000, questioned the accuracy of the Food Service Department's consolidated meal counts. However, the follow-up review provided evidence that the district took corrective action to satisfactorily pass the review.

The district should maximize federal reimbursement of student lunches

While the food service administrators and school kitchen personnel are commended for establishing effective and on-going marketing and promotional programs, the district needs to maximize use of federal reimbursements. At the present time, the district is using individual applications for each student. The district could have a mechanism, such as family applications, ensuring that all siblings in district families eligible for free or reduced-price meals receive this funding. For example, if an elementary school

student is eligible for free or reduced lunch, the district should check to see if the student's siblings (who may be middle-school or high-school age) also have applied. In January of 2003, the district plans to centralize the application process by utilizing family applications that will list all family members enrolled in the district. This will increase efficiency and reduce error in processing applications. The food services director has expressed an interest in using software and special scanners for inputting and processing applications. This would implement a cost savings because it will not require additional personnel.

11 The district regularly evaluates purchasing practices to decrease costs and increase efficiency.

The district uses competitive bidding for food purchases to decrease costs and increase efficiency. Bid specifications are submitted by the Food and Nutrition Services Purchasing Department which prepares the bids according to district policies, state board rules, Florida Statutes, and Federal Laws. Annual reviews of specifications and needed quantities are conducted. The district also uses the formal bidding process and specification development for equipment and supply items. The district routinely evaluates new products before including them in bid requests. District procedures freely allow vendors to bid for products and services requested by the district and all bids are thoroughly analyzed to be in compliance with *School Board Policy 4.44*.

12 The district has developed an effective inventory control system that is appropriate for its food service program.

The district has a comprehensive set of inventory control procedures in its policy and procedures manual. The manual covers the district's central warehouse, which is used to store food program items as well classroom supplies. The food service director has the additional duty to oversee consolidated warehouse operations for the district.

To assist in proper accountability, the food service department procedures manual also has inventory control guidelines. Food service managers conduct physical inventories each month to assist in determining their food costs. As required by the rule, federally donated foods are kept on a perpetual inventory basis and the results are reported to the district staff of the Food service department. District management monitors inventory levels and checks for outdated items during the performance reviews of each cafeteria.

13 The district has a system for receiving, storing, and disposing of food, supplies, and equipment.

The district has written procedures for receiving, storing, and disposing of food, supplies, and equipment. This protects and preserves program assets. These procedures include order checking-in, ordering procedures, and product and service evaluation. Food service and central warehouse managers and employees are required to examine product deliveries to verify amounts against the bid and brands delivered, as well as to reject incorrect items and sign invoices. Procedures are also in-place to document complaints about purchased items after acceptance has been completed. Food service employees are trained to mark the received date on each package before storage.

14

The district has a long-range plan for replacing equipment, but the program does not pay for all repair and maintenance costs.

The program has procedures for immediate equipment and facility repair, as well as replacement

Food service staff is addressing immediate equipment and facility repair and replacement needs in a timely manner. Site visitors found equipment to be clean and operational. A five-year equipment replacement plan is used, except in emergencies. To optimize equipment value and program assets, replacement purchases are based on equipment rating charts and input provided by maintenance department technicians.

A well-defined preventative maintenance program currently does not exist, as equipment is serviced only as needed. It is important, however, for the district to establish a preventative maintenance plan to avoid costly repairs and premature replacement. The district would be well served to begin annual equipment inspections and have a formal preventative maintenance program. This will extend the useful life of the expensive food service equipment, as it is generally accepted that, in the long-run, repair and routine maintenance of equipment costs less than replacement.

Equipment maintenance and repair costs should be absorbed by the food service department

The food service program uses the district's maintenance department to perform repairs on food program equipment. Food program maintenance and repair expenses assessed by the maintenance department were approximately \$142,000 from August 2001 through March 2002. This figure includes both parts and labor costs. Yet, the food service program reimbursed the maintenance department only \$21,536.11. The district's general fund absorbed the remaining portion of expense. Generally it is accepted practice that the food services program should reimburse the district for all costs of maintenance. Full payment for food service maintenance and repairs would allow district general revenue funds for other uses, such as classroom-related needs. As an alternative to full payment of expenses, the food program should analyze and consider contracted maintenance services or hiring of program staff to perform maintenance functions.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district develop a preventative maintenance plan to maximize the life of equipment and reduce overall program costs.*

Action Plan 13-5 shows the recommendations necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that the food service program absorb its own maintenance and repair costs.*

Action Plan 13-6 shows the recommendations necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 13-5

Maximize Equipment Life and Reduce Costs

Strategy	Develop a preventative maintenance plan for food service program equipment.

Action Needed	Step 1: The Food Service Director and the Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services should ensure there is a complete inventory of all equipment subject to routine maintenance and repair. Step 2: Program staff should consolidate all manuals and literature available for program equipment and identify equipment maintenance needs. Step 3: Food and district maintenance staff should develop a maintenance and repair schedule. Step 4: Food program staff should solicit cost estimates for contract maintenance, estimate in-house costs, and select the most cost-effective method.
Who Is Responsible	Food Service Director and the Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services
Time Frame	August 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	A reduction in overall equipment service and replacement costs is possible.

Action Plan 13-6

Reduce Maintenance Expenditures From the General Fund by Requiring the Food Services Department to Absorb Program Maintenance and Repair Costs

Strategy	To reduce maintenance expenditures of the general fund by requiring the Food Services Department to absorb program maintenance and repair costs.
Action Needed	Step 1: Food Service Program should absorb all program maintenance and repair costs and budget accordingly. Step 2: The Assistant Superintendent of Operational Support Services should ensure compliance with recommendation.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent of Operational Support Services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Based on our estimate, approximately \$130,000 per year additional revenue may become available for the district's general fund by instituting this recommendation.

Meal Preparation and Service

15

The district provides school meals designed to meet the nutritional needs of students.

The department plans menus that meet student nutritional needs and dietary guidelines

The district provides nutritious meals based on the USDA meal patterns and employs a registered dietician to plan and analyze menus ensuring this important aspect of the program mission is accomplished. Additionally, Florida's Department of Education annually conducts nutritional reviews of the program to ensure compliance with federal rules. Student special diet needs are addressed individually at each school as long as a physician provides appropriate documentation. These special dietary meals are reimbursed at the same rate as regular meals despite generally costing the district more to prepare. However, since the number of these meals is so few, the fiscal impact is minimal. Survey results shown in Exhibit 13-9 reflect that the needs of students with special diet are being addressed. However, since the survey shows 12% of teachers did not agree and 27% were unable to respond to the statement, it is suggested that a reminder about this service be communicated to school principals and their staff.

Exhibit 13-9

Survey Results Indicate That Special Diet Needs are Being Met Satisfactorily

Survey Group	Statement	Strongly Agree or Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree or Disagree	Don't Know
Teachers	The cafeteria manager satisfactorily addresses the needs of children with special food requirements.	42%	18%	12%	27%

Source: Surveys conducted by ValienteHernandez P.A., June 2002.

16 The district's food production and transportation system ensures the service of high-quality food with minimal waste.

The program maximizes the use of USDA-donated foods

School districts are eligible to participate in the US Department of Agriculture Donated Food Program, often called "commodities." Lee County makes efficient use of its USDA-donated foods in its menu planning. Under the program, the district is only required to pay for storage and delivery of the donated food. To ensure maximum use, district recipes identify specific commodity items and amounts that should be used. To further encourage food service managers to use these donated foods, the district publishes donated food availability reports.

The program has standardized food production

The district provides standard recipes for food service managers to ensure program consistency and quality. Standardized recipes are distributed and used district-wide to provide precise directions, yields, serving sizes, portioning utensils, and per-serving nutritional analyses. Using standard recipes and portion control instructions enables program management to better meet budgeted food cost goals.

Safe and Sanitary Food Service Environment

17 The district follows safety and environmental health practices and regulations.

Sound safety and hygiene practices are a prerequisite for any school food service program to protect student health and ensure nutrition. District managers ensure that food service employees are trained to follow safety and environmental health practices and regulations. The program's food service policies and procedures manual also covers safety and health information under general policies. The Lee County Health Department conducts inspections of the district's cafeterias. No significant violations were noted by ValienteHernandez P.A. reviews of inspection records at sites visited. However, several schools received the program's coveted "White Glove" award, which recognizes school cafeteria operations for achieving three consecutive perfect sanitation reports.

14

Cost Control Systems

The district's cost control systems include internal auditing, financial auditing, asset management, inventory management, risk management, financial management, purchasing, and payment processing. The district should conduct annual risk assessments to identify and minimize potential risks. Also, the district's Internal Audit Department should assume the responsibility for monitoring student FTE counts. The district should enhance its monitoring of capital projects by automating the accounting function, the reconciliation of subsidiary ledgers, and the general ledger for fixed assets. The district should distribute its ethics policy to all employees, automate monthly grant reporting, and modify its accounting methods for payroll benefits and purchasing processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Conclusion

During our review of the district's cost control systems, ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the School District of Lee County (district) has generally established adequate cost control systems.

ValienteHernandez P.A. has determined that enhancements can be made for 7 of the 31 best practices, which when implemented, will improve effectiveness. Below are our conclusions on the district's use of each cost control system best practice.

The district and management team have made several notable accomplishments over the last two years to the district's cost control systems. Exhibit 14-1 describes some of these accomplishments.

Exhibit 14-1

Notable Accomplishments in Cost Controls in the Past Two Years

- The district has achieved an unqualified audit opinion with no material weaknesses or reportable conditions for financial records and the monitoring of federal and state grants.
 - The district has achieved \$1,200,000 in savings by implementing the recommendations of the previous OPPAGA review of cost control system performance.
-

Source: School District of Lee County.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found:

Internal Auditing

1. The district has established an internal audit function; however, the duties and responsibilities of this position are not consistent with those outlined in the Florida Statutes. (Page 14-5)

Financial Auditing

2. The district obtains an external audit in accordance with government auditing standards. (Page 14-8)
3. The district provides for timely follow-up of findings identified in the external audit. (Page 14-9)
4. The district obtains and reviews required financial information relating to school internal accounts, direct support organizations, and charter schools. (Page 14-9)

Asset Management

5. The district segregates responsibilities for custody of assets from record keeping responsibilities for those assets. (Page 14-10)
6. The district has established controls that provide for proper authorization of asset acquisitions and disposals. (Page 14-10)
7. The district has established records that accumulate project costs and other relevant data to facilitate reporting construction and maintenance activities to the board, the public, and grantors. However, the use of a manual system of updating capital project costs contains a greater possibility for error and is more labor intensive than an automated system. (Page 14-11)
8. The district provides recorded accountability for capitalized assets. (Page 14-12)
9. Assets are safeguarded from unauthorized use, theft, and physical damage; however, controls for verifying that all assets have been accounted for should be enhanced. (Page 14-12)

Inventory Management

10. The district segregates responsibilities for custody of inventories from record keeping responsibilities for those assets. (Page 14-13)
11. The district has established and implemented controls that provide for proper inventory requisitioning. (Page 14-13)
12. The district has established controls that provide for inventory accountability. (Page 14-14)
13. The district has evaluated the inventory function to determine its cost-effectiveness. (Page 14-14)

Risk Management

14. The district sets objectives for risk management activities, identifies and evaluates risks, and has designed a comprehensive program to protect itself at a reasonable cost. (Page 14-15)
15. The district has comprehensive policies and procedures relating to acquiring and reviewing coverage for risks of loss. (Page 14-15)

Financial Management

16. District management communicates its commitment and support of strong internal controls; however, it should communicate its ethics policies more effectively to employees. (Page 14-16)
17. The district records and reports financial transactions in accordance with prescribed standards. (Page 14-17)
18. The district prepares and distributes its financial report in a timely manner; however, monthly reporting of grant activity should be automated. (Page 14-17)
19. The district has a financial plan serving as an estimate of and control over operations and expenditures. (Page 14-18)
20. The district has effective controls to provide recorded accountability for cash resources. (Page 14-19)

21. The district has an investment plan that includes investment objectives and performance criteria designed to maximize return consistent with the risks associated with each investment, and specifies the types of financial products approved for investment. (Page 14-19)
22. The district has established effective controls for recording, collecting, adjusting, and reporting receivables. (Page 14-20)
23. The district has effective controls that provide accountability for paying salaries and benefits; however, payroll enhancements are needed. (Page 14-20).
24. The district analyzes, evaluates, monitors, and reports debt-financing alternatives. (Page 14-22)
25. The district effectively monitors and reports grant activities. (Page 14-23)

Purchasing

26. The district segregates purchasing responsibilities from the requisitioning, authorizing, and receiving functions. (Page 14-24)
27. The district has established controls for authorizing purchase requisitions. (Page 14-24)
28. The district has established authorization controls over purchasing; however, enhancements could be made to its present purchasing processes. (Page 14-25)
29. The district has established controls to ensure that goods received meet quality standards. (Page 14-28)

Payment Processing

30. The district has established controls to ensure that disbursements are properly authorized, documented, and recorded. (Page 14-29)
31. The district has established controls for processing invoices to ensure that quantities, prices, and terms coincide with purchase orders and receiving reports. (Page 14-29)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations ---

ValienteHernandez P.A. recommends two actions related to the district's cost control systems that will have financial impact on the district. If our recommendations are implemented, we estimate that the district would incur costs of \$295,000 over the next five years, the majority for implementing the use of purchase cards. Although the district would incur additional costs by implementing the use of purchase cards, it would gain efficiencies that cannot be measured monetarily. We have also made eight additional recommendations that can be implemented using existing resources. The two recommendations that will have a fiscal impact to the district are as follows:

- The district should conduct a risk-assessment study. We estimate that this would result in a one-time cost of \$20,000. (Action Plan 14-1)
- The district should implement a purchasing card system. We estimate that this would result in a five-year expenditure of \$275,500. (Action Plan 14-7)

The estimated costs associated with these recommendations are illustrated in Exhibit 14-2.

Exhibit 14-2

Cost Control Recommendations Will Cost \$295,000 Over Five Years

Fiscal Effect: Cost Savings/Increased Revenues or (Increased Costs)						
Action Plan and Strategy	Year 2002-03	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Total Cost
14-1 Contract out a risk-assessment study	\$(20, 000)	\$ 0.00	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$(20, 000)
14-7 Implementation of a purchasing card system	0	(275, 000)	0	0	0	(275,000)
Total savings (cost)	\$(20, 000)	\$(275,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$(295,000)

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Background

The district's major cost control systems are separated into eight subsections.

- Internal auditing
- Financial auditing
- Asset management
- Inventory management
- Risk management
- Financial management
- Purchasing
- Payment processing

The district, as provided in Ch. 230.03(2), *Florida Statutes*, is required to operate, control, and supervise all public schools in the district. Laws, rules, regulations, and grantor restrictions applicable to the district's activities define, among other matters, the purposes for which resources may be used and the manner in which authorized uses shall be accomplished and documented.

Effective cost control systems must be established and maintained to assure the efficient and effective operation of the district in accordance with good business practices and applicable legal and contractual requirements.

The superintendent is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective cost control systems, the objectives of which are to:

- Provide management with reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that assets are safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition;
- Ensure that transactions are executed in accordance with the board's authorization;
- Ensure that transactions are recorded properly to promote reliable financial data;
- Ensure that restricted assets are managed in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and contracts, and;

- Ensure that operating policies and procedures promote cost-effective and efficient methods of operations within the constraints established by applicable laws and regulations.

All of the responsibilities for ensuring efficient and effective cost control systems rest with the Financial Services Division, which is the responsibility of the chief financial officer.

Methodology

To obtain program input, ValienteHernandez P.A. held one teacher focus group, one principal focus group, and conducted one public forum. Community input also was received through a telephone hot line coordinated by OPPAGA and the firm, and advertised on the district's website. ValienteHernandez P.A. distributed a survey to 100% of the district's teachers and an electronic survey to 100% of the principals.

To determine if the district's cost control systems is meeting the Best Financial Management Practices, ValienteHernandez P.A. conducted four site visits, interviewed the chief financial officer, finance director, budgeting director, purchasing director, insurance and benefits director, internal audit director, and other key staff.

ValienteHernandez P.A. also analyzed documents received from the district. Issues identified through interviews, site observations, analyses, focus groups, and forums were used to compare the district's cost control systems with the programs in five peer districts: Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole and Volusia.

Internal Auditing

1 The district has established an internal audit function; however, the duties and responsibilities of this position are not consistent with those outlined in the Florida Statutes.

Section 230.23(10)(l), *Florida Statutes (2001)*, permits school districts to use internal auditors for ongoing verification of the district's financial records. These auditors must report directly to the board or its designee. Such an internal audit function, when properly defined and carried out, can assure a school district that internal controls are adequately designed and functioning effectively, and can evaluate compliance with board and administrative policies and procedures, as well as state and federal guidelines. Internal audits can also function as a performance evaluation and management control system.

Some of the duties of an internal auditor include:

- Review financial and operating information and the means used to identify, measure, classify, and report such information.
- Review the systems established by the district to ensure compliance with policies, plans, procedures, laws, regulations, and contracts.
- Review the means of safeguarding assets and, as appropriate, verify the accounting of such assets.

Cost Control Systems

- Evaluate the district's use of resources.
- Review district operations to determine if they're meeting their objectives.
- Provide consulting services to add value and improve operations.

The School District of Lee County has not established a true internal audit function

Recent organizational changes have improved the district's Internal Audit Department, which now reports directly to the superintendent of schools instead of the chief financial officer. This new independence will allow the internal auditors to present their findings directly to the superintendent rather than to the function being reviewed. The department has four internal auditors who ensure that professional care is exercised in performing their duties. These responsibilities include auditing the school internal funds, defalcations, charter school reviews, ensuring that external audit recommendations are implemented, and completing various special projects as needed. Internal auditors have full access to records, have developed audit programs to document the nature, timing and extent of their audit work, and are independent of the activities they monitor. The job description for the district's director of internal auditing is as follows:

- Reviews audit work of staff auditors to assure quality control, uniformity, and adherence to generally accepted practices.
- Directs and coordinates the planning and implementation of school internal funds audits for all schools.
- Plans, oversees, and reviews the monthly and annual reconciliation for school internal fund financial information for all schools on a consolidated basis.
- Develops and implements procedures for accountability of funds and compliance with state and district rules, regulations, and policies.
- Provides guidance to schools on issues concerning policies, procedures, and financial accountability.
- Provides assistance to school-based staff in reconciling financial data.
- Ensures compliance with board policies, federal regulations, state regulations, and good business practices to school funds.
- Maintains and supports school internal fund accounting software for all schools.
- Supervises assigned personnel, conducts annual performance appraisals, and makes recommendations for appropriate employment action.
- Trains and assists bookkeepers in bookkeeping procedures and concepts relevant to school internal funds.
- Researches state and regulatory provisions in support of accountability for district funds.
- Designs and supports spreadsheets for fee-supported programs.
- Performs special audits upon request.
- Develops administrative guidelines and procedures.

The internal auditor's duties and responsibilities indicate that the district has used an internal auditor to audit individual school internal funds, as required by State Board of Education Rule 6A-1.087, *Florida Administrative Code*. They also indicate that the district's internal audit function is becoming consistent with Florida Statutes.

In order for the district to implement a true internal audit function, however, the board needs to adopt an audit charter consistent with Institute of Internal Audit (IIA) guidelines. A review of the internal audit

function in the five peer school districts (Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia) showed that only one of these districts has a “true” internal audit function.

The district should conduct a risk assessment of its activities and operations

The district is currently moving in the direction of establishing a true internal audit function. Regardless of the ultimate decision about its internal audit function, the district should assess potential risks to district assets, revenues, liabilities, and expenditures. Large organizations use risk assessments to prevent unnecessary losses and improve their operations. Without properly conducted risk assessments, which are typically the responsibility of the Internal Audit Department, the district cannot identify potential risks and set priorities for addressing them.

Revenue enhancements and cost savings will usually offset the cost of annual risk assessments. Until the district can do this in-house, an independent accounting firm should be contracted to conduct an initial risk assessment. However, even if the district decides that establishing a “true” internal audit function is not cost effective, it should still plan to conduct annual risk assessments and act on the findings.

The internal audit plan should include monitoring student FTE counts in the schools

Currently, the Budget Department certifies the FTE for the district to the Department of Education, prepares the district FTE projections, answers questions, and co-ordinates staff training for school data entry personnel at the beginning of the school year. The Budget Department also checks for major errors in FTE reporting. However, student FTE counts are currently not being monitored. As the Internal Audit Department evolves, it should assume responsibility for monitoring student FTE counts in the schools. Through its training of bookkeepers, data entry personnel, and school internal funds audits, the Internal Audit Department has more contact with the schools than does the Budget Department. Moreover, this change would involve the Internal Audit Department more fully with the district-wide finances. With some training, school data processors could help monitor FTE counts, as they have daily contact with students. To avoid the same person having both monitoring and auditing duties, the internal auditor assigned to monitor the student FTE counts at a school should not be the same auditor who ultimately conducts the internal audit.

Recommendations

- *We recommend that the district contract an independent accounting firm to conduct an initial risk assessment of district operations, and then conduct risk assessments annually.*

Action Plan 14-1 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend that responsibility for monitoring FTE counts be assumed by the Internal Audit Department.*

Action Plan 14-2 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 14-1

Contract with an Independent Accounting Firm for an Initial Risk Assessment of District Operations

Strategy	Complete an initial risk assessment, using an independent certified public accountant, and then conduct a risk assessment annually. Determine if it is cost beneficial to expand the internal audit function to address risks identified by the risk assessment.

Action Needed	Step 1: Contract with an appropriate organization to conduct the first risk assessment. The contract deliverables should include a risk assessment methodology and materials appropriate to the School Board of Lee County so that the district can use the information to perform subsequent annual risk assessments in-house. The contracted risk assessment also should include estimates of the financial impact for all risks identified through the assessment. Step 2: Assign priorities to identified risks. Step 3: Develop strategies to eliminate or mitigate identified risks.
Who is responsible	Internal Audit Director
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Effect	One-time cost of \$15,000-\$20,000 (lower estimate based on one-time cost of a risk assessment conducted in Manatee county). After the initial risk assessment, the recommended annual risk assessment can be done in-house with existing resources.

Action Plan 14-2

The Internal Audit Department Could Assume Responsibility for Monitoring FTE Counts

Strategy	To include the monitoring of the FTE counts at the schools in the internal audit plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The budget department and Internal Audit Department should jointly develop projections of the FTE count. Step 2: After the beginning of the school year, the Internal Audit Department should verify that the actual student enrollment conforms to the projected FTE count. Step 3: The Internal Audit Department should enlist the aid of the school data processors to review changes in enrollment at the school. Step 4: The Internal Audit Department should include quarterly monitoring of the student FTE counts as part of their audit plan.
Who is responsible	Internal Audit Director, Budget Director, School Principals
Time Frame	June 30, 2004
Fiscal Effect	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Financial Auditing

2 The district obtains an external audit in accordance with government auditing standards.

The annual audit of the district for the 2000-01 fiscal year was performed by an independent certified public accounting firm, in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, supplemented with government auditing standards, and the provisions of the federal Single Audit Act.

Pursuant to s. 218.39(1)(d), *Florida Statutes*, the district annually receives a financial audit by either the Auditor General of the State of Florida, or by an independent CPA. A financial audit is defined in s. 11.45(1)(c), *Florida Statutes* as financial audits that are conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and government auditing standards.

While performing the financial audit, the Auditor General and the independent CPA perform an examination to determine if district operations are properly conducted in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements.

Because of the district's significant federal funding sources, these audits included a review of the federal programs as required by the United States Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) *Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations*.

The district has submitted all of the required financial reports with the Florida Department of Education.

3 The district provides for timely follow-up of findings identified in the external audit.

The Auditor General, pursuant to s. 11.45(4)(d), *Florida Statutes*, and the independent CPA firm, pursuant to s. 218.39(5), *Florida Statutes*, are required to provide the district with all of the auditor's comments that will be included in the audit report.

A review by ValienteHernandez P.A. of the audit reports for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2000, and June 30, 2001, indicate that the audits for both of these years contained no audit findings. An unqualified opinion with no material weaknesses or reportable conditions was given for both the financial statement and compliance with the requirements of federal and state programs.

One of the responsibilities of the Internal Audit Department is to ensure that the recommendations of the external audit are implemented. A review of the management representation letters for the years June 30, 2000, and June 30, 2001, indicated that all of the recommendations of the audit for the year ended June 30, 2000, that the district was in agreement with, had either been implemented, or were in the process of being implemented.

4 The district obtains and reviews required financial information relating to school internal accounts, direct support organizations, and charter schools.

The district has established policies and procedures to administer the school internal funds. The Internal Audit Department had completed audits of 51% of the school internal funds prior to the completion of the external audit for the year ended June 30, 2001, and the fieldwork on all of the 2000-01 fiscal year's school internal funds audits by June 30, 2002. The audits of the school internal funds for the 2000-01 school year were presented to the board on July 26, 2002.

The district has a direct support organization. An external audit was completed of the foundation for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2001 and financial data from this audit was included in the district-wide annual financial report.

An external audit was completed for each of the district's charter schools and the results were presented to the board while in session. In addition to annual audits, the charter schools are required to provide and have submitted quarterly financial statements to the board.

