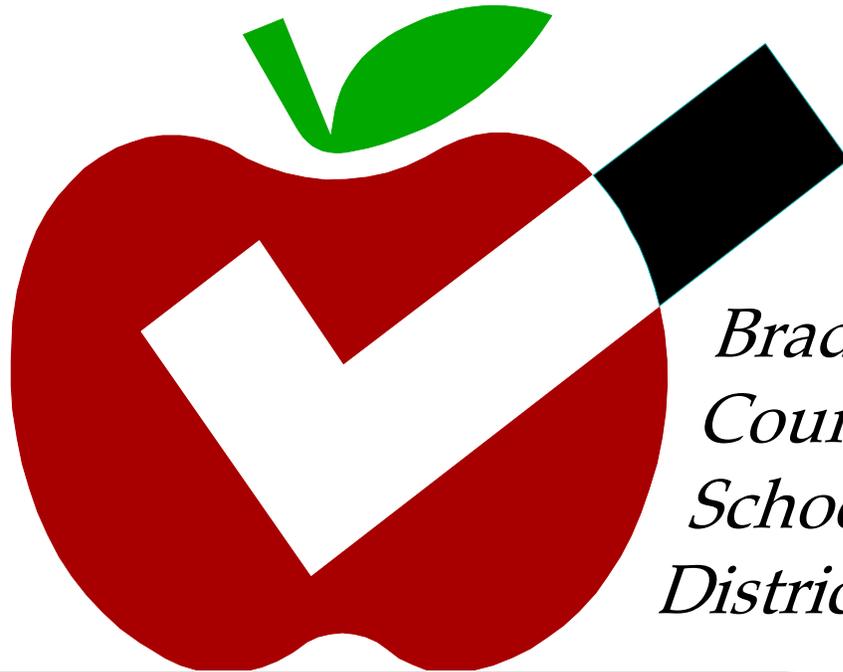


# *oppaga*

## *Sharpening the Pencil*

### Best Financial Management Practices Review



*Bradford  
County  
School  
District*



Office of Program Policy Analysis  
and Government Accountability

*an office of the Florida Legislature*

Report 03-39



# 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 Bradford County School District  
The School Board Members of the Bradford County School District

I have directed that a Best Financial Management Practices Review be conducted of the Bradford 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, Bradford 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.

Frank Alvarez was the project manager for this review, which was supervised by David Summers. Other OPPAGA staff included Sybille Allendorff, Drucilla Carpenter, Nancy Dufoe, Janice Foley, Jason Hight, Brenda Hughes, Claire Mazur, Sara Mendonça-McCoy, and Scott Stake. Auditor General staff included Randy Arend and Jim Kiedinger under the supervision of David Martin.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary R. VanLandingham".

Gary R. VanLandingham  
Interim Director

GRV/mc

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

# Table of Contents

- [Digest](#).....1
- [Chapter 1: Introduction](#) ..... 1-1
  - Overview..... 1-1
  - Methodology..... 1-2
  - County Profile..... 1-2
  - School District Profile..... 1-3
- [Chapter 2: Management Structures](#)..... 2-1
  - Summary..... 2-1
  - Background..... 2-1
  - Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 2-4
- [Chapter 3: Performance Accountability Systems](#)..... 3-1
  - Summary..... 3-1
  - Background..... 3-1
  - Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 3-2
- [Chapter 4: Educational Service Delivery](#) ..... 4-1
  - Summary..... 4-1
  - Ways to Save ..... 4-1
  - Background..... 4-2
  - Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 4-7
- [Chapter 5: Administrative and Instructional Technology](#)..... 5-1
  - Summary..... 5-1
  - Background..... 5-1
  - Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 5-5
- [Chapter 6: Personnel Systems and Benefits](#)..... 6-1
  - Summary..... 6-1
  - Background..... 6-1
  - Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 6-3
- [Chapter 7: Facilities Construction](#) ..... 7-1
  - Summary..... 7-1
  - Background..... 7-1
  - Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 7-4
- [Chapter 8: Facilities Maintenance](#) ..... 8-1
  - Summary..... 8-1
  - Ways to Save ..... 8-1
  - Background..... 8-1
  - Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 8-4

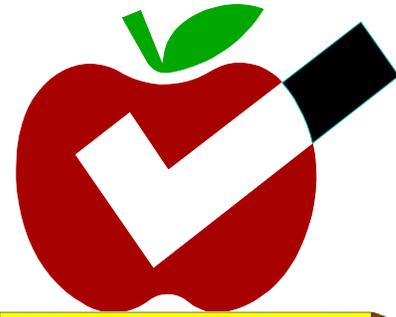
*Table of Contents*

<b><u>Chapter 9: Transportation</u></b> .....	<b>9-1</b>
Summary.....	9-1
Background.....	9-1
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	9-4
<b><u>Chapter 10: Food Service Operations</u></b> .....	<b>10-1</b>
Summary.....	10-1
Ways to Save .....	10-1
Background.....	10-2
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	10-6
<b><u>Chapter 11: Cost Control Systems</u></b> .....	<b>11-1</b>
Summary.....	11-1
Auditor General's Scope, Objectives, and Methodology for Cost Controls.....	11-1
Background.....	11-2
Conclusions and Recommendations .....	11-5
<b><u>Appendix A:</u></b> .....	<b>A-1</b>
<b><u>Appendix B: Action Plan</u></b> .....	<b>B-1</b>



# Digest of the Best Financial Management Practices Review

Bradford County School District



Sharpening the Pencil

Report No. 03-39A

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 Bradford County School District during Fiscal Year 2002-03. The review determined that the Bradford County School District currently is using 74% (107 of 145) of the applicable best practices adopted by the Commissioner of Education.<sup>1</sup> The district is using a majority of the best practices in 7 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.

<sup>1</sup> Three best practices do not apply to the district given its size and certain aspects of its operations.

## Exhibit 1

### The District Is Using 74% of the Applicable Best Practices

Best Practice Area (Total Practices)	Is the District Using Individual Best Practices?		
	Yes	No	N/A
<a href="#">Management Structures</a> (14)	12	2	0
<a href="#">Performance Accountability System</a> (3)	1	2	0
<a href="#">Educational Service Delivery</a> (12)	4	8	0
<a href="#">Administrative and Instructional Technology</a> (9)	7	2	0
<a href="#">Personnel Systems and Benefits</a> (11)	8	3	0
<a href="#">Facilities Construction</a> (24)	19	2	3
<a href="#">Facilities Maintenance</a> (22)	13	9	0
<a href="#">Transportation</a> (20)	19	1	0
<a href="#">Food Service Operations</a> (11)	5	6	0
<a href="#">Cost Control Systems</a> (22)	19	3	0
<b>All Areas (148)</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>3</b>

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 \$590,311 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
<b><u>Educational Service Delivery</u></b>	
• Increase cost recovery for lost and damaged textbooks (Best Practice 9, page 4-21)	\$ 16,061
<b><u>Facilities Maintenance</u></b>	
• Implement an energy management program (Best Practice 15, page 8-17)	125,000
<b><u>Food Service Operations</u></b>	
• Improve its use of commodities (Best Practice 6, page 10-13)	68,250
• Utilize a procurement co-op (Best Practice 6, page 10-13)	110,000
• Expand breakfast program (Best Practice 6, page 10-13)	20,000
• Reduce labor costs (Best Practice 9, page 10-18)	251,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$590,311</b>

***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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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](http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us).

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 to review the Bradford County School District during Fiscal Year 2002-03. With about 4,000 students, the Bradford County School District is the fifty-second largest school district out of 67 districts in the state. Located in northeast Florida, the district operates 10 schools and programs, including 4 elementary schools, 1 middle school, 1 senior high school, 1 vocational/technical school and 3 other types of schools and programs. 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 implement each report recommendation. 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 recommendation within two years. Pursuant to s. 1008.35, *Florida Statutes*, OPPAGA made the final determination on whether the school district is using best practices adopted by the Commissioner of Education based on information in the final report and the independent assessment of the district's use of each best practice.

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

## ***General Overview and District Obligations***

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Currently, the Bradford County School District is using 74% of the best practices adopted by the Commissioner, and at this time is not eligible for a Seal of Best Financial Management. Appendix B 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 financial management 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 these best practices. If no such changes have occurred

and the school board determines that the school district continues to conform to the 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***

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

### **Management Structures**

The Bradford County School District is using 12 of 14 of the best practices in management structures. The district has a clearly defined organizational structure, with the board and superintendent exercising effective oversight of the district's staffing and financial resources and giving principals the authority to effectively manage their schools. The district also has procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective; routinely seeks legal counsel to advise it about policy; has a system to accurately project enrollment; and actively seeks community involvement in its decision-making process. To use the remaining best practice standards, the district should address three issues. First, the district should update board policies to reflect major statutory changes to the school code that occurred in 2002. Second, the district should develop written procedures for certain operational or educational areas. Third, the district should have a strategic plan to guide its decision making.

### **Performance Accountability System**

The Bradford County School District is using one of the three performance accountability best practices. The district reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its educational and operational programs, the district needs to develop and implement a performance accountability system; conduct evaluations based on need; use these evaluations to modify programs; and report more performance information to the board and public, primarily through the improvement of the district's internet web page. The district currently provides parents and the public some information on the performance of educational programs through its website.

### **Educational Service Delivery**

The Bradford County School District is using 4 of the 12 educational service delivery best practices. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs

## *Digest: Best Financial Management Practices Review*

(such as Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment) and effective and efficient workforce development programs. It also ensures effective progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 and has an organizational structure and staffing of educational programs that minimizes administrative layers and processes. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its educational programs, the district needs to

- improve its system of data analysis and program evaluation;
- ensure the timely evaluation and placement of students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- enhance training opportunities in a variety of curricular areas;
- provide better guidance and feedback on the development of school improvement plans;
- ensure that all students have textbooks in core academic subjects;
- improve library and media services through better coordination;
- facilitate the integration of technology into the curriculum; and
- implement performance accountability standards for student support services.

### **Administrative and Instructional Technology**

The Bradford County School District is using seven of the nine administrative and instructional technology best practices. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner and generally provides timely and cost-effective support services; employs a dependable network and provides access to the Internet to personnel and students and encourages its use throughout the district; relies on well-developed data systems to deliver accurate financial and student information; and has written policies that direct safe and appropriate use of technology.

To meet the remaining best practice standards, the district needs to make improvements in two areas. First, the district should improve technology planning by broadening stakeholder participation, conducting assessments of technology needs, and developing goals in the technology plan that are feasible and measurable and include expected completion dates to track and evaluate goal achievement. Second, the district should improve performance in technology professional development by better assessing technology skills of employees to ensure those individuals who need additional training receive it. In addition, the district should track technology training received and evaluate its effectiveness, and principals should consider

technology skills used in the classroom as a criterion in evaluations.

### **Personnel Systems and Benefits**

The Bradford County School District is using 8 of the 11 personnel systems and benefits best practices. The district generally recruits and hires qualified personnel and uses cost containment strategies for its workers' compensation and employee benefits programs. The district has also improved the management of its personnel function and maintains an effective collective bargaining process.

The district is not using 3 of the 11 best practices for its personnel system. First, the district cannot demonstrate whether its working environment enhances employee satisfaction and minimizes turnover. To assess the level of job satisfaction within the district, the district should conduct periodic climate surveys of district employees and exit interviews with employees who terminate their employment with the district. Second, the district's staff development program has several deficiencies. To address this issue the district should assess the training needs of its employees and institute a mentoring program for new teachers. Third, the district has not established an effective system for evaluating employees. The district should update and improve its performance appraisal system and establish a districtwide training program on the new system.

### **Facilities Construction**

The Bradford County School District is using 19 of the 21 applicable facilities construction best practices.<sup>3</sup> The district has outsourced nearly all of its construction operations through contracts and construction management. While it has no plans for new school construction, the district has maximized the use of local revenue which funds the small construction projects that do occur. The district keeps school personnel and the public informed of construction projects through public announcements, school board meetings and post-construction orientations. To meet the remaining best practice standards the district needs to address several issues. First, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its construction operations, the district needs to establish a facilities planning committee and ensure competitive contracting practices. Second, the facilities construction budget should be the product of a facilities planning group and should outline the capital needs for the school district for the next five years. Third, the district should ensure that competitive bidding for construction services is conducted as outlined in Florida statutes.

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<sup>3</sup> Three best practices do not apply to the district given its size and certain aspects of its operations.

### **Facilities Maintenance**

The Bradford County School District is using 13 of the 22 best practices relating to facilities maintenance. The district has an experienced maintenance staff and has established an annual budget for the department within limited resources. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its facilities maintenance services, the district should establish better accountability mechanisms for maintenance work, use customer feedback to target maintenance and custodial areas needing improvement, complete a thorough assessment of maintenance needs, prioritize maintenance and improvements, utilize available information for planning and establish a written energy management plan.

### **Transportation**

The Bradford County School District is using 19 of the 20 transportation best practices. The district effectively transports some 1,900 students to and from school each day; however, it can improve accountability and efficiency. To meet the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its transportation program, the district needs to develop an accountability system for transportation functions.

### **Food Service Operations**

The Bradford County School District is using 5 of the 11 food service operations best practices. The district's food service program is organized with clear lines of responsibility, provides training to meet basic program needs, has developed a fairly comprehensive procedures manual, annually inspects critical program components, and has passed its most recent state and federal inspections. However, in order to meet the remaining best practice standards and to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its food service program, the district must improve program operations in several areas. The district's food service program needs to develop a strategic plan and improve its overall planning, budgeting, and accountability system by setting and using performance measures and benchmarks during the school year. The food service program also needs to perform better cash and account management by absorbing its fair share of all program expenses and optimize its financial opportunities by making the best use of its commodity allocations and modifying certain procurement practices. Finally, the program needs to develop a customer feedback system to identify barriers to meal participation and methods to overcoming those barriers.

### **Cost Control Systems**

The Bradford County School District is using 19 of the 22 cost control systems best practices. The district has adequate staffing and financial information systems to provide useful, timely, and accurate cost control information. The district also ensures that it receives an annual external audit to improve its operations, periodically reviews cash management activities, and has established written policies and procedures to provide for effective management of capital assets, debt, risk, purchasing, and inventory. To meet the remaining best practice standards, the district needs to establish written procedures that promote ethical financial management practices and provide for confidential reporting of suspected improprieties, develop a strategic plan that will provide management with measurable goals and objectives, and perform a risk assessment of its operations. After developing its strategic plan, the district should establish budget planning processes that link the development of the budget to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

## ***Bradford County School District Best Financial Management Practices***

***Currently, the Bradford County School District is using 74% (107 of 145) 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.***

<b><i>Best Practices</i></b>	<b><i>Is the District Using Best Practices?</i></b>		
<b><u>MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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.	✓		2-5
2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.	✓		2-5
3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.		✓	2-7
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.	✓		2-8
5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.	✓		2-9
6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.	✓		2-10
7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.	✓		2-11
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.	✓		2-12
9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.		✓	2-12
10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.	✓		2-13
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.	✓		2-14
12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.	✓		2-14
13. The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district's decision making and activities.	✓		2-15
14. The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district's decision making and activities.	✓		2-15

**Best Practices**

**Is the District Using Best Practices?**

<b><u>PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocational/Technical Education, English for Speakers of Other Languages Education, Facilities Construction, Facilities Maintenance, Transportation, Food Services, and Safety and Security.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>		✓	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

<b><u>EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1. District administrators use both academic and nonacademic data to improve K-12 education programs.		✓	4-8
2. The district provides effective and efficient Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs for students with disabilities and students who are gifted. <sup>5</sup>		✓	4-10
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]. <sup>6</sup>		✓	4-13
4. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs (such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment).	✓		4-16
5. The district provides effective and efficient workforce development programs (such as vocational-technical, adult basic education, and adult high school programs).	✓		4-17
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.		✓	4-18
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	✓		4-20
8. The district's organizational structure and staffing of educational programs minimizes administrative layers and processes.	✓		4-20
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.		✓	4-21

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Programs for students with disabilities are required by federal law to serve children aged 3 through 21.

<sup>6</sup> 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?**

<b><u>EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
10. The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction.		✓	4-23
11. The district utilizes instructional technology in the classroom to enhance curriculum and improve student achievement.		✓	4-24
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.		✓	4-25

<b><u>ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1. The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision making.		✓	5-6
2. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner that will best meet its instructional and administrative needs. <sup>7</sup>	✓		5-7
3. District and school-based staff receive professional development training for all technologies used in the district.		✓	5-8
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.	✓		5-11
6. The district uses technology to improve communication.	✓		5-12
7. The district has written policies that apply safe, ethical, and appropriate use practices that comply with legal and professional standards.	✓		5-12
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.	✓		5-13
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.	✓		5-13

<b><u>PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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. <sup>8</sup>		✓	6-5

<sup>7</sup> Instructional needs include incorporating technology into the curriculum and needs of students learning how to use technology.

<sup>8</sup> 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?**

<b><u>PERSONNEL SYSTEMS AND BENEFITS</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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. <sup>9</sup>		✓	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. <sup>10</sup>	✓		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.	✓		6-10
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.	✓		6-10
11. For classes of employees that are unionized, the district maintains an effective collective bargaining process.	✓		6-11

<b><u>FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1. The district has effective long-range planning processes. <sup>11</sup>		✓	7-6
2. When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.	✓		7-8
3. The five-year facilities work plan establishes budgetary plans and	✓		7-8

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Long-range covers 5-20 years out.

**Best Practices**

**Is the District Using Best Practices?**

<b><u>FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
priorities.			
4. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.	✓		7-8
5. The district has an effective site selection process based on expected growth patterns.	N/A		7-9
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.	✓		7-9
7. Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.	✓		7-9
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.	✓		7-10
9. The district develops thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each construction project. <sup>12</sup>	✓		7-10
10. The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.	✓		7-11
11. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.	✓		7-11
12. The district minimizes construction and maintenance and operations costs through the use of cost-effective designs, prototype school designs, and frugal construction practices.	✓		7-11
13. The district has effective management processes for construction projects.	✓		7-12
14. District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.	✓		7-12
15. All projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the Florida Building Code.	✓		7-13
16. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.	✓		7-13
17. The district retains appropriate professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.	✓		7-13
18. The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.		✓	7-14
19. The district minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to control project costs.	✓		7-15
20. The architect recommends payment based on the percentage of work completed. A percentage of the contract is withheld pending completion of the project.	✓		7-15

<sup>12</sup> 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?**

<b><u>FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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.	✓		7-16
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.	✓		7-16
23. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.		N/A	7-17
24. The district regularly evaluates facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.		N/A	7-17

<b><u>FACILITIES MAINTENANCE</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1. The district's maintenance and operations department has a mission statement and goals and objectives that are established in writing.		✓	8-6
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.		✓	8-8
4. The district has established procedures and staff performance standards to ensure efficient operations.		✓	8-9
5. The department maintains educational and district support facilities in a condition that enhances student learning and facilitates employee productivity.		✓	8-10
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.	✓		8-13
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.	✓		8-15
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.	✓		8-15
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

**Best Practices**

**Is the District Using Best Practices?**

<b><u>FACILITIES MAINTENANCE</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
16. The district has an energy management system in place, and the system is maintained at original specifications for maximum effectiveness.	✓		8-19
17. District personnel regularly review maintenance and operation's costs and services and evaluate the potential for outside contracting and privatization.	✓		8-20
18. A computerized control and tracking system is used to accurately track work orders and inventory.		✓	8-21
19. The maintenance and operations department has a system for prioritizing maintenance needs uniformly throughout the district.		✓	8-22
20. District policies and procedures clearly address the health and safety conditions of facilities.	✓		8-23
21. The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health and safety conditions.	✓		8-24
22. The district is aware of and prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code.	✓		8-24

<b><u>TRANSPORTATION</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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. <sup>13</sup>	✓		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.	✓		9-8
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.	✓		9-13

<sup>13</sup> 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?**

<b><u>TRANSPORTATION</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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
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.	✓		9-17
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.	✓		9-18
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

<b><u>FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1. The program has developed strategic or operational plans that are consistent with district plans, the program budget, and approved by the district.		✓	10-7
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.	✓		10-8
3. Program management has developed training designed to meet basic program needs as well as improve food services, both based on a needs assessment.	✓		10-10
4. Program management has developed comprehensive procedures manuals that are kept current.	✓		10-11
5. The district performs sound cash and account management.		✓	10-12
6. District and program management optimizes its financial opportunities.		✓	10-13
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.		✓	10-16
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.	✓		10-17

**Best Practices**

**Is the District Using Best Practices?**

<b><u>FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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.		✓	10-18
10. The food service program and district complies with federal state and district policy.	✓		10-20
11. The district conducts activities to ensures that customer needs are met and acts to improve services and food quality where needed.		✓	10-20

<b><u>COST CONTROL SYSTEMS</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
1. The district periodically analyzes the structure and staffing of its financial services organization.	✓		11-7
2. Management has developed and distributed written procedures for critical accounting processes and promotes ethical financial management practices.		✓	11-7
3. The district has adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information.	✓		11-9
4. District financial staff analyzes significant expenditure processes to ensure they are appropriately controlled.	✓		11-10
5. The district has established adequate internal controls.	✓		11-10
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.	✓		11-11
8. Management analyzes strategic plans for measurable objectives or measurable results.		✓	11-12
9. The district ensures that it receives an annual external audit and uses the audit to improve its operations.	✓		11-12
10. The district has an effective internal audit function and uses the audits to improve its operations. <sup>14</sup>		✓	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.	✓		11-15
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

<sup>14</sup> 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?*

<b><u>COST CONTROL SYSTEMS</u></b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
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
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.	✓		11-20



## *The Florida Legislature*

# *Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability*

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[Performance-based program budgeting \(PB<sup>2</sup>\) 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.

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# 1 Introduction

## Overview

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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 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

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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

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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 the 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*

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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 Bradford County School District and public schools. The evaluators interviewed district and school-based administrators, held two public forums, conducted focus groups with teachers, and attended a school board meeting. Evaluators also gathered and reviewed many program documents, district financial data, data on program activities, and data on student performance.

To put the Bradford County School District'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: Columbia, Jackson, Lafayette, Suwannee, and Walton. 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*

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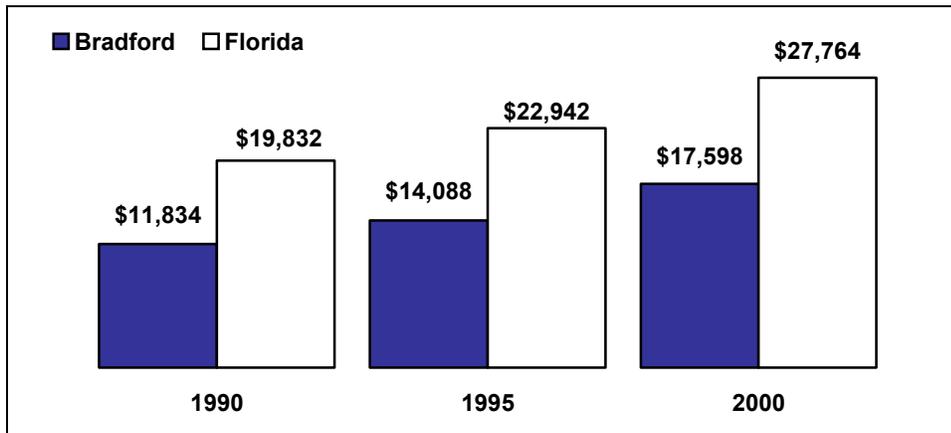
As of July 1, 2001, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the total population of Bradford County was 26,423. The county's population increased by 15.9% between 1990 and 2000, which was slower than the state's growth rate of 23.5% during that same time period. Most of the population of the county lives in unincorporated areas. The major population centers include Stark, Lawtey, Hampton, and Brooker.

Of the county's population, 98.8% consider themselves to be one race, while the remaining 1.2% considers themselves multi-racial. The largest percentage (76.3%) 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, 20.8% of the county's residents are Black or African American, which is higher than the statewide figure of 14.6%. These percentages are similar to the racial/ethnic composition of the student population.

A significant percentage of Bradford County's population (21.9%) is of school age (under 18 years old) while an additional 5.5% are less than five years old. By contrast, 12.9% of the county's population is 65 years old or older. Approximately 74.2% of the county's residents aged 25 years or older are high school graduates, while 8.4% 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 Bradford County is lower than it is across the state.

Bradford County's per capita income in 2000 was \$17,598, which was \$10,166 below the state average. As shown in Exhibit 1-2, the per capita income of Bradford County residents has been consistently lower than the per capita income of the state as a whole.

**Exhibit 1-2**  
**Per Capita Income of Bradford County Residents**  
**Was \$10,166 Below the State Average in 2000**



Source: Florida Research and Economic Database, 2002.

While 14.6% of the county’s residents live below the poverty level, a larger percentage of the county’s children (22.8%) live below the poverty level. These figures are higher than for the state as a whole. This corresponds with the relatively higher percentage of school children that are eligible for a free or reduced price lunch.

The unemployment rate in Bradford County has been lower than the state’s rate for the past four years. This suggests that students who graduate from high school in Bradford County should not have more difficulty finding employment than graduates in other parts of the state. Bradford County has a civilian workforce of 9,475 people. The county’s primary sources of employment include government services related to corrections, healthcare, and manufacturing.

## *School District Profile*

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The district operates 10 schools, as shown in Exhibit 1-3.

