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Sharpening the Pencil

Best Financial Management Practices Review

Franklin County School District

Sharpening the Pencil

The Florida Legislature

OFFICE OF PROGRAM POLICY ANALYSIS AND GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Gary R. VanLandingham, Interim Director

July 2003

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

I have directed that a Best Financial Management Practices Review be conducted of the Franklin County School District. The 2001 Legislature directed that the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) conduct 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, Franklin County School District* to comply with the law directing OPPAGA to issue a report to the district regarding its use of the best practices and cost savings recommendations.

OPPAGA and the Auditor General were responsible for fieldwork and report findings and recommendations. OPPAGA made the final determination on the district's use of Best Financial Management Practices.

Sabrina Hartley was the project manager for this review, which was supervised by David Summers. Other OPPAGA staff included Kathleen Del Monte, Richard Dolan, Anna Estes, Peter Graeve, Kathy McGuire, Nan Smith, Linda Vaughn and Rich Woerner. Auditor General staff included Greg Centers and Jim Kiedinger under the supervision of David Martin.

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

Sincerely,

Gary R. VanLandingham
Interim Director

GRV/mc

cc: The Honorable Jeb Bush, Governor
        Commissioner Jim Horne, Commissioner of Education

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Digest of the Best Financial Management Practices Review

Franklin County School District

Sharpening the Pencil

Report No. 03-37A

July 2003

Results in Brief

Created in 2001, the Sharpening the Pencil Program (s. 1008.35, *Florida Statutes*) is intended to improve school district management and use of resources and to identify cost savings opportunities. Florida law 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 Florida law, the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and the Auditor General conducted a Best Financial Management Practices Review of the Franklin County School District during Fiscal Year 2002-03. The review determined that the Franklin County School District currently is using 65% (92 of 142) of the applicable best practices adopted by the Commissioner of Education.[1] The district is using a majority of the best practices in 6 of the 10 areas reviewed. (See Exhibit 1.) The report contains action plans to address the remaining best practices and to make the district eligible for the Seal of Best Financial Management. A detailed listing of all the best practices that identifies the district's status in relation to each starts on page 6 of this report.

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[1] Six best practices do not apply to the district given its size and certain aspects of its operations.

Exhibit 1
The District Is Using 65% of the Applicable Best Practices

Best Practice Area (Total Practices)	Is the District Using Individual Best Practices?		
	Yes	No	N/A
Management Structures (14)	12	2	0
Performance Accountability System (3)	1	2	0
Educational Service Delivery (12)	4	8	0
Administrative and Instructional Technology (9)	7	2	0
Personnel Systems and Benefits (11)	10	1	0
Facilities Construction (24)	13	6	5
Facilities Maintenance (22)	10	12	0
Transportation (20)	15	5	0
Food Service Operations (11)	2	9	0
Cost Control Systems (22)	18	3	1
All Areas (148)	**92**	**50**	**6**

As seen in Exhibit 2, the review identified additional opportunities to reduce costs and increase revenues. Implementing these opportunities would have a positive impact of $297,035 over a five-year period. Determining whether to take advantage of these opportunities is a district decision and should be based on many factors including district needs, public input, and school board priorities. If the district uses these opportunities to reduce costs and increase revenue, it would be able to redirect the funds to other priorities, such as directing more money into the classroom or making improvements suggested by this report.

Exhibit 2
The Review Identified Ways the District Could Further Reduce Costs and Increase Revenues

Ways to Save	Projected Five-Year Cost Savings or Increased Revenue
Educational Service Delivery	
• Seek Medicaid reimbursement for direct services (Best Practice 2, page 4-9)	$ 79,960
Transportation	
• Eliminate ESE bus (Best Practice 8, page 9-11)	5,000
• Contract for fuel purchases (Best Practice 10, page 9-13)	12,075
Food Service Operations	
• Reduce and restructure kitchen staff (Best Practice 5, page 10-9)	150,000
• Move commodities from the federal warehouse within 60 days (Best Practice 6, page 10-11)	50,000
TOTALS	**$297,035**

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. [2] 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

Two of the most important provisions of the Sharpening the Pencil Program 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.

Florida law 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 accordance with the schedule of Best Financial Management Practice Reviews in Florida law, the Legislature directed that OPPAGA review the Franklin County School District during Fiscal Year 2002-03. With 1,442 students in the 2001-02 school year, the district is the fourth smallest district in the state. Located in Florida's Panhandle approximately 80 miles southwest of Tallahassee, the district operates seven schools; two elementary, one middle/high, one elementary/middle/high, and three other types of schools including one charter school. OPPAGA and the Auditor General's staff conducted fieldwork and developed report findings and recommendations.

The report contains findings related to each best practice and detailed action plans to address best practice standards not met. These action plans were developed with input from the school district and describe the specific steps the district should take if it decides to implement the action plan 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.

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[2] A list of cost saving opportunities identified in prior best practices reviews is available under Ways to Save on OPPAGA's website, the *Florida Monitor*, at www.oppaga.state.fl.us.

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

General Overview and District Obligations

Currently, the Franklin County School District is using 65% of the best practices adopted by the Commissioner, and at this time, is not eligible for a Seal of Best Financial Management. Appendix C of the full report contains an action plan detailing how the district could meet the best practices within two years.

As provided by law, 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 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 practices.

If the school district successfully implements the Best Financial Management 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 state's Best Financial Management Practices. If no such changes have occurred and the school board

determines that the school district continues to conform to these 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.

School Consolidation Options

Though not a specified best practice area, OPPAGA examined school consolidation options as a result of resident and district employee suggestions that consolidation might be used to address several challenges confronting the district.

In providing education to the children of Franklin County, the district faces several challenges, including declining enrollment, limited revenues, and maintaining small and aging school facilities. Residents and district employees suggest that school consolidation might be used to address these concerns. [3] We identified the opportunities and challenges associated with the following three consolidation models:

1. consolidating school-based administrative functions of two nearby schools;

2. consolidating two schools on the west side of the county by closing one; and

3. consolidating students in a new school facility.

This information is provided to assist the district in assessing the advantages and disadvantages of consolidation. In determining whether to consolidate, the board should consider many factors, including district need, public input, and district priorities. If the board chooses to consolidate schools, it would be able to reduce costs and redirect the funds to other priorities, such as putting more money into the classroom or addressing the physical plant deficiencies identified in our review.

Management Structures

The Franklin County School District is using 12 of 14 of the management structures best practices. The district has

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[3] In 1987, the Franklin County School Board established a committee to study the feasibility of a consolidated secondary school. The committee issued its report in 1990, recommending that the board construct a new consolidated school for grades 9-12 at a location midway between Apalachicola and Carrabelle. The committee also recommended that the board levy the maximum capital outlay millage and for three years commit the full amount to constructing the school. These recommendations were not implemented.

clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the school board and superintendent, its organizational structure is clearly defined, financial oversight is in place, and principals have clearly assigned authority. Student enrollment is accurately projected and the district makes efforts to actively involve parents, guardians, business partners, and community organizations in decision-making and activities. To meet the remaining best practice standards the district should expand its strategic plan to include operational programs, revise the plan to clearly identify and prioritize goals and measurable objectives, and clearly specify the resources needed to accomplish them.

Performance Accountability System

The Franklin County School District is using one of the three performance accountability best practices. The district reports to parents and taxpayers on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational programs and, though not currently reporting the same information for its operational programs, is expected to do so when the data becomes available. To meet the remaining best practice standards and increase its accountability, the district needs to substantially improve program-level accountability systems, conduct evaluations based on need, use these evaluations to modify programs, and report more performance information to the general public.

Educational Service Delivery

The Franklin County School District is using 4 of the 12 educational service delivery best practices. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs, effective and efficient workforce development programs, and ensures that students and teachers have sufficient current textbooks and other instructional materials. To meet the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its educational programs, the district needs to establish a systematic process for using data to make school improvement decisions, and establish mechanisms to improve the identification and placement of ESE students. In addition, the district needs to improve its oversight of the school improvement planning process and revise outdated curriculum guides. Finally, the district needs to keep school libraries open during school hours and keep teachers informed about how to integrate available instructional technology into their regular curricular activities.

Administrative and Instructional Technology

The Franklin County School District is using seven of the nine administrative and instructional technology best practices. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner, provides professional training for technology use, maintains a dependable standards-based infrastructure, uses technology to improve communications, has policies and procedures outlining the appropriate use of technology, has system controls in place, and meets the technological needs of administrative and instructional personnel. To meet the remaining best practice standards, the district should improve its assessment of technology training and technical support needs, include these needs in the district technology plan, and increase access to on-site technical support.

Personnel Systems and Benefits

The Franklin County School District is using 10 of the 11 personnel systems and benefits best practices. The district generally recruits and hires qualified personnel; maintains a reasonably stable work force; provides staff development programs for instructional employees and school-based administrators; has implemented a system for formally evaluating employees; and, generally ensures that employees who fail to meet the district's performance expectations are removed from contact with students. The district also has implemented appropriate policies and practices for providing substitute personnel. It uses cost containment practices for its workers' compensation and employee benefit programs, and maintains an effective collective bargaining process. Although the district is using the majority of the personnel best practices, to use the remaining best practice it needs to better focus technology training to increase classroom use and provide sufficient job training for non-instructional staff.

Facilities Construction

The Franklin County School District is using 13 of the 24 applicable facilities construction best practices.[4] The district communicates with the community regarding its construction program and five-year facilities plan; appropriately collects and uses construction funds; effectively designs construction; has a project management process; requires appropriate inspections; retains professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction; minimizes change orders; and, conducts comprehensive facility orientations prior to use. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its construction program, the district needs to improve its planning, training, and contractual oversight activities in three ways. First, officials need to engage in long-term planning by more accurately forecasting what projects they plan to fund over the next five years. Second, officials overseeing the district's construction projects need Florida Building Code training to ensure proper oversight of construction projects. Third, the district's legal staff needs to ensure that construction contracts include language to

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[4] Five of the best practices are not currently relevant to district operations. These five best practices apply to counties with growing student enrollment, and Franklin's is declining.

controls costs and ensure quality projects are completed on time and within budget.

Facilities Maintenance

The Franklin County School District is using 10 of 22 facility maintenance best practices. The district obtains customer feedback to identify program improvements; regularly reviews the maintenance organizational structure; has complete job descriptions and appropriate hiring and retention practices; has an annual budget with spending limits; maintains a reserve fund balance for one-time expenditures; minimizes equipment costs; provides staff with sufficient tools; contains energy costs and has an energy management system; and, regularly assesses the potential for contracting and privatization. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its facilities maintenance services, the district needs to develop a maintenance and custodial accountability system; develop written maintenance and custodial operating procedures; improve school conditions; improve maintenance and custodial employee training; and project short- and long-term maintenance costs. It also needs to fully implement the comprehensive work order and inventory management system; establish policies and procedures to meet health and safety standards; and ensure proper project permitting, inspection, and compliance with the current Florida Building Code. During the course of this review the district began taking corrective action to improve its operations and is working with a firm to help it address pressing maintenance issues.

Transportation

The Franklin County School District is using 15 of the 20 transportation best practices. The district effectively organizes and staffs the transportation department; efficiently recruits, retains, trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers and attendants; efficiently supplies fuel; maintains secure facilities and a sufficient parts inventory for vehicle maintenance; ensures regular bus routes and activity trips operate in accordance with established routines; provides efficient transportation for exception students; acts promptly in response to accidents or breakdowns; maintains appropriate student behavior on buses; and has explored the prospect of student transportation privatization. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its transportation program, the district needs to examine current bus routes and the number of courtesy riders; develop a bus replacement schedule; improve vehicle maintenance records and review; monitor program expenditures and compare them to the annual budget; and develop a transportation program performance accountability system.

Food Service Operations

The Franklin County School District is using 2 of the 11 food service operations best practices. The program is organized to succeed and is in compliance with state and federal inspection requirements. To meet the remaining best practice standards, the program needs to update its procedures manual and training activities to ensure that food service employees are well-prepared to do their jobs. To promote efficiency and effectiveness, the food service program needs to improve its overall planning, budgeting, and accountability system by developing performance measures, setting performance goals, and comparing performance to these goals during the school year. To be financially self-supporting, the program should adjust some procurement and storage practices, reduce the number of kitchen employees, and increase student participation.

Cost Control Systems

The Franklin County School District is using 18 of the 22 Cost Control Systems Best Practices.[5] The district regularly examines financial services' structure and staffing; has adequate financial information systems; appropriately examines and controls expenditure processes; has adequate internal controls and promptly responds to internal control weaknesses; receives an annual internal audit and ensures that audits of internal funds are performed timely. It also reviews cash management activities, banking relationships, and investment performance; has effective cash, debt, and risk management policies and procedures; ensures that capital outlay purchases and debt financings meet strategic plan objectives; monitors compliance with risk management laws; prepares written cost benefit analyses for insurance coverage; takes maximum advantage of competitive bidding, volume discounts, and special pricing arrangements; and has policies and procedures to effectively manage inventories. To meet the remaining best practice standards and improve its cost control systems, the district should perform a risk assessment of its operations; establish budget planning processes that tie the district's strategic plan objectives to budget development; establish a comprehensive procedures manual that addresses all finance-related activities; and establish written procedures that promote ethical financial management practices and provide for confidential reporting of suspected improprieties.

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[5] The district does not use warehousing services to maintain its inventories; therefore, one best practice relating to warehousing is not applicable.

Franklin County School District
Best Financial Management Practices

Currently, the Franklin County School District is using 65% (92 of 142) of the applicable best practices adopted by the Commissioner of Education, and at this time, is not eligible for a Seal of Best Financial Management. The detailed list below contains all the best practices and identifies the district's current status in relation to each.

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		
MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
1. The roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent have been clearly delineated, and board members and the superintendent have policies to ensure that they have effective working relationships.	✓		2-4
2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.	✓		2-4
3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.	✓		2-5
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.	✓		2-6
5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.	✓		2-7
6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.	✓		2-7
7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.	✓		2-8
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.	✓		2-9
9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.		✓	2-10
10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.	✓		2-11
11. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its annual priorities in the strategic plan and its goals and objectives; and district resources are focused towards achieving those goals and objectives.		✓	2-11
12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.	✓		2-12
13. The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district's decision making and activities.	✓		2-13
14. The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district's decision making and activities.	✓		2-13

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		

PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM	*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 • Vocational/Technical Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages Education, Facilities Construction, Facilities Maintenance, Transportation, Food Services, and Safety and Security. [6]		✓	3-3
2. The district formally evaluates the performance and cost of its major educational and operational programs and uses evaluation results to improve program performance and cost-efficiency.		✓	3-5
3. The district clearly reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers.	✓		3-6

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
1. District administrators use both academic and nonacademic data to improve K-12 education programs.		✓	4-6
2. The district provides effective and efficient Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs for students with disabilities and students who are gifted. [7]		✓	4-9
3. The district provides effective and efficient programs to meet the needs of at-risk students [including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Title I, and alternative education]. [8]		✓	4-11
4. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs (such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment).	✓		4-12
5. The district provides effective and efficient workforce development programs (such as vocational-technical, adult basic education, and adult high school programs).	✓		4-13
6. The district ensures that schools use effective planning and evaluation processes to improve student outcomes, including school improvement plans and other data driven processes such as the Sterling process.		✓	4-14
7. The district ensures effective progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of the Sunshine State Standards and prepares students for work and continued education		✓	4-16
8. The district's organizational structure and staffing of educational programs minimizes administrative layers and processes.		✓	4-18
9. The district ensures that students and teachers have sufficient current textbooks and other instructional materials available to support instruction in core subjects and to meet the needs of teachers and students.	✓		4-18
10. The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction.		✓	4-19

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

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

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

| Best Practices | Is the District Using Best Practices? | | |

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY	YES	NO	PAGE
11. The district utilizes instructional technology in the classroom to enhance curriculum and improve student achievement.		✓	4-20
12. The district provides necessary support services (guidance counseling, psychological, social work and health) to meet student needs and to ensure students are able to learn.	✓		4-21

ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision making.		✓	5-7
2. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner that will best meet its instructional and administrative needs. [9]	✓		5-9
3. District and school-based staff receive professional development training for all technologies used in the district.	✓		5-9
4. The district provides timely and cost-effective technical support that enables educators and district staff to successfully implement technology in the workplace.		✓	5-10
5. The district maintains a dependable, standards-based infrastructure employing strategies that cost-effectively maximize network and Internet access and performance.	✓		5-13
6. The district uses technology to improve communication.	✓		5-13
7. The district has written policies that apply safe, ethical, and appropriate use practices that comply with legal and professional standards.	✓		5-14
8. The district has established general controls in the areas of access, systems development and maintenance, documentation, operations, and physical security to promote the proper functioning of the information systems department.	✓		5-15
9. The information needs of administrative and instructional personnel are met by applying appropriate project management techniques to define, schedule, track and evaluate purchasing, developing, and the timing of delivering IT products and services requested.	✓		5-15

PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district efficiently and effectively recruits and hires qualified instructional and non-instructional personnel.	✓		6-4
2. To the extent possible given factors outside the district's control, the district works to maintain a reasonably stable work force and a satisfying work environment by addressing factors that contribute to increased turnover or low employee morale. [10]	✓		6-5

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

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

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		
PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
3. The district provides a comprehensive staff development program to improve student achievement and to achieve and maintain high levels of productivity and employee performance among non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees. [11]		✓	6-6
4. The district's system for formally evaluating employees improves and rewards excellent performance and productivity, and identifies and addresses performance that does not meet the district's expectations for the employee.	✓		6-7
5. The district ensures that employees who repeatedly fail to meet the district's performance expectations, or whose behavior or job performance is potentially harmful to students, are promptly removed from contact with students, and that the appropriate steps are taken to terminate the person's employment. [12]	✓		6-8
6. The district has efficient and cost-effective system for managing absenteeism and the use of substitute teachers and other substitute personnel.	✓		6-8
7. The district maintains personnel records in an efficient and readily accessible manner.	✓		6-9
8. The district uses cost-containment practices for its Workers' Compensation Program.	✓		6-9
9. The district uses cost-containment practices for its employee benefits programs, including health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, and retirement.	✓		6-10
10. The district's human resource program is managed effectively and efficiently.	✓		6-11
11. For classes of employees that are unionized, the district maintains an effective collective bargaining process.	✓		6-11

FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
1. The district has effective long-range planning processes. [13]		✓	7-7
2. When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.		✓	7-9
3. The five-year facilities work plan establishes budgetary plans and priorities.		✓	7-9

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[11] In some districts, the staff development programs and issues related to non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees may vary widely. In such cases, it is acceptable to separate this best practice into two or three separate best practices, and to deal with these employee groups separately.

[12] Evidence of a problem in this best practice area could include one or more of the following examples
- the forced reinstatements of employees who had been dismissed;
- large monetary settlements to employees who had been dismissed;
- public forum, survey or focus group results that suggest that poor performing employees are transferred from site to site rather than being dismissed; or
- incidents occur that are adverse to students involving employees who had previously been identified by the district as poor-performers or as potentially harmful to students.

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

[13] Long-range covers 5-20 years out.

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		

FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
4. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.	✓		7-10
5. The district has an effective site selection process based on expected growth patterns.	N/A		7-10
6. The board considers the most economical and practical sites for current and anticipated needs, including such factors as need to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to development, and consideration of agreements with adjoining counties.	N/A		7-11
7. Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.	✓		7-11
8. The district approves and uses construction funds only after determining that the project(s) are cost-efficient and in compliance with the lawfully designated purpose of the funds and the district's five-year facilities work plan.	✓		7-11
9. The district develops thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each construction project. [14]	✓		7-12
10. The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.	✓		7-13
11. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.	✓		7-13
12. The district minimizes construction and maintenance and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs, prototype school designs, and frugal construction practices.	✓		7-13
13. The district has effective management processes for construction projects.	✓		7-13
14. District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.		✓	7-14
15. All projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the Florida Building Code.		✓	7-15
16. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.	✓		7-16
17. The district retains appropriate professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.	✓		7-16
18. The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.		✓	7-16
19. The district minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to control project costs.	✓		7-17
20. The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project.	✓		7-18
21. The district conducts a comprehensive orientation to the new facility prior to its use so that users better understand the building design and function.	✓		7-18

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

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		
FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
22. The district conducts comprehensive building evaluations at the end of the first year of operation and regularly during the next three to five years to collect information about building operation and performance.	N/A		7-19
23. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.	N/A		7-20
24. The district regularly evaluates facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.	N/A		7-20

Best Practices			
FACILITIES MAINTENANCE	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
1. The district's maintenance and operations department has a mission statement and goals and objectives that are established in writing.		✓	8-5
2. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance and efficiency of the maintenance and operations program.		✓	8-6
3. The district obtains and uses customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements.	✓		8-7
4. The district has established procedures and staff performance standards to ensure efficient operations.		✓	8-7
5. The department maintains educational and district support facilities in a condition that enhances student learning and facilitates employee productivity.		✓	8-9
6. The district regularly reviews the organizational structure of the maintenance and operations program to minimize administrative layers and assure adequate supervision and staffing levels.	✓		8-12
7. Complete job descriptions and appropriate hiring and retention practices ensure that the maintenance and operations department has qualified staff.	✓		8-12
8. The district provides a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff to enhance worker job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.		✓	8-13
9. The administration has developed an annual budget with spending limits that comply with the lawful funding for each category of facilities maintenance and operations.	✓		8-14
10. The district accurately projects cost estimates of major maintenance projects.		✓	8-14
11. The board maintains a maintenance reserve fund to handle one-time expenditures necessary to support maintenance and operations.	✓		8-15
12. The district minimizes equipment costs through purchasing practices.	✓		8-16
13. The district provides maintenance and operations department staff the tools and equipment required to accomplish their assigned tasks.	✓		8-16
14. The district uses proactive maintenance practices to reduce maintenance costs.		✓	8-16
15. The maintenance and operations department identifies and implements strategies to contain energy costs.	✓		8-17
16. The district has an energy management system in place, and the system is maintained at original specifications for maximum effectiveness.	✓		8-17

| Best Practices | Is the District Using Best Practices? | | |

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE	YES	NO	PAGE
17. District personnel regularly review maintenance and operation's costs and services and evaluate the potential for outside contracting and privatization.	✓		8-18
18. A computerized control and tracking system is used to accurately track work orders and inventory.		✓	8-18
19. The maintenance and operations department has a system for prioritizing maintenance needs uniformly throughout the district.		✓	8-20
20. District policies and procedures clearly address the health and safety conditions of facilities.		✓	8-20
21. The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health and safety conditions.		✓	8-21
22. The district is aware of and prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code.		✓	8-21

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The district coordinates long-term planning and budgeting for student transportation within the context of district and community planning.	✓		9-6
2. The district provides regular, accurate, and timely counts to the Florida Department of Education of the number of students transported as part of the Florida Education Finance Program.	✓		9-6
3. The transportation office plans, reviews, and establishes bus routes and stops to provide cost-efficient student transportation services for all students who qualify for transportation. [15]		✓	9-7
4. The organizational structure and staffing levels of the district's transportation program minimizes administrative layers and processes.	✓		9-8
5. The district maintains an effective staffing level in the vehicle maintenance area and provides support for vehicle maintenance staff to develop its skills.	✓		9-9
6. The district effectively and efficiently recruits and retains the bus drivers and attendants it needs.	✓		9-9
7. The district trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers to enable them to meet bus-driving standards and maintain acceptable student discipline on the bus.	✓		9-10
8. The school district has a process to ensure that sufficient vehicles are acquired economically and will be available to meet the district's current and future transportation needs.		✓	9-10
9. The district provides timely routine servicing for buses and other district vehicles, as well as prompt response for breakdowns and other unforeseen contingencies.		✓	9-12
10. The district ensures that fuel purchases are cost-effective and that school buses and other vehicles are efficiently supplied with fuel.	✓		9-13
11. The district maintains facilities that are conveniently situated to provide sufficient and secure support for vehicle maintenance and other transportation functions.	✓		9-14
12. The district maintains an inventory of parts, supplies, and equipment needed to support transportation functions that balances the concerns of immediate need and inventory costs.	✓		9-14

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

| Best Practices | Is the District Using Best Practices? | | |

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION	YES	NO	PAGE
13. The district ensures that all regular school bus routes and activity trips operate in accordance with established routines, and any unexpected contingencies affecting vehicle operations are handled safely and promptly.	✓		9-15
14. The district provides efficient transportation services for exceptional students in a coordinated fashion that minimizes hardships to students.	✓		9-16
15. The district ensures that staff acts promptly and appropriately in response to any accidents or breakdowns	✓		9-16
16. The district ensures that appropriate student behavior is maintained on the bus with students being held accountable for financial consequences of misbehavior related to transportation.	✓		9-17
17. The district provides appropriate technological and computer support for transportation functions and operations.	✓		9-18
18. The district monitors the fiscal condition of transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and reviewing them against the budget.		✓	9-18
19. The district has reviewed the prospect for privatizing transportation functions, as a whole or in part.	✓		9-19
20. The district has established an accountability system for transportation, and it regularly tracks and makes public reports on its performance in comparison with established benchmarks.		✓	9-19

FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS	YES	NO	PAGE
1. The program has developed strategic or operational plans that are consistent with district plans, the program budget, and approved by the district.		✓	10-6
2. The district and program are organized with clear lines of responsibility and in a manner that provides the food service program sufficient authority to succeed.	✓		10-6
3. Program management has developed training designed to meet basic program needs as well as improve food services, both based on a needs assessment.		✓	10-7
4. Program management has developed comprehensive procedures manuals that are kept current.		✓	10-8
5. The district performs sound cash and account management.		✓	10-9
6. District and program management optimizes its financial opportunities.		✓	10-11
7. Food service program management has developed comprehensive performance and cost-efficiency measures that provide management with information to evaluate program performance and better manage operations.		✓	10-12
8. At least annually, the program inspects and evaluates its operational components and the system as a whole, and then takes action to initiate needed change.		✓	10-13
9. District and program administrators effectively manage costs of the food services program and use performance measures, benchmarks, and budgets on a regular basis to evaluate performance and use the analysis for action or change.		✓	10-14
10. The food service program and district complies with federal state and district policy.	✓		10-14

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		

FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
11. The district conducts activities to ensures that customer needs are met and acts to improve services and food quality where needed.		✓	10-15

COST CONTROL SYSTEMS	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
1. The district periodically analyzes the structure and staffing of its financial services organization.	✓		11-8
2. Management has developed and distributed written procedures for critical accounting processes and promotes ethical financial management practices.		✓	11-8
3. The district has adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information.	✓		11-10
4. District financial staff analyzes significant expenditure processes to ensure they are appropriately controlled.	✓		11-11
5. The district has established adequate internal controls.	✓		11-11
6. Management proactively responds to identified internal control weaknesses and takes immediate steps to correct the weaknesses.	✓		11-11
7. The district produces an annual budget that is tied to the strategic plan and provides useful and understandable information to users.		✓	11-12
8. Management analyzes strategic plans for measurable objectives or measurable results.	✓		11-13
9. The district ensures that it receives an annual external audit and uses the audit to improve its operations.	✓		11-13
10. The district has an effective internal audit function and uses the audits to improve its operations. [16]		✓	11-13
11. The district ensures that audits of internal funds and discretely presented component units (foundations and charter schools) are performed timely.	✓		11-14
12. The district periodically reviews cash management activities, banking relationships, investment performance, and considers alternatives.	✓		11-15
13. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of capital assets.	✓		11-16
14. The district ensures significant capital outlay purchases meet strategic plan objectives.	✓		11-16
15. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective debt management.	✓		11-17
16. The district ensures that significant debt financings meet strategic plan objectives.	✓		11-17
17. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective risk management	✓		11-17
18. District staff periodically monitors the district's compliance with various laws and regulations related to risk management.	✓		11-18
19. The district prepares appropriate written cost and benefit analyses for insurance coverage.	✓		11-18

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

Best Practices	Is the District Using Best Practices?		
COST CONTROL SYSTEMS	*YES*	*NO*	*PAGE*
20. The district has established written policies and procedures to take maximum advantage of competitive bidding, volume discounts, and special pricing agreements.	✓		11-19
21. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of inventories.	✓		11-19
22. The district periodically evaluates the warehousing function to determine its cost-effectiveness.	N/A		11-20

The Florida Legislature

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

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Visit the *Florida Monitor*, OPPAGA's online service. See http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us. This site monitors the performance and accountability of Florida government by making OPPAGA's four primary products available online.

OPPAGA publications and contracted reviews, such as policy analyses and performance reviews, assess the efficiency and effectiveness of state policies and programs and recommend improvements for Florida government.

Performance-based program budgeting (PB²) reports and information offer a variety of tools. Program evaluation and justification reviews assess state programs operating under performance-based program budgeting. Also offered are performance measures information and our assessments of measures.

Florida Government Accountability Report (FGAR) is an Internet encyclopedia of Florida state government. FGAR offers concise information about state programs, policy issues, and performance.

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.

Subscribe to OPPAGA's electronic newsletter, Florida Monitor Weekly, a free source for brief e-mail announcements of research reports, conferences, and other resources of interest for Florida's policy research and program evaluation community.

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1 Introduction

Overview ——————————————————————————

The 2001 Florida Legislature created the Sharpening the Pencil Program to improve school district management and use of resources and identify cost savings. Florida law requires each school district to undergo a Best Financial Management Practices Review once every five years, and provides a review schedule.

The best practices are designed to encourage school districts to

1. use performance and cost-efficiency measures to evaluate programs;

2. use appropriate benchmarks based on comparable school districts, government agencies, and industry standards;

3. identify potential cost savings through privatization and alternative service delivery; and

4. link financial planning and budgeting to district priorities, including student performance.

The Florida Legislature's Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and the Auditor General developed the best practices, which were adopted by the Commissioner of Education. Under these reviews, OPPAGA and the Auditor General examine school district operations to determine whether districts are using the best practices to evaluate programs, assess operations and performance, identify cost savings, and link financial planning and budgeting to district policies. As illustrated in Exhibit 1-1, the practices address district performance in 10 broad areas.

Exhibit 1-1
Best Financial Management Practices Review Areas

Management Structures	Facilities Construction
Performance Accountability Systems	Facilities Maintenance
Educational Service Delivery	Student Transportation
Administrative and Instructional Technology	Food Service Operations
Personnel Systems and Benefits	Cost Control Systems

Districts found to be using the Best Financial Management Practices are awarded a Seal of Best Financial Management by the State Board of Education. Districts that are found not to be using Best Financial Management Practices are provided a detailed action plan for meeting best practice standards within two years. The district school board must vote whether or not to implement this action plan.

Methodology ─────────────────────────────

OPPAGA and the Auditor General used a variety of methods to collect information about the district's use of the Best Financial Management Practices. The evaluation team made several site visits to the Franklin County School District and public schools. The evaluators interviewed district administrators and personnel, held a public forum, conducted focus groups with principals and teachers, and attended school board and school advisory council meetings. Evaluators also gathered and reviewed many program documents, district financial data, data on program activities, and data on student performance.

To put Franklin County's programs and activities in context with other Florida school districts, OPPAGA and the Auditor General gathered information from five peer districts around the state: Bradford, Levy, Sumter, Washington, and Hendry counties. The peer districts were selected based on their similarities across a number of categories, including the size of the student population and demographic information.

County Profile ─────────────────────────────

As of July 1, 2001, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the total population of Franklin County was 11,202. The county's population increased by 23.3% between 1990 and 2000, which was comparable to the state's growth rate of 23.5% during the same time period. Within Franklin County there are two municipalities: Apalachicola (the county seat) and Carrabelle. Each municipality has its own government and provides city services such as police and zoning protection.

Of the county's population, 98.7% consider themselves to be one race, while the remaining 1.3% consider themselves multi-racial. The largest percentage (81%) of the population is white, with persons of Hispanic or Latino origin comprising 2.4% of the population, a fraction of the statewide figure of 16.8%. In addition, 16.3% of the county's residents are black or African American, which is slightly larger than the statewide figure of 14.6%. These percentages are similar to the racial/ethnic composition of the student population.

Approximately 13% of Franklin County's population is of school age (5 to 17 years old) while an additional 4.6% are less than five years old. By contrast, 15.7% of the county's population is 65 years old or older. Approximately 68.3% of the county's residents aged 25 years or older are high school graduates, while 12.4% have graduated from college. These percentages are lower than the statewide figures of 79.9% and 22.3%, respectively. This means that the level of educational attainment in Franklin County is lower than it is across the state.

Franklin County's per capita income in 2000 was $19,259, which was $8,505 below the state average. As shown in Exhibit 1-2, the per capita income of Franklin County residents has been consistently lower than the per capita income of the state as a whole.

Exhibit 1-2
Per Capita Income of Franklin County Residents
Was $8,505 Below the State Average in 2000
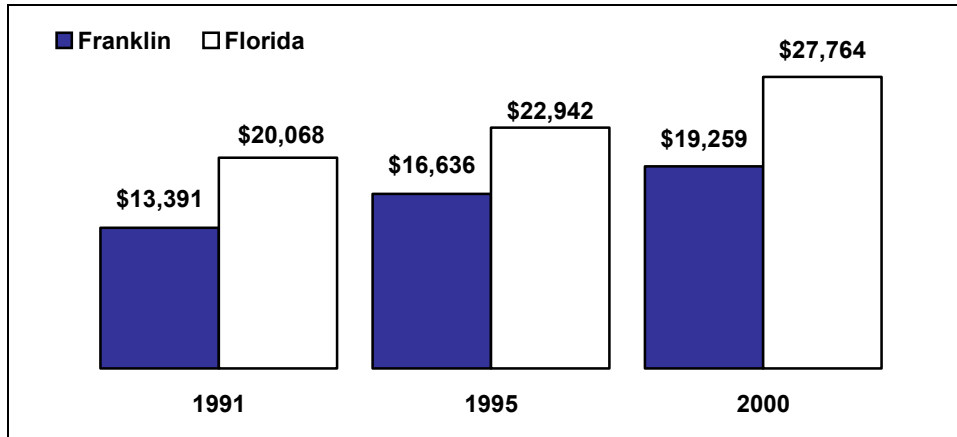
Source: Florida Research and Economic Database.

While 16.8% of the county's residents live below the poverty level, a larger percentage of the county's children (24.5%) live below the poverty level. These figures exceed the percentages for the state as a whole. This corresponds with the high percentage (67%) of school children that are eligible for a free or reduced price lunch.

The unemployment rate in Franklin County has been lower than the state's rate for the past three years. This suggests that students who graduate from high school in Franklin County should not have more difficulty finding employment than graduates in other parts of the state. Franklin County has a civilian workforce of 4,705 people. The county's primary sources of employment include the service industries, retail trade, local government, and the fishing industry.

School District Profile

The district operates four traditional and three alternative schools, as shown in Exhibit 1-3. The district does not operate separate middle schools; middle school students attend the high schools.

Exhibit 1-3
Franklin County Operates Seven Schools

Number and Type of School		
2 - Elementary Schools	1 - Other Types of Schools	1 - Charter Schools
0 - Middle Schools	0 - Vocational Schools	0 - Exceptional Student Education Schools
2 - High Schools	1 - Adult Schools	0 - Juvenile Justice Facility Schools

Source: Franklin County School District.

With 1,442 students enrolled during the course of the 2001-02 school year, the Franklin County School District is the fourth smallest district in the state. Franklin County's student enrollment declined 4%

between 1997-98 and 2000-01, as shown in Exhibit 1-4. [1] In contrast, the state experienced a 9% increase in enrollment.

Exhibit 1-4
Franklin County Student Enrollment Has Declined
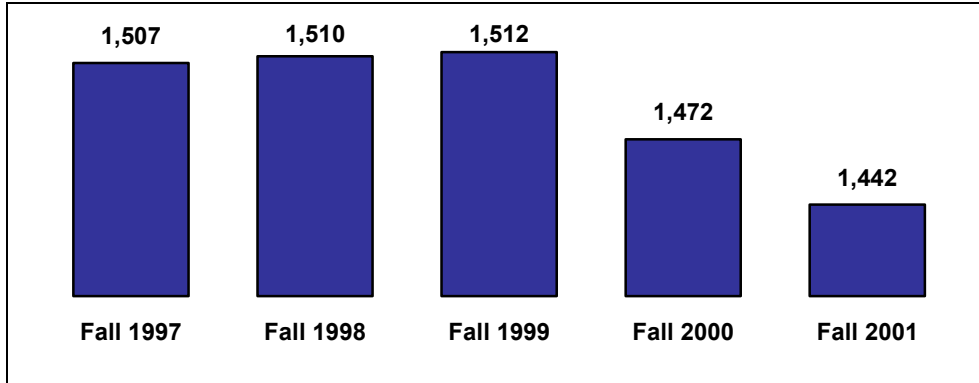
Source: Florida Department of Education (2000-01).

The Franklin County School District expended $11.6 million for the 2001-02 fiscal year. The district receives revenues from federal, state, and local sources. Most of the revenue that the district receives from the state is generated through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). The FEFP takes into consideration a number of factors in distributing funding to Florida's 67 school districts, such as varying local property tax bases, education program costs, costs of living, and costs for equivalent programs due to the sparsity and dispersion of the student population. This funding source, established by the Legislature, annually prescribes state revenues for education as well as the level of *ad valorem* taxes (property taxes) that can be levied by each school district in the state. [2] It also includes some restricted funding provided through categorical programs, through which the Legislature funds specific programs such as instructional materials or student transportation.

In 1999, the district was near bankruptcy; it has since improved its financial position and now carries forward a financial reserve at the end of each fiscal year, as required by law. Exhibit 1-5 describes the district's revenue, expenditures, and fund balances for the 2001-02 fiscal year.

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[1] This decrease reflects the county's overall population trend, which has seen an increase in retirees, while the net ban and general economic decline appear to have resulted in younger families with children leaving the county. The decrease in enrollment is discussed further in Chapter 1a, School Consolidation Options.

[2] The FEFP formula and ad valorem taxes are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1a, School Consolidation Options.

Exhibit 1-5
District Funds Include Federal, State, and Local Sources;
Expenditures Are Primarily Related to Instruction

Revenues and Expenditures	Total
Revenues	
Federal Through State	$ 2,155,478
Federal Through Local	213,825
State	2,517,003
Local	7,290,052
Total Revenues	**$12,176,358**
Expenditures	
Instruction	$ 6,316,941
Pupil Personnel Services	379,118
Instructional Media Services	196,581
Instructional Staff Training	111,161
Board of Education	176,862
General Administration	220,455
School Administration	530,371
Facilities Acquisition and Construction	320,582
Fiscal Services	200,027
Food Services	553,129
Central Services	374,154
Pupil Transportation Services	391,392
Operation of Plant	786,460
Maintenance of Plant	247,912
Fixed Capital Outlay:	
Facilities Acquisition and Construction	12,473
Other Capital Outlay	571,230
Debt Service:	
Principal	54,812
Interest and Fiscal Charges	106,876
Total Expenditures	**$11,550,536**
Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue Over Expenditure	**$ 625,822**
Other financing sources:	
Transfers In	$ 581,794
Insurance Loss Recoveries	4,742
Transfers Out	(581,794)
Total other financing sources	**$ 4,742**
Net Change in Fund Balances	630,564
Fund Balances, July 1, 2001	1,399,600
Fund Balances, June 30, 2002	**$2,030,164**

Source: Florida Auditor General Financial, Operational, and Federal Single Audit Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2002.

As Exhibit 1-6 illustrates, the percentage of administrators and instructional staff are generally lower in the Franklin County School District than that of comparison districts. Exhibit 1-7 illustrates the actual numbers of administrators, instructional personnel, and support positions in the district.

Exhibit 1-6
Staffing Ratios Are Generally Lower Than State and Peer Averages

School District	Staff Ratios					
	Administrators to Classroom Teachers	Administrators to Total Instructional Staff	Administrators to Total Staff	Classroom Teachers to Students [1]	Teacher Aides to Classroom Teachers	Guidance to Students
Franklin	1: 8.54	1: 9.45	1: 17.45	1: 16.08	1: 6.26	1: 504.00
Bradford	1: 9.80	1: 10.80	1: 20.76	1: 16.09	1: 3.10	1: 410.30
Hendry	1: 10.70	1: 11.76	1: 25.82	1: 20.71	1: 2.67	1: 502.60
Levy	1: 9.51	1: 10.35	1: 21.61	1: 16.93	1: 3.37	1: 392.68
Sumter	1: 11.70	1: 13.66	1: 30.48	1: 18.56	1: 2.24	1: 533.45
Washington	1: 7.90	1: 8.56	1: 18.03	1: 14.18	1: 3.59	1: 336.30
Peer Average	1: 9.92	1: 11.03	1: 23.34	1: 17.29	1: 2.99	1: 435.07
State	1: 14.20	1: 15.89	1: 29.04	1: 17.68	1: 4.29	1: 438.18

[1] This is not the same as average classroom size. This ratio is calculated by DOE using numbers reported through the EE0-5 survey of salaries in districts. The classroom teacher ratio includes all staff paid under the instructional salary schedule, and some of these positions may actually be administrative positions.

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

Exhibit 1-7
Franklin County School District Has 183 Full-time Employees

Full-Time Employees	Number	Percentage
Administrators	9	5%
Instructional	100	55%
Support	74	40%
Total	183	100.0%

Source: Franklin County School District.

The district is a member of the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC), which is composed of 14 member and 8 participating school districts. [3] The superintendent of each member district sits on the consortium's board, which selects which services the consortium will provide. As a consortium the members benefit from economies of scale and reduce service costs. PAEC provides more than 20 administrative services; the Franklin County School District contracts with the consortium for several services including risk management and professional development.

The Franklin County School District faces a number of challenges. Franklin County is experiencing a unique demographic shift in which the overall population is increasing, but student enrollment is declining. As a result, school buildings are operating under capacity. The aging facilities are also in need of expensive repairs. These and related issues are discussed in the following chapter on school consolidation options.

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[3] Participating districts do not have voting rights on the board.

1a School Consolidation Options

Summary ────────────────────

Though not a specified best practice area, OPPAGA examined school consolidation options as a result of resident and district employee suggestions that consolidation might be used to address several challenges confronting the district.

In providing education to the children of Franklin County, the district faces several challenges, including declining enrollment, limited revenues, and maintaining small and aging school facilities. Residents and district employees suggest that school consolidation might be used to address these concerns. [1] We identified the opportunities and challenges associated with the following three consolidation models:

1. consolidating school-based administrative functions of two nearby schools;
2. consolidating two schools on the west side of the county by closing one; and
3. consolidating students in a new school facility.

This information is provided to assist the district in assessing the advantages and disadvantages of consolidation. In determining whether to consolidate, the board should consider many factors, including district need, public input, and district priorities. If the board chooses to consolidate schools, it would be able to reduce costs and redirect the funds to other priorities, such as putting more money into the classroom or addressing the physical plant deficiencies identified in our review.

Background ────────────────────

During our Best Financial Management Practices Review, residents and district employees suggested that consolidation might be used to address several challenges confronting the district. These include declining student enrollment, limited revenues, and maintaining small and aging school facilities.

Declining Enrollment

Franklin County student population is declining. [2] This decline in student enrollment is consistent with the overall county population trend, which has seen an increase in retirees, while the net ban and general economic decline appear to have resulted in younger families with children leaving the county.

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[1] In 1987, the Franklin County School Board established a committee to study the feasibility of a consolidated secondary school. The committee issued its report in 1990, recommending that the board construct a new consolidated school for grades 9-12 at a location midway between Apalachicola and Carrabelle. The committee also recommended that the board levy the maximum capital outlay millage and for three years commit the full amount to constructing the school. These recommendations were not implemented.

[2] For the five-year period from 1997 to 2001, student enrollment declined 4.31%, according to Department of Education data.

This student decline affects school utilization and funding. The district operates four traditional schools: Apalachicola Middle/High, Chapman Elementary, Brown Elementary and Carrabelle Elementary/Middle/High. As shown in Exhibit 1, the capacity of these schools now significantly exceeds the number of students enrolled.

Exhibit 1a-1
Franklin County Schools Are Operating Under Capacity

	Apalachicola High	Chapman Elementary	Brown Elementary	Carrabelle E/MS/HS	Total 4 schools
Student Enrollment	345	181	281	495	1302
Design Capacity	698	584	347	679	2308
Percentage School Capacity used	49%	31%	81%	73%	56%
Year Built	1972	1977	1963	1970	

Source: Franklin Five-Year Facilities Work Plan, November 25, 2002.

The decline in enrollment at the four schools has been exacerbated by students transferring to the Apalachicola Bay Charter School (ABC), which opened two years ago and is now serving approximately 125 students. The charter school, which is an elementary school, has notified the school board that it intends to submit a request to open a middle school, a high school, and a vocational/technical school. If this expansion occurs, it could further reduce the enrollment of the four traditional public schools.

Limited Revenues

The Franklin County School District budget, $14,115,294 for Fiscal Year 2002-03, is one of the smallest in the state. The district's revenue is limited by the state school funding formula and a self-imposed restriction on discretionary millage rates. [3] Further, the board has chosen not to ask voters to approve additional taxes for the school system.

The state funding formula was developed to distribute resources so as to implement a uniform system of free public education. The formula allocates money to school districts based on several factors, including the number of students served. So, Franklin's declining student enrollment has resulted in a declining funding allocation to the district. [4] In addition, because the charter school is a public school, students that attend ABC take their allocations with them to fund their charter school, thereby reducing the amount remaining with the district to operate the traditional schools. While the funding is reduced in proportion to the number of students that need to be served, facility maintenance expenses of the traditional school buildings have not decreased because the buildings, which were built for larger populations, still need to be maintained even with lower occupancy.

The funding formula also limits the amount of revenue Franklin County can generate for school operations through taxes. Funding for school operations comes primarily from the state and from local property taxes. The funding formula creates equity and uniformity among all districts by setting the state's contribution in proportion to the amount each county is able to raise through its tax base. The state provides more funds to districts with a low tax base than districts with a high tax base. Franklin has a high tax base because the value of some properties is very high. As a result, when the formula is applied, the state contributes 10% of the funding while Franklin pays the remaining 90%. In order to comply with the uniform schools provision of Article IX of the Florida Constitution, state law does not permit districts

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[3] One mill is equal to 1/1000 or .001. Millage refers to the collective number of mills of tax levied by the county on taxpayer properties. A one mill tax on $1,000 of property value will yield $1.00 in tax receipts.

[4] The state provides Franklin County a declining enrollment supplement, but it replaces only a portion of funds lost due to reduced student population as provided by s.1011.62 (7), *F.S.*

to collect more than the 90% from local taxpayers and places a cap on local school taxation and spending. Franklin is one of only six counties that have reached this cap.

As a result of the cap, new economic development in the county does not translate into increased funding to Franklin County school operations. As new homes and businesses are built, the value of property that can be taxed will increase. However, the statutory requirements will result in a lower tax rate (millage) so that the county does not generate more than 90% of the funding allowed by the funding formula.

In contrast, the district could generate more revenue for capital projects such as new roofs, school buses, and new construction. State law authorizes school boards to levy up to two additional property tax mills to fund capital projects.[5] The board has opted to impose one of the two possible discretionary mills. If the school board voted to levy the second mill, it could use the additional revenues of approximately $1,038,782 to improve the condition of its schools.[6] Levying the additional mill would also make the district eligible to apply for state Special Facilities Construction Fund monies, which can be used to construct new facilities. In 2000-01, 56 of 67 school districts levied their full two mills.

Millage levied on property varies among districts because of varying property tax bases. Districts with high tax bases need to levy fewer mills to raise specific dollar amounts. For example, if the tax base were comprised of one $50,000 home, it would require a five-mill assessment to raise $250; if it were one $500,000 home, it would require only a half-mill assessment to raise $250. Currently, total Franklin County millage is 12.45. In comparison, Gulf County levies 13.45, Liberty County levies 16.49, Wakulla County levies 18.82, and Leon County levies 19.57 mills.

The district also has the option of asking voters to approve other tax increases, such as a half-cent sales tax, to raise school funds. The board has chosen not to request such an increase due to the depressed economy in Franklin County at this time. If the board increased the discretionary millage, it would impinge more on those with higher property values. Sales tax increases would impinge more on those with lower incomes. Sales taxpayers, regardless of wealth or income, pay equal sales tax rates on taxable purchases. Those with lower incomes use higher portions of their income for basic living expenses that are subject to sales taxes and consequently use a higher percentage of their lower incomes for sales tax.

Maintaining and Operating Small and Aging School Facilities is Costly

With enrollments ranging from 181 (Chapman Elementary) to 495 students (Carrabelle K-12), Franklin County schools' student populations are very small.[7] Small schools are relatively costly to operate because of a higher ratio of fixed costs per student. For example, approximately the same number of administrators and support staff are required to operate a school of 181 students as a school of 400 students, so the overhead cost per student is higher at a smaller school than a larger one. This situation is further aggravated when the school is operating under capacity, so that the student body is small but the physical plant is larger. Then, not only does the small school fail to benefit from economies of scale, but also it must maintain and pay for unused space, thereby further increasing the overhead cost per student. Because of declining enrollment, all Franklin County schools are operating under capacity, as shown in Exhibit 1.

Aging schools such as those in Franklin County also generally require more work and money to maintain than newer schools. For example, older buildings are less energy efficient than newer buildings, which use advances in construction technology. In addition, the district architect has identified a number of significant maintenance problems with the schools that need to be addressed. These include replacing roofs at Brown Elementary and repairing them at the Carrabelle and Apalachicola High Schools; restoring gyms at the Apalachicola and Carrabelle High Schools; and overhauling the plumbing at all four schools.

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[5] School boards are authorized to levy two mills without voter approval.

[6] The district could use the cash or bond the increase to establish a revenue flow for a specified number of years to get initial funding for construction.

[7] Florida legislation defines small schools as 500 students for elementary, 700 students for middle school and 900 students for high school.

Also, due to the design of the city sewer system, the toilets cannot be flushed at Brown Elementary during heavy rains, creating a health hazard for students and staff. Administrators say sewage backups occur approximately six times per year. The architect estimates that the needed repairs, excluding the Brown sewer situation, will cost up to $10.5 million over the next five years. [8] Deferring projects could exacerbate the problems and further increase costs.

Other areas of school administration

In addition to the issues described above, consolidation could affect other areas of school operation, such as transportation, food service, and computer technology. Food service and technology could be provided more efficiently if there were fewer schools to serve. However, transportation costs could increase if more students had to be transported at public expense to more distant schools instead of walking. Some of this cost will be offset because the state subsidizes transportation for students that travel more than two miles from home. Costs and savings in these functional areas would depend on how the district implemented consolidation. Research literature indicates that while educational quality can be enhanced by consolidation, the primary benefits are economic.

Consolidation Options ─────────────

There are advantages and disadvantages to consolidation. In determining whether to consolidate, the board should weigh many factors, including district need, public input, and district priorities. If the board chooses to consolidate schools, it would be able to reduce costs and redirect the funds to other priorities, such as putting more money into the classroom or addressing physical plant deficiencies.

Through discussions with residents and district personnel, we identified three primary models for consolidation for the district to consider:

1. consolidate school-based administrative functions of two nearby schools;

2. consolidate two schools on the west side of the county by closing one;

3. consolidate all students in a new school facility.

This list is not exhaustive; it is intended to assist the district in evaluating possible alternatives. In analyzing the viability of the three models, we considered student demographics and the 2002 class size amendment. [9] We also note that charter school enrollment will have a significant effect on the traditional schools and how they can best and most economically serve their students.

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[8] The architect estimates $3.7 million for heating/ventilation air conditioning (HVAC), roof, plumbing and life safety issues at Apalachicola High, $3.6 million for roof, asbestos abatement, life safety and plumbing issues at Carrabelle High, $2.4 million for plumbing, roof, Americans with Disabilities Act, HVAC and life safety issues at Chapman and $800,000 for roofing and plumbing at Brown.

[9] The class size amendment requires schools not meeting student-per-class limits to reduce classes by two students in the 2003-04 school year and be in full compliance by 2010.

MODEL 1: CONSOLIDATE SCHOOL-BASED ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS AT TWO NEARBY SCHOOLS

Could provide modest savings with little disruption to students

In this option, administration would be combined for Chapman Elementary and Apalachicola High School, which are two blocks apart. The other schools are not close enough to each other for combined administration to be a viable option. By using one principal and bookkeeper instead of two for the two schools, and eliminating one secretary position, the district could save approximately $102,400 in personnel costs, as described in Exhibit 2. [10] If these positions were eliminated, the demands on the remaining employees would increase as they supervise and support both schools. However, given that the total enrollment of the two schools combined is approximately 500 students, such a combination would be comparable to the enrollment at Carrabelle and would not appear to create an unreasonable workload.

Consolidating the administration of Chapman and Apalachicola High School could make a modest reduction in district costs and would appear to have a minimal effect on students. This change could be implemented in the short term and would not interfere with the implementation of other consolidation models in future years. However, this model would not remedy the schools' physical plant problems.

MODEL 2: CONSOLIDATE TWO WESTERN COUNTY SCHOOLS BY CLOSING ONE

May be viable and could provide significant savings, but more analysis is needed of special classroom capacities

In this option, the district would close one elementary school, thereby eliminating its administrative and physical plant costs. This model could be implemented in one of two ways. The board could

A. close Brown Elementary at East Point and move its 281 students five miles to Chapman Elementary in Apalachicola, which is operating at 31% of its capacity, or

B. close Chapman Elementary and relocate its 181 students two blocks to Apalachicola High School, which is operating at 49% of its capacity and use this facility to house both elementary and high school students.

OPPAGA analysis suggests that the size and number of the classrooms at Brown and Apalachicola High School may be sufficient to meet the requirements of the class size amendment. (See calculations in Appendix A.)

▪ Chapman would require 27 classrooms to serve its students plus those from Brown. It has 24 classrooms and may be able to provide the three additional required classrooms using portables that it already owns.

▪ Apalachicola High School would require 31 classrooms to serve its students plus those from Chapman. It has 28 classrooms and may be able to use portables for the three additional needed classrooms.

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[10] Reductions include the elimination of one secretary position, leaving one secretary at each school.

However, these estimates do not take into account the effect of specialty classrooms, such as band rooms and computer labs, on overall classroom capacity. The estimates also do not factor in separation of age groups at the high school. If the district decides to give this model serious consideration, it will need to conduct a detailed analysis of overall classroom capacity. While being so near capacity does not allow much room for fluctuations in the student population, closing a school may be a viable short-term option if the board wishes to implement model 3, new construction.

If the district implemented this option, it could avoid the costs of operations and deferred maintenance, such as plumbing and roof repairs, of the closed school. For Brown, the annual energy costs are $23,400 and the architect estimates the five-year maintenance costs at $800,000; over a five-year period, the district could potentially save $917,000 in operations and maintenance costs by closing Brown. [11] Closing Brown would also eliminate the sewer problem. Closing Chapman would produce an annual energy savings of $60,524, and avoid $2.4 million in estimated five-year maintenance costs; over a five-year period, the district could potentially save $2,702,620 in operations and maintenance costs by closing Chapman. [12] This cost reduction may be offset by the cost of setting up portables at Apalachicola High School to serve as extra classrooms. Closing either school would also reduce water, sewer and communications costs. If the district could dispose of the vacated school, it may generate revenue as well. [13]

Closing a school could also reduce personnel costs by approximately $146,600 per year if positions were eliminated as described in Exhibit 2. Of the two alternatives, closing Chapman and moving its students to Apalachicola High School would appear to be less disruptive to the community than closing Brown and moving its students to Chapman. If Chapman students were relocated, they would only move two blocks. If Brown were closed, students would have to be moved to another town five miles away.

If more detailed analysis of school capacities indicates that closing a school is viable, this option would appear to provide significant savings for the district.

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[11] Brown deferred maintenance costs include roof and plumbing repairs but do not address the sewer problem.

[12] Chapman deferred maintenance costs include plumbing, roof, ADA, HVAC and life safety issues. Energy costs were derived from historical energy contract costs in the TECO BGA contract.

[13] DOE would apply the Castaldi formula, which rates facilities on age and a variety of other cost based factors, to determine if the district should keep or eliminate the buildings and dispose of the property.

Exhibit 1a-2
Consolidation Options Offer Varying Advantages and Disadvantages

	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3: New Construction		
	Consolidate Chapman and Apalachicola administration	**Consolidate two schools on the west side of the county by closing one**	**Consolidate all western county students in a new school on AHS property**	**Consolidate all high school students in a new school at a central location**	**Consolidate all county students in a new school at a central location**
Construction Costs (100 square foot per child at $125 per square foot)	None	None	(800 students) $10 - $12 million Estimated $8 million paid by state	(400 students) $5 million Estimated $3.75 million paid by state	(1,500 students) $18 - $20 million Estimated $16 million paid by state
Possible Personnel Savings (Figures provided include salary plus 28% benefits)	1 principal $ 62,356 1 bookkeeper 23,130 1 secretary 18,246 $103,732	1 principal $62,356 1 bookkeeper 23,130 1 secretary 18,246 1 food service mgr. 16,168 2 food svc empl. 26,764 $146,664	2 principals $124,712 2 secretaries 36,492 2 food service mgrs. 32,336 2 food svc empl. 26,764 1 custodian 20,637 $240,941	None. Positions eliminated by closing AHS would be needed to operate the new school; Carrabelle would retain its administrative positions to operate the elementary and middle school.	3 principals $187,068 3 bookkeepers 69,390 3 secretaries 54,738 1 attendance asst. 23,835 1 custodian 20,637 3 food service mgrs. 48,504 4 food svc empl. 53,528 $457,700
Maintenance and Operations Cost Avoidances	None	A. Close Brown, save $917,000 over 5 years **OR** B. Close Chapman, save $2,702,620 over 5 years or less if portable classrooms are needed	Close Apalachicola, Chapman, and Brown and avoid $7.6 million over 5 years	Close Apalachicola and avoid $4 million over 5 years	Close all four schools and avoid $11.6 million over 5 years
Summary	Could be implemented quickly and could be used in the short term if other long-term options were chosen. This model provides modest savings with minimal disruption but does not solve physical plant problems.	Could be used in the short term if other long-term options were chosen. Closing Chapman may be less disruptive because students stay in their community. If analysis of special classrooms indicates closing one school is viable, could generate significant savings	Requires a three-year one-mill tax increase county wide but benefits only students on the west side of the county. This option is more similar to current patterns of school attendance.	Requires a three-year one-mill tax increase. This option could be combined with the recommendation from the Chapman SAC to move the 7th and 8th grades from Apalachicola to Chapman. This option reduces district costs by eliminating positions and closing expensive to maintain older schools.	Requires a three-year one-mill tax increase but benefits all students. The creation of one centralized school would also allow the district to respond more efficiently to increases and decreases in the student population, as well as changes in population distribution. This option provides the greatest reduction in district costs by eliminating positions and closing expensive to maintain older schools.