Asset Management

5 The district segregates responsibilities for custody of assets from record keeping responsibilities for those assets.

Capital expenditures are initiated by the school or Facilities Department and approved by the Purchasing Department or school board. The cash management accountant in the Financial Accounting Department is responsible for the general ledger accounting/reconciliation and the assistant director in the Financial Accounting/Property Records Department is responsible for recording the asset.

The administrator or designee having custody of the funds, prior to their submission to the Purchasing Department, approves purchase requisitions, including those for capital expenditures, leases, and maintenance projects. The Purchasing Department evaluates for proper account coding, competitive bids, and/or school board project approvals when dollar volume requires. Lease agreements are incorporated into bid documents when possible.

Property records staff maintains property records. The Finance Department staff maintains the general ledger.

Principals and department heads are responsible for control of inventory as custodian. Property records staff conduct physical inventories. The schedule for the physical inventory is established and monitored regularly by the assistant director of the Financial Accounting Department.

6 The district has established controls that provide for proper authorization of asset acquisitions and disposals.

If a location (school or department) has budget capacity to purchase equipment, then the administrator has the authorization to initiate the capital asset transaction. The limit of a location's authority is governed by the budget capacity of its account lines and board policy. Board policy identifies individuals who may make capital transactions and describes the limits of this authority. Each capital project is tracked on the accounting system with an individual project number. Written board approval is required for all significant capital asset projects or acquisitions.

Procedures have been established and are followed for authorizing, approving, and documenting sales or other dispositions of capital assets. Also, the district complies with guidelines for financing alternatives as outlined in Ch. 237, *Florida Statutes*, the Florida Department of Education publication *Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting For Florida Schools (Red Book)*, and district policy.

Grantor approval is obtained for all grant funds. A project application lists all anticipated expenditures and is approved by the board and appropriate department heads before being submitted for consideration. The project is set up upon grant approval notification from the grantor, and grant-funded acquisitions are subject to school board purchasing and bidding policies.

7 **The district has established records that accumulate project costs and other relevant data to facilitate reporting construction and maintenance activities to the board, the public, and grantors. However, the use of a manual system of updating capital project costs contains a greater possibility for error and is more labor intensive than an automated system.**

The district assigns a project number to each capital project and repair. Three levels of accounting distribution reviews ensure proper allocation of charges to fixed asset and expenditure projects. For example, three levels of approval are required before any payments are made when contractors perform construction work.

The district maintains a worksheet for all project expenditures. Project expenditures are manually moved to completed projects only after the board approves the certificate of final inspection. The Facilities Department identifies completed projects so that timely transfers to the appropriate accounts can be made. The district does not use “cost-plus” or similar contracts, so it does not perform audits of contractors for compliance with EEO, Davis-Bacon, and other regulations and contract terms. This review is conducted during the annual external audit, although the district occasionally receives questionnaires from outside auditors performing audits of contractors. This is an area of potential cost savings that would be identified by a risk assessment.

The district should conduct a cost/benefit analysis for automating the recording of capital projects

The manual recording and transfer of construction in progress to the completed project exposes the district to greater risk of incomplete and inaccurate information than if these processes were automated. Although the district has instituted a number of checks and balances to ensure that all capital projects are properly accounted for, these processes, because they are manual processes, can increase the risk of error. Also, the system is extremely labor intensive, requiring the capital projects accountant to update the worksheet manually each time a bill is paid.

Prior to the implementation of this recommendation; however, the district must upgrade the existing computer software programs as discussed in the Administrative and Technology Section, Chapter 6, Best Practice #18.

Recommendation

- *We recommend that the district conduct a cost/benefit analysis to determine if automating the recording of capital projects is feasible.*

Action Plan 14-3 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 14-3

Conduct A Cost/Benefit Analysis To Determine If Automating The Recording Of Capital Projects Is Feasible	
Strategy	Determine if it would be cost beneficial to automate the recording of the capital project progress billings and transfer to completed project.

Action Needed	Step 1: Identify all steps and levels involved in the recording of capital projects including any other tracking systems for capital projects in the Facilities and Budget Department.
	Step 2: Track time spent by the capital project accountant in updating the excel worksheet records.
	Step 3: Conduct a meeting to determine how to automate the recording of capital projects.
Who is responsible	Financial Director, Facilities Director, Capital Projects Accountant and MIS Department
Time Frame	June 30, 2004 – for pilot testing
Fiscal Effect	None

8 The district provides recorded accountability for capitalized assets.

Detailed property records are maintained for all significant self-constructed, donated, purchased, or leased assets. Each asset is tagged and logged to the responsible location. A threshold of \$750 for the capitalization of assets has been established and approved by the board. The district uses accounting codes (fund, function, project, and object) to distinguish between non-capital expenditures and capital expenditures. The district also distinguishes between capital and operating leases. Evidence of property rights deeds and titles are kept in the Facilities Department.

9 Assets are safeguarded from unauthorized use, theft, and physical damage; however, controls for verifying that all assets have been accounted for should be enhanced.

The construction manager or project contractor verifies the quantity and condition of materials and services purchased for capital projects as they are delivered to the project site. Lease transactions are subjected to the same controls. Each school or department inventory is assigned to a member of the property inventory staff. Property records are compared to existing assets on an annual basis and whenever there is a change in property custodian. An exit conference with the school/district department head is conducted to discuss differences between the property records and physical inventory. Written responses are required from the school/district department head. Missing items are reported to the board for permission to write off the Tangible Property Asset file. The district previously used metal bar tags to identify equipment, but has recently begun bar coding assets with nylon strips.

The district should enhance the recording of fixed asset acquisitions and dispositions

Asset acquisitions and dispositions are now done manually. While the district has checks and balances in place to capture fixed assets, a manual process is inherently more prone to errors and omissions than an automated system, and is more labor intensive. We recommend that the district choose a cutoff date, perform a final manual reconciliation of the detailed property to the general ledger, and then fully integrate the detailed property records with the general ledger. The general and subsidiary ledger records should be reconciled periodically (preferably monthly, but at least quarterly). Before implementing this recommendation, however, the district must upgrade existing computer software programs, as recommended in the Administrative and Technology Section, Chapter 6 Best Practice #18.

Recommendation

- *The district should integrate the detailed property records directly with the general ledger.*

Action Plan 14-4 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 14-4

Integrate the Detailed Property Records Directly With the General Ledger	
Strategy	To fully integrate the detailed property records with the general ledger and a periodic reconciliation of the general ledger to the subsidiary property records
Action Needed	Step 1: Before the upgrade has been fully implemented, select a cutoff date (one-two weeks before the end of the month). Freeze all non-essential fixed asset purchases to allow the property accountant to update fixed asset subsidiary records. At month end, run a complete listing of the subsidiary ledgers and update the general ledger balance to the balance in the subsidiary ledgers. Step 2: Fully implement the proposed modification of the accounting software. Ensure that when assets are entered into the general ledger the detailed property records are up-dated.
Who Is Responsible	Property Accountant and Finance Department
Time Frame	December 31, 2004
Fiscal Effect	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Inventory Management

10 The district segregates responsibilities for custody of inventories from record keeping responsibilities for those assets.

The district maintains inventory in the district warehouse, Maintenance Department, Transportation Department, and the print shop. The food service and supply inventories are both maintained in the district warehouse. Each department segregates responsibilities for requisitioning and approving inventory purchases from inventory accounting by having different people perform these functions. Each department also segregates perpetual inventory accounting from inventory custody by having one person maintain control of inventory records and another maintain custody of the inventory. In all but one department, the same people perform both functions. The warehouse compensates for that by having the people who have custody of the inventory records perform blind counts, which are independently verified.

11 The district has established and implemented controls that provide for proper inventory requisitioning.

District procedures for requisitioning items from inventory are limited to specific individuals or by the use of forms that pass through different layers of control. Each department limits the requisitioning of inventory items to department heads, principals, or specific individuals who have obtained proper approval. The district warehouse also requires the use of a specific computer terminal and approved security password. Each department requires the use of specific requisition documentation either by paper forms or electronic means. Each department also periodically reconciles inventory balances and requisitions.

12 The district has established controls that provide for inventory accountability.

All of the departments maintain inventories in secure, limited-access locations that protect items from physical deterioration. The district maintains detailed inventory records, and each department periodically compares its records to existing inventories, as illustrated in Exhibit 14-3.

Exhibit 14-3

Inventory General Ledger and Physical Count Balances Differed by 3.74% Before Adjustment

General Ledger			
Category	Balance	Physical Count	Difference
Maintenance	\$ 379,171.78	\$ 341,150.31	\$ (38,021.47)
Transportation	207,865.75	211,600.37	3,734.62
Supply	267,860.60	237,665.26	(30,195.34)
Printing	25,926.08	24,244.90	(1,681.18)
Curriculum	954,701.74	954,701.74	-
Snack Bar	1,809.12	1,809.12	-
Total	\$ 1,837,335.07	\$ 1,771,171.70	\$ (66,163.37)

Source: School District of Lee County inventory counts and general ledger.

The total discrepancy between the physical count and the general ledger balance was 3.74%, with the largest individual discrepancies in the Supply (12.70%) and Maintenance (11.15%) Departments. Both departments investigated the discrepancies and documented the necessary inventory adjustments.

13 The district has evaluated the inventory function to determine its cost-effectiveness.

The School District of Lee County maintains inventory in supplies, print shop, parts, maintenance, and food services. The district's parts, maintenance and food services inventory procedures will be evaluated more fully in the transportation, maintenance, and food services chapters. However, by closely monitoring supply inventory levels and using a vendor that delivers within 24 hours, the district has been able to substantially reduce its supply inventory over the last five years.

Risk Management

14 The district sets objectives for risk management activities, identifies and evaluates risks, and has designed a comprehensive program to protect itself at a reasonable cost.

The insurance and benefits staff meets quarterly with the third-party administrator to assess risk management activities, reports, claims, and changes in risk exposure. Annually, the third-party administrator presents a comprehensive review/evaluation of risk and purchased insurance options in preparation for the district's July 1 insurance renewal. The district's CFO, board attorney, and other top-level staff, as needed, are included in the annual review meetings. Claim history for each line of coverage is evaluated and the Schedule of Property Values is updated for the property insurance renewal.

The district contracts with the third-party administrator to provide comprehensive risk management services, which include an evaluation of risks and risk-financing options. The district has a comprehensive disaster recovery program that deals not only with disaster preparedness for human resources, but also with the recovery of the district's operating resources. However, as outlined in Action Plan 14-1, the performance of a risk assessment by the district would assist in identifying all potential risks to which the district is exposed.

15 The district has comprehensive policies and procedures relating to acquiring and reviewing coverage for risks of loss.

The School District of Lee County has a 16-member Insurance Task Force (ITF), which oversees the district's self-insured health plan and voluntary employee benefits. The ITF reviews all benefits annually and must approve all new benefits and/or changes to existing benefits. When the ITF recommends releasing a request for proposal (RFP) for an employee benefit, a subcommittee is appointed to work with the district's benefit consultant to draft the RFP, evaluate the submissions, interview a short list of proposers, rank the finalists, and make a recommendation to the full Task Force for its approval. The ITF's recommendation is presented to the board in a briefing meeting and then at a regular board meeting for board approval.

When other commercial coverage is necessary, the third-party administrator (TPA) provides the district with an annual analysis that identifies all carriers that were approached and applicable quotes. The district periodically reviews and updates its insurance coverage to ensure that all assets are adequately insured for loss. The district verifies that insurance premiums are properly assessed and paid in accordance with bids, contracts, and/or consortium plan requirements by comparing each annual or "one-time" invoice to the corresponding proposal, board-approved agenda item, and/or governing contract. If a refund or recovery is received the TPA reviews it for accuracy, then it is sent to the Insurance and Benefits Department. The accountant in the Insurance and Benefits Department logs the dollar figure into the appropriate budget account line. It is then forwarded to the Financial Accounting Department with directions for deposit and the account line that should be credited. Once the monthly budget report from the Financial Accounting Department is received by the Insurance and Benefits Department, the accountant reviews the report to ensure that the funds were properly credited.

When an individual is terminated, the individual's file is noted with a cancellation date and given to the on-site TPA representative to enable coverage to be immediately canceled directly in the TPA's system. The district ensures that only qualified recipients are receiving benefits by running a deduction/discrepancy report prior to the balancing of each payroll.

Annually, the ITF, with the assistance of the district's benefit consultant, analyzes risk retention/cost options (stop-loss insurance) for the self-insured health plan. Semi-annually, the district reviews the amounts actually due from excess coverage. The district maintains two bank accounts to pay for claims administered by the district's TPA. Each year, the district's self-insured health plan has received a letter from the Florida Department of Insurance accepting the plan as being in compliance with the requirements of s. 112.08, *Florida Statutes*.

Financial Management

16 District management communicates its commitment and support of strong internal controls; however, it should communicate its ethics policies more effectively to employees.

The district's commitment to internal controls is communicated to each employee during new employee orientation. The district emphasizes its commitment to internal controls by periodically reviewing the segregation of duties and limiting the access employees have both physically to different areas and logically through the use of passwords and computer access codes.

The district should more effectively communicate ethics policies to employees

The district has an ethics policy and is drafting an employee handbook. While the draft copy has a provision protecting individuals who report suspected improprieties in accordance with Florida law, until the board formally approves it and it is adopted, anyone reporting improprieties is unprotected. We recommend that the employee handbook be completed, reviewed, presented to the board, and adopted for use in the district.

Recommendation

- *The district should complete and review the employee handbook, and present it for board approval.*

Action Plan 14-5 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 14-5

Complete and Review the Employee Handbook and Present It for Board Approval	
Strategy	Complete and review the draft copy of the employee handbook, present it to the board and adopt the approved version.

Action Needed	Step 1: Present the draft copy of the employee handbook to a group of district employees for review. Incorporate any input into an approval draft and present it to the board. Step 2: Once the board has approved the employee handbook, distribute it to all district employees. Distribute the handbook to new employees.
Who Is Responsible	Personnel services and the internal auditor.
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Financial Impact	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

17 The district records and reports financial transactions in accordance with prescribed standards.

The district's computer system collects information by fund, function, and amount. Additionally, the system collects subsidiary information by fund, function, object, location, project, cost center, and amount. The accounting system has the capacity to show both budgetary and actual amounts. Automated entries are processed through the information systems sections of the Communication and Technology Department. Manual entries are processed through the Financial Accounting Department.

Pursuant to law, the district's accounting system was designed to include a chart of accounts consistent with the requirements of the Florida Department of Education's manual *Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools* (known as the *Red Book 2001*). System features include account-coding information (cost center, program, function, and object) to accumulate costs in accordance with prescribed standards.

Accounting manuals are distributed to appropriate personnel in financial services, and the district maintains a log of the individuals who have received manuals. Access to the accounting system is restricted logically, by user I.D. and password. Batch number records are assigned to all manual journal entries, and all entries are reviewed and approved by the assistant finance director.

18 The district prepares and distributes its financial reports in a timely manner; however, monthly reporting of grant activity should be automated.

The budget director and the chief financial officer prepare monthly financial summaries for presentation to the board. Annual financial statements are presented for board review and approval before the external audit has been completed.

District staff prepares regular financial reports to meet the reporting requirements of grants or projects funded with restricted funds. The district's reporting process includes monthly FA-399 preparation for projects funded by federal cash advance and other reports as required by the projects. A spreadsheet is kept listing each project and its encumbrance and liquidation deadlines. In addition, a tickler file is kept on the calendar section of Outlook listing project liquidation dates.

The district should automate the monthly reporting of grants

District staff keep grant records on manually prepared spreadsheets. District staff records all changes to the spreadsheet before they post the general ledger. While the district has checks and balances to ensure

that grant changes are properly recorded, a manual process is inherently more prone to errors and omissions than an automated system. Also, the manual method of recording grant changes is more labor intensive than an automated system and requires the grants accountant to review several pieces of documentation each time a change is made. We recommend that the district implement an accounting change that would allow automating the monthly grant reports. Prior to the implementation of this recommendation, however, the district must upgrade the existing computer software programs as discussed in the Administrative and Technology Section, Chapter 6 Best Practice # 18.

Recommendation

- *The district should automate the preparation of the monthly grant reports.*

Action Plan 14-6 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 14-6

Automate the Preparation of the Monthly Grant Reports	
Strategy	To automate the monthly reporting of grants.
Action Needed	Step 1: As part of the overall computer upgrade, select a financial software package that updates the detailed grants records each time the general ledger is changed. Consideration must also be given to the ability to interface with other software applications in the selection of the financial accounting software.
	Step 2: For a period of two months, perform simultaneous testing using the automated and manual report preparation to ensure that the automated system is working.
	Step 3: Fully implement the automated monthly reporting of grants.
Who Is Responsible	Grants Accountant, MIS Department, and Finance Department
Time Frame	September 30, 2004
Financial Impact	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

19 The district has a financial plan serving as an estimate of and control over operations and expenditures.

The district effectively segregates responsibilities for budget preparation, adoption, execution, and reporting. The principal or department head prepares his or her own school or department budget. These individuals input their budgets directly into the mainframe computer system. The Budget Department oversees the budget, the board approves the budget, and the Finance Department runs the budget reports.

Annually, usually during the last week in July, the district begins the budgetary process for the next fiscal year. The district places advertisements concerning budgetary hearings and capital outlay millage rates in local periodicals. The district also holds an open public meeting to solicit input from the public on the proposed budget. The district maintains a budgetary calendar to ensure the orderly submission and approval of the budget.

The Budget Department receives a weekly fund report that shows revenue and expenditure levels by fund category. Budget reports are sent monthly to all schools and departments to allow personnel to review actual expenditures against projected expenditures. The flow of expenditures and commitments are controlled through the use of an encumbrance system in the automated purchase ordering system.

20 The district has effective controls to provide recorded accountability for cash resources.

Two accounting clerks are responsible for the receipt and coding of cash receipts and the bank reconciliation accountant verifies coding of cash receipts and posting to the general ledger. Cash disbursements are segregated from cash receipts and are the responsibility of the cash management accountant. Receipts are deposited daily at the district level, and the school internal funds make deposits every five days. In the course of reviewer observations it was noted that schools deposit cash receipts whenever a certain dollar amount has been received. All receipts in the district are pre-numbered, and each week the cash reconciliation accountant compares cash receipts against deposit slips. A restrictive endorsement is placed on all incoming checks, and non-sufficient fund checks are delivered to someone other than the person responsible for cash receipts. Non-sufficient fund checks are followed up on a weekly basis. All undeposited cash is kept in a safe overnight.

The district keeps its moneys in a bank that has been approved by the state for public deposits. The district is currently in a five-year banking agreement that expires in 2003. As it has done before, the district will request requests for proposals from interested banks. A review of banking agreements in peer districts indicated that all but two districts deposit their moneys in the same bank.

Receipts are required for disbursements from petty cash funds. The petty cash and change funds are kept locked in a cash register or desk drawer of the custodial employee. Fidelity bonds are maintained on all employees handling cash.

Although the district keeps moneys owned by several different restricted and unrestricted funds in a pooled bank account, it uses fund numbers to maintain appropriate fund ownership of the cash in the pooled bank account. Receipts and checks are posted on a weekly basis and verified by the bank reconciliation accountant. The director of the Financial Accounting Department authorizes all inter-bank and intra-bank fund transfers. Bank accounts are reconciled monthly and employees are cross-trained to perform the bank reconciliation process if necessary.

21 The district has an investment plan that includes investment objectives and performance criteria designed to maximize return consistent with the risks associated with each investment, and specifies the types of financial products approved for investment.

The district has segregated the responsibilities for initiating, evaluating, and approving investment transactions and for detail accounting, general ledger, and other related functions, between the receivables accountant and the cash management accountant. Investments maintained by the district are consistent with its board policy. The district maintains approximately 99.5% of its total investments in either the State Board Administration (SBA) investment pool or in an interest bearing checking account. The school board is updated monthly on investment earnings, and the district has segregated the responsibilities for initiating investments from the final approvals that commit government resources. The district has also segregated the responsibilities for the maintenance of the detailed accounting records and general ledger entries among various district personnel.

The district has an established investment policy, which is periodically reviewed and updated. The district invests all cash that it does not need in the SBA investment pool. The director of the Financial Accounting Department approves all wire transfers.

School internal fund investments are maintained by the bank reconciliation accountant, and segregated by school. These funds are reconciled on a monthly basis to the SBA account. Interest received from bank accounts is reconciled and posted quarterly to the general ledger that provided the resources by the bank reconciliation accountant.

22 The district has established effective controls for recording, collecting, adjusting, and reporting receivables.

The receivables accountant maintains the detail for the accounts receivable. The accounting clerk posts the receipts. Each month, the district verifies and posts the cash receipts received that month. At year-end, however, the district accrues the receipts that have been received by the tax collector, but not yet transferred to the district. The accounts receivable accountant sends late letters monthly for all delinquent accounts. Accounts are charged off on an annual basis, except for salary over-payments, which are sent to collections after unsuccessful collection by an attorney. The director of the Financial Accounting Department approves all write-offs of non-sufficient fund checks in the food services account.

All receivables are posted from original invoice documents. The grant accountant and the accounts receivable accountant reconcile subsidiary accounts to the general ledger monthly. The accounts receivable accountant prepares a quarterly aging report, which is reviewed by the finance director.

23 The district has effective controls that provide accountability for paying salaries and benefits; however, payroll enhancements are needed.

The district has established sufficient controls to provide accountability for the payment of salaries and benefits. Each non-instructional employee is assigned a pay grade and step from the relevant board-approved salary schedule. Each instructional employee's salary is linked to a pay step based upon his/her educational degree and verified work experience. Voluntary insurance deductions are initiated either in the Personnel Department during new hire processing, or in the Insurance and Benefits Department for plan or coverage level changes. Notices of additions, separations, and changes in salaries, wages, and deductions are promptly reported to the payroll-processing function.

Access to the master payroll file is limited to authorized employees through use of passwords. The basic payroll functions are separated into three areas. Personnel services staff have capability to enter personal data and basic salary schedule information such as pay grade and step. The Payroll Department has access to payroll fields in which calculated wages and other information about payroll payments and deductions are processed. Payroll checks and direct deposit statements are signed and distributed in the Financial Accounting Department. All changes to the master payroll records must be submitted to the Management Information Services (MIS) Department.

Each school and department has an administrator responsible for supervising employees at their worksites. Time keeping and attendance are maintained at the department or school level using absence reports. The Payroll Department records absences in the following month. Monthly updating of sick and leave balances is consistent with the procedure in two of the five peer districts. Overtime hours are

reported on an MIS form initiated at the worksite and signed by the employee and administrator. The form is then forwarded to the Budget Department for approval.

The board approves calendars for each work schedule each fiscal year.

Payroll processing is done in the Payroll Department; general ledger functions are maintained in the Financial Accounting Department. The employee's payroll master file and the payroll budget report provide detailed accounting information for classifying employee compensation and benefit expenditures. The Payroll Department balances the employee's gross salary from the opening register and the net salary changes in the pay period to the final payroll register.

The district recommends that all employees take advantage of the direct deposit option; however, a union contract within the Transportation Department prevents the district from requiring it. Overall, 57% of the district's 9,518 employees are on direct deposit.

The district effectively monitors employee W-2s and any returned W-2s are investigated promptly. Employee leave balances are updated monthly and reported to employees on their payroll stubs.

The district should enhance its method of calculating the cost savings from early retirement incentive programs should it decide to re-offer the program

The district has offered three iterations of the early retirement plan. The first was offered in 1995, the second in 1997, and the third in 1999. Each plan offered retiring employees continuation of health insurance benefits. The district structured the program so that the expenses of the early retirement incentive program would be less than the salaries of the employees opting for the early retirement incentive program. However, the district did not calculate the actual cost savings that resulted from these programs. Although the district is not planning another iteration of the early retirement program, should it decide to offer another iteration of the program at a future date, it should review the cost savings (if any) that have resulted from previous iterations of the program, and perform a thorough prospective analysis of the anticipated cost savings before another iteration of the early retirement program is offered.

The district should upgrade the current personnel/payroll application software to one that interfaces with other financial applications

The district's current method of recording payroll is labor intensive. Payroll calculations, terminations, new hires, and other payroll changes must be recorded on an excel spreadsheet prior to being entered into the current system. Also, the current payroll software system does not allow on-line research of the employee's work history when questions arise from employees concerning sick leave or vacation balances. The current system does not allow historical research of prior year information. Retrieval of the historical information requires either a special request to the MIS Department or extensive manual research of paper documentation. We recommend that when the district upgrades its current computer system as discussed in the Administrative and Technology Section, Chapter 6 Best Practice #18, a personnel/payroll application software that interfaces with other financial applications and maintains historical data is selected.

Recommendations

- *Should the district re-offer an early retirement program in the future, we recommend that the district review the cost savings (if any) that have resulted from past early retirement incentive*

programs and complete a prospective analysis of the anticipated cost savings of the new program before a final decision is made.