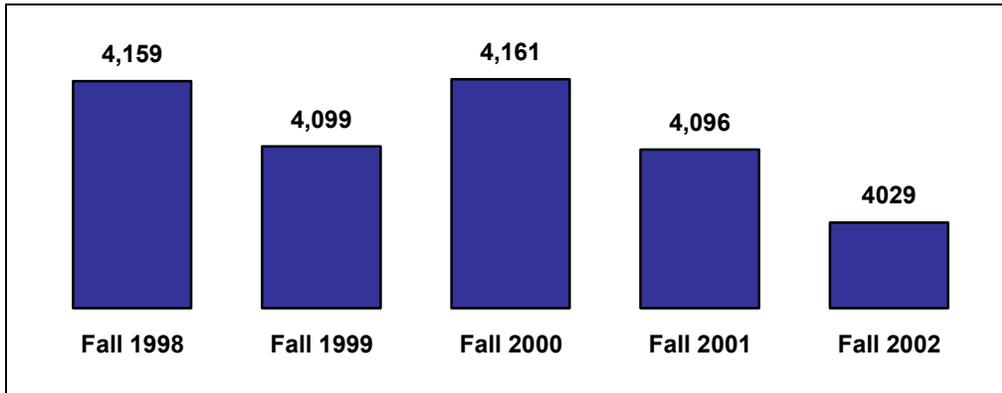
**Exhibit 1-3**  
**Bradford County Operates 10 Schools**

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

Source: Bradford County School Board.

With 4,029 students in the fall of 2002, the Bradford County School District is the 52nd largest school district in the state. The student population growth has fluctuated between fall 1998 and 2002, for a total net decrease of 3.13%, as shown in Exhibit 1-4. This rate was much smaller than the 8.71% increase in enrollment across the state.

**Exhibit 1-4**  
**Enrollment Growth in Bradford Has Fluctuated Over the Past Five Years**



Source: Florida Department of Education, Membership in Florida's Public Schools, Fall 2002.

The Bradford County School District expended \$27.1 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. It also includes some restricted funding provided through categorical programs, through which the Legislature funds specific programs such as instructional materials or student transportation. Exhibit 1-5 describes the district's revenue, expenditures, and fund balances for the 2001-02 fiscal year.

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

<b>Revenues and Expenditures</b>		<b>Total (Millions)</b>
<b>Revenues</b>		
Federal Direct		\$ 142,918
Federal Through State		3,111,848
Federal Through Local		322,899
State		18,033,781
Local		5,231,302
<b>Total Revenues</b>		<b>\$26,842,748</b>
<b>Expenditures</b>		
Instruction		\$14,135,744
Pupil Personnel Services		943,641
Instructional Media Services		406,248
Instruction and Curriculum Development Services		653,077
Instructional Staff Training		67,655
Board of Education		216,780
General Administration		299,131
School Administration		1,884,141
Facilities Acquisition and Construction		36,396
Fiscal Services		265,265
Food Services		1,273,713
Central Services		455,232
Pupil Transportation Services		1,068,943
Operation of Plant		2,079,546
Maintenance of Plant		821,604
Community Services		266,434
Fixed Capital Outlay:		
Facilities Acquisition and Construction		1,050,467
Other Capital Outlay		1,040,998
Debt Service:		
Principal		55,000
Interest and Fiscal Charges		64,558
<b>Total Expenditures</b>		<b>\$27,084,573</b>
<b>Excess (Deficiency) of Revenue Over Expenditure</b>		<b>\$ (241,825)</b>
Other financing sources:		
Operating Transfers In		\$ 100,464
Insurance Loss Recoveries		21,149
Operating Transfers Out		(100,464)
<b>Total other financing sources</b>		<b>21,149</b>
<b>Total Excess or Deficiency</b>		<b>\$ (220,676)</b>
<b>Fund Balances, July 1, 2001</b>		<b>4,430,465</b>
<b>Fund Balances, June 30, 2002</b>		<b>\$4,209,789</b>

Source: Florida Auditor General Annual Audit, Ending Fiscal Year 2002.

Exhibit 1-6 illustrates the percentage of administrators and instructional staff in the Bradford County School District and districts used for comparison. Exhibit 1-7 illustrates the actual numbers of administrators, instructional personnel, and support positions in the district.

**Exhibit 1-6  
Staffing Ratios Are Higher Than for Peer Districts**

School District	Staff Ratios					
	Administrators to Classroom Teachers	Administrators to Total Instructional Staff	Administrators to Total Staff	Classroom Teachers to Students <sup>1</sup>	Teacher Aides to Classroom Teachers	Guidance to Students
Columbia	1: 13.47	1: 14.64	1: 29.33	1: 16.92	1: 3.21	1: 478.90
Jackson	1: 12.10	1: 14.20	1: 27.05	1: 15.51	1: 2.93	1: 305.16
Lafayette	1: 11.33	1: 12.50	1: 24.33	1: 15.14	1: 3.77	1: 515.00
Suwannee	1: 11.28	1: 12.67	1: 23.39	1: 18.35	1: 5.44	1: 414.28
Walton	1: 11.18	1: 12.15	1: 25.37	1: 16.67	1: 3.25	1: 497.33
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>1: 10.29</b>	<b>1: 11.29</b>	<b>1: 21.79</b>	<b>1: 16.58</b>	<b>1: 3.08</b>	<b>1: 512.12</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>1: 14.45</b>	<b>1: 16.20</b>	<b>1: 29.64</b>	<b>1: 18.26</b>	<b>1: 4.28</b>	<b>1: 455.37</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2001-02.

**Exhibit 1-7  
Bradford County School District Employed 523 Staff in Year 2001-02**

Full-Time Employees	Number	Percentage
Administrators	24	4.6%
Instructional	271	51.8%
Support	228	43.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2001-02.

The Bradford County School District faces a number of distinct challenges. For example, the district has a declining student population resulting in falling state revenues. In addition, the district has FCAT scores below the state average; however, reading and math scores have risen steadily over the past three years. At the end of the 2002-03 school year, the district will lose seven administrators to retirement, creating a loss of institutional memory in a district with few written procedures. Most of the district's schools are over 30 years old and require renovations and a high level of maintenance. The district's food services program has low participation and is not self-sustaining. Within its limited resources, the district is confronted with the need for more training of classroom teachers, especially in the area of instructional technology. Many of the challenges and advantages faced by this district will be discussed throughout this review.

<sup>1</sup> This is not the same as average classroom size. This ratio is calculated by DOE by 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.

# 2

## Management Structures

### *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using 12 of 14 of the best practices in management structures. The district has a clearly defined organizational structure, with the board and superintendent exercising effective oversight of the district's staffing and financial resources and giving principals the authority to effectively manage their schools. The district also has procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective; routinely seeks legal counsel to advise it about policy; has a system to accurately project enrollment; and actively seeks community involvement in its decision-making process. To use the remaining best practice standards, the district should address three issues. First, the district should update board policies to reflect major statutory changes to the school code that occurred in 2002. Second, the district should develop written procedures for certain operational or educational areas. Third, the district should have a strategic plan to guide its decision making.

### *Background*

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The Bradford County School District's management structure is a standard hierarchical structure, with both the executive and policy-setting entities elected by the general population. The district has five board members and an elected superintendent. The district's board members are elected at-large, although they do represent specific districts within the county. Each member is elected for a four-year term. Two members are elected at the time of the presidential general election, and three are elected at the time of the gubernatorial general election.

The district has an experienced board, with all but two members serving in at least their second term. The newest members were elected for their first term in 2002, and two members were reelected during the 2000 general elections. Exhibit 2-1 shows the length of time board members have served and their previous experience.

**Exhibit 2-1  
Most Board Members Are Serving in Their Second or Third Term**

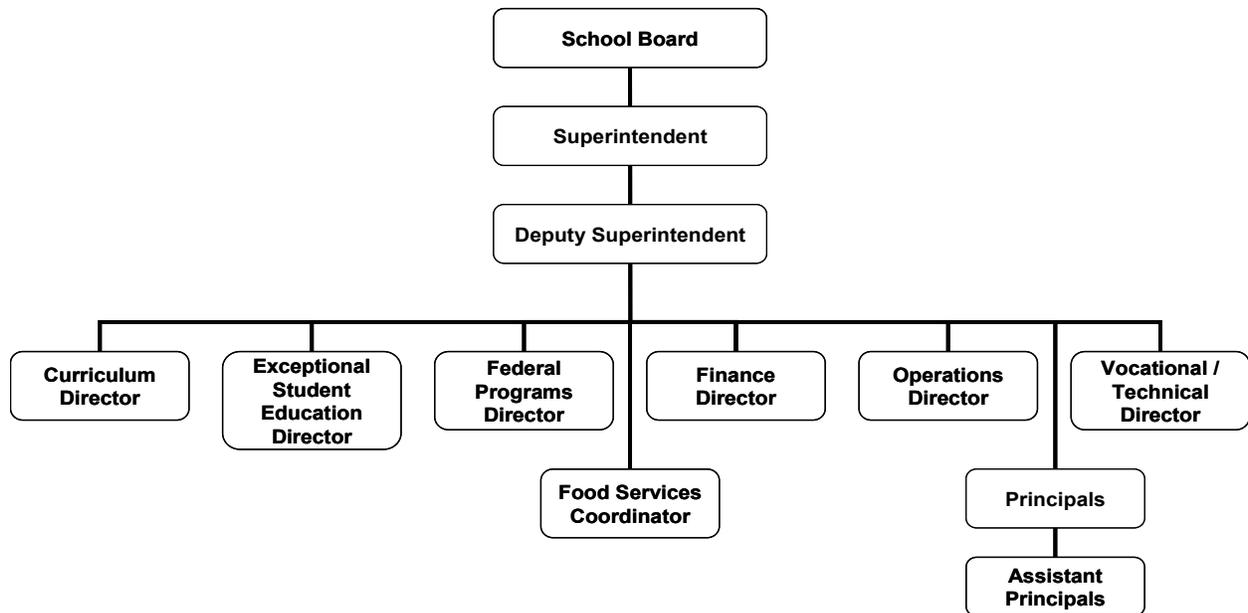
Board Member	Tenure	Background
Randy Jones (chair)	Elected for first term in 1996, reelected in 2000, up for reelection in 2004.	GIS Specialist
Bobby Carter	Elected for first term in 2002.	Truck Driver
Vivian Chappell	Elected for first term in 1992, reelected in 1996 and 2000, up for reelection in 2004.	Group Home Administrator
Jesse Moore	Elected for first term in 1998, reelected in 2002, up for reelection in 2006.	Retired School Administrator
James Watson	Elected for first term in 2002.	Correctional Officer

Source: Bradford County School District.

The current superintendent, Robert Paterson, was elected in 2000. He is a native of Bradford County and started teaching in the district in 1975. He became an administrator in 1978 and has served as the principal of every school in the district.

The superintendent is the chief executive and administrative officer of the board and, as such, is responsible for organizing the district’s administration. Exhibit 2-2 illustrates the district-level administrative structure for Fiscal Year 2002-03. The district’s school-level administration is limited to the principals and assistant principals of the district’s four elementary schools (K-5 grade), one middle school (6-8 grade), one community school (K-8 grade), and one high school (9-12 grade). The district’s two small elementary schools do not have assistant principals, while the high school has three. The district operates a vocational-technical school for secondary and post-secondary students with a director/principal and a coordinator of community education. In addition, the district operates an alternative school, the Renaissance Center, and provides teachers for a Department of Juvenile Justice residential facility.

**Exhibit 2-2  
The Bradford County School District’s Organizational Structure Is Hierarchical**



Source: Bradford County School District.

In addition to the activities conducted by the offices in Exhibit 2-2, the Bradford County School District uses many of the services offered by the Northeast Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC) to supplement or replace some administrative activities. NEFEC is an educational consortium of 14 members and 12 participating school districts located across northeast Florida. The consortium's board of directors is composed of the superintendent from each member district and an executive director manages day-to-day administration. The board, in consultation with NEFEC administrators, selects which services the consortium will provide. The consortium attempts to provide certain administrative services in a way that maximizes economies of scale, which reduces the cost of these services compared to the expense that would occur if each individual district conducted the activity using internal staff. NEFEC provides more than 20 administrative services including cooperative purchasing; risk management; data processing and Management Information Systems (MIS); professional development; employee benefits program, and energy management. Each school district has the option of participating in any or all of the services or programs.

As Exhibit 2-3 illustrates, the district's revenue has fluctuated over the last few years. One significant change has been in the capital projects fund. The significant increase between Fiscal Years 2001-02 and 2002-03 relate to increased revenue to build a new media center at Southside Elementary School, classroom additions to Southside and the Vocational-Technical School, and an addition to the cafeteria at Bradford High School. The budget decrease in Fiscal Year 2001-02 resulted from statewide general revenue shortfalls. The district has no outstanding debt and is able to maintain an annual unrestricted fund balance.

**Exhibit 2-3  
The Bradford County School District's Revenue  
Has Fluctuated Over the Past Three Years**

	Fiscal Year		
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$22,230,660	\$21,840,525	\$22,544,838
Special Revenue – Food Services	1,261,287	1,284,841	1,362,176
Special Revenue - Other	2,946,042	2,245,232	3,318,968
Debt Service Funds	115,820	117,586	114,732
Capital Projects Funds	1,959,743	1,249,177	2,250,099
Enterprise Funds	0	0	0
Internal Service Funds	116,594	125,535	0
Trust Funds	1,000	1,000	1,000
<b>Less Transfers</b>			
From General Fund	0	0	0
From Special Revenue – Food Services	0	0	0
From Special Revenue - Other	0	15,500	0
From Debt Service Funds	155,000	10,052	0
From Capital Projects Funds	143,567	74,912	0
From Enterprise Funds	0	0	0
From Internal Service Funds	0	0	0
From Trust Funds	0	0	0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$28,332,579</b>	<b>\$26,763,432</b>	<b>\$29,591,813</b>

Note: Revenues for Fiscal Years 2000-01 and 2001-02 are actual audited revenues. Revenues for Fiscal Year 2002-03 are budgeted revenue.

Source: Bradford County School District, April 2003.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Management Structures Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Board and Superintendent Roles and Responsibilities</b>	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	2-5
	2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.	Yes	2-5
	3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.	No	2-7
	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	2-8
<b>Organization, Staffing and Resource Allocation</b>	5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.	Yes	2-9
	6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.	Yes	2-10
	7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.	Yes	2-11
	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.	Yes	2-12
<b>Planning and Budgeting</b>	9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.	No	2-12
	10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.	Yes	2-13
	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.	Yes	2-14
	12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.	Yes	2-14
<b>Community Involvement</b>	13. The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district's decision-making and activities.	Yes	2-15
	14. The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district's decision-making and activities.	Yes	2-15

# 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 further undermine effective working relationships particularly when the school board and superintendent have substantially different philosophies and opinions on key issues. Thus, districts should have mechanisms in place to maintain a distinct separation of roles and responsibilities between the school board and superintendent. In the most simple of terms, the school board should be the policymaking entity in the district, and the superintendent should have the primary responsibility for implementing these policies during the course of his/her daily administration of the district. School board members should not be directing daily operations and should address operational concerns through the superintendent. 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 in place that comply with state statutes regarding these roles and responsibilities.

The Bradford County School District policies clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of the board and the superintendent. Training provided to the board and the superintendent by the Florida School Board Association and the Florida Association of District School Superintendents reinforced the separation of the policy-making role of the board from the management and administrative responsibilities of the superintendent. The district received additional training from the Florida School Board Association to further strengthen the board's policy-making role. The board was certified as a master board in 1993, 1997, and 2002 and participated in reinstatement training in March 2003 because of its two new members. In an effort to enhance the working relationship between the superintendent and the board, the superintendent discusses agenda items, especially those that might be controversial, with the chairman and each board member before board meetings.

The district policies establish the relationship between the board and district personnel. The superintendent has procedures, transmitted by memorandum and orally, requiring communication between board members and school-level personnel to go through either the superintendent or deputy superintendent. Board members interact with district level administrators on issues relating to board meeting agenda items requiring clarification or additional information. Some board members contact school-based administrators on operational issues, although this practice is not affecting district management nor creating confusion on lines of authority.

## Best Practice 2: Using

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

The primary goal of all school board meetings should be to come to a decision in a timely manner on the majority of policy issues presented during a particular meeting. To use this best practice goal the school board and superintendent should have formal and informal mechanisms in place to ensure that board

## *Management Structures*

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

The Bradford County School District board meetings are generally efficient and effective. Board meetings usually last one and one-half hours and end on time. However, some meetings run long because of questions or concerns about agenda items. The district recently developed a master calendar of major events and required board actions to ensure that the board handles these matters in a timely manner. The district holds its board meetings at a location and time that is convenient to the public. Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in the boardroom at the district administrative offices in downtown Starke. The location is convenient to the public since the county is small geographically and driving distances are relatively short. Meetings are scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Board meetings are advertised in the local weekly paper. Meeting agendas and material are available to the members and the public seven days before the meeting.

Although the district is using this best practice, it could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of board meetings in two ways. First, board members or the superintendent routinely pull items from the consent agenda. Items removed from the consent agenda are transferred to the regular agenda so these can be considered and voted on separately, although this can extend the time of the meeting, or handled during a subsequent workshop that requires a second meeting during the month. Altering the consent agenda may indicate that controversial items or items needing action, a decision, or significant further discussion are placed on the consent agenda. The consent agenda should be used for items that are information only and do not require a decision or any board action. Because of the number of items pulled from the agenda, the district often holds at least one workshop each month in addition to the monthly board meeting. For a district the size of Bradford County, holding two meetings each month may not be efficient because of the time required of district personnel to prepare material for these meetings.

Second, board members receive large packets of material for each board meeting; however, members are not provided with summary information to assist in their review or decision-making. Board members must seek additional information on agenda items from district administrators before or during the meeting, indicating that there is not sufficient information on agenda items upon which to base a decision. Not only is this method inefficient for obtaining information, but it may also mean that not all board members receive the same level of information on agenda items.

**To further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of board meetings, we recommend that the superintendent and board chairman, in consultation with the board attorney, determine before each board meeting which items are appropriate for the consent agenda and which should be action items on the regular agenda. Examples of items that should be on the regular agenda rather than the consent agenda are purchasing decisions (sole source versus competitive bid), major purchases by the district, large dollar contracts or agreements (e.g., construction), creation of new positions, new or revised job descriptions, and special pay supplements for district personnel. We also recommend that the district provide board members with clearly written summaries for agenda items that describe how the item supports the district’s goals and objectives, the resources that will be needed, the implication for the district’s budget, what alternatives have been considered, and the superintendent’s recommendation to the board.**

### **Best Practice 3: Not Using**

**The district does not have up-to-date policies, and many operational and educational programs do not have written procedures.**

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

The Bradford County School District has written board policies and limited procedures that are known and followed by district personnel. However, the policies were written in 1997 and last revised in 1998. The district recognizes that its policies need to be revised and has a plan to do so. The district obtained Northeast Florida Education Consortium prototype policies developed for its members because of the school code revisions. The district plans to have district administrators tailor the policies to meet the needs of the Bradford County School District. District administrators each have their own copy of the current policy notebook. School-based personnel have access to board policies at their schools. Written procedures do not exist for most board policies and may not be needed in a district the size of Bradford County. The district has limited written procedures in the form of the student progression plan and code of conduct. In general, district procedures are unwritten and transmitted verbally to district-level and school-based personnel in staff meetings or through memoranda from the superintendent.

The district can improve its operations and meet this best practice by addressing two issues. First, the district’s policies are out-of-date and need to be revised to reflect revisions in the school code in 2002. Specifically, the 2002 Florida Legislature revised all statutes related to schools in Florida to conform to the constitutional reorganization of the public education system in the state. As a result, many school districts, including Bradford, do not comply with this best practice. Without this update, district personnel may not be aware of or follow current state law. For example, the student code of conduct references statutes that no longer exist.

**Action Plan 2-1**

<b>We recommend that the district revise its board policies to reflect current state statutes.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Assign sections of the NEFEC prototype policies to appropriate district administrators.
	Step 2.	Tailor prototype policies to district practices, as needed.
	Step 3.	School board attorney reviews and approves the revised prototype policies.
	Step 4.	Distribute revised policies to board members for review.
	Step 5.	Schedule and hold a public workshop to discuss the revised policies.
	Step 6.	Board approves the revised policies at the next board meeting after the workshop.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendent, district-level administrators, school board attorney, school board.	
Time Frame	July 2003	

Second, the district does not have written procedures for most of its educational and operational areas. The district does have written procedures for student progression and student code of conduct, as required by state law, as well as procedures for food service workers to follow. While a small school district may not need to develop procedures for every thing it does, the district should develop procedures for those areas where they face significant risk of not meeting state or federal compliance requirements, or that could cause a disruption in student services. The lack of written procedures is important because the district will experience the retirement of seven district and school-based administrators at the end of the 2002-03 school year. It is likely that there will be significant loss of district history and knowledge through this attrition. Written procedures, rather than the current verbal transmission of procedures, will assist the transition of new administrators into their positions and serve as a training aid for new personnel. Examples of areas needing written procedures are the hiring and firing of personnel, student discipline, federal programs, admission to the alternative school, and financial management.

**Action Plan 2-2**

<b>We recommend that the district develop written procedures for key operational areas.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	District-level administrators determine the district's highest risk areas in consultation with the school board attorney,
	Step 2.	District-level administrators develop written procedures for the identified risk areas within the purview of their department.
	Step 3.	The school board attorney reviews and approves the procedures.
	Step 4.	The district holds a public workshop to discuss the proposed procedures.
	Step 5.	Board members approve the procedures at the next board meeting.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendent, district administrators, school board attorney, school board.	
Time Frame	August 2003	

**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 in size, they should periodically evaluate whether hiring a full-time in-house attorney would be more cost-effective for the districts. 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 Bradford County School District has an attorney under contract to advise, counsel, and represent the board, the members of the board, the superintendent, and district personnel. The district also seeks external counsel for specialized legal services as needed. In addition to the board, the attorney provides counsel to district administrators where no conflict of interest exists. The board has retained the same attorney since 1995, and she has not raised her rate in five years. The attorney is required to log her hours spent on school district issues. She attends all board meetings and workshops and provides consultation and services in the areas of contracting, personnel issues, student discipline, public record requests, and child custody issues. The attorney's contract with the district is for a minimum of ten hours per month at \$90 per hour. Billing records for Fiscal Years 1999-00 through 2002-03 show annual payments ranging from a high of \$27,344 in 1999-00 because of a lawsuit to a low of \$14,132 in 2001-02. The attorney does not charge the district for routine telephone calls from board members or district personnel nor does she charge for attending board meetings. Before the attorney's contract was renewed for Fiscal Year 2002-03, the district compared contracted legal costs with neighboring Baker and Union counties. The comparison showed that the district is obtaining legal services at a reasonable cost: \$90 per hour charge compared with \$200, a monthly retainer of \$900 compared with \$1,000, and no charge for board meetings compared with \$200.

Although the district does not have written procedures addressing the board or district personnel conferring with the attorney, they access her services appropriately. District leadership and administrators, principals, and board members may call the attorney at any time for assistance; she does not accept calls from teachers. Since the attorney does not bill for routine telephone calls, the lack of written procedures for accessing her services has not affected the cost of legal services for the district.

## **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)]. Irrespective of organizational structure, staff and the general public should be able to clearly understand who is responsible for what in the district.

## *Management Structures*

The Bradford County School District has clearly defined organizational units whose functions are known to district personnel. School board policies clearly define the administrative organization and the responsibilities, duties, and qualifications of administrative personnel. In recent years, the district has eliminated administrative positions and flattened its organizational structure. Administrative positions eliminated include one assistant superintendent position, the director of MIS, and the director of operations. Funds from the eliminated administrative positions were redirected to salary increases for teachers.

The approved organizational chart for Fiscal Year 2003-04 reflects the elimination of the director of operations position, the creation of supervisory positions for transportation and maintenance, and the re-establishment of the director of MIS position. Most of the district top administrators have reasonable spans of control, with the exception of the deputy superintendent. The deputy supervises all district-level administrators and principals as well as serving as the personnel director. Before the elimination of an assistant superintendent position and the consolidation of functions under the deputy superintendent, the district had two assistant superintendents, one over educational services and one over operational functions.

### **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 lean administratively and maximize funds available to support their primary mission, 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 Bradford County School District reviews its administrative staffing levels, especially as administrators resign or retire. Examples include the elimination of one assistant superintendent position, the elimination of the operations director and MIS director, with funds redirected towards increasing teacher salaries. Additional staffing changes made recently to improve operating efficiency include the creation of the ESE director position, re-establishing the MIS director position, and creating supervisors for the transportation and maintenance functions. The district's last staffing plan was completed by FADSS in Fiscal Year 1996-97.

Based upon the most recently available Department of Education (DOE) data for Fiscal Year 2001-02, the district has higher ratios of administrators to teachers, instructors, and staff than statewide ratios and is higher than its peer districts. However, since 2001-02, the district has eliminated several administrative positions, which is likely to affect the ratios shown in the exhibit below.