MODEL 3: CONSOLIDATE STUDENTS IN A NEW SCHOOL FACILITY

Costs or savings cannot be determined without additional information

In this option, the district would replace one or more aging schools with new construction, and could be implemented in three ways.

A. The board could close the three schools on the western side of the county and build a new school on the Apalachicola High School property. [14]

B. The board could close Apalachicola High School and transfer the high school students from the K-12 school in Carrabelle and build a new school for all high school students in the middle of the county.

C. The board could close all four schools and build a new school for all students in the middle of the county.

The district may not need to purchase additional property to implement this model. To consolidate all K-12 students on the west side of the county, the district could construct a new school on the 22-acre Apalachicola High School property. [15] For the other two options, the board would need to establish a new central campus. According to Department of Education administrators, the minimum space needed to construct a new school for a student capacity of 1,500 is 18 acres. The board currently owns a central parcel of 27 acres on State Road 65. This site is connected to the paved highway, sewer, and water, but may be undesirable for a school because it is next to the county jail. However, it may be possible for the district to work out an arrangement with the state in which the district would give the state its acreage to become part of the adjacent state conservation property, and the state would give or sell the district the amount of land it needs at another point along State Road 65 from its holdings. [16]

According to Department of Education administrators, new school construction costs approximately $125 per square foot. Estimates of construction costs for each option are provided in Exhibit 2. To pay for new construction, the board could apply to the Department of Education for funding from the Special Facilities Fund. To be eligible to use this fund, the project must be deemed a critical need and be recommended for funding by the Special Facility Construction Committee. The district also would be required to impose its full two-mill discretionary tax for three years and direct 1.5 mills of it to the state for those three years. [17] Districts are authorized to assess the discretionary tax to pay for capital improvements such as construction and other long-lasting costly items such as school buses. Currently, the district assesses only one mill of this two-mill tax. A one-mill increase would cost homeowners an additional $100 in property tax each year on a $100,000 home. As the district directs the millage revenue to the state, the state would pay for the school to be constructed. The result would be that the district would direct approximately $4.6 million to the state over three years and in return the state would pay approximately 75%, or $13-15 million, for the district to construct a new facility (the estimated cost of a new school for all students). In contrast, if the district continues to operate the existing schools, the district will pay all of the deferred maintenance costs of $10.5 million. So, new construction would cost the district $5.9 million less than repairing the existing schools.

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[14] A new school would be required because none of the three existing schools has sufficient excess capacity to accept all the students.

[15] As a variation of this option, it may be possible to totally renovate all or part of the existing AHS building and add on to it. In this case, the district would not benefit from state construction funds for the overhaul.

[16] According to the county planner, a precedent for a trade for conservation land was established with the Topsail project.

[17] School boards are authorized to levy two-mill money without voter approval.

If the district received construction funding from the Special Facilities Fund, its budget could be affected in two ways. First, it would experience a one-half mill reduction in its capital improvement budget for the three-year period. This would occur because the district would raise the millage to two mills but must direct 1.5 mills to the state; so .5 mills would remain with the district instead of the one mill it currently generates. The .5 mill decrease would amount to approximately $591,391 per year for the three years. However, with new facilities under construction there should not be as great a need for capital improvement dollars during this period. In addition, if a new high school was built and the existing two were closed, the district could lose approximately $88,000 a year from the state sparsity supplement it receives because the allocation is based in part on the number of high schools operating in the district. We note that if the district implemented consolidation model 2 and closed a school as discussed above, it may be able to offset this loss in operating revenue while a new school is constructed.

A key to the feasibility of this model would be the Department of Education economic analysis of keeping aging buildings versus new construction. This analysis rates school facilities on age and a variety of other cost-based factors. One aspect of this rating is the project life of recent investments. The district's most recent major investment, the new $500,000 weight room, could still be used if a new school for western county students were built on the Apalachicola High School property. Another consideration in whether replacing facilities would be a sound financial decision is the investment the state has made by providing grant funds to the district to renovate the administration building. If schools were operating from a central county campus, it may be more efficient to locate district administration there as well. In this situation, the board may wish to find an alternative use for the restored buildings. If the analysis indicates that it would be a sound decision to close one or more schools and the district were able to sell the properties, the revenue could help offset the costs of new construction.

A major benefit of closing aging schools would be that the district could take money it would have spent on deferred maintenance, such as plumbing and roof repairs, and invest instead in new facilities. The district architect estimates the five-year maintenance costs for the four schools at $10.5 million. Exhibit 2 illustrates the maintenance costs that could be avoided for each option. If Brown were closed, the sewer problem would also be eliminated. The annual energy cost of the four schools is $214,537; the newer buildings would operate more cost-effectively due to advances in construction technology. Consolidating the schools would also reduce water, sewer and communications costs.

Consolidation could also reduce personnel costs, as shown in Exhibit 2. The option to consolidate only the high schools would not appear to reduce personnel costs because Carrabelle E/MS would continue to operate, and the new school would probably require about the same number of administrative positions as those that would be eliminated by closing Apalachicola High School.

The viability of this model will be determined by the results of the Department of Education analysis, the availability of suitable land, and whether the board wishes to levy a one-mill tax increase for three years. This model would create the biggest change in patterns of school attendance. It is possible that constructing a new school at a mid-county location would encourage parents to send their children to the private or charter schools in their home communities. Conversely, having a new school may encourage parents, students, and teachers to participate in the traditional schools and provide an incentive for students attending other schools to return.

Conclusions

Our analysis shows that the district could consolidate the administrative functions of Chapman Elementary and Apalachicola High School (model 1) to realize modest savings. It may be able to close Brown Elementary and transfer its students to Chapman, or close Chapman and transfer the students to Apalachicola (model 2), to realize increased savings and cost avoidances. And finally, it may be able to build a new school and close one or more of the older schools to reduce costs and enhance educational

services, but this option would also require a one-mill increase in property taxes (model 3). The district should develop the information needed to fully assess the third option so that it can weigh the financial benefits of creating a new school campus.

Consolidation is a political and social as well as financial decision. Some of the elements that need to be weighed, such as the enrollment and expansion of the charter school, are outside board control. However, declining enrollment, the high costs of repair, and school underutilization are factors that can be managed and controlled.

2 Management Structures

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using 12 of 14 of the management structures best practices. The district has clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the school board and superintendent, its organizational structure is clearly defined, financial oversight is in place, and principals have clearly assigned authority. Student enrollment is accurately projected and the district makes efforts to actively involve parents, guardians, business partners, and community organizations in decision-making and activities. To meet the remaining best practice standards the district should expand its strategic plan to include operational programs, revise the plan to clearly identify and prioritize goals and measurable objectives, and clearly specify the resources needed to accomplish them.

Background

The Franklin County School District's management structure is a standard hierarchical structure, with both the executive (the superintendent), and policy-setting entities (five school board members) elected by the general population. The district's board members are elected at-large by the entire county but each represents a specific district within the county. Each member is elected to a four-year term. School board elections are staggered with two members elected at the time of the presidential general election, and the remaining three elected at the time of the gubernatorial general election.

The district has an experienced board with all but one member having served more than one term. The newest member was elected to a first term in 2000 and three members were re-elected during the 2002 primary elections. Exhibit 2-1 shows how long individual board members have served and their previous experience.

Exhibit 2-1
Franklin County's School Board Members Vary in Experience

Board Member	Tenure	Experience
Jimmy Gander Chair	Elected in 1994, re-elected in 1998 and 2002, current term ends in 2006	Self-employed businessman.
David Hinton Vice Chair	Elected in 2000 to fill a vacant seat, re-elected in 2002, current term ends in 2004	Teacher, Franklin County, 20 years, retired; U.S. Air Force, 20 years, retired.
Teresa Ann Martin	Elected in 2000, current term ends in 2004	Franklin County Clerk's Office, parent.
Katie McKnight	Elected in 1992, re-elected in 1996 and 2000, term ends in 2004	Independent contractor, seafood industry.
George Thompson	Elected in 2000, term ends in 2004	U.S. Postal Service, parent.

Source: Franklin School District.

The current superintendent, Jo Ann Gander, was elected in 2000. She began her career as a teacher and taught for 19 years until becoming the assistant administrator at Carrabelle High School. She held that position until she was elected superintendent. Prior to becoming superintendent, she also served as an adjunct professor at Gulf Coast Community College in the Business Department. She holds a master's degree in education from Florida State University and certifications from the Florida Superintendent Special Certification Program and the Chief Executive Officer Leadership Development Program.

The superintendent is the chief executive and administrative officer of the board and, as such, is responsible for organizing district administration. Exhibit 2-2 illustrates the district's current administrative structure. School-level administration is limited to the principals of the district's four traditional schools: two elementary schools (K-5th grade) and two high schools (one 7th-12th grade and one K-12th grade). There is also an alternative learning center, one adult school, and one charter school.

Exhibit 2-2
Franklin County School District's Organizational Structure
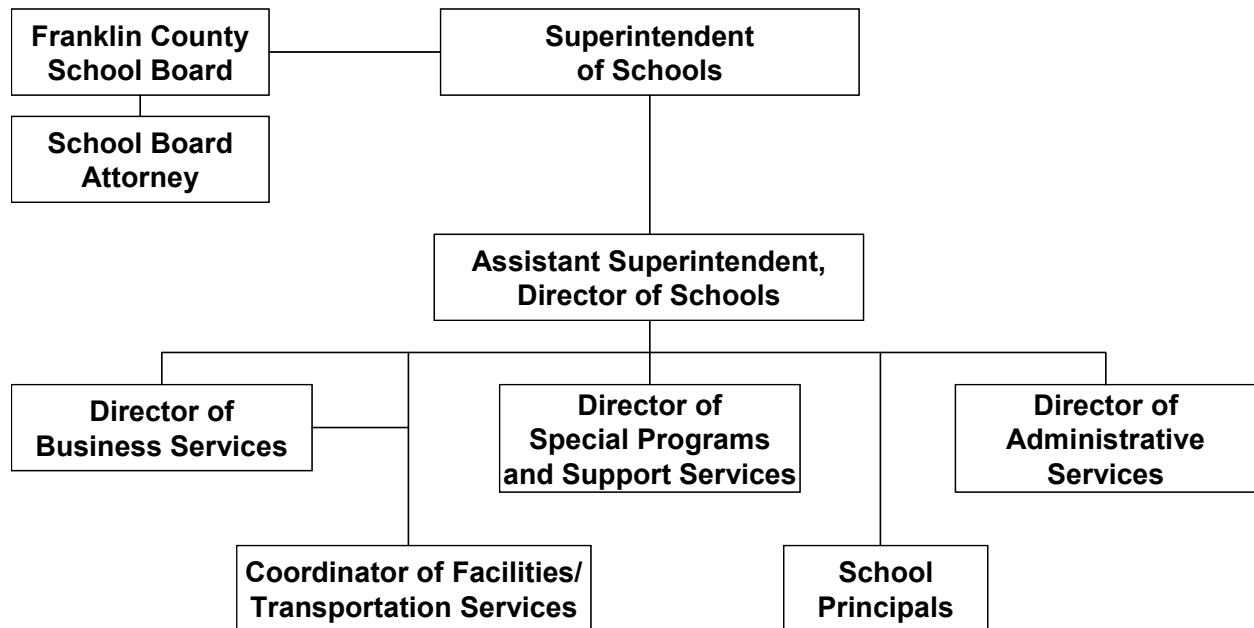
Source: Franklin County School District.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Conclusions for Management Structures Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Best Practice Used?	Page No.
Board and Superintendent Roles and Responsibilities	1. The roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent have been clearly delineated, and board members and the superintendent have policies to ensure that they have effective working relationships.	Yes	2-4
	2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.	Yes	2-4
	3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.	Yes	2-5
	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.	Yes	2-6
Organization, Staffing and Resource Allocation	5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.	Yes	2-7
	6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.	Yes	2-7
	7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.	Yes	2-8
	8. The district has clearly assigned school principals the authority they need to effectively manage their schools while adhering to districtwide policies and procedures.	Yes	2-9
Planning and Budgeting	9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.	No	2-10
	10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.	Yes	2-11
	11. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its annual priorities in the strategic plan and its goals and objectives; and district resources are focused towards achieving those goals and objectives.	No	2-11
	12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.	Yes	2-12
Community Involvement	13. The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district's decision making and activities.	Yes	2-13
	14. The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district's decision making and activities.	Yes	2-13

BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice 1: Using

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

To be effective, school districts must have a constructive, trusting relationship between their school boards and superintendents. This relationship is jeopardized most often when the parties do not understand or fail to adhere to their distinct roles in the educational process. In Florida, unlike most other states, many superintendents are elected rather than appointed by the school boards. This has the potential to undermine effective working relationships particularly when the school board and superintendent have substantially different philosophies and opinions on key issues. Thus, districts should have procedures to maintain a distinct separation of roles and responsibilities between the school board and superintendent. The school board should be the district's policymaking entity, and the superintendent should have primary responsibility for implementing these policies during the course of daily administration. School board members should not be directing daily operations and should address operational concerns through the superintendent. Likewise, the superintendent should not make broad, districtwide policies without the approval of the board. A district may use both formal and informal mechanisms to ensure that each entity adheres to its proper roles and responsibilities. At a minimum, the district (regardless of size) should have policies that comply with state statutes regarding these roles and responsibilities.

The Franklin County School District's policies clearly specify the roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent. However, the district needs to update its policies to comply with the 2002 legislative rewrite of the Florida School Code. The district contracted with the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) to revise the policies to conform to the rewritten school code and the revisions are currently in draft form. The district's goal is to approve the updated policies by the end of the 2002-03 school year.

School board members and the superintendent report that the board's role as policymakers is well defined and that board members do not exceed their role and become involved in operational matters. Board members report that they are actively involved with constituents, regularly receiving and responding to phone calls and concerns. In most cases, board members advise citizens to contact the school principal. All principals report that board members adhere to their role and do not become involved in district operational issues.

> **We recommend that the district complete the update of new school policies to comply with the 2002 legislative rewrite and formally adopt them prior to the 2003-04 school year.**

Best Practice 2: Using

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

The primary goal of each school board meeting should be to decide in a timely manner on the majority of policy issues presented during the meeting. To meet this goal, the school board and superintendent should have formal and informal mechanisms to ensure that board meetings run efficiently and effectively

and that all policy discussions and decisions are open and accessible to the public. If board meetings consistently last longer than the time allotted, it is usually a sign that appropriate mechanisms are not used or are ineffective. Board members should not have to ask staff frequently for more information on agenda items or ask for clarifications of provided materials. More importantly, regardless of how well board meetings are run, board members and the superintendent should ensure that meetings are accessible and open to the public. For example, meetings should be located in large population concentrations at times that are not in conflict with normal work hours (e.g., board meetings should usually begin after 6 p.m.). If possible, board meetings should be broadcast live, or taped for later broadcast, on local public access television channels.

Both the superintendent and board members report that their meetings are efficient. Interviews, board meeting attendance, and a review of board minutes attest to the efficiency of meetings. In the event more time is needed to ensure adequate consideration of an agenda item, discussion of the item may be carried over to the next meeting before a decision is made. Likewise, public input has resulted in items being added to board meeting agendas.

In November 2002 the board approved a new policy requiring rotating meeting locations to allow for maximum public participation. All regular school board meetings begin at 6 p.m. while special meetings, such as deliberations about contract changes or bid acceptance, generally begin at 12 noon. While board meetings are captured on tape and in writing, they are not available on the school website for easy public access. Posting meeting minutes on the district's website would help maximize public participation.

> **We recommend that, beginning in the 2003-04 school year, the district post board meeting minutes on its website for maximum public access.**

Best Practice 3: Using

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

Up-to-date district procedures, when coupled with appropriate policies, ensure that activities are carried out efficiently and effectively. In addition, relevant and complete policies help ensure that districts comply with federal and state laws and that staff and students are treated equally and consistently. The larger the district or the more decentralized its administration, the more important the overarching set of policies and procedures become. All districts should have, at minimum, written board policies that are consistent with the *Florida Statutes*. Most districts also should have detailed written policies pertaining to specific areas like student progression, transportation, and services for ESE populations. Districts also should have procedures to ensure that these policies are implemented consistently within administrative units, grade levels, and among schools. Finally, districtwide policies and procedures should be readily accessible by staff, students and their guardians, and the general public.

The district has a process to regularly update its policies and procedures to comply with state changes or as needed to reflect new district efforts. The policies and procedures are maintained both at individual schools and in the school administration building and are readily accessible to all. However, the district's policies and procedures are not currently available on the district's website. As recommended in Best Practice 1, the board should finalize its review and adoption of updated policies to conform to the 2002 statutory school code revisions. Once completed, the district should post the revised policies and procedures on its website to facilitate public access.

> **Following the update of district policies and procedures, we recommend that the district post current policies and procedures on its website to facilitate public access.**

Best Practice 4: Using

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.

School boards should have appropriate, responsive legal counsel to address legal issues as they arise. Legal services should be comprehensive, providing input on district policies, personnel issues, and advice to ensure that the district complies with federal and state legal requirements. Legal services should support the board, its individual members, the superintendent, and district staff. In smaller districts, legal services are more likely to be contracted out, while the largest districts may have several in-house attorneys as well as contracted attorneys. As small districts grow, they should periodically evaluate whether hiring a full-time in-house attorney would be more cost-effective. Regardless of the district's size, legal expenses (including hourly rates, retainer fees, and total annual expenditures) should be evaluated for accuracy and appropriateness.

The Franklin County School Board contracts with a local attorney who is authorized to advise the superintendent unless there is a potential conflict of interest. The board has employed the same attorney since 1988. The attorney's duties and responsibilities are specified each time the board renews the contract, usually annually. As part of the district's contract, PAEC provides legal services for risk management and employee grievance matters. Outside counsel is retained whenever there is a potential conflict between the board and the superintendent, such as an expulsion hearing where the board serves as the deciding body with the board attorney advising and the principal or her attorney serving as the prosecutor.

The superintendent and school board chair are designated as primary attorney contacts. Any other district employees needing to talk or meet with the board attorney must seek authorization from the superintendent. This approval process keeps the superintendent informed about district issues and ensures that the attorney meets with appropriate parties to avoid discussing hearsay. This process is a cost-effective and efficient way to appropriately use the attorney's services and ensures essential communication with the superintendent.

In Fiscal Year 2001-02, the board attorney provided 115 hours of billable services at a cost of $11,266. Neither the superintendent nor the board has conducted a cost benefit analysis of attorney fees to determine if they are reasonable or comparable to fees paid by peer districts. OPPAGA compared these legal service costs to those of seven similar peer districts (Bradford, Dixie, Gadsden, Glades, Hamilton, Hardee, and Jefferson counties) and found that the Franklin County School District is obtaining its legal services at a reasonable cost. To ensure that the district continues to pay reasonable legal fees, at least every three to five years, the district should review its attorney costs and compare them to peer district legal costs. If the district finds its costs are higher that its peers, it should consider using an open bid process to purchase legal services. Consideration should be given to applicants' expertise as part of the bid process.

> **We recommend that every three to five years the district evaluate attorney fees to determine whether they are reasonable or comparable services could be obtained at a lower cost.**

ORGANIZATION, STAFFING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Best Practice 5: Using

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

A school district's organizational structure should enable the effective and efficient delivery of support services to the schools, teachers, and students. In general, school districts should organize their administration so that similar support services are grouped together and lines of authority are clear to staff and the general public. In addition, school districts should minimize administrative staff, especially at the district level. There is no one-size-fits-all district organizational structure, although there are several common administrative structures employed by school districts statewide. Smaller districts are more likely to have a simple hierarchical structure with all administrative units reporting directly to the superintendent and ultimately to the board. Larger districts may group their administrative units by distinct functions [i.e., school operations; instructional support services (curriculum, evaluation); business support services (finance, budgeting, MIS); operational support (food services, transportation, safety and security)]. Regardless of organizational structure, staff and the general public should be able to clearly understand who is responsible for what.

The Franklin County School District is a small district with few administrators and support staff. The district has six administrative and four support staff at the district level and a principal at each of the four schools. Some administrators have responsibilities for more than one operational area. For example, the coordinator of facilities and transportation services is responsible for student transportation, maintenance of the district's white fleet, and facility construction and maintenance. A teacher on special assignment serves as the district's technology resource teacher and is responsible for districtwide technology training and support. The technology resource teacher reports to the assistant superintendent, though this is not reflected on the district's organizational chart. While the district has a lean organization and minimal administrative costs, to more accurately reflect district operations, the district should revise its organizational chart to reflect actual assignments. In addition, to illustrate workload demands, the district should develop detailed organizational charts outlining the total number of staff each administrator supervises. Finally, the district should revise the organizational chart to show a dotted line between the facilities coordinator and the director of business services to reflect a coordinating rather than a supervisory relationship, as the director of business services does not supervise the facilities coordinator.

> **We recommend that the district revise the organizational chart to reflect actual assignments and operations; clarify the chart to illustrate that the director of business services does not supervise the facilities coordinator; and, expand the organizational charts to include the number of positions supervised by each administrator.**

Best Practice 6: Using

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

Well-run school districts are administratively lean and maximize funds to support their primary mission of educating students. To accomplish this, school district staffing should promote efficiency and effectiveness while minimizing administration, especially at the district level. Low administrative to instructional staff ratios generally indicate that resources are being concentrated in the classroom, the

main objective of most school boards and the state. However, districts must balance the goal of minimizing administration with the fact that some support services provided at the district level are more cost-effective than multiple site-based staff.

The district has made staffing changes to improve efficiency and save money such as returning the function of recording and transcribing board meeting minutes from an outside contractor to the superintendent's secretary. However, no formal analysis of this function shift was conducted and the process and criteria used to make the change was not documented. As such, the district cannot demonstrate that the change was in its best financial or organizational interest.

As part of the strategic planning process, the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) conducted an extensive district management analysis. The study included a comparison of administrators, instructional personnel, and student FTE funding to six peer districts: Calhoun, Gulf, Hamilton, Jefferson, Liberty and Madison counties. As Exhibit 2-3 illustrates, the review found that Franklin County was well within the average of the six peer districts in nearly all areas of comparison. The Franklin County superintendent reports that these rankings are appropriate for the district.

Exhibit 2-3
Franklin Staffing Ranks in the Middle of Peer Panhandle School Districts

Comparison Category	Franklin's Rank out of 7 Districts
District Administrators as a Percentage of Total Employees	3
School-based Administrators as a Percentage of Total Employees	5
Total Administrators as a Percentage of Total Employees	3
Instructional Staff per District Administrator	4
Instructional Staff per School Based Administrator	3
Instructional Staff per Total Administration	3
Students per District Administrator	4
Students per School Based Administrator	3
Students per Instructional Staff	4
Students per Total Administration	3
Students per Total Employees	4
Students per Non-Instructional Employees	3
Total Revenue per FTE	5

Source: ©EMC, as modified by OPPAGA.

Best Practice 7: Using

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

The school board and superintendent must have a clear and up-to-date understanding of the financial condition of their district in order to exercise effective oversight. To accomplish this, the superintendent and board members must understand the fiscal implications of their decisions, both short and long term. In addition, if and when financial problems arise, the superintendent and school board must be able to react quickly and responsibly, and in a manner that prevents significant disruption of school district operations. In general, financial reports and budget information should be clear and useful to board members and the general public and should not require extensive explanation by district staff or the superintendent. Financial information should be regularly updated and presented to the board, and all agenda items that have an impact on the budget should include detailed explanations of these effects.

One of the debate issues of the 2000 board member election campaign was financial responsibility. When a new superintendent and three new board members were elected, the district was experiencing financial difficulties. As required by the Florida Department of Education, the district implemented a corrective financial action plan to ensure a positive financial balance. The district considered numerous options to address their financial problems and elected to reduce summer school, field trips, teacher training and other expenses as part of the recovery effort. These efforts were successful in that the district currently has a substantial reserve fund balance that exceeds the legally required amount.

Budget documents provided to the board are clear, comprehensive, and understandable. Budget summaries clearly show local and state funding as well as the total millage rate and its components such as operating discretionary and capital improvement tax levies. The board also has policies and procedures to monitor purchasing requirements, specifying which amounts can be approved by administrators (up to $2,000) and which have to be approved by the board (over $10,000). (See Chapter 11, Best Practice 20, for a discussion and recommendation about raising the competitive bid threshold.)

Best Practice 8: Using

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

Principals should have the authority and ability to manage the day-to-day operations of their schools with minimal interference from the district office. At the same time, it is important that principals adhere to districtwide policies and procedures so students are treated equally from school to school. Principals, as the top administrators in the schools, should have the ability to respond to most situations in their schools without first having to receive approval or acknowledgment from the district. Principals should be held accountable for the performance of their faculty and students, but should also have the authority to modify programs to improve performance. To this end, principals should have discretion in the way they allocate their school funds that is consistent with the level of accountability required by the district. Principals must be aware of and adhere to districtwide policies and procedures, regardless of the level of "site-based management" used in the district. Districtwide policies and procedures ensure legal compliance and promote the equal treatment of students from school to school, and among grade levels.

Principals in the Franklin County School District have a great deal of authority and responsibility for their schools. They are required to adhere to district policies and procedures and, with authorization from the superintendent, may access the school board attorney to discuss appropriate matters. Each principal works with his/her school advisory council to develop a school improvement plan and allocate school fees.

The superintendent evaluates principals annually, usually in June, with each principal assessing his or her goals in light of the superintendent's expectations. The superintendent provides each principal the authority necessary to meet agreed upon goals. Principals report that they control their school budget and make personnel hiring decisions. Principals also interview prospective employees, make hiring recommendations to the superintendent, and receive hiring approval from the board. Each principal has a copy of all district policies and procedures, along with a principal's handbook. The superintendent has monthly meetings with all principals and meets with each principal individually. The superintendent practices an open door policy and is available to assist principals as needed. According to the superintendent, a principal's ultimate evaluation is the renewal of his/her annual contract. (See Chapter 6, Best Practice 4, for a discussion and recommendation about the principal evaluation process.)

PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Best Practice 9: Not Using

The district does not have a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.

Strategic planning enables a district to identify its critical needs and establish strategies and reallocate resources to address these needs. To ensure that all critical needs are identified, the strategic planning process should include broad stakeholder input. The decisions made during the strategic planning process should be in writing and the resulting plan should guide both policymaking and program development. The strategic plan should also address both instructional and non-instructional programs and have reasonable goals and objectives that can be accomplished, in most cases, within available resources. The complexity and breadth of the strategic plan will vary based on the size of the district. All strategic plans should include an accountability and evaluation component or else the plan becomes ineffectual.

While the Franklin County School District includes school-based goals in its strategic plan, it does not address operational programs such as student transportation, food services, and facilities. The district completed its first strategic plan in June 2002 for implementation in the 2002-03 school year. The plan incorporates each of the district's four school improvement plans to provide individualized school goals, objectives and strategies. Since many of the goals and objectives revolve around improving FCAT scores, the district will not be able to assess progress until school-level FCAT scores are available. The district's strategic plan focuses on improving academic performance and does not address operational programs that are also important to district operations. Transporting, feeding, and teaching students in safe, clean facilities is part of the district's responsibility and plays an important role in student academic achievement.

Action Plan 2-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 2-1

We recommend that the district expand its strategic plan to include operational programs.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The board and superintendent review the recommendations in the Organization and Management Review report prepared by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents.
	Step 2.	If necessary, the district requests additional assistance from FADSS and PAEC to refine the district strategic plan.
	Step 3.	The superintendent and appropriate administrators develop a revised strategic plan draft, including academic measures for each school as well as the following elements for each operational program: goals, quantifiable and measurable objectives, strategies to achieve the goals, identification of the units responsible for implementing the strategies, and an implementation timeline for each operational program.
	Step 4.	The superintendent presents the draft to the board for comment/review.
	Step 5.	The superintendent incorporates board comments into a final strategic plan draft.
	Step 6.	The superintendent provides the final draft report to the board, who invite public input as part of the approval process.
	Step 7.	The superintendent reviews the plan annually, revises as appropriate, and presents to the board for approval.
Who is Responsible	The superintendent and school board.	
Time Frame	The revised plan should be completed by October 2003 and implemented by December 2003.	

Best Practice 10: Using

The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.

Districts use full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment projections for many things, including budgeting, zoning, estimating facility requirements, and reviewing staffing ratios. Because of the importance of FTE projections, school districts must have a system to calculate student enrollment projections as accurately as possible. Thus, districts must have trained staff and formal procedures for applying both the state projection methodologies and local corrective methodologies, which can be very complex and often require considerable technical expertise. At a minimum, the district must use the cohort survival methodology provided by the Florida Department of Education to establish its FTEs for the coming year.

Exhibit 2-4
Student Enrollment Projections Are Generally Accurate

Fiscal Year	District Enrollment Estimate	Actual Enrollment	Actual Over/Under Enrollment Estimate	Forecast Error Rate
2000-01	1,459.00	1,397.70	-61.30	-4.4%
2001-02	1,422.84	1,379.75	-43.09	-3.1%
2002-03 [1]	1,378.49	1,310.09	-68.40	-5.2% [2]

[1] Based on fourth calculation.

[2] According to DOE and district staff, the 1% error in the projection stems from 17 students in Franklin County participating in the Corporate Scholarship program, which was more than anticipated. This program provides $3,500 for qualified students to attend private school. The amount is contributed by corporations in lieu of taxes, as approved by Department of Revenue.

Source: Legislative Services Education Estimating Conference.

The Franklin County School District uses a Florida Department of Education formula to project enrollment, and uses supplemental information such as enrollment in the charter school to refine the projections. In addition, principals and teachers are asked for input on any potential changes that might affect the number of enrolled students. This information, along with data on county births, the number of students entering kindergarten, the number of graduating seniors, and migration from other grades is scrutinized and adjusted as necessary to calculate the district's FTE forecast. Once the projection is made, the figure is used in budget calculations to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to fund the projected FTEs. According to district officials, these efforts have produced projections that fall within acceptable ranges.

Best Practice 11: Not Using

The district has not established district priorities and therefore cannot link financial plans and budgets to annual priorities in the strategic plan.

Because school districts generally have seemingly unlimited demands for available funds, they must set budget priorities. Thus, a school district's financial decisions should reflect its priority goals and objectives. These goals and objectives (which should be part of a strategic plan) may either be explicitly stated in the budget or may be reflected in changes in allocations that are concurrent with the district's shifting priorities. For example, if improving reading scores is a priority goal, then the district's budget should include resources that assist schools in pursuing this goal (e.g., hiring additional resource teachers or purchasing a new reading curriculum).

The Franklin County School District strategic plan does not prioritize goals and does not include operational programs. Without prioritized goals and inclusion of all district operations, goals, and budgeting cannot be linked. Rather than the board establishing priorities and allocating the resources to achieve them, the district develops its budget using last year's funding levels with input from program administrators about future needs. This results in available funding driving priorities rather than priorities

driving funding. For example, rather than identifying the most pressing facility needs and funding these needs, the coordinator of facilities and transportation services completes projects based on available funds. The completed projects may not address the most pressing facility problems and may, in the long run, result in higher costs to the district as facilities deteriorate.

The district's four school improvement plans do not specify the resources required to implement the plans; only use of school advisory council monies is addressed. While the district's strategic plan specifies budgeted amounts for certain strategies, e.g., $6-6.5 million for personnel to adequately support the instructional program and $850,000 to provide exceptional student education, it is not possible to link the strategic plan to individual school goals and strategies and the resources required to achieve the goals. It is also unclear how the budgeted funds link to the actual operational budget. For example, one strategy calls for the district to provide and implement a board and state approved Food Services Plan/Program with a budget of $475,000. However, there is no food service plan, and the amount budgeted for 2002-03 is $545,411.

Action Plan 2-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 2-2

The district should revise its strategic plan to clearly identify and prioritize goals and measurable objectives and identify the resources needed to accomplish them.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The board and superintendent review and revise as necessary the measurable objectives specified for each school and operational program, as developed in Action Plan 2-1. These objectives should be included in the 2003-04 strategic plan.
	Step 2.	The board and superintendent identify district goals and prioritize the strategic plan objectives in accordance with the goals.
	Step 3.	The district identifies the resources necessary to achieve each objective if it requires specific allocations beyond those designated for continuation of normal operation of the program or function.
	Step 4.	The board and superintendent identify the primary individual responsible for assessing whether the prioritized objectives were achieved within the allocated resources.
Who is Responsible	The board and superintendent.	
Time Frame	October 2003 for implementation in December 2003.	

Best Practice 12: Using

When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.

A school district may find it necessary to consider raising additional revenue if it has done everything in its power to streamline processes and minimize costs yet still cannot meet critical student and/or staff needs without additional funds. In general, districts may need to increase revenue in times of rapid growth or when demographics within the district change significantly. However, the ability to raise funds varies considerably among districts and is dependent on a district's ability to levy additional taxes (if not already at the maximum allowed by law) and their current debt load. There are several options available to school districts to increase revenues. These additional revenue sources may include property taxes, sales taxes, bond issues, impact fees, or grants in aid. Some revenue sources can be used only for operational expenses, while others can be used only for capital expenditures, and still others can be used for both.

In 1999, the Franklin County School District developed a list of capital project needs and associated costs to meet them. It calculated the potential revenues that could have been raised by voters if they approved

an increase in the sales tax and the amount that could be raised by board approval of one of the two discretionary mills allowed under Florida law for capital projects. As a result, the board opted to levy one mill of the optional two mills to meet their needs.

Currently, district consultants estimate that maintenance and repair costs for the district's four schools will total $10.5 million over the next five years. The one discretionary mill allowed under Florida law for capital projects generates approximately $1 million per year. This amount may not be sufficient to provide a long-term solution to the district's maintenance needs. In dealing with the future needs of their schools, the district has a variety of options, which could include steps to consolidate schools (discussed in Chapter 1a), further reduce spending, and/or increase revenues. (See Chapter 8, Best Practice 5, for a discussion and recommendation to improve facility maintenance.)

Best Practice 13: Using

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

To successfully educate students, school districts must actively engage parents and guardians in district and school activities. The greater the parental involvement, the better most schools perform. However, in order to be actively involved in the educational process, parents must be aware of and encouraged to participate in school activities and decision making processes that affect their children.

School district administrators, principals, and employees in the Franklin County School District do a variety of things to enhance parental/guardian involvement. The district has a school advisory council at each of its four schools and booster groups for the two high schools. Additional activities aimed at encouraging involvement include use of the district website to post general information as well as a website page for each school, homework phone lines, parent or guardian report card pick-up nights with related social activities, and teacher conferences. To keep the public informed about performance, the district distributes each school's annual school performance report and publishes FCAT scores in local newspapers. The district continues to look for and explore new methods of communication.

Best Practice 14: Using

The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in decision making and activities.

Business and community groups are able to provide not only financial assistance, but also in-kind services, mentoring, and other support services that benefit students and their schools. Thus, school districts and individual schools should actively engage local and regional businesses and community groups so these entities will participate in educational activities. Some of the major ways to involve businesses and community groups include direct contact and solicitation for services, participation in educational committees of service and business associations, and encouraging business and community group leaders to participate in the school advisory councils (SACs). Districts should also coordinate with these groups to create a fundraising foundation. These non-profit foundations can better leverage contributions and can often receive matching funds from the state or federal government for certain projects (i.e., the Take Stock in Children scholarship program). Regardless of how business partners and community groups are approached, the district and schools should work to ensure that business and community leaders have an impact on school performance. This requires more than accepting money or services from these entities.

In the Franklin County School District, school administrators and employees try a variety of things to actively involve business and community organizations in the schools, including cooperative training programs in which students receive credit for working part time, guest speakers at school events, career days, volunteer programs, and boosters' efforts. The primary efforts to include business in school events

are through the booster organizations and participation in sponsorship opportunities related to sports events and yearbooks. There is also business representation on school advisory committees. Businesses do not participate in grant programs but do take an active role in organizing the collection and distribution of school supplies at the beginning of each school year.

While the district works to get businesses involved in activities and decision making, it has not attempted to establish a district wide mentoring program using community volunteers. Instead, each school is left to decide whether to implement such a program. One school, Apalachicola High, has a peer mentoring program that uses volunteer students; another, Brown Elementary, has an informal mentoring process that allows interested community volunteers to tutor students. The general concern about full-scale citizen mentoring programs is how to pay for background screenings, training, and oversight. If the district determines that a mentoring program should be implemented districtwide, it should explore the possibility that the Chambers of Commerce may be willing to partner with the district to support such an effort.

3 Performance Accountability Systems

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using one of the three performance accountability best practices. The district reports to parents and taxpayers on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational programs and, though not currently reporting the same information for its operational programs, is expected to do so when the data becomes available. To meet the remaining best practice standards and increase its accountability, the district needs to substantially improve program-level accountability systems, conduct evaluations based on need, use these evaluations to modify programs, and report more performance information to the general public.

Background

The Franklin County School District developed its first five-year strategic plan in 2002. The plan contains a mission statement, beliefs, goals, and strategies and is linked to the state goals. The plan will serve as the foundation for the district's performance accountability system, which, to date, has primarily been comprised of ad hoc program and service evaluations. To improve its accountability system, the district should establish an evaluation system to monitor progress toward achieving the strategic plan goals and objectives. The evaluation system should target those areas in which the inability to achieve the desired goal or objective will put the district at substantial risk.

Conclusion and Recommendations ────────

Summary of Conclusions for Performance Accountability Systems Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Best Practice Met?	Page No.
Goals and Measurable Objectives	1. The district has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives that can be achieved within budget for each major educational and operational program. [1] These major programs are Basic Education (K-3, 3-8, 9-12), Exceptional Student Education, Vocational/Technical Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages Education, Facilities Construction, Facilities Maintenance, Transportation, Food Services, and Safety and Security.	No	3-3
	2. The district formally evaluates the performance and cost of its major educational and operational programs and uses evaluation results to improve program performance and cost-efficiency.	No	3-5
	3. The district clearly reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers.	Yes	3-6

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

GOALS AND MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES

Best Practice 1: Not Using

The district does not have clearly stated goals and measurable objectives that can be achieved within budget for each major educational and operational program.

Like other publicly funded entities, a school district should be held accountable for and provide information to parents and other taxpayers on the performance and cost of its major programs. To do this, school districts should have an effective accountability system that includes clearly stated goals and measurable objectives that provide performance expectations for their instructional and non-instructional programs, and mechanisms for measuring the district's progress in meeting these expectations. Objectives should include high-level outcome measures that board members and the public can use to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the district's programs. Objectives also should include lower level interim outcome or process measures that managers can use to administer programs effectively. To assess the progress of its programs toward achieving desired results, school districts should establish standards for the progress they would like to obtain within available resources. Districts also should benchmark their performance data against past results or the results of other, comparable districts.

The Franklin County School District adopted its first formal strategic plan in June 2002 with assistance from a consultant contracted through the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC). The plan focuses on all education program components and is supplemented by the individual school improvement plans and annual accountability reports. The plan does not, however, include goals and objectives for the district's major non-instructional programs such as facilities, transportation, and food services. Since there are no quantified measurable objectives for non-instructional programs, it is not possible to identify the resources necessary to achieve them or evaluate the programs' effectiveness.

While not required, especially for smaller school districts, a strategic plan can serve as a tool to communicate the board's strategic priorities and district direction as a whole, as well as establish specific program-level accountability for district managers. With some modification, the district's current strategic plan can provide strategic direction and program-level accountability. For instance, to more effectively provide overall strategic direction, the plan should be expanded to include high-level goals that reflect the school board's priorities across both educational and operational programs, and measurable objectives that clearly communicate the board's expected outcomes for each of the plan's objectives. In addition, regardless of whether the district incorporates program-level accountability into its current strategic plan or separately, it should establish a system to specifically address the performance and cost of each major educational and operational program. To be useful as a program-level accountability instrument, the district's current strategic plan needs to be expanded to include more detailed and explicit objectives and measures for each major educational and operational program. Once objectives and measures are clearly identified, managers will have a systematic way of assessing ongoing program performance and cost.

Action Plan 3-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 3-1

> **We recommend that the district expand its strategic plan to include specific objectives and measures that apply to non-instructional programs as well as educational programs. We also recommend that the district develop a program-level accountability system to examine whether programs are having the desired results. Finally, we recommend that the district develop a system to incorporate this information to improve district operations. [1]**

Action Needed		
	Step 1.	Identify a few high-level outcome and efficiency measures for inclusion into the district's strategic plan that reflect board priorities for educational and operational programs and services. In addition, for each major educational and operational program identify supporting measures that reflect the primary purpose of each program that managers can use to monitor performance. The district may wish to consider adopting measures provided in Appendix B.
	Step 2.	For each measure, identify the data needed and determine the information below.
		Who will collect performance data and how often?
		What is the source of the data (e.g., state or district reports)?
		In what format is the data needed?
		How often should the data be collected?
		Who (program staff, department head, assistant superintendent, superintendent, school board) will the data be reported to and how often?
		How should the data be used?
	Step 3.	Identify and prioritize data needs by classifying data into the following two categories:
		▪ data currently available, accessible, and in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives and
		▪ data currently either not available, accessible or in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives.
	Step 4.	For each measure, determine a standard (benchmark) for performance the district would like to achieve, which may be based on past performance, the performance of comparable districts, or industry standards.
	Step 5.	For each measure or related measures develop a written statement (objective) that indicates the desired performance (result) or improvement target. For academic programs, objectives should be stated in terms of student outcomes (that is, the effect the program will have on participating students if the program is successful). For operational programs objectives should be stated in terms of the quality and cost of service provided of desired performance. Objectives should be
		▪ either short-term (two to three years) or mid-term (four to five years);
		▪ address major aspects of the program's purpose and expenditures;
		▪ be specific;
		▪ be easily understood;
		▪ be challenging but achievable; and
		▪ be measurable and quantifiable.
		Examples of objectives include:
		"The food service program will maintain a labor margin of ___% in 2003-04."
		"By 2005, the facilities department will decrease average energy cost per gross square foot from $____ to $____ which is consistent with the average of its peers (identify peers)."
		"By 2004, the maintenance department will reduce number of custodians per net square foot to _____ which is consistent with the industry standard of 1:_____."
	Step 6.	Periodically compare district performance data to data from other, comparable districts or programs to determine whether the district could improve its operations.
	Step 7.	Based on the ongoing analysis described in Step 6 above, identify undesirable trends in performance and cost that need more in-depth evaluation.

	Step 8.	Conduct more in-depth evaluations to identify the cause and potential remedies to address trends identified in Step 7. Put the results of these in-depth evaluations in writing.
	Step 9.	If the evaluation requires the use of an outside consultant, the district should develop a cost estimate and the superintendent should present it to the board for consideration.
	Step 10.	At least annually, report performance related to high-level measures to the school board. Provide the written results of in-depth evaluations to the school board.
Who is Responsible	School board, superintendent, program managers	
Time Frame	July 2004	

[1] For detailed discussions on performance accountability system development for specific programs, refer to Chapter 4, Best Practice 6 (education programs); Chapter 7, Best Practice 23 (facilities construction); Chapter 8, Best Practice 1 (facilities maintenance); Chapter 9, Best Practice 20 (transportation); and, Chapter 10, Best Practice 1 (food service).

Best Practice 2: Not Using

The district does not formally evaluate the performance and cost of its major educational and operational programs and use evaluation results to improve program performance and cost-efficiency.

School districts should periodically evaluate their operations to identify ways in which they can improve their efficiency and effectiveness and then use evaluation results to improve program performance either by implementing new strategies or by outsourcing. Districts should use performance data and other relevant information (such as the cost of a program or service, or the potential detrimental effect that poor program performance might have on students) to determine which programs to evaluate. The findings and recommendations resulting from these evaluations should be presented in writing to district administrators and, if needed, the school board and used to improve district operations. Districts also should have interim performance measures that assist in the daily administration of its programs.

Although the Franklin County School District adopted a Strategic Plan in June 2002 and should be commended for its initial efforts to develop goals, strategies and objectives, these efforts focus only on educational programs and exclude non-instructional programs. As the district becomes more experienced at strategic planning, it will be better able to develop quantifiable goals, objectives, and strategies for all programs. Once the district has these elements in place for both instructional and non-instructional programs, it will be able to effectively evaluate program performance. For example, the district will be able to evaluate the effectiveness of math or reading remedial efforts by comparing pre- and post-FCAT scores in those categories. Development and implementation of an accountability system also will help the district determine which program areas are most in need of evaluation.

The district has adopted objectives and goals for its education programs as part of the individual school improvement plans and evaluates school performance through the annual school reports. However, there are no district level prioritized quantifiable goals and objectives used for evaluation. For example, the district could adopt as a goal "to have two schools functioning at least at the B level and two at the A level for FCAT purposes". This measure clearly outlines the intended goal and how success will be measured or identified.

Since there are no specified measurable objectives and goals for operational programs, meaningful performance evaluation against agreed upon expectations is not possible. According to district administrators, while there are no formal evaluations, they rely on staff reports to assess non-instructional program performance. While informal, anecdotal information can be a useful part of an overall evaluation system, the district is not using this best practice because major educational and operational programs are not formally and consistently evaluated for efficiency, effectiveness, and cost.

The district needs a more systematic method to determine which programs would benefit most from evaluation. This process begins by developing program performance measures and focusing evaluation resources on those programs that are not meeting expectations. In addition to performance, other criteria for determining which programs should be evaluated include legal requirements, funding source(s), students served, and risks or consequences of poor performance. District administrators should develop, with board approval, a schedule to regularly evaluate major programs. Evaluation results should be presented to the board and disseminated to district administrators and school personnel. In the event that professional consultation is necessary, the potential costs for this service should be identified and presented to the board for their consideration.

Action Plan 3-1 includes steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Best Practice 3: Using

The district clearly reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational programs but does not have current operational program data to report.

Without regular performance reports, school board members and the public may not be aware of the efficiency and effectiveness of the school district in meeting its major goals and objectives. Therefore, school districts should clearly report on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs. School districts that can demonstrate their ability to manage their programs efficiently and effectively are likely to receive greater support than those which do not provide accountability information.

While information on the Franklin County School District's educational efforts is widely communicated, the district does not currently have information relating to the performance and cost-efficiency of its major operational programs to ensure accountability. The district has demonstrated its commitment to effectively distribute program data and should include non-instructional program data when it becomes available.

For its education programs, the district makes the annual school performance reports available to parents and citizens and also publishes FCAT results in the local newspaper. Budget reports, showing revenues and expenditures, by specific categories are available at monthly, regularly scheduled board meetings. Staff reports on operational program accomplishments and problems are made as necessary or as requested, both in writing and verbally, as part of the monthly board meetings. These reports are available to the public as part of the board agenda and meeting materials.

The district uses numerous mechanisms to receive community feedback and address concerns, including parent conferences, especially when developing and monitoring academic improvement plans and individual education plans; principal-scheduled meetings for parent teacher conferences; encouragement for parents to call about concerns or problems; and, report card pickup open houses. Parents and citizens regularly contact principals, the superintendent, and board members to express concerns or problems. These calls are handled at the appropriate staff level to resolve concerns and assure accountability.

Regularly-scheduled school board meetings are well publicized and open to the public. To enhance public participation and attendance, board meetings are rotated among schools in the county's three major communities and begin at 6 p.m. in an effort to accommodate traditional work schedules.

The district distributes an annual survey to faculty, students, and parents soliciting their opinion on issues ranging from educational programs to school conditions. The district website provides contact information and enables parents and other taxpayers to email district personnel. (See Chapter 8, Best Practice 8 for a discussion and recommendation about expanding the survey instrument.)

The district can improve its operations in this area by continuing current communications and developing a more formal system for reporting district performance. Once the district develops and fully implements a strategic plan, it will be able to evaluate educational and non-instructional program performance. This

performance information should be available to community stakeholders, district administrators, and districtwide staff. For maximum public access, program performance information should be distributed in printed publications (e.g., school newsletters, meeting agendas, district fact sheets, and press releases) and in electronic format (e.g., E-mails and websites) to the greatest extent possible.

While the district effectively communicates educational program performance and cost-efficiency information, we recommend that it also communicate non-instructional performance and cost-efficiency program information once the data are available.

4 Educational Service Delivery

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using 4 of the 12 educational service delivery best practices. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs, effective and efficient workforce development programs, and ensures that students and teachers have sufficient current textbooks and other instructional materials. To meet the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its educational programs, the district needs to establish a systematic process for using data to make school improvement decisions, and establish mechanisms to improve the identification and placement of ESE students. In addition, the district needs to improve its oversight of the school improvement planning process and revise outdated curriculum guides. Finally, the district needs to keep school libraries open during school hours and keep teachers informed about how to integrate available instructional technology into their regular curricular activities.

As seen in Exhibit 4-1, the district has the opportunity to reduce costs and increase revenues in this area. Determining whether to take advantage of this opportunity is a district decision and should be based on many factors including district needs, public input, and school board priorities. If the district implements this action plan, it would be able to redirect the funds to other priorities, such as putting more money into the classroom or addressing deficiencies identified in this report.

Exhibit 4-1
Our Review Identified One Way the District Could Increase Revenues in the Area of Educational Service Delivery

| Best Practice Number | Fiscal Impact: Savings | | | | | |
	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Year 2007-08	Total
2 Seek Medicaid reimbursement for direct services	$15,992	$15,992	$15,992	$15,992	$15,992	$79,960

Background

The Franklin County School District served 1,442 students during the 2001-02 school year with an ethnic breakdown of 82% white, non-Hispanic, 16% black, non-Hispanic, 1% Hispanic, 1% multiracial, and less than 1% Asian/Pacific Islander. The district has seven schools, including two elementary schools, one pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade, one seventh through twelfth grade, one alternative school, one adult school, and one charter school. For Fiscal Year 2001-02, operating costs were $6,749 per pupil, more than the state's average operating cost of $5,180.

As Exhibit 4-2 shows, the Franklin County School District has experienced student decline over the past five years, the greatest decline in student population among its peer districts and the state. The district has a very low percentage of students served in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. The percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced priced lunch is higher than the state average and all but one of its peer districts.

Exhibit 4-2
Franklin County School District Student Demographics

District	Total Students	Percentage Increase, Fall 1997-2001	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) [1]	Percentage Eligible for Free or Reduce Price Lunch [2]
Bradford	4,097	-2%	1%	52%
Franklin	1,442	-9%	<1%	67%
Hendry	7,587	5%	7%	65%
Levy	6,260	6%	2%	56%
Sumter	6,396	8%	4%	58%
Washington	3,373	4%	0%	53%
State	2,499,781	12%	8%	44%

Source: DOE Profiles of Florida School Districts 1997-98, 2001-02. Florida School Indicators Report, 2001-02

The Franklin County School District's director of administrative services is responsible for providing all the instructional and support services required throughout the district. These services include exceptional student education, school readiness, school improvement and accountability, curriculum development, grant writing, charter school accountability, ESOL, instructional strategies, and administrative/reporting activities.

The Franklin County School District serves students through several types of programs. These include the K-12 basic education program, the Exceptional Student Education program (ESE), at-risk programs, accelerated programs, and vocational and adult education programs.

K-12 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 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 FCAT writing test.

Exceptional Student Education (ESE). Exceptional Student Education is designed for students who meet specific federal and state criteria. In Florida, 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. School districts must provide students with disabilities and students who are gifted the opportunity to receive a free appropriate public education that will maximize their learning. Schools use a variety of strategies, such as modifying schedules, changing teachers, or varying instructional techniques to help ESE students meet their potential and succeed in the classroom. Districts identify students who are eligible for ESE programs and provide special education programs and related services to meet the individual needs of those students.

The percentage of Franklin County School District students identified and served in the district's ESE program (18%) is lower than most of its peers. Seventeen percent of the district's students have disabilities while less than 1% are identified as gifted.

Teachers, parents, or guidance counselors begin the ESE process by referring students for assessment. Child Study Teams (comprising the assistant principal, teachers, and staffing specialist) initially screen students at the school level by reviewing the case, assessing the student, and determining appropriate interventions to assist the student to succeed. School personnel then implement these interventions over the course of six to nine weeks. If the child study team finds that these attempts are unsuccessful, the team refers the student to a school psychologist for evaluation. The results of this evaluation determine the student's ESE status. If the student requires ESE services, the child study team meets to decide the most appropriate placement for the student. Exhibit 4-3 illustrates this process.

Exhibit 4-3
The Child Study Team Referral Process

| Initial Referral | → | Child Study Team | → | Interventions Implemented | → | Referral for Evaluation | → | Evaluation | → | Placement |
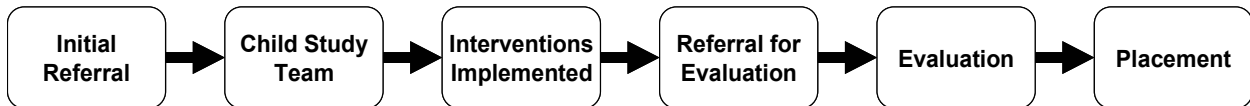
Source: Developed by OPPAGA.

At-Risk Programs. The Franklin County School District provides several programs for students who need academic or social skills interventions to assist them to be successful including Title I, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and alternative education programs. Title I programs offer ancillary support services to students needing assistance by providing instruction that reinforces the curriculum and helps students with deficient skills. Title I teachers and teacher assistants help regular classroom teachers by working with students to increase their proficiency in identified skill areas. Title I is funded by federal sources and provides services to schools with high concentrations of poverty as determined by the number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch. For a school to qualify for school-wide Title I services in 2000-01, 50% or more of its students must meet the criteria for free or reduced-price lunch. Three of the district's four traditional schools qualify for school-wide Title I programs.

As noted earlier, the percentage of students in the district's ESOL program is very low. The ESOL program currently serves two students or less than 1% of the student population. The district uses the inclusion approach to educate ESOL students, placing students in the regular classroom. School administrators identify ESOL students based on the results of the home language survey administered through the ESOL district office. Guidance counselors are responsible for ensuring that students progress and that their needs are met. To exit the program, students must meet certain reading and writing criteria.

The district also offers an alternative education program for students with discipline problems at the Franklin Learning Center. Students in this program, with the assistance of teachers, establish specific behavioral and academic goals. School personnel annually assess student progress toward meeting these goals.

Accelerated Programs. The Franklin County School District provides students several accelerated opportunities, including Advanced Placement (AP), Dual Enrollment, early admission to postsecondary education, and access to the Florida Virtual School. The district does not have an International Baccalaureate (IB) program, a course of study based on a specific curriculum design that provides an advanced level of high school coursework allowing students to meet various international university entrance standards.

The Dual Enrollment Program allows high school students to enroll in courses for which they can receive both high school and college credit. These courses can be academic courses that count toward an associate or baccalaureate degree or vocational courses that count toward meeting vocational certificate requirements. The Advanced Placement program allows high-achieving and self-motivated students in grades 11 and 12 to enroll in advanced courses of study and earn college credit and/or advanced placement credit while still enrolled in high school. During the 2002-03 school year, 58 students were enrolled in AP courses at the high school.

Franklin County students may also take advanced courses through the Florida Virtual School. Students who enroll in this on-line school take classes for graduation credit over the Internet, allowing them to learn at their own pace. Students do not physically meet as a group but access coursework over the Internet, using email, fax machines, and telephones to communicate with teachers and other students. School-based teachers or district administrators proctor required exams.

Vocational and Adult Education. The district offers several secondary and postsecondary vocational programs, including culinary arts and food production, accounting applications, and computer networking. The Franklin County School District offers adult education through the Franklin Learning Center, its alternative education setting, and currently has 54 students enrolled in the program. The district is working with local businesses and Gulf Coast Community College to establish agreements to provide secondary and adult students with more vocational program offerings in the future.

Student Support Services. In the Franklin County School District, the Student Services Department provides both psychological and guidance services. The district partners with the Franklin County Department of Health to provide students with school health services. The objective of these student support services is to provide support outside of the classroom, which helps students overcome problems that could interfere with their academic success and broadens their education experience. (For a further description of student support services see Best Practice 12).

Conclusion and Recommendations —————

Summary of Conclusions for Educational Service Delivery Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
Effective and Efficient Instructional Programs	1. District administrators use both academic and nonacademic data to guide them in their decision making about improving K-12 education programs.	No	4-6
	2. The district provides effective and efficient Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs for students with disabilities and students who are gifted.	No	4-9
	3. The district provides effective and efficient programs to meet the needs of at-risk students (including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Title I, and alternative education).	No	4-11
	4. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs (such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment).	Yes	4-12
	5. The district provides effective and efficient workforce development programs (such as vocational-technical, adult basic education, and adult high school programs).	Yes	4-13
	6. The district ensures that schools use effective planning and evaluation processes to improve student outcomes, including school improvement plans and other data driven processes such as the Sterling process.	No	4-14
	7. The district ensures effective progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 that maximizes student mastery of the Sunshine State Standards and prepares students for work and continued education.	No	4-16
	8. The district's organizational structure and staffing of educational programs minimizes administrative layers and processes.	No	4-18
Effective and Efficient Instructional Support	9. The district ensures that students and teachers have sufficient current textbooks and other instructional materials available to support instruction in core subjects and to meet the needs of teachers and students.	Yes	4-18
	10. The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction.	No	4-19
	11. The district utilizes instructional technology in the classroom to enhance curriculum and improve student achievement.	No	4-20
	12. The district provides necessary support services (guidance counseling, psychological, social work and health) to meet student needs and to ensure students are able to learn.	Yes	4-21

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Best Practice 1: Not Using

The district should improve its use of academic and nonacademic data to guide decision-making and improve K-12 education programs.

Effective school districts use academic and nonacademic data to drive decisions related to their instructional programs and to improve the performance of all students. To meet this best practice, districts should collect, analyze, and use data regularly to monitor the performance of its schools and subgroups of students, identify areas requiring intervention strategies, and evaluate the effectiveness of intervention strategies. In addition to performing well or showing steady improvement, an effective district uses academic and nonacademic data to establish district goals and priorities, target interventions, and allocate resources.