Action Plan 14-7 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *When the district upgrades its current computer software system as discussed in the Administrative and Technology Section, Chapter 6 Best Practice #18, it should choose a personnel/payroll application software that interfaces with financial applications and is capable of storing historical data.*

Action Plan 14-8 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 14-7

Prior to Re-Offering Another Early Retirement Program, We Recommend the District Review the Cost Savings (If Any) That Resulted From Prior Offerings and Analyze Anticipated Cost Savings of the New Program	
Strategy	To review the cost savings (if any) that has resulted from the first three offerings of the early retirement incentive program and the anticipated cost savings of another version of the early retirement program prior to offering any new early retirement opportunity.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review the cost savings (if any) that have resulted from the first three iterations of the program. For the proposed iteration of the program, analyze the number of employees who will probably participate in the program and the salary savings that could result. Offset against these savings, the costs to replace personnel, including recruitment, background checks, training, etc., and the costs of providing benefits to the plan participants. Step 2: Determine the future costs for all iterations of the program for current participants. Examine the current employee pool to determine the number, salary, and benefits of employees who would be eligible for early retirement in the next five years. Step 3: This compiled information will provide financial data that will indicate the actual cost savings or expenses that resulted from the first three iterations of the early retirement program and the proposed cost savings of a new iteration of the program should the district consider offering another iteration in the future.
Who is responsible	Payroll director, finance director, personnel services
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented using the district's current financial resources.

Action Plan 14-8

When Upgrading the Current Computer Software System As Discussed In the Administrative and Technology Section, Chapter 6 Best Practice 18, Include a Personnel/Payroll Application That Interfaces With Financial Applications and Is Capable Of Storing Historical Data	
Strategy	As part of the overall upgrade of the computer software system, the district should select a personnel/payroll software application program that interfaces directly with other financial applications and is capable of storing historical data.
Action Needed	Step 1: As part of the review of the overall computer software system process, perform a review of the personnel/payroll software application modules of all the software programs under consideration for implementation system wide. Step 2: Determine which ones (two-three) would be the most efficient if implemented in the personnel/payroll area. Step 3: Determine the computer system that works most efficiently in the personnel/payroll area that is also beneficial to other departments.
Who is responsible	Payroll director, finance director, personnel services and the MIS department

Time Frame	September 30, 2004 for pilot implementation.
Fiscal Impact	The fiscal impact of the selection of the personnel/payroll application software would be part of the district's plan to upgrade the computer system.

24 **The district analyzes, evaluates, monitors and reports debt-financing alternatives.**

The district considers various financing alternatives when it needs moneys for significant and high cost projects. The type of financing considered is based on the district's needs and resources. The district calculates its debt capacity when preparing its annual budget.

The district sends request for proposals to financial institutions or financial advisors depending on the nature of the financing that the district needs. Financial Accounting Department staff evaluates the requests for proposals and the chief financial officer (CFO) reviews the results of the evaluations. The district also has procedures for reviewing and evaluating the costs of issuing debt, including legal fees, printing, travel, credit enhancement, and the underwriter's spread. When considering debt refinancing, financial accounting staff, the managing underwriter and the CFO/assistant superintendent of business services review costs and savings to refund debt.

The capital projects accountant is responsible for maintaining a schedule of all district debt and arbitrage dates in order to comply with federal regulations. The debt service accountant is responsible for maintaining the sinking-fund investment account to ensure that the balance is adequate for the current year and next year's principal and interest payments.

As of June 30, 2001, the district had a total of \$18,271,713, not including interest, in notes payable to financial institutions.

The total future value of the minimum lease payments on four certificates of participation is \$230,297,034 including interest, and total bonds payable is \$37,364,388 including interest.

The debt service accountant is responsible for submitting timely reports and the continuing financial disclosures required by SEC rule 15c2-12 for debt arrangements.

25 **The district effectively monitors and reports grant activities.**

The district effectively monitors and reports grant activity by providing for the following for each grant it receives:

- The agency from which it is received.
- Grant name
- Project code (what the grant is to be used for)
- Agency project number (how the granting agency identifies the project)
- Agency contact.
- Terms and conditions.
- Last date for incurring expenditures and issuing purchasing orders.
- Liquidation date.

- Submission date for final disbursement reports.
- Notification to the school or department receiving the grant.

The district uses a unique number (called a project number) to identify each grant it has received. In the district, grants are given an 8xxx project number and placed in funds 421-426. Before spending grant funds, the appropriate department signs off on all applications for proposed expenditures. The application then goes before the board before being sent to the grantor for approval.

The district has no sub-recipients on any grant funds. The grant accountants are responsible for filing the required FA-399 reports on time.

Purchasing

26 The district segregates purchasing responsibilities from the requisitioning, authorizing, and receiving functions.

Each department or school is responsible for requisitioning items for the Purchasing Department's approval and issuance of purchase orders. Purchase orders include instructions to vendors, including instructions for vendors to mail all invoices to the Financial Accounting Department. This department forwards invoices to schools and departments for signatures acknowledging receipt of goods or services, and authorizing payment.

An accounting clerk in the Finance Department processes the invoice, while the accountant reconciles open invoices to the general ledger every week. Responsibilities for the disbursement preparation and approval functions are segregated from those for recording cash disbursements and general ledger entries in a similar manner. The disbursement accounting clerk prepares and submits disbursements to the assistant director of finance for approval. Either the food service accountant or bank reconciliation accountant reconciles general ledger entries. Since this does not include separate receiving screens in the account payable system, two copies of all invoices are requested from each vendor. The original invoice stays in the Financial Accounting Department and a copy is forwarded to the school or department.

27 The district has established controls for authorizing purchase requisitions.

For the automated purchase order system, principals and department heads submit requests to the MIS Department for user IDs and passwords to access the system for the purpose of approving purchase requisitions and submitting them to the Purchasing Department for review and issuance of purchase orders. Manual, pre-printed purchase requisitions are pre-numbered and distributed by printing services, which maintains records of requisition numbers delivered to each location. The automated purchase order system assigns a requisition number when the requisition is added to the system. The system assigns a purchase order number when the Purchasing Department approves the requisition and issues the purchase order.

The principal or department head initiating the purchase requisition is responsible for indicating the budgetary line to be charged. The purchase order/requisition computer system will not allow requisitions on the system that exceed budget capacity. Additionally, the budget director signs off on the fiscal impact of all agenda items. The fiscal impact states the amount and account lines for obligations exceeding monetary thresholds, as required by the board.

The Purchasing Department cooperates with schools and departments in developing technical specifications to be used for soliciting quotations, bids, and proposals.

28 The district has established authorization controls over purchasing; however, enhancements could be made to its current purchasing processes.

The purchasing director, two buyers, and two accounting clerks are authorized to approve requisitions and issue purchase orders. These individuals observe school board policy and the lower level individuals consult with the director if there are any compliance issues on the purchase requisition. The district has procedures in place to consolidate planned purchases such as annual bids for items that will be purchased by a majority of schools or departments.

Authorized Purchasing Department personnel review purchase requisitions for proper account coding, vendor selection, and use of awarded quotes, bids, or state contracts. The district's executive team reviews recommendations for awarding formal bids and proposals.

The district uses state contracts, when advantageous to do so. The district also maintains a membership in a purchasing consortium made up of governmental entities in Lee and contiguous counties.

The district has procedures for requesting, receiving, and evaluating competitive bids based on price and quality. The Purchasing Department mails invitation to bid packages to known potential bidders for the majority of formal solicitations. Newspaper advertisements are placed when there are too few or no potential bidders. The appropriate number of price quotes is obtained when a formal bid is not required for a purchase. The district keeps a list of vendors whose performance fell short of expectations, and no longer uses those vendors.

Purchasing Department professional staff receives copies of the annual Florida Commission on Ethics Guide to the Sunshine Amendment and Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees.

Additional enhancements could be made to the purchasing function

The district could make two significant enhancements to its purchasing function. While district policy prohibits purchase splitting, it relies solely on manual processes to prevent this practice. The district could benefit by automatically flagging multiple purchase requisitions for the same item. This could be accomplished, for example, by creating a program that periodically (monthly) examines the commodity code on purchase orders that are subject to bids and quotations at various dollar levels. Before implementing this recommendation; however, the district must upgrade the existing computer software programs, as discussed in the Administrative and Instructional Technology Section, Chapter 6 Best Practice 18.

The district also requires manual or automated purchase requisitions for all items. While the necessary resources are available, a purchasing card system could not be implemented without first changing the

district's purchasing software system. The district's current accounting software is incapable of encumbering amounts using a purchase card; also, a purchasing card system requires coordination between the purchase cardholders, the Purchasing Department, and the Finance Department. Modifying the existing software would cost approximately \$275,000, based upon peer district information. Reducing the number of purchase orders should permit Purchasing Department personnel to administer the purchasing card system; however, on-going maintenance of the program (including, for example, the timely receipt of information for payment of bills, monitoring new-user applications, and terminating or transferring existing purchase card users) will require reorganization of current resources.

As shown in Exhibit 14-4, although implementing a purchase card system would require a one-time investment by the district of \$275,000 over the next five years, the organization would gain efficiencies in the purchasing process. For instance, in April 2002, approximately 3,708 purchase requisitions were submitted to the Purchasing Department. Of these requisitions, 2,018 were for purchases under \$200, while 676 were for purchases of \$200 to \$500, for a total of 2,694 purchase orders under \$500 during the month. The district has not analyzed the average cost per purchase order; however, the National Association of School Boards estimates the average cost of processing a purchase requisition (including employee time) at between \$50 and \$125.

While state agencies and one of five peer districts have claimed significant cost savings from using purchase cards to purchase items not required to be capitalized, any savings to the district cannot be precisely estimated. The largest benefit would be the gained efficiencies in the district's purchasing function. Departments and teachers could order directly and receive goods more quickly, accounts payable would pay one vendor instead of multiple vendors, warehousing would be eliminated, and the purchasing staff could devote their time to larger purchases and some management of the purchasing card system.

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that different areas involved in the purchasing process absorb the functions that develop as a result of implementing a purchasing card system. None of the peer districts with a fully implemented purchasing card system (Polk, Seminole, and Volusia) have created or hired a person to administer, coordinate, or conduct training related to purchasing cards. In Seminole County, for example, responsibility is shared between the purchasing agent, the purchasing assistant, the Accounts Payable Department, and the school bookkeepers.

Exhibit 14-4

Implementing a Purchasing Card Program Will Require an Investment of \$275,000 Over the Next Five Years, But Will Result in Gained Efficiencies in the Purchasing Function

	Fiscal Year				
	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Annual Cost Savings/(Investment)	\$0	\$(275,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0
Cumulative Cost	\$0	\$(275,000)	\$(275,000)	\$(275,000)	\$(275,000)

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A. calculations.

All five peer districts use a purchasing card system, as shown in Exhibit 14-5.

Exhibit 14-5**All Peer Districts Use Purchasing Cards**

District	Use of Purchase Cards
Lee	Does not use purchasing cards.
Brevard	Uses purchasing cards, still in implementation stage.
Pasco	Uses purchasing cards, still in implementation stage.
Polk	Uses purchasing cards.
Seminole	Uses purchasing cards.
Volusia	Uses purchasing cards.

Source: School District of Lee County and peer districts.

Each of the peer districts using a purchasing card system has different usage criteria for the purchasing card; but all filter out the purchase of capital equipment, liquor, and entertainment. As shown, some of the peer districts are still in the pilot phase. Others have fully implemented the system, restricting use of the cards to what these districts consider to be warehouse items.

Limiting the use of purchasing cards to certain items and providing adequate security reduces administrative costs.

Recommendations

- We recommend that the district's Purchasing Department automatically flag purchase requisitions for the same item from the same department by creating a program that periodically (monthly) examines the object code included on purchase orders that are subject to bids and quotations at various dollar levels.*

Action Plan 14-9 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- We recommend that the district implement the purchasing card system for the purchase of supply items up to \$500 currently obtained through purchase requisitions.*

Action Plan 14-10 provides the steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 14-9
We Recommend That The District's Purchasing Department Automatically Flag Purchase Requisitions For The Same Item From The Same Department By Creating A Program That Periodically (Monthly) Examines The Object Code Included On Purchase Orders That Are Subject To Bids And Quotations At Various Dollar Levels

Strategy	Automatically flagging purchase requisitions for the same item from the same school or department.
Action Needed	Step 1: Discussion between the Purchasing Department and the MIS Department of the software modification necessary to flag automated purchase orders. Step 2: Require that all purchase requisitions except memberships, registrations, and similar exceptions be submitted on automated purchase requisitions. Step 3: Implement a flagging system, such as a warning message when a second requisition is submitted for the same item in a certain period of time (i.e., one or two weeks). Step 4: Request written (email) verification from school or department that second orders are not attempted purchase splitting.
Who Is Responsible	Purchasing Department, schools/departments, MIS Department

Time Frame	Implementation by June 30, 2003
How to Evaluate	Reduction in number of purchase splitting on requisitions
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented using existing district resources.

Action Plan 14-10

Implement the Purchasing Card System for the Purchase of Supply Items Up To \$500 Currently Obtained Through Purchase Requisitions

Strategy	Implementing the use of purchasing cards for non-inventory items up to \$500 currently obtained from the warehouse or through purchase requisitions.
Action Needed	Step 1: The schools/departments, Purchasing, and Finance Departments meet to discuss implementing a purchasing card system. Step 2: Discussion of purchasing card features. Among the items to be considered: • Dollar limit on transactions (for example up to \$500). • Types of acceptable transactions (recommendation: for example initially Supply (0510) items). • Level of implementation (recommendation: pilot programs in five schools and one department). • Type of card used (recommendation: bank card). • Authorization level (most peer districts have principal, bookkeeper, department heads, and secretaries). • Budget (for example up to \$10,000/month, or the school's or department's line item encumbrance budget, which ever is lower). Step 3: Present purchase card implementation plan to principals and department heads for review and comment. Choose a tentative pilot group. • Present purchase card plan to board for approval. • If plan is approved, meet between representatives from schools/departments, Finance and Purchasing Departments.
Who Is Responsible	Purchasing, Finance, schools/departments
Time Frame	Pilot Implementation by December 31, 2004
How to Evaluate	Reduction in time and resources spent completing purchase requisitions.
Financial Impact	Implementing this recommendation will require a one-time investment of \$275,000, as shown in Exhibit 14-4. However, the district will benefit from gained efficiencies in the purchasing function that cannot be measured at this time.

29 The district has established controls to ensure that goods received meet quality standards.

Reports are prepared for purchased goods received in the distribution warehouse. These reports are forwarded to the accounting clerk in the Financial Accounting Department. If the quantity, description, and unit price match the invoice and purchase order, the receiving report is attached to the original copy of the invoice, and the invoice is paid. If a discrepancy is found between the receiving report and the invoice or purchase order, the invoice is sent to the authorized signer in the distribution warehouse for analysis and approval or disapproval.

The district has procedures for filing claims against carriers or vendors for shortages or damaged materials.

The district's procedures for ensuring items are received in good condition include instructing the principals/department heads, and bookkeepers (authorized signers) that their signatures imply that goods were received in sufficient quantity and condition, that the item, model number, etc., are correct and that

the site intends to keep the goods/services. Accounting clerks verify appropriate signatures and other information. This is a manual process.

A permanent record of the goods received is maintained and the receiving reports are numerically sequenced, accounted for, and sent to the Finance Department.

Payment Processing

30 The district has established controls to ensure that disbursements are properly authorized, documented, and recorded.

The director or assistant director of financial accounting approves all manual checks. Checks are input in the on-line banking system by a senior accountant and released only by the director or assistant director. Checks and warrants are kept in a safe in the locked vault room. The check-signing machine is accessible only by password, and is also kept in the locked vault room. District personnel promptly notify the bank when an individual is added or deleted from the list of approved check signers.

All checks are paid using facsimile signatures. Two signatures are required on all checks. The cash management accountant is responsible for properly accounting for checks and warrants.

All invoices are stamped with a red “Paid” stamp when entered on the mainframe system. Personnel not responsible for requesting or preparing payments deliver signed checks or warrants to the mail carrier. All warrants or checks are cross-referenced to vouchers.

31 The district has established controls for processing invoices to ensure that quantities, prices, and terms coincide with purchase orders and receiving reports.

The district has established controls and procedures for processing invoices. An instruction sheet is sent to all vendors who receive district purchase orders. This instruction sheet directs vendors to send all invoices to the Financial Accounting Department. The Financial Accounting Department uses the signed invoice from the school or department as the receiving report and pays invoices using it.

The construction manager must sign the requests for progress payments on capital projects. Payments of recurring or lease payments must be approved before payment.

The district uses an automated warrant register system to ensure that the proper accounting distribution is done on each invoice. The district has limited Budget Department access to the electronic data processing files.

The Financial Accounting Department’s secretary keeps a list of everyone who can approve expenditures. The district uses a separate purchase order for travel expenditures. All original invoices are sent to the Financial Accounting Department, and payments are made only when the receiving reports (and signed invoice), forwarded from the department or school, match the invoice. The district has procedures to ensure that all vendors are in the accounting system before payments are made.

15

Community Involvement

The School District of Lee County has developed and maintained an effective, well-received community involvement program. With a few adjustments and additional attention to coordination and oversight, the program has a long, bright future.

Conclusion

The School District of Lee County has several mechanisms in place for communicating with parents and the general public. The district also has a positive relationship with the business community, a partnership with an active private foundation that assists in developing business partnerships, an active volunteer program, and procedures in place to solicit parental input. The district's community involvement program provides active and effective support to its schools. Volunteers and business partners are the foundation of this effort and with proper coordination and oversight the district could effectively maintain the program with minimal funding. Exhibit 15-1 presents several of the accomplishments the district had in the area of community involvement.

Exhibit 15-1

In the Past Three Years, the District had Several Notable Accomplishments in the Area of Community Involvement

- The district arranges live broadcasts of the school board meetings through public access channels on the cable system serving Lee County.
 - The district implemented a system of citizen advisory councils and committees to provide input from the community on key educational issues and operational functions.
 - The district developed the Volunteer TEAM Program generating extensive volunteer participation in the schools and obtaining services and materials worth the equivalent of millions of dollars for students.
 - Since 1986, when the Golden Apple program was founded in Lee County, 76 teachers have been recognized with the Golden Apple Teacher Recognition Program award.
 - The Foundation for the Lee County Schools, Inc. promotes the Jim and Ellie Newton Children's Literature Center, which provides book sets for teachers to use in the classroom and the School Resource Center program, offering surplus materials and supplies for use in the schools and classrooms.
 - During the 2000-01 school year, the Foundation for the Lee County Schools, Inc. helped raise more than \$1.7 million in donations.
-

Source: ValienteHernandez P.A.

Overall, ValienteHernandez P.A. found:

Communication with Stakeholders

1. The district has a community involvement mission statement but lacks a specific strategic plan. (Page 15-4)

Community Involvement

2. The district has neither established nor implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its community involvement program. (Page 15-6)
3. The district solicits and incorporates parent and community involvement and support. (Page 15-8)
4. The district uses a variety of methods to communicate with parents. (Page 15-10)
5. The district periodically reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the community involvement program to minimize administrative layers and processes. (Page 15-12)

Parents' Involvement

6. The district has Zone Advisory Councils, School Advisory Councils, and Parent Teacher Organizations to involve and encourage parent leadership and participation. (Page 15-13)
7. The district provides activities that encourage family involvement in schools. (Page 15-14)

Community Involvement

8. The district uses community resources to strengthen schools, families, and student learning and consistently offers school resources to strengthen communities. (Page 15-16)
9. The district has developed school-business partnerships. (Page 15-17)
10. District schools maintain active and effective volunteer programs, including involvement in the education process. (Page 15-18)
11. The schools solicit and receive economic support through a private foundation. (Page 15-21)

Fiscal Impact of Recommendations ---

The recommendations in this chapter will strengthen the district's community involvement and are fiscally neutral.

Background ---

A school district's community involvement efforts typically include communicating with and engaging different segments of the community, including parents, local businesses, and other area groups. Community involvement in a public school district includes activities to provide supplemental resources to schools, to involve students with the community, and to enhance parental involvement in student and school activities. Most of these activities take place at the school rather than the district level.

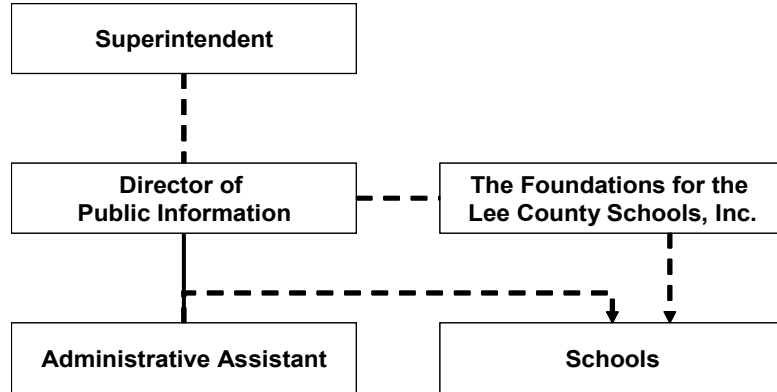
The School District of Lee County's community involvement program assists schools by coordinating publications and conducting recognition activities related to community involvement efforts. In addition, the district collects information from schools related to the participation of volunteers for reporting purposes. Each school has a liaison or volunteer coordinator to work with parents, students, and the community. Because of the district's policy of school-based management, participation in community involvement varies from school to school. As a result, many schools have developed their own business partnerships.

The district has an in-kind agreement with the Education Foundation of Lee County, Inc. (the Foundation), a private, non-profit organization that raises funds to supplement school district programs. The Foundation serves as the district's primary source for garnering partnerships with mid- to large-sized businesses. Monies raised by the Foundation supplement the school board's fund allocation to each school.

Exhibit 15-2 depicts the organization of the district Office of Public Information and Community Relations.

Exhibit 15-2

Office of Public Information and Community Relations



Source: Lee County School District.

Methodology

ValienteHernandez P.A. used various methods to determine if the district meets the best practices for community involvement. ValienteHernandez P.A. reviewed the self-assessment instruments completed by district level staff and managers, and conducted on-site interviews with several staff members.

ValienteHernandez P.A. examined and analyzed evidence and assessed compliance with rules and regulations through reviews of existing policies and procedures, and consultation with related organizations, such as the Florida Department of Education and the Florida School Boards Association. ValienteHernandez P.A. also obtained information from a group of peer districts chosen for this project (Brevard, Pasco, Polk, Seminole, and Volusia County School Districts).

To obtain feedback from district stakeholders, ValienteHernandez P.A. held teacher and principal focus groups, as well as a public forum. OPPAGA and ValienteHernandez P.A. coordinated Lee County community input through a telephone hotline and disseminated hotline information during the focus groups, forum, and via the district's website. ValienteHernandez P.A. also designed and distributed surveys to 100% of the district's teachers and principals. The survey results are incorporated into various sections of this chapter.

Communication with Stakeholders

1 The district has a community involvement mission statement but lacks a specific strategic plan.

The district solicited input from parents in developing its community involvement mission statement

The district's mission statement for community involvement, adopted August 2000, is as follows:

"The School Board of Lee County believes that community engagement is essential to the district's commitment to student learning. The purpose of public engagement is to channel community concerns and issues into constructive action."

In the past, the district's Zone Advisory Councils (ZACs), each with memberships of one district staff person and two parent representatives, solicited parents' input via parent satisfaction surveys. During the 1998-99 school year, district schools administered similar satisfaction surveys to staff and exiting senior students. The district used the information to develop its mission statement. The district, however, did not solicit and incorporate input from other stakeholders, such as business leaders, community organizations, or the Education Foundation of Lee County, Inc. (the Foundation). Since it recently adopted a new strategic plan, the district may consider developing a new mission statement to complement the new plan.

The district should develop a strategic plan for community involvement that aligns with the district's new strategic plan

In June 2002, the district adopted the 2002-07 School District of Lee County Strategic Plan. The plan proposes to solicit community input using satisfaction surveys in 2002-03 to help develop five-year targets in the areas of improved learning gains, safety and health, and efficiency and effectiveness. The plan requires all departments and schools to assess current operations, and to develop baseline data and deployment plans. The district will measure goal progress and revise the one- and five-year targets as needed.

The plan lists the district's core values as follows: "We believe that all students can learn and staff can perform best in an organization that practices community and parental involvement." Excerpts from the district's plan, which include community involvement efforts, are listed below in Exhibit 15-3

Exhibit 15-3

Community Involvement References From the District's Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Improved Learning Gains

Measure	The district will improve learning as measured by the percentage of students completing career and occupational preparatory programs.
Baseline Data	Not Available
Five-year Target	The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007. In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed with data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007.

Goal 2: Safety and Health

Measure	The district will measure satisfaction of students, parents/guardians, employees, and the community regarding safety and health.
Baseline Data	Not Available
Five-year Target	The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007. In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed with data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007.

Goal 3: Efficiency and Effectiveness

Measure	The district will measure satisfaction of students, parents/guardians, employees, and the community regarding efficiency and effectiveness.
Baseline Data	Not Available The district will administer a satisfaction survey in November 2002. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007.
Five-year Target	In 2002, a comprehensive strategy for assessing the satisfaction of internal departmental customers will be developed with data collected in spring 2003. Results will be used as baseline data for establishing a five-year target for 2007.

Source: School District of Lee County.

While stakeholder satisfaction is an integral part of community involvement, mentor and volunteer participation, business partnerships, contributions, and donations also measure community involvement. In addition, community involvement may include achievement recognition and effective communication with stakeholders. The district should develop a strategic plan for its community involvement program that is aligned with the district's overall strategic plan.