**Exhibit 2-4  
Staffing Ratios are Higher Than for Peer Districts**

School District	Staff Ratios					
	Administrators to Classroom Teachers	Administrators to Total Instructional Staff	Administrators to Total Staff	Classroom Teachers to Students	Teacher Aids to Classroom Teachers	Guidance to Students
Columbia	1: 13.47	1: 14.64	1: 29.33	1: 16.92	1: 3.21	1: 478.90
Jackson	1: 12.10	1: 14.20	1: 27.05	1: 15.51	1: 2.93	1: 305.16
Lafayette	1: 11.33	1: 12.50	1: 24.33	1: 15.14	1: 3.77	1: 515.00
Suwannee	1: 11.28	1: 12.67	1: 23.39	1: 18.35	1: 5.44	1: 414.28
Walton	1: 11.18	1: 12.15	1: 25.37	1: 16.67	1: 3.25	1: 497.33
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>1: 10.29</b>	<b>1: 11.29</b>	<b>1: 21.79</b>	<b>1: 16.58</b>	<b>1: 3.08</b>	<b>1: 512.12</b>
<b>State</b>	<b>1: 14.45</b>	<b>1: 16.20</b>	<b>1: 29.64</b>	<b>1: 18.26</b>	<b>1: 4.28</b>	<b>1: 455.37</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2001-02.

**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. These documents should not require extensive explanation by district staff or the superintendent. Financial information should be updated and presented to the board on a regular basis, and all agenda items that have an impact on the budget should include detailed explanations of these effects.

Bradford County School Board members receive training in school district budgets and finance through master board training. The board has established expenditure thresholds by department and funding source. All purchase requests are reviewed and approved by the finance director. The finance director provides district and school-based administrators with monthly expenditure reports to help them manage their budgets. Budget amendments by department and by school are also presented to the board for approval. The district is free of debt and maintains a reserve fund that meets the best practice standard of between three and five percent of total budget. Financial information presented to the board does not provide information on the short and long-term implications of budget decisions on the district’s goals and programs.

Although the district is using this best practice, it could improve financial and budget information provided to the board. The district could provide the board with summary information on how budget items under consideration might affect the district’s ability to meet board priorities, goals, and objectives. This summary information would assist board members with their decision-making by linking financial decisions to the district’s programs as well as short and long-term goals.

**To further facilitate board actions at meetings, we recommend that the district provide the board with summary information on the implications of proposed budgets or budget amendments on the district’s ability to meet board priorities, goals, and objectives.**

### **Best Practice 8: Using**

**The district clearly has assigned school principals the authority they need to effectively manage their schools while adhering to district-wide 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 that 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 this 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.

The Bradford County School District has policies on the roles and responsibilities of principals and assistant principals. The district also has policies on school-based management. These policies provide school-based administrators with the authority to manage the operations of their schools. The job goals, duties, and responsibilities contained in the job descriptions of principals and assistant principals support district policies. These documents clearly provide principals and assistant principals with decision-making authority for their schools. Interviews indicated that principals felt they had authority over personnel, budget, and school operations.

The district provides each principal with the student progression plan and code of conduct and monitors adherence to these policies by school administrators. School principals are held accountable for their performance in achieving educational goals. School-based administrators, who were not able to achieve the district’s goals, have been moved or demoted by the superintendent. The superintendent holds monthly meetings with district and school-based administrators to discuss policies and procedures, financial matters, and upcoming district events.

## **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 also should 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.

The Bradford County School District currently does not have a strategic plan. The board and district leadership recognize the need for a strategic plan to guide the development of strategic goals and objectives, action plans, and as the means to measure progress. While the district does not have a strategic plan, it has established goals that are reflected in school improvement plans and are known by district and school-based personnel. These goals include improving school grades, improving Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores, reducing disciplinary problems, and increasing teacher salaries. In its recent audit, the Auditor General recommended the district develop a strategic plan that establishes long and short-term goals and priorities to assist the district in decision-making and resource allocation. The district anticipates having a strategic plan in place in the summer of 2003.<sup>1</sup>

### Action Plan 2-3

We recommend that the district develop a strategic plan.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Determine whether a consultant will be used to facilitate the development of the strategic plan and who this consultant will be.
	Step 2.	Identify funds to pay for the consultant.
	Step 3.	Identify which district personnel will be involved in plan development.
	Step 4.	Identify and involve district stakeholders in plan development.
	Step 5.	Identify key tasks and deadlines.
	Step 6.	Present draft plan to district stakeholders in a public workshop.
	Step 7.	Prepare and disseminate final plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendents, board members.	
Time Frame	August 2003.	

### Best Practice 10: Using

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

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment projections are used for many things in districts including budgeting and funding, zoning, estimates of facility requirements and staffing ratios. Because of the critical nature of FTE projections, school districts must have a system to make the most accurate student enrollment projections 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. However, medium to large districts or districts with above average student growth rates should supplement the DOE models with additional projection methodologies. These additional methodologies should include in-depth demographic information, not used in the DOE models. The information from each methodology should be reconciled to produce the actual FTE projection. Districts may choose to supplement the DOE model with information from local planning departments, state universities, or private demographers.

The MIS supervisor has responsibility for FTE projections in the district. The Bradford County School District forecasting of student enrollment is accurate. Standards for FTE projection error rates are within +/- two percent, which the district has met consistently. The district uses the DOE cohort survival statistical procedure to calculate enrollment. Additional factors are considered when making enrollment forecasts. For the current school year, the district factored in the proposed closing of a Department of Juvenile Justice facility in its calculations. The superintendent attends local and regional chamber of

<sup>1</sup> Florida Auditor General, Bradford County District School Board Financial, Operational, and Federal Single Audit Report for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 2002, Report No. 03-136

commerce meetings as well as city council meetings to stay apprised of business and economic developments in the county that could affect student enrollment.

### **Best Practice 11: Using**

**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 these goals and objectives.**

Like most other organizations, 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) either may 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 Bradford County School District does not have a strategic plan to guide the use of its resources. However, the district does have stated and widely known goals that form the basis for directing the use of resources. For example, the district hired reading coaches to raise reading scores, one of its major goals, and redirected funds from the elimination of administrative positions to raising teacher salaries, another district goal.

Although the district is using this best practice, it is important that the district link budget development, budget amendments, and spending decisions to its goals and strategies once the strategic plan is completed. The Auditor General in the district's Fiscal Year 2001-02 audit has also made this recommendation.<sup>2</sup>

**To improve its planning and budgeting processes, we recommend that the district link its resources and expenditures to the goals and strategies presented in its strategic plan when this plan is complete.**

### **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 and it still cannot meet critical student and/or staff needs without additional funds. In general, districts usually 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.

The Bradford County School District approved a small increase (.094) in the millage rate for the 2002-03 school year. Other local options to increase revenue are not under consideration. The district receives grant awards for Title I, Carl Perkins, and Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. The district also

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<sup>2</sup> Florida Auditor General, Bradford County District School Board Financial, Operational, and Federal Single Audit Report for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 2002, Report No. 03-136.

applied for and receives Title III funding for translators as part of the English for Speakers of Other Languages program. Additional grant funds include \$297,000 for reading coaches as part of the Florida Reading Initiative (FRI).

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

### Best Practice 13: Using

**The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district’s decision-making and activities.**

To be successful in educating students, school districts must actively engage parents and guardians in the activities of the district and the individual schools. 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.

The Bradford County School District uses a variety of communication mechanisms to provide information to parents including information sent home or mailed to parents and information on the district’s website. Parents and other community members are included in SAC membership. SAC members are responsible for developing and approving the SIPs as well as tracking goal attainment. The district does not provide training to SAC members on their roles and responsibilities, SIP development, data analysis or tracking goal attainment. Training of SAC members is left up to each school principal.

Although the district is using this best practice, it could improve its efforts with parents and community members by providing SAC members with relevant training on their roles and responsibilities, SIP development, data analysis, and tracking goal attainment.

**To improve the knowledge and skills of parents, and others serving on the SACs, we recommend that the district develop and provide training to SAC members.**

### Best Practice 14: Using

**The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district’s decision-making and activities.**

Business and community groups are able to provide 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 that 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.

The Bradford County School District has active business partners for each of its schools. It is the responsibility of the principal or his or her designee to recruit and maintain business partners. There is a

## *Management Structures*

district-wide coordinator for business partners as well who ensures that partnership lists are up-to-date and arranges for partnership appreciation events. A limited number of business partners serve on the SACs. Business partners provide schools with services, discounts, and funds. Examples of contributions made by business partners include cash donations for technology upgrades, contributions of office supplies, and hosting a reception for eighth graders. The district holds an appreciation luncheon each year for its business partners that is hosted by the vocational-technical school. The vocational-technical school has craft advisory committees for each of its programs. Members of the advisory committees are recruited by the program directors to provide advice in such areas as curriculum, desired length for each program, and pay expectations for graduates.

Community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce provide funding for district initiatives. The Chamber hosted a regional training for the FRI in the summer of 2002. The district also has an education foundation that offers student scholarships and grants to teachers for classroom activities. Students and district personnel participate in a variety of community service projects including Jail and Bail, March of Dimes, Relay for Life, Habitat for Humanity, the local food pantry, and reading to nursing home residents.

# 3 Performance Accountability Systems

## *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using one of the three performance accountability best practices. The district reports on the performance and cost-efficiency of its major educational and operational programs to ensure accountability to parents and other taxpayers. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its educational and operational programs, the district needs to develop and implement a performance accountability system; conduct evaluations based on need; use these evaluations to modify programs; and report more performance information to the board and public, primarily through the improvement of the district's internet web page. The district currently provides parents and the public some information on the performance of educational programs through its website.

## *Background*

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The Bradford County School District began developing its five-year strategic plan in March 2003. The plan should contain a mission statement, beliefs, goals, and strategies when completed. The plan will serve as the foundation for the district's program-level performance accountability system, which to date has been comprised of a few broad educational goals measured by limited testing data. The district has not developed goals or performance measures for its educational or operational programs. The district needs to develop an accountability system comprised of performance measures, measurable objectives, and more comprehensive reporting to the board and the public.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Performance Accountability Systems Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Goals and Measurable Objectives</b>	1. The district has clearly stated goals and measurable objectives that can be achieved within budget for each major educational and operational program. These major programs are Basic Education (K-3, 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

## 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 should also benchmark their performance data against past results or the results of other, comparable districts.

The Bradford County School District does not have a well-defined accountability system as part of its management structure. The district does not have formal goals and objectives for its major educational or operational programs. Without measurable objectives, the district is limited in its ability to assess and improve its performance and the cost of its programs and support services. However, the district does have several broad educational program goals and a related personnel goal: improving school grades, improving Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores, improving student discipline, and increasing teachers' salaries. School Improvement Plans (SIPs) for the district reflect these goals. The district measures its progress primarily through test scores. The achievement of these goals is tied to the district's budget decisions. Individual administrators use various methods to assess the performance of their program or school: comparisons with other counties in the educational consortium, comparisons with Department of Education (DOE) data, and performance assessment at weekly staff meetings. The district relies on school-based administrators to review student data and identify and implement strategies to improve performance.

**Action Plan 3-1**

**In conjunction with its development of a strategic plan, we recommend that the district develop a program-level accountability system to assess and improve the performance and cost of its programs and support services.**

Action Needed	<p>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 A.</p> <p>Step 2. For each measure, identify the data needed and determine the information below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who will collect performance data and how often?</li> <li>▪ What is the source of the data (e.g., state or district reports)?</li> <li>▪ In what format is the data needed?</li> <li>▪ How often should the data be collected?</li> <li>▪ Who (program staff, department head, assistant superintendent, superintendent, school board) will the data be reported to and how often?</li> <li>▪ How should the data be used?</li> </ul> <p>Step 3. Identify and prioritize data needs by classifying data into the following two categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ data currently available, accessible, and in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives and</li> <li>▪ data currently either not available, accessible or in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives.</li> </ul> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• either short-term (two to three years) or mid-term (four to five years);</li> <li>• address major aspects of the program’s purpose and expenditures;</li> <li>• be specific;</li> <li>• be easily understood;</li> <li>• be challenging but achievable;</li> <li>• be measurable and quantifiable;</li> </ul> <p>Examples of objectives include:</p> <p>“The food service program will maintain a labor margin of ___% in 2003-04.”</p> <p>“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).”</p> <p>“By 2004, the maintenance department will reduce number of custodians per net square foot to _____ which is consistent with the industry standard of 1:_____.”</p> <p>Step 6. Periodically compare district performance data to data from other, comparable districts or programs to determine whether the district could improve its operations.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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-</p>
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depth evaluations in writing.  
 Step 9. 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	The board, the superintendent, principals, directors, and coordinators
Time Frame	August 2003

Source: OPPAGA.

## Best Practice 2: Not Using

### **The district does not formally evaluate the performance and cost of its major educational and operational programs, and does not 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 should also have interim performance measures that assist in the daily administration of its programs.

The Bradford County School District does not have an evaluation system in place to assess whether educational and operational programs are meeting intended purposes, goals, and objectives in the most efficient manner. As a result, the district is not able to evaluate the cost efficiency or effectiveness of its programs in a formal or consistent manner. Because the district lacks a system of goals, objectives, and performance measures, there is no basis upon which programs can be evaluated. Evaluation of program performance is a critical component of effective management as well as critical to public accountability.

The district relies on Department of Education (DOE) program monitoring or audit reports of programs to identify problems and needed improvements. Some program directors compare program data with DOE and Northeast Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC) data for comparable counties. The district does not systematically compare its performance against that of peer districts. There is limited evaluation of performance at the school level. Data on test scores, discipline, and attendance is disaggregated by student subgroups to focus resources on specific students or to initiate improvements. Ongoing evaluation provides a means for program directors and school administrators to monitor and manage programs on a daily basis and make adjustments as needed. The periodic assessment of the cost-effectiveness of programs is a component of a performance accountability system. Because the district lacks such a system, it is impossible for district managers to assess the costs of major programs on a regular basis.

The district could implement an evaluation process by developing more systematic methods for determining which programs would benefit most from evaluation. These methods would begin with developing performance measures for district programs and focusing evaluation resources on programs that are not meeting expectations. In addition to performance, other criteria for determining which programs should be evaluated may be legal requirements, funding source, students served, and risks or consequences of poor performance. District administrators should develop, and the board should approve, a schedule to evaluate major programs on a periodic basis. District personnel or students from the University of Florida could conduct these evaluations. Evaluation results should be presented to the board and disseminated to other administrators and school personnel. Refer to Action Plan 3-1 for the steps the district should take to improve program evaluation.

### **Best Practice 3: Using**

#### **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.**

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 who do not provide accountability information.

The Bradford County School District provides information about student performance on its web site. This information includes graduation rates, dropout rates, suspensions, type of diplomas and certification of completion received, and FCAT scores. However, information is aggregated at the district level without statewide comparison data presented. This means that parents and other stakeholders are not able to compare student performance among schools in the district or compare a school with the district average or with statewide averages. In addition, no trend data on student performance is presented. Parents and other stakeholders are not able to determine whether their school has improved its performance or how much improvement has been made. In addition, performance information on the district's web site is not up-to-date. For example, in February 2003, performance data was from the 2000-01 school year. Information on school performance is published in the local weekly newspaper, the *Bradford County Telegraph*. In May 2002, the newspaper reported that Bradford County FCAT scores were below the state average in all areas. The district also does not routinely present the board, parents, or other stakeholders with information on how special groups of students, e.g., Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, are performing and how their performance compares with that of basic education students. Since the district has not developed an accountability system for its operational programs, it does not report on the performance of these programs to the board or the public.

Although the district is using this best practice, the district could improve the way it reports the performance of its programs in two areas. First, the district could expand the mechanisms it uses to report performance information to the public and the board. For example, the performance of educational programs could be included in informational pamphlets that are sent home to parents. Board members could be provided performance information through school and district budgets, which they review and approve. Budgets and budget amendments could also provide the number and percentage of students performing at or above a satisfactory level in reading, math and writing as well as average daily attendance. This would allow board members to see how much progress schools are making in improving student performance and would help link budget decisions to student performance. Once the district conducts evaluations of its programs, results should be provided to the board, parents, and the public through formal reports, school information pamphlets, district fact sheets, web site postings, and press releases.

Second, the district could present performance data on its web site in a way that permits parents and the public to make comparisons among schools, between schools and the district average, and between the district and state average. The district could also provide trend data on performance so that parents and public can see whether schools have improved their performance over time and how much improvement has been made. The district should make every effort to have the most up-to-date performance data on its website.

**To improve the way the district reports its performance and costs, we recommend that the district expand the ways it communicates program performance to the board, parents, and public. Information should be conveyed through cost-efficient mechanisms such as pamphlets, website postings, and press releases. In addition, we recommend that the district present current performance data on its website that permits comparisons within the district and with statewide averages as well as trends over time.**

# 4

## Educational Service Delivery

### *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using 4 of the 12 educational service delivery best practices. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs (such as Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment) and effective and efficient workforce development programs. It also ensures effective progression of students from kindergarten through grade 12 and has an organizational structure and staffing of educational programs that minimizes administrative layers and processes. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its educational programs, the district needs to

- improve its system of data analysis and program evaluation;
- ensure the timely evaluation and placement of students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL);
- enhance training opportunities in a variety of curricular areas;
- provide better guidance and feedback on the development of school improvement plans;
- ensure that all students have textbooks in core academic subjects;
- improve library and media services through better coordination;
- facilitate the integration of technology into the curriculum; and
- implement performance accountability standards for student support services.



As seen in Exhibit 4-1, the district could potentially increase revenue in this best practice area. Determining whether to take advantage of this opportunity is a district decision and should depend 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 That the District Could Reduce Costs and Increase Revenues in the Area of Educational Service Delivery**

Best Practice Number		Fiscal Impact: Savings					Total
		Year 2002-03	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	
9	Textbook cost recovery	\$1,050	\$2,120	\$3,191	\$4,261	\$5,439	\$16,061

## *Background*

The Bradford County School District served 4,029 students during the 2002-03 school year with an ethnic breakdown of 73% white, non-Hispanic, 25% black, non-Hispanic, 1% Hispanic, and less than 1% each multiracial, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan native. The district has 10 schools, including four elementary schools, one combination elementary and middle school (K-8), one middle school, one high school, one vocational school, one adult school, and one alternative education school. For Fiscal Year 2001-02, the operating costs in the district were \$4,977 per pupil, less than the state’s average operating cost of \$5,180.

As Exhibit 4-2 shows, the Bradford County School District has experienced a student decline over the past five years. The district has a very low percentage of students served in the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program and the percentage of students who are eligible for the free or reduced priced lunch program is similar to its peer districts and higher than the state average. In addition, the district has a high level of students served in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program.

**Exhibit 4-2**

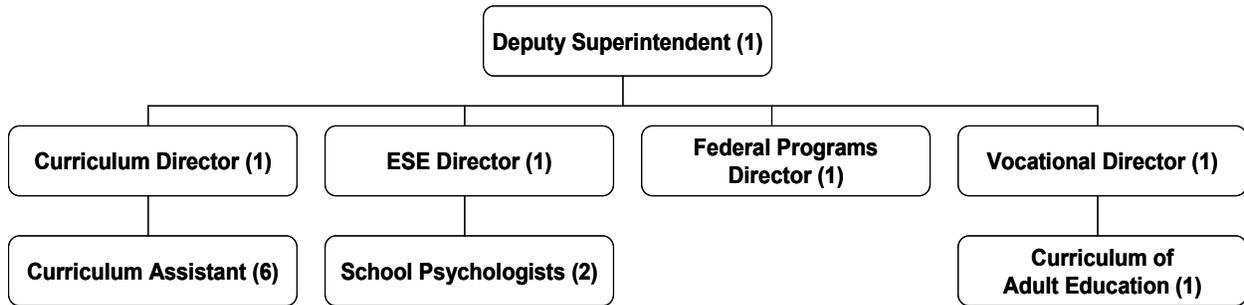
**Bradford County’s Student Population Declined Between 1997-98 and 2001-02**

District	Total Students 2001	Percentage Change in Total Students, 1997-2001	English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)	Percentage Eligible for Free or Reduced Price Lunch	Exceptional Student Education (ESE)
Bradford	4,097	-1%	<1%	52%	25%
Columbia	9,578	2%	<1%	52%	19%
Jackson	7,324	-9%	<1%	53%	22%
Lafayette	1,030	-4%	3%	51%	14%
Suwannee	5,800	-2%	2%	49%	14%
Walton	5,968	4%	1%	52%	19%
<b>State</b>	<b>2,499,781</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>19%</b>

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

The Bradford County School District’s deputy superintendent supervises the four departments that provide instructional and support services to the district’s schools. These services include curriculum development, Exceptional Student Education, federal programs, and vocational education. As shown in Exhibit 4-3, four district directors report directly to the deputy superintendent.

**Exhibit 4-3  
Four District Departments Perform the  
District Level Educational Service Delivery Functions**



Source: Bradford County School District.

The Bradford 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 that are based on local needs. In language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, the Sunshine State Standards are further defined to include grade-level expectations that are the basis for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).

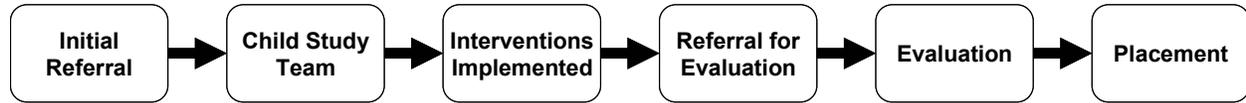
The purpose of the FCAT is to assess achievement of the Sunshine State Standards (SSS) in reading, mathematics, and writing. The FCAT also includes a norm-referenced test (NRT), which reports the performance of Florida students compared to students nationwide. Currently, students in grades 3 to 10 take the FCAT (SSS) and FCAT (NRT) reading and mathematics tests. Students in grades 4, 8, and 10 take the FCAT writing test and students in grades 5, 8, and 10 take the science 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 Bradford County School District students identified and served in the district’s ESE program in 2002, 25%, is higher than all of its peers as well as the state average of 20%. Two percent of the students in the district are 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 prove 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 4-4 illustrates this process.

**Exhibit 4-4  
The Child Study Team Referral Process**



Source: Developed by OPPAGA.

**At-Risk Programs.** The Bradford 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 who need 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 both federal and state sources and provides services to schools with high concentrations of poverty as determined by the number of students who receive free or reduced lunch. For a school to qualify for school-wide Title I services, 40% or more of its students must meet the criteria for free or reduced lunch. All five of the district's elementary schools (including the K-8 combination school) offer school-wide Title I programs. The district does not currently offer any targeted assistance to eligible students in middle and high school.

As noted earlier, the percentage of students in the district's ESOL program is very low. The ESOL program served 23 students or less than 1% of the student population in 2001-02. 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 through the Renaissance Center, which places students with discipline problems in an alternative setting. Students in this program, with the assistance of teachers, establish specific behavioral and academic goals in their behavioral contract, and teachers periodically evaluate students' progress toward meeting these goals. Students who violate their behavioral contract must serve an additional number of days depending on the infraction.

**Accelerated Programs.** The Bradford County School District provides students several accelerated opportunities, including Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP), 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 that provides an advanced level of high school coursework based on a specific curriculum designed to allow students to meet various international university entrance standards.

Dual Enrollment Programs allow 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. Santa Fe Community College instructors teach dual enrollment classes for Bradford High School students. During the 2002-03 school year, 80 students were enrolled in dual enrollment courses and 78 passed and received college credit.

The Advanced Placement program allows high-achieving and self-motivated students in grades 10-12 to enroll in advanced courses of study and earn college credit and/or advanced placement credit while still

enrolled in high school. The district offered AP calculus and AP chemistry during 2002-03, with 23 students participating.

Bradford County students also may 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, and telephone to communicate with teachers and other students. School-based teachers or district administrators proctor required exams. In 2002-03, 20 students participated in the Florida Virtual School.

***Vocational and Adult Education.*** The district's secondary vocational and technical education program served approximately 601 students during the 2002-03 school year. The program offers several "tech prep" courses of study that include accounting operations, computer electronics, nursery operations, patient care assisting, and cosmetology. These courses of study prepare students for postsecondary work as well as assist them in developing job-ready skills.

The district also provides vocational and technical education for postsecondary students. During 2002-03, the district served 241 students in programs such as commercial vehicle driving, school bus driver training, administrative assistant, cosmetology, and accounting operations. Through the adult general education program, the district offers instruction to individuals who do not have a high school diploma (or who test below the ninth grade level), whether or not they are enrolled in a regular day school. The district enrolled 451 adult education students in 2002-03.

Districts that provide postsecondary vocational instruction can receive additional funding through the Workforce Development Education Program. The state funds postsecondary vocational programs using a formula based on both need and performance. Each district receives 85% of its previous year's appropriation as a base allocation. The remaining amount, up to 15%, is based on how well a district performs on established measures such as the level of student skills, program completion, and student placement in the workforce. Districts use these funds to maintain or enhance their postsecondary vocational and technical programs.

***Student Support Services.*** In the Bradford County School District, the Student Services Department provides psychological services and guidance services. The district collaborates with the Bradford County Health Department to provide students with school health services. However, the district does not currently have any social workers. The objective of these student support services is to provide support outside of the classroom, which helps students to overcome problems that could interfere with their academic success and to broaden their education experience. Further description of student support services in Bradford County appears in the discussion of Best Practice 12.

## **Activities of particular interest**

Some school districts have developed programs that are especially noteworthy and can serve as a model for other school districts to follow. In the Bradford County School District, these include serving as a Medicaid billing agent for another county and providing a strong and comprehensive health services program.

***Medicaid Billing Agent.*** The Bradford County School District is currently the only school district that provides Medicaid billing services for another school district. Using part of a grant received from the Shared Services Network, a collaborative project of the Florida Department of Education and the University of South Florida, the Bradford County School District entered into an agreement with the Baker County School District to perform Medicaid billing services. The Bradford County School District receives a monthly flat rate fee from the Baker County School District to perform billing related tasks and is planning to provide billing services for additional school districts in the future.