Administrators in the Franklin County School District currently analyze data for reporting purposes. However, there is no systematic data disaggregation for planning purposes or for making policy decisions to improve K-12 programs. Critical analysis of academic and other relevant data is particularly important for the district given their most recent performance on state administered exams. Such analysis will enable the district to better formulate strategies to target specific areas, schools, and students whose performance is lagging.

Compared to state and peer district averages the students in the Franklin County School District generally do not score well on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). As seen in Exhibit 4-4, the majority of students in grades 7-10 scored below Level 3 on the most recent administration of the reading FCAT. In math, the majority of Franklin students in grades 5, 7, and 9 scored below Level 3. Students performing at Level 1 and 2 have little success with the challenging content of the Sunshine State Standards. Franklin County students showed modest improvement over the past three years. Reading scores improved slightly in grades 3, 4, 5, and 9 from 2001 to 2003. Student scores in math for the same period also increased slightly in grades 3, 6, and 9.

When compared on the mean developmental scale score, Franklin County students showed considerably greater average individual learning gains from 2002 to 2003 than students in peer districts and across the state in many grade levels in both reading and math. While this success has not yet translated into significantly improved test scores overall, it does show progress and reflects the district's goal of "one student at a time" as stated in the district's strategic plan.

Exhibit 4-4
Franklin County Students Generally Do Not Score Well on the FCAT

District	FCAT Reading—Percentage of Students Scoring Level 3 or Higher
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Bradford	61	53	53	46	45	48	27	25
Franklin	60	66	53	53	38	34	29	23
Hendry	52	50	48	41	39	30	21	20
Levy	59	60	59	50	51	45	26	37
Sumter	60	58	60	44	44	44	25	37
Washington	66	68	62	57	64	45	31	35
State	63	60	58	53	52	49	31	36

District	FCAT Math—Percentage of Students Scoring Level 3 or Higher
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10
Bradford	56	44	39	46	39	52	46	51
Franklin	57	54	40	50	38	64	43	50
Hendry	55	41	45	36	34	38	44	46
Levy	52	53	50	43	48	56	56	60
Sumter	57	58	53	37	49	53	45	59
Washington	69	72	50	51	52	59	54	57
State	63	54	52	47	47	56	51	60

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2003.

State-based school grades are based largely on FCAT scores. Exhibit 4-5 compares Franklin County School District's 2002-03 school grades with those of its peer districts. Three of the district's four schools earned a grade of "A" or "B", an improvement over last year.

Exhibit 4-5
Three of Four of Franklin County School District Schools Earned a Grade of "A" or "B"

District	Number of Schools Receiving Grades	Number of Schools Receiving a Grade of:
		"A"	"B"	"C"	"D"	"F"
Bradford [1]	6	1	2	2	0	0
Franklin	4	1	2	1	0	0
Hendry	9	1	3	4	1	0
Levy	11	4	5	2	0	0
Sumter	10	3	3	4	0	0
Washington	6	3	1	2	0	0

[1] One school received an incomplete.
Source: Florida Department of Education, 2003.

If student achievement is to improve, it is vital that district administrators and teachers begin to look at data in a systematic manner and use the information to make policy decisions. The district should establish a systematic process for using data to make school improvement decisions. One approach would be for the district to ensure that all principals receive continued training in student data analysis methods and use this knowledge to make school improvement decisions. All principals and some teachers have attended the Digging Into Data training or other data analysis-type training offered through the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium. The district should provide continued support and follow-

up training as principals and lead teachers learn to track student data. There are several affordable commercial software packages designed specifically for this purpose. For example, the Sarasota County School District has developed a system that allows teachers to track all student data including teacher assessments and other computerized assessments, FCAT, and other standardized test scores in real time from their classroom computer. Regardless of which software the district chooses, district administrators should ensure that all principals receive adequate training in how to disaggregate data and are regularly using data analysis to make decisions. Minimally, the district should disaggregate results for student subgroups such as ESE, Title I, and ESOL as well as by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic category to look for patterns or trends and to target improvements based on this information. The district is fortunate to have an example of data-driven decision making to emulate. The Chapman Elementary principal is already using data in a very systematic manner. For the last few years, the principal has disaggregated student FCAT scores to the individual strand level, identified trends, and made staffing and professional development decisions based on these data.

Requiring principals to disaggregate student data, analyze it, and incorporate it into school-based decision making does not require additional resources, only additional training. While there may be a nominal fee associated with principal training, the district should explore the potential of Florida Department of Education and/or Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) data use training available at no charge. Once principals are educated about data and its proper use, they will be able to share this knowledge with school-based personnel to improve overall school-based decision making.

It is important that all district staff involved in decision making and curriculum implementation understand the need for and use of performance data. While there is an immediate need for principals to receive data use training, following completion of principal training, the district should explore the potential for other district staff, including the Title I coordinator, curriculum and instructional staff, and the superintendent to receive the same training. Finally, once the district has an understanding of data use and successfully incorporates it into site-based decision making, the district should explore automating the data analysis system. While this automation may require an investment, the amount may be minimal, as packages such as commercial spreadsheets or database software could be used or the district could explore purchasing a product developed by another school district or consortium.

Action Plan 4-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-1

We recommend that the district require all principals to complete data use training to be able to disaggregate student data and analyze the resulting information to make school-based decisions aimed at improving student performance.	

Action Needed		
	Step 1.	Identify data use training opportunities such as through FDOE and/or PAEC. Additionally, explore whether another school district has developed a data-training curriculum available at no cost or a nominal cost.
	Step 2.	Require all principals to complete follow-up training on disaggregating student data, analyzing the results, and using the analysis to develop school improvements action plans. Minimally, data results should be disaggregated for student subgroups such as ESE, Title I, and ESOL as well as by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic category to provide information that will allow for targeted improvement strategies. Explore the potential to provide the same training principals received to the curriculum and instructional staff and superintendent.
	Step 3.	The principal should spend time with teachers helping them disaggregate student data for the upcoming year. Principals should meet with their teachers or department heads to discuss teachers' assessments of students in their classes and strategies to address students' lagging performance.
	Step 4.	The district should hold periodic data use refresher training sessions aimed at reinforcing the importance of data in decision making.
	Step 5.	Once district personnel have completed data use training and are successfully using data to make site-based decisions, the district should explore automating their data analysis systems. This exploration should include consideration of commercial data analysis packages, database software, and products/systems developed by other school districts.

Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent, director of administrative services, principals
Time Frame	The training schedule and reporting mechanisms should be in place by the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.

Best Practice 2: Not Using

The district's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program for disabled and gifted students has some strong components, but the district should improve the identification and placement of ESE students and systematically conduct data analysis to evaluate ESE student outcomes.

Under federal and state law, school districts must provide appropriate services designed to meet the learning needs of disabled and gifted students. To meet this best practice, school districts should identify and place students requiring Exceptional Student Education (ESE) services in a timely manner and ensure minority student access to the gifted program. To increase student success, districts should promote parental involvement and ensure that teachers receive adequate support and training. Districts also should periodically assess the needs and progress of ESE students and make adjustments as needed to ensure that students perform to their capacity.

The Franklin County School District does a good job of following state and federal guidelines for exceptional students, including developing individual education plans (IEPs). The district sends six students to Gretchen Everhart School, a school in Leon County specifically designed to teach severely disabled students, for center-based ESE services that are beyond the scope of what Franklin County is able to provide. The director of administrative services conducts an annual cost analysis of these services to assure that the district is not paying too much and is not paying for services that they could provide at a lower cost. The district does a good job completing ESE evaluations in a timely manner; completing assessments within 60 days. In fact, even though the state has not yet instituted the 60-day rule, district administrators report that the district's policy, as outlined in its admissions and placement manual, requires all evaluations to take place within 60 days of referral. The district has very few pending referrals.

The Franklin County School District has secured a contract with a third party billing agency to begin maximizing Medicaid reimbursements for these students. While the district has been billing for the administrative claim portion of Medicaid, with this contract it will begin fee-for-service billing. The district expects fee for service billing to bring an estimated $17,769 ($172 for transportation plus $17,597 for therapy) annually, which it plans to use to provide ESE student services. The district estimates that it will pay the contractor approximately $1,777 annually for billing services. Thus, the net increase to the district is $15,992 annually or $79,960 over five years.

> **We recommend that the district pursue its plans to seek Medicaid reimbursement for direct services, including transportation and therapy.**

The district also has been making progress at increasing the percentage of disabled students participating in the FCAT. The state Department of Education has identified participation in statewide assessments by students with disabilities as a key indicator in monitoring ESE programs. As seen in Exhibit 4-6, the percentage of ESE students participating in the FCAT is lower than most peer districts and the state average in grades 4, 5, and 8. The district has developed a Continuous Improvement/Self Assessment Monitoring Plan for 2002-03. The plan outlines specific goals, objectives, strategies, and timelines to assure that more ESE students participate in the FCAT test. There is evidence that these strategies have been successful. The district has shown considerable improvement over the past three years in most grades in both reading and math. In grade 10, the district's participation rate exceeded four peer districts and the state average.

Exhibit 4-6
Franklin County's ESE Students Participate in FCAT Testing
Less than Most Peers in Grades 4, 5, and 8 and More than Most Peers
and the State in Grade 10, 2001-02

District	Grade 4 Reading	Grade 5 Math	Grade 8 Reading	Grade 8 Math	Grade 10 Reading	Grade 10 Math
Bradford	91%	88%	91%	87%	77%	76%
Franklin	**77%**	**71%**	**67%**	**78%**	**73%**	**67%**
Hendry	99%	93%	85%	85%	34%	34%
Levy	94%	94%	82%	82%	66%	68%
Sumter	91%	90%	98%	97%	79%	83%
Washington	88%	68%	68%	68%	56%	56%
State	88%	88%	80%	80%	62%	62%

Source: Florida Department of Education, LEA Profile, 2003.

> **We recommend that the district continue to implement the Continuous Improvement/Self Assessment Monitoring Plan as directed by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to ensure that more ESE students participate in FCAT testing.**

The district could improve its Exceptional Student Education program in three ways. First, the district could improve the identification and placement of exceptional students. The district's current placement rate is 55%. When a high number of students are referred for ESE services evaluation and found ineligible, it unnecessarily increases workload and may ultimately lead to a need for additional psychologists to conduct the evaluations or increase the overall time it takes to evaluate all students. The district should establish mechanisms to decrease the number of inappropriate ESE referrals. In addition, the district's percentage of gifted students is lower than its peers. Disproportionate percentages of gifted students may not be a problem, but the district needs to analyze related data to identify why its percentage of gifted students is lower than its peers. The district recognizes its low percentage of gifted students and

has implemented a plan to test all students scoring at level 5 or higher on the FCAT for the gifted program. This should help increase the number of Franklin County students that will be screened for the gifted program.

Second, the district needs to increase the percentage of disabled students placed in the least restrictive environment (LRE). While the district does an excellent job placing its 3-5 year old students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers, the district should improve it's placement of students age 6-21. According to Florida Department of Education reports, the district's regular class placement of disabled students aged 6-21 is the lowest of its peer districts and the state average.

Action Plan 4-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-2

We recommend that the district establish mechanisms to improve the identification and placement of ESE students.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Continue to review current placement of ESE students to determine whether some students can be better served in the regular classroom. Ensure that all members of the ESE placement decision team receive training in placing students in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
	Step 2.	Continue to provide teachers training and ongoing support to assist in implementing strategies and providing appropriate accommodations to help disabled students succeed. Accommodations/modifications for courses may include adjusting teaching methods or materials or allowing additional time to complete assignments. Accommodations for assessments may include a flexible format, response, or setting.
	Step 3.	Review options for reducing inappropriate referrals. This may involve training and support of regular education teachers in strategies for individualized instruction so fewer students are referred for evaluation that are unlikely to qualify for special services. Implement and monitor the strategies and adjust as needed to reduce the rate of inappropriate referrals.
	Step 4.	Continue implementation of the district's plan to identify gifted students; adjust as necessary.
	Step 5.	Review the district's placement efforts twice a year to determine whether placement has improved or additional changes are needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of administrative services and principals	
Time Frame	Review of current placement should take place by the beginning of the 2003-04 school year; training and support should be on-going	

Third, the district can improve its Exceptional Student Education program by implementing a plan to systematically conduct data analysis to evaluate ESE student outcomes. Action Plan 4-1 includes the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

Best Practice 3: Not Using

The district provides effective and efficient programs to meet the needs of at-risk students but should establish mechanisms to systematically analyze data and use the results to help improve student outcomes.

Students at risk for failing or falling behind grade level often have significant barriers to learning, and therefore, need various specialized services and programs to address these barriers and to be academically successful. School districts should have programs in place to meet the diverse needs of these students, especially those who need academic and/or social skills interventions to assist them to perform well. To meet this best practice, school districts should periodically assess the academic and social needs of their students and use resulting information to identify or develop programs to meet those needs. To increase student success, districts should promote parental involvement and provide teachers adequate training and

support. Districts should also periodically assess the progress of at-risk students adjusting programs as needed to ensure that students perform to their capacity.

The Franklin County School District does not use student achievement data to evaluate its programs for at-risk students. The district can improve its operations by systematically analyzing data and using the results to drive decisions to improve student outcomes, particularly in the area of Title I which serves the majority of students. School administrators should be using student data to ensure that each student is performing to his/her potential. In addition to FCAT scores, the district should be evaluating data such as suspension and expulsion rates, graduation rates, and dropout rates. These data should be disaggregated by student subgroups, including Title I, ESOL, and alternative education and compared with peer districts and state averages. Analyzing data in this way will allow the district to determine where performance gaps exist and target district resources to improve student outcomes in those areas. Action Plan 4-1 includes the steps needed to implement this recommendation.

We recommend that the district consider providing additional Title I support and assistance to ensure that students receiving Title I are provided the tools they need to succeed. Given the number of responsibilities assigned to the director of administrative services, this individual is not able to adequately oversee the responsibilities attached to Title I requirements. (For a detailed discussion of this issue, please see Best Practice 8.) One option would be to train a teacher to assist the principal currently responsible for Title I, providing the teacher with a modest stipend. Together, the principal and teacher would be responsible for analyzing data as it relates to Title I. They would also be responsible for conducting training for teachers and parents, tracking academic improvement plans (AIPs) of students not making adequate yearly progress as determined by the state's accountability system, and overseeing the school improvement planning process. School improvement planning is particularly important because in Franklin County the school improvement planning process also serves as the Title I planning process.

Action Plan 4-3 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-3

We recommend that the district improve its capacity to systematically analyze data and use the results to drive decisions to improve student outcomes in the area of Title I.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Improve capacity to conduct data analysis, monitor AIPs, monitor the SIP process as it relates to Title I, conduct trainings, and perform other duties as they pertain to Title I.
	Step 2.	Explore options and determine the most feasible way to increase capacity to conduct analysis of Title I student data.
	Step 3.	One possibility would be to train a teacher or other administrator in the district to assist the principal currently responsible for Title I.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, director of administrative services, food service director	
Time Frame	Begin process in the 2003-04 school year with implementation in 2004-05.	

Best Practice 4: Using

The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs (such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Dual Enrollment), but should provide adult supervision to students taking courses via television.

Highly motivated and academically talented high school students need educational challenges and opportunities to accelerate their learning and meet their academic potential. To meet the needs of these students, districts should provide an appropriate number and type of accelerated programs, such as advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, and Dual Enrollment. Districts should periodically assess the needs of their highly motivated and academically talented high school students and use this information to identify and develop accelerated programs to meet those needs. Districts should ensure that accelerated programs are accessible to all eligible students and that teachers, parents, and students are

aware of such opportunities. To increase student success, districts should ensure that teachers receive adequate support and training. Districts should also take advantage of incentives and technical assistance offered through the Florida Department of Education and the College Board.

The Franklin County School District does a good job of offering a variety of accelerated programs for a district of its size. The number of students enrolled in AP courses has increased dramatically from zero in 1999-2000 to 25 in 2000-01 and 58 in 2001-02. The number of students participating in dual enrollment classes has remained steady at 12. The Franklin County School District also does a good job enrolling students in the Florida Virtual School. The district allows students to register for on-line courses and complete them as part of their regular course schedule. Students with on-line courses report to the library or computer lab instead of a standard classroom for one class period daily to work on their on-line coursework. The district has tried some innovative teaching techniques such as an instructional television (ITV) course whereby an Apalachicola High School chemistry class, taught by an on-site teacher, is viewed on television by another class in Carrabelle. However, based on interviews with school personnel, the district does not always provide adequate adult supervision for the class viewing the course. For example, in some cases, students were not focusing on the instruction, but socializing with other students in the room. In addition, this class occasionally experiences technical difficulties that the students are unable to fix. The district should provide adult supervision at all times. This person does not necessarily have to be a teacher or administrator, but can be a paraprofessional, volunteer, or parent. The district should ensure that this individual receives some training in use of the equipment and knows whom to contact if there is equipment failure.

> **We recommend that the district continue to use the ITV teaching method to maximize course offerings, but provide adult supervision at all times in the remote viewing classroom.**

Best Practice 5: Using

The district provides effective and efficient workforce development programs.

Students who do not plan to attend college immediately after high school need to enhance their ability to be economically self-sufficient. Many of these students benefit greatly from workforce development programs, such as career and technical education, which help them attain skills needed to become or remain employed. These programs are designed to provide training to meet local and state workforce needs and to help Florida compete in a global economy by building a broadly based, highly skilled, more productive workforce. The programs also provide a broad variety of services including literacy training, English language skills, and/or attainment of high school diploma for adults who need these skills to enter the labor market. Districts should have workforce development programs that meet the needs of business and industry in their areas, including high skills/high wages occupations as well as occupations that are in critical demand by the community. Districts should periodically assess workforce development program offerings to ensure that needed programs and newly emerging occupations are addressed. Districts should also provide adult basic education programs that reach all sectors of the population and meet the needs of students at all literacy levels. To assess student success and improve programs, districts should monitor changes in performance funding, student completion, and job placement.

The Franklin County School District offers several vocational programs, including culinary arts and food production, accounting applications, administrative and office technology, and computer networking. The district is in the process of working out a collaborative agreement with Gulf Coast Community College for Franklin County students to take *Introduction to Electricity* and *Introduction to Pipe Trades*, the first courses needed to become an electrician and plumber, respectively.

In addition, because of a $100,000 Perkins Grant received by Gulf Coast Community College, the district will be able to establish an interactive television connection between the college and the two district high schools that will enable high school students to take classes offered by the college while physically

remaining in the high school. The district expects to begin offering such classes during the 2003-04 school year. Courses are expected to be offered in both the afternoon and evening, allowing both high school and adult students to take advantage of the enhanced course offerings.

The district can further enhance its operations in this area by continuing to implement planning procedures for its vocational and technical workforce programs, including input from the local community. The district should obtain input from the local business community, the workforce development board, and the community college as to which programs would best serve their employment needs. The Franklin County business climate is changing from the fishing industry to tourism and building construction and the district should continue to tailor its programs to the needs of graduates and the local economy.

> **We recommend that the district continue to implement planning procedures for its vocational and technical workforce programs that include the local business community, workforce board, and community college.**

Best Practice 6: Not Using

While the district has a school improvement planning process in place, it should improve the quality of the school improvement plans, evaluate each school's progress in meeting its school improvement plan objectives, and use the results to develop a districtwide strategic plan.

High-performing districts and schools use effective processes to assess and improve student outcomes. Florida law requires that each district school have a school improvement plan (SIP) that establishes the school's specific goals, objectives, and strategies to meet the educational needs of their students. Districts should ensure that all schools effectively plan and evaluate programs and strategies to improve student outcomes. Districts should ensure that each school's improvement plan addresses the needs of major subgroups of students (regular, ESE, ESOL, Title 1, etc.) and incorporates and integrates to the extent possible other school-level improvement planning processes (Title I, technology, school improvement, Sterling, etc.). To increase effectiveness of the school improvement process, districts should provide training for school improvement teams including the use of academic and non-academic data to identify areas needing improvement, developing measurable objectives, and evaluating progress in meeting objectives. Districts should also oversee the school improvement planning process and provide additional assistance to schools that do not make adequate progress.

All Franklin County schools have a board-approved school improvement plan (SIP). Each year, the director of administrative services provides each school a training manual and up-to-date information from the Florida Department of Education regarding changes affecting the school improvement plan. In addition, each school receives a timeline and sample SIP to serve as a guide.

The district can improve its SIP process in two ways. First, the district should improve the quality of School Advisory Council (SAC) member training. While the director of Administrative Services provides every SAC a training manual and up-to-date information annually, there is need for improved training as evidenced by the quality of the school improvement plans. The four school improvement plans we reviewed varied in quality, with only one containing concrete data analysis, measurable objectives, strategies tied directly to data and budget items, timelines for each item, and the school's technology plan. The district recently decided to use this plan as a template for all schools. In addition to using a template, the district should provide additional training and support to ensure that school personnel understand that the SIP can and should be a driving force for school improvement. The district has already begun this process by holding bi-monthly district wide meetings with all SAC members. During these meetings, critical lines of communication were opened and a district network of SAC members was created.

Action Plan 4-4 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-4

We recommend the district continue with its plan to develop a model for the School Improvement Plans.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Continue district wide SAC meetings and use them to train members in critical need areas such as analyzing data and defining a measurable objective.
	Step 2.	Contact PAEC to determine what professional development resources are available. The Digging into Data series for both teachers and principals would be appropriate for SAC members, provided student confidentiality is maintained.
	Step 3.	Once SACs complete data analysis and identify areas in need of improvement, conduct budgeting sessions in conjunction with school principals and the director of business services to enable linkage of budget items to SIP strategies, objectives, and goals.
	Step 4.	Once complete, each SAC should present the SIP to the board. The presentation should provide the board with a brief overview of the school's goals and objectives. The board should examine how each of the goals, objectives, and strategies might affect student achievement.
Who Is Responsible	The Title I coordinator, director of business services (as needed for technical support), finance director	
Time Frame	Beginning of the 2003-04 school year and ongoing thereafter	

The second way the district can improve its school improvement planning is by improving its strategic plan. To achieve this, a summary of the results of each plan should be incorporated into the district's strategic plan when the strategic plan is updated. There will be issues, such as districtwide teacher recruitment and retention, which are more appropriately addressed in the district strategic plan and may not appear in the individual SIPs. However, issues of student achievement and other student outcomes should be consistent in both plans. See Action Plan 3-1 for additional steps to improve the district's strategic plan.

Action Plan 4-5 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-5

We recommend the district use the information in the SIPs to revise its district strategic plan to better integrate the documents and address student achievement needs and outcomes.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Once the SIPs are complete and approved by the board, the Title I coordinator or assistant superintendent should compile the SIP goals and objectives into one document to create a shell for a new district strategic plan.
	Step 2.	The superintendent, school board, assistant superintendent, Title I coordinator, director of business services, and any other parties the district deems relevant should conduct a workshop to develop a new district strategic plan.
	Step 3.	The new plan must be based on disaggregated data analysis results, have measurable objectives, and have strategies tied to timelines and budget allocations where applicable.
	Step 4.	The plan should be adjusted annually and as student outcome data is received.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent, school board, assistant superintendent, Title I coordinator, director of business services, and any other parties the district deems relevant.	
Time Frame	Beginning of the 2003-04 school year and ongoing thereafter	

Best Practice 7: Not Using

While the district's student progression plan complies with Florida law, the district should revise outdated curriculum guides and improve its monitoring of the academic improvement plan process.

In 1996, the State Board of Education adopted the Sunshine State Standards as content expectations for Florida's K-12 students. Since that time, the standards have been refined and expanded to include grade level expectations and represent the academic expectations for Florida students by grade level and subject. Florida districts and schools should have modified their instructional programs and aligned curriculum to include the standards to ensure that students master necessary skills and will be able to perform at the next grade level. Thus, districts must have a clear, comprehensive, easy-to-follow student progression plan that meets state requirements and incorporates the Sunshine State Standards. The plan should be specific, informing teachers and school administrators of factors to consider in deciding whether to promote or retain a student. The plan should also specify the steps schools should take to ensure that retained students either receive intensive remedial assistance or are placed in a program different from what the student received the previous year. To ensure that students progress as expected from kindergarten through grade 12 and are prepared for work and continued education, districts should have and use strategies that facilitate smooth transitions from one school level to the next. Districts also should periodically assess how well their students progress and use this information to make adjustments as needed.

The Franklin County School District has a student progression plan that complies with Florida law. However, like in many school districts, the student progression plan has grown into a large, often confusing document. To address this problem, several school districts (Osceola and Okaloosa, for example) have developed plans outlining the criteria for promotion, including actual steps and interventions at specific points throughout the school year. The district could enhance its operations by explaining the process for making retention and promotion decisions in an easy-to-use format, such as a matrix or flowchart detailing every step and option. A matrix or flowchart could be included in the student progression plan for every grade level in the subject areas of reading, math, language arts, and science.

> **We recommend that the district revise the student progression plan to include an easy to use table or flowchart outlining specific decisions, criteria, and assessments teachers should use when deciding whether to promote or retain a student.**

While some curriculum areas have comprehensive curriculum guides with detailed learning strategies aligned with the Sunshine State Standards and benchmarks, other content areas, such as elementary language arts, are based on 1995 frameworks, are aligned with the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills rather than the FCAT, and are not correlated with the Sunshine State Standards. These outdated curriculum guides also do not contain any teaching strategies aligned to benchmarks. We recommend that the district begin developing curriculum guides in line with the Sunshine State Standards, benchmarks, and grade level expectations. These guides should provide examples of learning strategies for teachers down to the individual strand level. The guides do not necessarily have to be available in hard copy, but should be accessible to all teachers. The district may choose to compile on-line resources currently available and disseminate them to teachers via the district's web page or some other electronic method. Alternatively, the district might opt to select content area lead teachers to develop these guides during the summer, paying them a modest stipend. If the district chooses this option, the district estimates the cost would be $2,000 ($80 per day for five teachers for five days) for elementary teachers and $2,000 ($80 per day for five days for five teachers) for middle/secondary teachers. Since reading is an area of critical need and elementary language arts is a content area with an obsolete guide, the district

may choose to begin working on elementary reading first. The district expects to revise its curriculum guides for the elementary grades during summer 2003 using staff development funds.

Action Plan 4-6 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-6

We recommend that the district develop curriculum guides which provide examples of specific teaching strategies that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards, benchmarks, and grade level expectations.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of administrative services, assistant superintendent and director of business services should meet and determine which route to go in developing these curriculum guides. If the district chooses the on-line option, the technology resource teacher should be involved as well. [1] If teachers will be brought in to develop the guides and/or compile the information a decision needs to be made as to how much the district can pay them and how long they can work during the summer.
	Step 2.	Research other districts to see what is already available. There may be guides available from other districts that will meet the district's needs available at very low or no cost.
	Step 3.	Since reading is an area of critical need and since elementary language arts is a content area with an obsolete guide, we recommend that the district consider beginning work on elementary reading first.
	Step 4.	Once the guides are developed, all teachers and principals should be trained in the area that the guide covers so they will know the resource exists and will use it.
	Step 5.	Conduct a satisfaction survey of teachers at the end of the school year to see if the teachers used the curriculum guides, what they found useful, what they would improve and apply these suggestions when developing future curriculum guides for other subject areas.
Who Is Responsible		The director of administrative services, assistant superintendent, director of business services, reading teachers; if on-line option is chosen, technology resource teacher
Time Frame		July - August 2003-04; ongoing thereafter

[1] The technology resource teacher is responsible for providing technical support and training to all schools in the district.

The district generally does a good job of developing academic improvement plans (AIPs) for students scoring in the lowest quartile (level 1) on the FCAT. Franklin County has an automated AIP system that makes monitoring AIPs relatively easy. School staff enters students scoring at level 1 into the system and tracks them throughout the year. They then run quarterly reports and give them to the director of administrative services for review. However, the AIP system breaks down because district staff is overwhelmed and cannot keep up with the workload. For example, as of the week before FCAT testing, some level 1 students still did not have AIPs. Part of the problem is that the district does not hold teachers accountable for developing and monitoring AIPs. As stated in Action Plan 4-1 we recommend requiring each principal to complete data use follow-up training in how to use performance data in site-based decision making. By disaggregating student data and using the results of the analysis to develop action plans for school improvement decisions, it is far more likely that students who require the additional assistance will receive the support they need. We also recommend in Best Practice 3 that the district improve its capacity to systematically analyze data and use the results to drive decisions to improve student outcomes in the area of Title I by training a teacher to assist the principal currently responsible for these duties. Additional Title I assistance will add an important layer of accountability to help ensure that all federal requirements are implemented at the school level. If the district chooses not to train a teacher to assist the principal currently responsible for Title I, it could assign the monitoring of AIPs to the appropriate school-level person, such as the guidance counselor.

Best Practice 8: Not Using

The district's current organizational structure and educational programs staffing does not adequately meet teacher and student needs.

School districts that operate efficiently meet the needs of their teachers and students with minimal administrative layers and staff. To meet this best practice, school districts should have a central office organizational structure that ensures adequate administrative oversight of education programs, adequate curriculum and instructional support for teachers, and adequate support to enable schools to identify their needs and evaluate their effectiveness. In addition, districts should ensure that individual school staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of students and are comparable across district schools.

The director of administrative services oversees the educational service delivery functions of the Franklin County School District. This individual is responsible for a wide range of duties as listed below.

• exceptional student education (ESE)	• Even Start
• curriculum	• school readiness
• instructional materials	• school improvement and accountability
• library/media	• charter schools
• student progression plan	• Florida Virtual School
• ESOL	• grant writing
• equity	• school volunteer program

As a result of such a large span of responsibility, some of these duties receive less attention than others. In Best Practice 3, we recommend that the district improve evaluation capacity by assigning the Title I coordinator an assistant. We also recommend, in Action Plan 4-1, that principals complete data use follow-up training to incorporate performance data into site-based decision making. These actions should help alleviate some of the director of administrative services' workload and help close some of the gaps brought on by having one person responsible for so many jobs.

At the school level, we found a principal teaching two courses daily and a library closed during school hours while the library/media specialist teaches classes. The district should make it a budget priority to alleviate these situations. For example, the district should aggressively pursue grants and actively encourage business/community partnerships and parent volunteers to assist in areas of highest need.

The recommendation in Best Practice 3, Action Plan 4-1, and our recommendation that the district make staffing a budget priority will allow it to improve operations and use this best practice.

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

Best Practice 9: Using

The district ensures that students and teachers have sufficient current textbooks and other instructional materials to support instruction in core subjects and meet teacher and student needs.

To meet the needs of teachers and students, school districts should ensure that all schools have sufficient numbers of current, state-adopted textbooks and other instructional materials available to support instruction in core subjects. Districts should solicit input from teachers when selecting textbooks and other instructional materials. To increase availability of textbooks, districts should seek to purchase, maintain, and dispose of textbooks in a cost-effective manner. Districts should collect monies from

students who have damaged or lost textbooks and use these monies to offset materials costs or to purchase additional materials.

The Franklin County School District does a good job in this area and follows the state textbook adoption cycle. When it is time to adopt a textbook the district forms a committee of interested teachers to decide which book to adopt. Teachers reported being satisfied with their level of input in this process. Teachers, parents, and students also reported being satisfied with the textbooks they (or their children) are using. When a book becomes obsolete, the district first tries to sell it. If unable to sell it, they then either donate the book to charity or store it in the warehouse until the next county sale. Due to the district's small size, there are few problems with lost and/or damaged books and the collection of related fees. Lost book records are informal and most transactions are successfully handled by a phone call from the school secretary to the student's parents.

Best Practice 10: Not Using
The district's school libraries and media services are insufficient.

To meet this best practice, school districts should have sufficient school library/media center resources to support instruction. Library materials and equipment should be up-to-date and centers should operate during hours that meet student needs. To maximize the availability of library materials, the district should have and regularly use procedures to reduce library and media costs, such as coordinating orders across schools to take advantage of bulk rate discounts.

The Franklin County School District's library and media centers all have automated card catalogue systems. However, until recently, not all collections were entered into the system and there was no easy way to conduct an inventory or to determine the collection's age other than to conduct a book-by-book inventory. It was evident from pulling random volumes off the shelves that the collection is out-of-date. However, the exact age is unknown. The district has recently purchased library cataloging software which should greatly enhance the media specialist's ability to manage the collection. We recommend that the district assess the age of each school's library collection and target existing library resources in the area of most critical need, typically areas that rapidly change over time such as computers, geography, science, and technology.

> **We recommend that the district assess each school library collection's age and target current and future resources to the area(s) of most critical need.**

Some library/media centers are closed for large portions of the day while the library/media specialist teaches classes. The library should remain open for students to use throughout the day. This can be achieved in a variety of ways. If the librarian is teaching a small class in the media center, the district could use a student assistant to check out books and keep the library open while the media specialist teaches. Another option is for community volunteers to run the library while the librarian teaches classes. Alternatively, the district (or the school) could hire a paraprofessional to run the library while the librarian teaches. This, however, would require additional funding. These are just a few of the options the district should consider. Regardless of which option(s) the district chooses, the goal is to keep the library open for students during all school hours, in addition to some time before and after school.

Action Plan 4-7 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-7

We recommend that the district keep the school library/media centers open to students during the school day and a period of time before and after school.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Determine whether student assistants can be used to staff the library while the librarian teaches.
	Step 2.	Determine whether community volunteers are available to run the library while the librarian teaches.
	Step 3.	Establish a library staffing schedule, using either student assistants or community volunteers to ensure that the library remains open during school hours and at least one half hour before and after school.
Who Is Responsible	The director of administrative services, principals, library and media specialists	
Time Frame	The 2003-04 school year and ongoing thereafter	

The school district does not order library materials in bulk, as there are just four schools. However, if the district were to form a purchasing alliance with neighboring districts or through PAEC they might be able to save money on common items that all districts will purchase.

> **We recommend that the district explore innovative options for purchasing library materials in bulk such as combining orders with other school districts or with PAEC member districts.**

Best Practice 11: Not Using

While the district utilizes some instructional technology, the district should ensure that all teachers are aware of available technology resources and provide specific training on how to integrate technology into the curriculum.

Technology has the potential to enhance curriculum and instruction, help improve student achievement, and assist students in attaining basic computer skills needed for the 21st century. Whenever possible, districts should use technology to support classroom learning. For instance, districts should offer a variety of courseware focused on helping students achieve grade level academic benchmarks as well as common basic software packages. To increase student success, districts should ensure that all students have opportunities to use computer software while in school. Districts also should periodically obtain feedback from teachers and principals related to the usefulness and adequacy of instructional technology and use this information when selecting future materials.

The Franklin County School District uses computer labs a great deal, particularly utilizing specialized software to track student progress in math and reading. However, computer use in the classroom as part of the daily curriculum is sporadic, with some teachers using technology more frequently than others. Some teachers indicated that they are not always aware of how to access software already downloaded on their machines. As previously mentioned, the district's administrative staff wear many hats. This is also true of the technology resource teacher who is responsible for maintaining all of the district's hardware, technology training, instructional curriculum, and technical support. The schools have computer lab monitors but computer lab responsibilities typically take up their time. Consequently, teachers may not always be aware of what is available or how to help their students use it.

While they take full advantage of the computer labs, most teachers we spoke to said that they are not integrating technology into their curriculum, either in their own presentation of material or requiring students to use technology to complete their assignments. In addition to not knowing what technology resources are available, some teachers expressed concern that they do not have the skills to fully integrate technology into the curriculum, including requiring students to use technology as part of their assignments. The district has recently begun a system whereby, as part of each teacher's evaluation, principals must observe teachers using technology in the classroom. Combined with improved

communication and additional training, this should improve teachers' use of technology with their students. For further discussion of focusing training on curriculum integration, please see Best Practice 3 in Chapter 5.

Action Plan 4-8 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 4-8

We recommend that the district conduct technology information and training sessions to keep teachers and other school-based staff informed about available technology, how to use it, and how to incorporate it into the curriculum.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The technology resource teacher continues to provide school-based staff an overview/training of district technology, its uses, and how it can be incorporated into the daily curriculum, including requiring students to use various software programs as part of their assignments.
	Step 2.	As part of the overview/training process, teachers should develop lesson plans incorporating the use of available technology that can be used as examples throughout the district. The resulting plans can be posted to the district's website or compiled into a reference guide.
	Step 3.	Determine whether the overview/training needs to be held at each school to allow for on-site technology demonstrations.
	Step 4.	The technology resource teacher should conduct periodic follow-ups, such as weekly or bi-weekly emails to teachers with tips or updates on where to find information.
Who Is Responsible	Technology resource teacher, principals, teachers	
Time Frame	Pre-service for the 2003-04 school year; ongoing thereafter	

Best Practice 12: Using

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

To be successful learners, students often need a variety of non-academic services to meet their health, social, and emotional needs, which if left unattended may present significant barriers to their learning ability. Districts should ensure that schools offer sufficient support services, such as counseling and social work to help maintain the overall well being of students. An effective district periodically reviews and assesses its support services plan and uses this information to make adjustments as needed to help resolve barriers to student learning.

The Franklin County School District does a good job of providing student support services. Like many small districts, Franklin administrators evaluate their student support needs informally and make changes based on student needs. For example, the district previously contracted with a private firm for psychological services. However, because the district was not receiving the service it needed, there was a backlog in ESE assessments. Consequently, students who should have been receiving ESE services were not because they were waiting to receive the formal testing required by law for admission into the ESE program. The district resolved this problem by not renewing the outside contract and hiring its own school psychologist. Now, students in the district are receiving the services they need in a timely manner. Franklin County School District administrators periodically compare their health worker, guidance counselor, and psychologist staffing levels to other peer districts and they compare favorably. The district is very successful at providing student health services. Each school in has a full-time nurse or health aide funded through the county health department. We commend the district for this school-by-school health care staffing.

5 Administrative and Instructional Technology

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using seven of the nine administrative and instructional technology best practices. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner, provides professional training for technology use, maintains a dependable standards-based infrastructure, uses technology to improve communications, has policies and procedures outlining the appropriate use of technology, has system controls in place, and meets the technological needs of administrative and instructional personnel. To meet the remaining best practice standards, the district should improve its assessment of technology training and technical support needs, include these needs in the district technology plan, and increase access to on-site technical support.

Background

Instructional and administrative technology is an important aspect of school district operations. Technology affects student performance by enabling students to access and analyze information, solve problems, collaborate with others, and effectively communicate their thoughts and ideas. Teachers use technology as a tool to assist in administrative duties, provide curriculum support, and prepare students for life after graduation. Administrators and district employees use technology to provide timely information, to effectively manage the district's resources, and make informed decisions.

The instructional and administrative technology resources in the Franklin County School District serve six sites: two elementary schools, a K-12th high school, a 7th-12th high school, the Franklin County Learning Center, and the district administrative building. A wide variety of technology resources exist throughout the district.

Instructional Technology

Computer and audio-visual equipment, projection systems, televisions, and digital cameras are available to employees at every school. All schools have T1 connectivity and all classrooms have Internet access. Each classroom can connect up to six devices to the network; however, most classrooms use four of these connections for at least three student and one teacher workstation connected to the network. Each school uses computer labs to assist with instruction in a variety of ways including the use of integrated learning systems, drill and practice, business applications, and Internet research.

In the last two years, the district has pursued technological strategies to improve student academic achievement. New technology helps teachers assess student academic achievements and automatically develop individual student progress plans that follow Sunshine State guidelines. The district is also implementing the use of televideo/audio equipment to provide distance learning opportunities to teachers,

administrators, and students. In addition, the district maintains a website called "Teacher Talk" allowing every teacher the opportunity to make announcements to parents and the community using an online bulletin board. [1] Each teacher and all district administrators have their own email accounts, allowing them to communicate with district staff and parents.

Administrative Technology

The district provides technological systems that support administrative functions. The Franklin County School District participates in cooperative agreements with other small districts to contract for financial management and student record services. These systems are installed at the Northwest Regional Data Center and accessed by remote terminals housed at district offices. As a participant in the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) and the Gateway Student System Consortium, the district avoids the high cost of providing these services in-house. These systems are well supported by the consortia and are very stable.

As a PAEC member, the district uses a financial management system to track payroll, personnel, finance, professional development, and facilities management information. Support for the financial management systems is provided by PAEC and includes application support, cost reporting, and user training. [2] The district tracks student records using an application developed and supported by the Gateway Student System Consortium. This system is used to track student demographics, schedules, attendance, bus schedules, health records, test scores, and full-time equivalent (FTE) student counts. Support for the student information system includes transmitting electronic data, training users, services for Florida Department of Education required surveys, and maintaining the application to accommodate changes in reporting requirements. [3]

Funding

The district's estimated technology budget is approximately 3% of the 2002-03 budget. Over the last three years, the district used public school technology funds, E-rate reimbursement, and state and federal grants to fund approximately 83% of its technology expenditures. [4] The district uses other funding sources such as local funding, capital outlay funds, and general revenue, to cover additional technology expenditures. Hardware acquisitions account for the majority of district technology expenditures. Exhibit 5-1 shows the district's technology funding sources and expenditures for Fiscal Years 1999-2000 through 2001-02. As illustrated, the Franklin County School District spent more on technology ($702 per student) in Fiscal Year 2001-02 than in preceding years.

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[1] See Franklin County Teacher Talk website for more information.

[2] The Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) presently has 14 member districts with the Washington County School Board as district of record, e.g. the legal entity under which the consortium operates.

[3] Santa Rosa County serves as the fiscal agent for the Gateway Student System. The system meets FDOE reporting requirements for K-20 and the Workforce Development Information System.

[4] See E-rate for further information on E-rate reimbursement amounts.

Exhibit 5-1
Franklin County Technology Funding Sources and Expenditures

	Fiscal Year		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Technology Funding			
Funding from Sources Earmarked for Technology			
Public School Technology Funds	$39,617	$36,557	$35,108
E-rate Reimbursement	5,155	5,472	49,915
State/Federal Grants	43,643	79,967	853,234
Total from Funding Sources Earmarked for Technology	**88,415**	**21,996**	**938,257**
Funding from Other Sources			
Other Funding Sources[1]	155,574	43,904	30,856
Total from All Funding Sources	**$243,989**	**$165,900**	**$969,113**
Technology Expenditures			
Contracted Services – Technology	$18,621	$19,011	$19,515
Hardware Acquisitions	49,358	20,000	430,019
Software Licensing	55,619	5,580	273,998
Salaries and Benefits	32,000	35,000	115,372
Technology Training	4,300	4,521	37,849
Communication and Technology	68,411	81,788	74,644
Parts, Supplies and Repairs	15,680	-	17,716
Total Expenditures	**$243,989**	**$165,900**	**$969,113**
Funding per FTE			
FTEs	1,442	1,399	1,380
Total Funding per FTE from Sources Earmarked for Technology	**$61**	**$87**	**$680**
Total Expenditures per FTE from All Funding Sources	**$169**	**$119**	**$702**

[1] Other sources include capital outlay, general revenue, and local funds.

Source: Franklin County School District, January 2003.

Over the last three years, the district received state/federal funds for technology from three sources: Public School Technology Funds, the Technology Literacy Challenge Fund, and E-rate reimbursement. [5, 6] During this period, the Public School Technology Fund was the only technology funding based exclusively on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students served. However, the United States Department of Education has replaced Technology Literacy Challenge Funds with the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) initiative, which will result in additional funds being awarded based on FTE students. [7] The Florida Department of Education awards half of the $27 million of available federal EETT funds to all Florida districts based on FTE students, of which Franklin is expected

[5] The Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Educational Technology recommends that districts expend public school technology funds in accordance with the district's educational technology plan. These funds are also referred to as Education Technology Allocation (see Public School Technology Funds website for more information).

[6] Recipients of Technology Literacy Challenge Funds were selected for funding through a competitive process (see Technology Literacy Challenge Funds website for more information). These federal funds are no longer available, having been replaced with other opportunities through the No Child Left Behind Act—Enhancing Education Through Technology.

[7] See Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) website for more information.

to receive $12,488 for 2002-03. The Department of Education will award the other half of the funds competitively. Franklin submitted a proposal to compete for the additional EETT funding and has been awarded $299,000.

Although the district applied for technology grants for many years, it was not until 2001 that it received grant monies to fund its technology proposals. The district received a large grant from Title II funds in 2001-02 to set up computer labs and video conferencing and received $500,000 of Technology Literacy Challenge Funds to connect students and teachers. As a result, state/federal grants funded approximately 71% of the district's technology expenditures from 1999 to 2002.

The district's recent success in winning grants has enabled it to purchase a wide variety of technology resources. However, if future grants are not awarded to replace old technologies, the district may have to provide training and technical support for aging technology long after the grant money has run out. Because the district cannot depend on the award of competitive grants to replace and maintain older technology, it must continually apply for new grants, which is time consuming and not always productive, or use other funding sources to keep its inventory supported and up-to-date.

Technology Integration

Although the district provides a wide variety of technology resources there is still much to do to fully integrate technology into daily operations. The district lacks human resources to provide on-site technical support and training to enable teachers, administrators, and staff to fully integrate technology into classroom curriculum and administrative decision making. Currently, the Technology Resource Teacher, with help from on-site technology contacts and student network aides, is responsible for providing technical support and training at all six sites spread throughout the district. As a result, some schools are in a better position to integrate technology than others. The elementary schools have full-time technology specialists staffing computer labs who also assist with technical support and training. At the high schools, the technology contacts are a media specialist and a teacher who are paid a small supplement to take on the additional duty of providing technical support and training at each school during free periods and after school. Because the high school technology contacts have limited time, they often enlist student network aides to assist with on-site problems. Four student aides assist with technical support and training and are supervised and trained by the technology resource teacher. The aides are paid a small stipend through a $2,500 grant. Having no trained district technicians, the schools currently rely on the technology resource teacher, technology contacts, student aides and vendors for technical support and training.

As shown in Exhibit 5-2, the technology resource teacher works under the direction of the assistant superintendent/director. According to the district technology plan, the district technology resource teacher is responsible for all computer network management including security, inventory and maintenance, server operation, network infrastructure, developing appropriate network use guidelines, technology planning and budgeting, employee and student network account management, provision of technical support for all network users, and management of school websites. In addition, the technology resource teacher trains users at all six sites throughout the district. Users include district and school administrators, teachers, media specialists and technology contacts at each school, and student network aides.

Exhibit 5-2
The Franklin County School District's Organizational Structure Results in
Shared Responsibility for Information Technology Services
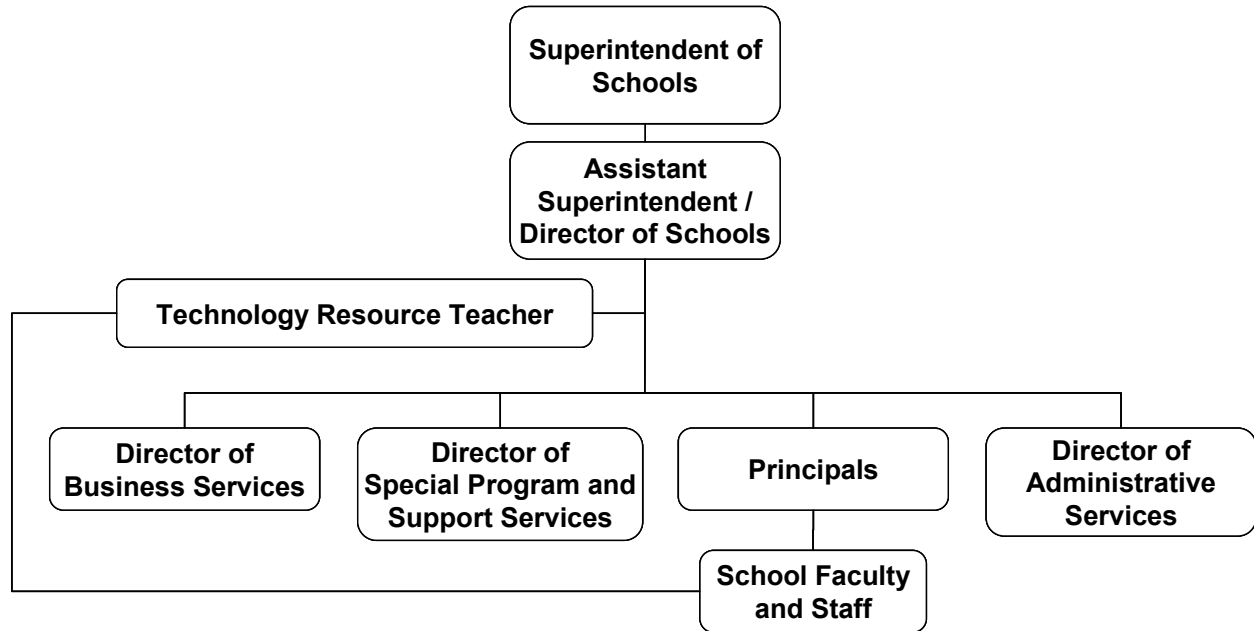
Source: Franklin County School District, October 2002.

Activities of particular interest

The district is innovatively using technology to compensate for its shortage of teachers and technical support personnel. The district provides two-way audio video communication systems to assist with on-site training and provide opportunities for high school students to share instructors between campuses. Sharing instructors enables students to take courses that would not otherwise be available at both high schools. In addition, the district has worked with the Florida Department of Transportation to procure driver education simulators, a cost-effective way to prepare students to drive. The simulators will be installed during the summer of 2003 and fully operational in the fall.

The district implemented a web-based work order system in an attempt to improve districtwide technical support. When technical issues cannot be resolved at the schools, the problem can be logged into the work order system through the district website. The technology resource teacher can access the information from any site and schedule time to resolve the problem. The work order system is available to all employees and is used to track maintenance and transportation work orders as well. The assistant superintendent monitors work order activity to flag high priority work orders and determine how efficiently work is completed.

Conclusion and Recommendations ────

Summary of Conclusions for Administrative and Instructional Technology Best Practices

Practice Area		Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
Technology Planning	1.	The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision making.	No	5-7
Cost-Effective Technology Acquisition	2.	The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner that will best meet its instructional and administrative needs.	Yes	5-9
Technology Professional Development	3.	District and school-based staff receive professional development training for all technologies used in the district.	Yes	5-9
Technical Support	4.	The district provides timely and cost-effective technical support that enables educators and district staff to successfully implement technology in the workplace.	No	5-10
Infrastructure and Network Communication	5.	The district maintains a dependable, standards-based infrastructure employing strategies that cost-effectively maximize network and Internet access and performance.	Yes	5-13
	6.	The district uses technology to improve communication.	Yes	5-13
	7.	The district has written policies that apply safe, ethical, and appropriate use practices that comply with legal and professional standards.	Yes	5-14
Information Management and Delivery	8.	The district has established general controls in the areas of access, systems development and maintenance, documentation, operations, and physical security to promote the proper functioning of the information systems department.	Yes	5-15
	9.	The information needs of administrative and instructional personnel are met by applying appropriate project management techniques to define, schedule, track and evaluate purchasing, developing, and the timing of delivering IT products and services requested.	Yes	5-15

TECHNOLOGY PLANNING

Best Practice 1: Not Using

The district has a comprehensive technology plan but does not use available data to assess technical support and training needs and does not include sufficient stakeholder input.

Planning is the key to a well-implemented, well-delivered technology system. Effective planning helps ensure that district technology meets the instructional needs of students and teachers and the administrative needs of decision makers, including administrators, teachers, and non-instructional personnel. An effective planning process identifies the user technology needs, develops strategies to acquire needed technology in a cost-effective manner, and identifies available funds required for acquisitions. To ensure that all critical needs are identified, the planning process should include a broad range of stakeholder input. The decisions made during the planning process should be in writing and the resulting plan should guide technology-related policymaking and acquisitions. While the complexity of the technology plan will vary based on the district's size, it should include a mission statement and reasonable, measurable goals and objectives that can be accomplished, in most cases, with available resources. The district's budget should also reflect the financial commitment to major technology initiatives in the technology plan. In addition, the planning process should include follow-up procedures allowing decision makers to assess the benefits of district investments in technology and abandon or modify failed strategies in favor of more successful ones. Finally, district plans should state who is responsible for implementing and updating the technology plan.

While the Franklin County School District's technology plan meets the Department of Education's technology planning expectations, includes a five-year technology budget, and provides standards for infrastructure and other technological resources, it was developed without widespread stakeholder input. The district plan addresses both administrative and instructional technology needs, is updated annually, and was approved by the board in December 2002 but was developed by only two district administrators without an analysis of user feedback instruments and without input and feedback from the district's technology users.

To ensure the district's technology plan represents widespread district needs, the district should create a technology committee including the district's core technology staff. The committee should be charged with analyzing already developed needs assessment tools such as the Florida Learning Alliance Surveys, the PAEC professional development surveys, and the Department of Education Technology Resources Survey. This information is important to technology plan development since the Florida Learning Alliance Teachers Survey revealed in 2001-02 that teachers are in need of additional training and technical support. [8] Although district administrators are aware of the survey results, it is unclear as to how and if the information was used to update the plan. After analyzing the needs assessment data, the core technology planners should develop a draft technology plan, present it to the entire district technology committee for finalizing, and obtain board approval. Once the plan is in place the core technology staff should monitor plan implementation during the course of the school year, analyze implementation efforts at the end of the school year, and make recommendations for plan updates to the entire district technology committee prior to the beginning of the next school year.

Action Plan 5-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

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[8] Florida Learning Alliance Teacher Survey Year Three, MGT of America, Inc., see the <u>Florida Learning Alliance</u> website for more information.

Action Plan 5-1

We recommend that the district analyze needs assessment data, incorporate user feedback, and solicit broad-based stakeholder input in the form of a district technology committee when developing the annual district technology plan.	

Action Needed	Step 1.	Form a district technology committee including the members listed below.
		▪ The district's core technology staff—assistant superintendent, the technology resource teacher, and technology contacts at each school
		▪ A teacher from each school
		▪ A parent from each school
		▪ A School Advisory Council (SAC) member from each school
		▪ Select district administrators including a curriculum representative
	Step 2.	The district's core technology staff should
		▪ analyze and summarize needs assessment data;
		▪ using the needs assessment data, develop a draft district technology plan including measurable objectives in the areas of training and technical support; and
		▪ present the draft technology plan to the district's technology committee.
	Step 3.	Upon receipt of the draft technology plan, the full technology committee should review the plan to ensure that goals and objectives are measurable, modify it as necessary, and submit the final plan to the board for approval. Accountability measures should include
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology for instruction;
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology for administration;
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology for communication;
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology to assess student performance;
		▪ average response time to reported problems; and
		▪ user satisfaction (teachers/administrators/other staff).
	Step 4.	Following annual implementation of the district's technology plan, the core technology group should
		▪ establish a meeting schedule to assess site-by-site plan implementation; feedback from each meeting should be used to target technical training and support activities to ensure successful implementation at each school;
		▪ establish an annual meeting to review/evaluate overall plan implementation;
		▪ analyze and summarize the prior year's technology performance and make recommended changes to the full technology committee for the upcoming year; and
		▪ initiate the process from Step 1 for each new school year.
Who Is Responsible		Assistant superintendent and technology resource teacher
Time Frame		Form committee for the 2003-04 school year, for the next annual technology plan update

COST-EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACQUISITION

Best Practice 2: Using

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

Districts can reduce and better anticipate technology-related expenses and avoid downtime by developing acquisition strategies that consider not only the initial purchase price, but also the cost of fully implementing and supporting the systems. Implementation and support cost considerations should include professional development requirements, training, standardization of equipment, system interoperability, technical support, and disposal costs. In addition, districts should base technology acquisitions on need and ensure that technology resources are equitably distributed throughout the district.

The Franklin County School District acquires technology cost-effectively to meet the district's instructional and administrative needs. For the last three years the district has used technology grant funds to meet instructional technology objectives by purchasing hardware, software, training and support. These purchases provide students and teachers with access to integrated learning systems, drill and practice software, and two-way audio/video transmission. In addition, the district has invested in infrastructure to provide Internet access to students and employees at all instructional and administrative sites. Since 1998, the district has cost-effectively improved infrastructure for instructional and administrative systems by applying for and receiving e-rate reimbursements. As a member of the PAEC and Gateway Consortia, the district reduces administrative technology costs by sharing automated financial management and student information systems with other member districts.

TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Best Practice 3: Using

District and school-based staff receive technology training but courses should better focus on classroom integration of technology and principals should monitor and hold teachers accountable for technology training completion.

Professional development is essential to ensuring that district employees maximize the use of existing technology. However, given the potentially wide range of knowledge and abilities among its staff, it is essential that districts identify employees training needs and use the information to focus professional development efforts. To accomplish this districts must define competency levels, clearly state training requirements, and develop strategies to provide the needed training. These strategies include traditional classroom, one-on-one, computer lab instruction, web-based instruction, electronic bulletin boards, videotapes, and other self-directed, technology-based methods. When evaluating training effectiveness, districts should go beyond identifying whether participants liked the training and focus on the intended outcomes and skills to be mastered. Assessing training effectiveness is important to planning and budgeting for future training initiatives.

The Franklin County School District provides professional development training for technology used in the district but could do a better job of focusing on classroom technology integration and ensuring that teachers complete training requirements. Vendors provided on-site training for teachers and computer lab specialists when the district purchased new software intended to improve student achievement. In addition, the district provided specialized network support training. The district uses the train-the-trainer model to provide targeted technology training to district employees who are expected to train other employees at their school site. As a member of PAEC, the district participates in a variety of training

opportunities. Though the district provides many technology training opportunities, district-wide classroom technology integration levels remain low. The district should focus its training efforts on increasing the use of technology in the classroom.

Classroom technology integration is also affected by the fact that the resource technology teacher has many competing demands. Because the resource technology teacher is responsible for both training and district-wide technology support, these duties frequently compete for his time. As a result, teachers may not get the level of technology training or support needed to fully integrate technology into daily operations. (See Best Practice 4 for a discussion of technology support.)

Following training course completion, each teacher is responsible for electronically completing follow-up questions that measure whether the training objectives were understood and can be applied in the classroom. Teachers do not get credit for completed courses unless they electronically complete the follow-up questions. While teachers are responsible for completing the training follow-up, principals are responsible for monitoring teacher training levels, ensuring that the follow-up is completed, and verifying that course credit was assigned. Currently, principals are not sufficiently monitoring teacher training to ensure completion and credit.