Recommendations

- *The district should develop a strategic plan for community involvement programs and projects.*

Action Plan 15-1 lists steps necessary to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 15-1

Develop a Strategic Plan for Community Involvement

Strategy	Use data from the 2001-02 school year as baseline for community involvement projects and to develop a strategic plan for the community involvement program with measurable objectives and targets.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office and the superintendent design a system to evaluate community involvement in the district. Step 2: The Public Information Office, the Foundation, and school volunteer coordinators develop tools and summary reports that summarize mentor and volunteer participation, business partnerships, contributions, and donations by grade level and school.

Step 3:	The Public Information Office and the directors of Teaching and Learning determine appropriate measures and targets for stakeholders' satisfaction, mentor and volunteer participation, business partnerships, contributions, and donations based on input from the Foundation, advisory councils and committees, and school volunteer coordinators.
Step 4:	The Public Information Office and the Foundation identify schools with high areas of need as related to mentorship activities from data obtained in Step 2.
Step 5:	The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators identify schools with low community participation from data obtained in Step 2.
Step 6:	The directors of Teaching and Learning provide feedback to school volunteer coordinators on revising community outreach activities.
Step 7:	Progress reports and success stories are disseminated to stakeholders.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information, Directors of Teaching and Learning, and the Foundation
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

2 **The district has neither established nor implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the community involvement program.**

A school system is accountable to multiple stakeholders: students and their parents, the state through the Florida Department of Education (DOE) and other state government agencies, staff including teachers and their union, local businesses, and to taxpayers representing the community at-large. These interested parties invest time and money into the school system and have a stake in the success of the educational process. In return, the school district is obligated to demonstrate it spends this time and money wisely and it makes the best efforts to produce educated, trained, and civic-minded graduates.

The district should have clearly stated goals and measurable objectives that reflect the purpose of the community involvement program

To achieve its community involvement efforts, the Lee County School Board promulgated multiple advisory committees to assist schools in determining whether they are meeting the needs of students and the community (See Exhibit 15-3 for a listing of district committees and their membership). The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, Inc. (the Foundation) is a private nonprofit foundation which solicits contributions from mid- to large-sized businesses, while the school fundraising organizations focus their efforts on smaller donors.

As discussed in recommendation 15-1, the district lacks a strategic plan that includes the program's intent, measurable objectives, and alignment with expenditures. Once the district develops and implements a community involvement strategic plan, district administrators should monitor the effectiveness of the community involvement efforts. Because the Foundation is a separate entity, administrators should communicate its objectives and needs to ensure the Foundation is also moving in the same direction.

The district should use appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures to evaluate the program

Schools report volunteer hours to the district office, but not business partnerships nor donation or contribution amounts, which should also be tracked by the district. The district office should then evaluate performance and cost-efficiency of these efforts by analyzing the various organizations'

activities over multiple years or with peer district comparisons. Program administrators could monitor cost-efficiency of volunteerism, for example, by comparing the cost of volunteer recruitment efforts versus the benefit of volunteer hours.

The district should establish and implement strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data

The district does not currently have staff responsible for ensuring the consistency and reliability of the schools' collected data. Relying on site-based management, the district also lacks procedures to monitor the accuracy of school level performance and cost data. The district should develop a system to monitor the reliability of program performance and cost data and develop procedures to ensure volunteer records are complete and accurate. For example, volunteer sign-in sheets should include the volunteer name, time on campus or designated areas, the volunteer activity, and the grade level of the volunteer effort. The district could also monitor data accuracy by re-calculating volunteer hours on a sample and representative basis.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the community involvement program.*

Action Plan 15-2 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

- *We recommend the district develop a mechanism to ensure consistency and reliability of the data schools collect and compile.*

Action Plan 15-3 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 15-2

Monitor the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Community Involvement Program	
Strategy	Monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the efforts of the various groups which have a direct involvement with stakeholders.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office and the directors of Teaching and Learning use objectives and targets monitor program effectiveness at least annually. Step 2: The Public Information Office and the directors of Teaching and Learning compare the costs and benefits gained from the quantifiable major areas of the community involvement program's expenditures at least annually. Step 3: The Public Information Office provides feedback to the Foundation revising community outreach or fundraising activities, as necessary, at least once per school year to meet the community involvement strategic plan objectives and goals. Step 4: The directors of Teaching and Learning provide feedback to school principals and volunteer coordinators on revising community outreach or fundraising activities, as necessary, at least once per school year to meet the community involvement strategic plan objectives and goals.
Responsible Party	Public Information Office and the Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 15-3

Develop Procedures to Ensure Data Consistency and Reliability	
Strategy	Develop a mechanism to ensure consistency and reliability of the data schools collect and compile.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and school volunteer coordinators assess the district's current reporting mechanisms for community involvement and procedures to ensure data consistency and reliability. Step 2: The directors of Teaching and Learning develop new procedures to ensure data consistency and reliability, as necessary. Step 3: The directors of Teaching and Learning and the director of Internal Audit consider auditing reported data on a sample and representative basis to ensure data reliability. Step 4: The directors of Teaching and Learning or the Office of Internal Audit should review volunteer records for completeness and accuracy. For example, volunteer sign-in sheets should include the volunteer name, time on campus or designated areas, the volunteer activity, and the grade level of the volunteer effort. Review procedures may also include re-calculating volunteer hours.
Responsible Party	Public Information Office, the Directors of Teaching and Learning, and the Internal Audit Office
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

3 **The district solicits and incorporates parent and community involvement and support.**

The district solicits feedback from stakeholders

The district surveys parents annually, has active Zone Advisory Councils (ZACs) and School Advisory Councils (SACs), and has mechanisms for citizens to provide feedback on budget and policy matters. Each year district schools administer parent, teacher, and exiting senior satisfaction surveys to solicit stakeholder feedback. The surveys are distributed by each school, which determines its exact method of distribution. The district compiles the survey results at the school level, which are shared with ZACs and SACs to evaluate the community's perception of the effectiveness of education programs and to develop possible improvement plans.

The schools encourage parents and other stakeholders to join education decision-making groups

The schools encourage parents to participate in their children's education through conferences with teachers and school administrators. The schools have office hours before and after school, and parents may schedule parent-teacher conferences at their convenience. The schools also recruit parents and other stakeholders to join ZACs, SACs, and Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) with notices in school newspapers and newsletters, with announcements at PTO meetings, and with memos to parents. The district has implemented a system of citizen advisory committees and task forces to encourage public input into a variety of both recurrent and special issues.

Advisory committees members come from all areas of the community and represent parents and grandparents of public school children, retirees, concerned citizens, business owners and managers, and

representatives of civic and community organizations. School board members appoint advisory committee members. Exhibit 15-4 lists the groups and their membership distributions.

Exhibit 15-4

**The District Advisory Committees and Councils
Involve Parents, Families, and the Community**

Committees/ Councils	Year Created	General Makeup	Citizen Members	Parent Members	Teacher Members	Staff Members	Other Members	Total Members	Frequency of Meetings
East Zone Advisory Council	1999	Parents & Staff		2 from each school	1 from each school			48	Monthly
West Zone Advisory Council	1999	Parents & Staff		2 from each school	1 from each school			56	Monthly
South Zone Advisory Council	1999	Parents & Staff		2 from each school	1 from each school			78	Monthly
Budget Advisory Committee	Pre- 1990	Community & Staff	12			2		14	Monthly
Construction Advisory Committee	Pre- 1990	Community & Staff	15			2		17	Monthly
Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment Advisory Committee	1995	Community & Staff	13			2		15	Bi-Monthly
Exceptional Student Advisory Committee	1998	Community & Parents	3 members from each zone & 3 members at-large					12	Monthly
Unitary Advisory Committee	1999	Community & Staff	9	4	1	1		15	Monthly
Calendar Advisory Committee	1992	Teachers, Support Staff, Union Representati ves, Parents, Adminini- stration		4	6	10	9	30	Annually
Student Advisory Committee	1998	High School Students, Superintende nt, Board Members				1	20	21	Quarterly
School Health Drug-Free School Advisory Committee	1993	Community & Staff	5	2	2	5		14	Monthly
Quality Improvement Advisory Council	2001	Community & Staff	10	3	3	15	3	34	Monthly

Committees/ Councils	Year Created	General Makeup	Citizen Members	Parent Members	Teacher Members	Staff Members	Other Members	Total Members	Frequency of Meetings
Fire Safety Task Force	2000	Community	13			4		17	Twice/Year
Student Assignment Task Force	2002	Community & Principals	9	8	3	3		23	Bi-Weekly

Source: School District of Lee County, 2002.

4 The district uses a variety of methods to communicate with parents.

Parents play an important role in their children's education and the district is responsible for ensuring that schools keep parents apprised of school activities and events. To accomplish this, schools must develop and maintain effective communication with parents. Although district office personnel serve as the primary and most visible means of communication between schools and parents, schools also typically distribute information to parents via newsletters, flyers, handbooks, and websites.

The schools use every practical means to provide timely information to parents

ValienteHernandez P.A. found that the district's schools produce newsletters and flyers regularly. Newsletters distributed to parents contain information about school activities, announcements of upcoming events, and recognition of new faculty and staff. Some schools have message boards at school entrances to inform parents of special events. Many middle and high schools distribute date books to students, which serve as handbooks and include information about school policies, programs, and reforms. School websites also include current information to inform parents and the community of ongoing activities.

The schools have language translators available to assist non-English speaking parents

The district has a diverse student population with 65% white, 16% black, 16% Hispanic, and 3% of other ethnic origins. The largest non-English speaking language is Spanish, followed by Creole. As required by state laws and regulations, the district must translate all materials disseminated to families into Spanish and Creole. In its efforts to meet these requirements, the district assigns English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) assistants, translators, and paraprofessionals to all schools. See Chapter Five, best practice four on Educational Service Delivery, for a detailed discussion of the ESOL program.

The district office and schools use the Internet to make information available to the community

The Public Information Office and the Office of Technical Support Services maintain the district website with links to school websites, while schools design and update their own websites. ValienteHernandez P.A. concurs with the Florida Association of District School Superintendents' (FADSS) 2002 review that curriculum and instruction should be the focus of the district and school websites. District and school websites should also include navigational aids to facilitate users seeking contact and other information.

To limit confusion for website visitors, individual schools should maintain responsibility for updating their own pages, but within the design scheme and layout that is appropriate for the district. The need to have a user-friendly website, however, should not detract from the fact that many parents may not have access to the web from home or work and must have other means to seek information.

The district office and schools maintain parent telephone hotlines

The district office and some schools maintain parent telephone hotlines. According to district administrators, the hotlines are available primarily for parents to use during emergency events, such as health-related crises or natural disasters. The district office should consider using the hotlines for obtaining stakeholders input and feedback or as another mechanism for parent/teacher conferences. For example, school hotlines may be used for parents to leave messages with teachers regarding a truant student's attendance.

The district office should report more of the district's successes

While the district office is primarily charged with communicating with the media during crisis situations, the district office could also channel its efforts into reporting district successes. Current efforts to report district successes include information disseminated through websites, newsletters, and flyers. However, staff believes more could be done and there is some indication that the district's cable access TV channel is underutilized.

The district may consider publishing an annual report highlighting the district's progress in achieving the goals outlined in its new strategic plan involving academics, health and safety, and community involvement. This effort should be coordinated with the superintendent's executive leadership team or the directors of Teaching and Learning for determining information to report to the public.

Recommendations

- *We recommend the district develop a consistent design scheme and layout for school websites focused on curriculum and instruction to limit confusion for website visitors, while individual schools maintain responsibility of updating their own web pages.*

Action Plan 15-4 lists steps necessary to implement these recommendations.

- *We recommend the district Public Information Office develop a mechanism to report more of the district's accomplishments.*

Action Plan 15-5 lists steps necessary to implement these recommendations.

Action Plan 15-4

Design a Broad Scheme or Layout for District School Websites	
Strategy	The district and school websites include similar navigational aids to facilitate users seeking contact numbers and other information within a consistent design scheme and layout.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of Public Information assesses the district and school websites for information usefulness and for user-friendly formatting. Step 2: The Office of Public Information, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and personnel from technical support services develop a broad scheme and layout for all websites. Step 3: The Office of Public Information obtains stakeholders' feedback on a sample and representative basis on the website changes. Step 4: The directors of Teaching and Learning and technical support services provide schools with support to implement the format changes. Step 5: The director of Public Information and the directors of Teaching and Learning meet periodically to evaluate the effectiveness of the websites' format.

Responsible Party	Director of Public Information and the Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 15-5**Inform Stakeholders of District Successes**

Strategy	Develop a mechanism to report more of the district's success. This mechanism may include a district annual report, more use of the district's TV channel, higher profile on websites, letters to the editor of the local newspaper, feature articles in the local paper, as examples.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Office of Public Information, superintendent, assistant superintendents, and school volunteer coordinators determine district information that should be reported to the public. Step 2: The Office of Public Information coordinates efforts to distribute the information to report.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

5 The district periodically reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of the community involvement program to minimize administrative layers and processes.

The district has aligned the duties of the newly-created director of public information and community relations position

The district underwent a best practice review in 1997 and accepted the recommendation to remove the public information services unit from the assistant superintendent of federal, state, and community relations. As a result, the district created the position of the director of business and community alliance which was aligned with authority directly to the superintendent. Following the Florida Association of District School Superintendents' (FADSS) report issued in the spring of 2002, the director position was renamed as the director of public information and community relations. The newly-created position of the director of public information is properly aligned under the superintendent and within the superintendent's executive leadership team to facilitate receipt and distribution of events and programs of the school district.

The district also reviews the organizational structure and staffing levels of all departments during the annual budget process and personnel staffing unit allocation processes. As illustrated in Exhibit 15-2, the Office of Public Information and Community Relations is comprised of the director and one administrative assistant. For the 2002-03 school year, the school board approved four new director positions for the teaching and learning unit. Two directors are charged with elementary schools, one is charged with secondary and alternative education, while the fourth is responsible for curriculum. The directors will assist the Public Information Office in collecting school information on community involvement activities during the annual principal evaluation process. For a detailed discussion of the district's organizational structure, see Chapter Three, Management Structures.

Parents' Involvement

6 The district has Zone Advisory Councils, School Advisory Councils, and Parent Teacher Organizations to involve and encourage parent leadership and participation.

The district has Zone Advisory Councils, School Advisory Councils, and Parent Teacher Organizations

The district is comprised of three zones and each zone has Zone Advisory Councils (ZACs) to coordinate the community involvement efforts of schools, among other responsibilities. ZACs memberships include parents, community members, and district staff. District schools also encourage parent leadership and participation through School Advisory Councils (SACs) and through Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs). State laws and regulations prescribe SACs memberships with requirements for parent involvement. School PTOs also offer a means for parents to become involved in their child's education. Schools recruit parent involvement in these organizations and advertise meetings through various media.

The district should monitor parent involvement in parent advisory councils and organizations

While some schools actively encourage parent participation in ZACs, SACs, and PTOs, the district does not currently monitor parent involvement at the school level because of the district's policy on school-based management. The district should review the schools' parent recruitment efforts and parent involvement at the school level to evaluate the progress of the district's strategic plan for community involvement. The district could then provide guidance to increase parent involvement to schools with low parent participation.

Recommendation

- *Consistent with the recommendations in best practice 2, we recommend the district monitor parent participation to measure the effectiveness of the community involvement strategic plan at least once per school year.*

Action Plan 15-6 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 15-6

Monitor Parent Volunteer Involvement	
Strategy	Monitor parent volunteer participation over multiple years to evaluate the effectiveness of the community involvement strategic plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and school volunteer coordinators assess the district's current reporting mechanism for parent involvement.
	Step 2: The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop data collection tools and create summary reports on parent involvement.

	Step 3: Use the school's annual survey to assess parents' perceptions of schools' recruitment efforts for parent involvement.
	Step 4: Based on collected data, the directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop new strategies for effective parent outreach programs, as necessary.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information and Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

7 The district provides activities that encourage family involvement in schools.

Most educators believe active family involvement in his/her education helps determine a student's success. In the past, parent involvement was limited to membership in schools' parent-teacher organizations or visits with teachers during an annual open house event.

Increasingly, it is recognized that student success is determined by the extent to which parents and families support the entire educational process, including tutoring, mentoring, and volunteering in extra-curricular activities. Schools are also changing the ways they utilize parents. In recent years, studies have demonstrated that students and schools with involved parents have:

- Higher grades and test scores
- Long-term academic achievement
- More successful programs
- More effective schools

These studies also indicate that children from low-income and minority families have the most to gain when schools involve their parents. Parent-teacher organizations have provided a venue for parental participation for many years. Parent involvement, however, can take many forms. See Exhibit 15-3 for positions available for parents and other family members on Lee County's various citizen advisory boards. Another form of family involvement is through influence on the development of district policy.

The school board provides effective opportunities for families to express views concerning education programs and issues at meetings

The school board provides effective opportunities for families to express their views concerning education programs and issues at school board meetings. School board meetings are held at the Adams Building in downtown Ft. Myers. All meetings are open to the public and are advertised in advance. The school board meeting room and an adjacent conference room are used for overflow attendance.

Public input time is scheduled at these meetings to allow ample time to hear as many speakers as possible. Speakers must sign in before the meeting, wait to be called to the podium, and must address comments to board members. Time limits are usually imposed on speakers when many stakeholders request time to comment. Additionally, parents and interested citizens can call, write, fax, or make an appointment to meet with any school board member, the superintendent, administrative staff, a principal, or a teacher to offer comments and discuss issues.

The population of the district is spread throughout Lee County. It is often a considerable drive (time and distance) to the central office if a concerned parent or family member wishes to attend a board meeting in person, particularly if one resides in outlying areas such as North Cape Coral or Pine Island, Lehigh Acres, Sanibel Island, Ft. Myers Beach, or Bonita Springs. The district, for a number of years, has

arranged to broadcast the regularly-scheduled school board meetings through the local public access channels available on the cable television systems throughout the county.

Residents of households with cable access can view the entire school board meeting from home. Although personal input to the school board during the meeting cannot occur, citizens can view and listen to all discussions, motions, and actions taken by the board. Cable television service helps keep parents, interested citizens, and taxpayers informed of the decisions reached by school board members. The broadcast also provides instant access to the workings of the board, the superintendent, and the district as issues and directions are discussed and debated.

The district should monitor family involvement at the school level

District schools have several programs to encourage families to take an active role in their child's education. Programs such as *Math Superstar*, *Parents as Reading Partners*, *Flight Site*, and multiple tutoring programs throughout the district promote family involvement. See Exhibit 15-4 for a listing of volunteer programs. Schools also should seek out parents and other family members with skills that could be used for parent-led workshops for students, teachers, and other parents. Such skills include carpentry, computer knowledge, cooking, landscaping, auto repair, health care, and the like.

While some schools actively encourage family participation in these programs, the district does not currently review family involvement at the school level because of the district's policy on school-based management. The district should review the types of family involvement activities schools offer such as library, cafeteria, playground, field trip, and tutoring support programs. The district could then provide schools with low family participation guidance in involving families in schools.

Recommendation

- *Consistent with the recommendations in best practice 2 we recommend the district monitor the types of activities schools offer for family involvement and family participation at the school level.*

Action Plan 15-7 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 15-7

Monitor Family Involvement at the School Level	
Strategy	Monitor the types of activities offered for family involvement and family participation at the school level.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and school volunteer coordinators assess the district's current reporting mechanism for family involvement. Step 2: The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop tools and summary reports for family involvement data collection as necessary. Step 3: The schools use parent satisfaction surveys at least annually to assess perception of school recruitment of family involvement efforts. Step 4: The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop new strategies for effective family outreach programs based on data collected, as necessary.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information and Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003

Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Community Involvement

8 The district uses community resources to strengthen schools, families, and student learning, and consistently offers school resources to strengthen communities.

The schools interact with the community

District schools inform parents and students of activities and events by the various methods described in this chapter such as newsletters, flyers, and website postings. The information disseminated also includes community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other community services or programs. The schools regularly participate in community service projects with parents, students, teachers, and administrators and offer school resources to benefit and include the community.

The district should develop a reporting mechanism to review schools' community activities

District schools participate in community service projects such as March of Dimes, Pennies for Pasta, Edison Parade of Lights, and the Lee County Reading Council. In addition, some schools house evening classes for parents, PTO meetings, and Boy and Girl Scout troops. Some schools also provide community activity support by asking school staff to volunteer in community fundraising activities such as bookkeeping for Pennies for Pasta.

While it is clear that many of the district's schools participate in these community activities, the district does not have a reporting mechanism in place to monitor participation. The district should develop a reporting system to review school community activities; with this reporting mechanism in place, the district could more effectively monitor implementation of the district's strategic plan for community involvement and could target schools needing assistance in this area.

Recommendation

- *Consistent with the recommendations in best practice 2, we recommend the district develop a mechanism for all schools to regularly report their community activities and monitor the effectiveness of the schools' community involvement in achieving the district's strategic plan for community involvement, as discussed in Action Plan 15-1.*

Action Plan 15-8 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 15-8

Monitor Schools' Community Activities

Strategy	Develop a reporting mechanism for all schools to report their community activities.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and school volunteer coordinators assess the district's current reporting mechanism for schools' community activities.

Step 2:	The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop tools and summary reports for schools' community activities data collection, as necessary.
Step 3:	The schools survey parents' perceptions of schools' community activities efforts in parent satisfaction surveys at least annually.
Step 4:	The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop new strategies for effective community outreach programs based on data collected as necessary.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information and Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

9 The district has developed school-business partnerships.

The district has a positive relationship with the business community

The School District of Lee County has a flourishing student population requiring new school facilities at a rapid pace and has an increasingly diverse student population requiring on-going teacher and staff training and special student services. Yet, education stakeholders demand a quality education by the most cost-efficient and effective means possible. Concurrently, the district faces competition from quasi-public alternatives, such as charter schools and the school voucher program. The district, however, has successfully demonstrated its ability to produce graduates with the knowledge, skills, and relevant experience required by higher learning institutions and employers. In these efforts, the district has demonstrated its value through continued public and private support by area businesses and the community.

The business community in Lee County is a service, tourist-based economy. The five largest employers are government, healthcare and retail entities, including the School District of Lee County, the Lee Memorial Health System (hospital/healthcare system), Publix, Wal-Mart, the Lee County Government.

Most district schools maintain and report statistics on their business partnerships, but the Lee County district does not have a mechanism in place for all schools to regularly report this information. A reporting process would help the district monitor and improve its community involvement and business partnership programs. In addition, the district has delegated most of its centralized business partnership operations to the Foundation. With a reporting system in place, the district could coordinate efforts between the schools and the Foundation to maximize business involvement in the district.

The Foundation focuses on business partnerships that help students academically or experientially, such as arranging speakers for classes, assisting in developing curriculum at the vocational centers, assisting in exploring career options, and providing training in technical skills. The Foundation strives to provide district schools with contributions and services to supplement the tax dollar base. See best practice 11 for a detailed discussion of the Foundation.

Recommendation

- *Consistent with the recommendations in best practice 2, we recommend the district develop a mechanism for all schools to regularly report their business partnerships and use the information to coordinate the district's business partnership efforts in collaboration with the Foundation.*

Action Plan 15-9 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 15-9

Monitor District Business Partnerships	
Strategy	Develop a reporting mechanism for all schools to report their business partnerships and solicit collaboration with the Foundation to maximize business partnership participation.
Action Needed	Step 1: The public information office, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and school volunteer coordinators assess the district's current reporting mechanism for business partnerships. Step 2: The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop tools and summary reports for schools' business partnerships data collection, as necessary. Step 3: The director of public information works with the Foundation to collaborate on business partnership efforts. Step 4: As necessary, the directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop new strategies for effective community outreach programs based on collected data. Step 5: The director of Public Information communicates the district's strategic plan for community involvement and business partnerships to the Foundation to coordinate these efforts.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information and Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

10 District schools maintain active and effective volunteer programs, including involvement in the educational process.

The district has an active volunteer program

Individuals, particularly parents, play an important role through active involvement in school activities and events. Residents interested in education may include retirees, business owners, and employees who wish to become involved in local school efforts through one of many volunteer programs. A variety of opportunities exist for individuals and organizations to donate money, materials, and time, to serve as tutors and mentors for students, or to contribute clerical and support services to the schools. Some businesses and individuals have chosen to establish or contribute to scholarship and other funds that go directly to students or teachers based on needs and accomplishments.

The district operates a volunteer program called *Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM)*. The director of the public information office oversees this program and each school recruits and supports a volunteer coordinator. The district has developed a *School-Based Volunteer Coordinator's Handbook* that outlines goals and objectives, volunteer recruitment, and record-keeping at the school level. School coordinator training sessions are also offered at the beginning of each school year.

A number of TEAM programs are available in the schools for volunteer participation from parents, concerned citizens, and business representatives. Several of these volunteer programs are aimed at certain grade levels or at specific student population. Most of the programs are available at each district school.

The volunteer coordinator at each school records volunteer data and reports at least annually to the district's Volunteer TEAM Coordinator. During the 2001-02 school year, the district volunteer coordinator also coordinated the district's charter schools and the pupil progression plan. To better align the volunteer coordinator responsibilities, the district planned to shift the coordination efforts to the

directors of teaching and learning. The district approved the new director positions for the 2002-03 school year and the directors will monitor schools' volunteer efforts during the annual principal evaluation process.

Typically, volunteers are asked to sign in at the school office indicating name, time on campus, activity, and classroom and grade level of the volunteer effort. This information, along with other data on the volunteer, is sent to the district office, where summary statistics are compiled for Department of Education reports. Exhibit 15-5 lists some of the district's volunteer programs.