***Health Services Program.*** The Bradford County School District has a comprehensive and efficient school health services program. Working in cooperation with the Bradford County Health Department, the district has health services in nine schools provided by four registered nurses and five nurse's aides. The district's school health program uses standard forms and documentation procedures in all school health rooms. In addition, the program trains all school health staff to work in every health room in the district. The Bradford County School District health services program has established a policy to maintain a student treatment record for all students enrolled in a district school. According to a Department of Health representative, this is notable. These records include information on a student's visit to the health rooms, as well as other data such as immunization and medication administration records. Program staff have also worked to improve immunization rates and implemented a summer school sports physical initiative to provide free physicals for students from financially disadvantaged families, allowing them to participate in organized school sports.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Educational Service Delivery Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Effective and Efficient Instructional Programs</b>	1. District administrators use both academic and nonacademic data to guide them in their decision making about improving K-12 education programs.	No	4-8
	2. The district provides effective and efficient Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs for students with disabilities and students who are gifted.	No	4-10
	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	4-13
	4. The district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs (such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Dual Enrollment).	Yes	4-16
	5. The district provides effective and efficient workforce development programs (such as vocational-technical, adult basic education, and adult high school programs).	Yes	4-17
	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	4-18
	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.	Yes	4-20
	8. The district's organizational structure and staffing of educational programs minimizes administrative layers and processes.	Yes	4-20
<b>Effective and Efficient Instructional Support</b>	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.	No	4-21
	10. The district has sufficient school library or media centers to support instruction.	No	4-23
	11. The district utilizes instructional technology in the classroom to enhance curriculum and improve student achievement.	No	4-24
	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.	No	4-25

# EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

## Best Practice 1: Not Using

**District administrators need to improve their use of both academic and nonacademic data to guide them in their decision making about improving 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.

The Bradford County School District collects and analyzes FCAT scores by subtest, grade level, and school. Through this analysis, the district identified that reading test scores needed improvement and, as a result, the district decided to participate in the Florida Reading Initiative (FRI). The FRI is a learning model that expands the use of reading skills within an existing school curricula with a focus on achieving 100% literacy for all children. The district also has used reports produced by the Department of Education (DOE) to identify peer districts with higher performing schools and has contacted those districts in order to identify strategies for improvement. The district provides technical assistance to schools on a number of curricular issues; for example, the district has initiated a Strategy of the Month program in order to educate principals and teachers on effective teaching strategies.

Student performance on academic assessments has been mixed in recent years. While FCAT Reading performance has improved over the past four years for grade 8, performance declined from 2000 to 2002 for grade 4 and remained fairly stable in grade 10, as shown in Exhibit 4-5. In addition, a comparison of student performance with peer districts shows that Bradford students mean reading and math scores are below the state average, as illustrated in Exhibit 4-6. The district's scores on the FCAT writing test, however, are comparable with peer districts, although they are also below the state average, as shown in Exhibit 4-7.

**Exhibit 4-5**  
**The Percentage of Students Scoring 3 or Above on FCAT Reading Varies by Grade Level**

Year	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
2000	54%	27%	23%
2001	46%	35%	25%
2002	44%	39%	25%
2003	53%	48%	25%

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2000-03 FCAT Scores.

**Exhibit 4-6**  
**Bradford County Student Mean FCAT Reading and Math Scores**  
**Are Lower Than the State Average**

School District	Reading			Mathematics		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10	Grade 5	Grade 8	Grade 10
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>293/Level 2</b>	<b>299/Level 2</b>	<b>289/Level 2</b>	<b>301/Level 2</b>	<b>302/Level 2</b>	<b>303/Level 2</b>
Columbia	303/Level 3	297/Level 2	302/Level 2	308/Level 2	302/Level 2	318/Level 3
Jackson	310/Level 3	300/Level 2	300/Level 2	320/Level 2	310/Level 3	314/Level 2
Lafayette	303/Level 3	315/Level 3	309/Level 2	304/Level 2	323/Level 3	324/Level 3
Suwannee	294/Level 2	293/Level 2	298/Level 2	302/Level 2	301/Level 2	313/Level 2
Walton	312/Level 3	305/Level 2	304/Level 2	320/Level 2	309/Level 2	319/Level 3
<b>State</b>	<b>305/Level 3</b>	<b>301/Level 2</b>	<b>302/Level 2</b>	<b>320/Level 2</b>	<b>310/Level 3</b>	<b>320/Level 3</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2003 FCAT Scores.

**Exhibit 4-7**  
**Bradford County's Mean FCAT Writing Scores**  
**Are Comparable to Peers, But Lower Than the State Scores**

School District	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 10
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Columbia	3.4	3.4	3.3
Jackson	3.5	3.6	3.5
Lafayette	3.6	3.6	3.5
Suwannee	3.5	3.5	3.5
Walton	3.7	3.8	3.7
<b>State</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.8</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2003 FCAT Scores.

However, the district could improve its use of academic and nonacademic data and meet best practice standards. First, while there is an informal process by which principals and directors may raise concerns at biweekly district meetings, this process does not ensure that the district will identify potential problems in a timely fashion. The district needs to routinely analyze many types of academic and nonacademic data beyond FCAT score data. Types of data that should be routinely analyzed in order to develop intervention strategies include data on attendance, retention and graduation, disciplinary data, SAT and ACT scores and participation rates, and free/reduced lunch status, as well as other relevant indicators of student success. Analysis of these types of data would reveal to district staff whether there was a persistent problem with truancy or whether SAT and ACT scores were improving over time. Second, in order to ensure that the needs of student subgroups are being met, the district should disaggregate data by student subgroups including ethnic groups, ESE students, ESOL students, free/reduced lunch students, alternative education students, migrant students, and any other relevant categories.

**Action Plan 4-1**

**We recommend that the district adopt a more formal, systematic approach to data analysis that addresses a variety of academic and nonacademic indicators and that addresses the needs of student subgroups by disaggregating data.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum gathers input from other district-level and school-level staff and develops a plan for routinely analyzing a variety of academic and nonacademic indicators of student success.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Curriculum formally identifies the persons responsible for collecting and analyzing each type of data and establishes timeframes for reporting data.</p> <p>Step 3. The district provides additional training in data analysis to all persons responsible and consults with Department of Education staff for technical assistance, if needed.</p> <p>Step 4. Designated persons conduct data analysis according to the established timeframes, using techniques such as disaggregation by student subgroup and comparison with peer districts.</p> <p>Step 5. The director of Curriculum reviews data and works with directors and principals to develop strategies for addressing any problems revealed through the data analysis, consulting with Department of Education staff for technical assistance, if needed.</p> <p>Step 6. Results of data analyses are reported annually to the school board.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum
Time Frame	Develop a plan and establish timeframes by September 2003.

**Best Practice 2: Not Using**

**The district needs to provide more effective and efficient Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs for students with disabilities and students who are gifted.**

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

Currently, ESE students comprise 25% of the Bradford County student population, as shown in Exhibit 4-8. The Bradford County School District works to ensure the quality of Exceptional Student Education programs by providing numerous training opportunities for ESE teachers. The district also maximizes reimbursement through Medicaid by billing for services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and transportation, and Bradford is the only district in the state that currently serves as a billing agent for another school district. The ESE director conducts frequent meetings with ESE teachers in order to discuss issues and concerns, and the director also sends memos to teachers on a regular basis with technical assistance and reminders. The rate of FCAT participation is very high as compared with other districts in the state, and overall, the district does a good job of serving students in the least restrictive educational environment.

**Exhibit 4-8  
In Fall 2002, Bradford County Had the Highest  
Percentage of ESE Students Among Their Peers**

School District	Number	Percentage
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>1,016</b>	<b>25%</b>
Columbia	1,843	19%
Jackson	1,596	22%
Lafayette	135	13%
Suwannee	829	14%
Walton	1,228	20%
<b>State</b>	<b>499,214</b>	<b>20%</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, Membership in Programs for Exceptional Students, Fall 2002

However, to meet best practice standards the district needs to improve ESE programs and services in several ways. First, the district does not have a system to ensure that ESE students are evaluated and placed in a timely manner. Currently, the district is not able to provide data on the length of time between referral and evaluation of ESE students, and principals and teachers frequently stated in interviews that there are significant delays in the evaluation process. If there are significant delays in the evaluation process, there may also be delays in service. The district is currently developing a log to track ESE student referrals. This log should include, at a minimum, the length of time between referral and evaluation and whether a student has qualified for services. These data will allow the district to determine the timeliness of evaluations, percentage of inappropriate referrals, and the number of pending referrals between FTE counts.

**Action Plan 4-2**

<b>We recommend that the district develop a system to ensure the timely evaluation and placement of ESE students.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Exceptional Student Education builds a system to track the date of referral, the date of parent consent, the date of evaluation, the date of placement, and the number of days of student attendance during each of these timeframes.
	Step 2.	The director of Exceptional Student Education periodically uses this system to determine the percentage of students who are evaluated within 60 days of student attendance from the date of parent consent.
	Step 3.	The director of Exceptional Student Education examines and addresses any systemic problems contributing to delays in the evaluation process and reports progress on this issue to the school board at least annually.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Exceptional Student Education	
Time Frame	Establish tracking system by October 2003.	

Second, while the district does coordinate a variety of training opportunities for ESE teachers, there is a need for training for regular education teachers in the district. Specific training needs include identification of children with disabilities and accommodations for ESE students, especially for ESE students taking the FCAT. These training needs were noted by the state Department of Education in a 2002 program audit as well as by teachers and principals during the course of this review. We suggest that the district develop a training plan that will address these training needs as well as any others identified by DOE or by teachers and principals, and that the district begin tracking the participation of regular teachers in these training sessions and evaluating the effectiveness of the training that is offered (refer to Action Plans 4-3 and 4-4).

Third, the Department of Education identified Bradford County as needing improvements in its ESE program in order to meet certain state and federal guidelines. According to a DOE report, Bradford County has a disproportionately high percentage of students classified as Educable Mentally Handicapped and a disproportionately low percentage of minority students who are gifted. The district also has a disproportional percentage of black, non-Hispanic students who are Educable Mentally Handicapped. We recommend that the district address this observed disproportionality.

**Action Plan 4-3**

**We recommend that the district develop strategies to ensure that the procedures used to identify students for ESE programs do not contribute to the observed disproportionality.**

Action Needed	Step 1. The director of Exceptional Student Education consults with Department of Education staff to identify possible causes for disproportionality.
	Step 2. The director of Exceptional Student Education develops strategies for addressing the causes of disproportionality as well as a timeframe for implementation of those strategies.
	Step 3. The district provides and/or coordinates training for regular teachers in identifying students with disabilities.
	Step 4. The district continues to implement Plan B for identifying students who are gifted and periodically evaluates the plan's effectiveness.
	Step 5. The director of Exceptional Student Education reports progress on this goal to the school board once per year.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum
Time Frame	Develop strategies and timeframe by beginning of 2003-04 school year.

Although the district serves 52% of ESE students in a regular class setting, which is higher than the state average and all of its peer districts, as shown in Exhibit 4-9, there are some indications that the district is not serving all of its students in the least restrictive environment, as required by state and federal law. In interviews with teachers and principals, there were some indications of teachers' unwillingness to serve certain ESE students in their classrooms. In addition, a DOE monitoring report found that ESE students at the Renaissance Center were not receiving additional services that would justify their placement in a separate school rather than serving them in a regular public school setting. The report recommended that the district review all Renaissance Center students to determine if they need a special school setting and establish criteria for new placements to ensure that students placed there receive additional services beyond what they would receive in the regular public school. We recommend that the district ensure that students are being served in the least restrictive environment based on student need.

**Exhibit 4-9  
Bradford County Serves More Than Half  
of Its ESE Students in the Regular Classroom**

School District	Percentage
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>52%</b>
Columbia	46%
Jackson	40%
Lafayette	21%
Suwannee	43%
Walton	50%
<b>State</b>	<b>48%</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2003 LEA Profiles.

**Action Plan 4-4**

**We recommend that the district ensure that all students are being served in the least restrictive environment and that all district staff understand the significance of this requirement.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum ensure that all teachers (regular and ESE) and principals have received training on ESE accommodations by tracking teacher attendance and sending reminders to teachers. Training can be provided by the district or coordinated through NEFEC and ISRD.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum review the services provided at the Renaissance Center to determine whether students should continue to be served there or in a regular public school setting.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum review data reported by school principals twice annually to ensure that all students are being served in the least restrictive environment.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Exceptional Student Education, director of Curriculum, and principals
Time Frame	Conduct initial review of data by September 2003; continue reviewing data at least annually; aim for 90% of teachers to receive training by May 2004.

**Best Practice 3: Not Using**

**While the district offers a strong Title I program, the district needs to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programs for other at-risk students (including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and alternative education).<sup>1</sup>**

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 students 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 this information to identify or develop programs to meet those needs. To increase student success, districts should promote parent involvement and provide teachers adequate training and support. Districts also should periodically assess the progress of at-risk students, making adjustments to programs as needed to ensure that students perform to their capacity.

The Bradford County School District provides very comprehensive Title I services in each of the district’s elementary schools, all of which offer schoolwide Title I programs. All elementary school students utilize Title I computer labs, where their individual progress is tracked using instructional software programs. The district serves ESOL students using the inclusion model, and the director of Curriculum reviews each of the ESOL students’ test scores each year. The district provides alternative education through the Renaissance Center, which established a school advisory council during the 2002-03 school year in order to improve the program’s effectiveness.

However, the district could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of at-risk programs and meet best practice standards in several ways. First, the district does not currently ensure the timely identification, evaluation, placement, and removal of students into and out of the ESOL program. Although the district evaluated two students during 1999-2000, according to data published by the state Department of Education, the length of time to placement was more than double the state standard of 20 days in the 1999-2000 school year. Factors contributing to this problem may include a lack of adequate training and oversight from the district. There was also some concern among teachers, principals, and district staff that some students were remaining in the program longer than necessary. The district should ensure that

<sup>1</sup> At-risk students are students who need academic and/or social skills interventions to assist them to perform to their capacity.

staff are trained to evaluate students for ESOL and that the district regularly monitors the entry and exit of students in the ESOL program.

**Action Plan 4-5**

**We recommend that the district develop procedures to ensure the timely identification, evaluation, placement, and removal of students into and out of the ESOL program and to assess the needs of the ESOL population.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of federal programs works with ESOL teachers and school principals to determine the causes of delays in the identification, evaluation, placement, and removal of students into and out of the ESOL program.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of federal programs works with Department of Education staff to identify strategies for improving timeliness and establishes timeframes for implementation of those strategies.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of federal programs reports to the school board annually on the timeliness of identification, evaluation, placement, and removal of students.</p> <p>Step 4. The director of federal programs works with Department of Education staff to determine whether the current ESOL program meets the needs of the district's ESOL population as a whole, with a goal of determining how the program could be improved.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of federal programs
Time Frame	Report to school board at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year; determine causes of delays by October 2003; develop strategies by December 2003.

Second, the district should improve its efforts to ensure that teachers who serve ESOL students have received the training that is required by law. In an audit conducted in 2000, DOE noted that 24 out of 110 ESOL teachers in Bradford County did not have the required training. Furthermore, the district has not provided any ESOL training in the last two years. Although the district has allowed teachers to count Florida Reading Initiative (FRI) training towards their ESOL requirements, this training does not specifically address the unique needs of ESOL students. By allowing FRI training to count, the district is also providing teachers with a disincentive to participate in ESOL-specific training opportunities, which are available online and through the Northeast Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC). In addition, according to DOE staff, Florida Reading Initiative training cannot count towards the ESOL training requirements for any language arts teachers, which includes all elementary school teachers.

**Action Plan 4-6**

**We recommend that the district ensure that all teachers of ESOL students have completed the legally required training as specified by the Department of Education.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of federal programs identifies all teachers with ESOL students in their classes at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of federal programs reviews the personnel files of identified teachers to determine their training needs.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of federal programs works with NEFEC, Department of Education staff, University of Florida, and other relevant parties to ensure that teachers have adequate opportunities to receive ESOL training.</p> <p>Step 4. At the mid-point of the school year, the director of federal programs sends reminder notices to teachers who have not yet received the required training.</p> <p>Step 5. At the end of the school year, the director of federal programs reports progress on this action plan to the school board.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of federal programs
Time Frame	Identify teachers by September 2003; send reminder notices in January 2004; report to school board in May 2004; continue this cycle in each subsequent school year.

Third, the district should conduct an annual needs assessment for all at-risk students in order to guide decision making about the implementation of at-risk programs. Although the computer software used by the Title I program enables teachers to evaluate the needs of individual students, the district should be making more of an effort to analyze the needs of students across the district. The district should then use this information to improve services provided through Title I to better meet students' needs. Similarly, the district should gather input from students, parents, and teachers of ESOL students and alternative education students in order to ensure that the at-risk programs are fulfilling the needs of those students. Refer to Action Plan 4-1 for recommendations on using data to improve educational programs.

The district also needs to improve its alternative education services in several areas. First, the district's program, the Renaissance Center, does not have a written description of its purpose, mission, or function. A 2002 DOE monitoring report found that the purpose of the center was unclear, and the DOE could not determine if the ESE portion of the school was a short-term placement for disruptive students or a special day school. The district needs to clarify the purpose in order to ensure that students receive appropriate services. Second, the DOE report found that the district needs to clarify entry and exit criteria. The entry procedures do not address whether a student needs special services that are not available in a regular public school setting, and the exit criteria do not specify what students have to do to exit the program. Third, our interviews with district staff suggest that more training is needed for Renaissance Center teachers on subjects such as ESE and behavior management. There is currently only one ESE certified teacher on the center staff, but over 70% of the students are classified as ESE. Regardless of what role the district decides the Renaissance Center will serve, the district needs to ensure that it provides students with appropriate curriculum and instruction and behavior management skills.

**Action Plan 4-7**

<b>We recommend that the district clarify the purpose and mission of the Renaissance Center.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Curriculum works with the School Advisory Council of the Renaissance Center in order to develop a formal mission statement, a policy and procedures manual, and to complete a school improvement plan with measurable goals and objectives. The director of Curriculum will also work with school-based administrators and teachers to ensure that they understand the purpose of the Renaissance Center.
	Step 2.	Submit school improvement plan for school board approval.
	Step 3.	The ESE director and lead teacher of the Renaissance Center work together to design clearly defined criteria for entry to ensure that students are being served in the most appropriate environment. They will also work together to design clear exit strategies.
	Step 4.	The ESE director and lead teacher of the Renaissance Center work together to provide center teachers with training and support in needed areas such as ESE, behavior management, and social skills. They will also provide training and guidance to teachers to help provide curriculum that corresponds with student needs.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum, Renaissance Center lead teacher, ESE director, school advisory council	
Time Frame	Clarify purpose and develop criteria by December 2003; training by February 2004 and ongoing thereafter.	

## Best Practice 4: Using

**Although the district provides an appropriate range of accelerated programs such as Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment, the district should conduct a more formal analysis of student needs and should ensure that students are adequately informed about all types of accelerated programs.**

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 made 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 Bradford County School District offers a variety of dual enrollment courses in conjunction with Santa Fe Community College. In 2002-03, students were able to enroll in 15 different courses, and in the prior school year, 99% of students passed their dual enrollment courses and thus earned college credit for their work. The district ensures that students are informed about dual enrollment opportunities through the high school curriculum guide. Of the students who are eligible to participate in dual enrollment, 27% were enrolled in at least one dual enrollment course in the 2002-03 school year. The district's high school offered two Advanced Placement courses in the 2002-03 school year, and 23 students participated in those courses. No students took Advanced Placement courses online through the Florida Virtual School.

Although the district is using this best practice it could improve accelerated program offerings in several ways. During interviews, some principals and teachers expressed that the high school should offer more Advanced Placement (AP) courses, particularly AP English. To further improve the district's ability to increase the number of accelerated program offerings, the district could provide incentives for teachers to participate in the AP Summer Institute, which is paid for by the state. Because the district does not offer an International Baccalaureate program, the district could also explore the possibility of an arrangement with a neighboring school district so that interested students could attend an International Baccalaureate program at another school.

**To further improve the district's accelerated programs, we recommend that the district obtain stakeholder input to ensure it is meeting the needs of teachers and students.**

In addition, neither the district nor the high school regularly analyze student data to determine student need or performance. To determine potential candidates for accelerated programs, the district should routinely examine students' grade point averages, PSAT or PLAN test scores, and SAT or ACT test scores. The district also should regularly analyze student performance in dual enrollment and Advanced Placement courses in order to evaluate the success of those programs and to modify those programs accordingly.

**We recommend that the district regularly use student data to identify candidates for accelerated programs and modify programs to increase student success.**

## Best Practice 5: Using

### **The district provides effective and efficient workforce development programs (such as vocational-technical, adult basic education, and adult high school 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 to attain the skills that they will need 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 a high school diploma for adults who need these skills to enter the labor market. Districts should have workforce development programs in place 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 also should 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 Bradford County School District has worked closely with the Workforce Development Board, particularly the First Jobs First Wages and High Skill/High Wage committees, as well as Santa Fe Community College in order to ensure that program offerings reflect community needs. The district conducts satisfaction surveys of employers and parents in addition to surveying students to assess the demand for specific programs. Each workforce development program in the district has a craft advisory committee, and the director of workforce development meets at least twice per year with each of these committees. The district regularly evaluates the success of programs by examining enrollment, completions, placements, and customer satisfaction, and the district has eliminated several programs with low enrollment or poor performance. As shown in Exhibit 4-10, in 2000-01 100.0% completed postsecondary programs.

#### **Exhibit 4-10**

#### **Bradford County's Percentage of Secondary Students Completing Programs and Being Placed Is Higher Than the State Average and That of Many of Their Peers**

School District	Completion Rate	Placement Rate
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>82.6%</b>
Columbia	83.9%	78.4%
Jackson	94.0%	79.6%
Lafayette	100.0%	55.6%
Suwannee	90.1%	74.8%
Walton	81.1%	56.3%
<b>State</b>	<b>87.8%</b>	<b>80.7%</b>

Source: Perkins Performance Report 2000-01.

The adult education program in Bradford County works closely with the high school and Santa Fe Community College in addition to having agreements with agencies, such as the local chamber of commerce, the state attorney's office, the county jail, and numerous others. The district routinely analyzes the performance of students in Adult Basic Education as well as Adult General Education, particularly by looking at Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and General Educational Development (GED).

In 2003, the Department of Education recognized one of the district's students as a statewide winner in the All American Success Stories program. This program recognizes students who have participated in adult and/or technical education programs and overcome obstacles to achieve success in their career fields. The Department of Education selected a student from 160 total nominations and 27 regional winners in various program categories. Because of her success, the district will receive a reward of \$10,000 from the state.

### **Best Practice 6: Not Using**

#### **The district needs to improve its efforts to ensure that schools use effective planning and evaluation processes, such as school improvement plans, to improve student outcomes.**

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 I, 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 that includes using academic and non-academic data to identify areas needing improvement, developing measurable objectives, and evaluating progress in meeting objectives. Districts also should oversee the school improvement planning process and provide additional assistance to schools that do not make adequate progress.

The Bradford County School District works to ensure that effective planning and evaluation processes are used by schools by requiring each school to have a school improvement plan (SIP). The school board approves each plan. In addition, the director of Curriculum provides school principals with guidelines on plan requirements and reviews the plans for completeness. In an effort to avoid duplication of effort and resources, school budgets and technology plans are integrated within the SIP.

However, the district could improve its planning and evaluation processes and better meet best practice standards in several ways. First, the district does not provide training to schools on developing SIPs. Training information and materials are available from the Department of Education, but the district does not ensure that training activities are taking place in the schools. Second, the district provides limited guidance and feedback on SIPs. The director of Curriculum provides principals with guidelines on what should be included in the plan and reviews the plans for these components. However, this review is compliance oriented and does not assess the quality of the SIP. Third, the district does not monitor the schools' implementation of the plans and the progress they are making on achieving listed goals and objectives.

We reviewed nine school improvement plans (SIPs) and found them to be of variable quality. For example, the plans do not address the needs of subgroups of students such as ESOL and ESE and the strategies to achieve goals and objectives are somewhat vague, in many instances. Most important, in some plans, the objectives themselves could be more measurable and include clear criteria for evaluation, as shown in Exhibit 4-11. This makes judgment as to whether or not the objectives have been attained difficult. The fact that SIPs are of variable quality is evidence that the district needs to improve its planning and evaluation processes.

**Exhibit 4-11  
Some Bradford County School Improvement Plans Lack Measurable Objectives**

Current Objectives from SIPs	An Example of a More Measurable Objective
All students will be able to communicate successfully through writing.	Objective needs to state clearly defined criteria that can be measured. For example, "Average combined score on the grade 4 FCAT writing will improve from 3.7 in 2002 to 3.9 in 2003."
80% of students will show gains on the FCAT and SAT 9.	These should be two separate measures: one for the FCAT, one for the SAT 9. In addition, gains need to be clearly defined. For example, "80% of students will improve their FCAT scores by at least one level."
75% of targeted students (Level 1 on FCAT Math) will demonstrate positive growth from the 2002 FCAT to the 2003 FCAT.	Positive growth needs to be defined. For example, "75% of students scoring Level 1 on the 2002 FCAT math will improve their scores to 2 or higher on the 2003 FCAT math."
The 2002 FCAT reading scores for 8 <sup>th</sup> graders showed that 61% of 230 students fell in the bottom 2 levels of achievement. Because of this high percentage, (we) will implement procedures to help increase reading performance.	This objective needs to include a specific target for improvement. For example, "Reduce the percentage of 8 <sup>th</sup> grade students scoring Level 2 and below on the FCAT reading test from 61% to 50%."