> **We recommend the district focus its training efforts on integrating technology into the classroom and require principals to monitor teacher training completion.**

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Best Practice 4: Not Using
The district does not provide timely and cost-effective technical support that enables educators and district staff to successfully implement technology in the workplace.

Timely, helpful technical support can be a determining factor in whether technology is used or abandoned, decisions are made in a timely manner, and essential district services are maintained or interrupted. Districts should provide responsive technical support to all users. Instructional personnel should provide media-rich curricula, and non-instructional personnel should conduct administrative tasks without technical interruptions. Areas of technical support include email support, intranet/Internet access, software application support, web development, and computer hardware installation and maintenance. Providing technical support can be accomplished in a variety of ways, including providing a trained non-instructional technology support person or providing a technology facilitator in each school; managing a central help desk at the district; implementing a work order tracking system; contracting for regional or vendor support services. In addition, districts can minimize the cost of supporting out-of-warranty equipment by establishing replacement guidelines that specify a time frame for when technologies should be recycled or replaced.

The Franklin County School District provides comprehensive technical support for the financial management and student information systems but instructional technology is not adequately supported. Technical support for the financial management system is provided through PAEC while Gateway Consortium technical support staff in Santa Rosa County support the student information system. In the 2001-02 Florida Learning Alliance Teachers Survey, 67% of responding teachers said that technology failures resulted in long waits for repairs and 59% reported that there is not enough assistance when teachers have problems with or questions about software. Although the survey response rate was low, 53 (45%) of 119 teachers, the results indicate that teachers are not provided timely technical support. Our review found that teachers are satisfied with the quality of technical support they receive, but need more of it.

The district does not have a position dedicated to technical support but, instead, uses a trained teacher on special assignment to serve as the district technology resource teacher. The technology resource teacher is employed ten months a year and is currently responsible for all technology support and training districtwide. Supporting technology systems at six different sites spread throughout the district as well as training all levels of technology users represents a tremendous workload that exceeds one individual's capabilities. As a result of workload and limited technical staff, the demand for timely support is often unmet. When prompt support is not provided or available, technology investments are wasted or diminished as users become discouraged and eventually give up trying to incorporate technology into the classroom. To this end, we recommend in Chapter 4, Action Plan 4-12, that additional training be provided teachers to ensure that they are aware of available technology, how to use it, and how to incorporate it into their daily curriculum.

Generally, the best solution to on-site technology support is initially to have a sufficient number of highly qualified technical support personnel available at each site. Unfortunately, most school districts, including Franklin County, do not have the resources to provide this level of support. Hiring technical support personnel to adequately support the district with a technology specialist at each school as well as a district technician would cost the district up to $136,000 annually. [9] The district does not currently have the resources to provide this level of technical support. Over time, as technology solutions are shared, users learn how to solve technical problems themselves and become proficient with software, the need for on-site technical assistance diminishes and technical support for each site may no longer be as necessary.

In the meantime, to address current support needs and minimize costs, in Action Plan 5-2, we recommend that the district extend the district technology resources teacher position from ten months to year-round employment, hire a part-time technician to assist with districtwide technical support duties, and provide summer training to prepare school technology contacts for fall support functions. Working during the summer, when there is less network activity, gives network support personnel, time to maintain, upgrade, train, and prepare the network and technology support staff for the upcoming year. The salary requirement for a year-round district technology resources teacher will cost the district an additional $8,000 per year, while the addition of a part-time technician requires an additional $26,000. [10] The total annual investment for improving technology support districtwide is $34,000 or $170,000 over five years.

Recognizing the need for additional technical support and technology training, the district has already allocated Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) funding to extend the technology resource teacher position throughout the 2003 summer. To expedite hiring a part-time technician, the district can shift funds currently earmarked for parts and supplies to technical support without violating any associated grant or fund requirements and without jeopardizing existing systems maintenance. To protect the district's long-term technology investment, it should identify a more stable funding source to pay for the additional part-time technical support position, as grant monies are non-recurring. Public Technology Funds and EETT Part 1 monies are fairly stable, and could be used to fund the technician position; the availability of these funds, however, is based on FTE, which has been shrinking in Franklin County in recent years. These funding sources are also subject to federal policy changes that may occur as a result of changing economic conditions. The district should allocate recurring funds for the technical support position to ensure long-term technical support. One method to ensure recurring salary monies is to rely on districtwide attrition as a result of the district's staffing plan and the transfer of salary monies to support technology positions.

Additional technical support will give the district an opportunity to better maximize the technology resource teacher's time to provide more on-site technology training and user support. For example, while the technology resource teacher focuses on training staff in the use of technology and classroom

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[9] This estimate assumes annual salaries and benefits of $25,000 for each of four technology specialists, one at each school site, and conservatively $36,000 for a full-time district technician.

[10] These salary figures include benefits and year-round employment.

integration, the technician can focus on technical support and maintenance activities including installing cable and wireless antennas, repairing PCs, upgrading operating systems, imaging PCs, installing software, and interacting with vendors to troubleshoot hardware and software problems.

In addition to implementing Action Plan 5-2, the district can implement several options to improve districtwide technology support. The technical support team, including on-site technology contacts as well as network aides, should work together to improve technical support services in several ways. The district support personnel should work with the on-site technology contacts to establish a site-by-site rotating visitation schedule providing regularly scheduled training and support to school site users. The new work order system should continue to be used to prioritize technical support activities but should also be used to identify areas where technical support costs can be reduced through targeted training programs. Using the data from the work order system, benchmarks should be established to assist in measuring the success of technical support effort, i.e., the average time to resolve technical support problems. In addition, system manuals and frequently asked questions and answers should be available on-line for district users to access information to solve their own technology problems.

Action Plan 5-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 5-2

We recommend that the district provide technology users with better access to on-site technical training and support.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The assistant superintendent should work with the district technology resources teacher and the personnel office to write a job description for the district technician position, clearly defining job duties and qualification requirements. The district technology resources teacher job description should be updated to remove the technical support functions that will be assigned to the technician.
	Step 2.	The district technology resources teacher position should be changed to a year-round position to do network maintenance and provide training to prepare site-based technology contacts for the coming school year.
	Step 3.	A year-round, part-time technician should be hired to perform technical support functions, freeing the district technology resources teacher to provide more instructional personnel support throughout the year.
	Step 4.	The resource technology teacher, in conjunction with appropriate district technology staff, should establish a site-by-site rotating visitation schedule that should be communicated to all district users, allowing for anticipation of site-based training and technical support needs.
	Step 5.	The new work order system should continue to be used to prioritize technical support activities and to identify areas where technical support costs can be reduced through targeted training programs.
	Step 6.	The technology resources teacher (or designee) should place system manuals and frequently asked questions/answers on-line for district users to access as needed to solve their own technology problems.
	Step 7.	The assistant superintendent should work with the technical support staff to establish benchmarks to measure the success of technical support efforts, i.e., the average time to resolve technical support problems. This information should be used to assess annual technical support needs.
	Step 8.	The assistant superintendent should present a proposal encompassing all of the preceding steps, associated costs, and implementation timeline to the superintendent for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendent, and the district technology resources teacher.	
Time Frame	January 2004	

INFRASTRUCTURE AND NETWORK COMMUNICATION

Best Practice 5: Using

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

A district's success in meeting information demands depends largely on the ability of its infrastructure to receive and transmit data for effective communication and resource sharing. Thus, districts should have a districtwide infrastructure that provides cost-effective communication, data transmission, resource sharing, and Internet capabilities. The district's network should be fully operational and consistently available to users. To help ensure network dependability, the district should protect its network from viruses and have speed and access standards for district network resources. Network access and dependability is crucial for meeting the information needs of students, teachers, administrators, and non-instructional personnel.

The Franklin County School District maintains a dependable, standards-based infrastructure employing strategies that cost-effectively maximize network access and performance. The district network provides all administrative offices and classrooms access through T1 lines. The district is an active participant in the Florida Learning Alliance (FLA), Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC), and the Florida Information Resources Network (FIRN). These affiliations allow the district to reduce the costs of providing distance learning opportunities, maintaining student and financial management systems, and improving communications via email and website development districtwide. The district has developed speed and access standards for district network resources as outlined in the technology plan. The district uses anti-virus software to automatically update network workstations with the latest virus signatures.

Best Practice 6: Using

The district uses technology to improve communication.

Technology has revolutionized communications, providing tools to disseminate large amounts of information to a wide audience. Email, websites, and teleconferencing are examples of technologies that enhance communication within and beyond school boundaries. Whenever possible, districts should use web technologies, such as Internet and intranet sites, and email to improve and enhance communications. Using email can expedite communication between and among colleagues without having to wait for a meeting to discuss important issues, saving time and travel. Posting information on websites, such as policies, announcements, and calendars, improves districtwide access to important information and decreases the expense associated with sending hardcopy updates. Voice, email and website technologies can facilitate communication with parents by providing information about expectations, progress, and the well-being of children, as well as provide general information about specific programs and course offerings.

The Franklin County School District uses web technologies to improve and enhance communication among groups such as schools, other districts, the state, parents, and the community. The district's website features many valuable communication tools such as pupil progression plans, the code of conduct, lunch menus, and the school year calendar. [11] The website also contains staff development resources, including links to on-line registration for training opportunities and links to professional organizations. Position vacancies are advertised on the "Careers" page of the district's website and forms may be downloaded and printed for prospective employees, current teachers, administrators, and/or staff.

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[11] See the Franklin County Schools district website for more information.

Through a district-maintained website called "Teacher Talk" every teacher can make announcements to parents and the community using an online bulletin board. District employees can access the new work order system through the website, to enter work requests for items like buildings, grounds, electrical, plumbing, technology, and/or transportation.

Email is used by district administrators to communicate policies and information throughout the district and many employees use Florida Information Resource Network (FIRN) email accounts, administered by the Department of Education. However, because FIRN passwords expire every 90 days, passwords have usually expired in the fall when teachers return from the summer break. District employees sometimes find it inconvenient or do not know how to reactivate their accounts and, as a result, limit their ability to communicate via email.

> **At the beginning of the school year, the district should request that FIRN activate all employee email accounts and then provide employees with instructions on changing their FIRN email password. The district should follow-up to ensure that all teachers have active FIRN email accounts.**

The Franklin County School District has innovatively provided distance learning and video conferencing opportunities. Administrators, teachers and students use two-way audio video communication to circumvent the cost of traveling to distant meetings and to provide distance learning opportunities whenever possible. Franklin County School District administrators have participated in meetings with other PAEC member districts using video conferencing technology. The two-way audio video communication technology is also being tested to teach classes between the two high schools, enriching course offerings for students at Carrabelle High School where choices are limited. Though the technology works well, there are administrative problems. (See Chapter 4, Best Practice 4.) The district also encourages students to participate in the Florida Virtual School, a distance-learning program that allows students to complete courses for high school credit on line. [12]

Best Practice 7: Using

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

While technological innovations have provided districts with numerous opportunities to improve communication and increase efficiency and productivity, they can be inappropriately used causing potential harm to students and exposing districts to lawsuits. Thus, districts must develop effective strategies and comprehensive guidelines for the appropriate use of technology. The safe use of online resources is important to everyone. The federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) requires districts using E-rate funds to protect students from harmful online content. Because the infringement of copyright has legal ramifications, districts must provide guidelines for employees and others to comply with copyright laws.

Board policy and network user agreements provide written and verbal guidelines to personnel, teachers, students, and parents describing the appropriate and inappropriate uses of district technology. As the district's Internet provider, FIRN filters access to websites that have been identified as inappropriate including adult-oriented material, extremist-militant material, anonymous proxy sites, racist or hate-oriented material, and material inciting resistance to or insurrection against lawful authority (sedition). [13]

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[12] See the Florida Virtual School website for more information.

[13] See the FIRN Internet Content Filter website for more information.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY

Best Practice 8: Using

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.

Districts are becoming increasingly dependent on information systems to manage their operations. These systems typically are used to track student information and financial management. For example, the Department of Education requires student data be submitted electronically. Because student data is used for assessment and funding, it is important that districts have controls in place to secure access and ensure date reliability and accuracy. Districts should have processes in place that ensure they are following typical electronic data processing (EDP) practices and controls promoting the proper functioning of all information systems.

In general, Franklin County School District personnel are well informed and sensitive to the confidentiality of the information contained in district databases. District administrators have well-developed methods for processing data housed in the financial and student information systems such as report production features that are tied to the school calendar.

Although the district uses this best practice, the district would benefit from well-documented procedures and training manuals made available online to appropriate users. Such e-documents would assist in improving technical support by providing immediate access to reference material for technical support personnel. In addition, documents can be updated and maintained more cost-effectively if they are in electronic format.

> **To enhance employee access to district documents, the district should develop and store documents such as handbooks and procedure manuals in electronic format and give appropriate access to employees for training, reference and maintenance purposes.**

Best Practice 9: Using

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

Because districts depend heavily on information systems data to make informed decisions, the data must be accessible when needed and presented in useful report formats. To ensure that teacher and administrator information needs are met, districts should use common project management techniques to schedule, prioritize, and provide users with a projected timeline when developing reports and applications. Districts should have procedures in place to gauge user information system and service satisfaction. Districts should then analyze alternatives to identify the most cost-effective method of responding to these needs.

The district made a cost-effective decision to participate in the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium and Gateway Student System Consortium (consortia), as it is cost prohibitive for smaller districts to develop and maintain large database applications. The financial management and student information systems are well managed and provide district personnel a wealth of information. As the use of technology evolves, the district has opportunities through PAEC and the consortia to expand and update services that would be too costly absent sharing expenses with other member districts. For example, there are models such as the Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) to integrate and streamline automated administrative processes. The SIF is an industry initiative to develop an open specification for ensuring

that K-12 instructional and administrative software applications work together more effectively. SIF is not a product, but rather an industry-supported technical blueprint for K-12 software that enables diverse applications to interact and share data seamlessly now and in the future. It defines common data formats and high-level rules of interaction and architecture and is not linked to a particular operating system or platform.[14] Again, this is an idea that the district, as a member of PAEC, can share with other members for future joint development efforts, as the need to streamline administrative functions is common to many districts, regardless of size.

> **In partnership with other PAEC member districts, the district should investigate strategies that would streamline automated administrative processes.**

The district is training school administrators and instructional personnel on the new student assessment and integrated learning systems in an effort to improve student achievement. As these systems become more familiar, instructional personnel will have greater access to individual student information.

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[14] See Schools Interoperability Framework (SIF) website for more information.

6 Personnel Systems and Benefits

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using 10 of the 11 personnel systems and benefits best practices. The district generally recruits and hires qualified personnel; maintains a reasonably stable work force; provides staff development programs for instructional employees and school-based administrators; has implemented a system for formally evaluating employees; and generally ensures that employees who fail to meet the district's performance expectations are removed from contact with students. The district has also implemented appropriate policies and practices for providing substitute personnel. It uses cost containment practices for its workers' compensation and employee benefit programs, and maintains an effective collective bargaining process. Although the district is using the majority of the personnel best practices, to use the remaining best practice it needs to better focus technology training to increase classroom use and provide sufficient job training for non-instructional staff.

Background

The Franklin County School District employed 183 full-time persons during school year 2001-02, of whom approximately 55% were instructional personnel, as shown in Exhibit 6-1.

The district does not have a separate human resources program or budget; the responsibilities for personnel actions are decentralized. The director of business services and various on-site administrators share accountability for personnel records, application and hiring processes, and evaluation procedures. The director supervises two part-time employees dedicated to personnel issues. Other aspects of the personnel system are managed through other administrative services as noted below.

- The assistant superintendent is primarily responsible for instructional staff development programs, while on-site administrators are responsible for non-instructional staff development programs.

- The director of business services oversees benefit packages and workers' compensation services.

- A team headed by the director of special programs and support services handles collective bargaining with both the instructional and non-instructional employees' unions.

The Franklin County Teachers Association represents the district's teachers in collective bargaining and the Franklin Educational Support Personnel Association is the bargaining agent for the non-instructional employees. As of March 2003, 40% of the district's instructional employees were union members.

Exhibit 6-1
During 2001-02, the Franklin School District Employed 183 Persons

Categories of Employees		Numbers of Employees
Administrative Employees	District Level	5
	School Level	4
	Total Administrative	**9**
Instructional Employees	Elementary	40
	Secondary	37
	Exceptional Student	15
	Other Instructional Staff	8
	Total Instructional	**100**
Non-Instructional Employees	Professional	37
	Non-Professional	37
	Total Non-Instructional	**74**
Total Employees		**183**

Source: Franklin County School District.

Conclusion and Recommendations ——————

Summary of Conclusions for Personnel Systems and Benefits Best Practices

Practice Area		Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
Human Resource Management	1.	The district efficiently and effectively recruits and hires qualified instructional and non-instructional personnel.	Yes	6-4
	2.	To the extent possible, given factors outside the district's control, the district works to maintain a reasonably stable work force and a satisfying work environment by addressing factors that contribute to increased turnover or low employee morale.	Yes	6-5
	3.	The district provides a comprehensive staff development program to improve student achievement and to achieve and maintain high levels of productivity and employee performance among non-instructional, instructional, and administrative employees.	No	6-6
	4.	The district's employee evaluation system rewards excellent performance and productivity, and identifies and addresses performance that does not meet the district's expectations.	Yes	6-7
	5.	The district ensures that employees who repeatedly fail to meet the district's performance expectations, or whose behavior or job performance is potentially harmful to students, are promptly removed from contact with students, and that the appropriate steps are taken to terminate the person's employment.	Yes	6-8
	6.	The district has efficient and cost-effective system for managing absenteeism and the use of substitute teachers and other substitute personnel.	Yes	6-8
	7.	The district maintains personnel records in an efficient and readily accessible manner.	Yes	6-9
	8.	The district uses cost containment practices for its workers' compensation program.	Yes	6-9
	9.	The district uses cost containment practices for its employee benefits programs, including health insurance, dental insurance, life insurance, disability insurance, and retirement.	Yes	6-10
	10.	The district's human resource program is managed effectively and efficiently.	Yes	6-11
	11.	For classes of employees that are unionized, the district maintains an effective collective bargaining process.	Yes	6-11

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 1: Using

The district recruits, processes applications, and hires instructional and non-instructional personnel in a generally efficient and effective manner.

Well-run school districts are lean administratively and maximize funds available to support their primary mission, educating students. This requires districts to make the most effective use of funds allocated for administrative services, such as personnel. Thus, school districts should maintain efficient and effective processes for recruiting potential employees, reviewing applications for employment, and hiring new employees. These processes should not be unreasonably burdensome to the applicant or to the principals and department heads that must review applications and make hiring recommendations. School districts should maintain clearly defined district position descriptions for all positions and establish recruiting practices that generate a sufficient number of qualified applicants to fill vacant positions in a timely manner. In those areas in which the district has historically experienced a shortage of qualified applicants, the district should have developed and implemented both short and long term strategies to remedy these shortages, including making comparisons of entry level salaries and other key factors related to recruitment.

The Franklin County School District has established standard procedures to process applications and hire instructional and non-instructional personnel. The district does not have a separate human resource program; both the district office and site administrators take an active role in interviewing candidates and conducting background checks to complete the hiring process. The district has a stable work force with 64% of instructional employees teaching 10 years or longer. When vacancies occur the district has no difficulty filling most positions and is only experiencing some problems finding suitable personnel in areas of high demand such as math, science, and special education. The district uses out-of-field assignments as a short-term solution. [1] A long-term strategy includes periodic out-of-town advertisements for instructional personnel and recruitment of student teachers for internship.

Position vacancies are advertised on-line, on-site, and in the local news media. An employment application form is available on the district's website for downloading. The district hired 12 new instructional staff in the 2001-02 school year, the equivalent of about 12% of its instructional work force. [2] The district's average instructional salaries are reasonably competitive and the benefit package compares favorably with benefits paid by neighboring school districts.

The job descriptions for each class of positions, which were updated two years ago, clearly describe the responsibilities associated with the jobs and the needed qualifications. Being a relatively small district with limited resources, administrators are necessarily assigned multiple duties. Several administrative position descriptions include tasks and responsibilities that span several functional areas without identifying the position's primary responsibilities. In the future, the district should consider revising these job descriptions to more precisely identify the primary responsibilities of each administrative position. This will better enable the district to evaluate candidates and identify training priorities for the persons selected for the positions.

> **We recommend that the district more precisely identify administrative positions' primary duties in job descriptions to assist with employee evaluations and training.**

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[1] An out-of-field teacher is an individual assigned teaching duty in a subject area outside the field in which the teacher is certified.

[2] Instructional staff includes classroom teachers, library media specialist, counselors, and other non-administrative instructional personnel.

Best Practice 2: Using

To the extent possible given factors outside the district's control, the district works to maintain a reasonably stable work force and a satisfying work environment.

A stable work force reduces costs, particularly those associated with recruiting and training new employees, minimizes the disruption of essential district services, and allows management to focus on improving the quality of services provided. Each school district should be able to demonstrate that it has created a working environment for its employees that enhances worker satisfaction and minimizes employee turnover due to factors within the district's control. A district can effectively manage employee turnover in a number of ways. For instance, it should maintain data on turnover rates for major classes of employees and on approaching retirements, and should be taking steps to remedy factors that are adversely affecting the work environment. The district also should conduct exit interviews with instructional personnel who separate from the district and provide the data from those interviews to the state Department of Education. In addition, the district should maintain clear and effective channels of communication with its employees.

The Franklin County School District has a stable work force, with many long-term instructional and non-instructional employees. For example, the district's newest bus driver was hired in 2001. District administration monitor employee attrition and retirements through the school principals, DROP applications, and a regular review of employee seniority. [3] Currently, 12 employees are in the DROP program districtwide, representing approximately 6% of the work force.

The district strives to provide competitive salaries and benefits and address employee concerns. While the district's salary schedule for instructional employees is comparable to surrounding school districts, salaries for food service employees, bus drivers, and custodians are relatively low. However, the new contract agreement between the board and the unions provides a 2% salary increase for instructional and a 4% increase for non-instructional personnel retroactive to July 2002. The district also pays for all health care premiums for its employees, which compares favorably with the benefits paid by nearby school districts.

Focus groups and interviews with administrators, principals, and teachers revealed that district officials generally maintain an open door policy of communication with staff, and conduct regular staff meetings to encourage employee participation and feedback on district policies and other issues. Each school also conducts annual surveys of teachers, students, parents, and community partners that are taken into consideration when developing school improvement plans.

Although the district is using this best practice, there are two areas in which the district could improve interaction between district administration and employees. First, the district conducted an organizational climate survey for the first time in 2002. The survey included only a fraction of employees and the response rate was very low (10%). According to the survey report, the highest rated dimensions were safety/environment and commitment. The lowest rated dimension was innovation/adaptation.

The district should repeat the climate survey during the 2003-04 and subsequent school years to provide more complete and accurate feedback on the district work environment. This survey should be developed and administered in a way to ensure an optimum level of participation by employees so results can be compared from year to year to detect trends in the district's work environment.

> **We recommend that the district develop and regularly administer a comprehensive climate survey to all employees to obtain results that can be compared from year to year to identify work environment trends. The district should devise strategies to maximize the employee response rate.**

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[3] Deferred Retirement Option Program.

Secondly, the district provides data as required to the Florida Department of Education on the number of classroom teachers separating from service and their reasons for leaving. Sometimes the information is based on the principal's personal knowledge about the teacher and related circumstances rather than on exit interviews, which are more reliable.

While we recognize that some instructional employees may separate from employment during the summer or at other times when it is difficult to conduct a formal face-to-face exit interview, we believe it is important that these separating employees be given an opportunity to comment on factors that may have influenced their resignation.

> **We recommend that the district take steps to ensure that all instructional employees leaving district employment complete an exit interview at the time of termination. These interviews should be conducted in a face-to-face format, by phone, or by having the employee complete a written survey document containing the information required by the Florida Department of Education. The exit interview should encourage the employee to state reasons that may have influenced their decision, and the district should regularly analyze exit interview results to identify the main reasons for terminations.**

Best Practice 3: Not Using

The district provides a comprehensive staff development program to improve student achievement and to achieve and maintain high levels of productivity and employee performance among instructional staff but does not provide sufficient training for non-instructional staff.

Training ensures that school district employees understand the scope of their responsibilities and performance expectations, and update skills and knowledge necessary to effectively and efficiently carry out their duties. Thus, a school district should provide a comprehensive professional development program that includes orientation, mentoring, and job-related training for both instructional and non-instructional employees. The district's training plans should be based upon periodic training needs assessments. Training should be designed to improve student achievement and maintain high levels of productivity and performance among employees. The district should have a leadership training program that prepares future principals.

Since the Franklin County School District does not have a central training office, the assistant superintendent is primarily responsible for instructional staff development and program administrators are responsible for training non-instructional employees. Each cost center has its own training budget and principals and supervisors approve training participation. The district received over $1 million in federal awards in Fiscal Year 2000-01 for training purposes.

The district has a good training program for instructional staff, who are required to accumulate 120 hours of training points within a five-year period; each hour of training typically counts for one point. The district obtains training for instructional staff from the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium Professional Development Center. The center developed a Five-Year Master In-Service Plan for Professional Development for instructional staff based on student data analysis; review of professional individual development plans, school improvement, and district strategic plans; and teachers' certification renewal requirements. All participants are required to complete and submit an evaluation form at the end of each training program so the district can assess training effectiveness. District administration maintains the employees' in-service training records in electronic personnel system files. While the district generally does a good job of providing training to instructional staff, technology training should be more focused on integrating technology into the daily curriculum and increasing classroom technology use. (See Chapter 5, Best Practices 1 and 3.)

The district provides fewer training opportunities to non-instructional employees. Transportation employees receive state required training and attend workshops with other non-instructional personnel on work place safety and school based emergency management. However, food service employees do not receive specific food safety and sanitation training. (See Chapter 10, Best Practice 3.) Other district support employees, such as maintenance employees and custodians, do not receive job-related training at all. (See Chapter 8, Best Practice 8.) Also, no district employee responsible for construction project oversight has training in the current Florida Building Code. (See Chapter 7, Best Practice 13.)

To assist new employees' transition into the school district and enhance their success, the district is developing an induction/mentoring program to explain the school system organization, personnel procedures, and requirements. The district is working with consultants from the Professional Development Center to identify appropriate training modules for employees serving as mentors. The district has initiated a pilot mentoring program in food service and plans full implementation of the comprehensive induction/employee-mentor program for the 2003-04 school year. The district plans to use employee climate surveys and performance appraisals, including student performance data, to evaluate the program's success.

Action plans for addressing non-instructional employee training and technology training for instructional employees can be found in the chapters below.

- Technology Integration—Chapter 5, Action Plan 5-2; Chapter 4, Action Plan 4-8
- Facility Construction—Chapter 7, Action Plan 7-2
- Maintenance/Custodian—Chapter 8, Action Plan 8-4
- Food Service—Chapter 10, Action Plan 10-2

Best Practice 4: Using

The district's employee evaluation system rewards excellent performance and productivity, and identifies and addresses performance that does not meet the district's expectations.

Performance appraisals are an essential district tool for improving the quality of services. By evaluating its employees, a district can determine the extent to which each employee is meeting performance expectations and identify ways in which individual and organizational performance can be improved. Each school district should have a formal system for evaluating instructional and non-instructional employees. The system should include components that provide for the improvement and growth of employee performance, reward excellent performance, and identify areas of performance that do not meet district expectations. Feedback from non-administrative personnel and parents should be used to evaluate district administrators.

As required by s.1012.34, *Florida Statutes,* the Franklin County School District established a formal procedure annually reviewing employee performance. In 1999 the Department of Education approved the district's performance appraisal system plan and evaluation instrument for instructional personnel, which includes measures related to student outcomes. The annual assessment process and the instructional personnel evaluation criteria are described in the district's policy manual and in the union contract. An exemplary annual evaluation is one of the components included in the district's performance pay incentive plan endorsed by the teachers' union that gives a 5% salary increase to high performing, productive teachers.

The district has policies addressing employees who repeatedly fail to meet the district's performance standards or whose behavior is potentially harmful to students. Written disciplinary procedures including due process provisions are found in the employee handbook and the union contract. When an employee's performance does not meet district expectations, he/she is provided notice and assisted in developing and following a professional improvement plan before termination is considered.

Principals evaluate instructional personnel in their schools, and supervisors evaluate non-instructional employees. The superintendent conducts administrative staff evaluations including the principals. However, these reviews do not always yield a written assessment, which makes it impossible to compare performances within this class of employees or document improvements or declining performance among personnel. A consistent, written evaluation process for all employee classes provides the best instrument to effectively assess and compare employee job performance over time.

> **We recommend that the superintendent provide a written evaluation to administrative employees so that their performance can be effectively reviewed and compared over time.**

Best Practice 5: Using

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 the appropriate steps are taken to terminate the person's employment.

District employees are in a position of trust and have the potential to influence children in both positive and negative ways. To minimize the potential for negative influence, each school district should establish policies and procedures that address issues related to inappropriate conduct or behavior by employees as well as employees who repeatedly do not meet the district's performance expectations. The district should follow these policies and procedures in such a manner that unsatisfactory employee behavior or performance is effectively dealt with so that these employees do not have an adverse effect on students or upon the school environment. District administrators should receive training and district level support in dealing with poorly performing employees. When it is necessary for a district to terminate an employee, the termination decision should be defensible in a judicial review.

As stated in Best Practice 4, the Franklin County School District has appropriate policies and procedures to respond to poorly performing employees or those who are potentially harmful to students. Both the school board policy manual and union contract outline steps to be taken when allegations surface against an employee that are conditions for dismissal. District and union procedures ensure fair and equitable treatment of all employees.

The district Performance Appraisal System Plan for instructional personnel provides guidelines for a professional development assistance plan to be considered when an employee's performance level is less than satisfactory. When a tenured teacher performs poorly, the principal works with the teacher to develop a professional improvement plan and provides guidance before removing the teacher from the reappointment list. If a poorly performing teacher is on an annual contract, most often, the principal simply does not recommend the person for contract renewal.

As identified in school policies, harmful, inappropriate behaviors include sexual misconduct and drug and/or alcohol use. While drug testing is a condition of employment and staff can be asked to take a random drug test if there is probable cause/suspicion, continuous and random drug testing is only required of transportation employees.

Best Practice 6: Using

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

Excessive employee absenteeism can reduce district productivity, disrupt the continuity of classroom instruction, and, when such absences require the district to use substitutes, increase costs. Thus, each school district should monitor rates of absenteeism and the costs associated with the use of substitutes for instructional and non-instructional personnel. It should have a sufficient number of substitute teachers to

cover absenteeism peaks and should have efficient processes for the notification of absences and the placement of substitutes. It also should provide orientation and training to substitutes, and special assistance (coaching, guidance, and oversight) for extended teacher absences. A district should have policies that either encourage high attendance or discourage excessive absenteeism.

The Franklin County School District has policies to limit absenteeism and to ensure that instructional and non-instructional substitutes are available. Administrators monitor absenteeism and the average number of days teachers are absent at each school is reported in the annual *School Accountability Report.* [4] The district markedly reduced teacher absenteeism by providing more in-house training and conducting training on days when schools are not in session and during the summer. By scheduling in-service training more efficiently, the district was able to reduce the cost of hiring substitutes from $85,000 in 2000-01 to $64,000 in 2001-02. The district also provides an incentive to counteract absenteeism; at the end of each school year instructional employees may elect to receive 80% of their daily pay for leave that has been earned but not used.

The district's substitute teachers hiring process is similar to that of hiring full-time personnel, including a background check and fingerprinting. Using a grant, the district has initiated the Substitute Teacher Training Program through a workshop designed by the Gulf Coast Community College and presented by a veteran district teacher. The district also uses substitutes for non-instructional jobs. Each school or cost center has developed its own list of available substitute employees to fill temporary vacancies. Currently, there are approximately 80 active substitutes on the districtwide list.

Best Practice 7: Using

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

School district personnel files hold essential information on all district employees, which must be maintained in a manner that protects the employees while serving the needs of the district. Each school district should maintain its personnel records in an efficient, readily accessible, and timely manner. When it is more cost-efficient to do so, districts should implement automated record keeping systems that facilitate the ready exchange of personnel information with school sites and other departments. When feasible and cost-effective, the district should explore options that would delegate certain data entry responsibilities to school site personnel, so long as this does not compromise the security of those records.

Although the Franklin County School District does not have a separate human resources department, it maintains its personnel records in an efficient manner. Personnel records are handled in conjunction with payroll under the direction of the business office. District personnel files are maintained in a secure environment and are accessible in hard copy in addition to the data being kept in an automated data system. To address security and privacy concerns, school-level employees do not have access to the system and are unable to view or edit the electronic files.

Best Practice 8: Using

The district uses cost containment practices for its workers' compensation program.

When left uncontrolled, workers' compensation claims can become a significant expense to school districts and, thus, should be effectively managed to minimize their frequency and cost. A district can do this in a number of ways. For instance, a district should conduct routine evaluation of the claims and expenses. The district should also have an active safety inspection program, and should develop corrective actions, such as physical plant repair or employee training, based on information gained from past workers' compensation claims. In addition, the district should implement cost containment steps to

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[4] Average teacher absences include personal and sick leave, temporary duty elsewhere, and all other leave.

limit workers' compensation expenses, such as a light duty program that enables injured employees to return to work as soon as they are able.

Risk management, including the district's workers' compensation program, is handled by Sedgwick Claims Management Services (SCMS) through the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC), which serves as a third party administrator. SCMS receives and processes claims forms, and receives and pays related bills. As a participating member of the consortium, the district paid PAEC $157,000 for the 2002-03 school year for these services. The consortium generates quarterly accident report cards listing worker compensation and property claims, which allows the district to review the types of claims filed and their associated expenses. The district takes corrective action if an injury occurs because of an unsafe condition or an illness results from the work environment. For example, the district bought special shoes for food service employees after slippage on wet floors resulted in injuries.

The Franklin County School District initiated a return to work/light duty work program as a cost containment practice that helped reduce workers' compensation payments during the past two years. This light duty work program enables employees with work-related injuries to return to work with a physician's approval while recovering from the effects of their injury. The program provides a light duty assignment on a temporary basis that is within the injured employee's physical restrictions.

The district disseminates procedural guidelines to all employees concerning the prompt reporting of job injuries. Notices are posted on bulletin boards at all schools and other sites informing employees about reporting and handling accidents and injuries. PAEC provides safety training for instructional and non-instructional employees.

Best Practice 9: Using

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

The cost of employee benefits is a substantial, ongoing expense for most school districts. In addition, due to rising health care costs, benefit expenses can increase more rapidly than anticipated resulting in districts having to reduce other services or borrow from reserves. Thus, each school district should use cost containment practices to limit increases in costs for employee benefits and to provide optimum employee benefits for the costs incurred. The district should periodically review its employee benefit package, in cooperation with the employee unions, to identify alternatives. The district should calculate the short- and long-term fiscal impact on all changes to its benefit packages prior to approval of those changes.

The Franklin County School District continues to take steps to contain employee benefit costs. The district reviews the employee benefits package annually, evaluates numerous plan designs, and considers the fiscal impact of various plans to ensure it provides a competitive benefit package at a reasonable cost. However, the lack of local HMOs and other providers and the relatively small number of district employees limit the available benefit programs. As part of the union negotiations, the district worked with members of the employees' insurance committee to prepare a health insurance renewal proposal and health plan comparison for Fiscal Year 2002-03. The new health plan proposal represents a 6.8% increase in employees' family contribution and raises the prescription co-payments from $3/5 to $7/20. The school board and the unions have both approved the new insurance package.

The district provides free insurance coverage for full-time employees and school board members including health, dental, and life insurance. Currently, an employee's contribution for family coverage covers about 36% of the cost paid by the district. The district offers all employees a $20,000 life insurance policy. When compared to surrounding counties, the district's health benefit package costs employees less and the district more. While Franklin County district employees do not pay anything for their individual health coverage, in surrounding counties the costs ranges from $12 to $82. Franklin County family coverage costs $272 compared to $385 to $602 in the adjacent counties.

Best Practice 10: Using

The district's human resource activities are managed effectively and efficiently.

Like other publicly funded entities, a school district should be accountable for and provide information to parents and other taxpayers on the performance and cost of its major programs and support services. For human resource activities, each school district should have an effective accountability system that includes clearly stated goals, measurable objectives, and expected outcomes. The district should review program structure and staffing, and justify each administrative position. In addition, each district should consider the advantages and disadvantages of alternatives, such as increased use of automation or outsourcing.

As previously stated, due to its small size, the Franklin County School District does not have a separate human resources department, and personnel management is decentralized. Various administrators are responsible for specific aspects of personnel issues. The *Franklin County School Board Personnel and Payroll Manual* contains the district's personnel policies and procedures to ensure uniform handling of personnel issues. In this way, the district has held staffing to a minimum, and the principals have more input into personnel decisions. The hiring process is efficient; the completion of a checklist ensures all required steps are completed, positions are not open for excessive periods, turnover is relatively low, and input from principals and supervisors is readily available. The district uses an automated database system that comes with technical and program support.

Although the responsibility for human resource services is dispersed, the district has established one primary goal and associated strategies in its 2002-07 strategic plan regarding human resource issues. To achieve the goal of employing and retaining highly qualified personnel in the district, strategies include developing orientation and mentoring programs, encouraging teacher participation in the National Board Certification Program, assessing and projecting instructional personnel needs for the next five years, and developing innovative ways to attract personnel. The district has developed an action plan for each of these strategies.

Best Practice 11: Using

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

Each school district should maintain a collective bargaining process that results in affordable and fair employee compensation packages. To achieve this, district negotiators should receive training to enhance negotiation knowledge and skills, and the roles and responsibilities of the negotiator, superintendent, and school board during the negotiating process should be clearly defined. The district should identify and review issues to be considered during the negotiation process and determine the estimated fiscal impact as well as the advantages and disadvantages of each proposal. The negotiating team should have access to an attorney trained in collective bargaining law and procedure, and records of negotiations should be maintained for a time set by the district.

The Franklin County School District maintains an informal collective bargaining process to negotiate with the district's two unions. The district designates a three-member team that is responsible for labor relations and contract negotiations. The director of special programs and support services serves as the district's chief negotiator. In addition, one principal and the director of administrative services are designated as members of the school board team. The district's two bargaining units are the Franklin County Teachers Association (FCTA), an affiliate of the Florida Teaching Profession, and the National Education Association. The FCTA is the exclusive bargaining representative for all instructional personnel, while the Franklin Educational Support Personnel Association represents the non-instructional employees. The bargaining process is common, and both entities sign the agreed upon contract. The district maintains the records of negotiations in perpetuity.

The current three-year contract is in effect until June 30, 2005, but allows the unions to open two issues in addition to salary and insurance for renegotiation each year. Although the district does not have a formally trained negotiating team, the results of the last several years indicate an effective and efficient collective bargaining process. District staff, principals, and administrators meet periodically to review potential and actual union issues and determine the feasibility of each. Costs and/or potential savings are identified and included in the discussion/deliberations.

The school board retains an attorney in an advisory capacity that attends all the executive sessions of the bargaining process (when the bargaining team reports back to the board), but the attorney does not take part in the actual negotiations. Although the attorney does not have specialized training in collective bargaining, she has performed in this capacity for 15 years.

7 Facilities Construction

Summary

Franklin County School District is using 13 of the 24 applicable facilities construction best practices. [1] The district communicates with the community regarding its construction program and five-year facilities plan; appropriately collects and uses construction funds; effectively designs construction; has a project management process; requires appropriate inspections; retains professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction; minimizes change orders; and, conducts comprehensive facility orientations prior to use. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its construction program, the district needs to improve its planning, training, and contractual oversight activities in three ways. First, officials need to engage in long-term planning by more accurately forecasting what projects they plan to fund over the next five years. Second, officials overseeing the district's construction projects need Florida Building Code training to ensure proper oversight of construction projects. Third, the district's legal staff needs to ensure that construction contracts include language to controls costs and ensure quality projects are completed on time and within budget.

Background

The Franklin County School District has built few projects over the years because capacity exceeds enrollments at each of its four schools. Over the last 10 years, the district has built a physical education facility at each of its two high schools (one of which is currently in progress), a media center, and has replaced some of the school roofs. The district is currently remodeling the district office restrooms and has plans to refurbish a school auditorium using an historic preservation grant. Construction funds for the district's 2002-03 Fiscal Year budget are $766,557. The district's primary emphasis is on repair and renovation, rather than new construction.

Facilities utilization. Franklin County schools are underutilized because enrollment is less than the schools' design capacity and the number of student stations. As shown in Exhibit 7-1, the schools have a total capacity of 2,308 pupils across its four schools. The current enrollment of 1,302 utilizes 56% of this capacity. (Please see Chapter 1a, Exhibit 1, for each school's capacity. [2])

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[1] Five of the best practices are not currently relevant to district operations. These five best practices apply to counties with growing student enrollment, and Franklin's is declining.

[2] Chapter 1a discusses the consequences of operating schools below capacity and outlines options for school reconfigurations.

Exhibit 7-1
Overall the District Utilizes 56% of Its Facility Capacity [1]

Description	Capacity of Permanent Facilities	Enrollment	Percentage Facility Capacity Used
Elementary	931	719	77%
Middle/Senior High	1,377	583	42%
Total	2,308	1,302	56%

[1] These number include Pre-Kindergarten enrollments.

Source: Florida Inventory of School Houses SY2002-03 and district data, 2003.

Facilities inventory. The district's four schools range in age from 26 to 40 years. Exhibit 7-2 shows that the schools range in square footage from 39,582 to 104,124.

Exhibit 7-2
Age and Size of Franklin County Public Schools
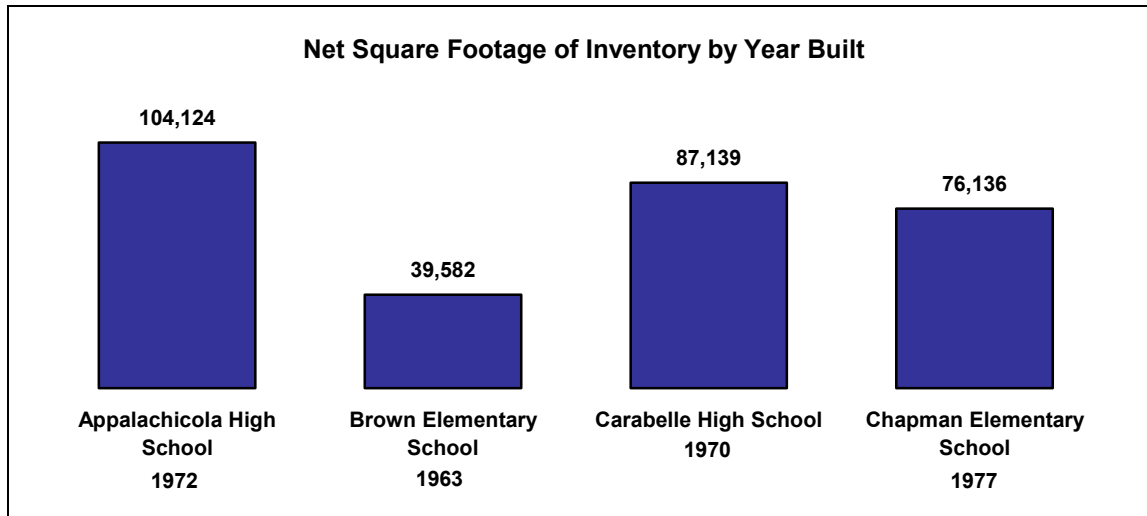
Source: FISH Report for the Franklin County School District, October 2002.

Organization and management. As shown in Exhibit 7-3, the director of business services and the construction coordinator share construction project management responsibility. The construction coordinator is responsible for keeping projects on schedule while the director of business services is responsible for keeping projects within budget.

Exhibit 7-3
The Franklin County School District's
Organizational Structure Results in Shared
Responsibility for Construction Services

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              ┌─────────────────────┐
              │  Superintendent of  │
              │      Schools        │
              └──────────┬──────────┘
                         │    ┌─────────────────────┐
                         │────│     Assistant       │
                         │    │   Superintendent    │
                         │    └─────────────────────┘
              ┌──────────┴──────────┐
      ┌───────────────┐    ┌───────────────────┐
      │   Finance     │    │   Construction    │
      │   Director    │    │   Coordinator     │
      └───────────────┘    └───────────────────┘
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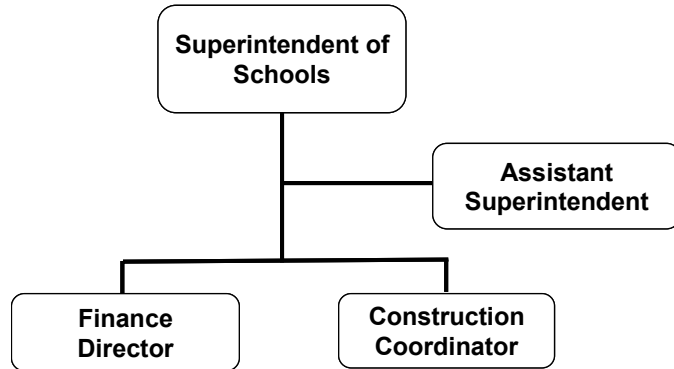
Source: Franklin County School District, January 2003.

Capital budget. As shown in Exhibit 7-4, the district's Fiscal Year 2002-03 capital budget is $1,043,411. Franklin County School District has identified the funds and projects in Exhibit 7-4 on their facilities five year work plan. As can be seen, not all of these projects relate specifically to construction; some relate to transportation (Chapter 9) and maintenance (Chapter 8). Exhibit 7-5 shows funding sources exclusively used for construction.

Exhibit 7-4
Franklin County School District's Capital Budget

Project Descriptions	2002-03 Projected Budget
Life Safety	$ 29,000
Energy Performance Contract	128,411
Ed Plant Survey Recommendations	450,000
Remodeling Projects	150,000
Grounds Improvements	100,000
School buses	80,000
Cafeteria Equipment	15,000
Land purchase	50,000
Copier Lease	36,000
Custodial Equipment	5,000
Total	**$1,043,411**

Source: Facility Five-Year Work Plan, Franklin County School District, November 25, 2002.

Exhibit 7-5
Franklin County School District's Construction Funds[1]

Funding Source	Amount
Local Taxes	$578,782
Public Education Capital Outlay	55,236
Capital Outlay and Debt Service Bonds	60,000
Classrooms First Bonds	72,539
Total	**$766,557**

[1] The district's budget is not delineated by program, but by line item. These numbers are based on OPPAGA's review of district financial documents.

Source: Facility Five-Year Work Plan, Franklin County School District, November 25, 2002.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Conclusions for Facilities Construction Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Best Practice Used?	Page No.
Construction Planning	1. The district has effective long-range planning processes.	No	7-7
	2. When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.	No	7-9
	3. The five-year facilities work plan establishes budgetary plans and priorities.	No	7-9
	4. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.	Yes	7-10
	5. The district has an effective site selection process based on expected growth patterns.	N/A	7-10
	6. The board considers the most economical and practical sites for current and anticipated needs, including such factors as need to exercise eminent domain, obstacles to development, and consideration of agreements with adjoining counties.	N/A	7-11
Construction Funding	7. Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.	Yes	7-11
	8. The district approves and uses construction funds only after determining that the project(s) are cost-efficient and in compliance with the lawfully designated purpose of the funds and the district's five-year facilities work plan.	Yes	7-11
Construction Design	9. The district develops thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each construction project.	Yes	7-12
	10. The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.	Yes	7-13
	11. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.	Yes	7-13
	12. The district minimizes construction and maintenance and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs, prototype school designs, and frugal construction practices.	Yes	7-13
New Construction, Renovation and Remodeling	13. The district has effective management processes for construction projects.	Yes	7-13
	14. District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.	No	7-14
	15. All projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the Florida Building Code.	No	7-15
	16. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.	Yes	7-16
	17. The district retains appropriate professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.	Yes	7-16
	18. The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.	No	7-16
	19. The district minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to control project costs.	Yes	7-17
	20. The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project.	Yes	7-18

Practice Area	Best Practice	Best Practice Used?	Page No.
Facility Occupancy and Evaluation	21. The district conducts a comprehensive orientation to the new facility prior to its use so that users better understand the building design and function.	Yes	7-18
	22. The district conducts comprehensive building evaluations at the end of the first year of operation and regularly during the next three to five years to collect information about building operation and performance.	N/A	7-19
	23. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.	N/A	7-20
	24. The district regularly evaluates facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.	N/A	7-20

CONSTRUCTION PLANNING

Best Practice 1: Not Using

The district does not have an effective long-range planning process.

Long-range facilities planning enables a district to identify its critical needs, establish strategies, and plan resource allocation to address these needs. To ensure that all critical needs are identified, the district should obtain broad stakeholder input by establishing a facilities planning committee, including school district personnel, parents, real estate and construction professionals, and other community stakeholders. Facility planning decisions should be in writing and resulting plans should project facilities needs from 5 to 20 years into the future. The planning process should assess enrollment projections, plant capacity, sufficiency of funds, and other relevant information. A district employee should be assigned primary responsibility for facilities planning and developing and maintaining demographic information for use in predicting future facilities needs. Because the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) is used to report plant capacity and help determine district facilities funding levels, it must accurately reflect the capacities and physical condition of existing facilities. In addition, to refine projections with more current information, the five-year facilities work program should be annually updated since it is also used to establish short-term capital budget plans and construction priorities.

The Franklin County School District does not have a long-range planning process. Although construction activity has been sporadic and relatively small in scope, a planning process would help the district prioritize and maximize available construction funds. A key aspect of this process will be for the district to do a critical needs assessment of all of its buildings. Once critical needs have been identified, these needs should be shared with a long-range planning committee composed of school officials, teachers, parents, community stakeholders, and construction, design, engineering, and real estate professionals. These groups can help the district strategize the most cost-efficient and effective ways to meet its critical needs, e.g. repair, renovate, remodel, or replace, and can help prioritize which critical needs should be addressed first. Since stakeholders pay for the district's schools, they should be involved in helping strategize and prioritize district spending and building.

Action Plan 7-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 7-1

We recommend that the district establish a comprehensive long-range planning process that includes a broad-based group of stakeholders, a comprehensive review of the conditions of the district's schools, written budgetary plans and priorities, forecasts for inflation, and a mechanism to ensure responsiveness to community concerns.	

Action Needed	Step 1.	Working with the architect under contract, conduct an annual facilities inventory and assess each school's

- structural integrity,
- mechanical systems,
- electrical systems,
- plumbing and sewer systems,
- fire, safety, health and sanitation issues,
- educational suitability,
- site size, layout, space and adaptability,
- operations and maintenance costs,
- technological readiness,
- capacity utilization,
- users' satisfaction, and
- compliance with federal standards, including the Office of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

	Step 2.	Update Five-Year Plant Survey based on Step 1.
	Step 3.	Utilize Five-Year Plant Survey to annually develop an updated Five-Year Facilities Work Plan.
	Step 4.	Annually update FISH data to correct funding from the Department of Education and to ensure accurate budgeting and managerial decision making.
	Step 5.	Establish a planning committee composed of broad-based group of stakeholders to determine the need for new construction, repair, or renovation of the district's schools. Members of the committee should include teachers, school officials, parents, community stakeholders, and construction, design, engineering, and real estate professionals.
	Step 6.	Prioritize needs for corrective action based upon results of steps 1-5 and incorporate facility needs into the district strategic plan.
	Step 7.	Document the consideration of alternatives to new construction, such as renovation, and remodeling, merging underutilized schools, expanded use of relocatables, joint use agreements for existing buildings, etc.
	Step 8.	Ensure that the five-year facilities work reflects the most pressing needs identified by the district-wide facility inventory, taking into account assessment by the broad-based planning committee, budget, inflation, and demographic projections.
	Step 9.	Develop 10-year and 20-year strategic facility plans, incorporating the five-year facilities work plan, demographics, and inflation projections.
	Step 10.	Present the Five-Year Facilities Work Plan to broad-based planning committee to ensure community responsiveness.
	Step 11.	Present the 10-20 year facility strategic plan to the board for approval.
	Step 12.	Implement Five-Year Facilities Work Plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendent, maintenance coordinator, finance director, principals, stakeholders, contracted architect	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Best Practice 2: Not Using

When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan, the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction but does not prioritize construction needs.

Alternatives to new construction such as year-round education, extended day schools, changes in grade level configuration, changes in attendance boundaries, and use of relocatable classrooms are ways a district can avoid the high costs associated with building new facilities. Alternative methods of using existing facilities can help mitigate fluctuations in future student enrollments.

The Franklin County School District has had few construction projects for which to consider alternatives. For the most recent construction project, the Apalachicola High School physical education facility, the district considered using a prefabricated metal building rather than building a new facility. District officials stated that a new facility was necessary because only one-half of the current physical education building was habitable. Though district administrators reported consideration of construction alternatives, the deliberations and resulting decisions were not documented. Documenting alternatives and deliberations protects the district against potential later claims that stakeholder input and other pressing district needs were ignored when decisions were made. (See Best Practice 4.)

Although the district considered construction alternatives for the new physical education facility, it did not determine whether the project was immediately needed or whether construction monies might have been better spent on other building or maintenance problems. Since the district faces many serious maintenance problems such as sewage back-up, leaking roofs, and plumbing repairs, it would benefit from a prioritization system to determine how best to spend available monies and plan for future construction and repairs. (See Chapter 8 for a discussion of facility maintenance issues.)

Action Plan 7-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Best Practice 3: Not Using

The five-year facilities work plan does not establish budgetary plans and priorities.

The Five- mandated by Florida law (s. 1013.35, *Florida Statutes*), should be prepared and submitted to the Department of Education. It is primarily a current-year budget document with an additional four-year projection of anticipated revenues and new and continuing capital projects. The plan details a schedule of major projects intended to properly maintain the district's educational plant and ancillary facilities, and to provide an adequate number of satisfactory student stations for projected student enrollments. The Five-Year Educational Plant Survey is the basis for the Five-Year Facilities Work Plan. A five-year work plan is not and should not become a district's strategic plan but is an important element to be used in the planning process. A five-year view of capital needs is inadequate and reactive in nature for a school district; a much longer-term view, constituting a strategic plan, is necessary to ensure adequate funding and appropriate land acquisition decisions. Capital project priorities (site acquisition, site improvement, construction, remodeling, renovation, maintenance) should be established in the strategic plan and linked to the district's anticipated revenues and budget projections through the five-year work plan.

The Franklin County School District's Year Facilities Work Plan does not reflect specific budgetary plans and priorities beyond the first year of a project and does not link anticipated revenues and budget projections to capital projects. Neither the work plan nor the district's strategic plan contains inflation projections to help the district budget for future needs. In addition, there are no supplemental policies or criteria to ensure the plans properly prioritize and equitably fund each of the school's capital needs. As a result, capital needs have not been addressed and the schools have deteriorated. The district retained an architectural firm in October 2002 to help it better develop long-term planning priorities. This firm will provide recommendations on construction, renovation, and repair priorities as well as help establish project cost projections.

Action Plan 7-1 includes steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Best Practice 4: Using

The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the Five-Year Facilities Work Plan.

School districts should be accountable for and provide information to parents and other taxpayers about the performance and cost of their major programs, including the facilities construction program. A school district should provide the public with clear and accurate information regarding its capital program, such as planned projects, future project priorities, and how those priorities were determined. A district should provide a complete explanation of how planned projects will help the district meet its educational, site acquisition, construction, remodeling, renovation, and maintenance needs. Effective communication with district stakeholders helps earn public support for the capital program. Typically, districts that successfully communicate their capital program priorities hold regular school board meetings and provide information about the construction program and clear explanations of each construction project in a format that allows for public input.

Although records show that the Franklin County School Board holds regular public meetings to discuss the district's budget and proposed capital projects, the district needs to better document public comment at these meetings. District officials report that they routinely solicit community comment on construction projects, and did so for the district's most recent construction project—the Apalachicola High School physical education facility. Although provided an opportunity, no public comment was given at the school board meeting about the project. Comments made at an OPPAGA public forum, along with calls to our office, reveal that some Franklin County citizens opposed this elective construction project, believing the district had more pressing needs such as roof, electrical, plumbing and HVAC repairs. To demonstrate input solicitation at each regularly scheduled board meeting, the district should document public comments and note when none are provided. (See Chapter 8 for a discussion of facility maintenance.)

> **To ensure and demonstrate that projects reflect stakeholder priorities, we recommend that the district actively solicit and maintain a written record of public comment regarding capital projects as well as document when comment is requested but none is given.**

Best Practice 5: Not Applicable

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

This best practice is not currently applicable. Since schools are at 56% average capacity and enrollments are declining, the Franklin County School District has no site selection process and is not seeking sites for new schools. However, should conditions change or the district decide to reconfigure its schools, it will need to establish a process to ensure proper site selection.

The appropriate and timely selection of new facility sites is critical to a district's capital program and ensures that land is available when and where it is needed. A district should use demographic projections to identify potential sites in areas that may require new school facilities as a result of growth or changing district needs. Early identification of appropriate parcels will allow the district to acquire the land well in advance of construction needs. When multiple sites are to be considered, the district should use the facilities planning committee, which includes experts and community stakeholders, to review the proposed sites.

> **If the district chooses to build new facilities, we recommend that it establish a broad-based committee (as outlined in Action Plan 7-1) to study relevant site selection issues and make recommendations to the school board; study demographic projections and how they affect enrollment; examine inflation projections and how they might affect costs; identify potential sites and acquisition obstacles; and analyze potential supplemental costs such as, drainage issues, proximity to the aquifer, land clearing, etc.**

Best Practice 6: Not Applicable

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

This best practice is not currently applicable to the Franklin County School District. The district has no need to acquire the most economical and practical sites for expansion, as district enrollments are declining, not growing. Should conditions change or the district decide to reconfigure its schools, we recommend the district implement the steps outlining a site-selection process in Best Practice 5.

An effectively managed district acquires the right property for its facilities in an economical way. To accomplish this, a district should ensure that the land meets its location needs and that the site complies with Florida law requirements. Moreover, the price should be reasonable. In determining the appropriate price, the district should consider factors beyond the cost of the land itself, including the need for site development and improvement or other work that may be incidental to construction.