Exhibit 15-5

Volunteer TEAM Programs

Program Name	Target Grade(s)
Booster Clubs	School-level/all grades
Classroom Helpers	All grades/classroom
Clinic Helpers	All grades/clinic
Foster Grandparent Program	All grades/ESE
Job/Career Shadowing	N/A
Junior Achievement	Grades K, 4, 5, 8, 12
Math Superstars	Elementary and middle
Odyssey of the Mind	All grades
Partners in Education	School-level
Peer Cross-Age Tutors	K-12
Intergenerational Programs	K-12
The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)	All grades
School Advisory Councils	School-level (state requirement)
Service Learning	N/A
Technology/Media Helpers	All grades
Youth Partnership Program	All grades

Source: Volunteer TEAM Coordinator Handbook, 2000.

The district tracks and reports most volunteer hours

Although the information and data on volunteering is incomplete, the data clearly shows substantial utilization of the TEAM programs. As illustrated in Exhibit 15-6, during the 2001-02 school year the program benefited from the work of nearly 8,000 volunteer citizens who generated close to 300,000 hours of service to the district's schools and students. If this effort was generated with minimally-paid district employees (based on a \$15 per hour rate established by the Department of Education), costs would exceed \$4.4 million.

Exhibit 15-6

Volunteer Contributions are Valued at Over \$4.4 Million

	2001-02
Total number of volunteers	\$ 7,784
Total hours	296,338
Average hours per volunteer	38
Salary equivalent of volunteer hours at \$15 / hour rate	\$4,445,070

Source: School District of Lee County and calculations by ValienteHernandez P.A.

The district's volunteer program has positively influenced schools and students through its various programs. However, documenting the level of effort is difficult since the school-level data is collected

and analyzed inconsistently and does not clearly adhere to established district guidelines. Cooperation of school administrators and volunteer coordinators in recording the efforts of volunteers at the schools needs to be enhanced.

The district effectively recognizes overall volunteer efforts

The district has a program in place to effectively recognize overall volunteer efforts, an essential component to any volunteer program. Annually, the district recognizes school success in volunteer and community outreach using state volunteer recognition programs: *Five Star School Award*, *Golden School Award*, and *Silver School Award*. These are awarded for exemplary community involvement; the criteria for the *Golden School* and *Silver School Awards* are presented in Exhibit 15-7 below. For example, to qualify for the *Five Star Award*, a school must achieve 100% of the established criteria in the categories of Business Partnership, Family Involvement, Volunteers, Student Community Service, and School Advisory Councils. The number of distinguished schools in the district is one measure of the effectiveness of the community involvement activity. Currently, there are 46 *Golden Schools*, including five schools, which had previously been awarded *Silver School Awards*.

Exhibit 15-7

Criteria for the *Golden School* and *Silver School Awards*

Award	Criteria
Golden School Award	• A staff training program in which a minimum of 80% of the school staff has participated during the school year. • A school volunteer coordinator who has been designated to provide leadership for the school volunteer program through recruitment, placement, training, and supervision of participants. • A total number of hours in volunteer service, which equals twice the number of students enrolled in the school. These hours of volunteer service will be in the areas that support instruction. Hours donated in all forms of volunteering are to be included (i.e.: mentors, tutors, advisors, and advocates).
Silver School Award	• The sending school must have a volunteer coordinator who will provide coordination of the program, placement of students, orientation and training for the students, and student and program evaluation. • The receiving school must have a volunteer coordinator who will provide organization to the program, assist in the placement of the secondary students, provide orientation and training for the receiving staff, and assist in providing student and program evaluation. • Student volunteers and the receiving faculty must both receive orientation and training. Student volunteers must receive continuous supervision. • The composite student volunteer hours must equal at least one half the total number of students in the sending school (e.g., 2000 students - 1000 volunteer hours.)

Source: The School District of Lee County.

Recommendation

- *Consistent with the recommendations in best practice 2, we recommend the district implement effective reporting procedures for school volunteer programs in order to improve*

accountability and tracking of volunteer efforts and to measure schools' progress towards achieving the community involvement strategic plan goals, and to document the district's effectiveness in this area.

Action Plan 15-10 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 15-10

Develop an Effective Reporting Mechanism for School Volunteer Programs	
Strategy	Develop a reporting mechanism for all schools to effectively report volunteer activity.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and school volunteer coordinators assess the district's current reporting mechanism for volunteer hours. Step 2: The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop tools and summary reports related to schools' volunteer hours, as necessary. Step 3: The director of public information works with the Foundation to collaborate on collecting and reporting volunteer activity. Step 4: As necessary, the directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators develop new strategies to improve volunteer participation.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information and Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

11 The schools solicit and receive economic support through a private foundation.

The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, Inc. supports area schools

Private, non-profit organizations often fill a niche in government agencies for volunteer services, fund-raising, in-kind support, and the formation and maintenance of partnerships with the business community at-large. They play a valuable and immeasurable role in a successful public education system at the district level.

The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, Inc. (the Foundation) was established in 1986 to fund a recognition program for the district's outstanding teachers. While a separate entity from the district, the Foundation is committed to enriching the quality of local public education through community and business partnerships. The district provides office space and an administrative assistant in return for the benefits of the Foundation's efforts.

From a single Golden Apple Teacher Recognition Program, the Foundation has expanded its influence to include scholarship funds, educational assistance and fundraising activities. The Foundation directs all funds and resources to individual school needs and not district operations. The Foundation funds special programs that are not funded with tax dollars. The Foundation board of directors develops strategies to generate funds and volunteer time from the local business community, and determines how to distribute resources using an annual survey of needs. School requests can include audio/video equipment, computer equipment, donated materials for awards and incentive prizes, capital projects such as playground equipment and storage space, landscaping service, clothing, and mentors.

The Foundation continues to add new innovative ways to assist area schools. Recent examples include the Jim and Ellie Newton Children's Literature Center and the School Resource Center. The Jim and Ellie Newton Children's Literature Center provides teachers with a menu of book sets to request for their

classes. The center was founded in 1991 with 25 sets of books available in the first year. In 2002, the center offered 220 sets of books for teachers to use in the classroom with donations and contributions from the Newtons and other individuals and businesses. The School Resource Center offers classroom teachers many resources that would not be available free-of-charge from any other source. Local businesses and individuals donate big items such as office furniture and equipment of all kinds, computer software and related equipment, office supplies, books, audio-visual items, books, and arts and crafts materials. The district should continue to support the Foundation in its community involvement efforts for the district, especially in providing delivery assistance to the Foundation with these two programs.

Currently, Foundation staff estimates financial support in excess of \$12 million over 15 years ending in 2001. This estimate does not include the value of materials donated or the time countless business and community members donate to the various events, ceremonies, fund-raisers and instructional programs offered through the organization. Exhibit 15-8 lists the current Foundation programs and the estimated dollar impact for fiscal year 2000-01.

Exhibit 15-8

**The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, Inc.
Raised Over \$1.7 Million in Donations During 2000-01**

Program Name	Dollar Impact
Golden Apple Teacher Recognition Program	\$ 219,734
Academy of Teachers	6,910
Mini-Grants for Teachers	55,408
A-Team Challenge	68,550
Collegium	40,729
Children's Literature Center	19,530
Special Projects	362,060
Sanibel School Fund	187,156
Scholarships	531,790
Business Partners	244,370
Total	\$1,736,237

Source: The Foundation for Lee County Public Schools, Inc.

As the Foundation's programs continue to expand, it is important that the district accurately understand the Foundation's role and impact. Currently, little information is shared between the district and the Foundation, including volunteer/mentorship numbers, hours of participation, business partnerships, level of activities, and dollar values. In order for the district to more clearly appreciate the Foundation's value and the impact of its programs, ensure that all schools have equitable opportunities to benefit from community support, and fully maximize the community's efforts and supports, the district should coordinate volunteer efforts and related information between the district and the Foundation.

Recommendation

- We recommend the district collaborate with the Foundation to share volunteer and related data with the Volunteer TEAMS Program so the district can comprehensively assess levels of community involvement for each school, maximize community efforts, and ensure that all schools have equitable opportunities to benefit from community support.*

Action Plan 15-11 lists steps necessary to implement this recommendation.

Action Plan 15-11**Collaborate with the Foundation to Share Information that Ensures Coordinated Community Involvement Efforts**

Strategy	Collaborate with the Foundation to comprehensively report district-wide community involvement efforts.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office and the Foundation effectively collaborate on the district's community involvement activities. Step 2: The director of Public Information and the president of the Foundation meet at least twice per school year to coordinate efforts in achieving the district's strategic plan for community involvement including district support and assistance for the Foundation programs. Step 3: The directors of Teaching and Learning survey the perception of school principal's regarding the Foundation's community involvement efforts through satisfaction surveys at least annually. Step 4: The Public Information Office and the Foundation develop new strategies for effective outreach programs as necessary.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information and the president of the Foundation
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.



Action Plans

Management Structures

Action Plan 3-8

Track and Evaluate District Legal Services

Strategy	Ensure that all district legal service costs are properly tracked and effectively evaluated for cost-efficiency and accountability.
Action Needed	Step 1: Form a small ad-hoc committee made up of the staff, school board members, staff attorney, the chief of staff, the internal auditor, and representatives from workers' compensation, real estate, and construction. Step 2: Instruct this committee to develop guidelines and procedures that will address the following concerns: • When to retain outside counsel • Possibility of consolidating legal services now handled separately in the areas of workers' compensation, personal injury, real estate, and construction. Step 3: Develop an accounting procedure that tracks legal fees by categories such as in-house counsel, judgments, etc. Step 4: Conduct an annual performance review based on goals, objectives, reasonability, and comparability with other peer districts.
Who Is Responsible	The internal auditor and the chief of staff collaborate in reviewing existing procedures to secure legal services, developing a strategy to streamline and improve the present system, and prepare an annual report for the school board.
Time Frame	May 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-9

Improve the Current Evaluation System of Legal Services

Strategy	Build on the current evaluation system by creating a performance-based process that measures goals and objectives, reasonability, comparability, and quality of service.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop an evaluation instrument to review legal staff's performance. This instrument should consider performance measures, such as • Average elapsed time to final disposition (days) • Percentage of judgment settlements as a percentage of demand • Percentage of resolutions and contract drafted on schedule • Percentage of legal opinions rendered on schedule • Level of satisfaction with the services received Step 2: Annually review legal staff performance.
Who Is Responsible	Board along with the executive team.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-10

Revise and Update Department Level Organizational Charts	
Strategy	The district should update department-level organizational charts and develop functional organizational charts for both the broad and individual levels of the organization. When two or more units share responsibility for the same function, the district should develop written descriptions of the limits of each unit's authority and responsibility and how the units are to interact.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent assigns the chief of staff responsibility for working with the assistant superintendents and department directors to update and develop functional organizational charts. Step 2: The superintendent and assistant superintendents identify the functions of and develop an organizational chart for each unit. Step 3: The superintendent, assistant superintendents, and the chief of staff review the functional charts to ensure that they comply with the district's strategic plan and clearly delineate responsibility for implementing state directives and district initiatives. Step 4: The human resources department reviews, and if necessary revises, the job descriptions for key positions in each organizational unit to ensure that they are consistent with identified unit functions. Step 5: After correcting any inconsistencies, the superintendent submits the revised job descriptions and functional organizational charts to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent's Chief of Staff, Assistant Superintendents, and the Human Resources department
Time Frame	March 31, 2003 and on-going
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-11

Eliminate Unnecessary Positions	
Strategy	Eliminate and remove from the organizational charts the positions that were replaced or updated as a result of the April 2002 reorganization, as well as the position of deputy superintendent.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent and assistant superintendents identify the positions in the organizational chart that need to be deleted, including the position of deputy superintendent. Once identified, associated job descriptions are also eliminated. Step 2: The superintendent submits the revised organizational charts to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent's chief of staff, assistant superintendents, and the Human Resources department
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-12

Expand the Duties of the Three Area Directors of Education	
Strategy	Expand the duties of the three area directors of education with additional curriculum and instructional responsibilities, thus placing more emphasis on curriculum and instruction.
Action Needed	Step 1: Revise the job descriptions of the three new area directors of education to reflect greater responsibility to principals in providing support in curricular and instructional development and planning.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for Teaching and Learning and the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources.
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-13**Streamline the Organizational Structure to Allow Effective Work of the Superintendent and Selected District Senior Level Administrators**

Strategy	Revise and update the district level organizational chart in a way that is more consistent with peer districts in reflecting a better balanced span of control with five principal divisions: Teaching and Learning, Instructional Support Services, Human Resources, <i>Administrative Support Services</i> , and the chief financial officer.
Action Needed	Step 1: Place all curriculum and instruction functions under the same organizational unit. Within the current organization, basic, alternative, vocational, and adult education programs are under the purview of the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. However, exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services are under the assistant superintendent for instructional support services, though they are better aligned under the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning. Step 2: Reassign exceptional student education, intervention programs, and student services to the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning, thus reducing the span of control of the assistant superintendent for instructional support services to a more reasonable five. As shown in Exhibit 3-3, the assistant superintendent for instructional support oversees eight directors and the equivalent of over 15 different functions, and while some of these functions need to work closely to be effective, the span of control may be too large to ensure that certain essential functions are effectively coordinated. Step 3: Reassign the grants acquisition function currently under the assistant superintendent for human resources to the chief financial officer. Grant writing is a function that requires a great deal of financial data, thus placement of this function in this division is appropriate.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent and the school board
Time Frame	March 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-14**Long-Term Changes to Streamline the Organizational Structure**

Strategy	Once the district successfully implements recommendations to increase accountability levels and gain efficiencies in the operational areas of facilities, transportation, and internal auditing, the board should make changes to further streamline the organizational structure.
Action Needed	Step 1: Merge the function under the assistant superintendent for operational support services and the assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance into one single division named the Administrative Support Services. Currently, the spans of control of these two superintendents are too small to justify separate divisions with both carrying out administrative functions, as they are not in compliance with the three organizational factors described earlier. Step 2: Move equity and recruitment, currently reporting directly to the superintendent, under the assistant superintendent of human resources. Step 3: Place the internal audit function under the direct purview of the school board. Step 4: Shift the public information and community relations' under the purview of human resources division, if the board considers this function is consuming too much of the superintendent's time.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent and the School Board
Time Frame	March 31, 2005, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-15**Establish Guidelines for Staffing Under Site-Based Management**

Strategy	Establish guidelines for staffing under site-based management.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish a task force composed of district administrators, school principals, parents, and community leaders. Step 2: The task force conducts research with districts using site-based management on the basic staffing guidelines that must be in place. Step 3: Information gathered is reduced to a preliminary report. Step 4: The preliminary report is discussed with the school board at a workshop. Step 5: A staffing guidelines report is finalized and submitted to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Budget and Finance Director
Time Frame	May 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-16**Continually Monitor Staffing Levels**

Strategy	Monitor, and adjust, if needed, district and school-based staffing levels to keep them in-line with peer districts and the state average.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district should obtain the revised DOE staffing report when available and compare district and peer staffing levels and ratios. Step 2: The chief of staff, the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability and the Human Resources division should use this analysis, in conjunction with SAC standards, to ensure that administrative staffing levels and staffing ratios are within practice standards. Staff ratio comparisons, based on appropriate benchmarks can include: • Classroom teachers to district-level administrative staff • Classroom teachers to school-level administrative staff • Classroom teachers to total administrative staff • Instructional staff to administrative staff • Students to total administrative staff • Students to school-level administrative staff • Students to classroom teachers • Students to total instructional staff Step 3: Based on the findings, the district should adjust its administrative staffing levels
Who Is Responsible	Chief of Staff, Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, Human Resources division
Time Frame	August 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-22**District Budgets Formally Reflect the Goals and Priorities Articulated In the Strategic Plan**

Strategy	Identify in the budget the dedication of resources to priority goals and objectives in a more clear manner.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent and the executive team employ the strategic plan as the starting point for the district's planning and management system and allocate resources according to the priorities developed in the strategic planning process. Step 2: The Superintendent and the Chief Financial Officer and the executive team device the procedure needed to track strategic plan priorities and associated expenditures. Step 3: Procedure is finalized, tested and implemented. Step 4: The superintendent assigns the budget and finance director the responsibility of monitoring the process once a year, during the budget approval process, and any time there is a significant amendment or change to the budget. Step 5: The superintendent and the executive team take the steps necessary to ensure district directors and school administrators are responsible for ensuring their goals and objectives stay in line with the budget.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Executive Team, and budget and finance director
Time Frame	April 30, 2004
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 3-23**Link Financial Planning With Programmatic Goals and Student Achievement**

Strategy	Identify in the budget the dedication of resources to priority goals and objectives in a clearer manner.
Action Needed	Step 1: The superintendent and the executive team assign the budget and finance director the responsibility of strengthening the budgetary process by including links with programmatic goals. Step 2: The budget and finance director obtains information from other districts regarding how they specifically link programmatic goals to financial planning and budgeting, including student achievement. Districts that currently link programmatic goals to financial planning and budgeting include Alachua, Manatee, Polk and Leon. Step 3: The budget and finance director assess the current budgeting process in light of the process followed by other districts. Step 4: The budget and finance director prepares recommendations for board consideration that would alter the current financial planning and budgeting process to include linkage to district goals and objectives, including student performance. Step 5: The superintendent and the executive team select financial planning and budget development process alterations that suit the needs of the district, provide clear links to district goals and objectives, and provide opportunities to adjust financial planning and budgeting when warranted to meet goals. Step 6: The superintendent and the executive team implement a financial planning and budget development process that is linked to the district's goals and objectives, including student performance. Step 7: The superintendent and the executive team adopt a regular assessment process of the district's goals and objectives that includes adjusting financial planning and budgeting when warranted to meet goals. Step 8: The superintendent reviews and approves the process and submits to the board for approval.

Who Is Responsible	Superintendent's Executive Team and the budget and finance director
Time Frame	April 30, 2004
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Performance Accountability Systems

Action Plan 4-1

Continue to Establish Quantifiable Goals and Objectives for Each Educational and Organizational Unit

Strategy	Establish quantifiable goals and objectives for each educational and organizational unit and link these goals and objectives to the strategic plan and other operational plans.
Action Needed	Step 1: Articulate quantifiable goals and objectives for each organizational unit in achieving overall district goals and objectives. Step 2: Establish performance measures that can be used to assess the extent to which each unit is achieving its goals. Step 3: Assess the strengths and shortcomings of each unit in achieving its goals. Step 4: Set priorities based on a systematic assessment of where improvement is needed most.
Who is responsible	The Chief of Staff
Time Frame	June 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 4-2

Develop Comprehensive Performance and Cost-efficiency Measures for Major Programs

Strategy	Develop comprehensive program performance and cost-efficiency measures.
Action Needed	Step 1: The chief of staff assigns program directors and supervisors the responsibility of developing performance measures for the different programs/services. The office of Program Evaluation and Accountability is consulted as needed. Step 2: Program directors and supervisors develop a comprehensive system that: Step 3: Aligns efforts with the strategic plan Step 4: Identifies needed data, including collection time frames and format Step 5: Ensures performance measures link to the budget Step 6: Determines the critical performance and cost-efficiency measures to periodically report to school board members and the superintendent Step 7: Defines the specific roles and expectations for program staff in relation to a specific program's performance measurement system Step 8: Establishes benchmarks and selects peer comparisons, where appropriate, and identifies standards, such as trend analysis data, minimally acceptable performance, or generally accepted industry standards, to judge program performance or cost-efficiency Step 9: Review program director's and supervisor's recommendations with District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, the directors of MIS and Finance, and the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, assistant superintendents, superintendent, and others as needed, to ensure selected measures are appropriate and practical

Who Is Responsible	Chief of staff in cooperation with District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, assistant superintendents, Management Information Systems (MIS) Department, the office of accountability, program supervisors and directors, and appropriate program staff.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 4-3**Formalize the Process for Soliciting Ideas About Cost Savings and Alternative Service Opportunities**

Strategy	Implement a cost savings identification mechanism.
Action Needed	Step 1: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee (DQIAC), with input from the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, develops procedures to solicit ideas for cost savings and alternative service delivery methods. Step 2: Publicize the program, including any incentives, to district employees. Step 3: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee and the office of Program Evaluation and Accountability collect, analyze, implement, and track the ideas generated. Step 4: Recognize employees whose ideas save money.
Who Is Responsible	DQIAC and the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources and has the potential of generating additional funds and/or cost savings. The fiscal impact, however, cannot be determined at this time.

Action Plan 4-4**Develop a Framework and Continue With Plans to Evaluate Major District Programs**

Strategy	Develop an evaluation model to guide the review of major district programs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the Office of Program Evaluation and Accountability, continues using the Sterling process to guide evaluation efforts. Step 2: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee identifies criteria to determine when to outsource the evaluation or when it should be conducted in-house. Step 3: Establish a schedule to periodically evaluate major educational and operational programs. The schedule should consider: • The amount of change • Fiscal and data resources (internal and external) • Amount of information that must be accumulated • Time intervals needed to implement past recommendations and measure change • Legal requirements • Students served • Potential improvement or savings • Risk or consequences • Public concern Step 4: Present model to the school board for approval and communicate to district staff. Step 5: Conduct scheduled evaluations as planned, incorporating effort into annual work and budget plans.
Who Is Responsible	The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee in cooperation with the office of accountability and program staff, as needed.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 4-5

Report Additional Information on the Performance and Cost-efficiency of Major District Programs	
Strategy	Publicly report additional information on the performance and cost-efficiency of major district programs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee, in cooperation with the office of accountability, ensures that annual reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of selected educational and operational programs are presented to school board, district administrators, to various district-wide committees, and to others, upon request. Step 2: Refer to Action Plan 4-1 and 4-2 for more information.
Who Is Responsible	The District Quality Improvement Advisory Committee and the office of accountability
Time Frame	June 30, 2003 and yearly thereafter
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Educational Service Delivery

Action Plan 5-2

Identify and Disseminate Exemplary Teaching Strategies	
Strategy	Develop effective mechanism for identifying and communicating exemplary educational strategies.
Action Needed	Step 1: The instructor of the summer institute and the Teaching and Learning Department develop standard course materials for summer classes to facilitate the instruction process. The director provides instructors with guidelines in supplementing course materials with current and relevant information. Step 2: The Teaching and Learning Department considers requiring school administrators to attend the summer program and to train instructional personnel with the best practices learned throughout the school year. For accountability purposes, the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning considers including attendance in the Summer Institute in the principal evaluation process. Step 3: The instructor of the summer institute and Teaching and Learning Department survey classroom instructors at least once per school year on whether implementation techniques appear effective for new teaching strategies learned at the summer institute and during school year training sessions. Step 4: The instructor of the summer institute and the assistant superintendent for teaching and learning or designee evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies and course materials at end of the school year based on data obtained in Step 3. Step 5: The instructor of the summer institute and the Teaching and Learning revise the summer institute courses and school year training materials as necessary.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the director of the summer institute.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-3**Improve the Timeliness of Evaluation and Placement and Reduce the Percentage of Inappropriate Referrals for Evaluation**

Strategy	Review the policies and procedures relating to the referral, evaluation, and placement of ESE students to improve the timeliness of evaluation and placement and to reduce the percentage of inappropriate referrals for evaluation.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee assesses and monitors the timeliness of ESE evaluations and student placement for the district as a whole and for individual schools. Step 2: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee provides clarification, guidelines, and training to school district personnel in identifying students who may be eligible for ESE services. Step 3: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee evaluates and monitors to ensure that the least restrictive environment (LRE) criteria are applied correctly for ESE students as a whole and for educable mentally handicapped students in particular. Step 4: The assistant superintendent of instructional support or designee evaluates the effectiveness of the QDI Model and, if it is found to be effective, develops a plan to implement the QDI Model across all district schools and to monitor its effectiveness.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of instructional support.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-4**Monitor the Effectiveness of the Lab and Reasonable Access to the Lab by ESE Instructors**

Strategy	Assess and monitor the effectiveness of the Lab in assisting ESE instructors with ESE curriculum implementation and monitor reasonable access to the Lab by ESE instructors.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of the ESE department and assistant superintendent for instructional support develop measurable goals and objectives for each new technique taught at the lab. Step 2: The director of ESE and the assistant superintendent for instructional support assess whether all ESE instructors have access to the Lab and make improvements as necessary. Step 3: The Lab instructor ensures standard course materials include strategies and examples for implementing new techniques. Step 4: The Lab instructor surveys participants at least once per school year on whether implementation techniques appear effective. Step 5: The director of ESE evaluates whether participants met goals and targets identified during course at the end of the school year. Step 6: The director of the ESE department and lab instructor revise the Lab course materials as necessary based on evaluation data.
Who Is Responsible	The director of the ESE department and lab instructor.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-5

Perform a Feasibility Study for Direct Services Medicaid Reimbursement	
Strategy	The Internal Audit Office, Finance Office, or Instructional Support Division performs a cost/benefit analysis of filing for Medicaid direct services reimbursement.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of internal audit, director of finance, assistant superintendent for instructional support or designee performs a cost study of filing for Medicaid direct service reimbursement using data from peer districts with similar ESE populations and working with the Department of Education. Step 2: The district considers whether it would be more cost-effective to hire a billing clerk or part-time billing clerk or to contract with a private firm. Step 3: The superintendent's executive leadership team provides support and information as necessary for the study. Step 4: The school board adopts a billing policy appropriate for the district and based on the study.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for instructional support.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	The recommendation can be completed with existing resources, and if Medicaid service billing is implemented, could generate revenues for the district. The amount of revenue can not be computed at this time because the district was unable to provide the data needed to estimate potential reimbursement.