Source: Bradford County School Improvement Plans.

**Action Plan 4-8**

<b>We recommend that the district develop a system to improve the quality of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) by providing training, feedback, and monitoring to schools.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Curriculum arranges district-level training with the Department of Education Office of School Improvement. The district offers this training at the beginning of the school year at a time and place convenient to most SAC members and ensures that all SAC members receive notification of the training well in advance.
	Step 2.	The director of Curriculum provides ongoing support and technical assistance to SACs as they develop their SIPs.
	Step 3.	The director of Curriculum, with guidance from the Office of School Improvement, establishes a method for systematically reviewing each school's SIP for completeness and the quality of objectives, data analysis, strategies for improvement, and proposed methods of evaluation. The director of Curriculum will provide formal written feedback to each school.
	Step 4.	After the director of Curriculum provides this feedback and revisions are made, each school advisory council (SAC) will briefly present the SIP goals and objectives to the school board for approval.
	Step 5.	The SACs will return to the school board to report on progress made on their SIP objectives. The SAC will compare their goals and objectives to their actual results to determine whether the school made adequate progress.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum, school advisory councils	
Time Frame	Establish training, feedback, and monitoring system by beginning of 2003-04 school year.	

## **Best Practice 7: Using**

**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.**

In 1996, the State Board of Education adopted the Sunshine State Standards as content expectations for K-12 students in Florida. 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 also should 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 Bradford County School District has three separate student progression plans for elementary, middle, and high school students and also provides teachers with grade level expectations that identify learning benchmarks for students in each grade. The district also requires teachers to log when they have covered each of the Sunshine State Standards; in fact, the district has developed a computer program that allows teachers to do this electronically. Both the high school and the middle school offer new student orientations in order to facilitate the transition between schools, and the district examines retention data by grade level in order to identify any inconsistencies across grade levels. In addition to the state's new policy on third grade retention, the district has voluntarily implemented a similar retention policy for eighth grade students.

Although the district is using this best practice, it could further improve in two specific areas. First, the district could provide teachers with teaching strategies that are aligned with the grade level expectations. The district could do this by adopting strategies used by another school district or by developing their own. This would facilitate student progression by ensuring that teachers know how to address individual learning objectives in the classroom. Second, the district could work with school principals to address the problem of academic intervention plans not being completed in a timely manner, as required by law.

**To further improve the effective progression of students, we recommend that the district provide teachers strategies aligned with grade level expectations and work with principals to ensure academic intervention plans are completed in a timely manner.**

## **Best Practice 8: Using**

**The district's current organizational structure and staffing of educational programs minimizes unnecessary administrative layers and processes.**

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 schools in the district.

The Bradford County School District’s organizational structure and staffing levels for its education program minimizes administrative layers. The district regularly reviews the staffing of schools to ensure that the teacher/pupil ratios stated in state statute or district policy are maintained and are comparable with appropriate benchmarks. As shown in Exhibit 4-12, the district’s staffing levels are comparable to state and peer district levels.

**Exhibit 4-12  
Bradford County’s Staffing Levels Are Comparable to Peer Districts and the State**

School District	Total Number of Staff	Percentage of Administrative Staff	Percentage of Instructional Staff	Percentage of Support Staff
Bradford	523	5%	52%	44%
Columbia	1,232	3%	50%	47%
Jackson	1,055	4%	53%	44%
Lafayette	146	4%	51%	45%
Suwannee	655	4%	54%	42%
Walton	812	4%	48%	48%
<b>State</b>	<b>280,658</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>42%</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, Profile of Florida School Districts 2001-02.

## EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

### Best Practice 9: Not Using

**The district has not yet provided all students and teachers with a sufficient number of current textbooks and other instructional materials to support instruction in core subjects and to meet the needs of teachers and students.**

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.

In 2001, the Bradford County School District changed the process by which instructional materials are purchased in order to ensure that all students have current, state-adopted textbooks in core academic subjects. Previously, the district distributed funds for purchasing instructional materials to the schools on a per-student basis and permitted all purchases to be made at the school level. However, this policy change was partially in response to an Auditor General report that found that over 40% of the textbooks in Bradford County were more than eight years old.<sup>2</sup> Although the district has implemented the policy change for purchasing current, state-adopted textbooks in core academic subjects for all students, many

<sup>2</sup> Auditor General, November 2001, *Operational Audit of Instructional Materials Funding for District School Boards, July 1, 1999 to March 31, 2001*, Report No. 02-078

students still are lacking appropriate instructional materials because the district missed the adoption cycle. Particular areas of weaknesses include science for all grade levels and math and social studies at the high school level.

Currently, the Bradford County School District does not have any written policies or procedures regarding instructional materials. In addition, the district could improve its efforts to inform principals and teachers of changes in policy. The district presently relies upon communicating such policy changes through meetings; however, the district should consider sending memos or electronic notices to ensure that all school district personnel are aware of changes in policy. The district also should develop written policies and procedures that provide guidance on the purchasing of instructional materials, the flexibility that schools have to make decisions regarding instructional materials, the process for reviewing and selecting instructional materials, the maintenance and disposal of instructional materials, and the collection of fees assessed to students for lost and damaged textbooks.

While the district does seek teacher input when reviewing and selecting instructional materials, the district does not broadly survey teacher feedback on the usefulness of instructional materials that have been purchased. This information would be useful to the district in making future decisions about which instructional materials to purchase. Furthermore, the district could improve its efforts to recover the costs of lost and damaged textbooks by collecting a greater percentage of the fees assessed to students. As shown in Exhibit 4-13, the district could save as much as \$16,061 by raising the percentage of fees collected from 24% to 75% over the next five years.

**Exhibit 4-13  
Bradford Could Save \$16,061 by Increasing Cost Recovery  
for Lost and Damaged Textbooks**

Year	Actual 2002 Fees Assessed	Actual 2002 Fees Collected	Actual Collection Rate	Projected Collection Rate	Estimated Adjusted Fees Assessed <sup>1</sup>	Projected Collections	Potential Savings With Improved Rates <sup>2</sup>
<b>2002</b>	<b>\$10,705</b>	<b>\$2,590</b>	<b>24%</b>				
2003				34%	\$10,705	\$ 3,640	\$ 1,050
2004				44%	10,705	4,710	2,120
2005				54%	10,705	5,781	3,191
2006				64%	10,705	6,851	4,261
2007				75%	10,705	8,029	5,439
<b>TOTAL</b>						<b>\$29,011</b>	<b>\$16,061</b>

<sup>1</sup> Bradford has experienced a decline in the student population during the last two years. Thus, the amount of fees assessed does not need to be adjusted for growth in the student population.

<sup>2</sup> Potential savings represent the difference between the projected collections over the next five years at the current rate of collection and the estimated collections over the next five years if the district were to gradually increase the rate of collection to 75% of the total fees assessed for lost and damaged textbooks.

Source: OPPAGA analysis and Bradford County School District.

**Action Plan 4-9**

**We recommend that the district develop written policies and procedures for the purchasing, selection, maintenance, and disposal of instructional materials.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum forms a committee of district directors, school principals, and teachers to develop policies and procedures regarding instructional materials.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Curriculum presents policies and procedures to the school board for approval, if necessary.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of Curriculum issues the policies and procedures and distributes memos to all district and school staff to notify them of any subsequent changes in the policies and procedures.</p> <p>Step 4. School principals review the policies and procedures at faculty meetings to ensure that all teachers are aware of the new policies.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum
Time Frame	Begin meeting with committee in August 2003; develop written policies by January 2004.

**Action Plan 4-10**

**We recommend that the district improve efforts to collect fees assessed for lost and damaged textbooks by raising the collection rate to 75% over the next five years.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum works with the director of Finance to develop guidelines regarding the collection of fees for lost and damaged textbooks.</p> <p>Step 2. Each school keeps accurate records of the number of textbooks lost by each student, the fees assessed for each textbook, and the amount collected.</p> <p>Step 3. Schools report their fees assessed and fees collected twice annually to the director of Finance.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum and director of Finance
Time Frame	Schools issue reports to the school district in January 2004 and June 2004.

**Best Practice 10: Not Using**

**The district needs to improve its school library or media centers to better support instruction.**

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 the needs of students. 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 Bradford County School District has purchased software for cataloging library materials for every school, and two of the district’s schools have been accepted to the Sunlink program. However, the district could improve its library and media services in several ways. First, evidence suggests that the schools do not have up-to-date materials and equipment. Second, the district does not solicit feedback on teacher and principal satisfaction with available resources. Third, two of the schools do not have media specialists and thus do not have fully operational media centers. Interviews with district staff suggest that district-wide meetings of media specialists would help to address some of these problems. In addition, two of the district’s other schools could share their media specialist with the two schools that do not have a media specialist. In addition, the district and schools could work with parent-teacher associations to raise funds for library materials and solicit grants from charitable organizations. Other strategies that could strengthen the district’s library and media services include expanding library hours to better accommodate students’ needs, increasing parent awareness and involvement, and building a network of support from volunteers and community members.

**Action Plan 4-11**

<b>We recommend that the district improve library and media services through better coordination, formal solicitation of feedback, and resource development.</b>	
Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum appoints a committee composed of all school media specialists, and the committee designates one member as the chair.</p> <p>Step 2. The committee meets once per month to share information, discuss strategies to address priority issues, and identify issues affecting library/ media services in the district.</p> <p>Step 3. The district considers ensuring that each school has a library that remains open during school hours.</p> <p>Step 4. The district ensures that all schools have a media specialist for at least one day per week by assigning certain media specialists to more than one school. The district could staff additional hours at the library with volunteers, PTA and SAC members.</p> <p>Step 5. The committee develops and annually administers a survey instrument for obtaining feedback from teachers, students, and parents.</p> <p>Step 6. The committee develops and annually administers a survey instrument for obtaining feedback from teachers, students, and parents.</p> <p>Step 7. The committee analyzes the survey results annually, presents them to the school board, and uses the information to improve library/ media services.</p> <p>Step 8. The committee works together to identify and pursue funding opportunities.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum and committee chair
Time Frame	Committee begins meeting in September 2003; survey administered by December 2003; report to school board in February 2004 and annually thereafter.

**Best Practice 11: Not Using**

**The district does not adequately utilize instructional technology in the classroom to enhance curriculum and to improve student achievement.**

Technology has the potential to enhance curriculum and instruction, help improve student achievement, and assist students in attaining basic computer skills needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 should also 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 Bradford County School District could improve its instructional technology services and could meet this best practice standard by adopting several key strategies. First, the district does not currently provide schools with recommended lists of instructional courseware that align with the Sunshine State Standards. While the district has a Technology Committee that meets occasionally and identifies such instructional courseware, this information is not shared regularly or systematically with teachers in the district, nor is it compiled by anyone in the district for future reference. Furthermore, the district does not currently provide guidelines to teachers on how to integrate instructional technology into the curriculum. Although elementary school students in the district are using computers regularly for assessment and diagnostic purposes through the schoolwide Title I programs, interviews with district staff, principals, and teachers indicated that students at the middle and high school level are not getting sufficient exposure to instructional technology. The district has attempted to solicit feedback from teachers and principals on the usefulness of instructional technology, but responses have been difficult to obtain.

**Action Plan 4-12**

**We recommend that the district provide greater support for instructional technology through training, technical assistance, and facilitating an exchange of information among schools.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum works with the Technology Committee to develop a list of instructional courseware to be shared with teachers and updated at least twice per year.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Curriculum facilitates training in the use of instructional technology in the classroom with an emphasis on integrating technology into the curriculum and ensures that teachers are informed of training opportunities (see also Action Plan 5-2).</p> <p>Step 3. The Technology Committee formally solicits feedback from principals, teachers, parents, and students at least once per year on student and teacher usage of technology in the schools (see also Action Plan 5-3).</p> <p>Step 4. The Technology Committee chair reports at least twice annually to the school board on whether teacher and student usage of technology is increasing over time.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum and Technology Committee chair
Time Frame	Report to the school board on the above initiatives in June 2004, and twice annually in December and June thereafter.

**Best Practice 12: Not Using**

**Although the district has a strong health services program, the district needs to improve student support services in the areas of guidance counseling, school psychology, and social work to better meet student needs.**

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 ability to learn. 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 Bradford County School District, working in cooperation with the Bradford County Health Department, provides health services in nine schools through four registered nurses and five nurse’s aides. The district receives a grant from the Department of Health and submits a comprehensive health services plan to them each year. Through this program, the district has launched initiatives to address problems such as obesity, teenage pregnancy, and lack of immunization.

However, the district could meet best practice standards and improve its services in the areas of guidance counseling, school psychology, and social work. Although some of the district’s social work needs are addressed through the health services program, primarily through home visits and educational programs, the district does not currently have a strategy for providing other social work services. In addition, as mentioned in Best Practice 2 of this chapter, there appear to be significant delays in the evaluation of ESE students, which is the primary responsibility of the districts’ two school psychologists. Finally, teachers and principals mentioned consistently in interviews that guidance counseling was a major area of concern. Two of the district’s schools do not have a guidance counselor, and the counselors in many of the other schools are overwhelmed with testing responsibilities and consequently do not have sufficient time to counsel students. District staff as well as school staff also expressed concerns that guidance counselors are not being held accountable for their job performance and require more training and oversight from the district and their respective school principals. The district should improve student support services by developing a comprehensive student support services plan and by ensuring greater accountability for support service staff. In addition, the district should work with DOE staff to provide training for support service personnel. With regard to social work services, district staff suggested two potential strategies for

addressing the district's truancy problems (see discussion of absenteeism among ESE students in Best Practice 2 of this chapter): assigning a district staff person to serve as a truancy officer and/or establishing a truancy court to address students who are habitually truant from school.

**Action Plan 4-13**

**We recommend that the district improve the efficiency and effectiveness of student support services by developing a comprehensive student support services plan and by holding staff more accountable for their job performance.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	The district seeks technical assistance from Department of Education staff, Student Support Services staff, and/or other districts on developing a needs assessment and comprehensive student support services plan.
	Step 2.	The deputy superintendent works with the director of Curriculum and the director of Exceptional Student Education to conduct an assessment of student needs to be administered annually in the school district.
	Step 3.	In conjunction with Department of Education staff, the district develops a comprehensive student support services plan based on the results of the needs assessment. The plan will detail the responsibilities of all relevant district and school staff, list performance standards for each of the support service areas, and establish a system for holding staff accountable.
	Step 4.	Persons responsible for each student support service area report to the deputy superintendent monthly on progress made towards the goals established in the comprehensive plan.
Who Is Responsible	Deputy superintendent	
Time Frame	Develop comprehensive plan by October 2003; begin monthly reports in November 2003.	

# 5 Administrative and Instructional Technology

## *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using seven of the nine administrative and instructional technology best practices. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner and generally provides timely and cost-effective support services; employs a dependable network and provides access to the Internet to personnel and students and encourages its use throughout the district; relies on well-developed data systems to deliver accurate financial and student information; and has written policies that direct safe and appropriate use of technology.

To meet the remaining best practice standards, the district needs to make improvements in two areas. First, the district should improve technology planning by broadening stakeholder participation, conducting assessments of technology needs, and developing goals in the technology plan that are feasible and measurable and include expected completion dates to track and evaluate goal achievement. Second, the district should improve performance in technology professional development by better assessing technology skills of employees to ensure those individuals who need additional training receive it. In addition, the district should track technology training received and evaluate its effectiveness, and principals should consider technology skills used in the classroom as a criterion in evaluations.

## *Background*

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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 should use technology as a tool to assist in administrative duties, provide curriculum support, and prepare students for life after graduation. The exposure of students to technology is of pressing importance since computer application skills are essential foundations for a large number of current work force employments. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that a significant background in technology will be required in all but 8 of the 54 fastest growing job categories in the next 10 years. Technology use by administrators and district employees facilitates timely information to effectively manage the district resources and make informed decisions.

The instructional and administrative technology resources in the Bradford County School District serve the district office and 10 schools, including four elementary schools, one combination elementary and middle school (K-8), one middle school, one high school, one vocational school, one adult school, and one alternative education school. The district has provided basic technology resources throughout the district and established an efficient infrastructure to support networking and telecommunications allowing access to the Internet and connectivity between the schools and the district. Most schools have fiber optic connectivity while four schools are connected to the district office by T1 communications circuits. Most classrooms, with the exception of certain portables, have Internet access with at least one computer per

## *Administrative and Instructional Technology*

classroom connected to the district network. However, teachers in some schools experience network connection problems, some of which are due to periodic and persistent computer hardware problems.

The majority of schools use computer labs, including Title I labs with special curriculum software, to assist with instruction in a variety of ways. Most commonly used applications in labs range from reading software, drill and practice, to FCAT training, while Internet research and integrated learning systems and business applications are available to students in a few schools.

The district contracts for a resource management system called TERMS that tracks student demographics, attendance, test scores, grades, health records, contact and discipline information, full-time equivalent (FTE) student counts, and transcripts.<sup>1</sup> The management system also supports administrative functions for payroll, personnel, fixed assets, warehouse, and finance. The system runs on the AS400 in the district office, which is supported by the district and connected to the Northwest Regional Data Center. School employees enter data into the system through terminals and personal computers running terminal emulation. District employees access data through terminals housed at the district office. Support for the system is provided by a software provider who also offers application support and training.

The Bradford County School District avoids some of the high cost of services for financial management and student record services by participating in cooperative agreements with other small districts. The district is a member of the North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC) with 14 other districts and the AS/400-TERMS Consortium with six other small counties. As a partner of the Florida Learning Alliance, the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) provides a digital dish network for the Florida Educational Channel to seven schools in Bradford County.<sup>2</sup>

Exhibit 5-1 shows the district's total technology expenditures for Fiscal Years 1999-2000 through 2001-02. The district has invested at least 2% of its budget in technology each of the past three years and increased its investment to 4% in Fiscal Year 2000-01. Most of this increase in spending was made possible through a Technology Literacy Challenge Fund grant award (\$573,777) in Fiscal Year 2000-01. According to district personnel, this increase was mostly used for wiring several schools. Most technology expenses were for salaries and benefits of personnel in the Management Information System (MIS) department and a TERMS programmer. Training accounted for 1% (\$4,150) of technology expenditures in Fiscal Year 2001-02.

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<sup>1</sup>Total Educational Resource Management System (TERMS) is a commercially available resource management software package. OPPAGA's disclosure of the product's name should not be construed as an endorsement of the product.

<sup>2</sup> The [Florida Learning Alliance](#) is a consortium of 34 rural and small districts and the Florida Virtual School with the mission to increase academic achievement of students.

**Exhibit 5-1  
The Bradford County School District Has Expended at Least  
2% of Its Budget on Technology In the Past Three Fiscal Years**

	Fiscal Year		
	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
<b>Technology Expenditures</b>			
Contracted Services—Technology	\$ 60,477	\$ 328,334	\$ 39,500
Hardware Acquisitions	115,070	148,204	28,021
Software Licensing	69,878	129,262	21,563
Salaries and Benefits	289,051	344,355	232,784
Technology Training	8,475	11,291	4,150
Communication and Technology	92,977	60,625	66,120
Parts, Supplies and Repairs	74,545	204,220	113,628
<b>Total Expenditures</b> <sup>1</sup>	<b>\$ 710,473</b>	<b>\$ 1,226,291</b>	<b>\$ 505,766</b>
<b>Total District Budget</b>	<b>\$32,156,549</b>	<b>\$34,553,583</b>	<b>\$31,928,472</b>
<b>Expenditure as percentage of district budget</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>
FTEs	3,984	4,013	3,986
<b>Expenditures per FTE</b>	<b>\$178</b>	<b>\$306</b>	<b>\$127</b>

<sup>1</sup> Expenses include those for the MIS department, technology categoricals, AS/400-TERMS Consortium Fund, and grants directly related to technology.

Source: Bradford County School District expenditures as of May 1, 2003, DOE Florida Education Finance Program FTE final calculation, and OPPAGA analysis.

In Fiscal Year 2002-03, the Florida Department of Education (DOE) awarded \$31,518 federal Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) funds, based on full-time equivalent students served, to the Bradford County School District.<sup>3</sup> The district applied for but was not awarded the second part from the competitive portion of EETT funding even though Bradford County School District’s high percentage of low performing students and children from families with incomes below the poverty line made it eligible to compete. In the last three years, the district was awarded a few other grants for programs that integrate technology into the curriculum. These grants include the Florida Learning Alliance Grant and an INTEL grant for \$5,000. Individual teachers’ initiatives were instrumental in the pursuit and award for most of these grants. One teacher received additional pay for writing the application for the EETT grant. The district uses other sources of funds, such as non-federal grants and monies received from other AS/400-TERMS consortium counties to fund the consortium, to cover additional technology expenditures.

As shown in Exhibit 5-2, the district’s MIS program consists of three positions: an MIS director, an operational specialist, and a data entry person. Currently, the district’s MIS director is responsible for providing and organizing technical support to keep data processing and instructional programs functional throughout the district, with help from the operational specialist, school-based technology contacts, and a NEFEC contracted technician. The MIS director also gives authorized users access to the student information system and offers training workshops in administrative technology at a district-based technology laboratory. In addition, the director of curriculum allocates available funding for technology acquisitions and training in response to needs identified by the technology committee.

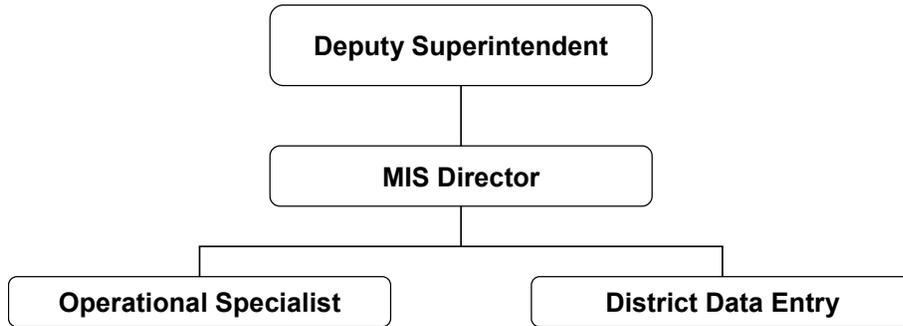
Each school has a technology contact, who typically is a teacher or other school employee with some experience in technology, voluntarily providing additional technical support at each school. Three schools allocate extra time to a technology teacher during the school day to help with technology needs.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See [Enhancing Education Through Technology \(EETT\)](#) for more information.

<sup>4</sup> The three schools are Bradford High School, Starke Elementary School and Southside Elementary School.

If these technology contacts cannot solve a problem on their own, they request help from the district MIS director who then tries to solve problems over the phone or in person, or delegates services to the NEFEC technician, who comes to the district one day per week.

**Exhibit 5-2**  
**The Bradford County School District's MIS Program**  
**Has Three Positions Responsible for Meeting Technology Needs**



Source: Bradford County School District, April 2003.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Administrative and Instructional Technology Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Technology Planning</b>	1. The district has a comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision making.	No	5-6
<b>Cost-Effective Technology Acquisition</b>	2. The district acquires technology in a cost-effective manner that will best meet its instructional and administrative needs.	Yes	5-7
<b>Technology Professional Development</b>	3. District and school-based staff receive professional development training for all technologies used in the district.	No	5-8
<b>Technical Support</b>	4. The district provides timely and cost-effective technical support that enables educators and district staff to successfully implement technology in the workplace.	Yes	5-10
<b>Infrastructure and Network Communication</b>	5. The district maintains a dependable, standards-based infrastructure employing strategies that cost-effectively maximize network and Internet access and performance.	Yes	5-11
	6. The district uses technology to improve communication.	Yes	5-12
	7. The district has written policies that apply safe, ethical, and appropriate use practices that comply with legal and professional standards.	Yes	5-12
<b>Information Management and Delivery</b>	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	5-13
	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	5-13

# TECHNOLOGY PLANNING

## **Best Practice 1: Not Using**

### **The district does not have a comprehensive technology plan that provides direction for administrative and instructional technology decision-making.**

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 technology needs of users, 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 size of the district, 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 also should reflect the financial commitment to major technology initiatives included in the technology plan. In addition, the planning process should include follow-up procedures that allow decision makers to assess the benefits of district investments in technology and abandon or modify failed strategies in favor of more successful ones. District plans should state who is responsible for implementing and updating the technology plan.

The Bradford County School Board approved a districtwide technology plan in December 2002 that addresses important issues such as basic technology needs and goals, resource allocation by school, and technology acquisition. However, the district can improve this technology plan and meet best practice standards by addressing the following four conditions.

1. Stakeholder input has been limited in developing the technology plan, as parents (apart from teachers who are parents) and community partners were not involved in the discussion and development of the plan. In addition, technology committee meetings addressing technology planning have been infrequent and attendance by members is often insufficient to hold a meeting when it is scheduled.
2. While the district identified basic technology needs through information informally obtained from members of the technology committee during its meetings, the district did not formally and systematically assess district and school-level technology needs to guide in the planning of technology resource allocations.
3. Some goals in the technology plan need to be more clearly defined to allow for measurement and evaluation based on outcomes. For example, the goal proposing integration and immersion of technology in the classroom is a strategic goal that does not indicate desired outcomes for evaluation. In addition, goals have no expected completion dates necessary in assessing whether progress is met within appropriate time periods.
4. The current plan does not fully reflect significant changes in the technology budget initiated by the board, which affects achievement of short-term and long-term goals in the plan. For example, the plan did not include that in September 2002 the district school board removed \$75,000 budgeted for Public School Technology to be used as a reserve for board-specified academic classroom instruction.