CONSTRUCTION FUNDING

Best Practice 7: Using

Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.

Funding for district capital projects is commonly derived from a variety of revenue sources, including property taxes, bond referenda, sales surtaxes, and certificates of participation. A district should be able to demonstrate that each revenue source is used as authorized by law. For instance, a district must be able to show that if local bond referendum proceeds were used, the scope of each project was spelled out in the bond referendum; and, that if local sales surtax revenue was used to finance a project, the scope of the project was spelled out in the sales surtax referendum resolution advertisement. The district should evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of alternative methods for funding and financing construction projects in the development of its capital planning budget. The best way to ensure maximum construction funding is to first maximize the use of local revenue alternatives.

The Franklin County School District has raised project funds appropriately, but not in an amount sufficient to address its most pressing capital needs. School project funds were raised in accordance with state statutes and the Auditor General has not issued any adverse findings regarding the district's fund collections. However, the district has not maximized local tax revenues and, as a result, has deferred $10.5 million in much needed facility maintenance projects. (See Chapter 1a for discussion of maximizing local tax revenue and Chapter 8 for a discussion of needed maintenance projects.)

Best Practice 8: Using

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

A school district must use tax revenues appropriately and for their intended purposes. All capital projects, including new construction, renovation, remodeling, site acquisition, and development and improvement projects may have separate funding sources with differing expenditure requirements. Districts typically rely on a finance officer to ensure that revenues for use in construction or site acquisition have been collected as authorized by Florida law and are being expended for lawful purposes. Generally, the district finance officer ensures that funds from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund are used to construct educational plant facilities with total student station costs, including change orders, which meet the allowable amount specified in Florida law. The finance officer ensures that the school

tax, defined in Florida law as two-mill money, is only used for construction, maintenance or other authorized capital or facilities purposes. The finance officer is responsible for the timely use of state funds, avoiding reversion of any unspent revenues. During the budget process, the finance officer should ensure that all available capital resources are applied to the five-year facilities work plan and limited use capital funds are not diverted to other, lower priority allowable uses.

The Franklin County School District approves and uses construction funds only after determining that projects are cost-efficient and in compliance with Florida law and the district's five-year facilities work plan. Neither the Auditor General nor the Florida Department of Education have issued any adverse findings regarding the district's use of funds. The district finance officer reports that no funds have reverted to the state. Public Education Capital Outlay funds are used appropriately, and the one-mill tax monies (of the possible two that could be assessed) are used for capital projects, as required by law.

CONSTRUCTION DESIGN

Best Practice 9: Using

The district has developed thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each education facility construction project.

Educational specifications are an important part of the facility planning process. They allow stakeholders to develop working descriptions of a planned educational facility. Once developed, specifications should be submitted to the design professional for use in preparing written construction materials and equipment specifications and schematic drawings. To ensure the safety and security of those using school district facilities, all building specifications should include common safety elements such as controlled access entrances, appropriate signs, and circulation patterns allowing for unobstructed views of the entrance and hallways. Finally, specifications should ensure that designs are cost-effective, provide for long term-energy efficiency, and reduce lifetime building operations and maintenance costs.

The Franklin County School District develops thorough descriptions and education specifications for projects over $100,000, but not for those under $100,000. For projects over $100,000, the district seeks the help of an outside architectural firm to develop designs that meet the district's building and educational specifications, incorporate effective safety features, and minimize construction, maintenance, and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs and frugal construction practices. The district generally followed this practice for the $519,320 Apalachicola High School physical education facility. District needs were delineated, requirements for the contractor were specified, compliance with the American with Disabilities Act and other safety issues were addressed, and costs were minimized by using the same design that was used 10 years earlier for the Carrabelle High School physical education facility. [3]

Although technically not an education facility, the district would have benefited from clearly defined project specifications for the district office restroom remodeling project. The $39,100 remodeling project did not include a thorough description and job specifications. The project began in March 2002, and required two different plumbing contractors. Written project specifications outlining expectations and requirements ensure that the contractor and district agree initially on the full scope of the project. With specifications, the project would likely have been completed more timely and the district would not have had to suffer prolonged work disruption as well as the added effort of finding additional contractors to complete the job. Since this renovation was not related to an educational facility but the district office, educational specifications were not necessary.

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[3] Although use of the prototype enabled the district to minimize design costs, use of green architecture techniques constrained the architect's ability to reduce energy costs. Such techniques include shading walls and fenestration, using light colors on exterior walls and roofs, building orientation, and other factors used to minimize the negative impact of prevailing environmental influences.

> We recommend that the district seek the help of an outside architectural firm to develop designs that meet building and educational specifications, incorporate effective safety features, and minimize construction, maintenance, and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs and frugal construction practices for all future projects. The district should take advantage of the current architectural contract to the greatest extent possible to obtain these services.

Best Practice 10: Using

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

A district should submit a well-developed educational specification to the design professional for use in preparing written construction documents, which include materials and equipment specifications, and schematic drawings. The Franklin County School District uses this practice for its larger projects. The best practice is discussed in conjunction with Best Practice 9.

Best Practice 11: Using

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

To ensure the safety and security of those using school district facilities, all building specifications should include common safety elements such as such as controlled access entrances, appropriate signage, and circulation patterns that allow unobstructed views of the entrance and hallways. The Franklin County School District uses this practice for its larger projects. The best practice is discussed in conjunction with Best Practice 9.

Best Practice 12: Using

The district minimizes construction and maintenance and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs, prototype school designs, and frugal construction practices.
A district should design new and remodeled space as efficiently as possible in order to minimize the costs of construction, provide for long term-energy efficiency, and reduce lifetime building operations and maintenance costs. The Franklin County School District uses this practice for its larger projects. The best practice is discussed in conjunction with Best Practice 9.

NEW CONSTRUCTION, RENOVATION AND REMODELING

Best Practice 13: Using

The district has contractually obtained an effective management process for construction projects.

As long as projects meet the Florida Building Code and sufficient oversight is exercised, districts have the option of managing construction projects in-house or contracting with private firms for construction management services. Regardless of whether the district manages a project in-house or assigns an employee to be a liaison between the district and a private construction management firm, district officials must be accountable to taxpayers for the project. Such accountability includes ensuring that each project is inspected by a competent authority, schooled and certified in Florida Building Code requirements. Compliance with the code assures that completed building projects provide a safe and secure facility for students and staff alike.

Because of its limited construction activity, the Franklin County School District has no one adequately trained in construction management, the Florida Building Code, or project oversight. During the course of our review, however, the district entered into a contract for the future provision of construction management services. Currently, the director of business services and the construction coordinator share project management responsibility and both have additional non-related duties. The construction coordinator is responsible for keeping projects on schedule while the director of business services is responsible for keeping projects within budget. Neither has training in the Florida Building Code. Lack of building code training and in-house project management led to the restroom remodel problems discussed in Best Practice 9. (For a further discussion of the Florida Building Code, see Best Practice 15.)

During the course of our review, the district hired a professional construction management firm to manage all future construction projects regardless of size. Based on this action, we believe they have now begun to use this best practice. The construction management contract, entered into in March 2003, extends through March 2005 and is renewable for additional one-year periods thereafter. The contract outlines construction management services to be provided including the contractor's services and responsibilities; permitting and inspection; subcontracts; schedule; completion; owner occupancy; liquidated damages; guaranteed maximum price for construction; contractors fee; project cost; project changes; discounts and penalties; and payments to the contractor.

Best Practice 14: Not Using

District planning does not provide realistic time frames for the implementation of construction, renovation, or remodeling that are coordinated with the opening of schools.

A district can obtain maximum use of construction and operating funds by reducing the effect of inflation and ensuring a smooth, non-disruptive student transition into new facilities at the beginning of a school term. This requires planning, coordination, and regular communication between the district's representatives and contractors. Realistic expectations for project completion must be established and should include contingency plans for delays caused by bad weather or unanticipated construction problems.

To ensure the least disruption to students and teachers, a district must ensure that the tasks for each project phase are incorporated into the project plan and timed to coordinate with the opening of schools. When time frames are not met, the district should revise them accordingly and identify why they were not met. The board and public should regularly be updated about changing project timelines. The plan should contain an accountability component assuring the board and public that planned projects will be implemented within proposed budget levels and time frames. Regular budget updates, prepared upon completion of each design phase, should also be delivered to the board.

The Franklin County School District does not have contractual end dates for all construction projects. The school board is briefed monthly on project status and the board chairman approves payment for completed work. Without contractually established time frames and completion dates, neither district staff nor the contractor is held accountable for completing the project on time and within budget.

Action Plan 7-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 7-2

To ensure that projects are properly inspected, conform to the Florida Building Code, and completed in a timely and cost-effective manner, we recommend that the district obtain the Department of Education's Florida Building Code training for its employees who manage projects in-house or who serve as a liaison to private construction firms managing district projects.

Action Needed	Step 1.	Assign accountability for construction project management to selected district personnel.
	Step 2.	Obtain training for district project management staff on the current Florida Building Code from the Department of Education's Office of Educational Facilities.
	Step 3.	Establish realistic timeframes for project completion in coordination with the opening of schools.
	Step 4.	Prior to project initiation, establish in the project contract quality standards, maximum cost guarantees, and time certain end dates and deadlines.
	Step 5.	Ensure that permits are pulled in accordance with the Florida Building Code for every project, regardless of size, before construction begins.
	Step 6.	Ensure that inspections are completed by trained and licensed professionals during the course of every construction project in accordance with the Florida Building Code. Document that projects meet the code.
	Step 7.	Review change orders for viability, necessity, and cost to ensure they do not exceed the maximum cost guarantee and do not exceed the time certain deadline. Document change order causes, initiator(s), and effects on the project budget and schedule.
	Step 8.	Evaluate each project after completion and using this feedback, implement changes as lessons learned and improve construction operations.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendent, maintenance coordinator, and contracted architect.	
Time Frame	January 2004	

Best Practice 15: Not Using

Not all projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the Florida Building Code.

The State of Florida has completed a major rewrite of the state building code, including those elements that pertain to educational facilities, which became effective on March 1, 2002. Significant changes included allowing districts to establish alternative methods of obtaining permits and required the re-education of existing staff certified to conduct building code inspections. All school construction projects begun after the effective date are required to meet the new code requirements. Districts must adjust for the code changes in contracted projects and consider the impact the new code will have on future projects. To ensure that districts are aware of and follow these new requirements, construction personnel should have received training in the Florida Building Code or the district should be able to justify why training is not needed.

The Franklin County School District does not currently have any staff versed in the revised building code and, as a result, its most recent construction projects, the district office restroom renovation, may not comply with the revised Florida Building Code. Without training in the Florida Building Code, the district's project management employees are not qualified to inspect their own in-house projects and cannot assure that projects comply with code requirements. Further, without knowledge of code requirements, the district cannot assure taxpayers that in-house projects meet structural and safety requirements.

Even for outsourced project management, such as the in-progress Apalachicola High School physical education facility, someone at the district needs to be accountable for ensuring that code requirements have been met and structures are properly inspected. Without this knowledge, the district has no way of knowing whether contractors have made mistakes or have taken advantage of them. Since the Department of Education's Office of Educational Facilities regularly provides Florida Building Code

training free of charge, the district can improve its accountability by obtaining this training for its project management staff.

Action Plan 7-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Best Practice 16: Using

The district obtained contractual services to ensure the appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.

Compliance with the Florida Building Code ensures that all school construction projects are inspected by a competent authority, schooled and certified in the requirements of the state building code. Although the Franklin County School District has not previously required inspections for all their construction projects, during the course of our review, the district hired a construction management firm to ensure that all future projects are inspected. As a result, the district is now generally using this best practice. (See also Best Practices 13 and 15.)

Best Practice 17: Using

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

A district should make reasoned and appropriate selections of design and construction professionals to aid in carrying out the school board's mission, goals and obligations in accordance with Florida law. The selection process should be in writing and available to the public and should begin sufficiently in advance of a proposed project's completion date to ensure that the necessary persons are selected, obligated, and committed to the project. Districts may select from a combination of in-house and outsourced options to staff a particular project or group of projects. Hiring permanent employees may not be cost-effective for smaller, low growth districts, but larger districts or districts with significant student population growth may find it appropriate to have permanent, professionally staffed design and construction departments. When outsourcing, the district should use a selection committee to choose appropriate professionals who will act in the district's best interests.

For projects over $100,000, the Franklin County School District has retained two architectural firms to assist with construction design and project management. These professionals were selected following portfolio presentations and interviews based on the firm's qualifications and price. For projects under $100,000 the district has heretofore relies upon its own staff for facility planning, design and construction. This has led to problem discusses in Best Practice 9. Because the district hired a professional construction management firm in March 2003 to now manage all of their construction projects regardless of size, however, we believe the district is now meeting the intent of this best practice.

> **Because the district has had so few construction projects and district employees have relatively little experience in planning, design, and construction, we recommend that the district outsource this function to the architectural firms under contract for all future projects.**

Best Practice 18: Not Using

Though the district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices, it does not include contractual legal safeguards to protect its financial interests.

To control costs and protect against litigation, a district should have policies and procedures delineating bid solicitation and contracting practices. These policies and procedures should be reviewed by legal counsel for adequacy and conformity to statutes and generally accepted practices. Generally accepted bidding procedures include set opening bid dates and times and a requirement that all bids are inspected to confirm receipt of required documents. Contracting practices include the use of standardized agreements that have been modified to satisfy local concerns and conditions, and are reviewed by legal

authority. The district should determine the type of contract appropriate for each project after considering alternative bid and construction systems. The contract should be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder whose bid, after review by district legal counsel, meets the specifications or to the construction manager or design build contractor selected pursuant to Florida law. The contracts should be submitted to the school board for final contract award.

Although the Franklin County School District follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices, its standard construction contract does not contain legal safeguards to protect the district's financial interests. The contract lacks provisions such as a maximum cost guarantee, a time-certain completion date, and change order limitations. Such cost containment clauses would help protect the district's financial interests and ensure that projects are completed on time and within budget. Although the district's contract has a liquidated damages clause of $50 a day should the contractor fail to comply with the contract, this amount is significantly less than a neighboring district's $1,000 daily penalty clause. The district's daily penalty clause should be set at a rate that encourages contract provision compliance.

During the course of our review, the district entered into a contract for construction project management services. The contract includes provisions for guaranteed maximum construction price, liquidated damages, project changes, and completion dates. However, these factors are only generally addressed and must be clearly and specifically delineated in all individual future project contracts.

Action Plan 7-3 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 7-3

We recommend that the district modify its standard construction contract to protect its financial interests and ensure timely construction project completion.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Consult the local building authority and surrounding districts to revise the district's daily liquidated damages clause amount to effectively enforce construction contract compliance.
	Step 2.	Insert a maximum-cost guarantee into each project contract to ensure project costs do not exceed a specified financial threshold.
	Step 3.	Insert time-certain project end dates and penalties for exceeding the established, agreed-upon dates for each project contract.
Who Is Responsible	District legal counsel	
Time Frame	January 2004	

Best Practice 19: Using

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

Changes to a facility's design after construction has begun must be carefully considered, as they can be very costly or they can provide substantial savings. Design changes can create substantial delays in project completion, while adding overlooked elements can enhance the educational environment or the delivery of educational services, or reduce future operational/maintenance costs. Necessary changes to the construction agreement, which may be requested by either the contractor or the district's representative, should generate a request for a change order. Change orders should be reviewed for viability, necessity, and cost. A district should use planning and contracting methods that minimize change orders and retain information sufficient to document the reasons behind a change order and the responsible individual. Critical to the change order process is a review that, when possible, ensures change orders do not result in the project exceeding budget, do not compromise educational specifications, do not exceed industry standards, and do not extend the completion date beyond the established date.

In general, the district attempts to minimize construction change orders. The Apalachicola High School physical education facility has had two change orders related to soil and drainage issues, increasing the

project cost by $73,521 (14%). Reasons for the change orders were documented as well as the effect on the project budget.

> **We recommend that the district continue to maintain and subsequently review documentation on all change orders to avoid similar problems on future projects.**

Best Practice 20: Using

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

Payments to contractors for large construction projects usually are separated into a series of partial payments known as progress payments. This practice protects the school district and pays the contractor in a fair and reasonable manner in proportion to the work completed. Once a payment request is received, the district should respond timely and efficiently. A district should retain a predetermined percentage of the contract pending final completion to cover non-performance issues or liquidated damages, should such situations arise. The district should have a system of internal controls to ensure that payments are made timely and only after the architect has approved the completed work, with the concurrence of the district's project manager.

In Franklin County, the architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. The contract also requires that, at each phase of completion, a percentage of the contract be withheld pending completion of any outstanding construction issues. This figure is usually between 10 and 20%. Contractors are paid through partial payments, known as progress payments or draws. These payments are made at specified project completion points and are established in the contract. When the contractor completes each pre-specified phase, he or she submits a request for payment to the architect. The architect inspects the contractor's work to verify payment requirements have been met. If the work is completed satisfactorily, the request for payment is submitted to the district's director of business services. If the work is not completed satisfactorily, the architect intercedes and requires the contractor to correct any deficiencies prior to forwarding the request for payment. Upon receipt of the request for payment, the district's project managers check the completed work and submit the request for payment to the district's finance office. The finance office is responsible for ensuring proper payment in a timely manner. A portion of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project and any outstanding construction issues.

FACILITY OCCUPANCY AND EVALUATION

Best Practice 21:   Using

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

Proper school operation is dependent on users' understanding of the facilities systems and why certain design elements were included. Therefore, school district personnel should be familiarized with a new facility prior to occupation. Orienting facility users is critical, as it allows the new facility to be used as it was designed, provides for the safety and comfort of the occupants, and ensures that the building's components are operated in a non-damaging and efficient manner. An orientation program should include the delivery of clear and understandable users' manuals designed for the appropriate staff. Elements of the program should be customized for particular groups of users such as maintenance staff, custodians, administrators, and teachers. The district should include clauses in the design and construction contract requiring the architect and contractor to share responsibility for and provide orientation programs and supporting documentation.

Although the Franklin County School District does not have procedures outlining comprehensive building orientation requirements, contracted project architects provide these orientations so users understand a new building's design and function. The architect for the district's current construction project, the Apalachicola High School physical education facility, will conduct a facility orientation upon its completion. The district's contracted architectural firms report that they serve as the lead agents in all orientation programs for new construction and will continue to provide orientations for all new construction. As long as the district is able to contractually obtain facility orientation services, it has no need to develop an orientation process of its own. In the event that this service cannot be obtained contractually, the district will have to develop its own orientation process.

> **If the district is unable to secure contractual facility orientation services, to ensure that building users can optimize the design and function of newly constructed buildings, we recommend that the district develop written orientation procedures for all future projects.**

Best Practice 22: Not Applicable

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.

This best practice is not currently applicable to the Franklin County School District, since it has not constructed any new buildings for the last several years requiring comprehensive building evaluations at the end of the first year of operations. However, prior to completion of the Apalachicola High School physical education facility, the district will need to develop an evaluation instrument to assess the building's operation and performance. This evaluation will enable the district to identify and capitalize on lessons learned to improve subsequent projects.

If conditions change and the district has a need to construct new facilities, it will be necessary to assess building operation and performance, and to continually improve district construction efforts. A post-occupancy evaluation helps a district determine how well the design of a facility meets the educational, service, community, and administrative needs of the building's users. Information from a post-occupancy evaluation can be used to improve the design of subsequent projects. Such an evaluation should be conducted on every new facility no earlier than one year and no longer than three years after occupancy. This timeframe allows for a full school year in the new facility and for the evaluation to occur before any functional design changes or remodeling might take place, which would change elements of the original design. As part of the evaluation, users, including students, parents, district and school-based maintenance and food service personnel, teachers, administrators, and bus drivers, should be surveyed or interviewed to determine their attitudes about the design. District facility design and construction staff, the design professional for the new facility, and a representative of the contractor should also provide evaluation input. The resulting information should be compiled into a report, enumerating the positive aspects and difficulties, if any, with the design of the facility. Information obtained through post-occupancy evaluations should be communicated to educational specification committees, the design review committee, and, when contracted for a new facility, the design professional.

> **To assess a new building's operation and performance, and to continually improve its construction efforts, we recommend that the district develop and conduct written evaluations for future projects at one, three, and five years after completion.**

Best Practice 23: Not Applicable

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

This practice, as well as Best Practice 24, is not currently applicable to the Franklin County School District, since there is no construction program and only a few construction projects. Little district construction has taken place over the last 10 years. However, should the district undertake future construction projects, e.g., renovations, roofing, or the potential reconfiguration of schools, it will need to develop a construction accountability and evaluation system.

Like other publicly funded entities, a school district should be held accountable for and provide information to parents, other taxpayers, and the school board on the performance and cost of its major programs and support services, including the facilities construction program. To accomplish this, each school district should have an accountability system including clearly stated facility construction program goals and measurable objectives that identify whether the program is operating efficiently and effectively. An effective accountability system includes performance and cost-efficiency measures, and interpretive benchmarks, including comparisons to adjoining districts. Information from these measures is used to evaluate the program and in management decision-making. As part of its accountability system, the district should also establish and implement strategies to continually assess program performance reliability and cost data and take advantage of significant opportunities to improve construction operations management.

Evaluation of completed projects is an important management tool because it assesses how tax dollars were spent and whether a district took full advantage of available, usually scarce, public funds. Districts should annually assess their facility construction operations using performance data and established benchmarks and annually report progress toward established goals, objectives, and benchmarks to the board and public. Future strategies should be established and implemented based on the evaluation outcomes.

> **For future projects, we recommend that the district develop clearly stated construction goals and measurable objectives reflecting the project purpose, including the cost per square foot; cost per student station; customer satisfaction; and, whether the project was completed on time and within budget. [4]**

Best Practice 24: Not Applicable

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

This best practice is not currently applicable in Franklin County. However, should the district build any new projects in the future, it should follow the accountability measures and benchmarks described in Best Practice 23.

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[4] For a general discussion about developing goals, objectives, and measures see Chapter 3, Action Plan 3-1.

8 Facilities Maintenance

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using 10 of 22 facility maintenance best practices. The district obtains customer feedback to identify program improvements; regularly reviews the maintenance organizational structure; has complete job descriptions and appropriate hiring and retention practices; has an annual budget with spending limits; maintains a reserve fund balance for one-time expenditures; minimizes equipment costs; provides staff with sufficient tools; contains energy costs and has an energy management system; and, regularly assesses the potential for contracting and privatization. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its facilities maintenance services, the district needs to develop a maintenance and custodial accountability system; develop written maintenance and custodial operating procedures; improve school conditions; improve maintenance and custodial employee training; and project short- and long-term maintenance costs. It also needs to fully implement the comprehensive work order and inventory management system; establish policies and procedures to meet health and safety standards; and ensure proper project permitting, inspection, and compliance with the current Florida Building Code. During the course of this review the district began taking corrective action to improve its operations and is working with a firm to help it address pressing maintenance issues.

Background

The Franklin County School District's facilities maintenance department is responsible for all aspects of preventive, routine, and emergency upkeep for the district's four schools and central office. Maintenance employees are also responsible for maintaining school grounds and athletic fields as well as installing and relocating portable classrooms. In total, the department maintains approximately 361,320 square feet of building space in schools ranging from 26 to 40 years old. [1] Each school has significant maintenance needs. According to the firm hired by the district to help improve its maintenance program, these needs total approximately $10.5 million.

Organization and management

The district's facilities coordinator divides his time among managing the maintenance, transportation, and construction programs. The coordinator has 4.5 full-time equivalent positions and a secretary who

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[1] This figure includes 306,981 square feet for all campus buildings plus 54,339 square feet for the district office and the maintenance support buildings.

divides her time between three programs. The maintenance employees have different specialty skills including plumbing, electrical, carpentry, and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC).

Custodians, who are not part of the maintenance department, report to the school principals and are charged with keeping the schools clean and performing minor maintenance tasks. Though not organizationally part of the maintenance department, an assessment of custodial services is included in this chapter, as they directly affect general school conditions. Exhibits 8-1 and 8-2 show the reporting structure for both maintenance and custodial staff.

Exhibit 8-1
Five And One-Tenth FTEs Maintain All Four Franklin County Schools
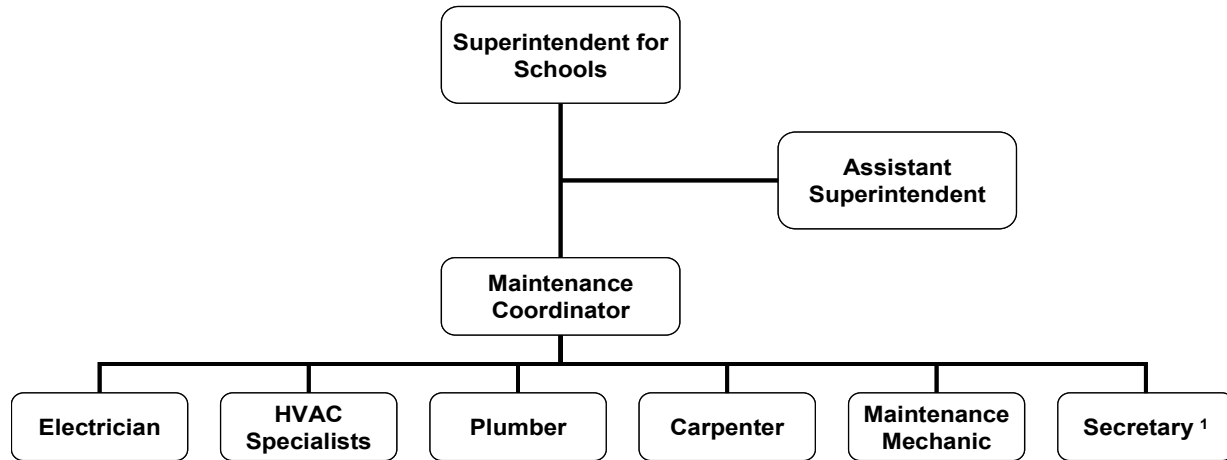
[1] The secretary and maintenance mechanic are shared half time with the transportation program. The maintenance coordinator divides his time three ways among managing the district's transportation, construction, and maintenance program.

Source: Franklin County School District.

Exhibit 8-2
Each School Has Between Two and Three Custodians Who Report To the Principal
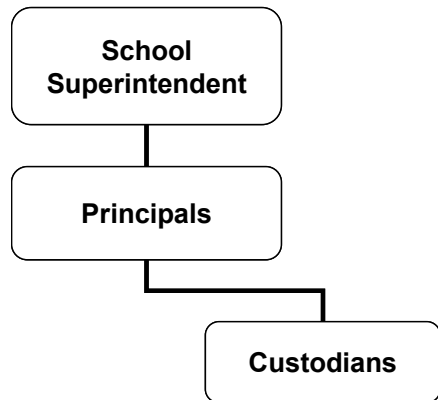
Source: Franklin County School District.

Activities of particular interest

To help improve its maintenance program, the district hired a firm to assist in implementing a preventive maintenance program and addressing pressing maintenance issues. This indicates the district's commitment to improving its maintenance program and using the best practice standards.

Conclusion and Recommendations———

Summary of Conclusions for Facilities Maintenance Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Best Practice Used?	Page No.
Program Direction and Accountability	1. The district's maintenance and operations department has a mission statement and goals and objectives that are established in writing.	No	8-5
	2. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance and efficiency of the maintenance and operations program.	No	8-6
	3. The district obtains and uses customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements.	Yes	8-7
	4. The district has established procedures and staff performance standards to ensure efficient operations.	No	8-7
	5. The department maintains educational and district support facilities in a condition that enhances student learning and facilitates employee productivity.	No	8-9
Organizational Structure and Staffing	6. The district regularly reviews the organizational structure of the maintenance and operations program to minimize administrative layers and assure adequate supervision and staffing levels.	Yes	8-12
	7. Complete job descriptions and appropriate hiring and retention practices ensure that the maintenance and operations department has qualified staff.	Yes	8-12
	8. The district provides a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff to enhance worker job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.	No	8-13
Resource Allocation and Utilization	9. The administration has developed an annual budget with spending limits that comply with the lawful funding for each category of facilities maintenance and operations.	Yes	8-14
	10. The district accurately projects cost estimates of major maintenance projects.	No	8-14
	11. The board maintains a maintenance reserve fund to handle one-time expenditures necessary to support maintenance and operations.	Yes	8-15
	12. The district minimizes equipment costs through purchasing practices.	Yes	8-16
	13. The district provides maintenance and operations department staff the tools and equipment required to accomplish their assigned tasks.	Yes	8-16
	14. The district uses proactive maintenance practices to reduce maintenance costs.	No	8-16
	15. The maintenance and operations department identifies and implements strategies to contain energy costs.	Yes	8-17
	16. The district has an energy management system in place, and the system is maintained at original specifications for maximum effectiveness.	Yes	8-17
	17. District personnel regularly review maintenance and operation's costs and services and evaluate the potential for outside contracting and privatization.	Yes	8-18

Practice Area	Best Practice	Best Practice Used?	Page No.
Information Management	18. A computerized control and tracking system is used to accurately track work orders and inventory.	No	8-18
	19. The maintenance and operations department has a system for prioritizing maintenance needs uniformly throughout the district.	No	8-20
Health and Safety	20. District policies and procedures clearly address the health and safety conditions of facilities.	No	8-20
	21. The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health and safety conditions.	No	8-21
	22. The district is aware of and prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code.	No	8-21

PROGRAM DIRECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Best Practice 1: Not Using

The district's maintenance and operations department does not have a mission statement, goals, or objectives.

Like other publicly funded entities, a school district should be held accountable for and provide information to parents and other taxpayers on the performance and cost of its major programs and support services, including facilities maintenance. To accomplish this, a school district should have an accountability system including a mission statement, clearly stated goals, and measurable objectives that identify facilities maintenance program expected outcomes. The program's goals and objectives should be in writing, tied to the district's strategic plan, and focus on operating facilities in a cost-efficient manner while allowing for maximum utilization. Maintenance program goals and objectives also should include comprehensive projections for size of the necessary work force, amount and types of required equipment, and anticipated long-term budget requirements. These projections should be based on a survey of the physical condition of facilities and equipment, and should identify facility repair or replacement needs.

There are three major benefits to developing a written mission statement, measurable goals, and expected outcomes. First, a written record of this information holds district officials accountable to taxpayers for maintaining the schools in a safe and healthful condition. Second, it allows district officials to evaluate the purpose of each program component and focus resources accordingly. Third, by tying this information to the district strategic plan and the subsequent five-year facilities work plan, the district is able to identify, anticipate, and prioritize needed maintenance projects for the next five years.

The Franklin County School District does not have a written mission statement, measurable goals, or expected outcomes for its maintenance and custodial services program. With the exception of the district's energy program, discussed in Best Practice 16, there are no written goals or objectives addressing schools' plumbing, electrical, and carpentry needs. For example, there are no written goals or time specific objectives for the repair or replacement of damaged plumbing fixtures, electrical fixtures, or vandalized buildings and windows. In addition, there are no goals or time specific objectives for preventive maintenance projects such as paving, painting, and roofing. Not addressing these issues in the district's budget, strategic plan, and five-year work plan has left the district's schools in disrepair.

Action Plan 8-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 8-1

We recommend that the district develop an accountability system including program mission, goals, and objectives for the custodial and maintenance programs. [1]		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Develop a program mission statement that focuses on core functional responsibilities and intended outcomes. For example, a mission statement might read: The mission of the maintenance department is to conduct cost-effective, routine, and preventive maintenance on all school facilities and to provide a safe and healthy environment that enhances student learning and employee productivity.
	Step 2.	Establish goals and time specific objectives to meet the department's mission. For example, a measurable objective might read: Reduce emergency work orders by 10% annually following implementation of a preventive maintenance program.
	Step 3.	Improve district operations by reviewing the management practices, procedures, and benchmarks used by other districts, large and small, and tailor this information to fit Franklin County practices. Determine if the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) can assist by holding workshops or otherwise coordinating communication efforts between panhandle districts.
	Step 4.	Develop performance and cost-effectiveness measures, using resources such as the State Requirements for Educational Facilities (SREF) and the DOE Maintenance and Operations Guidelines, benchmarking manuals, and measures from other districts. Consider using the following measures: ▪ number of user complaints; ▪ number of job call-backs; ▪ percentage of work orders completed within X number of days; ▪ percentage of preventive maintenance tasks performed on schedule; 　▪ average days to institute routine repairs; 　▪ percentage of emergency repairs completed within one day of notification; 　▪ amount of time spent per work order vs. how time allowed by standard; 　▪ facilities operation costs per square foot; 　▪ maintenance and repair costs per square foot and per student; 　▪ custodial costs per square foot and per student; and 　▪ square feet maintained per FTE for both custodians and maintenance employees.
	Step 5.	Distribute all standards and goals to employees and discuss management's expectations.
	Step 6.	Select critical performance and cost-efficiency measures and annually report on performance to the school board and superintendent.
	Step 7.	Revisit the accountability system annually and revise as necessary.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator, principals, superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

[1] For a general discussion about developing goals, objectives, and measures see Chapter 3, Action Plan 3-1.

Best Practice 2: Not Using

The district has not established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance and efficiency of the maintenance and operations program.

An effective accountability system includes performance and cost-efficiency measures, and interpretive benchmarks, such as comparisons to adjoining districts or an industry standard, to evaluate the program and use in management decision making. By periodically comparing established benchmarks to actual performance, a district can determine if changes are needed in its maintenance program to improve efficiency and effectiveness, reduce costs, and assess whether alternative service delivery methods, such as privatization, may be cost-effective. Measures to consider when evaluating the maintenance program include costs per square foot (including energy use), full time staff per square foot of facility, and costs

per student. [2] As part of its accountability system, a district should establish and implement strategies to continually assess program performance and cost data reliability. In addition, school board members should periodically receive performance information to help them assess the maintenance program's efficiency and effectiveness.

With the exception of the district's energy program, the Franklin County School District has not established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance and efficiency of its maintenance and custodial program. There are no benchmarks for routine in-house maintenance, such as how long specific jobs should take versus how long they actually take, number of call-backs to correct work, and how satisfied principals, teachers, and students are with completed work. Furthermore, there are no measures for custodial and maintenance costs per square foot, full time staff per facility square foot, and costs per student. The district does not collect cost data showing how much each routine maintenance and custodial task costs per employee nor how much tasks cost the unit as a whole.

Action Plan 8-1 includes steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Best Practice 3: Using

The district obtains and uses customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements.

Customer survey feedback is one tool to evaluate the maintenance program's efficiency and effectiveness. Customer evaluation surveys should ask stakeholders, such as principals and school-based employees, to provide their perceptions of response times, work order completion times, quality of work, overall facility appearance and cleanliness, and maintenance employee professionalism. This type of survey should be performed at least annually and summary results should be shared with maintenance employees, district managers, the superintendent, and the school board. If customer surveys identify problems, program managers should assess the situation, prepare corrective action plans, and make program improvements.

Although the Franklin County School District obtains and uses customer feedback to identify and implement program improvements, it could improve its efforts. Each year the district sends a survey to parents, teachers, and students soliciting feedback on a variety of issues, including general school maintenance. The survey does not, however, address some of the key issues of concern identified by district employees and students, such as unsanitary bathrooms, dirt and mold on school walls and ceilings, classrooms that smell bad, and generally poor custodial services.

> **To be accountable to stakeholders and better direct maintenance corrective action efforts, we recommend that the district expand its customer survey instrument to include issues specific to facility conditions.**

Best Practice 4: Not Using

The district has not established procedures and staff performance standards to ensure efficient operations.

Up-to-date procedures, when coupled with appropriate district policies, ensure that activities are carried out efficiently and effectively and that districts comply with federal and state laws. In addition, written procedures serve as a district's institutional memory for key processes and as such help to minimize disruption to essential services and reduce the need for costly training and assistance due to personnel turnover. Program managers should develop written procedures and employee performance standards with input from maintenance managers, trade and custodial employees, and human resource

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[2] All Florida school districts are required to report operations and maintenance costs and energy usage to the Department of Education annually and this information is readily available to school districts for comparative purposes.

professionals. Procedures and standards should utilize a combination of national standards and local imperatives and be adjusted for budgetary considerations. Performance standards serve as a basis for measuring how well maintenance and custodial employees meet or adhere to board policies, and set clear expectations for job performance, giving managers tools for consistent and objective employee evaluations.

The Franklin County School District has not established procedures and staff performance standards to ensure efficient operations. With the exception of written purchasing and hiring policies, there are no written policies or procedures for

- how long routine maintenance and custodial tasks should take, based on an internal review of current standards of performance;

- delineating exactly which duties are the responsibility of maintenance and which are the responsibility of custodial employees;

- minimum facility maintenance and cleanliness standards and how failure to meet those standards will be communicated;

- ensuring that all schools are equitably maintained; and

- prioritizing maintenance and custodial tasks.

Lack of procedures and standards has resulted in unclean and poorly maintained facilities. (These problems are discussed in detail in Best Practice 5.) The district needs to develop procedures and standards to ensure appropriate staff training and to communicate management's employee performance expectations. It is particularly important for the district to clearly define custodial expectations and hold employees accountable, since custodians are the front-line employees responsible for school conditions.

To help develop procedures and standards, the district can review popular maintenance and custodial benchmarking manuals as well as consult with other school districts of various sizes about their policies, procedures, and standards. The district can also use the Department of Education's maintenance and custodial peer data to compare operations, set goals, and assist in budget formulation and justification. During the course of our review, the maintenance coordinator purchased a facilities maintenance benchmarking manual intending to use it as a guide to develop procedures and standards to improve maintenance practices. Similar steps need to be taken for custodial services.

Action Plan 8-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 8-2

We recommend that the district develop written maintenance and custodial operating procedures to establish performance expectations and take steps to ensure they are met.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Contact other districts of various sizes and obtain their operating procedures to use as examples when developing the district's procedures.
	Step 2.	Develop operating procedures for maintenance tasks related to

- carpentry, electrical, plumbing;
- heating, ventilating and air conditioning;
- communication and alarm systems such as the public address system and fire alarms;
- fire protection systems and equipment such as sprinklers and extinguishers;
- the conduct and scheduling of preventive maintenance programs
- handling of such hazardous materials as paint, bloodborne pathogens, and cleaning supplies;
- site and grounds standards such as tree trimming, vegetation removal from concrete walkways, mowing, raking, and aesthetics;
- responding to emergencies and safety issues, including hazardous materials spills and emergency work orders;
- purchasing supplies and maintaining minimum stockage levels, particularly for custodial supplies;
- general floor cleaning;
- trash and debris removal;
- cleaning and maintaining portables and restrooms;
- cleaning food service areas;
- vertical surface cleaning including windows, mirrors, vents, blinds, and partitions;
- event preparation/cleanup; and,
- opening/closing of buildings.

	Step 3.	Present operating procedures to the superintendent for approval.
	Step 4.	Distribute procedures to maintenance and custodial personnel and managers.
	Step 5.	Provide training to personnel on operating procedures and conduct annual refresher training.
	Step 6.	Hold maintenance and custodial staff accountable for adhering to all procedures and reflect success or failure in such adherence in their annual performance appraisals.
Who Is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator, principals, assistant superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Best Practice 5: Not Using

The department does not maintain educational and district support facilities in a condition that enhances student learning and facilitates employee productivity.

Comprehensive and proactive physical plant maintenance is critical to sustaining a suitable environment for teaching and student learning and extending a facility's life. Facilities should provide appropriate working conditions for district employees and be maintained in a condition that supports efficient operations and maximum facility utilization. An effective proactive maintenance program can reduce maintenance and operations costs, reduce service outages, and extend the useful life of expensive buildings systems, and should include routine inspections of facilities and custodial operations.

Franklin County school conditions reflect inadequate maintenance and custodial services and indicate that the district has not maintained its facilities in a condition that enhances student learning and facilitates employee productivity. OPPAGA's school inspections found

- restrooms throughout the schools that had not been properly cleaned in some time, smelled strongly of urine, and were missing either soap, paper towels, toilet tissue, running water, urinals, or stall doors—unclean restrooms were the most common student complaint in a 2002 PAEC student survey;

- mold on interior school walls and ceilings and air vents that were not properly cleaned;

- some water fountains that were either broken, moldy, dirty, or used as receptacles for discarded chewing gum;

- graffiti and other signs of vandalism on buildings;

- some nonfunctioning gym showers;

- vegetation growing on roofs and in cement walkways, potentially necessitating expensive repairs; and,

- unsecured circuit breakers which, if tampered with, could disrupt school operations.

The district will have to make correcting these problems a priority if this situation is to be remedied. Estimates from the contracted architecture firm indicate that $10.5 million is needed to rectify the district's maintenance problems, including $3.7 million for HVAC, roof, plumbing, and safety issues at Apalachicola High; $3.6 million for roof, asbestos abatement, plumbing, and safety issues at Carrabelle High; $2.4 million for plumbing roof ADA, HVAC, and life safety issues at Chapman Elementary; and $800,000 for roofing and plumbing at Brown Elementary.

Besides prioritizing correction of these problems, additional corrective action should be undertaken. First, the district should develop a routine maintenance program, as discussed in Action Plan 8-2, as well as a preventive maintenance schedule. An effective preventive maintenance program can reduce maintenance and operations costs, reduce service outages, and extend the useful life of school buildings. Given the district's aging facilities, preventive maintenance is crucial.

Second, the district should consider privatizing its custodial and maintenance programs. This would free the district to concentrate on educating students and would place the maintenance and custodial problems in the hands of professionals who have the knowledge, experience, and expertise to correct them.

Third, if the district chooses not to privatize custodial and maintenance services, it should review how these programs are organized and consider changes to improve their effectiveness. Principals are currently responsible for overseeing custodial activities and monitoring school conditions. However, a principal's primary focus is, most appropriately, on curriculum issues such as teacher effectiveness, student learning, and standardized testing. While school conditions are important to the learning environment, principals may not be able to successfully focus on both curriculum goals as well as day-to-day facility conditions. If, after assessing the appropriate placement of facility condition responsibility, the district decides to leave the responsibility with principals, it should ensure that principals are held accountable for custodial oversight and facility conditions. One method to ensure accountability would be to include oversight of custodial services and facility conditions in the annual principal performance evaluation.

Conversely, the district may determine that this responsibility is too large and important to compete with the other priorities of a principal, and decide to place the responsibility with other district staff. The district could transfer supervision of custodial staff to the maintenance coordinator. This would improve the coordination of custodial and maintenance services and centralizes facility services management. Like the principals, however, the maintenance coordinator has multiple responsibilities, including student transportation, maintenance of the district's white fleet, and facility construction. Also as with principals, the district must determine whether the maintenance coordinator is able to take on the additional duty of custodial oversight in light of his current responsibilities. If the maintenance coordinator cannot effectively take on this additional duty and the district cannot financially support more than one person to

manage transportation, construction, and facility maintenance responsibilities, privatization may prove to be the most viable alternative.

Whether or not the district privatizes custodial services, the district must be accountable to taxpayers, students, and staff for improving facility conditions. As the district's executive, the superintendent is ultimately responsible for ensuring acceptable facility conditions and should oversee the prioritization of school maintenance and custodial operation problems. If these facility conditions are not corrected, long-term costs will increase exponentially as buildings continue to deteriorate.

Action Plan 8-3 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 8-3

We recommend the district improve school conditions by improving maintenance and custodial services		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Using the architectural firm under contract, conduct a conditions assessment for all buildings to identify maintenance problems.
	Step 2.	Develop a corrective action plan and time table for addressing the maintenance problems.
	Step 3.	Based on needed work and available funding, determine whether maintenance and custodial services management should be reorganized or the services privatized.
	Step 4.	Review manufacturer's equipment documentation/specifications to identify the type and frequency of required preventive maintenance.
	Step 5.	Use benchmarking manuals to establish ▪ both preventive and routine maintenance schedules for all school buildings and ▪ routine custodial schedules for all school buildings.
	Step 6.	Prioritize all maintenance projects and note the priorities in the five-year work plan.
	Step 7.	Determine who should be in charge of custodial and maintenance services. The responsible party(s) should conduct weekly spot checks of facility maintenance and cleanliness and make program changes as conditions warrant.
	Step 8.	Annually request teacher, student, and staff feedback on maintenance and custodial efforts using a detailed anonymous survey.
	Step 9.	Include survey results and corrective action plan implementation levels in the annual performance appraisal of the person(s) responsible for custodial and maintenance services.
	Step 10.	Develop a checklist and time table for routine and preventive maintenance projects.
	Step 11.	Develop a daily custodial duty checklist requiring custodians to sign off tasks as completed.
	Step 12.	Train custodial and maintenance personnel how to use the daily checklists to guide their work.
	Step 13.	Prioritize all custodial projects and note the priorities in the five-year work plan.
Who is Responsible	Superintendent, maintenance coordinator, principals, budget director, and architectural firm on retainer.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

Best Practice 6: Using

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

Well-run school districts are lean administratively and maximize funds available to support their primary mission, educating students. This requires districts to make the most effective use of funds allocated for administrative services, such as facilities maintenance. There is no "one" right way to organize and staff the facilities maintenance program. Critical factors that affect the structure of the maintenance organization include the number, ages, general condition, size (gross square feet), geographic distribution of a district's physical facilities, and the scope of services that have been assigned to the department. In general, however, the organizational structure of the maintenance function should be relatively flat with appropriate spans of control. Such a structure will result in minimized administrative and managerial costs while providing sufficient managerial controls to ensure operations are properly carried out. Staffing levels should ensure that work is accomplished in an economical and efficient manner. It is expected that smaller districts will have fewer staff with multiple areas of responsibility (such as facilities maintenance and transportation) than larger districts that are more likely to have these program areas headed by separate people.

The Franklin County School District has changed the maintenance program organizational pattern over the years from centralization to decentralization and back to centralization in an effort to maximize employee skills. In addition, the district added a technician and secretary to assist the program, has undergone Organizational and Management Studies by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, and is currently conducting an assessment to determine the feasibility of outsourcing facility maintenance services. These efforts show the district is meeting the intent of this practice. However, these efforts have not sufficiently improved school conditions. (See Best Practice 5 for a discussion of facility conditions.)

Best Practice 7: Using

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

A qualified, knowledgeable, stable group of employees is the cornerstone of any maintenance organization. Complete job descriptions that accurately reflect the knowledge, skills, abilities, duties, and responsibilities of every department employee are essential to development of such a workforce. Job descriptions should be readily available to school district employees and applicants, meet the district's needs, and be developed by human resource professionals in cooperation with individuals having specific expertise in the job tasks. Districts should establish competitive compensation to ensure they can attract and retain qualified candidates. Compensation includes salary and benefits, such as health, vacation, and retirement. Districts should establish procedures to ensure that personal and professional references are obtained and contacted.

The Franklin County School District has job descriptions and appropriate hiring and retention practices to ensure that the maintenance and operations department has qualified personnel. The district hired a private firm to survey all district personnel about their job duties. Based on the resulting information, job descriptions were developed and district management confirmed that the descriptions were accurate and reflected district needs. Employees are fingerprinted and background checks are conducted prior to hiring.

Best Practice 8: Not Using

The district does not provide a staff development program that includes appropriate training for maintenance and operations staff to enhance worker job satisfaction, efficiency, and safety.

Training ensures that school district employees understand the scope of their responsibilities and performance expectations, and serves to update skills and knowledge necessary to effectively and efficiently carry out their duties. The sophistication of the maintenance employee training plan, training methods, and training documentation will vary according to the district's size. However, maintenance training should address custodial operations, grounds maintenance, and specialized trades and should be tailored to the needs of the specific function. In addition, training in maintenance related activities such as operating procedures, use of tools, proper lifting techniques, work place safety, hazardous materials handling, and emergency procedures should be required for all employees. A district can use a variety of training sources including supply and equipment vendors and manufacturers, contract trainers, and professional association meetings. School districts should take advantage of free training materials and programs available through the Florida Department of Education, subscribe to trade publications, and maintain memberships in organizations that provide information on new technologies, equipment, and procedures. Training programs should include an evaluation component so employee feedback can be used to improve future training.

The Franklin County School District does not provide a staff development training program for maintenance and custodial personnel. District officials report that the district has neither the time nor funds to send employees to training courses. Unless the district takes steps to train its custodial and maintenance personnel in proper cleaning and maintenance techniques, the district will be unable to improve school conditions. It is also important to cross-train maintenance employees to meet district facility needs with a limited number of staff. Though the district may incur some travel expenses, it should explore the possibility of taking advantage of PAEC facility maintenance training or the following free training courses offered by the Florida Department of Education. Such classes include

- Conducting an Educational Plant Survey,
- Electrical Safety for Affected and Authorized Personnel,
- Indoor Air Quality Training,
- Job Hazard Analysis,
- OSHA Comprehensive Safety Training,
- Compliance with OSHA Regulations, and
- Fire Extinguishers, Fire Prevention, and Safety

Custodial training may be available from cleaning supply vendors. Custodial staff expressed a strong desire for training and such training would serve to enhance worker safety, job satisfaction, and efficiency. In addition to providing specific training, the district can improve employee job knowledge by subscribing to popular internet maintenance and operations publications that are free of charge.

Action Plan 8-4 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 8-4

We recommend that the district improve the skills training program for maintenance and custodial personnel		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Based on current maintenance needs, determine what training would enable staff to more effectively and efficiently address facility problems.
	Step 2.	Identify what type of training other similar districts are providing and consider adapting such training to Franklin's needs.
	Step 3.	Develop an in-house cross-training program whereby the electrician trains plumber, the carpenter trains HVAC specialist, etc.
	Step 4.	Identify monies available for training, budget them for training, establish a training schedule, and develop a curriculum based on steps 1-3.
	Step 5.	Investigate low cost or free training available from equipment and chemical suppliers, DOE, and PAEC.
	Step 6.	Implement a custodial, maintenance, and cross-training training program.
	Step 7.	Provide an opportunity for employee feedback and evaluation to ensure training meets their needs and for use in developing/selecting future training.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; budget director; assistant superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND UTILIZATION

Best Practice 9: Using

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

Like most other organizations, school districts have limited funds and therefore, must set budget priorities. A school district's budget allocation decisions should reflect its priority goals and objectives. These goals and objectives (which should be part of a strategic plan) may either be explicitly stated in the budget or may be reflected in changes in allocations that are concurrent with shifting priorities. A school district budget should allocate sufficient resources to ensure that plant operations and maintenance needs are adequately funded and rely on monies that are raised and expended in accordance with Florida law. Work force, supplies, equipment, training, and the technology to support the maintenance program are essential budget considerations. The budget should be based on educational and ancillary facility physical condition assessments, maintenance and custodial staffing standards, historical data, employee input, and projects identified in the strategic and five-year work plans. The annual budget should address long-term goals for maintaining and operating district facilities, recurring maintenance tasks such as preventive maintenance, and provide reasonably adequate funding to avoid accumulating a significant amount of deferred maintenance projects. The budget should also provide for the correction of deficiencies identified in the annual safety, casualty, and fire safety inspection reports.

The Franklin County School District administration has an annual budget with spending limits that comply with the lawful funding for each category of facilities maintenance and operations. Our review of Auditor General district audits found no mention of unlawful use of taxpayer dollars.

Best Practice 10: Not Using

The district does not accurately project cost estimates of major maintenance projects.

The cost of major maintenance projects can be a substantial expense for a school district, and therefore, must be effectively managed. Project cost estimates should be developed considering experience with prior similar projects, current estimating cost standards, local market conditions, and an inflation factor

for multiyear projects. A district's project estimates should be realistic so that once the five-year work plan is adopted, it becomes a valid indicator of work that will actually be accomplished and monies that will be needed and available. After projects are completed, officials should compare projected vs. actual costs to facilitate future planning efforts.

The Franklin County School District does not maintain documentation showing projected versus actual major maintenance project costs. Without this information, the district cannot assess its own planning and budgeting efforts. Without identifying specific maintenance needs, monies may not be sufficiently allocated to major projects. Best Practice 3 in Chapter 7 further discusses the district's budget planning efforts and why improvement is needed.

Action Plan 8-5 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 8-5

We recommend that the district accurately project cost estimates for short- and long-term maintenance projects		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Based on the facilities condition assessment outlined in Action Plan 8-3, develop a five–year facilities work plan with prioritized projects.
	Step 2.	Calculate a cost estimate for each project, including an inflation factor.
	Step 3.	During budget development, include facility projects as prioritized or a written explanation as to their exclusion/deferment.
	Step 4.	Develop 10- and 20-year maintenance plans in conjunction with the strategic plan and demographic projections.
	Step 5.	Present plans to the superintendent and school board for approval.
	Step 6.	Repeat annually.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; finance director; assistant superintendent, and architect.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Best Practice 11: Using

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

A well-managed school district has funds available to address unanticipated or emergency contingencies that may arise during the fiscal year. The age of facilities and equipment, repair history of major systems such as HVAC and roofs, area climatic conditions, and the district's preventive maintenance program effectiveness are considerations that help determine the amount of a maintenance reserve fund. Overall, the district's budgetary policy must be flexible to ensure funding of unforeseen maintenance needs that could adversely affect the district's mission.

The Franklin County School Board maintains an unreserved fund balance that can be accessed for unanticipated maintenance needs. As of June 30, 2002, the district had an unreserved fund of 8.5% of its general operating funds. Maintenance deficiencies are such, however, that the district should consider devoting a small percentage of the reserve funds to correct critical facility problems while still maintaining an unreserved fund balance within 3% to 5%, which has been deemed acceptable by the Auditor General.

> **We recommend that the school board consider directing a small percentage of its unencumbered reserve fund balance to correct some of the more critical maintenance deficiencies.**

Best Practice 12: Using

The district minimizes equipment costs through purchasing practices.

Sound purchasing practices foster competition, which yields the best pricing for goods and services. A district should not only establish purchasing policies and procedures that meet Florida law requirements but also ensure cost-efficient purchasing practices. Purchasing policies and procedures must be in a purchasing manual readily available to employees and the public. The district should periodically conduct cost comparisons to determine whether purchasing practices have minimized costs. Consideration of long-term equipment operating and maintenance costs, inflation, and the cost-effectiveness of repairing or refurbishing existing equipment should be part of replacement equipment cost projections.

Although the Franklin County School District minimizes equipment costs through purchasing practices, it may be able to improve its efforts. The maintenance coordinator regularly calls vendors for price quotes before purchasing electrical, plumbing, and carpentry supplies and follows the district's purchasing procedures. However, the district may be able to achieve volume discounts by combining purchases with the county or with the Gulf and/or Wakulla County school districts. The Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) may be able to facilitate the district's purchasing efforts as well. Proactive maintenance practices and a budget specifically outlining annual projects, will help the district better anticipate its purchasing needs and identify opportunities to work with other entities for volume purchases.

> **Using the facilities five-year plan as a reference, we recommend that the district forecast its purchasing needs for the next five years and take steps to achieve volume discounts by exploring the options of purchasing with other school districts and/or the county or using PAEC assistance.**

Best Practice 13: Using

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

To efficiently and effectively complete their day-to-day activities, maintenance and operations employees require a wide selection of common tools and equipment. Specialty tools may be required to accomplish unplanned or unusual projects. A district should have procedures in place to ensure that maintenance and operations employees have access to the right tools to accomplish their duties. Most maintenance departments have an inventory of commonly used tools available for day to day use, but usually find it more cost-effective to rent infrequently used specialty tools. Some districts provide small hand tools while other districts require employees to provide their own. Districts should have written operating procedures outlining acquisition, use, and the return of tools, parts, materials and other equipment required for day-to-day work and for special or emergency projects.

The Franklin County School District provides maintenance and operations department personnel the tools and equipment required to accomplish their assigned tasks either through purchase or rental. The district has established procedures for the acquisition and rental of infrequently used equipment it does not keep on-hand such as a ditch witch.

Best Practice 14: Not Using

The district does not use proactive maintenance practices to reduce maintenance costs.

An effective proactive maintenance program can reduce maintenance and operations costs, reduce service outages, and extend the useful life of expensive building systems. Therefore, a district should have proactive maintenance policies that include continuing evaluation of building systems through a

preventive maintenance program. The Franklin County School District does not have proactive maintenance practices. The best practice is discussed in conjunction with Best Practice 5. See Action Plan 8-3.

Best Practice 15: Using

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

A comprehensive energy management plan guides a district in lowering energy use and utility costs. Plan development should be a collaborative effort of stakeholders including maintenance employees, custodians, site-based administrators, instructional personnel, utility providers, and other experts on energy conservation. The district's energy manager should contact peer districts, state and local agencies, utility providers and other stakeholders to identify available resources to aid in energy management efforts. The energy management plan, at a minimum, should provide incentives to schools to reduce energy costs, provide for energy audits, implement strategies for effective demand-side energy management, and take advantage of energy rebates or other options to lower rates, which are offered by utility providers. Maintenance administrators should analyze the energy management system's reports and regularly assess major building system conditions to identify anomalies indicating problems that need to be addressed.

Although the Franklin County School District identifies and implements strategies to contain energy costs, it could improve its efforts. The district has contracted with a company to set-up and manage energy use for the district's schools. As part of the contract, there are specific energy savings benchmarks, including a quarterly report, to monitor use and annual savings targets. The contract provides guaranteed benchmarks, or minimums, above which energy costs will not rise. However, the district did not incorporate the Apalachicola High School physical education facility, currently under construction, into this plan and monitoring system. Failure to include this project will likely increase the facility's energy costs and reduce the overall effectiveness of the district's energy management plan.

> To ensure maximum energy management plan effectiveness and contain future energy costs, we recommend that all new construction projects be incorporated into the energy management plan.

Best Practice 16: Using

The district has an energy management system in place that is maintained at original specifications

Ever-increasing energy costs and limited budgets make it advantageous for school districts to install comprehensive, modern energy management systems, which can substantially reduce energy costs. An energy management system enables a school district to remotely operate and monitor HVAC equipment. Energy management system controls also allow the district to maintain facilities at uniform temperature settings during established operating hours. The system should be capable of generating reports that can help identify inefficiently operating building systems that may need servicing or upgrading. Because total replacement or installation of a new energy management system can be expensive, a school district should budget for energy control enhancements and system replacements in its five-year work plan until an effective system is in place.