Action Plan 5-6

Develop District Curriculum Guides That Contain Effective Teaching Strategies	
Strategy	Formulate meaningful teaching strategies for the delivery of educational service and in the development of district curriculum guides.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning oversees the development of district curriculum guides. The guides should reflect the Florida Accountability Standards and the Sunshine State. Step 2: The district curriculum guides should clearly illustrate strands and benchmarks or teaching strategies. Step 3: The Teaching and Learning Department works with the personnel from the Summer Institute in developing effective teaching strategies to include in the district curriculum guides. Step 4: The Teaching and Learning Department develops a coaching mechanism in implementing the curriculum guides with school principals. Step 5: The Teaching and Learning Department explores methods of creating a unit or lesson plan data bank to share best teaching practices between the Teaching and Learning area and the Summer Institute. Step 6: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning reviews and monitors the effectiveness of the district curriculum.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-7**Add Two Curriculum Specialists to the Curriculum Department**

Strategy	Add two new curriculum specialists to the Curriculum Department to monitor and train school personnel in the implementation of district curriculum guides, on using Sunshine State Standards and on using state curricular frameworks in lesson plan development.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the Superintendent include two curriculum specialists in the 2003-04 school year budget. Step 2: Submit budget proposal to the school board. Step 3: The Director of the Curriculum Department follows customary district procedures in hiring new personnel.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation will cost the district \$385,900 over the next five years.

Action Plan 5-8**Consider Utilizing an Electronic Curriculum Planning Tool**

Strategy	Consider utilizing an electronic curriculum planning/instructional management tool for district curriculum guides and considering developing a formal instructional management system using the electronic curriculum planning tool.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the director of the Curriculum Department conducts a feasibility study for purchasing an electronic curriculum planning tool for district curriculum guides. Step 2: The district considers purchasing <i>Abicus</i>, the curriculum software designed for the mainframe system in place, to lower start-up costs.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of teaching and learning.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-11**Improve Accountability at the School Level for Lost and Damaged Books**

Strategy	Strengthen accountability at the school level for lost and damaged books.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team seek feedback from the district's leadership team about options to raise consciousness among students, parents, and instructional staff to preserve textbooks and other instructional materials. The group also discusses other alternatives to increase school accountability for lost and damaged books. Step 2: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team establish policies and procedures for all schools to report the dollar amount of lost and damaged books over multiple years. Step 3: The district considers improving textbook inventory method to lower the reported amounts of lost or damaged texts. Step 4: The group provides guidance to schools with dollar amounts of lost and damaged books that increase or remain unchanged over multiple years
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team.
Time Frame	March 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Potential savings with improved collection rates of \$418,384.

Action Plan 5-12

Implement Accountability Mechanisms for Basic Education and Major Programs	
Strategy	Implement accountability mechanisms for basic education and major program areas.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and assistant superintendent for instructional support evaluate the district's current status on monitoring its basic education and major program areas. Step 2: The assistant superintendents determine whether evaluation process is consistent and thorough across major program areas. The assistant superintendents provide accessibility to necessary data at the school level and by major program area. Step 3: The assistant superintendents utilize assessment data and nonacademic data to incorporate peer group information into its data analysis. Step 4: The Teaching and Learning and Instructional Support Departments provide each school principal and major program director with its assessment data analysis. Step 5: School principals incorporate the data analysis into their general trend analysis for developing School Improvement Plans. Step 6: Each major program develops and outlines specific and measurable goals and targets for the identified student subgroups in their departmental strategic plans. Step 7: The district monitors the reliability of program performance and cost data of the major program using procedures recommended by the internal audit department. Step 8: The assistant superintendents monitor district progress in improving the performance of students at least once per school year.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for teaching and learning and the instructional materials team.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation implementation can be achieved with existing resources.

Action Plan 5-14

Create a Comprehensive Student Services Plan	
Strategy	Create a plan for systematically evaluating the effectiveness of its delivery of guidance, psychological, social, and health services.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for instructional support oversees the creation and implementation of a systematic plan for evaluating deliver of guidance, psychological, social and health services. Step 2: The assistant superintendent incorporates the plan into the departmental strategic plan documents for board approval. Step 3: The support services directors and coordinators implement the plan. Step 4: The assistant superintendent monitors the support services departmental progress to improving the delivery of these services at least once per school year.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent for instructional support.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Can be implemented with existing resources.

Administrative and Instructional Technology

Action Plan 6-1

Establish Standards for Technology Acquisitions

Strategy	Establish standards for school-based decision makers for technology acquisitions.
Action Needed	Step 1: Create an administrative policy concerning requirements for district computer workstations consistent with the district's technology plan. This policy should provide for changes in technologies by being reviewed and updated annually. Step 2: The school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent and the assistant superintendents of teaching and learning and of instructional support services should be responsible for drafting the policy. The school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 6-2

Develop and Implement a Funded Replacement Policy

Strategy	Develop and implement a funded policy for equipment replacement.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine the district's optimal replacement period, considering acquisition, warranty, support, management, maintenance, and disposal costs. Step 2: Identify both existing and new sources to fund this policy. Step 3: Draft the funded replacement administrative policy. Step 4: The school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent and the assistant superintendent of instructional support services should be responsible for drafting the policy and the school board should adopt the administrative policy.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The fiscal impact for this recommendation is included in Action Plan 6-3.

Action Plan 6-3

Replace Older/Obsolete Student Workstations

Strategy	Replace the district's older/obsolete student workstations.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine the funding source for replacement of existing older/obsolete instructional workstations. Step 2: Provide this funding based on needs to school-based decision makers for the purpose of replacement of older/obsolete instructional workstations. Step 3: Acquire the equipment necessary to meet statewide averages for modern instructional workstations. Step 4: Monitor compliance of the above described replacement policy.
Who Is Responsible	Funding sources need to be determined by the superintendent and approved by the school board. Acquisitions should be made by school-based decision makers in accordance with the guidance of the administrative policy recommended above. The assistant superintendent of instructional support services should be responsible for monitoring compliance with the replacement policy recommended above.
Time Frame	December 31, 2005
Fiscal Impact	Fiscal impact of this recommendation is approximately \$1,125,000 per year in addition to current expenditure levels. This investment is net of cost savings to be realized through reduced support and management costs. Older/obsolete equipment should be replaced over the next two years and funding for the replacement policy should be on a continual basis.

Action Plan 6-4

Review Technology Curriculum

Strategy	Review the technology curriculum to determine that it meets the needs for graduating students.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine what the desired technology-related outcomes for graduating students are. Step 2: Identify curriculum required. Step 3: Implement required curriculum.
Who Is Responsible	The Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning is responsible.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 6-6

Acquire 660 Student Workstations

Strategy	Acquire 660 student workstations to be placed in identified schools.
Action Needed	Step 1: Determine actual student workstation needs by assessing the current situation at each of the identified schools. Step 2: Identify funding source for the acquisitions. Step 3: Acquire and install the student workstations.
Who Is Responsible	The school board, superintendent, the assistant superintendent of instructional support services, and the purchasing division are responsible.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The fiscal impact of this recommendation is a cost of \$462,000.

Action Plan 6-7

Consider Funding Sources for New Technology With a Repayment Period Shorter Than 30 years

Strategy	Pursue a funding source to replace legacy systems with third party software having a repayment period in line with the life of the acquisition.
Action Needed	Step 1: Consider funding sources for this project Step 2: Obtain funding for the replacement systems. Step 3: Determine system specifications required for business applications systems. Step 4: Procure major systems through the district's normal procurement process. Step 5: Proceed with implementation schedule for student information systems. Step 6: Develop implementation schedule for business applications systems. Step 7: Implement systems in accordance with above plans.
Who Is Responsible	The school board is responsible for funding the project. The superintendent is responsible for the overall success of the project. The assistant superintendent of instructional support services is responsible for the design and implementation of the project. The purchasing division is responsible for procurement.
Time Frame	December 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	The district has already considered the fiscal impact of this recommendation. There is no additional fiscal impact related to this recommendation.

Action Plan 6-8

Ensure That All Technology User Stakeholders Have an Opportunity to Make Certain That Any New Computer System Meets Their Reporting and Informational Needs

Strategy	Solicit input from technology users on their reporting and informational needs.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify key technology user stakeholders in each operational unit Step 2: Solicit input from these users on data and reporting needs for decision making. Step 3: Ensure that the selected new system is capable of meeting these needs.

Who Is Responsible	The director of technology in cooperation with the directors of each functional area including, but not limited to, personnel, purchasing, food services, transportation, maintenance, construction, and education services.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 6-9**Establish Management Control Over Decentralized Databases**

Strategy	Establish management control over decentralized databases.
Action Needed	Step 1: Inventory all databases of significance. Step 2: Documents all significant databases. Step 3: Manage decentralized databases.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent of instructional support services and users of the decentralized databases are responsible for documentation and management of all significant decentralized databases.
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Personnel Systems and Benefits**Action Plan 7-1****Assess and Revise Recruitment Strategies**

Strategy	As a part of its recruitment planning process, the district should use prior experience (data) to prioritize its most cost-effective recruiting strategies, including short term and long term strategies. Ineffective strategies should be revised or discontinued. Special attention should be given to recruitment of minorities.
Action Needed	Step 1: Isolate the various recruiting strategies utilized by the district. Step 2: Determine the cost of each step of each strategy for FY 2001-02 and FY 2002-03. Step 3: Determine how many teachers were hired as a result of each strategy; identify number of minority teachers successfully recruited as a result of each strategy. Step 4: Use results of analysis to improve cost effectiveness and efficiency of future recruiting efforts. Revise or discontinue ineffective steps, or ineffective strategies such as the use of signed letters of intent.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Equity and Recruitment
Time Frame	To be completed by August 31, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-2**Restructure the Telephone Hotline for Vacancies by Job Categories**

Strategy	Organize and restructure the telephone hotline for vacancies by job categories and assess the minutes to find specific job category.
Action Needed	Step 1: Organize the hotline vacancies into non-instructional and instructional categories. Step 2: After reorganization, assess the average number of minutes to find specific job categories to ensure a more timely structure is in place.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Personnel Services
Time Frame	To be completed by June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-3**Improve the Strategy of Recruiting From Within**

Strategy	After assessing the strategy of recruiting paraprofessionals into the teaching ranks, expand the scope of this campaign to include teacher aides, assistants, substitute teachers, and other support personnel.
Action Needed	Step 1: Advertise the need for more teachers, meetings, support, training, information, and other to this target group. Address school non-instructional meetings or give speeches to drawing out interested workers. Speak with principals and ask for their help getting the word out, referring effective employees or others that may be interested, and otherwise cooperating with district recruiting efforts. Step 2: Work with SDC on guidance and training needs of this group. Apply for grants that may assist in financially covering related costs. Step 3: Explore new or improved cooperative agreements with colleges and universities, and new or increased community or business assistance. Step 4: Provide forums, college/university information, regular support meetings with selected topics of interest, increased advertisements of tuition discount or reimbursement programs, and other support, as appropriate. Step 5: Assess and revise the above, as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Equity and Recruitment
Time Frame	To be completed by June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Procured grants should offset any related costs.

Action Plan 7-4**Complete Revision of Job Descriptions**

Strategy	Establish a schedule for routinely updating job descriptions to reflect actual duties, educational and experience requirements, required qualifications, supervisory responsibilities, and salary levels. The district should continue recording the date of each job description review or revision.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Personnel Services Department or designee, with input from department heads and appropriate staff, should develop a schedule for reviewing job descriptions at least once every two years. In coordinating job descriptions with departments, managers should suggest pre-hiring physical requirements needed for certain duties and/or reflect each job's physical demands. Step 2: This schedule designates the process for updating job descriptions (i.e.: in conjunction with annual evaluations once every two years), and guidelines for job description format and content. Step 3: A schedule should be established before March 2003; job descriptions should be initially updated by June 2003.
Who Is Responsible	Personnel Department
Time Frame	To be completed by June 30, 2003, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-5**Revise Inefficient Process of Principals Traveling To Personnel Offices to Review Applicant Files**

Strategy	Determine a more effective and cost-efficient process to principals to review applicant files.

Action Needed	Step 1: For six months, measure principal travel time to district offices for this purpose, estimating indirect administrative costs and direct travel reimbursement costs (including the cost of pulling files). Step 2: During July, revise this procedure to eliminate travel time. Options can include, but should not be limited to, access to electronic entries or new software, faxes, or copies by school mail of the most significant forms/information in applicants' files. Step 3: Compare new costs to former costs, determine level of satisfaction with new processes, and solicit input for revisions, as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Personnel Services
Time Frame	January 1, 2003 to July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-18
Revisit and Revise Procedures to Ensure Personnel Files Are Complete and Meet the Current Personnel File Requirements

Strategy	Revisit and revise procedures to ensure personnel files are complete and meet the personnel file requirements to ensure that all documentation is in each personnel file.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review and adjust procedures for completing personnel files so ensure that all files will be completed correctly and thoroughly. Step 2: Request and replace the missing documentation of audited files and other files where missing documents are evident. Step 3: For new hires, personnel specialists should match a checklist of required documents of each category of positions with the incoming documents, and follow up where needed to complete a file.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Personnel Services
Time Frame	December 31, 2002 and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 7-20
Use Performance Accountability and Benchmarking

Strategy	Establish and implement accountability mechanisms to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the Personnel Department through a formal plan of action and subsequent evaluation. Select and utilize appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and benchmarks, including comparisons to adjoining districts. The same should be done for the other departments within the Human Resources Division. This can be achieved through the new Strategic Plan and implementation process.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Assistant Superintendents for Teaching and Learning and Human Resources should work with Personnel Department staff to identify the most important functions that the department performs, and then to identify possible output and outcome measures of these functions. Step 2: By June 2003, the Personnel Services Department should identify measures to determine appropriate performance benchmarks. Step 3: By December 2003, the Personnel Services Department should develop a set of performance measures that will be used to evaluate the performance of the department. Step 4: At least annually, the Personnel Services Department should report its performance based on its measures to the school board. Step 5: Repeat process for other departments within the Human Resources Division.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendents for Teaching and Learning and for Human Resources
Time Frame	December 31, 2002, and ongoing
Fiscal Impact	Can be implemented with existing resources. Efficiency creates potential savings.

Use of Lottery Proceeds

Action Plan 8-1

Quarterly Reports to the Public on the Extent to Which Lottery Expenditures Have Enhanced Student Education	
Strategy	Distribute financial and other information to the public on a quarterly basis showing how lottery proceeds have been used.
Action Needed	Step 1: Compile financial information relating to the expenditure of lottery proceeds and distribute this information to all interested stakeholders on a quarterly basis. The community relations officer should ensure that this financial information is distributed to the community by: • Including these reports with other information sent to parents. • Posting this information on the district's Web site.
Who is responsible	Director of Budget
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Use of State and District Construction Funds

Action Plan 9-4

Incorporate Life-Cycle Costing	
Strategy	Incorporate life-cycle costing into the overall construction, maintenance, and operating budgets.
Action Needed	Step 1: Life-cycle costing is defined and incorporated into the planning process of new facility construction. Step 2: The superintendent and school board approve the concept and incorporate it into the district's written policies and procedures. Step 3: Incorporate life-cycle costing into the five-year planning process. Step 4: Utilize current information as to design, systems, materials, construction processes, and labor techniques that, when used as part of the planning process, and if approved and implemented, will reduce future maintenance and operating costs.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance, Director of Construction and Planning, Director of Maintenance Services, and maintenance supervisors.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003 and ongoing.
Fiscal Impact	Possible major savings, presently undeterminable, at little or no additional cost.

Action Plan 9-5

Enhance Factors That Minimize Future Maintenance and Operational Costs of a Planned New Facility	
Strategy	Enhance factors that minimize future maintenance and operational costs of a planned new facility by including life-cycle costing into the process.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify specific, proven, and reasonable factors related to the maintenance and operations costs of new facilities. Step 2: Incorporate the results of the life-cycle analyses in design, construction, equipment selection, and furnishings to minimize maintenance and operational costs.

	Step 3: Quantify the future costs savings vs. additional construction costs to evaluate the feasibility of implementing the particular suggestion.
	Step 4: Regularly (i.e.: annually) assess and revise the factors identified above against actual results and compare to other districts.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Facilities and Maintenance, Director of Construction and Planning, Director of Maintenance Services, and maintenance supervisors.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003 and ongoing.
Fiscal Impact	Possible major savings, presently undeterminable, at little or no additional cost.

Facilities Construction

Action Plan 10-2

Update Organizational Chart and Establish Written Procedures for Facilities Planning

Strategy	The district needs to update its organizational chart, and job descriptions to accurately reflect the desired design of the facilities planning process. Establish procedures that will provide a desired framework for carrying out the facilities planning function of the district.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish an organizational chart that considers facilities planning and accurately reflects the framework of the function. Step 2: Prepare written procedures that will: • Clarify the role and responsibilities of the planning function for both staff and the school board • Provide for the implementation of the lines of responsibility as show in the organizational chart • Provide for regular lines of communication among the managers that report to the director of facilities • Provide for regular lines of communications among the directors and supervisors that report to an assistant superintendent Step 3: Periodically review policies in order to keep them current and eliminate any that are outdated.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for Support Services
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 10-3

Develop a Comprehensive Long-term Strategic Plan for Facilities Construction

Strategy	Develop a comprehensive long-term strategic plan for facilities construction.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review long-term student capacity needs for the district. Step 2: Prepare a long-term strategic plan that: • Identifies growth areas and student capacity needs by area • Identifies future sites for building facilities • Identifies how capital funding will be obtained and used • Identifies number of new student stations that will be created • Identifies joint use considerations • Projects construction dates for new facilities Step 3: Periodically review the strategic plan to keep it current.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for Support Services, director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 10-4

Development of the Five-year Work Program

Strategy	Use the facilities evaluation process and the district's facility planning committee to assist with priority setting within the five-year work program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish a committee to develop long-range facility plans. Step 2: Committee should utilize new plant survey and district's assessment of needs to develop five-year work program. Step 3: Present new five-year plan to the board for approval. Step 4: Develop a ten- and twenty-year facilities plan using the same evaluation process.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 10-5

School Board Should Establish Not-to-exceed Spending Levels

Strategy	The board should establish not-to-exceed spending levels that are consistent with state standards for construction.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop proposed "not-to-exceed" spending levels that are consistent with state standards for construction. Step 2: Draft policy establishing spending levels that are consistent with state standards. Step 3: Submit policy to board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	School board, superintendent, assistant superintendent for Support Services, director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 10-6

Comprehensive Evaluation and Ranking of Facilities

Strategy	Conduct a complete evaluation of facilities using a comprehensive format and develop a detailed, uniform checklist of the evaluation criteria, and utilize the results of these evaluations to prioritize needs to be included in the five-year work program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Update and verify FISH data. Step 2: Conduct a complete evaluation of facilities using a comprehensive checklist. The list should include items listed in the text. Step 3: This evaluation instrument should assign a score of 1 to 100 to each facility based on detailed analyses. Step 4: Utilize this information in preparing five-year work program.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for Support Services, Director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	We estimate a cost of approximately \$100,000, based on a similar evaluation study conducted in another school district (Martin).

Action Plan 10-8

Develop Formal Process for Prioritizing Construction Needs

Strategy	The district needs to develop a formalized process for prioritizing construction needs. The process needs to record the needs by school, including budgeted amount for the project.

Action Needed	Step 1: Develop a method to record all construction needs by school site, such as a facilities needs table. Step 2: Budget amount for each project. Step 3: Evaluate and prioritize needs so that projects including instructional capacity are given higher priority than administrative or support projects. Step 4: This evaluation should be conducted by senior personnel and professionals. Step 5: Utilize this information in preparing the five-year work plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendents, director of Construction and Planning, finance director. Approved by the school board.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources..

Action Plan 10-13**Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Orientation Program**

Strategy	Develop and implement comprehensive orientation programs for all new facilities and major renovations, and create a committee to oversee the project.
Action Needed	Step 1: Create an opening coordinating committee for AAA elementary school to develop an orientation program. Step 2: Identify and prepare a prototype orientation program to include modules for: • Maintenance personnel, architect, contractor(s), facilities department personnel, and the site administrator in attendance that involves the specifics of the mechanical systems • Instructional staff • Students, parents, and the community that includes a walk-through conducted by the site administrator Step 3: Prepare prototype user manuals for both teachers and maintenance staff that can be adapted for individual schools. Step 4: Create a district-based committee to oversee the implementation of the program.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent for Support Services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be accomplished within existing resources

Action Plan 10-14**Post-occupancy Evaluations**

Strategy	Regularly conduct post-occupancy evaluations.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop procedures to ensure that post occupancy evaluations regularly occur. These procedures should include educational adequacy, function, safety, efficiency, and suggestions for future improvements. Step 2: The evaluation should include: • An analysis of the educational program improvements for consideration by future educational specification committees • An operational cost analysis • A comparison of the finished product with the educational and construction specifications • Recommendations for future changes
Who Is Responsible	Director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 10-15

Analyze Maintenance and Operating Cost	
Strategy	Analyze maintenance and operations costs at recently completed facilities.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop a procedure to ensure that post-occupancy evaluations include an analysis of the maintenance and operations costs. Step 2: Compare these costs with other district facilities.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Construction and Planning
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Facilities Maintenance

Action Plan 11-1

Update Mission Statement	
Strategy	Update a Maintenance Department mission statement.
Action Needed	Step 1: As part of its strategic planning, district staff should establish a mission statement for the maintenance function. See sample on page 5. Step 2: Present the mission statement to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-2

Create Maintenance Zones	
Strategy	Decentralize the maintenance function into three maintenance zones; assign technical staff and equipment so that all skills are represented in each zone..
Action Needed	Step 1: Select locations for maintenance zone offices Step 2: Review current staffing and determine staffing needs so that all skills will be represented in each zone. Step 3: Adapt building/portable for stockroom and office space Step 4: Assign staff to zones Step 5: Review staffing and equipment requirements in six months, and annually thereafter to ensure zones have adequate tools
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance; zone managers
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The district could save \$15,000 per year, net office expenses, if maintenance staff are decentralized.

Action Plan 11-3

Streamline Organization Chart	
Strategy	Reevaluate the Maintenance Department's organization chart, streamline reporting, and clearly define job responsibilities, and reporting.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review current organization chart and job descriptions for clarity and definition Step 2: Review number of supervisory tiers, eliminate unnecessary tiers Step 3: Realign positions to create well-defined reporting Step 4: Review job descriptions and that organization chart annually, and update as needed

Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services; zone manager.
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-4**Adopt Operating Manual for Schools**

Strategy	Adopt the <i>Building Supervisor's Operations Manual</i> as standard operating procedures for the schools with school board approval.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review the <i>Building Supervisor's Operations Manual</i> and revise applicable sections Step 2: Develop measures of performance, indicate accountability Step 3: Train building supervisors on operating procedures Step 4: Certify building supervisors on operating procedures Step 5: Develop review process for measuring performance Step 6: Put the procedures manual on the server, allowing access by maintenance and campus staff. Step 7: Revise applicable sections as needed over one-to-two years
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and zone manager
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-5**Document Policies and Procedures**

Strategy	Document Maintenance Department policies and procedure.
Action Needed	Step 1: Research through national organizations to identify sources for procedures manual components. Step 2: Develop table of contents for maintenance procedures manual Step 3: Prepare a written draft of the maintenance procedures manual Step 4: Incorporate and update building supervisor's manual into maintenance procedures manual Step 5: Put procedures manual on server, allowing access by maintenance staff and campus staff. Step 6: Revise applicable sections as needed during a one- to two-year period.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services; zone manager.
Time Frame	December 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-6**Develop and Document Goals and Objectives**

Strategy	Develop and document specific goals and objectives consistent with the Maintenance Department's mission statement.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services and zone managers need to analyze the department's mission statement and write specific goals and objectives. These goals and objectives need to be communicated through proper channels to the superintendent, who will approve or amend them. Step 2: The superintendent approves the long-range plan, which is then presented to the board. Step 3: The board reviews and considers approving the plan.
Who Is Responsible	School board; superintendent; assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance; director of maintenance services; zone managers
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-7**Develop Five-year Plan of Projected Needs**

Strategy	Develop a long-range (five-year) plan that identifies staff, budget, and equipment needs to meet the district's goals and objectives.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services and zone managers analyze the existing list of facility improvements. The director projects manpower, budget, and equipment needs to complete the necessary facility improvements. Step 2: The director prioritizes maintenance needs identified in the previous steps, and develops a five-year plan with annual goals and objectives. Step 3: The director researches organizational publications and other sources for information to use in developing maintenance standards and procedures to accomplish the department's goals and objectives. Step 4: The director researches appropriate sources and prepares short-term and long-term standards. Step 5: The director and assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, develop projections for the five-year plan considering resources needed to meet the department's objectives and comply with approved standards. Step 6: Prepare a written proposal including, at a minimum: • Desired levels of physical conditions • Manpower requirements • Equipment requirements • Priorities based on budgetary constraints. Step 7: Obtain approval from superintendent and school board. Step 8: Document current year's budget in the five-year plan. Step 9: Annually revise applicable plan sections, as needed.
Who Is Responsible	School board; superintendent; assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance; director of maintenance services; director of finance; zone manager.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Can be completed with existing resources.