While the district's current technology plan represents a good blueprint for implementing and delivering an efficient technology system, several revisions would improve its usefulness to the district. The district should include greater stakeholder participation, assess technology needs, and develop goals with timelines for implementations that can be measured, tracked, and evaluated. The district should use the services provided by North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC) to improve the technology

plan and should present the plan to the school board for approval. The school board should use the plan as a valuable resource when prioritizing technology funding and allocating resources.

**Action Plan 5-1**

**We recommend the district improve the technology plan by encouraging broader stakeholder input and more commitment of technology committee members; and refining, tracking, and evaluating the implementation of goals.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. To obtain broader stakeholder input, the technology committee should invite parents and an identified liaison of each school’s advisory council to its meetings. In addition, the committee should recruit members that are more available to participate, since several meetings had to be cancelled due to poor attendance. The technology committee should use NEFEC’s services for steps 2 through 5.</p> <p>Step 2. The technology committee should survey and evaluate district and school-level technology needs on an annual basis. NEFEC could work with this committee to develop an instrument to meet this purpose.</p> <p>Step 3. The technology committee should develop feasible, clearly defined and measurable, outcome-based objectives for the technology plan that link technology initiatives to the district budget, identifying the funding commitment required for each initiative.</p> <p>Step 4. The technology committee should include specific, time-bound steps necessary to attain the goals in the plan. For example, the survey in step 2 should be conducted and evaluated prior to the academic year.</p> <p>Step 5. At least annually, the technology committee should meet to evaluate goal achievement and modify or abandon failed strategies and update the plan accordingly. The technology committee should review and approve the plan, ascertaining that updates are current.</p> <p>Step 6. A member of the technology committee should present the revised plan to the school board annually for approval, summarizing the progress of the previous year’s efforts.</p> <p>Step 7. The district should use the board-approved technology plan to prioritize and allocate technology funding decisions.</p>
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Who Is Responsible	District technology committee, NEFEC, and the district school board
Time Frame	Prior to the 2004-05 school year

## **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 Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district has developed strategies to cope with limited technology funding by relying substantially on the use of donated computers and computers purchased through grants. The district also purchases new computers at low cost assembled by students from the Bradford Union Vocational Center. The district purchased a mobile technology lab with 22 laptop computers and two wireless connection points with EETT funding it received in Fiscal Year 2002-03.

Although the district meets the intent of this best practice, it could reduce disparity in access to technology across schools. While access to and utilization of technology for most elementary schools are generally good, the level of technology at the middle and high school level is relatively low. The 2003 DOE Technology Resource Survey (TRS) shows the disparity of access to computers and computer age across schools. For example, the exposure of teachers and students at Bradford Middle School and those at Starke Elementary School to technology is very dissimilar with respect to the number and age of computers available to them. We found that, on average, two students share one computer in a classroom at Starke Elementary School, while nine students share one computer per classroom at Bradford Middle School. Computer age is an issue too, as 90% of the computers at Starke Elementary School were purchased within the past five years, while only 11% of Bradford Middle School's computers fall into this category. District personnel told us that most schools use equipment that is over eight years old. In addition, we found that Lawtey Community School still uses some Intel 386 and 486 computers in a few classrooms, which are several years behind current technology standards.

**To improve disparity in access to technology across schools, we recommend that the district target schools with predominantly obsolete computers (i.e., older than 5 years) and higher student-to-computer ratios as compared to other schools when allocating future technology resources. Information on school-based resources should be based on needs identified in the yearly DOE Technology Resource Survey and updated information on schools' current resources ascertained by the technology committee.**

## **TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Best Practice 3: Not Using**

**School-based staff does not receive sufficient professional development training to ensure technology skills development and the integration of technology in the classroom.**

The importance of technology skills in postsecondary education and for hiring in a large number of jobs make it imperative that students receive adequate training in technology at the secondary school level. Professional development of teachers is essential to ensure that they maximize their use of existing technology. Administrative personnel need to use technology in order to meet reporting requirements and to carry out their work efficiently. However, given the potentially wide range of knowledge and abilities among district staff, it is essential that districts identify the employees and specific areas in which employees are in the greatest need of training and then use this information to focus professional development efforts. To accomplish this, districts must define the level of competency to be mastered, clearly state the training requirements, and develop strategies to provide the needed training. These strategies include traditional classroom, individualized computer lab instruction, web-based instruction, electronic bulletin boards, videotapes, and other self-directed, technology-based methods. In evaluating training effectiveness, districts should strive to go beyond issues such as whether participants liked the professional development opportunity and should focus on the intended outcomes and skills to be mastered. Assessing training effectiveness is important to plan and budget for future training initiatives.

The Bradford County School District does not meet the intent of this best practice. We identified four issues the district should address to improve technology training and meet best practice standards.

1. The district has not developed technology standards for teacher performance. Even though the district's technology plan mentions the short-term goal of establishing standards using the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) National Education Technology Standards, these standards have not yet been developed or adapted and there are no current efforts in place to do so. The adoption of standards is important to define the level of mastery desired by the district to guide the planning of professional technology training of employees.

2. The need for training has not been systematically and periodically assessed to identify specific training areas that would benefit employees the most and to assign technology skills training. The identification of areas of greatest need would allow the district to target its limited resources to these needs. Some districts we have previously reviewed are using assessment tools for professional development assessment such as the School Technology and Readiness (STaR) Chart, the Florida Learning Alliance (FLA) Survey, and the Department of Education's Technology Resources Survey.<sup>5</sup> For example, the STaR Chart, developed by the Florida Department of Education, is a rubric of technology benchmarks that relate to a variety of education issues. The benchmarks for each issue are presented at stages, providing the opportunity to chart a school or district's progress in educational technology.<sup>6</sup> In addition, some of the benchmarks can be used to chart an individual's progress; that is, it can assist teachers with tracking and assessing their progress on a technology continuum. This use of the chart would allow teachers to assess whether they are moving toward a higher point of technology usage from year to year.
3. While administrative employees receive periodic training in using technology to conduct their work, teachers expressed concerns that technology training opportunities needed to be expanded to ensure the development of technology skills in the classroom.
4. The district does not track and evaluate technology training received to help identify training taken by staff and to assess whether they achieved desired levels of competency. The STaR chart described in point 2 above would be helpful in this effort as well, as it can be used to define and identify stages of desired and achieved development.

We identified several reasons for these deficiencies.

- The technology committee discusses training needs during its meetings, but these needs are based on the opinions of attending committee members rather than periodic and systematic feedback obtained from teachers.
- The district did not assign a person knowledgeable in technology the task of effectively communicating, coordinating, tracking and evaluating training. The director of curriculum sends information about training opportunities to principals and allocates funding for training. However, due to other pressing duties, she has not done sufficient follow-up to effectively evaluate training outcomes.
- Teachers told us that many training sessions are not offered on-site but at NEFEC offices in Palatka, approximately 40 miles from the district's central office. This location makes it inconvenient and difficult for them to attend.
- Since most communication is directed to principals who already receive a large number of messages, the dissemination of technology training information may not always reach teachers in a timely fashion.
- Finally, teacher work load and reservations about using substitute teachers prevent many teachers from taking time off for training sessions.

We recommend the following action plan to improve the technology professional development of district employees.

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<sup>5</sup> The Monroe County School District uses the STaR chart, while Franklin County uses the FLA survey.

<sup>6</sup> See [Florida STaR Chart](#) for further information on the use of the STaR Chart.

**Action Plan 5-2**

**We recommend that the district improve the professional development training of its employees by conducting needs assessments and expanding technology training opportunities; tracking and evaluating training.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The technology committee should adopt standards developed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) for technology professional development of teachers.</p> <p>Step 2. The technology committee or school-based administrators should survey and identify administrators' and teachers' skills in technology and the extent to which teachers integrate technology in the classroom. Existing assessment tools such as the School Technology and Readiness (STaR) Chart, the Florida Learning Alliance Survey, and DOE's Technology Resources Survey could be employed in this effort.</p> <p>Step 3. Once the district identifies training needs through surveys, the technology committee should develop a schedule of expanded and coordinated training through NEFEC or designated local mentors. Expanded and coordinated training opportunities should also include more locally held sessions with NEFEC to alleviate traveling for teachers. The technology committee should periodically invite a representative from NEFEC to its meetings to obtain and provide feedback concerning technology issues. Incentives such as extra pay from grants or extra time off from school duties may encourage better attendance.</p> <p>Step 4. Principals should use survey results to allocate training opportunities to teachers and consider offering training sessions during teacher planning and early release days.</p> <p>Step 5. To improve communication about training opportunities, the technology committee should consider assigning one of its members the responsibility of disseminating training information. This responsibility could be rotated among members to avoid burdening one person. To improve disseminating this information at the school level, each school's technology contact or other designated person should be responsible for forwarding this information to all teachers.</p> <p>Step 6. The technology committee should explore using existing district tracking systems used for in-service training hours or Florida Learning Alliance's free tracking system on the web, at <a href="http://www.my-points.org">www.my-points.org</a> to track training.</p> <p>Step 7. The technology committee and principals should assess the effectiveness of training to guide in the decision to pursue only training that produces desired results or to modify the training schedule. The district could pursue the option to use the STaR chart in evaluating training.</p> <p>Step 8. Principals should use teacher technology skills and use of technology in the classroom as criteria in the evaluation process.</p>
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Who Is Responsible	MIS Director, district technology committee, principals and the district school board
Time Frame	Prior to the 2004-05 school year.

## **TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

### **Best Practice 4: Using**

**The district generally provides 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; and 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 as resources become available.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. Although the district is using this best practice, it could improve technological capacity by enhancing communication between some schools and the district. Since teachers are required to enter attendance and grades electronically, access to the Internet and functional computers is essential to meeting these responsibilities. Most schools reported satisfaction with the response time and quality of technical support by the district. However, Lawtey Community School in particular experienced reported delays in access to the network and the Internet of up to several months. These delays were caused by the lack of response to teacher service requests due to the school's failure to convey these issues to the MIS office.

**To further improve technical support, we recommend that the district identify and improve current communication problems concerning the need for services between some schools and the district office. The MIS director should require that employees designated as technology contacts communicate service requests by teachers to the district within a specified timeframe, such as two days. In addition, the MIS director, in collaboration with the school technology contacts, should set a standard that service requests to solve problems related to teachers' access to a computer and to the Internet are met within a specified timeframe, such as one week.**

## **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 the demands for information 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 communication, data transmission, resource sharing, and Internet capabilities in a cost-effective manner. 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 Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district has implemented and established a dependable infrastructure. A central network system consists of an AS400 server that runs the resource management system and is connected to servers located at each school site. School employees use TERMS to enter data such as attendance and grades into the system through terminals and personal computers. All schools have access to the Internet and email through the district's connection to the Florida Information Resource Network (FIRN). In addition, one school has internal email capability. Even though the district has not yet installed a virus protection software system, it allocated funding to and contracted for the purchase of a software system.

## **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 access to important information district wide and decreases the expense associated with sending hardcopy updates. Voice, email, and website technologies can facilitate communication with parents by providing information regarding the expectation, progress, and well-being of their children, as well as providing general information about specific programs and course offerings.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district uses email districtwide and encourages school employees to make more use of email to communicate with other schools or district office employees. All but one of the district's schools use the Florida Information Resource Network (FIRN) as the central email system offering adequate email connections throughout the district and state at no cost. The remaining school uses a separate internal email system as part of its operating system at no additional cost. In addition, the technology teacher at this school reported that she currently does not invest a significant amount of time to manage the system, even though she had to devote extra time during initial system implementation. Another elementary school is considering the purchase of a school-based email system at a cost of \$2,000. We believe this purchase is unnecessary because FIRN provides an adequate email system for the school. In addition to the purchase price, the installation and management of the system will result in an unnecessary diversion on the district's limited technology resources. As discussed in Action Plan 5-1, a comprehensive technology plan would establish priorities for technology purchases.

## **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, it 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. 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.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district provides clearly written instructions and user agreement forms to employees and students on the appropriate use of the Internet and district computers.

# **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 are typically used to track student information and financial management. For example, the Florida Department of Education requires student data to be submitted electronically. Because student data is used for assessment and funding, it is important that controls are in place for the district to secure access and to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the data. Districts should have processes in place that ensure they are following typical electronic data processing (EDP) practices and have controls to promote the proper functioning of all information systems.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice as most equipment is secured in areas inaccessible to non-authorized users. However, during our site visits, we observed that the physical security of communications equipment in some schools was not sufficiently secured. For example, the wiring hubs in Lawtey Community School and Bradford High School were left easily accessible to non-authorized use. As a result, the network was unavailable to users because of equipment tampering. The district could improve access reliability to the network by ensuring that all communications equipment is secured from non-authorized access.

**To enhance the security of technology equipment, we recommend that wiring hubs and other communications equipment be secured at all schools by ensuring that they are enclosed within a room inaccessible to non-authorized users or locked within a cabinet.**

## **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 Information Technology (IT) products and services.**

Because districts depend heavily on data from information systems to make informed decisions, this data must be accessible when needed and presented in useful report formats. To ensure that information needs of teachers and administrators are being 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 satisfaction with information systems and services. Districts then should analyze alternatives to identify the most cost-effective method of responding to these needs.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district's MIS director, who is mostly responsible for processing requests for products and services, is in close and frequent contact with most school employees and regularly spends time at most schools. The district could further improve its performance in project management by adopting Action Plan 5-1 and prioritizing the delivery of IT products and services based on the needs assessment as recommended in step 2 of the action plan.

# 6 Personnel Systems and Benefits

## *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using 8 of the 11 Personnel Systems and Benefits Best Practices. The district generally recruits and hires qualified personnel and uses cost containment strategies for its workers' compensation and employee benefits programs. The district has also improved the management of its personnel function and maintains an effective collective bargaining process.

The district is not using 3 of the 11 best practices for its personnel system. First, the district cannot demonstrate whether its working environment enhances employee satisfaction and minimizes turnover. To assess the level of job satisfaction within the district, we recommend that the district conduct periodic climate surveys of district employees and exit interviews with employees who terminate their employment with the district. Second, the district's staff development program has several deficiencies. To meet this best practice and improve operations, we recommend the district assess the training needs of its employees and institute a mentoring program for new teachers. Third, the district has not established an effective system for evaluating employees. We recommend that the district update and improve its performance appraisal system and establish a district-wide training program on the new system.

Although the district meets 8 best practices, we have suggestions for enhancing performance in three areas. First, the district could deal more effectively with employees who repeatedly fail to meet district performance expectations. Second, the district could further improve its performance by providing formal training to substitute teachers on a regular basis. Finally, the district could improve the effectiveness of its record keeping by establishing a more consistent process for organizing its employee personnel records.

## *Background*

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The Bradford County School District employed 523 full-time persons during School Year 2001-02, of whom approximately 52% were instructional personnel. (See Exhibit 6-1.)

**Exhibit 6-1  
During 2001-02, the Bradford County School District Employed 523 Persons**

Categories of Employees		Numbers of Employees
<b>Administrative Employees</b>	District Level	8
	School Level	16
	<b>Total Administrative</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Instructional Employees</b>	Elementary	107
	Secondary	95
	Exceptional Student	40
	Other Teachers	5
	Other Instructional Staff	24
	<b>Total Instructional</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Non-Instructional Employees</b>	Professional	10
	Non-Professional	218
	<b>Total Non-Instructional</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Total Employees</b>		<b>523</b>

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2001-02.

The district has assigned responsibility for personnel systems and benefits to the deputy superintendent. These responsibilities include managing personnel records, processing applications and screening applicants, negotiating collective bargaining agreements and health benefits packages, and coordinating personnel evaluations. In addition to the deputy superintendent, the personnel office has one employee dedicated to personnel issues, one employee who is responsible for insurance and archived records, and one employee who serves as the district office’s receptionist. Other aspects of personnel are managed through other departments and agencies as noted below.

- The district’s instructional staff development programs are the primary responsibility of the curriculum director, while non-instructional staff development programs are the responsibility of the individual department directors.
- Workers’ compensation services fall under the oversight of the director of transportation.
- The Bradford County School District also contracts with the North East Florida Education Consortium (NEFEC) to provide several services. NEFEC is a regional, non-profit, educational consortium that provides programs and services including instruction, employee benefits, training, information technology, and risk management to 12 school districts.

The Bradford Education Association represents the district’s employees in collective bargaining and is the only employee union active among Bradford County School District employees. As of Fiscal Year 2002-03 approximately 65% of the district’s instructional employees were members of the union.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Personnel Systems and Benefits Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the 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.	No	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 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.	No	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	6-10
	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	6-10
	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 efficiently and effectively recruits and hires qualified instructional and non-instructional personnel.**

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 position descriptions for all positions within the district 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 Bradford County School District's personnel office has the primary responsibility for recruiting applicants and processing applications. The office uses an accessible, user-friendly job application process. The office posts vacancy notices on the district's website and on bulletin boards in district offices. This year, the district adopted a more simplified application and began posting the application on its website for downloading. The office receives applications during regular weekday business hours. The district is able to fill most of its vacant positions without exceptional efforts.

In Fiscal Year 2002-03, the district implemented a new centralized application screening process. Prior to this change, applicants were required to individually contact principals or department directors who had vacancies. This practice resulted in some individuals being hired before their background check had been completed or at a salary level that was not consistent with board policy. Under the new process, the Personnel Office conducts a background check and reviews the applicant's qualifications. The Personnel Office also explains the salary schedule for the position and general district policies to the applicant. The Personnel Office then refers the application to the department director or school principal to complete the application process and make a final hiring decision.

Although the Bradford County School District has not had difficulty filling vacancies in the past, the number of vacancies increased this year due to the large number of people retiring at the end of 2002-03. Most of the vacancies are administrative positions. To recruit applicants for these positions, district management surveyed employees in December 2002 to identify individuals who would be interested in working in administration. The district also offered leadership training to employees who did not have the requisite leadership certificate. The district was able to fill all of the administrative positions using this strategy, but some individuals did not have their leadership certificates at the time they were offered their new positions. As a result, the school board has raised some concerns and has called for a review of the qualifications of all of the newly appointed administrators.

Although the district is using this best practice, there are two areas where the district could further improve its recruiting and hiring practices. First, district administrators responsible for hiring have not been trained in the new application screening process. As a result, the district cannot ensure that the personnel office screens all applications. Second, although the district used a reasonable strategy to recruit from within to fill administrative positions vacant due to retirement, it did not establish clear expectations for when these new administrators would be required to meet minimum qualifications.

**To further improve the district’s recruiting and hiring practices, we recommend that the district should formalize its new application screening procedure by providing training to administrators to ensure that the procedure is used consistently. We also recommend that the district establish clear expectations and timelines for when new administrators will be fully qualified for their new positions.**

## **Best Practice 2: Not Using**

**Although the district has historically had a relatively stable workforce, it cannot demonstrate that it has created a working environment that enhances employee satisfaction and minimizes turnover.**

A stable workforce reduces costs, particularly those associated with recruiting and training of 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 control of the district. 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 this working 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 conduct climate surveys that measure employee satisfaction and maintain clear and effective channels of communication with its employees.

The Bradford County School District has historically maintained a reasonably stable workforce given the shortages facing the teaching profession and despite its salaries not being fully competitive with other school districts. According to the deputy superintendent, in the last two years approximately 8 to 10 employees have terminated employment with the district each year. The district also monitors data on the number of employees retiring each year and has data on projected retirements through 2005. The district has worked to improve employee morale and satisfaction through salary increases.<sup>1</sup>

However, the district does not meet best practice standards because it does not routinely conduct exit interviews with personnel who terminate employment nor does it conduct climate surveys that measure employee satisfaction. Exit interviews and climate surveys can provide district management with information about morale and work environment. These tools can also be used to identify issues at school sites and in district level departments that management needs to address.

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<sup>1</sup> During our field work, we requested supporting documentation of the 11% salary increase, but the district did not provide this information to us by the report publication date.

**Action Plan 6-1**

**We recommend that the district ensure that exit interviews (written or face-to-face) and climate surveys are done to assess the level of job satisfaction in the district.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	Ensure that separating employees complete the Department of Education's exit interview form beginning with the 2003-04 school year.
	Step 2.	Compile and review this information on a quarterly basis to identify specific reasons for turnover that are within the control of the district.
	Step 3.	Present the findings to the board annually.
	Step 4.	Develop a climate survey for all levels of employees to gauge morale and worker satisfaction at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
	Step 5.	Conduct the survey during the school year; compile and analyze results.
	Step 6.	Present survey findings to the board annually.
	Step 7.	Compare the results from year to year to detect trends in the work environment of the district.
Who Is Responsible	Deputy Superintendent	
Time Frame	June 2004	

**Best Practice 3: Not Using**

**The district's staff development program has several deficiencies. As a result, the district cannot ensure that its staff development program is improving student achievement and achieving high levels of productivity and performance among employees.**

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. 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. The 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.

The Bradford County School District's staff development program is administered and supported through its Office of Curriculum Development. The district allocates approximately half of its training budget to individual schools and retains the remainder for higher-cost training, district wide training, and to augment school-level training. The curriculum office maintains course attendance rosters and tracks recertification hours for instructional staff. The district contracts with Northeast Florida Education Consortium (NEFEC) to develop its In-Service Training Plan. NEFEC is the primary source for training courses for district employees and its courses cover a wide range of areas including classroom management, technology, teaching methods, subject area content, and school safety. The district encourages teachers to pursue certification by the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. The district has also been working with the CROWN Consortium to develop a leadership-training program for administrators and aspiring administrators.<sup>2</sup> This training will be provided in the fall of 2003.

However, to fully use the best practice, the district needs to address several staff development issues. First, although some teachers we interviewed said that the district's training program does not meet their professional development needs, the district does not assess the training needs of schools or individual employees. Some specific examples of additional training needed identified by teachers we spoke with are ESOL and ESE for regular classroom teachers and use of technology. (For more information on

<sup>2</sup> The Crown Consortium is comprised of 14 school districts and a laboratory school that have entered into a cooperative arrangement for management and leadership activities and school improvement services.

technology training needs, refer to Best Practice 3, Chapter 5). Second, the district does not evaluate the quality of courses provided by NEFEC or in-house by the district. Without analyzing participants' comments, the district does not know whether courses are helping to improve student achievement and employee performance. Finally, the district does not have a mentoring program for new employees. To meet this best practice and improve its operations, the district will need to increase the level of district wide coordination of training activities by implementing the following action plan.

**Action Plan 6-2**

**We recommend the district assess the training needs of district employees, develop and implement a standard evaluation form for district training courses, and institute a mentoring program for new teachers.**

- Step 1. Develop a training needs assessment instrument at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
- Step 2. Using this instrument, assess the training needs of district employees at the beginning of each school year.
- Step 3. Develop and implement a standard evaluation form to assess district training activities at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
- Step 4. Compile and analyze this information after each internal or external training program.
- Step 5. Identify experienced teachers who could serve as mentors at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
- Step 6. Institute a mentoring program for new employees by the end of the 2003-04 school year.

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Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum
Time Frame	June 2004

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**Best Practice 4: Not Using**

**The district has not established an effective system for formally evaluating employees.**

Performance appraisals are an essential tool to be used by a school district to improve the quality of services delivered. 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 system for formally evaluating the performance of its instructional and non-instructional employees. The system should include components that provide for the improvement and growth of employee performance, that reward excellent performance, and that identify those areas of performance that do not meet the district's expectations for the employee. The evaluation of district administrators should be made after feedback has been solicited and received from non-administrative personnel and from parents.

The Bradford County School District does not meet best practice standards because it has not established an effective system for evaluating its employees. The district's evaluation system has not been updated to reflect the requirements of recent law changes in Ch. 2002-387, *Laws of Florida*. As a result, the assessment instruments for evaluating instructional and administrative personnel are not primarily based on the performance of students assigned to their classrooms or schools as required by Florida law. In addition, the district has not established a district wide training program for the evaluation process. Without a training program, the district cannot ensure that personnel responsible for evaluating their employees are uniformly applying performance appraisal criteria. Another deficiency is that district management uses an informal process for evaluating principals and department directors and managers are reticent to use evaluations to communicate adverse performance.

**Action Plan 6-3**

**We recommend that the district update and improve its performance appraisal system.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. Update performance appraisal instruments to reflect the provisions of Ch. 2002-387, <i>Laws of Florida</i>, by basing the evaluations primarily on student performance.</p> <p>Step 2. After revisions are made to the performance appraisal system, develop a district wide training program to ensure that all employees responsible for evaluations consistently apply evaluation criteria and can identify adverse performance.</p> <p>Step 3. Develop a district wide orientation program for administrators and instructional employees to inform them of the new performance appraisal system and procedures.</p> <p>Step 4. Implement the new performance appraisal system during the 2003-04 school year.</p> <p>Step 5. Use employee appraisals to better identify and address training needs in areas such as technology and performance deficiencies.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Deputy Superintendent and Curriculum Director
Time Frame	June 2004

**Best Practice 5: Using**

**The district ensures that employees 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.**

District employees are in a position of trust with the potential to influence children in both positive and negative ways. To minimize the potential for negative influence on the children within a district, 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, then those termination decisions should be defensible in judicial review.