Although the Franklin County School District has an energy management system in place, system specifications may be contributing to the district's facility mold problems. Excess moisture and resulting mold may be due to the heat and air system being turned off at the end of each school day and over the week-end. Shutting the system off can allow humidity to accumulate in the buildings and air ducts. Another possible explanation for facility mold is leaks in the building roofs or windows. The district

needs to determine why mold is accumulating on walls and should start by examining its new energy management system.

> **We recommend that the district examine the energy management system programming specifications to determine if revisions can eliminate facility mold and excess moisture problems and make revisions as needed.**

Best Practice 17: Using

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

Maintenance administrators should consider opportunities for privatizing services by weighing the potential advantages and disadvantages of using in-house resources against alternative service delivery methods. Outsourcing may be cost-effective and allow the district to reduce, reassign, or make better use of in-house staff. An annual review of services to determine if alternative delivery methods are more cost-effective should be an ongoing, established function of the department. These evaluations should be in writing and available to the school board and the public for review. If a service is outsourced, periodic written follow-up analyses should be conducted to confirm the service effectiveness and to verify that anticipated cost savings are achieved. Criteria that support outsourcing services include opportunities to save money and time, opportunities to add specialized skills or training not available in-house, difficulties in hiring qualified employees, and opportunities to improve the overall quality of the maintenance and operations function.

Franklin County School District personnel regularly review maintenance costs and evaluate the potential for outside contracting. However, they do not put these reviews in writing, which would provide a record of what types of projects lend themselves best to in-house or private contracting and act as decision documentation should it be questioned at a later date. Although the district does not maintain documentation, district personnel identified instances in which the district saved money by outsourcing.

> **We recommend that the district maintain, in writing, cost records associated with maintenance and custodial operations to determine which types of services lend themselves to outside contracting versus those which can best be done in-house and to document the decision-making process.**

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 18: Not Using

A computerized control and tracking system is not used to accurately track work orders and inventory.

Computerized work order and inventory tracking systems provide a valuable tool enabling school districts to effectively and efficiently maintain school facilities. School districts should establish work order systems capable of tracking work orders and inventory, prioritizing maintenance requests, and equitably allocating maintenance resources. Such systems should also provide statistical information to assist managers in determining employee productivity. The systems should be designed to assist in developing cost reports and estimates, equipment histories, facilities condition assessments, and interface with other district financial programs. District administrators should receive sufficient training to maximize the potential of the work order system.

As part of a computerized work and inventory tracking system, written guidelines and operating procedures should be established for emergency, routine, and preventive maintenance activities.

The guidelines should define what is considered an emergency, the individuals responsible for handling the emergency, and the appropriate emergency response. Serious problems that affect the life, safety, or health of any student, district employee, or the public or an event that, if ignored, renders a facility unusable are considered emergencies.

The Franklin County School District's work order and inventory tracking system is in its infancy. During the course of our review, the district began pilot testing a work order tracking system and, in time, should have a fully functional system that meets the best practice standard. The system does not currently meet the best practice standard for four reasons. First, the system does not track inventory and cannot be used to re-order depleted supplies. Second, it does not provide statistical information to track employee productivity, including scheduled versus actual hours to complete a maintenance job, travel time to each maintenance job, total hours to complete a job, and the number of call backs to re-address jobs. Third, the system cannot be used to charge work order expenses to the appropriate entity, develop cost reports and estimates, and cannot interface with other district financial programs. Fourth, there are no written guidelines and operating procedures for how emergency, routine, and preventive maintenance activities will be handled within the work order system.

Action Plan 8-6 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 8-6

We recommend that the district improve maintenance operations through full implementation of the comprehensive work order and inventory management system.	
Action Needed	**Step 1.** Work with technology staff to determine how the current work order system can be used to ▪ track inventory; ▪ track employee productivity measures listed in Action Plan 8-1; ▪ charge maintenance expenses to the appropriate entity; ▪ develop cost reports and estimates; and, ▪ interface with other district financial programs. **Step 2.** Establish criteria to define an emergency work order and distribute the definition to all district employees. The district may wish to consider using the following definition of an emergency: a serious problem that prevents student instruction, renders a facility unusable, or that affects the life, safety, or health of any student or district employee. **Step 3.** Develop a system for documenting emergency work orders so exact maintenance staff workload is documented. Such documentation will help district officials determine if the maintenance department is sufficiently staffed. **Step 4.** Develop a system for prioritizing non-emergency work orders. Priorities should be based on: ▪ general school safety, ▪ adverse impact on instruction, ▪ adverse impact on operations or productivity, ▪ long-range facility planning, ▪ educational program needs, and ▪ comfort. **Step 5.** Have district technology staff train administrative staff on the system's analytical capabilities and train principals and faculty on how to place work orders. **Step 6.** Have the facility's coordinator analyze generated data and use results to increase operations efficiency.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator, information technology specialist.
Time Frame	July 2004

Best Practice 19: Not Using

The maintenance and operations department does not have a system for prioritizing maintenance needs uniformly throughout the district.

All school district maintenance departments must establish a work order system that prioritizes maintenance requests while equitably allocating maintenance resources. The Franklin County School District has not prioritized its maintenance needs. The best practice is discussed in conjunction with Best Practice 18. See Action Plan 8-6.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Best Practice 20: Not Using

District policies and procedures do not clearly address the health and safety conditions of facilities.

Florida law requires school districts to develop policies and procedures establishing a comprehensive safety and sanitation program to protect educational facility occupants. [3] All districts are required to conduct annual inspections of each educational and ancillary plant to determine compliance with sanitation and casualty safety standards prescribed in the State Board of Education rules. Florida law requires that inspectors certified by the Division of State Fire Marshal conduct annual fire safety inspections. Districts should establish health and safety training programs for their maintenance and custodial work force that comply with regulations promulgated by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA), and other relevant Code of Federal Regulations relating to hazardous materials handling, proper reporting of accidents, and asbestos handling and abatement. Districts should establish written health and safety standards and ensure that documented evaluations are conducted on the condition of each educational and ancillary facility. Districts should also have a written plan for maintaining healthy indoor air quality, including monitoring of indoor air quality and corrective action plans necessary to address indoor air quality issues.

In general, the Franklin County School District does not have policies, procedures, and standards addressing state and federal health and safety conditions of school facilities. The Florida Department of Education conducts an annual comprehensive health and safety inspection. The 2002 inspection report, the most recent report provided by the district, identified pervasive campus problems such as missing fire extinguishers and smoke detectors, inoperable emergency lights, obstructed exit doors, and poor housekeeping (i.e., custodial services). These problems can affect student and staff safety and poor sanitation, particularly in restrooms, can result in the spread of bacterial infections.

The district has no written policies and procedures outlining training requirements for its custodial and maintenance personnel to demonstrate compliance with EPA, OSHA, and other relevant federal guidelines. Lack of clear policies, procedures, and training programs in these areas could expose the district to liability, should accidents occur. The district should explore the possibility of obtaining PAEC assistance to develop and implement health and safety training programs.

Action plan 8-7 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

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[3] See s. 1013.12, *F.S.*

Action Plan 8-7

We recommend that the district establish policies and procedures to meet health and safety standards		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Contact FDOE and PAEC to determine mandatory health and safety requirements. Identify related training/services offered by each.
	Step 2.	Establish a training schedule for mandatory requirements in conjunction with FDOE and PAEC.
	Step 3.	Research health and safety benchmarks and compare the district with peer districts. Some benchmarks for consideration might include those below. ▪ Number of unresolved safety issues reported in 10-, 30-, and 90-day periods ▪ Workers compensation claims ratio ▪ Sick day usage ▪ Number of violations on annual Health and Safety inspection
	Step 4.	Perform health and safety checks, including indoor air quality tests, on a regular basis, utilizing checklists developed in Action Plan 8-3.
	Step 5.	Establish a priority system, in conjunction with Action Plan 8-6, to ensure health and safety work orders are timely addressed.
	Step 6.	Establish reporting mechanisms, like surveys, to monitor policy and procedure effectiveness.
	Step 7.	Present quarterly facility conditions reports to the school board.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; assistant superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Best Practice 21: Not Using

The school district does not comply with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health and safety conditions.

A school district, regardless of size, should have written policies and procedures that direct the district's compliance with state and federal regulations governing health and safety conditions within its facilities. The Franklin County School District does not currently comply with federal and state facility health and safety mandates. The best practice is discussed in conjunction with Best Practice 20. See Action Plan 8-7.

Best Practice 22: Not Using

The district is aware of but not prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code.

Effective July 1, 2002, the State Requirements for Educational Facilities (Rule 6A-2.001, *Florida Administrative Code*) were merged into the new Florida Building Code. Under the code, school districts are exempted from regulation by other local authorities and are required to follow a single state code. They are allowed to review project plans, issue their own building permits, conduct required building inspections, issue certificates of occupancy and generally perform as the local governing authority had in the past if properly trained and certified.

Smaller school districts may find it easier and more economical to rely on local building code officials rather than establish their own permitting and inspection department. A small district should evaluate the potential advantages and disadvantages of operating an internal building department. If the decision is made to allow the local authority to provide the service, then the district and the local authority should have a memorandum of understanding defining each entity's responsibilities.

The Franklin County School District is not prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code. Although the district received copies of the revised code, it has not created any

policies or procedures to address project permitting or inspection. The district has hired an architectural firm to ensure that projects costing more than $100,000 meet the code but has not done so for smaller projects and no district staff has been trained on code requirements. Projects under $100,000 have the same permitting and inspection requirements as larger projects managed by the architectural firm under contract. The district is ultimately responsible for ensuring each construction and maintenance project is permitted and inspected in accordance with the current Florida Building Code. [4] To ensure proper permitting and inspections of every project, the district could rely on the contracted architectural firm for all projects, regardless of size, enter into a memorandum of understanding with the local building authority, or train district staff in the current Florida Building Code requirements.

During the course of our review, the district entered into a contract for continuing construction management services. Included in the scope of contracted services is project permitting and inspections. While the district has made an effort to procure these services for future construction projects, it must ensure that each service is clearly spelled out and required in every individual project contract.

Action Plan 8-8 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 8-8

We recommend that all facility projects are appropriately permitted and inspected under the revised Florida Building Code.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Determine whether the current contracted architectural firm can provide permitting and inspection services for all facility projects under the current contract. If so, use the firm to provide these services for all future facility projects.
	Step 2.	If the contracted architectural firm cannot provide permitting and inspection services without additional cost, determine whether the district can enter into a memorandum of understanding with the local Franklin County building authority to provide the services.
	Step 3.	If neither the contracted architectural firm nor the local building authority can provide free permitting and inspection services, coordinate with FDOE and PAEC to obtain Florida Building Code training for appropriate district employees.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; budget director.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

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[4] See also Chapter 7, Best Practices 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 19 for an in-depth discussion of why district staff need Florida Building Code training.

9 Transportation

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using 15 of the 20 transportation best practices. The district effectively organizes and staffs the transportation department; efficiently recruits, retains, trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers and attendants; efficiently supplies fuel; maintains secure facilities and a sufficient parts inventory for vehicle maintenance; ensures regular bus routes and activity trips operate in accordance with established routines; provides efficient transportation for exception students; acts promptly in response to accidents or breakdowns; maintains appropriate student behavior on buses; and has explored the prospect of student transportation privatization. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its transportation program, the district needs to examine current bus routes and the number of courtesy riders; develop a bus replacement schedule; improve vehicle maintenance records and review; monitor program expenditures and compare them to the annual budget; and develop a transportation program performance accountability system.

WAYS TO $ SAVE
Sharpening the Pencil

As seen in Exhibit 9-1, the district has opportunities to reduce costs and increase revenues in the transportation area. Determining whether to take advantage of these opportunities is a district decision and should be based on many factors including district needs, public input, and school board priorities. If the district implements this opportunity, it would be able to redirect the funds to other priorities, such as putting more money into the classroom or addressing deficiencies identified in this report.

Exhibit 9-1
Our Review Identified Two Ways the District Could Reduce Costs and Increase Revenues in the Area of Transportation

Best Practice Number		Fiscal Impact: Increased Program Revenue/Savings					
		Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Year 2007-08	Total
8	Eliminate ESE bus	$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$1,000	$5,000
10	Contract for fuel purchases	2,415	2,415	2,415	2,415	2,415	12,075
	Total	$3,415	$3,415	$3,415	$3,415	$3,415	$17,075

Background

Franklin County is a rural county in Florida's Panhandle, located approximately 80 miles southwest of Tallahassee. The county is experiencing a declining student population. The county has 280 miles of paved and 227 miles of non-paved roads serving an area of 545 square miles. For the school year 2001-02, the district reported it provided transportation to 416 eligible students out of its 1,442 enrolled students (29%). Currently, the district serves 16 students in exceptional student education programs that require special transportation arrangements because of disabilities or the need for specialized classes.

Florida's smaller rural school districts have the same functional operating responsibilities as the state's largest school districts. However, small districts must accomplish these required tasks with significantly fewer personnel. The Franklin County School District is typical of a small Florida district in that its lowest and mid-level administrators have a larger range of activities to administer and supervise.

All facets of district student transportation are under the supervision of the transportation coordinator, who is also responsible for the district's facility maintenance and construction. The transportation coordinator directly supervises all of the bus drivers and mechanics as well as the maintenance supervisor. The transportation coordinator also performs functions such as bus routing, school district liaison to Franklin County's community traffic safety team, operations coordination and dispatch, back-up driver, department accident investigation, and is directly responsible for fielding parental complaints.

District school buses were driven 159,377 miles during the 2001-02 year, including 38,768 extracurricular activity trip miles (24% of the district's total). Of the 15 buses in current service, 10 are in daily service on the district's school bus routes with the remaining 5 buses (33%) used as spares.

For the 2001-02 school year, the district spent $505,312 on student transportation. It employed nine bus drivers along with two monitor/substitute drivers. [1] In addition, three transportation staff (including the transportation coordinator) can drive buses when needed.

Exhibit 9-2 presents selected student transportation data for the Franklin County School District and three peer districts in the state for the 2001-02 school year. [2] The district pays more to transport students than its peer districts when measured on expenditures per annual mile and total transportation expenditures. Low bus occupancy is a contributing factor in both high district transportation expenditures and the high percentage of these expenditures being paid for by local rather than state funds.

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[1] One driver covers both a regular bus route and the ESE route.

[2] Based on geographic size, number of schools, number of square miles, and number of paved/unpaved roads, different peers were selected for transportation comparisons than are used in other chapter comparisons.

Exhibit 9-2
Comparative Student Transportation Data
for Franklin County School District and Three Peer Districts

Measure	Franklin	Lafayette	Liberty	Glades	Peer Average
Square miles	545	545	837	763	715
Number of eligible students enrolled	1,442	1,030	1,321	1,099	1,150
Number of eligible students transported	416	645	763	398	602
Percentage of eligible students transported	29%	63%	58%	36%	52%
Number of buses in daily service	10	12	15	8	12
Number of miles driven	159,377	156,556	166,396	177,823	166,925
Student transportation expenditures	$505,312	$373,241	$485,723	$448,989	$435,984
Student transportation expenditures per annual mile	$2.46	$2.38	$2.27	$1.73	$2.11
Student transportation expenditures as a percentage of total district expenditures	4.64%	5.54%	6.01%	6.16%	6%
Average bus occupancy	44	52	55	50	52.33
Percentage state funding	35%	66%	64%	35%	54%
Percentage local funding	65%	34%	36%	65%	45%
Total transportation expenditures (including reported bus purchases) per student	$1,154	$579	$632	$1,126	$779

Source: *Q-Links: Florida District Transportation Profiles,* July 2003 for School Year 2001-02, Florida Department of Education and OPPAGA.

Conclusions and Recommendations ——————

Summary of Conclusions for Transportation Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
Planning, Organization and Staffing	1. The district coordinates long-term planning and budgeting for student transportation within the context of district and community planning.	Yes	9-6
	2. The district provides regular, accurate, and timely counts to the Florida Department of Education of the number of students transported as part of the Florida Education Finance Program.	Yes	9-6
	3. The transportation office plans, reviews, and establishes bus routes and stops to provide cost-efficient student transportation services for all students who qualify for transportation. [3]	No	9-7
	4. The organizational structure and staffing levels of the district's transportation program minimize administrative layers and processes.	Yes	9-8
	5. The district maintains an effective staffing level in the vehicle maintenance area and provides support for vehicle maintenance staff to develop its skills.	Yes	9-9
	6. The district effectively and efficiently recruits and retains the bus drivers and attendants it needs.	Yes	9-9
	7. The district trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers to enable them to meet bus driving standards and maintain acceptable student discipline on the bus.	Yes	9-10
Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance	8. The school district has a process to ensure that sufficient vehicles are acquired economically and will be available to meet the district's current and future transportation needs.	No	9-10
	9. The district provides timely routine servicing for buses and other district vehicles, as well as prompt response for breakdowns and other unforeseen contingencies.	No	9-12
	10. The district ensures that fuel purchases are cost-effective and that school buses and other vehicles are efficiently supplied with fuel.	Yes	9-13
	11. The district maintains facilities that are conveniently situated to provide sufficient and secure support for vehicle maintenance and other transportation functions.	Yes	9-14
	12. The district maintains an inventory of parts, supplies, and equipment needed to support transportation functions that balance the concerns of immediate need and inventory costs.	Yes	9-14
Operations, Management and Accountability	13. The district ensures that all regular school bus routes and activity trips operate in accordance with established routines, and any unexpected contingencies affecting vehicle operations are handled safely and promptly.	Yes	9-15
	14. The district provides efficient transportation services for exceptional students in a coordinated fashion that minimizes hardships to students.	Yes	9-16

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

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
	15. The district ensures that staff acts promptly and appropriately in response to any accidents or breakdowns.	Yes	9-16
	16. The district ensures that appropriate student behavior is maintained on the bus with students being held accountable for financial consequences of misbehavior related to transportation.	Yes	9-17
	17. The district provides appropriate technological and computer support for transportation functions and operations.	Yes	9-18
	18. The district monitors the fiscal condition of transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and reviewing them against the budget.	No	9-18
	19. The district has reviewed the prospect for privatizing transportation functions, as a whole or in part.	Yes	9-19
	20. The district has established an accountability system for transportation, and it regularly tracks and makes public reports on its performance in comparison with established benchmarks.	No	9-19

PLANNING, ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING

Best Practice 1: Using

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

Because district transportation staff is in a good position to know the district's transportation needs and the costs associated with options, transportation staff should be involved in major decisions affecting transportation operations. These needs and priorities along with cost-saving options should be presented to the school board and public during the budget process to assist in decision making. Similarly, the transportation department should provide the school board and public information about the potential financial effects of options such as staggered school start times and school choice programs. Also, because a school's location can have a significant effect on a district's transportation costs, transportation staff should be involved in community and school district planning as it relates to community growth and the need for new schools. Failure to inform decision makers about the potential effects of school siting decisions on district transportation can be very costly and negatively affect a district's transportation operations for many years.

The Franklin County School District does not have a formal mechanism for coordinating long-term planning and budgeting for transportation within the context of long-term planning for the district overall. However, due to the nature of anticipated development in Franklin County, which is not projected to result in substantial increases in the school population, coordination with community planners to address changes that would affect student transportation needs in the future is not a significant issue. The district's five-year facilities work plan does include estimated expenditures for anticipated future bus purchases. The transportation coordinator also participates fully in the district's annual budget building process and has recommended cost-savings ideas to the superintendent for the board's consideration. When planning educational programs, district administrators consult with the coordinator on an "as-needed" basis. The coordinator also meets with the finance director, assistant superintendent, and other district administrators to discuss budget issues. However, transportation cost-savings options are not presented to the board as a routine part of the district's budget planning and approval process.

> **To improve the cost-efficiency of the transportation function, we recommend that transportation cost-savings options be presented to the school board as a routine part of the district's budget planning and approval process.**

Best Practice 2: Using

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.

The main source of transportation funds for most Florida school districts is the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). Approximately 60% of the state's student transportation costs are paid for through the FEFP, primarily based on the number of eligible students in various categories who ride school buses. School districts conduct sample counts in October and February of each school year to determine the number of students riding their buses. The resulting information is reported to the Florida Department of Education. Because these counts ultimately determine each school district's transportation funding, it is important that the information be accurate. Auditors periodically review ridership records and, if the district cannot justify its claims for state transportation funds, the monies are rescinded. Student ridership counts are useful to district staff in establishing trend lines for the prediction of district student transportation needs.

The Franklin County School District generally does a good job of providing accurate and timely transportation data to the Department of Education. The Auditor General's Fiscal Year 2001-02 FEFP report for Franklin County found only 12 instances of material noncompliance involving the classification of transported students into FEFP ridership categories. Specifically, 12 of 79 students either were reported in an incorrect ridership category or were ineligible to be reported. Except for these instances of material non-compliance, the district complied in all material respects with the FEFP requirements. The Auditor General recommended that the district exercise more care and take corrective action to ensure that the number of students reported in each ridership category is properly documented and ESE students are reported based on their documented eligibility. In response to the audit findings, the district reported that it would take corrective action to ensure accurate ridership categories and ESE ridership eligibility.

> **We recommend that the district implement corrective actions regarding ridership categorization and ESE ridership eligibility to comply with the FEFP reporting requirements.**

Best Practice 3: Not Using

While the transportation office plans, reviews, and establishes bus routes and stops, it does not provide cost-efficient student transportation services for all students who qualify for transportation.

Routing is probably the single most important factor in establishing an effective and cost-efficient student transportation system. Efficient bus routes incorporate features such as fewer bus stops to serve a larger numbers of students, avoiding transporting students who can safely walk to school and are ineligible for state transportation funding (generally called "courtesy riders"), establishing school starting and ending times that allow individual buses to have separate runs for elementary, middle, and high schools ("three–tiered routing"), and providing sufficient time between school starting and ending times to allow buses to get from the end of one bus run to the beginning of another. Where hazardous walking conditions exist, school districts should work with governmental agencies to provide crossing guards, reduced speed limits, sidewalks, or other safety measures. Larger school districts with complex routes usually need the assistance of computerized routing systems to design cost efficient bus routes, while smaller districts can manually develop efficient routes.

The Franklin County School District has taken some steps to address route efficiency, such as combining grade levels on each route, using centrally located Brown Elementary School as a transfer point, and examining each bus route at least annually. However, the district pays more to transport students than its peer districts, transports a large number of courtesy riders and does not adhere to its policy of one half mile between stops. Based on 2001-02 Department of Education transportation data, Franklin County has only 35% of its transportation costs funded by the state (third lowest in the state). While the district's relatively high transportation costs are due in part to the relatively long distances buses have to travel to pick up students, the district can take steps to improve the cost-efficiency of its transportation operations.

One way the district can improve the cost-effectiveness of its transportation operations is by discontinuing transportation services to students who can safely walk to school. Currently, the district transports a large number of students who do not qualify for state funding because the distance between their homes and their assigned schools is less than two miles, and they do not meet certain conditions such as having physical disabilities or face statutorily defined hazardous walking conditions. The district's policy is to transport students who live more than one mile from their assigned school or when requested by parents (requests are usually made to school board members with approval of the district superintendent). Based on 2001-02 Department of Education transportation data, Franklin County ranks third highest in the state (after Glades and Hamilton) for the percentage of non-eligible state funded students it transports (32%) with only 35% of transportation costs funded by the state (third lowest in the state). The district can reduce the costs of its transportation function by discontinuing the busing of students who can safely walk to school. This requires the district to establish and use unsafe walking criteria to evaluate student

walking areas to justify the provision of district transportation for students facing unsafe walking conditions, while encouraging students who can safely walk to school to do so. Once the district has determined how many students need district transportation, it can plan efficient bus routes to provide transportation to these students. The district should work with local and state agencies (e.g., Franklin County Sheriff's Department and the Florida Department of Transportation) to eliminate unsafe walking conditions whenever possible.

The district can also improve the cost-effectiveness of its transportation operations by improving its bus stops. The district's bus stop policy requires that stops be no less than one-half mile apart. Based on our observation of two of the district's nine bus routes, many exceptions have been made to this policy, resulting in more frequent stops. The increase in number of bus stops on a given route increases the total time it takes the bus to complete its route (slower average speed) while increasing bus operation costs (e.g., increased fuel consumption and brake wear) thus increasing overall district transportation costs. Use of the above unsafe walking criteria and adherence to the district's current bus stop policy will enable the district to reduce the number of bus stops while ensuring the stops are safe for students to walk to thus improving the overall cost-efficiency of transportation operations.

Action Plan 9-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 9-1

We recommend that the district examine its transportation policies to identify options for cost savings.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The transportation coordinator and other district employees, with the assistance of the representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation, the Franklin County Road Department, and the Franklin County Sheriff's Department, will formulate unsafe walking criteria for the district.
	Step 2.	The transportation coordinator will submit the proposed unsafe walking criteria to the superintendent who, in turn, will submit the proposed criteria to the school board for approval.
	Step 3.	Upon approval of the criteria, the transportation department will use the criteria to determine the location of hazardous and unsafe walking conditions to potential bus stops and schools within the district. Using this information, the transportation department will determine what students will need district transportation and appropriate locations for bus stops. This evaluation should take place on an annual basis.
	Step 4.	To reduce the number of hazardous and unsafe student walking areas in the district, the transportation coordinator should work with state and local agencies to eliminate these hazardous and unsafe student walking areas.
	Step 5.	The transportation coordinator will annually submit the list of cost-efficient bus routes to the superintendent who, in turn, will submit the routes to the school board for approval.
	Step 6.	Upon approval by the school board, the district will implement the approved routes.
	Step 7.	Calculate the cost of providing courtesy rider transportation and annually report this information to the board, which can then determine whether to retain or modify the current practices
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator, superintendent	
Time Frame	May 2004	

Best Practice 4: Using

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

Well-run school districts are administratively lean and maximize available funds to support their primary mission, educating students. This requires districts to most effectively use allocated funds for

administrative services, such as transportation. There is no "one" right way to organize and staff the transportation program. The organizational structure of the transportation function should be relatively flat with appropriate spans of control. Such a structure results in minimized administrative and managerial costs while providing sufficient managerial controls to ensure operations are properly carried out. Staffing levels need to be appropriate to ensure that needed work is accomplished economically and efficiently. Since smaller districts likely have smaller numbers of transportation staff, it is expected that individuals will be required to handle multiple areas of responsibility, such as repairing buses and ordering replacement parts.

The organizational structure and staffing levels in the Franklin County School District's transportation department minimize administrative layers and processes. The department's administrative staff consists of a coordinator who also serves as the coordinator for the district's facilities/maintenance department; the department also shares a secretary with the facilities/maintenance department. Transportation personnel report directly to the coordinator, who reports to the assistant superintendent.

Best Practice 5: Using

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

Vehicle maintenance operations have to strike a balance between having enough trained staff to properly maintain vehicles and having excessive staff, which increases costs and reduces operational efficiency. The number of vehicle maintenance personnel needed varies depending on factors such as the number of different types of buses being maintained, whether vehicle maintenance maintains the district's "white fleet" (cars, trucks, and other on-road vehicles), and whether they maintain other district equipment such as lawn mowers and tractors. In addition to employing adequate maintenance staff, districts need to invest resources into updating vehicle maintenance staff skills to improve vehicle maintenance efficiency. Such resources include providing staff training opportunities and incentive pay for those who achieve certification in applicable work areas.

The Franklin County School District's vehicle maintenance employees consist of a full-time mechanic and a part time mechanic/technician who is not yet certified; the part-time mechanic splits his time between transportation and facility maintenance. The part-time mechanic allows for coverage for repairs and maintenance if the full-time mechanic is unavailable or on leave. The full-time mechanic has attended training in the area of vehicle maintenance and has over 15 years' experience. The part-time mechanic has a background in vehicle maintenance, has completed a class in diagnostic techniques, and is scheduled for training in air-conditioning repair. The part-time mechanic is not, however, a certified bus inspector and would not be able to provide these services if the full-time mechanic were absent.

> **To provide back-up to the full-time mechanic, we recommend that the part-time mechanic become a certified school bus inspector. This will assist the district in ensuring that buses are inspected as required by state law if the full-time mechanic is unavailable.**

Best Practice 6: Using

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

A stable workforce reduces costs and minimizes the disruption of essential district services. However, for most school districts, job turnover among bus drivers and attendants is generally high compared to that of other classes of employees. Job turnover can be addressed through retention and recruitment. Retention is a preferred way to maintain the staffing levels through reduction in job turnover. Districts need to collect data to determine what it will take to keep drivers and attendants working and performing well for the district. Once the district determines why the drivers and attendants want to work for the school district, the district can put together a combination of salary, benefits, and incentives (both financial and

non-financial) that will encourage good workers to keep working for the district yet not cause financial difficulties for the district. As there generally will be some turnover in district drivers and attendants each year, the district needs to be prepared to efficiently and effectively recruit high quality drivers and attendants. These efforts include collecting data on wages offered by alternative local employers (both public and private sectors) and knowing the best methods to put their recruiting message to potential drivers and attendants.

The Franklin County School District has no difficulty recruiting and retaining its bus drivers. The district has nine full-time drivers and two monitor/drivers. The full-time drivers have been employed between 3 and 30-plus years, while the monitor/drivers have been employed between 1 and 3 years. All district transportation personnel, including the coordinator and the full-time and part-time mechanic, have their commercial driver's license (CDL) and can drive buses if needed.

Best Practice 7: Using

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

To effectively and efficiently carry out their duties, school district employees must be aware of the scope of their responsibilities, have the skills to carry out those responsibilities, and understand district performance expectations. Thus, school districts need to effectively train, supervise, and assist employees in the performance of their duties. School districts generally offer commercial driver license training (the license is required to drive a school bus) on a no-cost basis in order to successfully recruit bus drivers. Since this license can also be used to drive other commercial vehicles such as tour buses and trucks, the school district needs a policy to recoup these training costs from bus drivers who resign shortly after completing driver training. Management is also responsible for supervising drivers to ensure that rules and regulations are followed and buses are safely operated. Supervision responsibilities include direct observation of bus handling, assisting drivers with student bus discipline problems, administering drug and alcohol tests, and enforcing driving policies. Management can improve job performance by providing in-service training and resolving drivers' job-related problems.

The Franklin County School District ensures that state bus driver in-service training requirements are met. The district provides CDL training for new drivers, and the mechanic is a certified trainer. The district conducts ride-on observations on an as-needed basis and assigns monitors to buses to assist with student discipline. Records show that the district complies with requirements for drivers' annual physical and dexterity exams. The district's "safe driver" program meets state/federal requirements for drivers' random drug and alcohol testing and complies with state requirements for checking drivers' driving records for traffic violations.

VEHICLE ACQUISITION AND MAINTENANCE

Best Practice 8: Not Using

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

School buses and other vehicles are an expensive but necessary investment for most school districts. Therefore, school districts need to have systems in place to ensure that decisions to purchase, maintain, and sell vehicles meet the district's needs in the most economical way. These decisions must consider a variety of factors. For instance, the need for buses to transport students is a given for districts, but it is important to buy the right type of buses at the right time. In addition, it is generally more economical to operate larger buses than smaller ones, as long as a high occupancy level can be maintained. Districts should purchase vehicles through economical methods such as the state pool purchase program. Once vehicles are purchased and inspected, districts should track vehicle maintenance costs and age to

determine optimal removal and replacement times (assuming the need for the vehicle still exists). Districts should minimize the number of spare buses they retain to avoid tying up funds through excess inventory. Vehicles removed from service should be processed so that the district recovers the maximum value possible for disposal of the vehicle, such as fixing minor cosmetic flaws to encourage higher bids at auctions.

The Franklin County School District uses the Department of Management Services' state bid program to purchase maintenance trucks and buys its buses through the Florida Department of Education Pool Purchase Plan, but the school board has not adopted a formal bus-replacement plan. Annually, the transportation coordinator submits a request to the superintendent for bus purchases/bus disposal based on in-house criteria such as bus condition, mileage, and transportation needs. In 1999, eight of the district's 13 buses were over 10 years old; its older buses included 1981-88 models. Since 1999, the district has purchased six new buses, to replace its older gas-run buses with new, more efficient, diesel-run buses.

The district's current fleet consists of 15 buses, including 9 regular route buses, one ESE bus, 2 buses assigned to monitor/drivers, and 3 spare buses. With 2 monitor buses and 3 spares, the district maintains 5 "spare" buses, 50% of its buses in daily service. While this is a high ratio, the 5 spare buses are reasonable given the small size of the bus fleet and the need to deal with breakdowns, replace buses that are in the shop, and provide coverage for field trips.

The district does not use this best practice for two reasons. First, it has not established a formal bus replacement schedule. While the district has recently modernized its fleet, it needs a formal bus replacement schedule to help ensure that the district does not again encounter a problem with overage buses.

Second, the district could improve its operations by modifying how it transports one ESE student. Currently, the district uses its ESE bus to transport one student. Use of a bus to transport just one student reduces the district's "average bus occupancy index" (which is one of five factors used in the state's transportation fund allocation calculation) and the amount of funds the district receives for student transportation. Franklin's average bus occupancy, based on the number of state-funded riders, for the 2001-02 School Year, was 44, the fourth lowest rate in the state. The transportation coordinator believes that it is feasible to transport this student using a van with a wheelchair lift. Eliminating the ESE bus and using a mini-van for the ESE student would increase the district's bus occupancy level by five students, which translates into a 1.39% increase in state funding (approximately $1,000 annually). [4] The district could then use the ESE bus as a spare or sell it to another district.

Action Plan 9-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 9-2

We recommend that the district establish a bus replacement schedule and explore eliminating the ESE bus and replacing it with a van.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Formulate and adopt a formal bus replacement schedule based on the district's need for student transportation, local driving conditions, vehicle maintenance repair records, and experiences of neighboring and exemplar school districts.
	Step 2.	Explore the option of retrofitting a van with a wheelchair lift to transport the ESE student. If the financial analysis shows that the transportation of the ESE student is less costly using a van rather than a school bus, the district should use a van for this transportation.
	Step 3.	Conduct a financial analysis to determine whether the current ESE bus should be retained as a spare or sold.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator, school board	
Time Frame	January 2004	

[4] This savings estimate is based on information contained in the *Quality Links* published by the Florida Department of Education in July 2002 covering school year 2000-01 and assumes that all other factors are held constant.

Best Practice 9: Not Using
The district needs to improve the servicing for buses and other district vehicles.

Good stewardship of district resources dictates district vehicles be properly maintained to operate efficiently and maximize their value. District vehicle maintenance operations can be divided into two types: those that service just buses and those that service buses and some or all other district vehicles. No matter what type of vehicle maintenance operation is used, it is important that the district's transportation department track vehicle maintenance for all district on-road vehicles to ensure timely servicing is performed. Use of this tracking can help the district make appropriate decisions on whether to make complex or expensive repairs on older vehicles. The servicing of district vehicles does not have to be accomplished in district-owned facilities (especially if there is lack of facilities and/or manpower) but can be done on an outsourced basis. The district should ensure that servicing and repairs (both those done by district staff and those done by vendors) are completed economically and timely.

The Franklin County School District is not using this best practice because it does not have a system in place to regularly review pre-trip bus inspections, bus servicing is improperly scheduled and not conducted on-time, and bus oil changes occur too frequently.

Bus inspections can be divided into pre-trip and routine inspections. Drivers complete pre-trip inspections and the records are kept on file in the Franklin County School District transportation department. The transportation coordinator reports that he reviews these records "from time to time." However, there is no system in place for regularly checking drivers' pre-trip inspection reports to ensure that buses are operated in good working order and that drivers are indeed monitoring bus conditions. Routine inspections can be further divided into those based on elapsed time (such as state mandated 20-day inspections) and those based on elapsed mileage (such as oil changes). [5] The mechanic posts an inspection schedule in the maintenance area and puts stickers on each bus to remind drivers when the next inspection is due. Drivers report that repairs are completed promptly and the quality of work is good. The mechanic reports that he follows the manufacturer's guidelines regarding preventive maintenance and schedules a major servicing for every bus during summer months.

Bus inspection and repair records show that improvements are needed in the servicing of district vehicles. A 2000-01 DOE audit of the district's buses found eight items on a total of four buses requiring repair before the bus could be returned to service. A review of a sample of bus inspections records from September through December 2002 shows that some 20-day inspections were conducted up to 8 days late with some inspections erroneously scheduled on a Saturday and Sunday (non-school work days). Bus repair records showed distance buses traveled between oil changes range from 3,000 miles to 13,000 miles (engine manufacturers recommend that the oil be changed every 15,000 miles). It was not possible to review servicing records for white fleet vehicles, as the district only recently began maintaining this information. Improved recording keeping and review of vehicle maintenance and inspections have the potential to reduce district transportation costs through less frequent oil changes while increasing the safety of district vehicles.

Action Plan 9-3 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

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[5]The State Board of Education extended the bus inspection cycle from 20 days to 30 days in April 2003.

Action Plan 9-3

We recommend that the district improve vehicle maintenance records while increasing the regular review of repair and inspection actions.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Establish a system to periodically confirm that driver pre-trip inspections are performed correctly. Evidence found by mechanics conducting periodic bus inspections and routine servicing of drivers not performing mandatory pre-trip inspections should be reported to the transportation coordinator.
	Step 2.	The transportation coordinator establishes a system for ensuring that bus inspections and routine vehicle maintenance is performed per district guidelines.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator	
Time Frame	December 2003	

Best Practice 10: Using

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

School districts need effective systems to ensure that fuel is purchased at the lowest possible cost, prevent unauthorized use of fuel, and that fueling stations are accessible to district vehicles. Cost-effective fuel purchases generally occur when the district and other large users of fuel (such as other school districts and local governments) pool their fuel purchases into a large bid. Part of the bid should include timely deliveries of fuel to district fueling stations. To ensure that the fuel stations have sufficient fuel for district operations, districts must monitor fuel disbursements to prevent theft and know when to reorder fuel supplies. Most districts are sufficiently large to be able to justify using automated fueling systems specifically designed to prevent unauthorized fuel disbursements and monitor fuel tank levels as well as log the amount of fuel individual vehicles take. Leaking fuel tanks can be a major cost for a district. Failure to promptly deal with fuel leaks found either through automated fueling systems or during inspections by governmental environmental agencies can result in high costs to clean up ground contamination especially if the contamination is underground and in the groundwater.

The Franklin County School District's two fueling stations are conveniently located: at the bus barn in Apalachicola and at Carrabelle High School. The district uses key control procedures and a fuel log to ensure the security of its fueling site in Apalachicola. However, the district is constrained in its ability to bid for fuel because there are only two fuel dealers in the county, one of which is owned by the school board chair and district procurement policy prohibits giving business to school board employees. Based on information provided by neighboring school districts on recent fuel purchases, these school districts are able to obtain diesel fuel for an average of 13.8 cents per gallon less than the Franklin County School District pays. [6] Local, regional, and national fuel vendors bid on the contracts to supply fuel for the neighboring districts. Some Florida school districts also obtain fuel off of a Florida Department of Management Services statewide fuel contract. If the Franklin County School District were able to obtain diesel fuel for the same average cost as neighboring school districts, it could save $2,415 annually. [7]

> **We recommend that the transportation department explore contracting out its fuel purchases with regional and national vendors as well as use of the Florida Department of Management Services statewide fuel contract.**

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[6] The comparison districts are Wakulla, Liberty, Gulf and Calhoun.

[7] 17,500/gallons per year x 13.8 cents per gallon (cost difference) = $2,415.

Best Practice 11: Using

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

If uncontrolled, vehicle maintenance costs can result in significant expenses to school districts and, thus, should be effectively managed. To efficiently maintain vehicles and reduce maintenance-related costs, the district must have maintenance facilities that are appropriately situated within the district so as to minimize the distance vehicles have to travel for servicing. The district must also have access to vehicle parts and delivery services. Service areas should be equipped with parts rooms, administrative areas, specialized tools, and covered and hard surfaced working areas so technicians can concentrate on their assigned jobs and not be distracted/prevented from work due to weather, lack of tools, etc. Maintenance facilities generate hazardous wastes such as antifreeze that need to be stored and properly disposed of. In general, district vehicles should be parked in secure compounds at the end of the workday to reduce overall transportation costs. The only time the district should allow vehicles to be taken home is if it proves to be in the district's best financial interests. For example, it may be cheaper to allow a bus driver to park a bus at his or her home instead of taking it to a distant bus compound. It is also appropriate for district employees on an on-call status (such as district facility repair staff) to park vehicles at their homes instead of a district compound, especially if the drivers frequently respond to calls after normal working hours that involve the transportation of materials not easily transported in personal passenger vehicles (such as heavy welding equipment or sheets of plywood).

The Franklin County School District has one maintenance/repair facility located at the district bus barn in Apalachicola with two drive-through covered bays. The mechanic and technician report that they have adequate specialized tools on hand to complete their work. Access to the shop is limited to maintenance and transportation personnel, while access to the parts room is limited to transportation personnel alone. The parts room/shop is locked at night for security. All hazardous waste material is placed in storage tanks and drums with a waste recycling firm removing the waste at no charge to the district. The district is in the process of fencing the transportation compound but spare buses and buses up for bid are already kept in a fenced area. Other buses are parked at the drivers' homes. District maintenance vehicles are parked in the vehicle compound when not being used.

Best Practice 12: Using

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

Minimizing the amount of time vehicles spend out of service in maintenance minimizes service disruptions and reduces the number of vehicles required to support the district's transportation needs. Thus, keeping vehicles on the road in good repair saves the district money. Several factors affect vehicle maintenance time and costs. For instance, insufficient parts inventories can result in higher maintenance downtime for buses and the need to maintain extra spare buses. Conversely, excessive parts inventories can cost the district monies that could be used to meet other district transportation needs. Ideally, districts should have the minimum number of parts and supplies necessary to efficiently operate their fleet. Strategies for achieving this goal include standardizing engines and bodies and using just-in-time inventories. Purchased parts and supplies also need to be secured to safeguard district assets. This can be accomplished by restricting access to parts rooms, maintaining inventory tracking systems, and periodically conducting part inventory audits. Districts also need to make sure that they take advantage of he warranties provided by bus manufacturers, thus avoiding paying for covered repairs and parts.

The Franklin County School District keeps a limited supply of high turnover parts such as filters, belts, brake shoes, seat covers, and tires. It uses the "state bid" for tires and other large item purchases; for other items the district requests vendor quotes.

The district uses a manual tracking system for tracking parts. The transportation department maintains a list tracking basic warranty coverage that identifies items by vehicle type, year, and manufacturer.

Warranty information on post-market parts, such as alternators, is kept in vehicle maintenance files. The manual system used by the transportation function relies on the mechanic to check parts against the invoice upon delivery, label the part with the invoice number and date received, and note the invoice number on the bus work order form when the part is used. The district does not conduct an annual parts inventory. Proper internal controls require not only an annual parts inventory, but that the inventory be conducted by an organizational independent (non-transportation function) person.

> **We recommend that the transportation department inventory its vehicle parts annually using a district employee who does not work in the transportation area.**

OPERATIONS, MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Best Practice 13: Using

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

Up-to-date procedures, when coupled with appropriate policies, ensure that activities are completed efficiently and effectively and that the district complies with federal and state laws. In addition, written procedures serve as a district's institutional memory for key processes and, as such, help minimize essential service disruption and reduce the need for costly training and assistance due to staff turnover. Therefore, districts need effective procedures addressing circumstances that prevent normal bus operations. These include vehicle breakdowns, driver absences, bus overcrowding, and excessive ride times. While the district needs to minimize these occurrences, they also need effective procedures to follow when these situations occur. To recover the costs of field trips, districts should have a policy to charge schools 100% of the transportation costs for the trips.

The Franklin County School District has policies to ensure that contingencies affecting vehicle operations are handled safely and promptly. The district has procedures and communication equipment in place to deal effectively with emergencies, such as breakdowns. Buses are equipped with radios and cell phones and drivers have been instructed on what to do if a breakdown or accident occurs.

Florida Department of Education 2001-02 transportation data shows that 24% of the district's total transportation miles were for field trips, including athletic and extracurricular trips. While such field trips are often beneficial, the transportation department should be reimbursed for the full costs of such trips to improve school accountability. The district's current practice is to allow each class one "free" curriculum-related trip paid for by the district; after the "free" trip, schools reimburse the transportation department for drivers' hourly pay and pay 30 cents a mile to cover fuel costs. The transportation coordinator does not believe that this charge covers all associated trip costs. He cannot definitively say because the district can not accurately track field trip costs (see Best Practice 18 for a further discussion). The transportation department is not reimbursed for any costs associated with athletic trips which sometimes go long distances. For example, some trips require transportation to the Pensacola area, 161 miles each way.

> **To improve school accountability and appropriately charge district cost categories, we recommend that the district establish a policy to charge schools 100% of the transportation costs incurred on field trips.**

District schools can reduce their costs of field trips and increase their flexibility in scheduling field trips if selected athletic coaches, school administrators, and teachers went through bus driver training and obtained a CDL. With such training and a license, the school staff could drive buses on field trips rather

than employing and using regular bus drivers. While this will reduce transportation costs, the amount saved will depend on the number of school personnel trained, the cost of training, and the number of field trips.

> **We recommend that the transportation department offer bus driver training to selected school staff so they can drive students on field trips.**

Best Practice 14: Using

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

School districts are required by law to provide specialized transportation services to certain disabled students (i.e., students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs). [8] While necessary, these services can be very costly to a district. Many ESE students can ride regular buses with no assistance or special equipment. However, others may require accommodations such as special wheelchair lifts to secure the wheelchair and student for transport. To ensure compliance with the law while controlling costs, school districts need effective systems for determining ESE students' needs for special transportation. Special transportation need is determined in meetings between teachers, ESE staff, and parents. Once determined, districts need policies clearly outlining the circumstances requiring special transportation. These policies also should identify circumstances in which alternative transportation modes, such as paying parents to drive children who need special supervision, can or should be used. Finally, districts should seek to recover Medicaid reimbursement for ESE transportation whenever possible, as this federal program reimburses school districts for transporting Medicaid-eligible students on certain approved bus runs. Rarely does the cost to complete Medicaid paperwork exceed the reimbursed amount. Every Medicaid dollar coming into the district frees general fund monies for other district needs.

The ESE administrator and transportation coordinator frequently communicate on an informal basis to coordinate transportation for ESE students requiring special services. The district reimburses parents on a per mileage basis for transporting 18-19 ESE students. The district also contracts with a private provider to transport four to five ESE students approximately 80 miles to Gretchen Everhart School in Leon County. The private provider charges the district $178.72 a day. The district could recoup a portion of the cost of transporting these students through Medicaid reimbursement, but it has not fully explored this option. Further discussion and the fiscal impact of additional Medicaid reimbursements can be found in Chapter 4 (Educational Services Delivery), Best Practice 2.

Best Practice 15: Using

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

No matter how competent bus drivers are and how well buses are maintained, accidents and breakdowns occur. Districts need written procedures to guide employees when these situations occur to ensure that activities are carried out safely, efficiently, and effectively; proper officials are notified; and the district complies with federal and state laws. [9]

All Franklin County School District buses are equipped with radios and cell phones. Drivers have been instructed how to handle a breakdown or accident. Daily, the coordinator, full-time mechanic, and part-time mechanic monitor the bus radios from the central bus compound and take clip-on radios to monitor calls when they must leave the office.

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[8] The ESE population in a school includes gifted students, slow learners, emotionally handicapped students, and physically handicapped students.

[9] For example, under Florida law, accidents involving damage of $500 or more or having student injuries must be reported to the Florida Department of Education.

Best Practice 16: Using

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

Inappropriate student behavior on school buses can distract bus drivers, potentially resulting in accidents that could injure students and others and leave the district with costly legal liabilities. Therefore, school districts need effective methods to control student behavior while they are being transported. Various district staff shares responsibility for ensuring students act appropriately on school buses and should be involved in developing these methods. For example, school principals are responsible for a student's bus conduct from the time a student gets on a bus until they leave. School bus drivers assist in maintaining appropriate student bus behavior using management techniques such as writing disciplinary referrals to principals when necessary. Principals can assist bus drivers maintain student bus discipline by informing them of what disciplinary actions are taking place in response to written disciplinary referrals.

The district's bus drivers report disciplinary infractions to individual schools and state that they usually receive a copy of the write-up disposition informing them about any resulting disciplinary action. A copy of these dispositions, however, is not given to the transportation coordinator. This impedes the coordinator's ability to track problems, identify trends, and proactively address student or bus driver issues.

> **To allow for better management of student behavior on buses, we recommend that the district require schools to provide the transportation coordinator a copy of bus disciplinary documents.**

While the district does not track bus vandalism costs, the transportation coordinator reports that there is little vandalism. One reason for the small amount of vandalism is that the district stations the two bus monitors on certain buses to prevent vandalism when they are not needed as substitute drivers or field trip drivers. While the presence of bus monitors appears to reduce vandalism, the cost is relatively high (approximately $4,000 per monitor per year). Given the high cost of using the bus monitors, the district needs to periodically evaluate the cost/benefit of using monitors on a regular basis to prevent bus vandalism.

> **We recommend that the district periodically evaluate the cost/benefit of using monitors on a regular basis as compared to other methods (e.g., video cameras) to prevent bus vandalism.**

The board's policy on vandalism and malicious mischief requires parents/guardians to replace damaged property. However, the transportation coordinator and bus drivers report that parents are reluctant to accept that their children are responsible for damage and it can be difficult to prove, even when students are assigned seats. To reduce bus vandalism costs, the district should establish and implement additional policies and procedures that will increase the detection of school bus vandalism and increase reimbursements for damages. These policies and procedures should require drivers to check buses for vandalism after each bus route, and hold students responsible for damage to assigned seats unless there is evidence that seat damage was caused by a non-assigned student.

> **We recommend that the district establish and implement additional policies and procedures to reduce bus vandalism costs. These policies can include the use of third party collection agents; making claims against responsible parties in small claims court; and, suspending responsible parties from district-provided transportation until damage claims have been paid. The transportation coordinator should periodically report on the effectiveness of the adopted vandalism policies and propose changes as needed.**

Best Practice 17: Using

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

The proper use of technology can make the district transportation function more efficient and safe, and less expensive. For instance, technology can assist school districts map out the most efficient bus routes and can reduce the need to manually manipulate data. Therefore, school districts need appropriate technology to support their transportation systems.

Although Franklin County School District's transportation department has little computer support, the department effectively maintains its records manually, which appears to work well for one of the state's smallest districts.

Best Practice 18: Not Using

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

Like most other organizations, school districts must make difficult budget decisions to control expenses and maximize available funds to support their primary mission, educating students. Exceeding budgets may require the district to reduce classroom funds, forgo other needs, or dip into reserves to meet unanticipated expenses. Thus, transportation management, like all other operational programs, must monitor operations and control costs to stay within budget. Budget categories need to be sufficiently detailed to be useful to transportation managers. Wide variance between actual expenditures and budgeted expenditures indicates problems in either the calculation of accurate expenditure figures or controlling actual expenditures. In either case, transportation management can prevent budgeting problems by analyzing expenditures and comparing them to budgeted amounts. These analyses will help identify unexpected patterns of expenditures as will as opportunities to increase operational efficiency and effectiveness.

The Franklin County School District's transportation coordinator reviews the transportation expenditure ledger summary at least monthly to compare expenditures against budgeted amounts. However, the expenditure report does not present information in a way that allows cost control issues to be easily identified. For example, the report does not break out the costs of ESE transportation and field trips. These costs are instead grouped under one travel code, making it impossible for the transportation coordinator to accurately determine how much was allocated each service.

Action Plan 9-4 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 9-4

We recommend that the transportation coordinator use program cost data to monitor expenditures and compare them against the budget.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The finance director, with the assistance of the transportation coordinator, should provide sufficient budget details to allow for the monitoring of transportation expenditures throughout the year as well as a comparison of expenditures to budgeted amounts.
	Step 2.	The transportation coordinator should compare on a monthly or quarterly basis transportation expenditures to budgeted amounts and, when discrepancies are found, notify the finance director and superintendent.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator, finance director	
Time Frame	December 2003	

Best Practice 19: Using

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

To be good custodians of public resources, reduce costs, and maximize classroom funds, school districts should continually evaluate operational efficiency and effectiveness, including examining the benefits of alternative service delivery methods. Certain administrative and support functions, including transportation, are more easily privatized due to the limited scope of operations and availability of private providers. Therefore, school districts should conduct periodic analyses to determine if they would benefit from privatization of certain aspects of their transportation systems. Privatizing specialized functions such as rebuilding bus transmissions can save districts money by avoiding the need to buy and maintain equipment and skills for jobs that occur only a few times a year. In some cases, districts have privatized their entire transportation operations and achieved cost savings. However, these steps need to be taken only after "make or buy" analyses are done to ensure that the move will produce real benefits. To conduct these analyses, districts need to identify their unit costs, both direct and indirect, for providing services (such as oil changes, paint and body work, and engine rebuilds) so they can compare internal costs to private vendor prices.

The Franklin County School District has contacted private transportation providers, but report that the private firms contacted were not interested in providing student transportation due to the district's small size. The transportation department privatizes transportation of most ESE students and contracts for some vehicle repair services on a case-by-case basis. Major warranty work is sent to outside shops with small warranty jobs being done in-house and charged to the company. The ESE administrator and transportation coordinator have compared the cost of outsourcing for ESE transportation to Gretchen Everhart School using an approximated in-house cost to provide the same service. However, this cost comparison was not reviewed by anyone in finance and accounting to ensure its accuracy and that all appropriate costs were included and properly allocated. To ensure that outsourcing ESE student transportation is the most cost-efficient method, the district should compare the cost of providing this service in-house to the cost of contracting the service on a semi-annual basis. To ensure that the most cost-efficient method of transporting these students is identified, the calculation should be reviewed by the finance and accounting department for accuracy.

> **We recommend that the district compare the cost of outsourcing ESE student transportation to the cost of transporting these students in-house on a semi-annual basis and that the cost comparison be reviewed for accuracy by the finance and accounting department.**

Best Practice 20: Not Using

The district has not established an accountability system for transportation.

Like other publicly funded entities, a school district should be held accountable to parents and other taxpayers for the performance and cost of its major programs and support services, including transportation. To accomplish this, each school district should have a system allowing managers at both the district and program level to evaluate performance and make informed decisions about the use of limited resources. In addition, school transportation departments need to be able to demonstrate to district management, school boards, and the public that they are good stewards of the public's funds and are constantly striving to improve. This is done by establishing measures, goals, and benchmarks and comparing internal performance to other school districts. Districts should regularly monitor some performance measures on a short-term (e.g., monthly) basis such as the number of bus breakdowns, driver/technician absenteeism, complaints received (e.g., buses not being on time and students not picked up), vehicle maintenance delays (oil changes, inspections not conducted, etc.), and paid overtime. Districts should monitor other performance measures on an annual basis, such as the percentage of courtesy students served, annual operational cost per student, vehicle breakdowns per 100,000 miles, the

percentage of spare buses, accidents per million miles, and the percentage of students delivered within established ride time standards. Districts should compare their performance to peer districts as well as against established benchmarks. Transportation department performance should regularly be reported to the district superintendent, school board, and the public.

The Franklin County School District has not established transportation goals, measurable objectives, or established benchmarks to compare the program's performance with peer districts. While the coordinator informally compares Franklin's state-reported transportation data with similar or neighboring districts, this data does not provide adequate information for tracking or comparing actual costs. The state-level cost-per-student measure, for example, is based on students who are eligible for state funding. To track the actual cost per student the district would need to include both state-funded and courtesy riders. The Franklin County School Board does not request or review peer comparison data nor does it review district-wide transportation costs.

Action Plan 9-5 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 9-5

We recommend that the district develop a transportation performance accountability system. [1]	
Action Needed	**Step 1.** The transportation coordinator develops a draft accountability plan that includes a department mission statement, goals, objectives, and benchmarks. The objectives should be time-specific, measurable, and address districtwide operations. The transportation plan should be consistent with the district's overall accountability plan. (See Appendix B)
	Step 2. The transportation coordinator works with the director of business services to assure that the draft plan is consistent with the district budget.
	Step 3. The transportation coordinator forwards the plan to the superintendent and/or the school board for approval as appropriate.
	Step 4. Annually the transportation coordinator compares program performance to peers on selected performance measures.
	Step 5. The transportation coordinator establishes appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and benchmarks for key indicators of student transportation performance. Benchmarks should be established based on past performance and reasonable expectations of future performance. They should also be limited to a number of indicators that collectively provide a "big picture" assessment of student transportation management.
	Step 6. The transportation coordinator provides district administrators and the school board with an annual "report card" that shows actual performance for all selected performance and cost efficiency measures in comparison with the selected benchmarks for that indicator and actual performance during the previous year. To provide this "report card" to the public, it should be placed on the district's website.
	Step 7. Each summer the coordinator reviews the plan and updates it as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator, director of business and finance, superintendent, school board
Time Frame	July 2004

[1] For a general discussion about developing goals, objectives, and measures see Chapter 3, Action Plan 3-1.

10 Food Service Operations

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using 2 of the 11 food service operations best practices. The program is organized to succeed and is in compliance with state and federal inspection requirements. To meet the remaining best practice standards, the program needs to update its procedures manual and training activities to ensure that food service employees are well-prepared to do their jobs. To promote efficiency and effectiveness, the food service program needs to improve its overall planning, budgeting, and accountability system by developing performance measures, setting performance goals, and comparing performance to these goals during the school year. To be financially self-supporting, the program should adjust some procurement and storage practices, reduce the number of kitchen employees, and increase student participation.

WAYS TO SAVE
Sharpening the Pencil

As seen in Exhibit 10-1, the district has several opportunities to avoid and reduce food service costs. Determining whether to take advantage of these opportunities is a district decision and should be based on many factors including district needs, public input, and school board priorities. If the district implements these action plans and becomes financially self-sufficient, it would be able to redirect operating funds to other priorities, such as putting more money into the classroom or addressing deficiencies identified in this report.

Exhibit 10-1
Our Review Identified Two Ways the District Could Reduce Food Service Costs

| Best Practice Number	Fiscal Impact: Increased Program Revenue					
	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Year 2007-08	Total
5 Reduce and restructure kitchen staff	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$30,000	$150,000
6 Move commodities from the federal warehouse within 60 days	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$10,000	$50,000
Total	**$40,000**	**$40,000**	**$40,000**	**$40,000**	**$40,000**	**$200,000**

Background

The Franklin County School District Food Service Program provided approximately 208,000 meals during 2001-02 school year, including 41,000 breakfasts, 153,000 lunches, and the equivalent of 14,000 meals in the form of a la carte items. The program provided meal services at four schools and three off-site locations. [1] The program employs 12 food service employees in the school cafeterias, 4 shared employees acting as cashiers, and a program administrator and secretary at the central office. The food service budget for the 2002-03 school year is approximately $481,000.