Action Plan 11-8**Develop Performance Standards**

Strategy	Develop performance standards for frequently repeated maintenance tasks. The standards shall clearly define the task and the number of staff hours necessary to complete the task in an efficient manner.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director, program administrators, zone managers, and foremen shall identify tasks that are appropriate for departmental performance standards, using existing industry/military standards that are applicable. One resource that is available is the R. S. Means Manual. Step 2: Utilizing the work order tracking software, the supervisors and their lead forepersons will develop employee performance standards for the most commonly repeated tasks. Step 3: The supervisors and the lead forepersons shall hold staff meetings to explain the performance standards. The standards shall be made available to all staff members. Zone managers should communicate the performance standards for building supervisors and custodians to the site administrators. Step 4: The supervisors shall track the performance of their staff as measured against the performance standards and correct deficiencies through retraining or by following district guidelines for unsatisfactory work performance. Step 5: The director shall review the performance standards with the board. Step 6: The board shall approve the use of the performance standards for the performance evaluations of staff.

Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-9**Develop Construction Standards and Implement One Standard Building Management System**

Strategy	Develop a set of construction standards to be used throughout the district.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of construction, the director of maintenance services, zone manager, and the architect should develop a uniform set of construction standards and adopt a standard building management system. Step 2: Consider construction products, materials, and systems that create an efficient and user-friendly environment for maintenance staff. Step 3: Have the construction standards approved by the board. Step 4: Update construction standards for new and implemented technology.
Who Is Responsible	Director of construction and director of maintenance services.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	If the nine systems currently in place were reduced to one system, the district could save approximately \$55,000 for a full year (\$40,000 for reducing labor time plus \$15,000 for reducing/eliminating inventory). Any incremental costs on the first year of implementation are considered to be negligible. Furthermore, there also may be additional cost savings in other areas as a result of utilizing construction standards, which have not been herein quantified.

Action Plan 11-10**Conduct an Annual Survey of Customers**

Strategy	Develop and implement an annual customer survey for the Facilities, Maintenance, and Operations Department.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services shall oversee the development of a customer survey. Step 2: The director will implement the necessary mechanism so that a responsible designated staff person conducts an annual survey at approximately the same time every year. Step 3: The results of the annual surveys shall be reported to the superintendent and the school board, and be used to plan operational improvements.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-11**Analyze Performance Data**

Strategy	Develop and implement procedures to measure the efficiency of maintenance personnel by gathering and comparing performance data.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services develops an evaluation form to measure actual time versus scheduled time for a particular work order. Step 2: The director will implement the necessary procedures to ensure work orders are reviewed. Step 3: The result of these analyses will be periodically conveyed by each supervisor to the director (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, but not any longer), who investigates actions taken to improve performance. Step 4: The director will report to the assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance achieved, or unachieved, improvements in productivity.

Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance and director of maintenance services.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-12

Implement Accountability Mechanisms

Strategy	The district needs to implement accountability mechanisms to ensure the maintenance programs' performance, effectiveness, and efficiency.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for business and support services, the director of maintenance, and assigned subordinates ("the implementation team") develop goals and objectives based on criteria developed from surveys and their own knowledge of the department's mission and resources available. Step 2: Performance data will be periodically conveyed by each supervisor to the director (weekly, bi-weekly or monthly, but not any longer), who investigates actions taken to improve performance. Step 3: Based on the applicable goals and objectives, the director of maintenance services oversees development of a stakeholder (customer) survey. Step 4: The director ensures an annual survey (conducted at approximately the same time every year) is conducted by a responsible staff person. Step 5: The results are reported to the assistant superintendent for business and support services, the superintendent, and the school board. Step 6: The survey results and other performance measures will be used to plan operational improvements Step 7: The implementation team will also identify appropriate and acceptable cost-efficiency measures and interpretive benchmarks to evaluate the program on an on-going basis. Step 8: The director of maintenance services periodically reports to the assistant superintendent for business and support services of achieved, or unachieved, improvements in productivity, potential cost savings, alternatives, and recommended course(s) of action.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for support services, director of maintenance services, and zone managers.
Time Frame	October 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-13

Develop Guidelines for Estimating Costs

Strategy	The district should develop guidelines for estimating cost for major projects.
Action Needed	Step 1: Develop guidelines for estimating cost that should include: • Past experience • Professional cost standards • Market conditions Step 2: Periodically evaluate cost estimates to improve future estimates.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and project administrators
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-15**Document Goals and Objectives**

Strategy	The district's budget for the Maintenance Department should be supported and tied to goals and objectives for the Maintenance Department as reflected in the district's five-year plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district's budget needs to tie each budget item to the corresponding goals and objectives. Step 2: The district's finance department ensures that these goals and objectives are reflected in the annual budget. Step 3: The Maintenance Department periodically reports on results comparing actual versus budget items, and whether the actions being reported are cost effective.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, zone manager; budget director or CFO.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-16**Privatizing Maintenance Services**

Strategy	Formally evaluate existing services to determine if any are suitable for privatization or if privatization should be continued.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify maintenance trade functions that could be privatized. Step 2: Identify criteria for use in determining cost to privatize these functions. Step 3: Perform analysis comparing vendor cost to in-house cost. Step 4: Consider non-monetary variables when performing this evaluation. Step 5: Determine feasibility of privatizing or continuing privatizing maintenance trade functions based on the results of the comparison.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and zone manager; CFO.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-17**Conduct Equipment Cost Projections**

Strategy	The district needs to make projections for needed equipment for five-year periods. These projections need to include an inflation factor and be part of the long-range plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district prepares a list of needed equipment for a five-year period. Step 2: The district's budget should include an inflation factor for each year. Step 3: The district's finance department determines whether these inflation factors are reasonable and reflected in the annual budget.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, zone manager, finance director.
Time Frame	July 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-18**Conduct Cost Comparisons**

Strategy	The district should periodically conduct cost comparison studies for purchasing materials and equipment. The goal of the studies is to ensure that the district is obtaining the best value for the money spent.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify materials and equipment where a cost comparison is applicable to determine whether the district received the best value for money spent. Step 2: Conduct a detailed and documentable comparison of the items selected under Step 1 above, as to the best value for the money spent.

	Step 3: Comparisons are to be for identical items (no substitutes).
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and program administrators and purchasing department.
Time Frame	July 31, 2002
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-19

Implement a Preventive Maintenance Program

Strategy	The district needs to undertake measures to create and implement a program to use preventive maintenance practices to reduce costs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district prepares a list of potential areas where preventive maintenance is attainable and projects attainable costs reductions. Step 2: The district, through its Maintenance Department, dissects the list into logical components and designates a lead person for each category. Step 3: The district's Maintenance Department prioritizes the projects and assigns target dates for accomplishing them.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, program administrators and zone managers.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Implementing a preventive maintenance program would save approximately \$1,729,200 over the next five years, as illustrated in Exhibit 11-5.

Action Plan 11-20

Preventive Maintenance Practices

Strategy	The district periodically reviews its preventive maintenance practices to ascertain whether costs are successfully and systematically reduced as a result of this program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify how the measurement of items to be compared will take place (dollars, efficiency, postponement of adverse conditions when major repairs take place). Step 2: Compare the added costs of preventive maintenance, after considering the time lapsed during which the preventive maintenance needs to take place, versus the costs of replacement and the costs of disrupting operations when major repairs take place. Step 3: Prepare a detailed listing of items selected under Step 1 above. Step 4: Determine costs savings by category or projects. Step 5: Inform assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, superintendent, and school board.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent; assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, director of maintenance services, zone manager, and finance director.
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-21

Review Organizational Structure

Strategy	Routinely perform a formal review of the maintenance organizational structure.
Action Needed	Step 1: Assistant superintendent for facilities and maintenance, director of maintenance services, and zone managers shall identify ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the maintenance structure. Step 2: Research the industry and other districts to gather ideas on ways of improving current structure. Step 3: Clearly define any structural changes in writing. Step 4: Submit to the board for approval.

Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and zone managers.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003 and ongoing.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-22**Maintenance Staffing Formula**

Strategy	The district should develop a staffing formula for each job category in the maintenance function.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services, assisted by the zone managers in the Maintenance Department, research different staffing formulas, including comparisons with peer districts. Step 2: This group will obtain industry information related to staffing levels for various maintenance trades, including published materials, periodicals, and internet sites. Step 3: The director and supervisors will develop a staffing formula that will enable the district to maintain the facilities with good quality, but at minimal cost.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, and zone managers.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Can be accomplished from existing resources.

Action Plan 11-23**Eliminate Redundant or Unnecessary Positions**

Strategy	The district should review management layers and job descriptions, and eliminate redundant layers to streamline reporting and increase operational efficiency.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review organizational chart and job descriptions for maintenance services. Step 2: Eliminate excessive administrative and supervisory positions. Step 3: Create new organizational chart and job descriptions for maintenance services under a decentralized structure.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for support services, assistant superintendent for human resources, director of maintenance services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be attained within existing resources but will also result in significant savings to the district that cannot be calculated at this time.

Action Plan 11-24**Create a Staff Development Program**

Strategy	Develop a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff in the areas of job skills, job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services and the supervisors will meet with their respective staffs to determine the types of training that are needed. Step 2: The director and supervisors shall meet with the staff development team and develop staff training at the least in the following areas: • job safety • team work • use of tools • interpersonal communications • work habits • job skills Step 3: Staff development shall prepare a training schedule, which allows for all Maintenance and Operations staff to receive at least two training sessions per year.

Step 4:	The director of maintenance services shall ensure the training budget conforms to the needs and training schedule prepared by staff development.
Step 5:	The director of maintenance services and the director of staff development shall present the training curriculum, schedule, budget, and expected outcomes to the board.
Step 6:	The board shall review, revise, and consider the approval of the training program.
Step 7:	The program will be evaluated annually. Staff feedback will be part of the basis for the evaluation.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and director of staff development
Time Frame	August 31, 2003.
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-25

Establish Inventory-tracking System

Strategy	Develop a plan to prioritize the establishment of an inventory tracking system.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of maintenance services, program administrators, zone managers, and director of MIS should meet to determine necessary steps in the establishment of an inventory tracking system. Step 2: Utilize appropriate resources determined in Step 1 to implement the system.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, director of MIS
Time Frame	September 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-26

Analyze Productivity of Maintenance Crews

Strategy	Routinely generate reports from the new work order system to analyze the efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance crews.
Action Needed	Step 1: Have procedures in place where work order reports are routinely generated and analyzed. Step 2: Area supervisors meet monthly to discuss results from report analyses. Step 3: Supervisors should troubleshoot and discuss ways to be more efficient and effective with productivity.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-27

Routinely Discuss Productivity Levels

Strategy	Supervisors meet monthly to discuss productivity levels and expectations of their staff.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish a procedure for supervisors to meet monthly to discuss productivity levels and expectations of their staff. Step 2: Area supervisors meet monthly to discuss results from report analyses. Step 3: Supervisors discuss with their staff expectations and ways to be more efficient and effective with productivity.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services and supervisors.
Time Frame	August 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-28**Establish Guidelines to Prioritize Maintenance Needs**

Strategy	Develop formal guidelines to prioritize maintenance needs. Ongoing maintenance should be tied to educational program needs, changing enrollment projections, or long-term facility planning.
Action Needed	Step 1: Establish written guidelines to prioritize maintenance needs. Step 2: This should include criteria to rank on-going maintenance needs. The criteria used for ranking should be more specific than routine, emergency, and vandalism. Step 3: Guidelines need to consider educational program needs, changing enrollment projections, and long range-facility planning to determine the priorities.
Who Is Responsible	Director of maintenance services, program administrators, and zone managers
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 11-29**Develop Energy Management Plan**

Strategy	Develop a comprehensive energy management plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: Director of maintenance services and zone managers should conduct research on different energy management programs. This would include communication with different organizations. Step 2: Review qualifications energy manager position and update criteria as needed. Step 3: Develop a comprehensive program that would include: • conducting an energy audit to determine ways of reducing energy consumption and cost • energy measures to be tracked by facility • energy management training for students, teachers, administrators, and maintenance workers • energy conservation checklist for students, teachers, administrators, and maintenance workers • incentive programs for schools to promote and reward student and staff for participation • plans for improving HVAC systems • monitoring and improving indoor quality Step 4: Present this plan to the superintendent for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Director of facilities and energy manager.
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation may result in future energy savings. However, until an assessment of the district's current situation is completed, savings cannot be reasonably estimated.

Student Transportation**Action Plan 12-1****Develop a Formal and Systematic Approach to Review Every Bus Stop on an Annual Basis**

Strategy	Establish a formal schedule to evaluate the safety and hazardous conditions of existing bus stops. This schedule should include the review of each existing stop at least every 12 months.

Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation for setting standardized criteria and a formal schedule to review the safety of all existing bus stops. Step 2: The director of transportation, supervisor of safety and training, and the supervisor of routing and scheduling coordinate efforts to establish benchmarks to which bus stops should conform, criteria for evaluating the safety of bus stops, develop standardized forms to document reviews and setting a schedule to perform the reviews. Step 3: The supervisor for safety and training delegates and instructs the appropriate safety and training personnel to perform the reviews, in accordance with the established schedule, on a weekly basis. Step 4: Reviews and findings are documented on standard forms and reported to the supervisor of safety and training. The supervisor of safety and training reports all evaluations and findings per summarized format to the director of transportation and supervisor of routing and scheduling. Step 5: The supervisor of routing and scheduling informs the supervisor of safety and training of any additions/ amendments to the current bus stop listing for incorporation into the schedule. Step 6: Based on evaluations, the director of transportation and supervisor of safety and training take appropriate action to ensure that all bus stops conform to the established safety benchmarks.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor of safety and training; supervisor of routing and scheduling
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 12-2

Provide Training to Routing Staff on All the Mapnet NT Functions

Strategy	Provide training from the product supplier on the use of coordination functions and “masterbuilding” of routes on the MAPNET.NT system to improve the efficiency of bus routing.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to facilitate the training of the supervisor of routing and scheduling and routing specialists. Step 2: The director of transportation and supervisor of routing and scheduling negotiate training packages with the product supplier. Step 3: The director of transportation delegates the coordination of training sessions and training curriculum to the supervisor of routing and scheduling. The supervisor of routing and scheduling schedules training sessions for routing specialists. Step 4: Provide staff quizzes and questionnaires to receive feedback on training curriculum, training usefulness. The supervisor of routing and scheduling reports back to the director of transportation. Step 5: During the next masterbuilding session staff and supervisors are to apply the all applications of the MAPNET.NT system.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor of routing and scheduling
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-3**Keep a Log of All Requests for Bus Stop Changes, Reasons for Changes and Changes Made**

Strategy	Maintain a log and document all requests for changes, reasons for changes and actions taken in order to evaluate the feasibility of current school of choice policies
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to maintain a log and document all requests for changes received, reason for changes, actions taken. Step 2: The director of transportation delegates the supervisor of routing and scheduling to instruct all routing specialist and data-processors to log and document all request for changes received, reasons for each request and action taken. Step 3: All requests for changes should be documented on existing request for change forms and filed per month per receiving staff member. The routing staff prepares a monthly summary report of all requests received, reasons and action taken. Step 4: The supervisor of routing and scheduling reports monthly analysis to the director of transportation. Reports are delivered to the superintendent when the current school of choice policies are reviewed.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor of routing and scheduling
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-4**Eliminate Unnecessary Courtesy Rides**

Strategy	Eliminate the bus transportation of students who live within two miles of their school and can safely walk to school.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation for compiling a list of all courtesy rides, citing reasons and indicating in each case if courtesy bus service is provided using existing resources and established routes. Step 2: In addition, the study should determine if courtesy service was provided without re-routing buses or creating additional capacity. Step 3: Determine which courtesy riders create additional capacity needs or result in re-routing buses. Determine why these students are receiving courtesy bus service, including safety and other issues. Step 4: The director of transportation contacts other agencies (i.e., Lee County Sheriff's Office; city Police Departments; Florida Highway Patrol; Lee County government; Florida Department of Transportation) that can help in decreasing or eliminating hazards that necessitate courtesy rides. Present the results of these contacts to the assistant superintendent for operational support services to formalize communications and obtain the other agencies' cooperation in dealing with these hazards. Step 5: Evaluate the cost/benefit of implementing this program. Step 6: Outline the program's benefits and suggestions, bringing to the superintendent for approval before submitting strategies to reduce courtesy ridership to the school board. Step 7: With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period (and when any changes have been made), bring strategies to the school board for approval.

Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; interaction with external agencies; approval by the superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	Complete the study by March 31, 2002; School board approval by April 30, 2003; Community outreach and input completed by June 30, 2003; Implementation by July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Future savings: up to \$38,000 annually.

¹ This recommendation does not imply that the district should discontinue courtesy ridership in cases where no documented alternatives exist to address significant safety concerns.

Action Plan 12-5

Reassess the Cost-Benefit and Feasibility of the Two-Tier System	
Strategy	Reassess the cost benefit and feasibility of the two-tier system
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation for reassessing the assumptions and recalculating the cost savings of the two-tier system. Step 2: In performing the analysis the following cost and opportunity cost must be included: • Recalculating the saving estimate, based on total 2002 bus driver and attendants wages and overtime costs (include all pay periods). Do not include overtime expended on activity trips, • Additional fuel and maintenance cost of buses that will be required as a result of the addition of buses in services, • A closer approximation of additional routes and drivers costs based on a range of expected outcomes and current information, • Effect of two-tier bussing on the district bus occupancy figure and estimation of State funding foregone. (Every 3.3 difference in bus occupancy results in a 1% difference in funding) • Factoring the replacement costs of the additional buses used, on a 12-year replacement cycle • Sensitivity analysis on savings based on possible scenario's and unexpected occurrences that can significantly influence costs under the new system, such as adjusting bell times by 15 minutes • Evaluating any alternatives to the possible two-tier system and calculating and including opportunity savings foregone. Step 3: Perform a feasibility study by allowing sufficient time for parent, teacher, and district staff feedback. Surveys should include, but need not be limited to, Internet polls, distributed questionnaires and setting a phone hotline. Step 4: Analyze 2002-03 transportation expenditure with prior years to determine if expenditure under the two-tier system indicate that cost savings are attainable. Step 5: The director of transportation and the assistant superintendent for operational support services evaluate the results of the cost benefit analysis, feasibility study and interim cost statements and propose actions that will lead to the most cost effective long-term solution. Step 6: Solutions and alternatives indicating costs implications are recommended to the superintendent. Outline each alternatives benefits and suggestions, bringing to the superintendent for approval before submitting an Action Plan to the school board. Step 7: With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period, bring the Action Plan to the school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; approval by the superintendent and school board.

Time Frame	Complete the study by February 28, 2003. Community outreach and input completed by May 31, 2003; School board approval by June 31, 2003 and implementation by July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-6**Reassess Full-Time Bus Operator and Substitute Bus Driver Ratios and Implement a Bus Driver Attendance Incentive Program**

Strategy	Change full-time and substitute bus driver ratios and implement an attendance incentive program, thereby minimizing unexpected absences and saving costs
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to reassess bus driver ratio's and to implement an attendance incentive program Step 2: The director of transportation, assistant superintendent for operational support services, chief financial officer, director of human resources, assistant superintendent of human resources negotiate with the SPARC labor union to implement changes in staff structures and on the implementation of attendance incentive program Step 3: The district establishes benchmark wage structures and tries to maintain an established balance: • Full time staff should cover the districts regular routes • Additional 4% of full time staff to cover unexpected emergencies at various regional compounds • Employ as many substitute drivers on call as possible Step 4: Benchmark wage structures and alternatives, indicating costs implications are recommended to the superintendent. Outline each alternatives benefits and suggestions, bringing to the superintendent for approval before submitting an Action Plan to the school board. Step 5: With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period (and when any changes have been made), bring the Action Plan to the school board for approval Step 6: The district advertises for bus driver and substitute positions for the forthcoming school year Step 7: The director of transportation and human resources department monitors staff structures to ensure compliance Step 8: The regional transportation supervisors report expected and unexpected absences to the director of transportation on a monthly basis, who analyzes the cost-effectiveness of current staff structures, wage and benefit structures and attendance incentive program in relation to prior years. Step 9: The director of transportation and assistant superintendent for operational support services reports to the superintendent the costs effectiveness of structures on a quarterly basis.
Who Is Responsible	The director of transportation, assistant superintendent for operational support services, chief financial officer, director of human resources, assistant superintendent of human resources, with approval by the superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	July 2003, with proposed reassessment of two-tier system
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources; Future savings: up to \$141,500 annually

Action Plan 12-7

Evaluate The Feasibility And Cost Savings Of Both The Transfer-Point System And “Corridor/ Arterial/ Trunk Routing” System Especially For County-Wide Programs Such As Magnet Schools And International Baccalaureate Students, With The Goal Of Increasing Bus Occupancy Starting In The 2005-06 School Year.

Strategy	Evaluate the feasibility and cost savings of both the transfer-point system and “corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing” system to increase bus occupancy, especially for county wide programs such as magnet school and international baccalaureate programs.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district assigns the responsibility to the assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation and student assignment task force to evaluate the feasibility and cost savings related to transfer-point systems and “corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing”. Step 2: The director of transportation, supervisor for routing and scheduling, regional supervisors and the student assignment task force combine efforts to evaluate the feasibility of a transfer point system and corridor/arterial/trunk routing. This should include drafting a plan for transporting students to countywide magnet programs, taking the following into consideration: • Contacting Hillsborough County School District student transportation to discuss its transfer-point model/ plan and to consider implementing its practices. • Establishing possible sites for transfer points. This should be done so that travel time between magnet schools, area of pick-up and transfers point is minimized and uses existing district owned structures (ramps etc.). • Considering the number of buses needed to transport students to transfer points, and from the transfer points to the different magnet schools. Calculations should be based on available student data from MAPNET systems and maps, bus capacity and ride time limitations. All eleven magnet schools should be evaluated. • Considering adequacy of student safety through supervision and monitoring. • Establishing possible arrival and departure cut-off times to project ride times and number of routes. • Considering the number of spare buses needed to minimize delays, (i.e.: Buses that travel in proximity to each other, can be assist each other in emergency situations, rather than delay transfer beyond cut-off times) • Considering the feasibility of supervision i.e.: I. Senior supervisory transportation staff adjusts daily functions to supervise a particular transfer point. II. Senior bus driver at each transfer point could be designated as a supervisor at that location and paid a small stipend (cost to district is minimal). III. Other school support or care personnel. • Making capacity buses available to be used to pick up students in close proximity. Step 3: Outline the plan structure, benefits, cost savings and operational difficulties to be eliminated before bringing to the student assignment task force for evaluation. Step 4: The director of transportation, supervisor for routing and scheduling and the regional supervisors combine efforts to evaluate the feasibility of a “corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing” system. This should include drafting a plan to transport students to countywide magnet programs. The plan should be developed taking the following into consideration:

	• Contacting Escambia County School District's student transportation offices to discuss its "corridor/ arterial/ trunk routing" model/ plan and to consider implementing its practices. • Establishing possible sites for central pick-up points. This should be done so that travel time between magnet schools and area of central pick-up is minimized; and that the pick up points are centrally located so that the buses attain a high bus occupancy. • Considering the amount of buses needed to transport students from each central pick-up point to the different magnet schools. Calculations should be based on available student data from MAPNET systems and maps, bus capacity, ride time limitations and students located in the vicinity of the pick-up point. All eleven magnet schools should be evaluated.
Step 5:	Outline the plan structure, benefits, cost savings and operational difficulties to be eliminated before bringing to the student assignment task force for evaluation.
Step 6:	The student assignment task force, assistant superintendent for operational support services and director of transportation evaluate the most cost-effective and efficient system and recommends the system with an action plan to the superintendent.
Step 7:	With the superintendent's approval, and after the necessary public notice and information period, bring the action plan to the school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; supervisor for routing and scheduling; regional supervisors; student assignment task force, superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	October 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	By increasing magnet school bus occupancy, the district could reduce the number of bus routes operated, thereby reducing the number of buses needed, number of drivers, maintenance needs, and fuel costs. This could lead to an annual reduction in operating expenditure and capital outlay of approximately \$3,874,400 per year, beginning in the 2005-06 school year.

Action Plan 12-8

Review School of Choice Policies Within the Continuing Operational Constraints, To Develop a Plan to Increase Overall Bus Occupancy Starting In the 2005-06 School Year.

Strategy	The district should analyze options to increase overall bus occupancy within operational constraints, for all transportation efforts.
Action Needed	Step 1: The district assigns the responsibility to the assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation and student assignment task force to review transportation policies in line with student assignment policies. Step 2: The assistant superintendent for operational support services and director of transportation working with the student assignment task force, should develop a plan for increasing bus occupancy from the 2005-06 school year. Step 3: Identify transportation policies and options that have the greatest impact on increasing overall bus occupancy. These options should include, but are not limited to: • Consideration of continuing school of choice and effects on transportation costs; • Reducing the size of the choice zones; • Amending school bell schedules to increase bus turn around times; • Limiting the number of schools to which student may change during the school year; • Limiting transportation to magnet schools to within a choice of zones;

	• Requiring parents to transport or pay for transportation to magnet schools outside of choice zones; • Through long term planning ensure that each zone has sufficient magnet schools and ESE schools to serve the surrounding areas.
Step 4:	Conduct cost- benefit analysis of policy options.
Step 5:	Produce a report and present it to the student assignment task force for evaluation. The student assignment task force, assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation recommends an action plan to the superintendent and school board to make a decision on how to increase bus occupancy from the 2005-06 school year.
Step 6:	Implement school board decision.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; student assignment task force, superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	October 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resource, but has the potential for significant cost savings, depending on the operating constraints and the selected strategies.