The Bradford County School District has a written policy regarding dismissal for cause that requires the district to conduct preliminary investigations of reports of misconduct. In addition, principals and other administrators are trained in identifying employee behaviors that could be harmful to students. There were two complaints against teachers in Fiscal Year 2002-03 that resulted in the teachers resigning.

Although the district meets the intent of this best practice, it could deal more effectively with employees who repeatedly fail to meet district performance expectations. Without an effective performance appraisal system, the district does not know whether employees are consistently failing to meet district performance expectations. Improving the performance appraisal system as described in Action Plan 6-3 should result in more effective resolutions to performance deficiencies.

**Best Practice 6: Using**

**The district has an efficient and cost-effective system for managing absenteeism and the use of substitutes.**

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 should provide special assistance (coaching, guidance, and oversight) to substitutes for extended teacher absences. A district should have policies that either encourage high attendance or discourage excessive absenteeism.

The Bradford County School District manages absenteeism well and maintains an ample supply of substitute teachers. The Personnel Director periodically reviews employee leave report data to monitor absenteeism rates. In our interviews with district administrators and teachers, we did not hear complaints of excessive absenteeism. The district's practice of paying employees for all of their sick and annual leave when they retire serves as an incentive for employees to save their leave. The district also recruits and maintains a sufficient number of substitute teachers and has procedures for contacting substitutes when teachers notify their school of an anticipated absence.

Although the district meets the intent of this best practice, it could improve performance by providing formal training to substitutes. Many of the district's substitute teachers have high school diplomas and have not received any formal training in classroom management and teaching techniques. As a result, substitutes need orientation and training classes to obtain the basic information and skills. The district has a training program for substitutes scheduled for the summer of 2003. This training will include classroom management, district personnel policies, and health issues.

**To further improve the district's staff development system, we recommend that the district continue to conduct periodic training of substitutes.**

## **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.

The Bradford County School District uses an automated record-keeping system for processing personnel transactions and for storing some personnel records such as salary and leave records. An automated system reduces reliance on manual files and the need for additional storage space and facilitates the exchange of information with school sites and departments. School sites have access to screens that provide general information but cannot make edits to information in the system.

Although the district is using this best practice, its manual system for maintaining its official personnel records could be improved. School districts need to have a consistent process for maintaining, using, and disposing of official personnel records. The records management system needs to include controls designed to ensure that information is filed accurately and in a timely manner. Personnel files should contain documentation of an individual's employment history, health benefits, and performance appraisals. In addition, the district should be able to locate these records when necessary. However, the district's manual personnel records are not well organized making this information difficult to find. In addition, the district cannot ensure that personnel information is filed accurately and in a timely manner.

**To further improve the district's system for maintaining personnel records, we recommend that the district establish a consistent process for organizing and maintaining official personnel records.**

### **Best Practice 8: Using**

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

When left uncontrolled, workers' compensation claims can represent a significant expense to school districts and, thus, should be effectively managed to minimize their frequency and costs. 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 also should have an active safety inspection program, and should develop correction actions such as physical plant repair or employee training based upon information gained from past workers' compensation claims. In addition, the district should implement cost containment steps to limit workers' compensation expenses, such as a light duty program that enables injured employees to return to work as soon as they are able.

The Bradford County School district has practices in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district contracts with the Northeast Florida Education Consortium (NEFEC) to manage its workers' compensation program. NEFEC coordinates the risk management program through a third party administrator for 11 school districts and the Florida Virtual School. NEFEC examines claim trends and expenses and provides the district with guidelines for its safety and light duty programs. The district processes the paperwork when claims are filed, reviews claims and expenses, and gets monthly reports from NEFEC on its claim activity and costs.

### **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 the district's 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 alternative delivery options. 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 Bradford County School district has practices in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district has an insurance committee that works with NEFEC's risk management staff and the Bradford Education Association. The committee reviews the district's benefit package each year and calculates the short-term and long-term impact of various options. NEFEC manages the district's benefit package through a third party administrator. In its negotiations for Fiscal Year 2002-03, the district limited the increase in the plan by \$250,000 by increasing the deductible, co-pay, and prescription drug costs. The district absorbed about half of the remaining cost increases and passed the other half onto its employees. The district offers employees a cafeteria plan of health benefits. For 2003-04, the district is going to consider other insurance providers that might provide less expensive coverage than their current provider.

### **Best Practice 10: Using**

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

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. To accomplish this, each school district should have an effective accountability system that includes clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for the human resource program that identify the expected outcomes of the program. The district should conduct formal and/or informal reviews of the program structure and staffing, with sufficient justification for each administrative position. In addition,

each district should consider the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the costs and potential cost savings, or alternative means of delivery of human resource services, such as increased use of automation and the use of outsourcing.

The Bradford County School district has practices in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district has two people assigned to its personnel office: the district's deputy superintendent (who also serves as the personnel director) and a personnel technician. The district has made many improvements to the management of its personnel function in the last two years. The district reduced a large backlog of personnel records that needed to be filed, expanded the hours the district accepts job applications to five days a week, and implemented a procedure that restricts access to personnel records. Given the size of the district and limited funds, there are no significant opportunities to further improve personnel management.

### **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 fair employee compensation packages that it can afford. 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, determining 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 Bradford County School district has practices in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district's school board appoints a three-member collective bargaining team to work with the school board and the Bradford Education Association (BEA). The deputy superintendent is the lead negotiator on the team. The team identifies issues and concerns, estimates costs of various proposals, and negotiates with the BEA. The team uses a district attorney who also advises the board. BEA representatives concur that the process works well.

# 7 Facilities Construction

## *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using 19 of the 21 applicable facilities construction best practices. (Given the district's relatively small size and growth rate, 3 Facilities Construction Best Practices do not apply.) The district has outsourced nearly all of its construction operations through contracts and construction management. While it has no plans for new school construction, the district has maximized the use of local revenue which funds the small construction projects that do occur. The district keeps school personnel and the public informed of construction projects through public announcements, school board meetings and post-construction orientations. To meet the remaining best practice standards the district needs to address several issues. First, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its construction operations, the district needs to establish a facilities planning committee and ensure competitive contracting practices. Second, the facilities construction budget should be the product of a facilities planning group and should outline the capital needs for the school district for the next five years. And third, the district should ensure that competitive bidding for construction services is conducted as outlined in Florida statutes.

## *Background*

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**Facilities utilization.** The Bradford County School District is a small district with declining enrollment. The district has a total of 5,021 satisfactory student stations (4,404 permanent student stations and 617 student stations located in relocatables) across its nine schools. With a current enrollment of 3,979 students, the utilization rate of district facilities was 80%. If only permanent student stations are counted, the utilization rate increases to 91%.

The last Educational Plant Survey for the district was conducted in 1998. The district has selected a contractor to complete a new survey. The 1998 survey made several districtwide recommendations including, correcting State Requirements for Educational Facilities (SREF) deficiencies identified in the district's safety inspection report, general remodeling needs pursuant to SREF and retrofitting existing schools for technological improvements. The district implemented some of these recommendations, specifically corrections to facilities based on SREF deficiencies.

**Facilities inventory.** As seen in Exhibit 7-1, most of the schools in this district are over 30 years old. Growth in the district has been slow and most campuses are small. As a result, the majority of district construction projects are small in scale, such as classroom additions to existing campuses. The last new school constructed in the district was Starke Elementary in 1997. This facility was constructed to replace the old Starke Elementary facility which was condemned for student use. The district renovated the old facility and now uses it for the district offices.

## Facilities Construction

Bradford County facilities include seven schools, two special purpose centers, and two ancillary complexes which are used for transportation, maintenance, and district administration. The district currently uses 33 relocatables, mainly at Lawtey Community and Southside Elementary schools. The facilities are predominantly located within the city limits of Starke and include over 630,000 square feet of space on 428 acres of district property.

### Exhibit 7-1 Overall the District Uses 80% of Its Capacity

Description	First Acquired <sup>1</sup>	Total Student Stations <sup>2</sup>	Current Enrollment	Permanent Square Footage	COFTE <sup>3</sup>
Southside Elementary	1959	832	652	62,711	660
Starke Elementary	1997	728	529	72,938	572
Hampton Elementary	1967	232	150	23,548	171
Brooker Elementary	1966	146	91	18,661	130
Lawtey Community School	1978	546	382	43,809	418
Bradford Middle School	1966	905	829	84,579	756
Bradford High School	1914	1,100	1,091	143,897	969
RJE Center (Alternative/ESE) <sup>4</sup>	1948	141	255	28,689	22
Vocational & Technical	1967	343	-	83,102	193
District Offices	1949	-	-	50,119	-
Transportation and Maintenance	1966	-	-	20,243	-
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>4,973</b>	<b>3,979</b>	<b>632,296</b>	<b>3,891</b>

<sup>1</sup> The date shown generally applies to when a site was acquired. The acquisition date of the facilities located at these sites may differ from the date shown in the exhibit.

<sup>2</sup> This total includes both permanent student stations and relocatable student stations for each facility.

<sup>3</sup> "COFTE" is the Capital Outlay Full Time Equivalent computed by the Florida Department of Education.

<sup>4</sup> This center includes ESE and alternative classes in one facility and a separate building housing a nursery and classes for teen mothers.

Source: Florida Inventory of School Houses 2002-03 school year, Bradford County Schools Enrollment: May, 2003.

## Capital budget

The Bradford County School District assesses the full 2 mills of capital outlay from property taxes allowed by Florida law. It has been able to address most facilities construction needs with these funds. The most recent facility constructed in the district was the new Starke Elementary School in 1997 and its construction was funded through the State of Florida's Public Education Capital Outlay Trust Fund's (PECO) Special Facilities Account. This is a grant program managed by the Florida Department of Education and is discussed in more detail in Best Practice 12.

The district's facilities construction budget for Fiscal Year 2002-03 was \$2,242,147. As shown in Exhibit 7-2, the district's construction needs over the next four fiscal years are mainly remodeling or renovation projects and small classroom additions at existing schools.

**Exhibit 7-2**  
**Most of the District's Capital Budget for the Next Five Years**  
**Is Devoted to Expanding Existing Facilities**

<b>Project Descriptions</b>	<b>2002-03 Expenditures</b>	<b>2003-04 Projected Budget</b>	<b>2004-05 Projected Budget</b>	<b>2005-06 Projected Budget</b>	<b>2006-07 Projected Budget</b>
<b>New construction</b>					
Southside Elementary Media Center	\$823,159				
Lawtey Community Classroom Building		\$650,000	\$450,000		
BMS Band Addition			\$500,000		
BHS Classroom Addition				\$825,000	
Renaissance Facility					\$480,000
New Maintenance Facility					\$500,000
Southside Elementary Classroom Building	\$673,277	\$485,000			
<b>TOTAL: \$5,386,436</b>					
<b>Remodeling, renovations, repairs</b>					
Convert Old Southside Media Center	\$25,000				
Fieldhouse Renovation		\$25,000			
Extend Band Room					\$35,000
Lawtey Community Pavilion	\$86,217				
Portable Renovation		\$25,000			
Replace damaged windows - Lawtey Community	\$27,950				
Replace windows (district wide)		\$20,000			
Pave Vo-tech parking	\$49,585				
New Vo-tech classroom	\$106,959				
Southside Elementary Pavilion				\$100,000	
BHS Cafeteria Expansion	\$450,000				
<b>TOTAL: \$950,711</b>					
<b>Fiscal Year Totals</b>	<b>\$2,242,147</b>	<b>\$1,205,000</b>	<b>\$950,000</b>	<b>\$925,000</b>	<b>\$1,015,000</b>
<b>Grand Total through 2007</b>					<b>\$6,337,147</b>

Source: Capital Projects Funds, 2002-2003 Budget, Bradford County School District, September 3, 2002.

## Organization and management

Facilities construction activities in the district are the responsibility of the maintenance supervisor. The district does not have a facilities construction program. This district has no staff that perform new construction, and therefore contracts with construction management or individual subcontractors on construction projects. The district does have a contract with an architect who manages many of the construction responsibilities including contract management.

The district also relies heavily on the Northeast Florida Education Consortium (NEFEC) for construction-related activities. NEFEC provides training and professional expertise to the district and provides a Florida Building Code inspector. Although the district does not have a large-scale construction program,

the maintenance employees have the opportunity for training on building code requirements and safety and fire inspections.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

### Summary of Conclusions for Facilities Construction Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Construction Planning</b>	1. The district has effective long-range planning processes.	No	7-6
	2. When developing the annual five-year facilities work plan the district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.	Yes	7-8
	3. The five-year facilities work plan establishes budgetary plans and priorities.	Yes	7-8
	4. The school board ensures responsiveness to the community through open communication about the construction program and the five-year facilities work plan.	Yes	7-8
	5. The district has an effective site selection process based on expected growth patterns.	N/A	7-9
	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.	Yes	7-9
<b>Construction Funding</b>	7. Funds collected for school projects were raised appropriately.	Yes	7-9
	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	7-10
<b>Construction Design</b>	9. The district develops thorough descriptions and educational specifications for each construction project.	Yes	7-10
	10. The architectural design fulfills the building specification needs as determined by the district.	Yes	7-11
	11. New construction, remodeling, and renovations incorporate effective safety features.	Yes	7-11
	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	7-11
	13. The district has effective management processes for construction projects.	Yes	7-12
<b>New Construction, Renovation and Remodeling</b>	14. District planning provides realistic time frames for implementation that are coordinated with the opening of schools.	Yes	7-12
	15. All projects started after March 1, 2002, comply with the <i>Florida Building Code</i> .	Yes	7-13

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
	16. The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.	Yes	7-13
	17. The district retains appropriate professionals to assist in facility planning, design, and construction.	Yes	7-13
	18. The district follows generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.	No	7-14
	19. The district minimizes changes to facilities plans after final working drawings are initiated in order to control project costs.	Yes	7-15
	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	7-15
<b>Facility Occupancy and Evaluation</b>	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	7-16
	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.	Yes	7-16
	23. The district has established and implemented accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of the construction program.	N/A	7-17
	24. The district regularly evaluates facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks and implements improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.	N/A	7-17

# CONSTRUCTION PLANNING

## Best Practice 1: Not Using

### **The district does not have effective long-range planning processes.**

Long-range facilities planning enables a district to identify its critical needs, establish strategies, and plan for the allocation of resources 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, which includes school district personnel, parents, real estate and construction professionals, and other community stakeholders. The decisions made during the planning process should be in writing and the resulting plans should address 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. Primary responsibility for facilities planning should be assigned to a district employee, and that person should be responsible for developing and maintaining demographic information that can be used to predict facilities needs. Because the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH) is used to report plant capacity and is used to help determine district facilities funding levels, it must accurately reflect the capacities and physical condition of the existing facilities. In addition, to refine projections with more current information, there should be an annual update to the five-year facilities work program, which establishes short-term capital budget plans and construction priorities.

The Bradford County School District has assigned responsibilities for facilities construction planning to the maintenance supervisor. Construction planning and operations are shared between the supervisor and the district architect through contract. Because the district has relatively few construction needs and construction projects are generally small in scale, the district outsources its construction activities.

The district does not meet best practice standards in this area for several reasons. First, although the district has experienced an enrollment decline over the past few years, it still has significant facility needs that are not being adequately planned for and addressed, for instance, chronic problems with site drainage at Lawtey Community School. Establishing a facilities planning committee whose membership includes a broad base of school district personnel, parents, construction professionals and other community stakeholders would provide a mechanism for broad stakeholder input in identifying, prioritizing, and making recommendations to the school board on resource allocation to meet the district's future construction needs.

Second, the district should improve its timeliness in identifying and addressing facility repair and renovation needs. Many of the district buildings are nearing the 50-year-design threshold and are in declining condition. As the district's building age, the need for accurate, overall physical assessment becomes even more important, and the educational plant survey will be less effective as a planning tool for major capital outlay projects. To do this, the district will need to standardize the facility inspection process with a formal checklist, in addition to the SREF assessment, and make these inspections at regularly scheduled times during the school year. The district did not provide the school board with a facilities assessment for the 2001-02 school year until May 2003.

A related issue that the district should remedy is the accuracy of facility data. As of February 2003, FISH data for the district had not been updated since 2000 and did not include the new Starke Elementary School built in 1997. The district finally updated this information in May of 2003; however, data for many facilities from 1945 to 2003 had changed, giving some more square footage and some less. This information must be kept current and accurate for the district to assess current facility utilization, adequately plan for future needs, and receive the appropriate amount of state education funding. The district should update and maintain their FISH data on a regular basis.

**Action Plan 7-1**

**We recommend that the district establish a facilities planning committee. The committee will be responsible for the planning and organization of any and all new construction in the district.**

<p>Actions Needed</p>	<p>Step 1: Establish a facilities planning committee that will meet every month (or as needed).</p> <p>Step 2: Develop written procedures to be followed by the committee when reviewing facilities construction projects and plans for future facilities needs to ensure all legal requirements are being met.</p> <p>Step 3: Require the facilities planning committee to ensure FISH data is updated annually and whenever changes to facilities occur.</p> <p>Step 4: Require the facilities planning committee to prepare written evaluation documents of proposed facility construction projects addressing site, educational specifications, design, cost, statutory requirements and availability of funds.</p> <p>Step 5: The committee should forward the written evaluation of project and all related documents (including construction plans) to the school board.</p> <p>Step 6: Require facilities planning committee to report results of annual facilities assessments to the district staff and school board at the end of each assessment period or fiscal year. The assessments should include such information as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• structural integrity,</li> <li>• mechanical systems,</li> <li>• electrical systems,</li> <li>• plumbing and sewer systems,</li> <li>• fire, safety, health and sanitation systems,</li> <li>• educational environment,</li> <li>• educational suitability,</li> <li>• site size, layout, space and adaptability,</li> <li>• operations and maintenance costs,</li> <li>• technological currency,</li> <li>• capacity utilization, and</li> <li>• users' satisfaction.</li> </ul> <p>Step 1: The committee should use the results of this survey to project the district's five-year needs relating to, renovation, remodeling, and new construction including ancillary space, and long-term maintenance concerns.</p> <p>Step 2: Apply the facilities assessment tool and use the information to adjust the capital outlay and five-year work plans.</p> <p>Step 3: Consider these needs in relation to projected capital outlay revenues and inflationary factors.</p> <p>Step 4: Develop linkages to the district's long-term strategic plan.</p> <p>Step 5: Present the capital outlay and five-year plans to the superintendent and publish and disseminate this information to the public.</p> <p>Step 6: The superintendent can make changes deemed necessary and annually report long-term anticipated capital outlay needs to the board.</p>
<p>Who is Responsible</p>	<p>The committee will involve, but not be limited to, the facilities and maintenance supervisor, the deputy superintendent, the district architect, at least one principal and at least one teacher.</p>
<p>Time Frame</p>	<p>By January 1, 2004</p>

## **Best Practice 2: Using**

### **The district evaluates alternatives to minimize the need for new construction.**

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 in which a district can avoid the high costs associated with building new space. Alternative methods of using existing facilities can help to mitigate the peaks and valleys in future student enrollments.

The Bradford County School District has little need for new facilities because student enrollment has been slowly declining. The district's main needs for new construction are replacement of older buildings or small additions to existing buildings. The district currently utilizes 33 relocatables on four campuses. As seen in Exhibit 7-1, most of the schools are also under capacity. This coupled with no anticipated changes in county growth patterns reduces the likelihood of construction of a new school in the next 20 years.

## **Best Practice 3: Using**

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

A five-year facilities work plan, 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 maintain the educational plant and ancillary facilities of the district properly, and to provide an adequate number of satisfactory student stations for the projected student enrollments. Information developed and contained in the Five-Year Educational Plant Survey is the basis for the work plan. A five-year work plan is not and should not become a district's strategic plan but it 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, a strategic plan, is necessary to assure that the district will develop adequate funding and make 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 district's five-year facilities work plan does establish budgetary plans for facilities construction. The district could benefit from a more structured method of predicting remodeling, renovation, and other maintenance needs as well as a method of associating those needs with anticipated levels of capital outlay funding. While the district has a more than adequate supply of student stations for current enrollment (see Exhibit 7-1), there are other construction needs such as building replacement that need to be addressed in the five year plan. The five-year facilities work plan can be an excellent planning tool and Action Plan 7-1 addresses this and an extension of the long-term planning process to assist in determining district needs.

## **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 on 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 information about planned projects, the priorities it has set for future projects and how those priorities were determined. A district should provide a complete explanation of how the planned projects will help the district meet its educational, site acquisition, construction, remodeling, renovation, and maintenance needs. Effective communications with district stakeholders helps earn the support of the public for its capital program. Typically, districts that successfully communicate their capital program priorities hold

regular school board meetings at which information regarding the construction program is provided and clear explanations of each construction project are made available in a format that allows for public input.

The Bradford County School District provides the board, district staff, and the public with construction project information at regularly scheduled, publicly announced board meetings. During the planning phase, the district architect and the facilities and maintenance supervisor meet with district staff at schools to determine their needs. When plans are completed, the architect and facilities district presents facilities plans in open public forums and allows for public input.

### **Best Practice 5: Not applicable**

**The district has no need for a formal site selection process based on expected growth patterns.**

The appropriate and timely selection of sites for new facilities is a critical issue for a district's capital program and ensures that land is available when and where it is needed. A district should use the demographic projections to identify land in areas, which may require school facilities as the district grows or needs change. 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.

The Bradford County School District has not constructed a new school since 1997. There is no established site selection process and with declining enrollment, it is doubtful that one is needed. The facilities planning committee recommended in Best Practice 1 should be an adequate method for site selection and should be involved in any future site purchases.

### **Best Practice 6: Using**

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

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

The Bradford County School District has limited needs for property acquisition. The district is experiencing declining enrollment and has low utilization rates at some schools (see exhibit 7-1). The only recent property acquisition has been a parcel connected to the middle school. This parcel is slated for future expansion of parking and athletic fields for the middle school, which the school currently shares with the high school.

## **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, which include property taxes, bond referendums, sales surtaxes, and certificates of participation. A district

should be able to demonstrate that each revenue source is used as authorized in the 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 any project, the scope of that project was spelled out in the sales surtax referendum resolution advertisement. The district should have evaluated the advantages and drawbacks of alternative methods for funding and financing construction projects when developing its capital planning budget. The best way to ensure the greatest amount of construction funding is for the district to first maximize the use of local revenue alternatives.

The Bradford County School District has maximized local two-mill revenue and has not sought local sales tax or bond revenue. It is unlikely the district will pursue local sales tax or bond revenue based on the low returns this would produce and the limited need for large, new construction projects. The last new school constructed in 1997 replaced an older facility condemned for student use and was funded through the State of Florida's PECO Special Facilities Account.

### **Best Practice 8: Using**

**The district approves and uses construction funds only after determining that the 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, and site acquisition, development and improvement projects may have separate funding sources with differing expenditure requirements. Districts typically rely on a finance officer to ensure that revenues generated for use as construction or site acquisition funds 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 for construction of educational plant space 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 towards the five-year facilities work plan and limited use capital funds are not diverted to other, lower priority allowable uses.

The Bradford County School District uses tax revenues appropriately and for their intended purpose. The district finance director reviews funding plans for the facilities program and ensures that PECO and other funds are spent according to Florida law. The finance director evaluates the facilities budgets and makes corrections to avoid funds being spent in areas other than those intended.

## **CONSTRUCTION DESIGN**

### **Best Practice 9: Using**

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

Educational specifications are an important part of the planning process allowing stakeholders, including parents, subject matter specialists, educators, administrators, and design professionals to develop working descriptions of a planned educational facility. Well-written educational specifications will ensure that, once built, the facility meets the needs of a variety of users. Educational specifications should include a rationale for the project, determine the size of the facility, and define the district's program goals, objectives and activities, teaching strategies and instructional methods, all based on staff input.

Educational specifications should identify the needs and design implications of advanced technology and provide for adaptability as changes and innovations occur in education. They should address spatial relationships and circulation patterns, security issues, and comply with the ‘small schools’ requirement.

The Bradford County School District’s most recent construction project involved several stakeholders. The new media center project involved media experts, the school principal, the architect, the facilities and maintenance supervisor and the school board. However, there was no formal document to provide others interested in this process a scope for the project. In the future, the district should document educational specifications for all construction projects and make documentation available to all interested parties.

**To further improve the district’s planning practices, we recommend that the district develop a policy requiring the responsibility for developing any future educational specifications be assigned to the facilities construction planning committee.**

### **Best Practice 10: Using**

**The architectural design fulfills the 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. A review of the documents should be made to ensure that the district planning leader, the users of the facility, and the architect and engineers have matched the written construction specifications and schematics against the educational specifications. The final plans must represent the district’s needs as expressed in the educational specification.

The Bradford County School District maintains a contract with a district architect that requires the architect design each project in accordance with educational specifications adopted by the school board and Florida statutes. The facilities and maintenance supervisor is also responsible for ensuring that construction plans match educational specifications.

### **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 controlled access entrances, appropriate, signage, and circulation patterns that allow unobstructed views of the entrance and hallways. Other safety needs and design elements include lighting, intra-communication systems, security and fire systems, security fencing, and a combination of fenestration and doorways, which provide safe and quick evacuation. A district must review safety and address it as part of the construction process when designing and building new structures, as well as during renovation and remodeling projects.

The Bradford County School District obtains architectural plan review services through NEFEC to ensure compliance with Florida’s safe school requirements as well as other building code requirements according to SREF. The district architect is required to incorporate these features into facility designs and the maintenance supervisor attends training for these areas when offered by the NEFEC.