The director of special programs and support services acts as the food service program director and manages all aspects of the food service program. The current director has been overseeing the program for four years. In addition to food service, the program director is responsible for many other aspects of school operation, including vocational education, dropout prevention and alternative education, standardized testing, adult education, and collective bargaining.

Program organization

As shown in Exhibit 10-2, the food service program director reports to the assistant superintendent of schools and oversees the cafeteria managers. The cafeteria managers supervise other kitchen employees. Secretaries who work in the front office for the principal at each school serve as food service cashiers three hours per day.

Exhibit 10-2
The Food Service Program Has Clear Lines of Authority
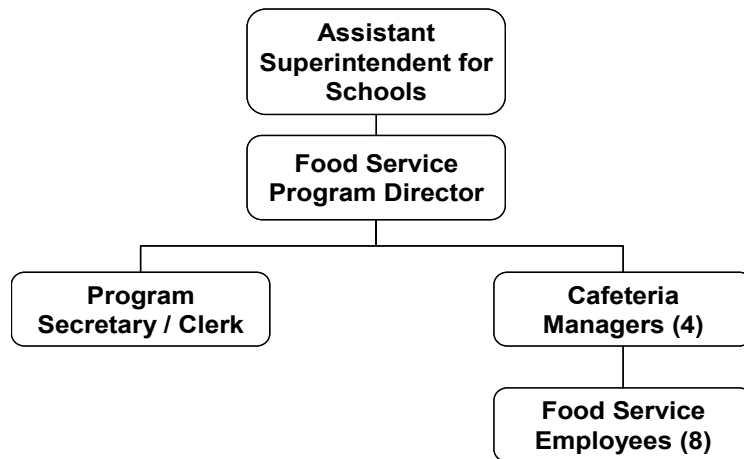
Source: Franklin County School District.

National School Lunch Program participation

The district participates in the National School Lunch Program and the Breakfast Program, which are regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). These programs assist states through grants-in-aid to operate and expand 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 provide and encourage the consumption of nutritious domestic agricultural commodities (USDA Donated Foods).

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[1] The Food Service Program contracted to provide meals to the Apalachicola Bay Charter School, Head Start, and Early Childhood Services.

These breakfast and lunch programs are administered through Florida's Department of Education and the 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.

As a program participant, the district receives monthly federal reimbursement income for the free, reduced price, and paid meals it serves. Quarterly, the state also provides required partial matching funds to lunch programs and to supplement breakfast meals. Exhibit 10-3 shows the federal reimbursement rates for the National School Lunch Program for 2002-03 school year. Based on relative economic need, districts receive a standard reimbursement of either $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. Under the program guidelines, Franklin County receives the $0.22 reimbursement rate. Students pay the full, reduced, or free meal rate based on individual family economic conditions set by the USDA. 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 and supplements some of this cost. The Franklin County School District has opted not to offer breakfast to students at Apalachicola High School.

Exhibit 10-3
Per Meal USDA Reimbursement Rates and Fees for School Year 2002-03

	Meal	Federal Assistance	Fees Paid by Student	Program Total Revenue
Franklin County Elementary Schools				
Full price	Breakfast	$0.22	$1.25	$1.47
	Lunch	$0.22	$1.50	$1.72[1]
Reduced price	Breakfast	$0.22 + $0.65	$0.30	$1.17 [2]
	Lunch	$0.22 + $1.54	$0.40	$2.16[1]
Free	Breakfast	$0.22 + $0.95	$0	$1.17 [2]
	Lunch	$0.22 + $1.94	$0	$2.16[1]
Franklin County Middle and High Schools				
Full price	Breakfast	$0.22	$1.25	$1.47
	Lunch	$0.22	$1.75	$1.97[1]
Reduced price	Breakfast	$0.22 + $0.65	$0.30	$1.17
	Lunch	$0.22 + $1.54	$0.40	$2.16[1]
Free	Breakfast	$0.22 + $0.65	$0	$1.17
	Lunch	$0.22 + $1.94	$0	$2.16[1]

[1] In addition, the state quarterly pays partial matching funds to the district. In 2001-02 this equaled about $0.03 per lunch served.
[2] For individual schools classified as "severe need," the federal program provides an additional $0.23.
Source: United States Department of Agriculture and Florida Department of Education.

As Exhibit 10-4 illustrates, participation in the federal National School Lunch Program and cash food sales account for the majority of revenue, while food costs, salaries, and benefits represent the majority of expenditures. The program ended the 2001-02 school year with a $14,000 deficit.

Exhibit 10-4
Franklin Food Service Program Revenues and Expenditures

	Fiscal Year			
	1998-99	**1999-2000**	**2000-01**	**2001-02**
Revenue				
Food Sales Revenue				
Federal Meals Program	$328,449	$365,930	$380,444	$371,509
State Supplement	12,254	17,245	17,144	13,744
Meal Sales	99,033	109,393	106,159	86,148
A La Carte Sales	41,359	45,273	39,531	42,822
Other Food Sales	1,485	1,411	663	854
Other Revenue	2879	2,852	2,042	23,655
Total Revenue	**$485,459**	**$542,104**	**$545,983**	**$538,732**
Expenditures				
Salaries	$159,361	$182,645	$207,912	$201,097
Employee Benefits	86,318	88,479	101,053	107,540
Purchased Services	8,444	10,644	21,060	28,081
Energy Services	0	0	0	21
Material and supplies	188,431	218,288	170,074	190,906
Capital Outlay	0	240	0	0
Other Expenses	40,138	28,360	25,297	25,484
Total Expenditures	**$482,692**	**$528,656**	**$525,396**	**$553,129**
Net Income (Loss)	**$2,767**	**$13,448**	**$20,587**	**$(14,397)**

Source: Franklin County School District.

Conclusion and Recommendations ——————

Franklin County School District Is Using Two Food Service Operations Best Practices

Practice Area		Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
Planning, Organization, and Staffing	1.	The program has developed strategic or operational plans that are consistent with district plans, the program budget, and approved by the district.	No	10-6
	2.	The district and program are organized with clear lines of responsibility and in a manner that provides the food service program sufficient authority to succeed.	Yes	10-6
	3.	Program management has developed training designed to meet basic program needs as well as improve food services, both based on a needs assessment.	No	10-7
Management	4.	Program management has developed comprehensive procedures manuals that are kept current.	No	10-8
	5.	The district performs sound cash and account management.	No	10-9
	6.	District and program management optimizes its financial opportunities.	No	10-11
Performance and Accountability	7.	Food service program management has developed comprehensive performance and cost-efficiency measures that provide management with information to evaluate program performance and better manage operations.	No	10-12
	8.	At least annually, the program inspects and evaluates its operational components and the system as a whole, and then takes action to initiate needed change.	No	10-13
	9.	District and program administrators effectively manage costs of the food services program and use performance measures, benchmarks, and budgets on a regular basis to evaluate performance and use the analysis for action or change.	No	10-14
	10.	The program and district comply with federal state and district food service policies.	Yes	10-14
	11.	The district conducts activities to ensures that customer needs are met and acts to improve services and food quality where needed.	No	10-15

PLANNING, ORGANIZING, AND STAFFING

Best Practice 1: Not Using

The food service program does not have an operational plan that is consistent with the overall district plan and budget.

A well-managed food service program should have a plan that includes a mission statement, goals, objectives, and strategies that describe what the program desires to accomplish. The extensiveness of such plans may differ by district size. For instance, larger districts should have more highly developed, detailed plans for their food service operations, whereas smaller districts may need a less extensive, more general plan. The food service program budget should be an extension of the plan and financial decisions should reflect the program's priority goals and objectives. The food service plan should be consistent with the district's overall plan and budget, and address operations for each school.

The Franklin County School District's Food Service Program has a mission statement but has not developed an operational plan. Action Plan 10-1 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 10-1

We recommend that the food service program develop an operational plan, including measurable goals and objectives, that is consistent with the district's plan and budget. [1]		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The food service director develops a draft plan that includes a mission statement and integrated goals and objectives. The objectives should be time-specific, measurable, and address operations for each school. The food service plan should be consistent with the district's overall plan.
	Step 2.	The food service director coordinates with the director of business services to assure that the draft plan is consistent with the district budget.
	Step 3.	Cafeteria managers review the draft plan and provide feedback to the food service director, who revises the plan as necessary.
	Step 4.	The food service director forwards the plan to the superintendent and/or the school board for approval as appropriate.
	Step 5.	Each summer the director reviews the plan and updates it as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	December 2003	

[1] For a general discussion about developing goals, objectives, and measures see Chapter 3, Action Plan 3-1.

Best Practice 2: Using

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

For the food service program to function well, the food service director and school principals need to balance authority and responsibility. If not closely monitored, this shared responsibility and authority can create barriers to student meal purchases and program success. All districts, even those with few employees, should maintain basic organizational charts to help management and employees understand their organizational relationships, assign responsibilities, and avoid conflict.

The Franklin County School District Food Service Program has practices in place to meet the intent of this best practice and is organized to succeed. The food service director has been given both the responsibility and authority to manage the program. The director, cafeteria managers, and principals have an effective, cooperative working relationship. The district organization chart accurately reflects program administration.

Best Practice 3: Not Using

The district provides some training to food service employees but more is needed.

Training ensures that school district employees understand their responsibilities and performance expectations. Through training, employees update their skills so that they can effectively and efficiently carry out their duties. Thus, school districts should have a process for identifying and tracking employee training needs. All food service employees should complete at least a minimum level of sanitation, safety, and food production/handling training. In addition, comprehensive training, though not necessarily required of all employees, should include essential program functions such as food safety; portion control; production control; special diets; inventory; meal count procedures; receiving and storing food and supplies; emergency procedures; and customer service. The district also should have a training strategy for addressing cafeteria manager turnover. All districts should take advantage of Department of Education training materials.

The Franklin County School District provides training for food service employees on topics such as worker's compensation and how to inventory food, reduce fat in meals, and maintain appropriate temperatures in food storage areas. However, the program should also periodically provide basic food service safety and sanitation training to protect both customers and cafeteria employees. In addition, managers should participate in refresher classes on topics such as portion and production control to help contain food costs.

The district has several options for obtaining assistance to provide this additional training.

- The Florida Chapter of the American School Food Service Association provides training, including home study courses.

- The Department of Education's Virtual Classroom offers classes in basic food safety. Franklin County School District employees could access this training through their home or school computers.

- The district participates in the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC), and has contracted for training for instructional and non-instructional personnel. The consortium may be able to provide food service safety training for food service employees and facilitate conference-call peer training sessions for managers on management issues such as cost containment.

The district should take advantage of resources such as these to periodically provide essential courses to food service employees.

Action Plan 10-2 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 10-2

We recommend that the district provide annual food service safety and sanitation training to all program employees and refresher classes on portion and production control to managers.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The food service director researches training options and identifies the most appropriate way to provide food service safety and sanitation training to all employees and refresher classes to managers.
	Step 2.	The food service director schedules annual training classes.
	Step 3.	Food service employees and cafeteria managers participate in the training sessions and provide evaluative feedback to the director on the usefulness of these classes.
	Step 4.	The food service director incorporates employee feedback as appropriate when developing and arranging future training classes.
Who Is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director).	
Time Frame	August 2004	

MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 4: Not Using

The district does not have a current comprehensive food service manual.

Up-to-date policies and procedures ensure that activities are carried out efficiently and effectively and that districts comply with federal and state laws. In addition, written procedures serve as a district's institutional memory for key processes and help minimize disruption and the need for costly training and assistance due to staff turnover. To ensure that employees know and use program policies, school districts should make comprehensive procedures manuals available to all food service managers. The manuals should cover important areas of food service operations and district policy and district should conduct a scheduled and documented review process to keep manuals current and complete.

The current food service procedures manual is missing some key information and procedures; however, the food service director is updating the manual to implement this best practice. The manual will provide managers and employees an overview of the food service program and its operations to help employees comply with state and federal requirements and ensure that new employees know how to perform their jobs. Action Plan 10-3 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 10-3

We recommend that the district update and maintain the food service procedures manual.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The food service director uses procedures manuals from other districts as examples to develop a manual tailored to Franklin County's food service program.
	Step 2.	Cafeteria managers review and field test the draft manual for three to five months and advise the director of any needed revisions.
	Step 3.	The food service director prints a final food service manual and issues copies to food service employees. The manual should be formatted so changes can be readily indicated.
	Step 4.	The food service director meets with the resource technology teacher to determine the feasibility of posting the manual on the district's website/intranet. Having the most current official procedures manual on a district-only website could increase use and improve the updating process.
	Step 5.	The food service director reviews the manual annually and makes necessary changes.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Best Practice 5: Not Using

The program needs to increase revenues and reduce costs so that it becomes and remains self-sufficient.

School districts should run the food service program much like a business, ensuring that it remains in a healthy financial position, pays its share of operating expenses, and maintains a reserve fund balance within legal limitations to protect it from unanticipated emergencies. At a minimum, district management should require the food service program to be self-sufficient by paying all appropriate direct and indirect expenses so it does not drain general revenue dollars from the classroom. Management should also ensure that program account balances, plans, and budgets support future self-sufficiency. Districts of all sizes should make prompt requests for payment to the federal National School Lunch Program because payments are so substantial that they affect cash management and interest income.

The Franklin County food service program operated at a deficit during the 2001-02 school year. To break even, the district needs to increase revenues or decrease expenses, or both. The program's primary revenues are National School Lunch and Breakfast reimbursements and meal sales. The district does well submitting timely claims to the National School Lunch Program. The program could increase revenue if more students participated in the school meals program; ways to increase student participation are discussed in Best Practice 11.

Food and personnel costs are the program's main expenses. Best Practice 6 explores how the district may be able to reduce food costs by improving management of commodities. The district could also take significant steps to improve its financial position by reducing personnel costs. Currently, the standard industry ratio of employee hours to the number of meals served (meals per labor hour), indicates that the program has too many employee hours for the level of service. [2] Each of the district's four kitchens has a manager and additional employees, some full-time and some temporary. The program and district managers should consider all or some of the options below for reducing personnel costs.

- ▪ ***Expand free workforce.*** Accept additional Green Thumb employees, who are paid by the Workforce Program and not out of the school budget. As a condition of their employment, Green

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[2] The meals per labor hour standard varies by the number of meals served. At 14 meals per labor hour, Chapman meets the standard; AHS, with a ratio of 8.8 falls short of the standard of 12-14; Brown has a ratio of 12, which is less than the standard of 13-15, and Carrabelle at 12 is under the preferred ratio of 15-16.

Thumb employees are not permitted to do any of the heavy work in the kitchen, but they supplement the efforts of regular food service employees. A Green Thumb employee replaced one temporary employee at Chapman Elementary, thereby significantly reducing labor costs for that kitchen. Replacing one temporary employee with one Green Thumb employee would reduce labor costs and save the program approximately $10,000 per year.

- ▪ ***Adjust breakfast staffing schedules****.* Apalachicola High School does not serve breakfast, but employees are scheduled to work the same number of hours as employees at the other schools that do serve breakfast. Employees at Apalachicola High School should be scheduled fewer total hours, thereby reducing labor costs.

- ▪ At the other three schools, two employees, the cafeteria manager, and the cashier work breakfast. Because breakfast consists mainly of simple or prepared foods, such as fruit, a box of cereal, and a drink container, the district should be able to reduce staff breakfast hours, thereby reducing labor costs.

- ▪ ***Consolidate kitchen staff and meal preparation****.* The kitchens at Apalachicola High, nearby Chapman Elementary, and Brown Elementary could be combined into one kitchen operation. Thus, food would be prepared at a central kitchen, the program van used to deliver the food to the other schools, and one or two employees would serve the meals at each school. Cashier support would remain the same. In this way the program would be able to prepare meals with fewer food service employees and cafeteria managers. Eliminating two manager positions would save $32,336 per year, including benefits. A consolidated operation would also simplify purchasing and inventory accountability. All schools should use disposable dishware to minimize dishwashing labor costs.

- ▪ If the district wanted to retain current manager employees, it could move them to two positions currently filled by temporary employees and let the temporary employees go. If the district continued to pay the employees the manager salaries, the district would save $20,000 ($10,000 per year per temporary employee) rather than the $32,336 per year for all four employees.

- ▪ ***Modify workforce.*** Convert one position into a roving substitute position to fill in for absent staff.

- ▪ ***Reduce benefit costs****.* Optional personnel benefits, such as medical plans, can be a significant expense for the program and are not traditionally provided in the food industry to part-time employees. If staff hours are reduced, the district may wish to revisit providing benefits to part-time employees. Current total benefits cost approximately $5,000 per food service employee per year. The district may wish to reconsider its benefit package for part-time employees to reduce program costs. The district could replace full-time staff with part-time staff through attrition.

Action Plan 10-4 describes how the district can use this best practice to reduce personnel costs to help the food service program become self-sufficient so that funds are no longer diverted from the classroom to support the program. The program director will need to routinely revisit the staffing schedules of all cafeteria and food service employees to monitor and adjust the workforce so it appropriately supports the program, particularly if district student enrollment continues to decline.

Action Plan 10-4

We recommend that the food service program reduce personnel costs so that the program is self-sufficient.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The district assesses options for reducing meals per labor hour so staffing levels are consistent with industry standards. The program director works with the assistant superintendent and the director of business services to evaluate options to reduce the number of employees and provides recommendations to the superintendent for approval.
	Step 2.	The director notifies kitchen employees of staffing changes that will be made and budgets accordingly.
	Step 3.	The director reviews meals per labor hour statistics monthly and adjusts employee schedules as necessary to assure that the program is able to break even, meet industry standards for meals per labor hour, and is as efficient as possible.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	Summer 2003 and school year 2003-04	

Best Practice 6: Not Using

The district needs to improve its procurement and commodities practices.

If the food service program takes advantage of opportunities to reduce costs and enhance revenues, it can avoid the need to raise meal prices and/or supplement the food service program with general operating funds that otherwise could be directed to student education. The district should aggressively seek to expand its operations as opportunities arise. The district should make optimal use of federally donated foods, which can substantially reduce food costs, and maximize its participation in the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs to increase federal reimbursement income. To respond to changing conditions and control costs, the district should also periodically review core processes, including warehousing, procurement, and management. These reviews should help the district make informed decisions as to which functions the program should perform and which should be outsourced.

The Franklin County School District food service program has taken advantage of opportunities to expand sales by contracting to provide meals to Apalachicola Bay Charter School, Head Start, and Early Childhood Services. The district has also worked with Second Harvest to obtain free snacks for the after-school program, thereby avoiding the costs of providing this food and helping students stay energized to take advantage of after-school activities. The food service director is investigating whether food service could be outsourced in its entirety, as permitted by state and federal rules.

One way school food programs reduce costs is by using free food distributed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through a system of allocations and bonuses (called commodities or donated food) in place of food it would otherwise purchase. The USDA and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services make annual allocations based on student participation and school district need. Bonus, or extra free food beyond the annual allocation, is offered as available. The Franklin County Food Service Program has historically ordered its full annual allocation of donated food to assist in reducing food costs. However, to use this best practice and fully realize the benefits of the donated food program, the district needs to improve its commodity and procurement practices. The district should use customer feedback to develop a menu, as discussed in Best Practice 11, and then obtain the food required for the menu at the best possible price. In the past, to take advantage of free food, the district accepted commodities that were not on the menu, which has led to several problems.

- *Savings opportunity lost.* The program has obtained more of some types of USDA food than it has been able to use before the expiration date. The program had to distribute food near its expiration date to other USDA food participants rather than destroy it. The food transferred to other agencies was obtained both as bonuses and as allocations. When the program uses its commodity allocation on food that it does not use, it prevents the district from off-setting its purchased food costs.

- ***Storage charges incurred.*** As part of the USDA Donated Food program, the district is allowed 60 days free storage at the regional USDA storage facility. However, the district accepted so much donated food that it did not have adequate district storage space, and had to incur federal warehouse storage fees. In Fiscal Year 2001-02, the program paid over $10,000 in federal warehouse storage fees, which it could have avoided if the district had ordered only the commodities it needed for the school year.

- ***Delivery costs incurred.*** The district also incurred food delivery costs that it later transferred to other agencies, which created an unnecessary expense to the program instead of the savings it was intended to provide.

In addition, the district needs to optimize the use of its donated food allocation. This can be done by comparing the price for food products from vendors to the "fair market value price" used in calculating the federal commodity allocation. Historically, the district has used its commodity allocation primarily for meat. However, buying meat is not always the most cost-effective use of the allocation. The district should compare a variety of food products to optimize its free food allocation.

Action Plan 10-5 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 10-5

We recommend that the food service program revise procurement and commodities practices to reduce costs.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The food service director and cafeteria managers develop a menu plan for the 2003-04 school year, using customer input as outlined in Action Plan 10-8 and specifically depleting all excess food or items near their expiration date.
	Step 2.	After determining what food is needed for the master menu, the director and business services manager determine which food items need to be purchased from vendors and which should be ordered through the federal commodity allocation.
	Step 3.	The director develops a policy limiting acceptance of bonus food items to minimize delivery and storage costs. This policy should incorporate procedures that will minimize any storage in the federal warehouse beyond 60 days.
	Step 4.	Using customer input, as outlined in Action Plan 10-8, the director annually develops menus to serve as the basis for food purchases, procures food accordingly, and analyzes which foods to obtain through vendors and which to obtain through federal commodity allocations.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	Summer 2003 and school year 2003-04	

PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Best Practice 7: Not Using

The program does not use key performance measures to assess and improve program performance.

Like other publicly funded entities, a school district should be accountable to parents and other taxpayers for the cost and performance of its major programs and support services, including food service. To accomplish this, school districts should have a system allowing managers at both the district and program level to evaluate performance and make informed decisions regarding the use of resources. Districts need to periodically verify that their performance information is reliable by testing its accuracy and assure its validity by assessing its usefulness. Managers also need to occasionally review performance benchmarks

for appropriateness. The degree of sophistication of the performance measurement system may vary with the size of the district; smaller districts may have a less formal reporting system and simpler methodology for development and validation of benchmarks.

The Franklin County School District can improve its operations and implement this best practice by using measures to routinely monitor the food service program. Data is readily available in the district's accounting system and in records and reports required for National School Lunch Program. For example, the food service director can calculate meals per labor hour, food cost, and labor cost per lunch and breakfast meal. Managers can use this information to routinely monitor performance and identify areas of poor performance, and then investigate the cause(s) of any performance problems. We recommend that the district develop a set of key program performance measures and benchmarks, including measures such as meals per labor hour, food and labor cost per meal, and participation rates.

Action Plan 10-6 outlines the steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 10-6

We recommend that the program use key performance measures to assess and improve program performance.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The food service director identifies a set of key performance measures for assessing program performance.
	Step 2.	The food service director researches and establishes benchmarks for each of the measures.
	Step 3.	The food service director trains cafeteria managers to track performance using the measures.
	Step 4.	Program managers collect performance data and periodically compare it to the established benchmarks.
	Step 5.	When performance does not meet the benchmarks, managers investigate why and develop strategies for revising operations to meet the goals.
	Step 6.	The director reports to the superintendent and the school board annually on program performance.
	Step 7.	The director revisits the measures and benchmarks annually to verify their accuracy, usefulness, and appropriateness.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Best Practice 8: Not Using

The program is not regularly inspected and evaluated.

School districts should have a system for inspecting individual cafeterias and evaluating overall program operations to ensure efficiency and compliance with public safety standards. Cafeteria inspections should review cash management, food and equipment inventories, food and employee safety, food preparation, and training. Program evaluations should analyze functions such as procurement and accountability. District managers should use inspection and evaluation results to implement corrective actions and improve the program. As part of overall operational efficiency and to assist in budgeting and planning, the district should have a preventive maintenance program and a long-range equipment replacement plan for the food service program.

While the director makes periodic informal inspections, the Franklin County food service program does not routinely conduct required documented kitchen inspections that include an evaluation of overall operations. Although the program is small, it is necessary to annually inspect each kitchen for efficiency and safety and to review food and equipment inventories. In addition, the district does not have a long-range equipment replacement and preventive maintenance program, but it has replaced some major

equipment, such as freezers, before they failed. Information from annual kitchen inspections could be used to develop maintenance and replacement plans and budget for future expenditures. It is generally accepted that equipment maintenance and preventive replacement will reduce long-term program costs.

Action Plan 10-7 outlines the steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 10-7

We recommend that the district annually inspect key food service operations to ensure efficiency and compliance with public safety standards.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The food service director reviews the district's inspection form to verify that all key kitchen operations are covered, including the condition of major equipment. Forms from food service operations in other districts may be helpful. The director revises the Franklin form as needed to adequately address food service operations.
	Step 2.	The food service director uses the form to annually inspect each kitchen.
	Step 3.	The director and cafeteria managers correct operations and/or conditions identified as unsatisfactory in the inspection findings to improve food service operations.
	Step 4.	District and program managers use information from the inspections concerning equipment conditions to incorporate maintenance and replacement needs into the program and district budgets and work with the coordinator of facilities and transportation services, who is responsible for facility maintenance, to develop a long-range preventive maintenance plan.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Best Practice 9: Not Using

The district and program managers do not regularly use performance measures, benchmarks, and budgets to evaluate performance and effectively manage program costs.

School district and program administrators should make informed decisions based on a goal driven, performance measurement system that is linked to the district's strategic plan. Best Practice 7 addresses the design, development, and maintenance of a comprehensive set of performance measures and benchmarks that comprise an accurate, complete, and reliable system of reporting. This best practice addresses management's use of the performance measurement system through the routine collection, analysis and reporting of performance information. All districts should keep upper management informed with some form of performance reporting and analysis of operations.

The Franklin County School District could improve operations and implement this best practice by using performance measures to evaluate and manage the food service program. As discussed in Best Practice 7, the program has not developed a measurement system that allows the food service director to routinely monitor and evaluate performance. The lack of such a system limits management's ability to timely identify problem areas or make informed management decisions during the year. The program should also use the performance measurement system to provide district management and the board with a summary of program accomplishments, shortfalls, recommendations, and issues where assistance is needed. Action Plan 10-6 outlines how the district can use this best practice to improve food service operations.

Best Practice 10: Using

The district and program comply with federal, state, and district food service policies.

To operate safely and efficiently, school districts must comply with applicable federal, state, and district policies. Therefore, the district should have a systematic process for identifying these policies,

performing the activities necessary for compliance, conducting periodic internal inspections to test for compliance, and implementing corrective action when areas of non-compliance are found. Of particular interest are policies pertaining to the pricing of a la carte items and the availability of certain beverages. A la carte items should be priced to promote the purchase of complete meals designed to fulfill nutritional needs of students. Certain beverages, such as carbonated soda, should not be available for one hour before or after meal serving periods, except in high schools when the board approves such sales.

The Franklin County School District passed the reviews and inspections for School Meals Initiative (nutrition), Coordinated Review Effort (National School Lunch Program), and United States Department of Agriculture commodities (donated food). The commodities review suggested changes in inventory and warehousing practices, as discussed in Best Practice 6. As directed, district policies encourage the purchase of more balanced and nutritious meals by pricing a la carte items higher than the complete meal and also comply with beverage and vending machine requirements.

Best Practice 11: Not Using

The district does not conduct activities to ensure that customer needs are met and improve food service and quality where needed.

Like most businesses, to be successful, school district food service programs must be responsive to customers, including students, teachers, and other employees. Therefore, food service programs should actively solicit feedback and use it to identify needed improvements, eliminate barriers to student meal participation, and gauge reactions to changes in program operations, promotional campaigns, and service levels. The district can obtain this information through individual cafeteria evaluations, regular customer surveys, suggestion boxes, customer taste tests, and the district website.

The food service program in the Franklin County School District facilitates participation by students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches by using a computerized program for meal purchasing that does not identify the student's payment status. The program also makes small annual increases in menu prices, which is appropriate for keeping up with increasing food costs. Franklin County's close community atmosphere and small school enrollment lends itself to open and informal customer communication. However, to fully implement this best practice the district should also make regular, more formal efforts at obtaining customer feedback. Such efforts could include soliciting feedback from groups such as each school's SAC (school advisory committee), PTO, and student government. Based on comments received at an OPPAGA conducted public forum, some students, parents, and teachers are dissatisfied with menu items. Suggestions from these customers should be incorporated into menu planning. Districtwide, 77% of all eligible students participate in the free or reduced price lunch program and 66% of all students buy school meals. If the district increased participation, it would help the food service program become self-sufficient and not rely on or require general fund supplements. One way to increase participation would be to expand district efforts and further increase a la carte sales, which the district has begun. Action Plan 10-8 outlines steps to assist the district in improving its operations and using this best practice.

Action Plan 10-8

We recommend that the program do more to ensure that customer needs are met.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Twice a year the food service director solicits feedback on food service, menus, and food quality from each SAC, PTO, and student government.
	Step 2.	The food service director meets with cafeteria managers to plan how to use the feedback to improve menus and kitchen operations. The food service director trains cafeteria managers to track performance using the measures.
	Step 3.	The director and cafeteria managers track participation and revenues as well as feedback to determine if the changes the program is making are increasing participation and sales.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

11 Cost Control Systems

Summary

The Franklin County School District is using 18 of the 22 Cost Control Systems Best Practices. [1] The district regularly examines financial services' structure and staffing; has adequate financial information systems; appropriately examines and controls expenditure processes; has adequate internal controls and promptly responds to internal control weaknesses; receives an annual internal audit and ensures that audits of internal funds are performed timely. It also reviews cash management activities, banking relationships, and investment performance; has effective cash, debt, and risk management policies and procedures; ensures that capital outlay purchases and debt financings meet strategic plan objectives; monitors compliance with risk management laws; prepares written cost benefit analyses for insurance coverage; takes maximum advantage of competitive bidding, volume discounts, and special pricing arrangements; and has policies and procedures to effectively manage inventories. To meet the remaining best practice standards and improve its cost control systems, the district should perform a risk assessment of its operations; establish budget planning processes that tie the district's strategic plan objectives to budget development; establish a comprehensive procedures manual that addresses all finance-related activities; and establish written procedures that promote ethical financial management practices and provide for confidential reporting of suspected improprieties.

Auditor General's Scope, Objectives, and Methodology for Cost Controls

Pursuant to s. 1008.35, *Florida Statutes,* the Auditor General assists the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) in examining district operations to determine whether they meet best financial management practices. The Auditor General provides this assistance by performing the review of the cost control systems area (one of ten areas) as defined in s. 1008.35(2)(j), *Florida Statutes*. We conducted the best practices review of the Franklin County School District's cost control systems in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards as they apply to performance audits. We reviewed cost control systems in the areas of financial management, internal controls, external and internal auditing, cash management, capital asset management, debt management, risk management, purchasing, and inventory management. We reviewed the district's operations relating to cost control systems primarily for the 2001-02 fiscal year and gathered information by using the following methods:

- Reviewed and tested compliance with state laws and rules applicable to cost control systems.

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[1] The district does not use warehousing services to maintain its inventories; therefore, Best Practice 22, relating to warehousing is not applicable.

- Examined and tested compliance with district policies and procedures applicable to cost control systems.

- Reviewed district prepared preliminary survey documents regarding best practice standards and indicators applicable to cost control systems.

- Examined operational reports and records as they relate to cost control systems.

- Interviewed district officials and employees.

- Reviewed other financial and compliance related audits and monitoring reviews of the district.

Background

The Franklin County School District's cost control activities are primarily managed by the finance function. Operational units of the finance function include general accounting, accounts payable, food service accounting, etc. The finance function consists of one administrative/professional staff, one para-professional staff, and three clerical staff. The finance function's budget for the 2001-02 fiscal year was $248,203.

Finance and accounting functions are centralized. The current Director of Business Services (DBS) has been with the district for three years and is a licensed Certified Public Accountant with five years of experience with the Auditor General's Office. Assisting the DBS in the finance and accounting functions are a senior accountant, who currently has over 16 years of finance experience, and three fiscal specialists. Exhibit 11-1 illustrates the current Finance Department's organizational structure.

Exhibit 11-1
Organizational Structure of the Finance Department

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                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │   Director of     │
                    │ Business Services │
                    └──────────────────┘
        ┌──────────────────┐        │
        │     Senior        │────────┤
        │   Accountant      │        │
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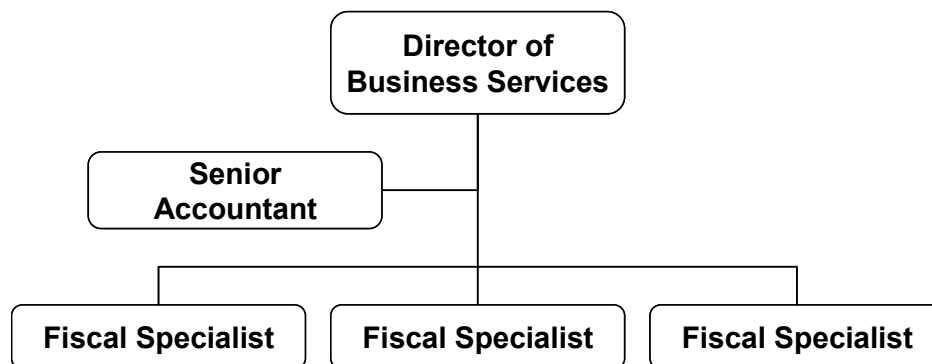
Source: Franklin County School District.

The district uses governmental accounting to report its financial position and results of operations. Governmental accounting segregates a governmental entity's operations and activities into funds based on the nature and restrictions placed on the revenue sources of each fund. The district's governmental funds include the general fund, special revenue funds, debt service funds, and capital projects funds. The district also reports fiduciary funds (agency funds). Substantially all of the district's resources are accounted for in the governmental funds. Exhibit 11-2 shows that the district reported revenues of approximately $12.2 million in its governmental funds during the 2001-02 fiscal year.

Exhibit 11-2
Governmental Funds Revenues—2001-02 Fiscal Year

General Fund	Special Revenue Funds	Debt Service Funds	Capital Projects Funds	Total
$8,227,027	$2,202,747	$306,826	$1,439,759	$12,176,359

Source: Audited Financial Statements.

Certain governmental funds account for non-operating activities of the district. For example, debt service and capital projects funds are used to account for resources restricted specifically for the payment of debt and for the construction, renovation, remodeling, and maintenance of district facilities. These resources are not used to finance ongoing operating activities of the district.

The general fund accounts for most of the operating resources and expenditures of the district and provides most of the operating resources for K-12 education programs. Exhibit 11-3 shows federal, state, and local sources reported in the general fund for the 2001-02 fiscal year.

Exhibit 11-3
General Fund Revenues—2001-02 Fiscal Year

Federal	State	Local	Total
$333,779	$1,685,156	$6,208,092	$8,227,027

Source: Audited Financial Statements.

Local revenues are primarily from ad valorem (property) taxes which provided 70 percent of the district's general fund resources during the 2001-02 fiscal year.

State revenues represented 20 percent of the district's general fund resources. Two sources administered by the Florida Department of Education comprise the majority of the state revenue accounted for in the district's general fund. First is the Florida Education Finance Program funding which is used for current operations. Second is resources provided for categorical education programs which are earmarked for certain programs such as supplemental academic instruction, transportation, and preschool projects.

As is characteristic of governmental accounting, the district presents expenditures by character or functional purpose. Within the governmental funds, functional expenditures are segregated into current and non-current capital outlay and debt service categories. General fund current expenditures comprise the largest portion, representing approximately 75 percent of the total 2001-02 fiscal year governmental funds expenditures. Current expenditures are broken down into three major functional classifications: instruction, instructional support services, and general support services. Exhibit 11-4 shows general fund current expenditures on a functional basis.

Exhibit 11-4
General Fund Functional Expenditures—2001-02 Fiscal Year

Instruction	Instructional Support Services	General Support Services	Total
$5,133,396	$653,634	$2,885,686	$8,672,716

Source: Audited Financial Statements.

Although general fund expenditures are higher than its revenues for the 2001-02 fiscal year, the general fund received a transfer in (other financing source) from the capital projects fund to pay for budgeted maintenance activities. This transfer resulted in revenues and other financing sources exceeding expenditures and other financing uses.

Instruction and instructional support expenditures represented approximately 67 percent of total general fund expenditures for the 2001-02 fiscal year. Expenditures for instruction include activities directly related to teaching students, including the interaction between teachers and students. Instruction expenditures include those for basic K-12 programs, exceptional student instruction, vocational technical instruction, adult general instruction, and other instruction, such as pre-kindergarten and workforce development. Instructional support services include those activities related to administrative, technical, and logistical support for the instruction program. It includes such activities as attendance, guidance, health, and psychological services. General support services expenditures represented approximately 33 percent of total general fund expenditures for the 2001-02 fiscal year. General support services include expenditures related to the functional categories of board activities, general administration (superintendent's office), school administration (principal's office), fiscal services (financial accounting, payroll, etc.), central services (information technology, staff services, inventories, etc.), pupil transportation services (school buses), operation of plant (utilities, insurance, etc.), and maintenance of plant (grounds keeping, repairs, preventative maintenance, etc.).

Exhibit 11-5 shows the district's general fund expenditures by natural classification (object) for the 2001-02 fiscal year. This schedule shows the expenditures in Exhibit 11-4 by type of expenditure in broad categories.

Exhibit 11-5
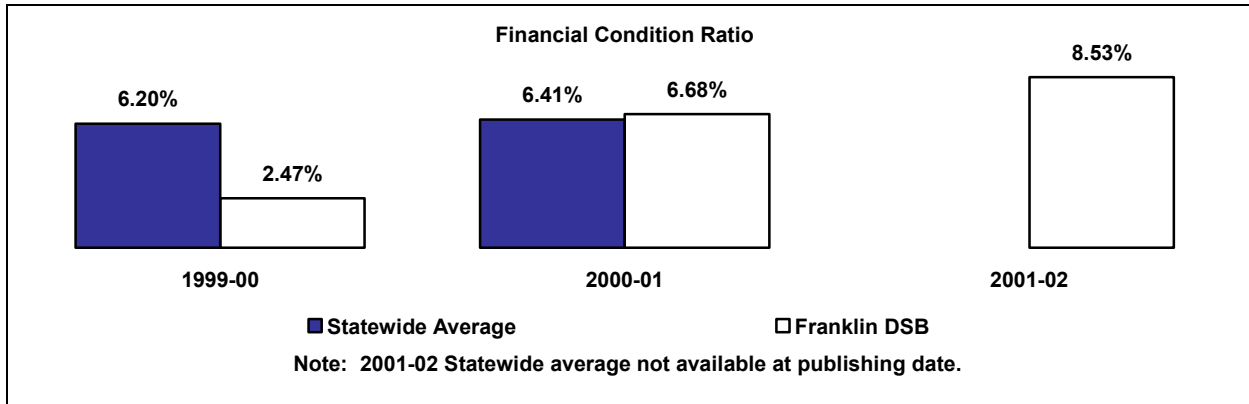**General Fund Object Expenditures—2001-02 Fiscal Year**

Salaries	Employee Benefits	Purchased Services	Energy Services	Materials and Supplies	Capital Outlay	Other Expenses	Total
$5,216,413	$1,622,359	$827,655	$284,922	$355,149	$21,460	$344,758	$8,672,716

Source: Audited Financial Statements.

As primarily a service organization, the school district's major expenditure objects are salaries and employee benefits which comprised 78.85 percent of total expenditures. Purchased services, energy services, materials and supplies, capital outlay, and other expenses were consistent with that of previous years.

We analyzed the fund balance in the general fund to determine if the district's efforts to control costs have had a beneficial impact on its financial position. The most common measure of financial position is the ratio of fund balance to operating activity. The fund balance of most school districts includes reserved and unreserved portions. Fund balances are often reserved for legal and other commitments of the entity. Common examples of reserves in Florida school districts include amounts reserved for outstanding purchase orders and contracts (encumbrances) and amounts reserved for restricted purposes (categorical programs). As a result, only the unreserved portion of the fund balance is actually available to offset unexpected needs and this portion is often referred to as the "rainy day" fund. For the purposes of our analysis, we used a common financial condition ratio that compares the general fund unreserved fund balance with operating revenues. Exhibit 11-6 compares the financial condition ratio for the district with statewide averages for the three-year period ending June 30, 2002.

Exhibit 11-6
The District's General Fund Financial Condition Ratio is Higher than the Statewide Average

Financial Condition Ratio

6.20% 2.47% 1999-00
6.41% 6.68% 2000-01
8.53% 2001-02

■ Statewide Average   □ Franklin DSB
Note: 2001-02 Statewide average not available at publishing date.

Source: Audited Financial Statements.

As can be seen in Exhibit 11-6, the district's ratio of unreserved fund balance to revenues over the past three years has increased.

Conclusions and Recommendations ———

Summary of Conclusions for Cost Control Systems Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
Financial Management	1. The district periodically analyzes the structure and staffing of its financial services organization.	Yes	11-8
	2. Management has developed and distributed written procedures for critical accounting processes and promotes ethical financial management.	No	11-8
	3. The district has adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information.	Yes	11-10
	4. District financial staff analyzes significant expenditure processes to ensure that they are appropriately controlled.	Yes	11-11
Internal Controls	5. The district has established adequate internal controls.	Yes	11-11
	6. Management proactively responds to identified internal control weaknesses and takes immediate steps to correct the weaknesses.	Yes	11-11
	7. The district produces an annual budget that is tied to the strategic plan and provides useful and understandable information to users.	No	11-12
	8. Management analyzes strategic plans for measurable objectives and results.	Yes	11-13
External and Internal Auditing	9. The district ensures that it receives an annual external audit and uses the audit to improve its operations.	Yes	11-13
	10. The district has an effective internal audit function and uses the audits to improve its operations.	No	11-13
	11. The district ensures that audits of internal funds and its discretely presented component units (foundations and charter schools) are performed timely.	Yes	11-14
Cash Management	12. The district periodically reviews cash management activities, banking relationships, investment performance, and considers alternatives.	Yes	11-15
Capital Asset Management	13. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of capital assets.	Yes	11-16
	14. The district ensures that significant capital outlay purchases meet strategic plan objectives.	Yes	11-16
Debt Management	15. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective debt management.	Yes	11-17
	16. The district ensures that significant debt financings meet strategic plan objectives.	Yes	11-17
Risk Management	17. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective risk management.	Yes	11-17
	18. District staff periodically monitors the district's compliance with various laws and regulations related to risk management.	Yes	11-18

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using Best Practice?	Page No.
	19. The district prepares appropriate written cost and benefit analyses for insurance coverage.	Yes	11-18
Purchasing	20. The district has established written policies and procedures to take maximum advantage of competitive bidding, volume discounts, and special pricing arrangements.	Yes	11-19
Inventory Management	21. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of inventories.	Yes	11-19
	22. The district periodically evaluates the warehousing function to determine its cost-effectiveness.	N/A	11-20

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 1: Using

The district periodically analyzes the structure and staffing of its financial services organization, but it could benefit from evaluating alternative methods of financial service delivery.

In recent years, a variety of external factors have had direct and indirect effects on school district finances. Some school districts have experienced significant changes in student population size – mostly getting larger, but some getting smaller. Similarly, changes in existing laws and new laws have changed financial documentation and reporting requirements which have impacted workload requirements. Because of this, districts should regularly evaluate the financial services function's organizational structure and staffing to ensure that needed financial services are being provided effectively and efficiently. Similarly, it is important that financial services staff receive timely and relevant training to ensure that the services they provide comply with current laws and reporting requirements.

The Franklin County School District's organizational chart, which includes the financial services organization, is current and position descriptions exist for all positions included in the organizational chart. Our review of position descriptions showed that educational and experience requirements for established positions were commensurate with the responsibilities for each position. Because of budgetary constraints, the director of business services and other management staff frequently evaluate the services provided by the financial services organization with a view towards minimizing the number of positions to effectively perform the responsibilities of this function. The director of business services has identified critical financial and accounting processes and has ensured that appropriate staff is cross-trained to perform these processes when the employees who are primarily responsible for performing those processes are absent. Financial services organization staff receive training in the use of the accounting system when hired and also receive annual training updates. Also, the director of business services attends state finance officers' association meetings and receives training relative to emerging issues in his responsibility areas at those meetings.

While the district has established a staff structure for its financial services, it has not documented potential cost savings opportunities, if any, from outsourcing financial services. The district believes that the remoteness (or distance) of Apalachicola from locations where vendors provide such services would result in services not being cost-effective. However, district staff has not performed cost benefit analyses to determine if these assumptions are correct. Given the small size of finance staff, the district may want to consider identifying job tasks that are detailed and time-consuming such as payroll processing, physical counts of tangible personal property, or other financial services, and determine the estimated cost of contracting these services. Once the district has obtained these estimates, the district will be in a position to compare estimated contracted costs with actual costs and determine the cost benefits, if any.

> **We recommend that the district evaluate outsourcing alternatives for selected finance-related activities.**

Best Practice 2: Not Using

The district does not have a comprehensive procedures manual that addresses all finance-related activities, does not have an ethics policy that covers all employees, and it has not developed a process that encourages the reporting of improprieties without fear of reprisal.

It is critical that districts be able to continue day-to-day financial operations. Even small school districts must have numerous control processes and safeguards to ensure that district resources are adequately protected and used. These control processes should be documented to ensure consistency in their application. Written procedures frequently represent the best way to document these processes.

Every school district has board policies that generally include policies related to accounting and financial services. However, these policies are not considered procedures. Procedures show district employees how to carry out board policies. Well written and organized procedures:

- Implement and assure compliance with board policies as well as documenting the intent of those policies;

- Protect the institutional knowledge of an organization so that as experienced employees leave, new employees will have the benefit of the others' years of experience;

- Provide the basis for training new employees; and

- Offer a tool for evaluating employee performance based on their adherence to procedures.

The development and maintenance of procedures manuals can be cumbersome and time-consuming tasks. For this reason, districts should, at a minimum, identify critical accounting and finance processes and ensure that written procedures are maintained for these processes. For example, if a key accounting employee that has responsibility for generating a payroll leaves the district, are there sufficient written procedures that someone else can follow to generate a payroll? Other critical processes can include bank reconciliations, processing of accounts payable checks, budget amendment processes, and so on.

Similarly, even small school districts benefit from having strong ethics standards (policies) for district accounting and financial staff and from processes that encourage reporting of suspected improprieties. When employees understand the importance of ethical conduct of their responsibilities and the ramifications of unethical conduct, the overall control environment is enhanced. Also, processes that encourage reporting of suspected improprieties without fear of reprisal further strengthen the control environment.

There are three reasons why the Franklin County School District is not meeting this best practice. First, although the district has established written procedures manuals for some critical financial and accounting processes such as personnel, purchasing, and property and equipment, it has not adopted such manuals for other procedures such as payroll, accounts payable, and budgeting. Second, although the district places a strong emphasis on professional and ethical conduct of its business, it does not have an ethics policy that applies to all personnel. And third, the district has not developed procedures for the confidential reporting of suspected improprieties.

Action Plan 11-1

We recommend that the district continue its efforts to develop a comprehensive procedures manual that addresses all critical financial and accounting processes.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Continue to develop procedures manuals for all critical financial and accounting processes.
	Step 2:	Consolidate these manuals into a single, board-approved comprehensive procedures manual for finance and accounting processes.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	June 2004	

Action Plan 11-2

We recommend that the district develop an ethics policy that applies to all personnel and that includes remedies for unethical behavior as a means to strengthen the overall control environment.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Develop an ethics policy and present the policy to the board for approval.
	Step 2:	Subsequent to board approval and adoption of the policy, all existing and all new employees should be required to sign a statement indicating that they are aware of the ethics policy and its ramifications.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	June 2004	

Action Plan 11-3

We recommend that the district develop a process for the reporting of suspected improprieties. This process should encourage individuals to report such improprieties without fear of reprisal.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Develop a policy for the confidential reporting of suspected improprieties and present the policy to the board for approval.
	Step 2:	Subsequent to board approval and adoption of the policy, distribute the newly developed procedures to all employees and post at all work sites.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	June 2004	

Best Practice 3: Using

The district has adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information, but it could enhance its payroll processing effectiveness by achieving 100 percent direct deposit of payroll checks.

Florida school districts are subject to significant federal, state, and local (board) oversight of their financial activities. Also, given the limited financial resources provided school districts, it is important that they have adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information. Users of this information must be able to understand the information provided so that they can make informed spending and resource use decisions.

The Franklin County School District uses an integrated accounting system that has various subsystem modules (such as accounts payable, fixed asset accounting, and payroll accounting) that interface seamlessly with the general ledger module. This system permits users to make entries at the subsidiary level and these entries automatically update the general ledger. As a result, the degree of manual reconciliations required between subsidiary ledgers and the general ledger are minimized. The reporting features of the system allow users to easily create user-defined reports at any time. Also, system-generated subsidiary detail reports (such as accounts payable details) agree with general ledger balances. The district's finance staff works with users, including the board, to identify financial reporting needs. As these needs become known, finance staff develop financial report products to meet user needs. Our interview with the superintendent and other administrative staff showed that these users are satisfied with monthly financial report products they receive and they believe that they receive these reports in a timely fashion. The district's financial services staff are satisfied with the system's reporting package and believe that its ease of use permits them to have the required Superintendent's Annual Financial Report completed well before the required report date.

Currently, approximately 50 percent of district employees permit the district to direct deposit their payroll checks. The district could achieve greater payroll processing and accounting efficiencies if it achieved 100 percent participation. District staff must account for payroll checks and track them from the time the district issues them through the time the checks are presented for payment at the bank. Also, district personnel must perform bank reconciliations and file and safeguard payroll checks (both blank checks and paid checks). The district must provide adequate and safe storage for the checks and follow appropriate public record retention periods and requirements for eventual destruction of the payroll checks. Many of these time-consuming processes could be eliminated or greatly reduced when using direct deposit. Although the district may not derive cost savings from using direct deposit, the increased control over payroll processing would add greater efficiencies to the overall payroll transaction process. The efficiencies gained will allow the district to reallocate resources to other district priorities.

> **We recommend the district try to achieve 100 percent participation in the direct deposit of payroll checks.**

Best Practice 4: Using

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

Other than salaries, the expenses of many school districts are frequently concentrated among a few vendors who are paid for goods and/or services on a repetitive basis. Examples include employee benefits, utility payments, payments for frequently used supplies, progress payments on contracts, and periodic payments for the use of assets, such as lease payments. It is important that employees approving such bills for payment are knowledgeable about relevant contract, payment, and other provisions to ensure that the bills are accurate and to ensure that only appropriate amounts are paid. In the case of utility payments, appropriate stewardship includes analyses of the payments to identify and determine the reasons for unusual fluctuations in consumption.

The Franklin County School District assigns payment monitoring for specific high cost and complex contracts to department heads and the maintenance supervisor. These individuals review all bills and invoices related to these contracts and must approve them prior to payment. They are responsible for understanding contract terms and they discuss any questionable issues related to payment and request for proposal (RFP) terms with the director of business services and the district's legal counsel. The district will pay bills and invoices containing these questionable issues only after the issues have been resolved to the district's satisfaction.

Specific expenditure categories, such as utility payments and travel expenditures, are assigned to specific accounts payable employees who are knowledgeable about payment patterns and legal requirements for these payments. We noted that utility payments were monitored by location to identify unusual fluctuations. District employees investigated any unusual changes that were noticed.

INTERNAL CONTROLS

Best Practice 5: Using

The district has established adequate internal controls.

School districts must practice sound financial management in order to maximize the effectiveness of limited resources and to plan for future needs. Effective financial management ensures that internal controls are in place and operating as intended.

In addition to its annual external audit, the Franklin County School District is also subject to monitoring reviews by federal and state grant monitors. Our review of these reports issued for the past three fiscal years disclosed that, with the exception of minor internal control weaknesses, the auditors and monitors found that internal controls were generally adequate. Also, our review of critical revenue and expenditure classes, such as collection cycles, payroll processing, and disbursement processing showed adequate internal control processes and that the processes appeared to be operating as intended.

Best Practice 6: Using

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

As noted previously, school districts must practice sound financial management in order to maximize the effectiveness of limited resources and to plan for future needs. Effective financial management ensures that internal controls are in place and operating as intended. School districts demonstrate effective financial management when they proactively respond to internal control weaknesses identified in external audits and other monitoring reviews.

We reviewed the Franklin County School District's efforts to resolve internal control weaknesses identified in the external financial audits and other monitoring reviews made over the past three years. Our review disclosed that district staff responded promptly to the findings in the reports and corrected them in a timely manner.

Best Practice 7: Not Using

Although the district produces an annual budget that provides useful and understandable information to users, it does not tie budget activities to strategic plan objectives.

Districts that make the best use of their resources and achieve high student performance rates generally practice some form of strategic planning that looks at all district operations, links support functions to the achievement of institutional goals, and has a direct link to the annual planning and budgeting process. Effective strategic planning includes:

- Identifying priorities through surveys of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders;

- School board input on goals and major priorities;

- Developing objectives for strategic plan goals that include measurable outcomes and achievement dates as appropriate;

- Assignment of responsibility for achieving objectives;

- Annual performance monitoring and adjusting of objectives as necessary to ensure achievement of strategic plan goals; and

- Budgets that require expenditures to be tied directly to the strategic plan priorities of the district.

The Franklin County School District has taken strategic plan goals and developed objectives that, if achieved, will meet strategic plan goals. The district has assigned responsibility for each objective to a specific department or cost center. The district has also developed measures to determine achievement of objectives. However, the budget for each responsible department and/or cost center needs to identify the appropriations established for meeting strategic plan objectives. Users need to be able to review measures and budgets to determine the district's effectiveness in meeting strategic plan objectives. The district could compare costs of various departments and cost centers that are meeting strategic plan objectives in an effort to identify additional efficiencies. For example, different schools that have met a specified strategic plan objective may have incurred different costs to meet the same objective. The district can review the costs of the different schools to identify the differences and evaluate whether additional cost efficiencies can be achieved.

Action Plan 11-4

We recommend that the district establish links between their strategic plan objectives and the budget planning process.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	List all strategic plan objectives and rank them in order of importance and cost.
	Step 2:	Ensure that during each budget planning meeting, the strategic plan objectives list is considered.
	Step 3:	After the proposed budget is completed, ensure that all strategic plan objectives are 1) noted as being included in the budget, or 2) reassigned to another budget year within the strategic plan.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	August 2004	

Best Practice 8: Using

District management analyzes strategic plans for measurable objectives and results.

As mentioned previously, districts that make the best use of their resources and achieve high student performance rates generally practice some form of strategic planning that looks at all district operations, links support functions to the achievement of institutional goals, and has a direct link to the annual planning and budgeting process.

Our review of the measures established by Franklin County School District for strategic plan objectives showed that, in general, measures were objective and clearly related to achievement of the related goal. The district generally used the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test and other universal objectives to measure educational achievement. Similarly, the district had established measures for financial goals, such as establishing a required minimum level of unreserved fund balance which was considered when preparing the budget.

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL AUDITING

Best Practice 9: Using

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

Section 11.45(2)(d), *Florida Statutes*, requires the Auditor General to annually conduct financial audits of the Franklin County School District. Section 11.45(1)(c), *Florida Statutes*, defines a financial audit as an examination conducted in order to express an opinion on the fairness of the financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principals and an examination to determine whether operations are properly conducted in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements. Financial audits must be conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and government auditing standards as adopted by the Board of Accountancy.

Franklin County School District has received annual financial audits for each of the last three years. These audits were performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and government auditing standards. The audit reports show that the district makes reasonable efforts to resolve findings noted in annual audits.

Best Practice 10: Not Using

The district does not have an internal audit function and it has not conducted annual risk assessments of its operations.

Section 1001.42(10)(l), *Florida Statutes*, permits school boards to employ internal auditors to perform ongoing verification of the financial records of the school district. This law requires the internal auditor to report directly to the board or its designee. Internal auditing is a managerial control that can be used to measure and evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and cost/benefit of operations, programs, other controls, and systems. The objective of internal auditing is to help management effectively discharge its responsibilities by providing analyses and recommendations on the activities reviewed. The internal audit function typically performs the annual risk assessments in private sector businesses.

The Franklin County School District does not have an internal audit function as anticipated by this best practice and the district does not conduct annual risk assessments of its financial operations and activities. As with many school districts, the district believes that it cannot afford the cost of establishing an internal audit function.

The district is responsible for having internal controls in place to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of the following objectives: (1) safeguarding of assets, (2) the reliability of financial reporting, (3) the effectiveness and efficiency of operations, and (4) compliance with applicable laws and regulations. In order to meet these objectives, the district should identify and analyze relevant risks using a risk assessment as a basis for determining how identified risks should be managed.

Some recurring risks are already addressed by various departments within the district. For example, the district monitors student full-time equivalent counts to ensure that significant errors in reporting are detected and corrected before the counts are reported to the state. The district has established procedures for ensuring that inventories and tangible personal property are counted annually and correctly to ensure stewardship for these assets. The district ensures that it obtains the required audits of the school internal accounts on an annual basis.

These activities, along with performing the annual risk assessment, are those that would typically be performed by an internal audit function. An established internal audit function would also be available to address other financial risks identified in an annual risk assessment that district management may not be effectively addressing. Regardless of whether or not the district establishes an internal audit function, it should conduct financial risk assessments of its operations and activities annually.

Given existing budget constraints, the district should examine staff workload and priorities, and if at all possible, conduct this risk assessment in-house. However, if the district determines that it cannot effectively conduct its own risk assessment it may choose to contract with a certified public accountant to conduct the first year risk assessment and provide a methodology so that district staff can conduct risk assessments in subsequent years. We estimate that the cost of contracting for the risk assessment would be a one-time cost of approximately $20,000. This amount is based on an estimate of 225 hours at an average rate of $90 per hour ($20,250 rounded to $20,000). As management addresses identified risks, the district will likely experience cost savings and avoidances that will offset the cost of the risk assessments. However, the cost impact of these potential savings and avoidances cannot be determined at this time.