Action Plan 12-9

Proceed With Planning, Implementation and Testing Of the Automated Payroll System	
Strategy	Plan, test and implement the automated payroll system
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the director of transportation to assist the MIS department in the planning, testing and implementation of the automated payroll system Step 2: The director of transportation and IS project coordinator should determine the needs of the transportation department in recording driver and employee time. This determination should include, but is not limited to, the following: • Monitoring and reviewing of driver overtime • Timeframe for notification of unexpected absences • Driver accountability for unexpected absences • Reports on employee attendance and sick leave • Input from employees on payroll system • Evaluation of MIS capabilities and generation of management reports that can be useful in decision making Step 3: Parallel testing should not only consider the necessary accuracy of time keeping, but also determine additional areas where the system can be helpful in improving MIS and management reporting. Step 4: Testing should be coordinated to ensure that all needs are addressed before final authorization of implementation Step 5: Produce a test report and present it to the superintendent and school board for a decision regarding the final implementation of the system. All estimated cost savings and additional operational efficiencies, as well as possible drawbacks, should be re-addressed Step 6: Implement school board decision
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; IS project coordinator; approval by the superintendent and school board
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-10**Charge Full Cost for Activity Trips**

Strategy	The school board establishes a policy for the full recovery of transportation costs when school buses and other district vehicles are used for purposes other than transporting students to and from school. Activity trip costs should be periodically analyzed to maintain full cost recovery.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns responsibility to the Finance Department (with assistance from the director of transportation) for capturing the full cost per mile (including bus operating cost per mile, driver salary and administrative costs) driven by district school buses and other vehicles. This may be based on empirical information derived from previous fiscal years, or from the current year's budget. Step 2: Once the per-mile cost is established, notify the superintendent of the potential reductions in operating expenses from charging the full cost per mile for activity trips, rather than the current fixed charge-out structure Step 3: Evaluation and approval by the superintendent is suggested, since this action may impact other policies being considered. Step 4: School board action may be required.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; finance director; possible delegation to subordinates; assistance from the director of transportation. Involvement and approval by the superintendent; consent or action by the school board.
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Additional annual Transportation Department revenues of approximately \$292,000

Action Plan 12-15**Immediately Reduce The Spare Bus Ratio To No More Than 16% Of Daily Routes. Targeting A 10% Spare Bus Ratio, Perform Annual Reviews To Identify Efficient Operating Levels**

Strategy	Set an immediate cap of 16% of daily routes for the number of spare buses maintained by the district. Target a 10% reserve and review spare bus ratios annually.
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of transportation and assistant superintendent for operational support services should formulate the new policy and submit new policy wording to the superintendent and school board for approval. Step 2: Change standard operating procedures to reflect immediate changes in the reserve ratio. This should include an evaluation of all the buses in the reserve fleet and buses used on routes to determine the estimated future useful lives of each bus. Preference should be given to keeping buses with low repair frequencies, low mileage and superior physical condition. Step 3: Plan a scheduled reduction in the new school bus purchases to reflect the change without radically increasing the spare fleet. Step 4: Auction off the districts special reserve buses and reserve buses (as determined above) on a private auction. Step 5: Auctions should be widely advertised to maximize returns. Extend invitations to known buyers could also be effective. Step 6: Perform annual evaluations of the spare bus ratio needed to operate current and expected routes. This evaluation should include estimating the following: • The frequency of breakdowns • The average downtime of buses • The average buses on a 20-day inspection cycle • The peak demand for activity buses effective • Maintenance support capacity from Transportation East Step 7: Revise operating procedures and follow actions as indicated in steps 2 to 6

Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; superintendent and school board
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	This recommendation could result in a one-time cost recovery of \$428,400. Additionally, the district would recover approximately \$153,000 by selling the special reserve buses on a private auction. Additional annual savings will accrue to the district in reduced maintenance costs.

Action Plan 12-16

Establish A Formal Bus Replacement Policy and Adhere To the Scheduled Purchases

Strategy	Consider the cost/ benefit of a 12-year replacement schedule. Establish a formal replacement policy, also requiring a review of bus replacement schedules every three years, and adhere to the scheduled purchases.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns to the director of transportation and the chief financial officer the responsibility of carrying out a cost-benefit review of a 12-year bus replacement schedule, and to perform review of the schedule every three years. Step 2: Part of the assessment should include an analysis of all the variables that impact the life cycle of the current fleet such as safety, specification and design, average expected life cycle of engines and transmissions and economy and efficiency. The assessment could also include consultations with the Hillsborough and the Miami-Dade school districts, and with DOE Step 3: If a 12-year bus replacement schedule results more cost-effective, the director of transportation and assistant superintendent for operational support services prepares a report including the cost savings and presents to the superintendent and school board for approval. Maintaining a 10 year replacement cycle will require the district purchase an additional 6 buses annually (in addition to the ones already budgeted), funding would have to be increased to approximately \$348,540 annually over the next five years. Step 4: The related school board policy is modified contingent upon Step 1. Step 5: As mentioned in action plan 12-6, recommendation 1, as buses are removed from service and replaced, they should go to auction to recover as much cost as possible. Step 6: The director of transportation and director of purchasing department should review the purchasing schedule on yearly basis and schedule replacement purchases accordingly.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; chief financial officer; director of purchasing, superintendent and school board
Time Frame	March 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Future annual savings over the next five years, based on 12-year replacement schedule, could amount to \$4,356,750.

Action Plan 12-17

Coordinate Efforts Between Student Assignment Office and Transportation Department to Incorporate Long-Term Growth Projections Into Future Bus Purchase Plans

Strategy	Coordinate efforts with the student assignment office to project the number of additional buses needed to accommodate future growth, the purchase of these buses, and their incorporation into the Transportation department's five-year plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns to the director of transportation the responsibility coordinate the projection of the number of additional buses needed to accommodate future growth with the student assignment office.

	Step 2: The director of transportation obtains future student growth projections from the manager of the student assignment office and estimates the additional buses needed to accommodate the future growth. In estimating future buses purchases for growth the following should be considered: • Current and future bus occupancy benchmarks • Future % of student population requiring transportation • Additional schools and their locations Step 3: The director of transportation includes bus purchases for growth in the transportation annual budget and 5 year projections and after approval by the assistant superintendent for operational support services presents budgets and projections to the capital planning committee. Step 4: The capital planning committee reviews all budgets and projections feasibility and plans budgeting requirements before submitting these to the superintendent and school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation; manager of the student assignment office; capital planning committee; superintendent and school board
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-18

Establish A Reasonable Threshold That, In Conjunction With The Age Of The Bus, Frequency Of Repairs And Estimated Costs Of Repair, Can Be Used To Alert The Appropriate Supervisor To Review Buses In Service

Strategy	When a bus nears two years to the end of its life cycle (replacement cycle) major repairs exceeding \$2,500 must be approved by the director of transportation and supervisor of garage operations
Action Needed	Step 1: The director of transportation establishes a policy that all bus repairs, greater than \$2,500 and the bus is within two years of its replacement date, need to be approved by both the supervisor for garage operations and director of transportation Step 2: The internal policy should be properly communicated to the regional service shops via memos, maintenance staff manuals and in existing training sessions Step 3: The director of transportation and supervisor of garage operations should follow the following steps as part of the ultimate decision to repair or remove a bus from service: Step 4: Review historical data including: • Mileage • Physical condition • Fuel consumption as compared to other buses in its class • Frequency of repairs • Nature of previous repairs Step 5: Other costs incurred on the bus remove a bus from service: Step 6: Projecting the expected increase in life cycle or longevity of the bus if said repairs are in fact made.
Who Is Responsible	Director of transportation; supervisor of garage operations; maintenance staff
Time Frame	February 28, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-21

Develop a Plan to Improve Working Conditions at Service Center Transportation East	
Strategy	Develop a plan to improve working conditions at service center Transportation East
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns the responsibility to establish a plan to improve working conditions at the service center, to the director of transportation. Step 2: The director of transportation, supervisor of garage operations and head mechanic of Transportation East devise a short-term and long-term plan to improve the working conditions at the service center. The plan should outline all expenditures and justification thereof. Step 3: The short-term plan should include: • Increasing the length of concrete work pads to accommodate the full length of a bus • Extension of the metal shelters to cover the entire bus • Installation of new safety features, such as eyewashes and oil grates. • Securing a surplus portable with restroom facilities to be used as an office and break/lunchroom for mechanics. Use existing building strictly for parts and storage. • Paving of parking lot Step 4: The long-term plan should include a site needs assessment and design to accommodate current and anticipated needs including garage bays, parts storage and employee facilities. Step 5: The plan should then be reviewed by the assistant superintendent and capital planning review committee before submitting these to the superintendent and school board for approval. The plan should stress the urgent need for a facility upgrade and all improvements and costs involved.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services; director of transportation, supervisor for garage operations, capital planning committee, superintendent and school board.
Time Frame	Development of plan: December 2002; Implementation of short-term phase: January 2003; Finish long-term plan: June 2004.
Fiscal Impact	The planning can be accomplished with existing resources. The district has budgeted for the facility in its five-year capital outlay projections.

Action Plan 12-24

Select Peer Districts That Are More Demographically Similar To Lee County to Compare Transportation Operations	
Strategy	Select peer districts that are more demographically similar to Lee County to compare transportation operations.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services assigns the responsibility of selecting peer districts that are similar to Lee County to the director of transportation. Step 2: Review other school Florida school districts to identify those that have court ordered bussing or school of choice programs and are demographically similar to Lee County. This criteria should include at least: • The number of students served; • The size of the bus fleet; • The average bus occupancy; • The population density of the district; • The size and nature of the County (coastal); and • The average mileage per year.

	Step 3: Review other Florida school districts to identify those that are performing at a exemplary level. Select at least two that are similar to Lee County. If no districts are found to be at an exemplary level, the district may wish to consider exemplary districts in other states.
	Step 4: Begin collecting and monitoring data related to transportation from existing data on comparison and exemplary districts
Who Is Responsible	Director of transportation, in consultation with assistant superintendent for operational support services
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-25

Develop Performance Indicators, Benchmarks, and A “Report Card” Style Annual Report For the School Board

Strategy	Develop a list of performance indicators that would be useful to the school board and general public to provide accountability for student transportation performance. Each performance indicator should be associated with a performance target to evaluate performance, and a “report card” style annual report should be made to the school board.
Action Needed	Step 1: Review benchmarks that are appropriate, feasible, and useful for both student transportation operations and vehicle maintenance. Selected benchmarks should support the district strategic plan. Staff should consider the following list of performance measures for student transportation operations: • Cost per mile for school bus operations • Average bus occupancy for regular, ESE and magnet transportation • Percentage of buses that are spare buses • Percentage of courtesy students served • Ratio of bus drivers to substitute drivers, bus attendants and number of routes served • Driver and other employee turnover • Failure to comply with pick-up or delivery schedules within prescribed time ranges (late arrivals), measured as incidents per month • Customer service evaluation rating as good, as measured by routine customer service surveys of principals and parents • Number and percentage of students who have scheduled bus ride times that exceed the district’s standards • Number of all accidents, measured as incidents per 100,000 miles • Parent complaints, measured by number of phone calls and categorized by type of complaint (on-time, discipline, safety concerns, vehicle maintenance, driver performance, etc.) Step 2: For vehicle maintenance staff should consider the following performance measures. • Down time of buses, measured as days out of service • Number of breakdowns per 100,000 miles • Maintenance cost for each vehicle, measured against average for all comparable vehicles • Turnaround time for scheduled and corrective maintenance by type of vehicle • Vehicle maintenance hours as a percentage of total hours charged • Vehicle to mechanics ratio • Average maintenance cost per mile by type of school bus • Safety inspections, measured as a percentage of all repair work time. Other performance indicators may be selected based on local interest and data availability.

	Step 3: For all performance measures that are selected, devise a reporting mechanism and frequency appropriate for that particular measure.
	Step 4: Collect information on actual performance and report on it at selected intervals.
	Step 5: Establish performance standards for future school years.
Who Is Responsible	Director of transportation, in consultation with assistant superintendent for operational support services
Time Frame	April 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-26

Involvement in District Planning

Strategy	Involve Transportation Department management in the planning of new school locations and construction, selection of schools to become ESE centers and other actions the district takes to deal with enrollment changes.
Action Needed	Step 1: Include department management in school planning so they can provide input from a transportation point of view and be able to take planning assumptions into account in planning for future transportation needs.
Who Is Responsible	The director of transportation, ESE transportation supervisor (for selection of ESE centers) and those involved in district planning
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-27

Board Review of Transportation Policies and Alternatives

Strategy	The district performs annual reviews of the cost implications of transportation policies and their alternatives.
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent for operational support services and the director of transportation annually prepare a report of the cost implications of transportation policies, all cost saving alternatives and their recommendations. Recommendations should include detailed justification. Step 2: The report should include the cost implications of the school of choice plan, ESE transportation, Magnet school student transportation and evaluate all possible cost saving alternatives. Step 3: The report and recommendations are presented to the superintendent and school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation, superintendent and school board
Time Frame	June 30, 2003, with Action Plan 12-1 Recommendations 4 – 9
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-28

Compare Cost of District vs. Private School Bus Operations and Services

Strategy	Develop key cost information and prepare a cost comparison of contracted vs. in-house bus operations and services to use as a basis for decision-making regarding the expansion contracted bus services
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent of operational support services assigns the responsibilities for the development of comparative cost information to the director of transportation Step 2: Develop a comprehensive analysis of the cost of district in-house bus operations. Step 3: Conduct a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to determine the market of viable

	contract bus providers followed by a bid process for bus operations.
Step 4:	Conduct a comparison of the cost of in-house bus operations to contracting for these services
Step 5:	Use the comparative analysis as a basis for expansion or contraction of contracted operations and services
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent for operational support services, director of transportation
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-29**Review of the Department's Organizational Structure**

Strategy	Conduct an annual review of the student transportation program's organizational structure and staffing level to minimize administrative layers and process.
Action Needed	Step 1: Update organizational chart to include all positions and lines of authority. Also review and update job descriptions. Step 2: Establish criteria and benchmarks to base review on. Step 3: Conduct annual review of department.
Who Is Responsible	The supervisor of transportation and assistant superintendent for business and support services.
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources

Action Plan 12-30**Review of the current staffing levels of Safety and Training Department, Routing and Scheduling Unit and Regional Transportation Centers**

Strategy	Review current staffing levels of the safety and training department, routing and scheduling unit and regional transportation centers to recommend minimizing of administrative layers
Action Needed	Step 1: The assistant superintendent of operational support services and director of transportation review current staffing levels to determine whether administrative levels are minimized. Step 2: This analysis should include: • Evaluation of workloads, duties, and responsibilities of each staff member in the safety and training department, routing and scheduling unit and regional transportation centers; • The use of staff questionnaires and interviews to evaluate daily job functions and workloads; • Comparison to organizational structure and staffing levels of peer districts. Step 3: The assistant superintendent of operational support services and director of transportation prepare a report on staff structures and recommendation to minimize administrative layers and staff levels. The report is submitted to the superintendent and school board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent of operational support services; director of transportation; superintendent and school board
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Minimizing administrative layers and staffing levels by eliminating two safety supervisors, three data processors and four transportation specialist could result in possible savings of \$436,166 annually

Food Service Operations

Action Plan 13-1

Establish Compliance with Federal Laws, State Rules, and Board Policies by Reinforcing Appropriate Authority Over the Program	
Strategy	Comply with federal laws, state rules, and board policy by reinforcing appropriate authority over the program.
Action Needed	Step 1: Conduct a meeting with the Food Service Director, Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services, and the superintendent to delineate food service program authorities, responsibilities and requirements. Step 2: Communicate authorities, responsibilities and requirements for food service positions to the principals and to the personnel officer. Step 3: The Food Service Director, Assistant Superintendent of Operational Support Services, and the superintendent take steps necessary to ensure that district management actively supports food service program policy.
Who is Responsible	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services, and the Food Service Director.
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Can be attained within existing resources. When implemented, the district will be assured that schools are in compliance with the federal regulations for NSLP funding, the loss of which would have substantial negative financial impact.

Action Plan 13-2

Eliminate Competition With the School Lunch Program and Bring the District Into State and Federal Compliance	
Strategy	To eliminate competition with the school lunch program and bring the district into district compliance.
Action Needed	Step 1: Identify schools with vending machines containing unauthorized foods and beverages. Step 2: Food Service Director meets with school principals and cafeteria managers to arrange for removal or proper operation of the machines. Step 3: Periodically review policies and procedures relating to vending machine access and inspect facilities for compliance.
Who is Responsible	Food Service Director
Time Frame	January 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 13-3

Complete a Comprehensive Cost Analysis to Determine the Most Cost-effective Methods for Storage of Frozen and Refrigerated Food Items	
Strategy	Complete a comprehensive cost analysis to determine the most cost-effective methods for storage of frozen and refrigerated food items.
Action Needed	Step 1: Food service management and staff should forecast future frozen and refrigerated foods storage needs and estimate equipment and construction to meet identified needs. Step 2: Food service staff should solicit estimates for contracting refrigerated and frozen food storage. Step 3: Food service staff should estimate and evaluate food delivery implications and costs associated with each option.

	Step 4: A committee comprised of the Food Service Director, Food Procurement Supervisor, Warehouse Supervisor, and Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support should meet, compare alternatives, and select the most efficient and effective long-term method of service delivery, and to consider equitable funding of any investment using all or some food service and general funds.
	Step 5: Obtain board approval through the budgeting process.
Who Is Responsible	Food Service Director
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources, however, program changes have the potential to minimize operational costs.

Action Plan 13-5**Maximize Equipment Life and Reduce Costs**

Strategy	Develop a preventative maintenance plan for food service program equipment.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Food Service Director and the Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services should ensure there is a complete inventory of all equipment subject to routine maintenance and repair. Step 2: Program staff should consolidate all manuals and literature available for program equipment and identify equipment maintenance needs. Step 3: Food and district maintenance staff should develop a maintenance and repair schedule. Step 4: Food program staff should solicit cost estimates for contract maintenance, estimate in-house costs, and select the most cost-effective method.
Who Is Responsible	Food Service Director and the Assistant Superintendent for Operational Support Services
Time Frame	August 31, 2004
Fiscal Impact	A reduction in overall equipment service and replacement costs is possible.

Action Plan 13-6**Reduce Maintenance Expenditures From the General Fund by Requiring the Food Services Department to Absorb Program Maintenance and Repair Costs**

Strategy	To reduce maintenance expenditures of the general fund by requiring the Food Services Department to absorb program maintenance and repair costs.
Action Needed	Step 1: Food Service Program should absorb all program maintenance and repair costs and budget accordingly. Step 2: The Assistant Superintendent of Operational Support Services should ensure compliance with recommendation.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant Superintendent of Operational Support Services
Time Frame	July 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	The recommendation can be implemented within existing resources. Based on our estimate, approximately \$130,000 per year additional revenue may become available for the district's general fund by instituting this recommendation.

Cost Control Systems

Action Plan 14-1

Contract with an Independent Accounting Firm for an Initial Risk Assessment of District Operations

Strategy	Complete an initial risk assessment, using an independent certified public accountant, and then conduct a risk assessment annually. Determine if it is cost beneficial to expand the internal audit function to address risks identified by the risk assessment.
Action Needed	Step 1: Contract with an appropriate organization to conduct the first risk assessment. The contract deliverables should include a risk assessment methodology and materials appropriate to the School Board of Lee County so that the district can use the information to perform subsequent annual risk assessments in-house. The contracted risk assessment also should include estimates of the financial impact for all risks identified through the assessment. Step 2: Assign priorities to identified risks. Step 3: Develop strategies to eliminate or mitigate identified risks.
Who is responsible	Internal Audit Director
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Fiscal Effect	One-time cost of \$15,000-\$20,000 (lower estimate based on one-time cost of a risk assessment conducted in Manatee county). After the initial risk assessment, the recommended annual risk assessment can be done in-house with existing resources.

Action Plan 14-2

The Internal Audit Department Could Assume Responsibility for Monitoring FTE Counts

Strategy	To include the monitoring of the FTE counts at the schools in the internal audit plan.
Action Needed	Step 1: The budget department and Internal Audit Department should jointly develop projections of the FTE count. Step 2: After the beginning of the school year, the Internal Audit Department should verify that the actual student enrollment conforms to the projected FTE count. Step 3: The Internal Audit Department should enlist the aid of the school data processors to review changes in enrollment at the school. Step 4: The Internal Audit Department should include quarterly monitoring of the student FTE counts as part of their audit plan.
Who is responsible	Internal Audit Director, Budget Director, School Principals
Time Frame	June 30, 2004
Fiscal Effect	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Action Plan 14-5

Complete and Review the Employee Handbook and Present It for Board Approval

Strategy	Complete and review the draft copy of the employee handbook, present it to the board and adopt the approved version.
Action Needed	Step 1: Present the draft copy of the employee handbook to a group of district employees for review. Incorporate any input into an approval draft and present it to the board. Step 2: Once the board has approved the employee handbook, distribute it to all district employees. Distribute the handbook to new employees.
Who Is Responsible	Personnel services and the internal auditor.
Time Frame	June 30, 2003
Financial Impact	This recommendation can be implemented with existing resources.

Community Involvement

Action Plan 15-1

Develop a Strategic Plan for Community Involvement

Strategy	Use data from the 2001-02 school year as baseline for community involvement projects and to develop a strategic plan for the community involvement program with measurable objectives and targets.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office and the superintendent design a system to evaluate community involvement in the district. Step 2: The Public Information Office, the Foundation, and school volunteer coordinators develop tools and summary reports that summarize mentor and volunteer participation, business partnerships, contributions, and donations by grade level and school. Step 3: The Public Information Office and the directors of Teaching and Learning determine appropriate measures and targets for stakeholders' satisfaction, mentor and volunteer participation, business partnerships, contributions, and donations based on input from the Foundation, advisory councils and committees, and school volunteer coordinators. Step 4: The Public Information Office and the Foundation identify schools with high areas of need as related to mentorship activities from data obtained in Step 2. Step 5: The directors of Teaching and Learning and school volunteer coordinators identify schools with low community participation from data obtained in Step 2. Step 6: The directors of Teaching and Learning provide feedback to school volunteer coordinators on revising community outreach activities. Step 7: Progress reports and success stories are disseminated to stakeholders.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information, Directors of Teaching and Learning, and the Foundation
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 15-2

Monitor the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Community Involvement Program

Strategy	Monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the efforts of the various groups which have a direct involvement with stakeholders.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office and the directors of Teaching and Learning use objectives and targets monitor program effectiveness at least annually. Step 2: The Public Information Office and the directors of Teaching and Learning compare the costs and benefits gained from the quantifiable major areas of the community involvement program's expenditures at least annually. Step 3: The Public Information Office provides feedback to the Foundation revising community outreach or fundraising activities, as necessary, at least once per school year to meet the community involvement strategic plan objectives and goals. Step 4: The directors of Teaching and Learning provide feedback to school principals and volunteer coordinators on revising community outreach or fundraising activities, as necessary, at least once per school year to meet the community involvement strategic plan objectives and goals.
Responsible Party	Public Information Office and the Directors of Teaching and Learning
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 15-3

Develop Procedures to Ensure Data Consistency and Reliability	
Strategy	Develop a mechanism to ensure consistency and reliability of the data schools collect and compile.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Public Information Office, the directors of Teaching and Learning, and school volunteer coordinators assess the district's current reporting mechanisms for community involvement and procedures to ensure data consistency and reliability. Step 2: The directors of Teaching and Learning develop new procedures to ensure data consistency and reliability, as necessary. Step 3: The directors of Teaching and Learning and the director of Internal Audit consider auditing reported data on a sample and representative basis to ensure data reliability. Step 4: The directors of Teaching and Learning or the Office of Internal Audit should review volunteer records for completeness and accuracy. For example, volunteer sign-in sheets should include the volunteer name, time on campus or designated areas, the volunteer activity, and the grade level of the volunteer effort. Review procedures may also include re-calculating volunteer hours.
Responsible Party	Public Information Office, the Directors of Teaching and Learning, and the Internal Audit Office
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.

Action Plan 15-5

Inform Stakeholders of District Successes	
Strategy	Develop a mechanism to report more of the district's success. This mechanism may include a district annual report, more use of the district's TV channel, higher profile on websites, letters to the editor of the local newspaper, feature articles in the local paper, as examples.
Action Needed	Step 1: The Office of Public Information, superintendent, assistant superintendents, and school volunteer coordinators determine district information that should be reported to the public. Step 2: The Office of Public Information coordinates efforts to distribute the information to report.
Responsible Party	Director of Public Information
Time Frame	December 31, 2003
Fiscal Impact	Recommendation can be implemented within existing resources.