Action Plan 11-5

We recommend that the district conduct annual risk assessments.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Conduct annual risk assessments using district staff.
	Step 2:	If district staff is unable to conduct assessments, develop and distribute a request for proposal for risk assessment services; review proposals for risk assessment services and select a firm that will perform the risk assessment for the district.
	Step 3:	Review the results of the risk assessment, prioritize high-risk activities, and assign responsibility for addressing and resolving prioritized risks.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	August 2004	

Best Practice 11: Using

The district ensures that audits of internal funds and its discretely presented component unit (charter school) are performed timely.

The financial transactions of individual school activities and organizations are accounted for in the school internal accounts (funds). The law requires that school districts provide for the annual audits of the school internal funds. Also, school districts may have related organizations such as foundations and charter schools. Due to the nature of these related organizations, their financial activity generally should be included with that of the school district. However, the law requires that these related organizations provide for their annual financial audits. School districts frequently provide little if any oversight of these related organizations other than to monitor their activity. School districts frequently monitor these related organizations' activity by reviewing the annual audit reports. Accordingly, it is important that the school districts receive timely audits of these related organizations and perform appropriate review of the reports.

The Franklin County School District has one charter school (the Apalachicola Bay Charter School, Inc.). Since law requirements provide that this organization be audited by other auditors, the district has negotiated a contract to require that this organization provide annual audited financial statements. Although the contract sets no specific deadline for the audit report, the contract requires the charter school to file its annual report with the district by August 4, or within 35 days after the end of each fiscal year. Each fiscal year, an audit of the charter school and its financial statements is conducted, as required by law, and the district receives and maintains copies of these audit reports.

Similarly, law provisions require that the district provide for the audit of the district's school internal accounts. The district has a contract in place to have the internal accounts audited after the June 30 fiscal year-end date of each fiscal year. Each fiscal year, an audit of the school internal accounts is conducted, as required by law, and the district receives and maintains copies of these audit reports.

CASH MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 12: Using

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

Cash and investment management involves the systematic coordination of cash-flow forecasting, cash-flow management, investment of surplus cash, and sound banking and investment relationships. Even small school districts have annual cash flows of millions of dollars and effective cash management and investing of these resources can generate beneficial results and resources which can be used to meet district needs. Similarly, beneficial banking services arrangements should promote the investment of idle cash and limit any banking service fees.

The Franklin County School District uses various bank accounts for transactions by fund. Most of the district's revenues are wired into its investment accounts and, subsequently, are transferred into the fund bank accounts. The district utilizes two of three local banks for banking services. In addition, the district reviews the features offered by the two banks to ensure that the district receives competitive banking services while minimizing the number of times the district has to change banks.

The district's policy manual includes policies for cash and investment activities. The district receives the majority of its cash in the form of wire transfers from the state which are sent directly to the district's investment account, or checks from the local tax collector, which is promptly deposited in the district's local bank account. Sufficient personnel are employed in the Finance Department to provide adequate segregation of duties for the cash receipts and disbursement functions. The senior accountant and the school food service secretary, both with no cash handling responsibilities, perform the reconciliation processes for the district's bank accounts.

District accounting staff forecasts cash needs based on bank balances and payroll and accounts payable runs. Based on these forecasts, excess funds are sent to the State Board of Administration for investment. The district places all of its investments with the State Board of Administration's Local Government Surplus Funds Trust Fund, a Securities and Exchange Commission Rule 2a7-like external investment pool. This fund offers highly liquid investments with competitive rates and provides a simplistic conservative investment approach by allowing investments to remain with the fund and permitting withdrawals to be requested based on periodic cash needs with no type of withdrawal penalties.

CAPITAL ASSET MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 13: Using

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

Capital assets include all properties, vehicles, equipment, and building contents. School districts should keep and maintain accurate accounting records because:

- Accurate capital asset records provide the basis for adequate insurance coverage;

- Annual physical inventories of capital assets allow the district to survey the physical condition of its assets and assess the need for repair, maintenance, or replacement;

- Reliable information about currently owned capital assets provides assistance when determining future needs and provides a basis for budgeting capital asset needs; and

- Accurate capital asset records provide users with documentation of how taxes have been used to carry out the operations of the district.

The Franklin County School District has developed detailed procedures for accounting for capital assets. These procedures are supplemented by state law and *Rules of the Auditor General*, which govern school district responsibilities relative to fixed assets. The district's Finance Department is responsible for purchasing and accounting for tangible personal property. School principals and department managers have custodial responsibilities for property charged to and under their area of responsibility.

To ensure that the property is being properly accounted for in the property records, an annual inventory is usually performed during the last four months of each fiscal year by district staff other than the custodian. District accounting staff reconcile the results of the inventory with the district's fixed asset subsidiary ledgers. The director of business services reviews the results of these reconciliations and ensures that unusual discrepancies, if any, are satisfactorily resolved.

Best Practice 14: Using

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

As mentioned previously, districts that make the best use of their resources and consistently have high student performance generally practice some form of strategic planning that addresses district operations, including the capital acquisition program, and links operational functions to the achievement of institutional goals.

The Franklin County School District has prepared capital projects budgets which are consistent with strategic plan objectives. The district's five-year facilities work program plan that addresses long-range goals concerning significant capital outlay purchases is used when developing annual capital projects budgets. The district has also developed approval processes that ensure only appropriate expenditures are charged to capital project budgets.

DEBT MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 15: Using

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

Many school districts must identify and procure other sources of financing to meet current facility needs and, in some instances, operating needs. There are specific provisions of state law that govern school districts' ability to incur debt. Also, most debt instruments are highly complex financial transactions that require a high level of expertise to ensure compliance with federal (primarily arbitrage), state, and district requirements as well as ensure that the transactions are appropriately accounted for and monitored. Many school districts, depending on the extent of their debt program, must have effective procedures to ensure that debt service requirements are appropriately followed.

The Franklin County School District does not frequently enter into long-term financing arrangements and currently has no bonded debt. As such, detailed procedures are not required. When needed, the district uses a contracted financial advisor, who is experienced in the issuance and sale of debt instruments, to assist in determining the best financing alternatives given the district's specific needs. The district also has adequate accounting procedures in place to ensure tracking of existing liabilities and timely payment of those liabilities.

Best Practice 16: Using

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

As mentioned previously, districts that make the best use of their resources and achieve high student performance rates generally practice some form of strategic planning that covers all district operations, including the use of debt management to meet capital acquisition program goals, and links them to the achievement of institutional goals.

The Franklin County School District's strategic plan objectives at the present time do not anticipate additional debt financing for capital asset acquisition. As capital project needs are identified, prioritized, and given a value, the district will evaluate revenue streams and fund balance resources as well as optional revenue streams such as the capital outlay millage levy and financing options. When evaluating financing options, the district will use a financial advisor. Based on the advice of the financial advisor, the board will be presented with the best financing alternative given the district's specific needs for approval.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 17: Using

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

Managing risks has become a critical component of school district operations. Rising costs of property, liability, and other insurance coverage has forced school districts to carefully evaluate the risks they are insuring and to identify ways to contain costs. Effective risk management involves:

▪ Evaluating insurance alternatives such as self-insurance and other current industry trends;

▪ Evaluating current insurance programs for deductible amounts, co-insurance levels, and types of coverage provided;

▪ Evaluating risks and implementing programs to minimize exposure to potential losses; and

- Monitoring district compliance with applicable laws and regulations. [2]

The Franklin County School District has established a policy for risk management which specifies the district's membership in a risk management consortium. The risk management consortium performs the duties set forth above. The district's risk manager, the Director of Business Services, oversees the process of providing the risk management consortium with all pertinent information and is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the district has acquired all insurance coverage required by law.

Best Practice 18: Using

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

School districts are exposed to various risks of loss related to torts; theft of, damage to, and destruction of assets; errors and omissions; injuries to employees; and natural disasters. Florida law requires school districts to provide effective protection against these risks. Florida law allows school districts to purchase insurance, to be self-insured, to enter into risk management programs, or to have any combination of the above in any area to the extent the district is either authorized or required by law to contract for insurance. Due to the significant risks that school districts are exposed to, it is important that they effectively monitor compliance with the various laws and regulations related to risk management.

To meet these law requirements, the Franklin County School District is a member of a consortium of school districts which was created to provide a combined self-insurance program and risk management services to participating members. This consortium is a public entity risk pool and provides a combined self-insurance program for property protection, general liability, automobile liability, workers' compensation, money and securities, employee fidelity and faithful performance, boiler and machinery, errors and omissions, and other coverage deemed necessary by members of the consortium. The insurance consortium is self-sustaining through member assessments (premiums) and purchases coverage through commercial companies for claims in excess of specified amounts.

Best Practice 19: Using

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

As mentioned previously, managing risks has become a critical component of school district operations. Rising costs of property, liability, and other insurance coverage has forced school districts to carefully evaluate the risks they are insuring and to identify ways to contain costs. Effective school districts regularly evaluate the costs of their risk management programs and compare their costs with their peers and continually evaluate new risk management products to determine the cost benefit.

The Franklin County School District's risk management function has established processes to determine current valuations of district assets to ensure that insurance policies cover recent changes in assets. Annually, with the assistance provided by the consortium, the insurance lines are reviewed to determine adequacy of services provided relative to the cost of the insurance. The risk manager uses analyses provided by the consortium to evaluate the reasonableness of costs paid by the district.

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[2] Risk management as it applies to this section relates to insurance coverage required by law other than employee group benefits, such as group health insurance, which are discussed in Chapter 6—Personnel Systems and Benefits.

PURCHASING

Best Practice 20: Using

The district has established written policies and procedures to take maximum advantage of competitive bidding, volume discounts, and special pricing arrangements; however, purchasing processes would be more efficient if the district raised its competitive bid threshold to the statutorily established maximum.

An effective purchasing system allows a school district to provide quality materials, supplies, and equipment in the right quantity in a timely, cost-effective manner. A good purchasing system has established purchasing policies implemented through effective and well developed procedures. Careful planning and cost-effective practices such as bulk-purchasing and price/bid solicitation provide the framework for the efficient procurement of goods and services. School districts must also ensure that goods and services are obtained to the specifications of the users; at the lowest possible costs; and in accordance with applicable state laws and regulations.

The Franklin County School District consolidates and bids recurring purchases when feasible. When practical, the district also uses various state purchasing contracts and piggybacks on the bids of other school districts. The district generally follows its purchasing policy, which provides that purchases of items or groups of items exceeding $10,000 shall be made on the basis of competitive sealed bids. The policy also requires that these bids are to be opened at a place and time designated in the presence of not less that two administrative personnel and shall be read, tabulated, and recommended to the board through the superintendent. Purchases of items or groups of items exceeding $2,000, but less than $10,000, may be authorized by the superintendent if approved by the board chairman.

Formal competitive bid processes are generally time and resource consuming. The district's current competitive bid threshold is $10,000, which is lower than the statutorily established maximum (currently $25,000). We recommend that the district consider raising the bid threshold to the statutorily established maximum. This change could enhance the district's purchasing processes and could possibly allow the district to achieve resource efficiencies that could be reallocated to other essential district needs**.**

> **We recommend that the district raise its competitive bid threshold from $10,000 to the statutorily established maximum (currently $25,000).**

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT

Best Practice 21: Using

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

Many school districts have chosen to centralize their warehousing function. In many instances, school district inventories include desirable items that are subject to misappropriation. Depending on the size of the warehousing function and the nature of the inventory items stored, it is essential that these school districts establish effective policies and procedures that ensure that the inventory assets are appropriately controlled, safeguarded, and accounted for.

The district has established a policy for inventory management of commodities. The district maintains an inventory only for the Food Service Department. This inventory is composed primarily of commodities. Due to the small amount of inventory, inventory balances are entered into the general ledger at the end of each fiscal year based on inventory counts.

Best Practice 22: N/A

The district does not have a centralized warehousing function.

School districts that have centralized warehousing functions can meet this best practice by evaluating the total cost of its warehousing operation and comparing this cost with alternative inventory procurement services. Recently, many organizations have been reassessing the need to maintain central warehousing facilities by assessing the potential economies of outsourcing warehouse operations to inventory supply companies. Some organizational studies have found that some inventory suppliers can provide services comparable to the central warehouse function at costs equal to or lower than the central warehouse function. The end result for these school districts has been to fully eliminate central warehouses and replace them with inventory supply delivery services for applicable and appropriate items.

The district does not use warehousing services to maintain its inventories, so this best practice is not applicable.

A Appendix A

Table A-1
School Capacity and Use

	Apalachicola High	Chapman Elementary	Brown Elementary	Carrabelle MS/HS
Number Students in Pre-K	0	20	20	23
Number Students in K	0	16	34	38
Number Students in 1st Grade	0	18	35	39
Number Students in 2nd Grade	0	18	35	39
Number Students in 3rd Grade	0	20	39	27
Number Students in 4th Grade	0	29	31	23
Number Students in 5th Grade	0	30	44	31
Number Students in 6th Grade	0	30	43	37
Number Students in 7th Grade	74	0	0	56
Number Students in 8th Grade	58	0	0	32
Number Students in 9th Grade	59	0	0	30
Number Students in 10th Grade	47	0	0	42
Number Students in 11th Grade	54	0	0	39
Number Students in 12th Grade	53	0	0	39
Total Student Enrollment (includes ESE)	**345**	**181**	**281**	**495**
Number of Classrooms in the school (not including ESE)	**28**	**24**	**15**	**29**
(FISH) Design Capacity	**698**	**584**	**347**	**679**
Percentage of School Capacity used	**49%**	**31%**	**81%**	**73%**

Source: November 2002 interview of Franklin County School District personnel.

Brown to Chapman

Brown to Chapman would require 27 total classrooms in Chapman to accommodate the students with 3 classrooms for Pre-K, 3 for K, 3 for 1st, 3 for 2nd, 4 for 3rd, 3 for 4th, 4 for 5th, 4 for 6th. Chapman has 24 classrooms.

Chapman to Apalachicola

Chapman to Apalachicola would require 31 classrooms in Apalachicola to accommodate the students with 2 classrooms for Pre-K, 1 for K, 1 for 1st, 1 for 2nd, 2 for 3rd, 2 for 4th, 2 for 5th, 2 for 6th, 4 for 7th, 3 for 8th, 3 for 9th, 2 for 10th, 3 for 11th, and 3 for 12th. Apalachicola has 28 classrooms.

These figures are based on the 2002 class size amendment requiring no more than 18 students in K through 3rd grade, 22 students in 4th through 8th grade, and 25 students in 9th through 12th grade. These calculations do not take into account special classrooms, which need to be analyzed and included in these estimates to determine overall capacity.

B

Appendix B

Educational Services—Basic Education and Disaggregate for all special student populations (ESE, ESOL, At-Risk, Title 1, Low SES, etc.) of sufficient numbers who expected to receive a regular diploma

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
School Grades	Suspension rates
FCAT Scores	Interim test scores (district choice of test)
Graduation rates	Retention rates
College placement test scores (SAT/ACT)	Absenteeism
Remediation rates (post graduation for students going to higher education)	

Educational Services—ESE1 (in addition to measures given above)

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
	Average time from referral to provision of services
	Percentage of referrals found in need of services
	Percentage of time ESE students spend in regular classes
	SEC characteristics of ESE students compared to regular students or state averages

Educational Services—ESOL1 (in addition to measures given above)

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
	Average time from referral to provision of services
	Average time in program

Educational Services—Vocational/Technical

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
Placement rates	Technical skill acquisition rates
Post-placement wages	Academic skill acquisition rate

Technology

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
Percentage of students with desired technology skills (ISTE standards)	Percentage of teachers using technology for instruction
	Percentage of teachers using technology for administration
	Percentage of teachers using technology for communication
	Percentage of teachers using technology to assess student performance
	Percentage of principals with desired technology skills (ISTE standards)
	User satisfaction with tech support (teachers/administrators/other staff)

Construction

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
Cost per square foot (new projects, renovations, remodeling)	Average number and dollar amount of change orders per contract
Cost per student station	Percentage of project cost due to change orders

Maintenance

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
Maintenance/operation cost per gross square foot	Customer satisfaction with maintenance services
	Customer satisfaction with custodial services
	Energy cost per gross square foot
	Cost of custodial operations per net square foot
	Number of custodians per net square foot
	Number of maintenance crafts persons per gross square foot
	Number of maintenance crafts persons per gross square foot

Note: Because Franklin County's schools are operating below capacity, maintenance performance measures based on square footage do not provide a true picture of district operations. We recommend that the district consider the performance measures in Action Plan 8-1, as they more accurately measure and reflect current district conditions.

Transportation

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
Cost per student (operational only)	Cost per mile
Percentage of buses arriving/departing on time	Average bus occupancy
	Vehicle breakdowns per 100,000 mile
	Accidents per million miles
	Driver absentee rate

Food Service

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
Gross margin (revenue less expenses)	Labor margin (percentage of total expenses comprising labor and benefits
Participation rates (regular and free and reduced lunch)	Materials margin (percentage of total expenses comprising food and materials
	Average meals served per labor hour

Safety and Security

School Board and Management Level	Program Level
Property damage due to accidents/incidents.	
Personal injury requiring physician care due to accidents/incidents.	
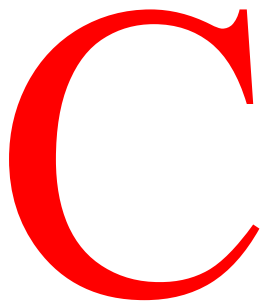
C Appendix C: Action Plans

Management Structures

Action Plan 2-1

We recommend that the district expand its strategic plan to include operational programs.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The board and superintendent review the recommendations in the Organization and Management Review report prepared by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents.
	Step 2.	If necessary, the district requests additional assistance from FADSS and PAEC to refine the district strategic plan.
	Step 3.	The superintendent and appropriate administrators develop a revised strategic plan draft, including academic measures for each school as well as the following elements for each operational program: goals, quantifiable and measurable objectives, strategies to achieve the goals, identification of the units responsible for implementing the strategies, and an implementation timeline for each operational program.
	Step 4.	The superintendent presents the draft to the board for comment/review.
	Step 5.	The superintendent incorporates board comments into a final strategic plan draft.
	Step 6.	The superintendent provides the final draft report to the board, who invite public input as part of the approval process.
	Step 7.	The superintendent reviews the plan annually, revises as appropriate, and presents to the board for approval.
Who is Responsible	The superintendent and school board.	
Time Frame	The revised plan should be completed by October 2003 and implemented by December 2003.	

Action Plan 2-2

The district should revise its strategic plan to clearly identify and prioritize goals and measurable objectives and identify the resources needed to accomplish them.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The board and superintendent review and revise as necessary the measurable objectives specified for each school and operational program, as developed in Action Plan 2-1. These objectives should be included in the 2003-04 strategic plan.
	Step 2.	The board and superintendent identify district goals and prioritize the strategic plan objectives in accordance with the goals.
	Step 3.	The district identifies the resources necessary to achieve each objective if it requires specific allocations beyond those designated for continuation of normal operation of the program or function.
	Step 4.	The board and superintendent identify the primary individual responsible for assessing whether the prioritized objectives were achieved within the allocated resources.
Who is Responsible	The board and superintendent.	
Time Frame	October 2003 for implementation in December 2003.	

Performance Accountability Systems

Action Plan 3-1

We recommend that the district expand its strategic plan to include specific objectives and measures that apply to non-instructional programs as well as educational programs. We also recommend that the district develop a program-level accountability system to examine whether programs are having the desired results. Finally, we recommend that the district develop a system to incorporate this information to improve district operations. [1]		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Identify a few high-level outcome and efficiency measures for inclusion into the district's strategic plan that reflect board priorities for educational and operational programs and services. In addition, for each major educational and operational program identify supporting measures that reflect the primary purpose of each program that managers can use to monitor performance. The district may wish to consider adopting measures provided in Appendix B.
	Step 2.	For each measure, identify the data needed and determine the information below.
		Who will collect performance data and how often?
		What is the source of the data (e.g., state or district reports)?
		In what format is the data needed?
		How often should the data be collected?
		Who (program staff, department head, assistant superintendent, superintendent, school board) will the data be reported to and how often?
		How should the data be used?
	Step 3.	Identify and prioritize data needs by classifying data into the following two categories:
		▪ data currently available, accessible, and in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives and
		▪ data currently either not available, accessible or in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives.
	Step 4.	For each measure, determine a standard (benchmark) for performance the district would like to achieve, which may be based on past performance, the performance of comparable districts, or industry standards.

Step 5.   For each measure or related measures develop a written statement (objective) that indicates the desired performance (result) or improvement target. For academic programs, objectives should be stated in terms of student outcomes (that is, the effect the program will have on participating students if the program is successful). For operational programs objectives should be stated in terms of the quality and cost of service provided of desired performance. Objectives should be

- either short-term (two to three years) or mid-term (four to five years);
- address major aspects of the program's purpose and expenditures;
- be specific;
- be easily understood;
- be challenging but achievable; and
- be measurable and quantifiable.

Examples of objectives include:

"The food service program will maintain a labor margin of ___% in 2003-04."

"By 2005, the facilities department will decrease average energy cost per gross square foot from $____ to $____ which is consistent with the average of its peers (identify peers)."

"By 2004, the maintenance department will reduce number of custodians per net square foot to _____ which is consistent with the industry standard of 1:_____."

Step 6.   Periodically compare district performance data to data from other, comparable districts or programs to determine whether the district could improve its operations.

Step 7.   Based on the ongoing analysis described in Step 6 above, identify undesirable trends in performance and cost that need more in-depth evaluation.

Step 8.   Conduct more in-depth evaluations to identify the cause and potential remedies to address trends identified in Step 7. Put the results of these in-depth evaluations in writing.

Step 9.   If the evaluation requires the use of an outside consultant, the district should develop a cost estimate and the superintendent should present it to the board for consideration.

Step 10.   At least annually, report performance related to high-level measures to the school board. Provide the written results of in-depth evaluations to the school board.

Who is Responsible	School board, superintendent, program managers
Time Frame	July 2004

[1] For detailed discussions on performance accountability system development for specific programs, refer to Chapter 4, Best Practice 6 (education programs); Chapter 7, Best Practice 23 (facilities construction); Chapter 8, Best Practice 1 (facilities maintenance); Chapter 9, Best Practice 20 (transportation); and, Chapter 10, Best Practice 1 (food service).

Educational Service Delivery

Action Plan 4-1

We recommend that the district require all principals to complete data use training to be able to disaggregate student data and analyze the resulting information to make school-based decisions aimed at improving student performance.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Identify data use training opportunities such as through FDOE and/or PAEC. Additionally, explore whether another school district has developed a data-training curriculum available at no cost or a nominal cost.
	Step 2.	Require all principals to complete follow-up training on disaggregating student data, analyzing the results, and using the analysis to develop school improvements action plans. Minimally, data results should be disaggregated for student subgroups such as ESE, Title I, and ESOL as well as by race/ethnicity and socioeconomic category to provide information that will allow for targeted improvement strategies. Explore the potential to provide the same training principals received to the curriculum and instructional staff and superintendent.
	Step 3.	The principal should spend time with teachers helping them disaggregate student data for the upcoming year. Principals should meet with their teachers or department heads to discuss teachers' assessments of students in their classes and strategies to address students' lagging performance.
	Step 4.	The district should hold periodic data use refresher training sessions aimed at reinforcing the importance of data in decision making.
	Step 5.	Once district personnel have completed data use training and are successfully using data to make site-based decisions, the district should explore automating their data analysis systems. This exploration should include consideration of commercial data analysis packages, database software, and products/systems developed by other school districts.
Who Is Responsible	The assistant superintendent, director of administrative services, principals	
Time Frame	The training schedule and reporting mechanisms should be in place by the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.	

Action Plan 4-2

We recommend that the district establish mechanisms to improve the identification and placement of ESE students.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Continue to review current placement of ESE students to determine whether some students can be better served in the regular classroom. Ensure that all members of the ESE placement decision team receive training in placing students in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
	Step 2.	Continue to provide teachers training and ongoing support to assist in implementing strategies and providing appropriate accommodations to help disabled students succeed. Accommodations/modifications for courses may include adjusting teaching methods or materials or allowing additional time to complete assignments. Accommodations for assessments may include a flexible format, response, or setting.
	Step 3.	Review options for reducing inappropriate referrals. This may involve training and support of regular education teachers in strategies for individualized instruction so fewer students are referred for evaluation that are unlikely to qualify for special services. Implement and monitor the strategies and adjust as needed to reduce the rate of inappropriate referrals.
	Step 4.	Continue implementation of the district's plan to identify gifted students; adjust as necessary.
	Step 5.	Review the district's placement efforts twice a year to determine whether placement has improved or additional changes are needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of administrative services and principals	
Time Frame	Review of current placement should take place by the beginning of the 2003-04 school year; training and support should be on-going	

Action Plan 4-3

We recommend that the district improve its capacity to systematically analyze data and use the results to drive decisions to improve student outcomes in the area of Title I.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Improve capacity to conduct data analysis, monitor AIPs, monitor the SIP process as it relates to Title I, conduct trainings, and perform other duties as they pertain to Title I.
	Step 2.	Explore options and determine the most feasible way to increase capacity to conduct analysis of Title I student data.
	Step 3.	One possibility would be to train a teacher or other administrator in the district to assist the principal currently responsible for Title I.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, director of administrative services, food service director	
Time Frame	Begin process in the 2003-04 school year with implementation in 2004-05.	

Action Plan 4-4

We recommend the district continue with its plan to develop a model for the School Improvement Plans.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Continue district wide SAC meetings and use them to train members in critical need areas such as analyzing data and defining a measurable objective.
	Step 2.	Contact PAEC to determine what professional development resources are available. The Digging into Data series for both teachers and principals would be appropriate for SAC members, provided student confidentiality is maintained.
	Step 3.	Once SACs complete data analysis and identify areas in need of improvement, conduct budgeting sessions in conjunction with school principals and the director of business services to enable linkage of budget items to SIP strategies, objectives, and goals.
	Step 4.	Once complete, each SAC should present the SIP to the board. The presentation should provide the board with a brief overview of the school's goals and objectives. The board should examine how each of the goals, objectives, and strategies might affect student achievement.
Who Is Responsible	The Title I coordinator, director of business services (as needed for technical support), finance director	
Time Frame	Beginning of the 2003-04 school year and ongoing thereafter	

Action Plan 4-5

We recommend the district use the information in the SIPs to revise its district strategic plan to better integrate the documents and address student achievement needs and outcomes.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Once the SIPs are complete and approved by the board, the Title I coordinator or assistant superintendent should compile the SIP goals and objectives into one document to create a shell for a new district strategic plan.
	Step 2.	The superintendent, school board, assistant superintendent, Title I coordinator, director of business services, and any other parties the district deems relevant should conduct a workshop to develop a new district strategic plan.
	Step 3.	The new plan must be based on disaggregated data analysis results, have measurable objectives, and have strategies tied to timelines and budget allocations where applicable.
	Step 4.	The plan should be adjusted annually and as student outcome data is received.
Who Is Responsible	The superintendent, school board, assistant superintendent, Title I coordinator, director of business services, and any other parties the district deems relevant.	
Time Frame	Beginning of the 2003-04 school year and ongoing thereafter	

Action Plan 4-6

We recommend that the district develop curriculum guides which provide examples of specific teaching strategies that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards, benchmarks, and grade level expectations.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of administrative services, assistant superintendent and director of business services should meet and determine which route to go in developing these curriculum guides. If the district chooses the on-line option, the technology resource teacher should be involved as well. [1] If teachers will be brought in to develop the guides and/or compile the information a decision needs to be made as to how much the district can pay them and how long they can work during the summer.
	Step 2.	Research other districts to see what is already available. There may be guides available from other districts that will meet the district's needs available at very low or no cost.
	Step 3.	Since reading is an area of critical need and since elementary language arts is a content area with an obsolete guide, we recommend that the district consider beginning work on elementary reading first.
	Step 4.	Once the guides are developed, all teachers and principals should be trained in the area that the guide covers so they will know the resource exists and will use it.
	Step 5.	Conduct a satisfaction survey of teachers at the end of the school year to see if the teachers used the curriculum guides, what they found useful, what they would improve and apply these suggestions when developing future curriculum guides for other subject areas.
Who Is Responsible	The director of administrative services, assistant superintendent, director of business services, reading teachers; if on-line option is chosen, technology resource teacher	
Time Frame	July - August 2003-04; ongoing thereafter	

[1] The technology resource teacher is responsible for providing technical support and training to all schools in the district.

Action Plan 4-7

We recommend that the district keep the school library/media centers open to students during the school day and a period of time before and after school.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Determine whether student assistants can be used to staff the library while the librarian teaches.
	Step 2.	Determine whether community volunteers are available to run the library while the librarian teaches.
	Step 3.	Establish a library staffing schedule, using either student assistants or community volunteers to ensure that the library remains open during school hours and at least one half hour before and after school.
Who Is Responsible	The director of administrative services, principals, library and media specialists	
Time Frame	The 2003-04 school year and ongoing thereafter	

Action Plan 4-8

We recommend that the district conduct technology information and training sessions to keep teachers and other school-based staff informed about available technology, how to use it, and how to incorporate it into the curriculum.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The technology resource teacher continues to provide school-based staff an overview/training of district technology, its uses, and how it can be incorporated into the daily curriculum, including requiring students to use various technology as part of their assignments.
	Step 2.	As part of the overview/training process, teachers should develop lesson plans incorporating the use of available technology that can be used as examples throughout the district. The resulting plans can be posted to the district's website or compiled into a reference guide.
	Step 3.	Determine whether the overview/training needs to be held at each school to allow for on-site technology demonstrations.
	Step 4.	The technology resource teacher should conduct periodic follow-ups, such as weekly or bi-weekly emails to teachers with tips or updates on where to find information.
Who Is Responsible	Technology resource teacher, principals, teachers	
Time Frame	Pre-service for the 2003-04 school year; ongoing thereafter	

Administrative and Instructional Technology

Action Plan 5-1

We recommend that the district analyze needs assessment data, incorporate user feedback, and solicit broad-based stakeholder input in the form of a district technology committee when developing the annual district technology plan.

Action Needed	**Step 1:**	Form a district technology committee including the members listed below.
		▪ The district's core technology staff—assistant superintendent, the technology resource teacher, and technology contacts at each school
		▪ A teacher from each school
		▪ A parent from each school
		▪ A School Advisory Council (SAC) member from each school
		▪ Select district administrators including a curriculum representative
	Step 2:	The district's core technology staff should
		▪ analyze and summarize needs assessment data;
		▪ using the needs assessment data, develop a draft district technology plan including measurable objectives in the areas of training and technical support; and
		▪ present the draft technology plan to the district's technology committee.
	Step 3:	Upon receipt of the draft technology plan, the full technology committee should review the plan to ensure that goals and objectives are measurable, modify it as necessary, and submit the final plan to the board for approval. Accountability measures should include
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology for instruction;
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology for administration;
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology for communication;
		▪ percentage of teachers using technology to assess student performance;
		▪ average response time to reported problems; and
		▪ user satisfaction (teachers/administrators/other staff).
	Step 4:	Following annual implementation of the district's technology plan, the core technology group should
		▪ establish a meeting schedule to assess site-by-site plan implementation; feedback from each meeting should be used to target technical training and support activities to ensure successful implementation at each school;
		▪ establish an annual meeting to review/evaluate overall plan implementation;
		▪ analyze and summarize the prior year's technology performance and make recommended changes to the full technology committee for the upcoming year; and
		▪ initiate the process from Step 1 for each new school year.
Who Is Responsible		Assistant superintendent and technology resource teacher
Time Frame		Form committee for the 2003-04 school year for the next annual technology plan update.

Action Plan 5-2

We recommend that the district provide technology users with better access to on-site technical training and support.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The assistant superintendent should work with the district technology resources teacher and the personnel office to write a job description for the district technician position, clearly defining job duties and qualification requirements. The district technology resources teacher job description should be updated to remove the technical support functions that will be assigned to the technician.
	Step 2:	The district technology resources teacher position should be changed to a year-round position to do network maintenance and provide training to prepare site-based technology contacts for the coming school year.
	Step 3:	A year-round, part-time technician should be hired to perform technical support functions, freeing the district technology resources teacher to provide more instructional personnel support throughout the year.
	Step 4:	The resource technology teacher, in conjunction with appropriate district technology staff, should establish a site-by-site rotating visitation schedule that should be communicated to all district users, allowing for anticipation of site-based training and technical support needs.
	Step 5:	The new work order system should continue to be used to prioritize technical support activities and to identify areas where technical support costs can be reduced through targeted training programs.
	Step 6:	The technology resources teacher (or designee) should place system manuals and frequently asked questions/answers on-line for district users to access as needed to solve their own technology problems.
	Step 7:	The assistant superintendent should work with the technical support staff to establish benchmarks to measure the success of technical support efforts, i.e., the average time to resolve technical support problems. This information should be used to assess annual technical support needs.
	Step 8:	The assistant superintendent should present a proposal encompassing all of the preceding steps, associated costs, and implementation timeline to the superintendent for approval.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendent, and the district technology resources teacher.	
Time Frame	January 2004	

Facilities Construction

Action Plan 7-1

We recommend that the district establish a comprehensive long-range planning process that includes a broad-based group of stakeholders, a comprehensive review of the conditions of the district's schools, written budgetary plans and priorities, forecasts for inflation, and a mechanism to ensure responsiveness to community concerns.	

Action Needed	Step 1:	Working with the architect under contract, conduct an annual facilities inventory and assess each school's
		▪ structural integrity,
		▪ mechanical systems,
		▪ electrical systems,
		▪ plumbing and sewer systems,
		▪ fire, safety, health and sanitation issues,
		▪ educational suitability,
		▪ site size, layout, space and adaptability,
		▪ operations and maintenance costs,
		▪ technological readiness,
		▪ capacity utilization,
		▪ users' satisfaction, and
		▪ compliance with federal standards, including the Office of Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
	Step 2:	Update Five-Year Plant Survey based on Step 1.
	Step 3:	Utilize Five-Year Plant Survey to annually develop an updated Five-Year Facilities Work Plan.
	Step 4:	Annually update FISH data to correct funding from the Department of Education and to ensure accurate budgeting and managerial decision making.
	Step 5:	Establish a planning committee composed of broad-based group of stakeholders to determine the need for new construction, repair, or renovation of the district's schools. Members of the committee should include teachers, school officials, parents, community stakeholders, and construction, design, engineering, and real estate professionals.
	Step 6:	Prioritize needs for corrective action based upon results of steps 1-5 and incorporate facility needs into the district strategic plan.
	Step 7:	Document the consideration of alternatives to new construction, such as renovation, and remodeling, merging underutilized schools, expanded use of relocatables, joint use agreements for existing buildings, etc.
	Step 8:	Ensure that the five-year facilities work reflects the most pressing needs identified by the district-wide facility inventory, taking into account assessment by the broad-based planning committee, budget, inflation, and demographic projections.
	Step 9:	Develop 10-year and 20-year strategic facility plans, incorporating the five-year facilities work plan, demographics, and inflation projections.
	Step 10:	Present the Five-Year Facilities Work Plan to broad-based planning committee to ensure community responsiveness.
	Step 11:	Present the 10-20 year facility strategic plan to the board for approval.
	Step 12:	Implement Five-Year Facilities Work Plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendent, maintenance coordinator, finance director, principals, stakeholders, contracted architect	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 7-2

To ensure that projects are properly inspected, conform to the Florida Building Code, and completed in a timely and cost-effective manner, we recommend that the district obtain the Department of Education's Florida Building Code training for its employees who manage projects in-house or who serve as a liaison to private construction firms managing district projects.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Assign accountability for construction project management to selected district personnel.
	Step 2:	Obtain training for district project management staff on the current Florida Building Code from the Department of Education's Office of Educational Facilities.
	Step 3:	Establish realistic timeframes for project completion in coordination with the opening of schools.
	Step 4:	Prior to project initiation, establish in the project contract quality standards, maximum cost guarantees, and time certain end dates and deadlines.
	Step 5:	Ensure that permits are pulled in accordance with the Florida Building Code for every project, regardless of size, before construction begins.
	Step 6:	Ensure that inspections are completed by trained and licensed professionals during the course of every construction project in accordance with the Florida Building Code. Document that projects meet the code.
	Step 7:	Review change orders for viability, necessity, and cost to ensure they do not exceed the maximum cost guarantee and do not exceed the time certain deadline. Document change order causes, initiator(s), and effects on the project budget and schedule.
	Step 8:	Evaluate each project after completion and using this feedback, implement changes as lessons learned and improve construction operations.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, assistant superintendent, maintenance coordinator, and contracted architect.	
Time Frame	January 2004	

Action Plan 7-3

We recommend that the district modify its standard construction contract to protect its financial interests and ensure timely construction project completion.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Consult the local building authority and surrounding districts to revise the district's daily liquidated damages clause amount to effectively enforce construction contract compliance.
	Step 2:	Insert a maximum-cost guarantee into each project contract to ensure project costs do not exceed a specified financial threshold.
	Step 3:	Insert time-certain project end dates and penalties for exceeding the established, agreed-upon dates for each project contract.
Who Is Responsible	District legal counsel	
Time Frame	January 2004	

Facilities Maintenance

Action Plan 8-1

We recommend that the district develop an accountability system including program mission, goals, and objectives for the custodial and maintenance programs. [1]		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Develop a program mission statement that focuses on core functional responsibilities and intended outcomes. For example, a mission statement might read: The mission of the maintenance department is to conduct cost-effective, routine, and preventive maintenance on all school facilities and to provide a safe and healthy environment that enhances student learning and employee productivity.
	Step 2:	Establish goals and time specific objectives to meet the department's mission. For example, a measurable objective might read: Reduce emergency work orders by 10% annually following implementation of a preventive maintenance program.
	Step 3:	Improve district operations by reviewing the management practices, procedures, and benchmarks used by other districts, large and small, and tailor this information to fit Franklin County practices. Determine if the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) can assist by holding workshops or otherwise coordinating communication efforts between panhandle districts.
	Step 4:	Develop performance and cost-effectiveness measures, using resources such as the State Requirements for Educational Facilities (SREF) and the DOE Maintenance and Operations Guidelines, benchmarking manuals, and measures from other districts. Consider using the following measures: - number of user complaints; - number of job call-backs; - percentage of work orders completed within X number of days; - percentage of preventive maintenance tasks performed on schedule; - average days to institute routine repairs; - percentage of emergency repairs completed within one day of notification; - amount of time spent per work order vs. how time allowed by standard; - facilities operation costs per square foot; - maintenance and repair costs per square foot and per student; - custodial costs per square foot and per student; and - square feet maintained per FTE for both custodians and maintenance employees.
	Step 5:	Distribute all standards and goals to employees and discuss management's expectations.
	Step 6:	Select critical performance and cost-efficiency measures and annually report on performance to the school board and superintendent.
	Step 7:	Revisit the accountability system annually and revise as necessary.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator, principals, superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

[1] For a general discussion about developing goals, objectives, and measures see Chapter 3, Action Plan 3-1.

Action Plan 8-2

We recommend that the district develop written maintenance and custodial operating procedures to establish performance expectations and take steps to ensure they are met.

Action Needed	Step 1:	Contact other districts of various sizes and obtain their operating procedures to use as examples when developing the district's procedures.
	Step 2:	Develop operating procedures for maintenance tasks related to • carpentry, electrical, plumbing; • heating, ventilating and air conditioning; • communication and alarm systems such as the public address system and fire alarms; • fire protection systems and equipment such as sprinklers and extinguishers; • the conduct and scheduling of preventive maintenance programs • handling of such hazardous materials as paint, bloodborne pathogens, and cleaning supplies; • site and grounds standards such as tree trimming, vegetation removal from concrete walkways, mowing, raking, and aesthetics; • responding to emergencies and safety issues, including hazardous materials spills and emergency work orders; • purchasing supplies and maintaining minimum stockage levels, particularly for custodial supplies; • general floor cleaning; • trash and debris removal; • cleaning and maintaining portables and restrooms; • cleaning food service areas; • vertical surface cleaning including windows, mirrors, vents, blinds, and partitions; • event preparation/cleanup; and, • opening/closing of buildings.
	Step 3:	Present operating procedures to the superintendent for approval.
	Step 4:	Distribute procedures to maintenance and custodial personnel and managers.
	Step 5:	Provide training to personnel on operating procedures and conduct annual refresher training.
	Step 6:	Hold maintenance and custodial staff accountable for adhering to all procedures and reflect success or failure in such adherence in their annual performance appraisals.
Who Is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator, principals, assistant superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 8-3

We recommend the district improve school conditions by improving maintenance and custodial services		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Using the architectural firm under contract, conduct a conditions assessment for all buildings to identify maintenance problems.
	Step 2:	Develop a corrective action plan and time table for addressing the maintenance problems.
	Step 3:	Based on needed work and available funding, determine whether maintenance and custodial services management should be reorganized or the services privatized.
	Step 4:	Review manufacturer's equipment documentation/specifications to identify the type and frequency of required preventive maintenance.
	Step 5:	Use benchmarking manuals to establish ▪ both preventive and routine maintenance schedules for all school buildings and ▪ routine custodial schedules for all school buildings.
	Step 6:	Prioritize all maintenance projects and note the priorities in the five-year work plan.
	Step 7:	Determine who should be in charge of custodial and maintenance services. The responsible party(s) should conduct weekly spot checks of facility maintenance and cleanliness and make program changes as conditions warrant.
	Step 8:	Annually request teacher, student, and staff feedback on maintenance and custodial efforts using a detailed anonymous survey.
	Step 9:	Include survey results and corrective action plan implementation levels in the annual performance appraisal of the person(s) responsible for custodial and maintenance services.
	Step 10:	Develop a checklist and time table for routine and preventive maintenance projects.
	Step 11:	Develop a daily custodial duty checklist requiring custodians to sign off tasks as completed.
	Step 12:	Train custodial and maintenance personnel how to use the daily checklists to guide their work.
	Step 13:	Prioritize all custodial projects and note the priorities in the five-year work plan.
Who is Responsible	Superintendent, maintenance coordinator, principals, budget director, and architectural firm on retainer.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 8-4

We recommend that the district improve the skills training program for maintenance and custodial personnel		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Based on current maintenance needs, determine what training would enable staff to more effectively and efficiently address facility problems.
	Step 2:	Identify what type of training other similar districts are providing and consider adapting such training to Franklin's need.
	Step 3:	Develop an in-house cross-training program whereby the electrician trains plumber, the carpenter trains HVAC specialist, etc.
	Step 4:	Identify monies available for training, budget them for training, establish a training schedule, and develop a curriculum based on steps 1-3.
	Step 5:	Investigate low cost or free training available from equipment and chemical suppliers, DOE, and PAEC.
	Step 6:	Implement a custodial, maintenance, and cross-training training program.
	Step 7:	Provide an opportunity for employee feedback and evaluation to ensure training meets their needs and for use in developing/selecting future training.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; budget director; assistant superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 8-5

We recommend that the district accurately project cost estimates for short- and long-term maintenance projects		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Based on the facilities condition assessment outlined in Action Plan 8-3, develop a five–year facilities work plan with prioritized projects.
	Step 2:	Calculate a cost estimate for each project, including an inflation factor.
	Step 3:	During budget development, include facility projects as prioritized or a written explanation as to their exclusion/deferment.
	Step 4:	Develop 10- and 20-year maintenance plans in conjunction with the strategic plan and demographic projections.
	Step 5:	Present plans to the superintendent and school board for approval.
	Step 6:	Repeat annually.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; finance director; assistant superintendent, and architect.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 8-6

We recommend that the district improve maintenance operations through full implementation of the comprehensive work order and inventory management system.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Work with technology staff to determine how the current work order system can be used to ▪ track inventory; ▪ track employee productivity measures listed in Action Plan 8-1; ▪ charge maintenance expenses to the appropriate entity; ▪ develop cost reports and estimates; and, ▪ interface with other district financial programs.
	Step 2:	Establish criteria to define an emergency work order and distribute the definition to all district employees. The district may wish to consider using the following definition of an emergency: a serious problem that prevents student instruction, renders a facility unusable, or that affects the life, safety, or health of any student or district employee.
	Step 3:	Develop a system for documenting emergency work orders so exact maintenance staff workload is documented. Such documentation will help district officials determine if the maintenance department is sufficiently staffed.
	Step 4:	Develop a system for prioritizing non-emergency work orders. Priorities should be based on: ▪ general school safety, ▪ adverse impact on instruction, ▪ adverse impact on operations or productivity, ▪ long-range facility planning, ▪ educational program needs, and ▪ comfort.
	Step 5:	Have district technology staff train administrative staff on the system's analytical capabilities and train principals and faculty on how to place work orders.
	Step 6:	Have the facility's coordinator analyze generated data and use results to increase operations efficiency.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator, information technology specialist.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 8-7

We recommend that the district establish policies and procedures to meet health and safety standards		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Contact FDOE and PAEC to determine mandatory health and safety requirements. Identify related training/services offered by each.
	Step 2:	Establish a training schedule for mandatory requirements in conjunction with FDOE and PAEC.
	Step 3:	Research health and safety benchmarks and compare the district with peer districts. Some benchmarks for consideration might include those below. ▪ Number of unresolved safety issues reported in 10-, 30-, and 90-day periods ▪ Workers compensation claims ratio ▪ Sick day usage ▪ Number of violations on annual Health and Safety inspection
	Step 4:	Perform health and safety checks, including indoor air quality tests, on a regular basis, utilizing checklists developed in Action Plan 8-3.
	Step 5:	Establish a priority system, in conjunction with Action Plan 8-6, to ensure health and safety work orders are timely addressed.
	Step 6:	Establish reporting mechanisms, like surveys, to monitor policy and procedure effectiveness.
	Step 7:	Present quarterly facility conditions reports to the school board.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; assistant superintendent.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 8-8

We recommend that all facility projects are appropriately permitted and inspected under the revised Florida Building Code.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Determine whether the current contracted architectural firm can provide permitting and inspection services for all facility projects under the current contract. If so, use the firm to provide these services for all future facility projects.
	Step 2:	If the contracted architectural firm cannot provide permitting and inspection services without additional cost, determine whether the district can enter into a memorandum of understanding with the local Franklin County building authority to provide the services.
	Step 3:	If neither the contracted architectural firm nor the local building authority can provide free permitting and inspection services, coordinate with FDOE and PAEC to obtain Florida Building Code training for appropriate district employees.
Who is Responsible	Maintenance coordinator; budget director.	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Transportation

Action Plan 9-1

We recommend that the district examine its transportation policies to identify options for cost savings.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The transportation coordinator and other district employees, with the assistance of the representatives from the Florida Department of Transportation, the Franklin County Road Department, and the Franklin County Sheriff's Department, will formulate unsafe walking criteria for the district.
	Step 2:	The transportation coordinator will submit the proposed unsafe walking criteria to the superintendent who, in turn, will submit the proposed criteria to the school board for approval.
	Step 3:	Upon approval of the criteria, the transportation department will use the criteria to determine the location of hazardous and unsafe walking conditions to potential bus stops and schools within the district. Using this information, the transportation department will determine what students will need district transportation and appropriate locations for bus stops. This evaluation should take place on an annual basis.
	Step 4:	To reduce the number of hazardous and unsafe student walking areas in the district, the transportation coordinator should work with state and local agencies to eliminate these hazardous and unsafe student walking areas.
	Step 5:	The transportation coordinator will annually submit the list of cost-efficient bus routes to the superintendent who, in turn, will submit the routes to the school board for approval.
	Step 6:	Upon approval by the school board, the district will implement the approved routes.
	Step 7:	Calculate the cost of providing courtesy rider transportation and annually report this information to the board, which can then determine whether to retain or modify the current practices
Who Is Responsible	School board, transportation coordinator, superintendent, representative from the Florida Department of Transportation, the Franklin County Road Department, and the Franklin County Sheriff's Department.	
Time Frame	May 2004	

Action Plan 9-2

We recommend that the district establish a bus replacement schedule and explore eliminating the ESE bus and replacing it with a van.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Formulate and adopt a formal bus replacement schedule based on the district's need for student transportation, local driving conditions, vehicle maintenance repair records, and experiences of neighboring and exemplar school districts.
	Step 2:	Explore the option of retrofitting a van with a wheelchair lift to transport the ESE student. If the financial analysis shows that the transportation of the ESE student is less costly using a van rather than a school bus, the district should use a van for this transportation.
	Step 3:	Conduct a financial analysis to determine whether the current ESE bus should be retained as a spare or sold.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator, school board	
Time Frame	January 2004	

Action Plan 9-3

We recommend that the district improve vehicle maintenance records while increasing the regular review of repair and inspection actions.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Establish a system to periodically confirm that driver pre-trip inspections are performed correctly. Evidence found by mechanics conducting periodic bus inspections and routine servicing of drivers not performing mandatory pre-trip inspections should be reported to the transportation coordinator.
	Step 2:	The transportation coordinator establishes a system for ensuring that bus inspections and routine vehicle maintenance is performed per district guidelines.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator	
Time Frame	December 2003	

Action Plan 9-4

We recommend that the transportation coordinator use program cost data to monitor expenditures and compare them against the budget.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The finance director, with the assistance of the transportation coordinator, should provide sufficient budget details to allow for the monitoring of transportation expenditures throughout the year as well as a comparison of expenditures to budgeted amounts.
	Step 2:	The transportation coordinator should compare on a monthly or quarterly basis transportation expenditures to budgeted amounts and, when discrepancies are found, notify the finance director and superintendent.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator, finance director, superintendent	
Time Frame	December 2003	

Action Plan 9-5

We recommend that the district develop a transportation performance accountability system. [1]		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The transportation coordinator develops a draft accountability plan that includes a department mission statement, goals, objectives, and benchmarks. The objectives should be time-specific, measurable, and address districtwide operations. The transportation plan should be consistent with the district's overall accountability plan. (See Appendix B)
	Step 2:	The transportation coordinator works with the director of business services to assure that the draft plan is consistent with the district budget.
	Step 3:	The transportation coordinator forwards the plan to the superintendent and/or the school board for approval as appropriate.
	Step 4:	Annually the transportation coordinator compares program performance to peers on selected performance measures.
	Step 5:	The transportation coordinator establishes appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and benchmarks for key indicators of student transportation performance. Benchmarks should be established based on past performance and reasonable expectations of future performance. They should also be limited to a number of indicators that collectively provide a "big picture" assessment of student transportation management.
	Step 6:	The transportation coordinator provides district administrators and the school board with an annual "report card" that shows actual performance for all selected performance and cost efficiency measures in comparison with the selected benchmarks for that indicator and actual performance during the previous year. To provide this "report card" to the public, it should be placed on the district's website.
	Step 7:	Each summer the coordinator reviews the plan and updates it as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Transportation coordinator, director of business and finance, superintendent, school board	
Time Frame	July 2004	

[1] For a general discussion about developing goals, objectives, and measures see Chapter 3, Action Plan 3-1.

Food Service Operations

Action Plan 10-1

We recommend that the food service program develop an operational plan, including measurable goals and objectives, that is consistent with the district's plan and budget. [1]		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The food service director develops a draft plan that includes a mission statement and integrated goals and objectives. The objectives should be time-specific, measurable, and address operations for each school. The food service plan should be consistent with the district's overall plan.
	Step 2:	The food service director coordinates with the director of business services to assure that the draft plan is consistent with the district budget.
	Step 3:	Cafeteria managers review the draft plan and provide feedback to the food service director, who revises the plan as necessary.
	Step 4:	The food service director forwards the plan to the superintendent and/or the school board for approval as appropriate.
	Step 5:	Each summer the director reviews the plan and updates it as needed.
Who Is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	December 2003	

[1] For a general discussion about developing goals, objectives, and measures see Chapter 3, Action Plan 3-1.

Action Plan 10-2

We recommend that the district provide annual food service safety and sanitation training to all program employees and refresher classes on portion and production control to managers.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The food service director researches training options and identifies the most appropriate way to provide food service safety and sanitation training to all employees and refresher classes to managers.
	Step 2:	The food service director schedules annual training classes.
	Step 3:	Food service employees and cafeteria managers participate in the training sessions and provide evaluative feedback to the director on the usefulness of these classes.
	Step 4:	The food service director incorporates employee feedback as appropriate when developing and arranging future training classes.
Who Is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director).	
Time Frame	August 2004	

Action Plan 10-3

We recommend that the district update and maintain the food service procedures manual.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The food service director uses procedures manuals from other districts as examples to develop a manual tailored to Franklin County's food service program.
	Step 2:	Cafeteria managers review and field test the draft manual for three to five months and advise the director of any needed revisions.
	Step 3:	The food service director prints a final food service manual and issues copies to food service employees. The manual should be formatted so changes can be readily indicated.
	Step 4:	The food service director meets with the resource technology teacher to determine the feasibility of posting the manual on the district's website/intranet. Having the most current official procedures manual on a district-only website could increase use and improve the updating process.
	Step 5:	The food service director reviews the manual annually and makes necessary changes.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 10-4

We recommend that the food service program reduce personnel costs so that the program is self-sufficient.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The district assesses options for reducing meals per labor hour so staffing levels are consistent with industry standards. The program director works with the assistant superintendent and the director of business services to evaluate options to reduce the number of employees and provides recommendations to the superintendent for approval.
	Step 2:	The director notifies kitchen employees of staffing changes that will be made and budgets accordingly.
	Step 3:	The director reviews meals per labor hour statistics monthly and adjusts employee schedules as necessary to assure that the program is able to break even, meet industry standards for meals per labor hour, and is as efficient as possible.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	Summer 2003 and school year 2003-04	

Action Plan 10-5

We recommend that the food service program revise procurement and commodities practices to reduce costs.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The food service director and cafeteria managers develop a menu plan for the 2003-04 school year, using customer input as outlined in Action Plan 10-8 and specifically depleting all excess food or items near their expiration date.
	Step 2:	After determining what food is needed for the master menu, the director and business services manager determine which food items need to be purchased from vendors and which should be ordered through the federal commodity allocation.
	Step 3:	The director develops a policy limiting acceptance of bonus food items to minimize delivery and storage costs. This policy should incorporate procedures that will minimize any storage in the federal warehouse beyond 60 days.
	Step 4:	Using customer input, as outlined in Action Plan 10-8, the director annually develops menus to serve as the basis for food purchases, procures food accordingly, and analyzes which foods to obtain through vendors and which to obtain through federal commodity allocations.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	Summer 2003 and school year 2003-04	

Action Plan 10-6

We recommend that the program use key performance measures to assess and improve program performance.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The food service director identifies a set of key performance measures for assessing program performance.
	Step 2:	The food service director researches and establishes benchmarks for each of the measures.
	Step 3:	The food service director trains cafeteria managers to track performance using the measures.
	Step 4:	Program managers collect performance data and periodically compare it to the established benchmarks.
	Step 5:	When performance does not meet the benchmarks, managers investigate why and develop strategies for revising operations to meet the goals.
	Step 6:	The director reports to the superintendent and the school board annually on program performance.
	Step 7:	The director revisits the measures and benchmarks annually to verify their accuracy, usefulness, and appropriateness.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 10-7

We recommend that the district annually inspect key food service operations to ensure efficiency and compliance with public safety standards.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	The food service director reviews the district's inspection form to verify that all key kitchen operations are covered, including the condition of major equipment. Forms from food service operations in other districts may be helpful. The director revises the Franklin form as needed to adequately address food service operations.
	Step 2:	The food service director uses the form to annually inspect each kitchen.
	Step 3:	The director and cafeteria managers correct operations and/or conditions identified as unsatisfactory in the inspection findings to improve food service operations.
	Step 4:	District and program managers use information from the inspections concerning equipment conditions to incorporate maintenance and replacement needs into the program and district budgets and work with the coordinator of facilities and transportation services, who is responsible for facility maintenance, to develop a long-range preventive maintenance plan.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Action Plan 10-8

We recommend that the program do more to ensure that customer needs are met.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Twice a year the food service director solicits feedback on food service, menus, and food quality from each SAC, PTO, and student government.
	Step 2:	The food service director meets with cafeteria managers to plan how to use the feedback to improve menus and kitchen operations. The food service director trains cafeteria managers to track performance using the measures.
	Step 3:	The director and cafeteria managers track participation and revenues as well as feedback to determine if the changes the program is making are increasing participation and sales.
Who is Responsible	Director of special programs and support services (food service program director)	
Time Frame	July 2004	

Cost Control Systems

Action Plan 11-1

We recommend that the district continue its efforts to develop a comprehensive procedures manual that addresses all critical financial and accounting processes.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Continue to develop procedures manuals for all critical financial and accounting processes.
	Step 2:	Consolidate these manuals into a single, board-approved comprehensive procedures manual for finance and accounting processes.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	June 2004	

Action Plan 11-2

We recommend that the district develop an ethics policy that applies to all personnel and that includes remedies for unethical behavior as a means to strengthen the overall control environment.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Develop an ethics policy and present the policy to the board for approval.
	Step 2:	Subsequent to board approval and adoption of the policy, all existing and all new employees should be required to sign a statement indicating that they are aware of the ethics policy and its ramifications.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	June 2004	

Action Plan 11-3

We recommend that the district develop a process for the reporting of suspected improprieties. This process should encourage individuals to report such improprieties without fear of reprisal.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Develop a policy for the confidential reporting of suspected improprieties and present the policy to the board for approval.
	Step 2:	Subsequent to board approval and adoption of the policy, distribute the newly developed procedures to all employees and post at all work sites.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	June 2004	

Action Plan 11-4

We recommend that the district establish links between their strategic plan objectives and the budget planning process.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	List all strategic plan objectives and rank them in order of importance and cost.
	Step 2:	Ensure that during each budget planning meeting, the strategic plan objectives list is considered.
	Step 3:	After the proposed budget is completed, ensure that all strategic plan objectives are 1) noted as being included in the budget, or 2) reassigned to another budget year within the strategic plan.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	August 2004	

Action Plan 11-5

We recommend that the district conduct annual risk assessments.		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Conduct annual risk assessments using district staff.
	Step 2:	If district staff is unable to conduct assessments, develop and distribute a request for proposal for risk assessment services; review proposals for risk assessment services and select a firm that will perform the risk assessment for the district.
	Step 3:	Review the results of the risk assessment, prioritize high-risk activities, and assign responsibility for addressing and resolving prioritized risks.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Business Services	
Time Frame	August 2004	