### **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 construction design and major equipment selection are to be analyzed to maximize the efficient use of energy and the environment, the potential for joint usage, how technology is used, and the life cycle and costs of the materials chosen. To control the costs of building new facilities, a district should have a written policy that encourages the design team to comply with Florida's SMART school design philosophy and develop practical design solutions that are functional and cost-effective.

The Bradford County School District's newest facility, Starke Elementary School, was completed in 1997 and used a prototype design. As mentioned previously, this project was funded through the State of Florida's PECO Special Facilities Account. This is a grant program managed by the Florida Department of Education for school districts with special needs for facilities construction. However, this facility has had significant maintenance problems since construction, as noted in Chapter 8. Smaller projects in the district were constructed based on previously constructed designs that complied with Florida's SMART school design philosophy.

## **NEW CONSTRUCTION, RENOVATION, AND REMODELING**

### **Best Practice 13: Using**

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

A district may be able to improve the management of construction projects by exploring alternative service methods. A district has several options on how to complete a construction project, which include whether to do the project in-house or contract out to a private company. The potential cost savings of alternative methods should be weighed before a project begins. This practice ensures that the district has evaluated the various types of construction contracting and chosen the most beneficial method given the circumstances of individual projects. Once the method is chosen the project must be monitored for quality, timeliness, and cost.

The Bradford County School District contracts with a district architect and construction managers to complete construction projects because it lacks the resources to complete projects in-house. As a result, the district must out-source management of most construction projects. The contracts with construction managers are monitored during the construction period by district staff and the architect before scheduled payments are made. Projects are monitored for quality, timeliness and cost and requirements for each of these areas are contained in contracts.

### **Best Practice 14: Using**

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

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

A district must ensure that the tasks for achievement of all phases of each project have been incorporated and timed to coordinate with the opening of schools to cause the least disruption to students and teachers. When time frames are not met, the district should revise them accordingly and identify why they were not met, periodically updating the board and public. The plan should contain an accountability component

that provides assurance to the board and to the public that the projects addressed in the plan will be implemented at the proposed budget levels within the time frame outlined. Regular budget updates, prepared at the completion of each phase of design, should be delivered to the board.

The Bradford County School District does plan the opening of new projects based on a certain number of bad weather days and to coincide with the opening of schools. These expectations are outlined in district contracts with construction managers. The district is currently constructing a new media center and will be expanding the high school cafeteria this summer and has stipulated project completion dates prior to the opening of schools. The district should consider involving the facilities planning committee with this best practice in future projects.

### **Best Practice 15: Using**

#### **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 Bradford County School District has no staff certified to conduct building inspections and have no need to train staff on the Florida Building Code. Instead, the district utilizes the Northeast Florida Education Consortium's building inspector for all construction projects.

### **Best Practice 16: Using**

#### **The district requires appropriate inspection of all school construction projects.**

Compliance with the Florida Building Code assures that completed building projects provide a safe and secure facility. Therefore, all school construction projects must be inspected by a competent authority, schooled and certified in the requirements of the state building code. Inspectors must be trained and certified in accordance with Florida law and the inspections must be in accordance with the new Florida Building Code as revised March 2002. All information about the affected space should be recorded in the Florida Inventory of School Houses (FISH), a data base which contains extensive information about school sites, capacity, and condition.

The Department of Education, Office of Educational Facilities requires final inspections and certificates of occupancy for all new construction. The Bradford County School District conducts inspections of school construction projects through the building code inspector from the NEFEC. However, the district has not updated FISH data in a timely manner and, as mentioned in Best Practice 1, the district could make this task one of the responsibilities of a facilities planning committee.

### **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 mission, goals and obligations of the school board and in accordance with Florida law. The selection process should be in writing and available to the public. It 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 out-sourced options to staff a particular project or group of projects. Hiring of 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 out-sourcing, the district should use a selection committee to choose appropriate professionals who will act in the district's best interests during the construction project.

The Bradford County School District has contracted with an architectural firm that is responsible for most of the district's construction projects. The district used a selection committee process pursuant to s. 287.055, *Florida Statutes*, and chose an architectural firm who had experience with other districts in the NEFEC. During the selection process, the district also ensured the firm had experience with state facilities construction guidelines, building prototypes, and management practices. Since construction projects in the district are usually small, this firm is responsible for almost all projects in the district.

### **Best Practice 18: Not Using**

#### **The district does not always follow generally accepted and legal contracting practices to control costs.**

A district should have policies and procedures in place, which delineate bid solicitation and contracting practices, to control costs and protect itself from litigation. These policies and procedures should have been reviewed by legal counsel for adequacy and conformity to statutes and generally accepted practices. Generally accepted bidding procedures include bids with set opening dates and times that are inspected to confirm that all required documents are in order. Contracting practices include the use of standardized agreements that have been modified to satisfy local concerns and conditions, and review by legal authority. The district should determine the type of contract appropriate for the work to be performed after considering alternative bid and construction systems for each new project. 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.

The Bradford County School District is currently constructing a new media center at Southside Elementary School and did not competitively bid architectural services for this project. The district contracted with an architectural firm after competitive bidding to provide ongoing services for projects over \$250,000 but under \$500,000 as required by s. 287.055, *Florida Statutes*. The district is allowed to use this firm for all projects under the \$500,000 threshold. The budget for the media center project began under the \$500,000 threshold and the district architect began plans for the center. During the course of drafting plans, the size of the project and the budget grew, surpassing the \$500,000 threshold. The district should have competitively bid for architectural services when the budget exceeded \$500,000 but did not. District officials and the district architect stated that they contacted DOE to obtain permission to proceed, but could not provide us with documentation. The district's need for more comprehensive construction planning mentioned in Best Practice 1 contributed to this oversight.

To prevent this from happening in the future, we recommend the district change its practices for contracting for architectural services. The district's facilities planning committee should review all future projects and, for those with a projected budget over \$400,000, the committee should recommend competitive bidding for architectural services.

**Action Plan 7-2**

**We recommend that the district develop a written process that requires the facilities planning committee to review all projects with a projected budget over \$400,000 and that management consider the possibility of a bidding process for architectural services.**

Actions Needed	<p>Step 1: The facilities and maintenance supervisor will prepare a project description and present it to the other members of the facilities planning committee.</p> <p>Step 2: The committee will evaluate the description and make determinations as to whether the project needs to be increased in budget or scope to meet educational specifications.</p> <p>Step 3: If the committee determines that the project needs to be larger or that the budget for the project may increase the committee will recommend to the board, in writing, that the project be competitively bid for architectural services.</p> <p>Step 4: The committee will forward this decision and any related evaluation documents to the school board for review and formal adoption.</p> <p>Step 5: The school board will distribute approved decision to responsible employees and construction project members.</p>
Who is Responsible	Facilities and maintenance supervisor and facilities planning committee
Time Frame	January 1, 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 to a district or they can save a substantial number of dollars. Design changes have the potential to create substantial delays in the intended completion date of a project, 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 implemented do not result in the project exceeding budget, do not compromise educational specifications, do not exceed industry standards, and do not extend the completion date beyond the established completion date.

The Bradford County School District has no significant problems with change orders. However, the district should utilize the facilities planning committee, when it is established, to further reduce the need for change orders through a more thorough planning process. In the future, members of the committee should be notified of change orders when they occur.

**Best Practice 20: Using**

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

Payments to contractors for larger construction projects are usually 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 and in proportion to the work completed. Once a payment request is received, the district should respond in a timely and efficient manner. A district should retain a predetermined percentage of the contract pending final completion to be used to cover non-performance issues or liquidated damages, should such a situation 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, and with the concurrence of the district's project manager.

The Bradford County School District does distribute payment for construction services in a timely manner and based on a percentage of the project completed as established in construction contracts. The district architect is responsible for ensuring that the required amount of work has been completed before disbursing district funds.

## **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.**

The proper operation of a school is dependent on the users' understanding of the facilities systems and why certain design elements were included in the project. Therefore, school district personnel should be familiarized with a new facility prior to occupation. Orienting users to a facility is a critically important activity that allows the new facility to work 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 being customized for a particular group of users such as maintenance staff, custodians or administrators and teachers. The district should include clauses in the design and construction contracts to require the architect and the contractor to share the responsibility for and provide the orientation programs and supporting documentation.

The Bradford County School District conducts building orientations for all interested parties, including the public, after construction projects are completed. The district architect, maintenance supervisor, and appropriate contractors are present at all orientations.

### **Best Practice 22: Using**

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

A 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 window of time 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 facilities design and construction staff, the design professional for the new facility, and a representative of the contractor also should provide input to the evaluation. The information gathered 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.

The Bradford County School District conducts eleventh-month inspections to evaluate new building performance and evaluates utility costs to verify pre-construction estimates. Safety, sanitation and fire

inspections are also conducted by district personnel after the first year of occupancy as required by SREF. The district could also improve these building evaluations by using the recommended survey in Best Practice 1.

### **Best Practice 23: Not applicable**

**The district has not needed to establish internal accountability mechanisms to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness facilities construction program.**

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 that includes clearly stated goals and measurable objectives for the facilities construction program that identify whether it is operating efficiently and effectively. An effective accountability system includes performance and cost-efficiency measures, and interpretive benchmarks, including comparisons to adjoining districts, to evaluate the program and use these in management decision making. As part of its accountability system, the district also should establish and implement strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data and take advantage of significant opportunities to improve construction operations management.

The Bradford County School District does not maintain a formal facilities construction program. Construction projects for the district are managed and completed through contracts and accountability is established at the project level through guaranteed maximum price (GMP), scheduled completion dates and other mechanisms. In addition to mechanisms currently in contracts, the district and the school board could benefit from project level measures of performance.

**To improve the district's accountability mechanisms, we recommend that, prior to beginning construction on any major educational facilities, the district, with the assistance of the facilities planning committee, develop a project accountability system to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Results from this system would be reported to the board and could include such information as cost per square foot, cost per student station, or a customer satisfaction survey.**

### **Best Practice 24: Not Applicable**

**The district does not evaluate facilities construction operations based on established benchmarks or implement improvements to maximize efficiency and effectiveness.**

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 assess their facilities construction operations as a whole at least annually using performance data and their established benchmarks. They should report their progress towards meeting established goals, objectives and benchmarks to the board and the public on at least an annual basis. Strategies should be established and implemented based on the outcomes of these evaluations.

The Bradford County School District does not have formal procedures to assess facilities construction operations. Given the lack of a continuing major construction program focused on adding school capacity there is no need for the district to develop an evaluation methodology for their construction program. Also, the majority of recent projects are completed through contracts with the district that contain accountability mechanisms mentioned in Best Practice 23.



# Facilities Maintenance

## Summary

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The Bradford County School District is using 13 of the 22 best practices relating to facilities maintenance. The district has an experienced maintenance staff and has established an annual budget for the department within limited resources. To use the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its facilities maintenance services, the district should establish better accountability mechanisms for maintenance work, use customer feedback to target maintenance and custodial areas needing improvement, complete a thorough assessment of maintenance needs, prioritize maintenance and improvements, utilize available information for planning and establish a written energy management plan.



As seen in Exhibit 8-1, the district has an opportunity to reduce costs by focusing on its utility usage. Determining whether to take advantage of this opportunity is a district decision. 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 8-1 Our Review Identified an Opportunity to Reduce Utility Costs through Better Energy Management

Best Practice Number	Fiscal Impact: Savings and Increased Revenue					
	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Year 2007-08	Total
15 Implement an energy management program	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$125,000

## Background

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The Bradford County School District’s Maintenance Department is responsible for all aspects of preventative, routine, and emergency upkeep for the district’s nine school sites and other district facilities. In total, the department maintains approximately 676,515 gross square feet of building space. Additional responsibilities include repairing custodial equipment such as vacuum cleaners and lawn mowers and completing some small construction and remodeling projects.

## *Facilities Maintenance*

The current supervisor of maintenance was appointed in October 2002 and is developing plans for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2003. At this time he intends to implement many improvements to the maintenance program, including updated procedures and systems to increase productivity. He has 30 years of experience as a skilled tradesman in the county's maintenance department.

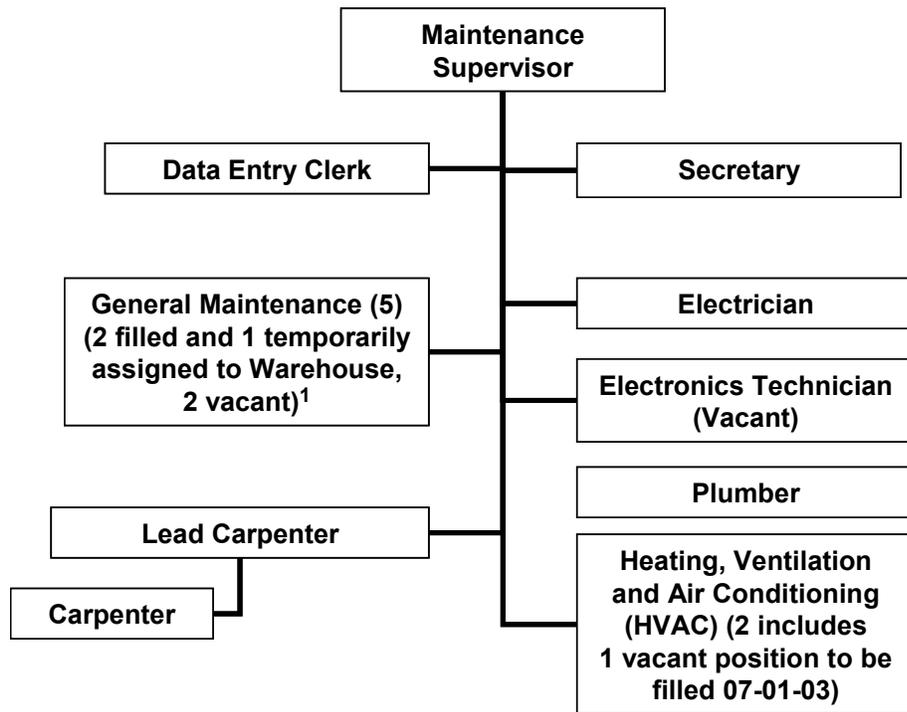
The maintenance department has 15 authorized positions with 10 employees in positions in various skilled trades, clerical, supervisory and maintenance support including a plumber, a carpenter, an electrician, and an HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) technician. An additional HVAC position has been recently created and will be filled in July 2003, three positions are vacant and will be filled if funding allows, and one position has temporarily been assigned to the warehouse. An additional general maintenance position has been added for Fiscal Year 2003-04. See Exhibit 8-2 for an overview of maintenance department staffing.

In addition, the district employs 24 custodial staff. Custodians are assigned and budgeted to individual schools and sites and report to individual site-based administrators. There are no custodial standards, and no single individual has been responsible for standardizing or oversight of the custodial program. At the February 2003 board meeting, the district approved the creation of a custodial supervisor position. This position is intended to improve custodial operations districtwide.

Bradford County has problems with flooding and drainage which has resulted in the need to address environmental problems in some schools and exacerbates continuing plumbing problems in some of the older facilities. The town of Lawtey, where one of the district's oldest schools is located, does not have a functioning stormwater management system.

The district's maintenance department had an operating budget of \$1.2 million and a capital outlay budget of \$3.8 million for the 2002-03 fiscal year. District administrators and staff feel that they do the best they can to maintain facilities within these resources. The maintenance department uses an electronic work order system to capture repair information but continues to depend on a system of mostly verbal communication as an operating and feedback system. Custodians are responsible for cleaning school facilities and some grounds maintenance. The district uses free prison labor for the majority of grounds maintenance.

**Exhibit 8-2  
While the Maintenance Department Has 15 Authorized Positions  
Only 10 Were Available to Serve the District in Fiscal Year 2002-03**



<sup>1</sup> An additional general maintenance position has been created for the 2003-04 fiscal year.

Source: Bradford County School District.

**Activities of particular interest**

The district has several practices that are worthy of special notice. For instance, the district utilizes free prison labor to maintain the school grounds. In addition, the department employs a bus driver, part time, as its lead painter. The district also uses the North East Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC) to provide several services including training and compilation of energy usage data. The district is currently one of two districts in the consortium using the shared services of a Uniform Building Code inspector.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Facilities Maintenance Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Program Direction and Accountability</b>	1. The district's maintenance and operations department has a mission statement and goals and objectives that are established in writing.	No	8-6
	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.	No	8-8
	4. The district has established procedures and staff performance standards to ensure efficient operations.	No	8-9
	5. The department maintains educational and district support facilities in a condition that enhances student learning and facilitates employee productivity.	No	8-10
<b>Organizational Structure and Staffing</b>	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	8-13
	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.	Yes	8-13
<b>Resource Allocation and Utilization</b>	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.	Yes	8-15
	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	8-15
	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.	No	8-17
	16. The district has an energy management system in place, and the system is maintained at original specifications for maximum effectiveness.	Yes	8-19
	17. District personnel regularly review maintenance and operation's costs and services and evaluate the potential for outside contracting and privatization.	Yes	8-20

<b>Practice Area</b>	<b>Best Practice</b>	<b>Using the Best Practice?</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>Information Management</b>	18. A computerized control and tracking system is used to accurately track work orders and inventory.	No	8-21
	19. The maintenance and operations department has a system for prioritizing maintenance needs uniformly throughout the district.	No	8-22
<b>Health and Safety</b>	20. District policies and procedures clearly address the health and safety conditions of facilities.	Yes	8-23
	21. The school district complies with federal and state regulatory mandates regarding facility health and safety conditions.	Yes	8-24
	22. The district is aware of and prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code.	Yes	8-24

## PROGRAM DIRECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Best Practice 1: Not Using

**The maintenance and operations department does not have a mission statement or goals and objectives that are established in writing.**

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 that includes a mission statement, clearly stated goals, and measurable objectives that identify the expected outcomes of the facilities maintenance program. The program's goals and objectives should be in writing, tied to the district's strategic plan, and focused on operating facilities in a cost-efficient manner while allowing for maximum utilization of facilities. Maintenance program goals and objectives also should include comprehensive projections of the size of the necessary work force, the amount and types of equipment required, and anticipated long-term budget requirements. These projections should be based on a survey of the physical condition of the facilities and equipment and should identify repair or replacement needs of district facilities.

The Bradford County School District is not using this best practice because it has not established a mission statement, goals, and objectives that articulate clear performance and cost-efficiency expectations for its maintenance and custodial services. Although the district's current maintenance handbook states that individual employees should prove that their work is being completed in a cost-efficient manner and should have a good attitude and work habits, the handbook does not identify how performance is to be measured or expectations for acceptable performance. In addition, custodial staff are assigned to the site-based administrators, and the district has not established a system to assess the performance or cost-efficiency custodial services districtwide.

A clearly articulated mission statement, goals and objectives, would help build consensus on program direction and priorities, provide a context for daily decisions and resource allocation, and establish a framework for developing other aspects of a program-level accountability system including performance and cost-efficiency expectations (see Best Practice 2 of this chapter for more information). Action Plan 3-1 outlines steps that the district should take to develop its program-level accountability system.

### Best Practice 2: Not Using

**The district has not established and implemented accountability mechanisms that would 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 these 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 that should be considered for evaluating the maintenance program include costs per square foot (including energy use), full-time staff per square foot of facility, and costs per student.<sup>1</sup> As part of its accountability system a district also should establish and implement strategies to continually assess the reliability of program performance and cost data. In

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

addition, school board members should periodically receive performance information that helps them assess the efficiency and effectiveness of its maintenance program.

The Bradford County School District is not using this best practice because it does not have a systematic way to assess the performance and cost-efficiency of its maintenance and operations program. The district could use data already maintained by the Department of Education to compare itself to similar school districts and to statewide averages in key areas to determine whether its performance and costs are reasonable. Key performance and cost measures include operations cost per gross square foot, maintenance cost per gross square foot, operations cost per student, maintenance cost per student, customer satisfaction with maintenance services, customer satisfaction with custodial services, and the timeliness of maintenance work.

For example, the district could use state data to assess the reasonableness of its maintenance and operations costs per square foot. Based on the most recent information available from the Department of Education, the district ranks second highest among its peers in operations cost per gross square foot and third highest in maintenance cost per gross square foot (see Exhibit 8-3). The district could use this information as a starting point to identify ways to lower its costs or increase its productivity. By establishing measures for key maintenance and custodial functions and defining acceptable performance benchmarks (such as below or above statewide or peer averages, meeting or exceeding industry standards, etc.), the district would be in a better position to identify and address poor or unacceptable performance and inefficiencies.

**Exhibit 8-3  
In Fiscal Year 2001-02, of Six Peer Counties, the Bradford County School District Was Second Highest in Operations Cost per Gross Square Foot and Third Highest in Maintenance Cost per Gross Square Foot**

District	Gross Square Feet Maintained <sup>1</sup>	Operations Cost per Gross Square Foot	Maintenance Cost per Gross Square Foot
Walton	1,160,026	3.10	.64
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>676,515</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>1.26</b>
Jackson	1,492,223	2.17	1.13
Suwanee	950,844	2.40	1.21
Columbia	1,551,970	2.39	1.34
Lafayette	200,184	2.29	1.46
<b>Average <sup>2</sup></b>		<b>2.57</b>	<b>1.17</b>

<sup>1</sup> Operations cost includes utilities, custodial, and insurance costs associated with buildings.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to school buildings, includes facilities such as administrative offices and transportation facilities.

Source: Florida Department of Education.

In spring of 2003, school board took a major step towards ensuring the accountability of its custodial services by creating the position of custodial supervisor in the maintenance department. This position will be responsible for oversight of the custodial staff; however, the staff will continue to employees of site-based administrators. Once hired, the new custodial supervisor should facilitate establishing custodial standards and evaluating progress toward those standards.

The district should develop measures and benchmarks for its maintenance and operations program in conjunction with the program’s mission statement, goals, and objectives (discussed in Best Practice 1 of this chapter). Action Plan 3-1 outlines steps that the district should take to develop its program-level accountability system.

### **Best Practice 3: Not Using**

#### **The district does not obtain and use customer feedback to identify and implement maintenance and custodial improvements.**

Customer feedback drawn from surveys is another tool to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the maintenance program. 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 the professionalism of employees in the maintenance program.<sup>2</sup> This type of survey should be performed at least annually and summary results should be shared with maintenance employees, custodians, the superintendent, and the school board. If the customer surveys identify problems, the maintenance or custodial supervisor should assess the situation, prepare corrective action plans for any identified problem areas, and make program improvements.

School administrators and staff we interviewed expressed general satisfaction with the work of the maintenance department. Because the district is small, performance that is less than satisfactory may sometimes be communicated directly to the supervisor of maintenance. Opinions on the performance of the custodial staff varied. This is most likely due to variations in supervision and custodial staff assignments to the different schools.

However, the Bradford County School District is not using this best practice because it has not established a means of obtaining customer feedback about maintenance and custodial work. While at schools, maintenance personnel may speak with school principals and teachers individually and hear concerns they have; however, this anecdotal information may not necessarily represent the satisfaction level of all school principals and school-based employees with maintenance services and employees. In addition, the maintenance department does not have a mechanism to systematically obtain customer feedback on the timeliness and quality of custodial services, which are monitored by school principals. The new custodial supervisory position was created due, in part, to dissatisfaction with this system.

The maintenance department should survey principals and teachers annually to determine the level of satisfaction with maintenance work and to identify opportunities for improvement. The custodial supervisor should also develop an evaluation of customer satisfaction. Action Plan 8-1 outlines steps that may be taken to implement this recommendation.

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<sup>2</sup> A district may also survey students, parents, or other stakeholders as may be appropriate.

**Action Plan 8-1**

**The maintenance department and custodial program should annually survey principals and teachers regarding their satisfaction with maintenance and custodial work and use this information to target areas needing improvement.**

Action Needed	Step 1: The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should develop survey instruments to assess customer satisfaction with maintenance and custodial work. Step 2: Annually, the maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should survey principals, teachers and staff about their current level of satisfaction with maintenance and custodial work to establish a baseline for future measurement. Step 3: The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should subsequently survey principals and a sample of teachers on an annual basis and report survey results to district and school personnel. Step 4: Survey results should be used to target areas needing improvement and make recommendations to the superintendent and school board about any need for districtwide change.
Who Is Responsible	Maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor
Time Frame	July 2004

**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 in an efficient and effective manner and that districts are in compliance 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 staff turnover. Program management should develop written procedures and employee performance standards with input from trade and custodial employees and human resource professionals. Procedures and standards should be developed utilizing a combination of national standards and local imperatives and be adjusted for budgetary considerations. Performance standards serve as a basis for measuring how well the maintenance and custodial employees meet or adhere to board policies, and set clear expectations for job performance, giving managers tools that allow them to consistently evaluate employees.

Employee performance standards serve as a basis for measuring how well maintenance and custodial individual employees meet or adhere to board policies, standards, and objectives. The standards set clear expectations for job performance and productivity and give managers reliable, objective tools for appraising employee performance. The lack of employee performance standards makes it difficult for managers to hold maintenance and custodial personnel accountable for their work. This can create problems if the district wishes to terminate the employment of an under-performing employee. To be effective, employee performance standards must be established in writing with input from the staff and clearly communicated to employees.

The Bradford County School District is not using this best practice because it lacks comprehensive procedures for its maintenance and custodial services as well as standards to assess the performance and productivity of employees. While the maintenance handbook has been in existence since the early 1990s, it does not include key operating information such as district procedures for creating the five-year facilities plan or performance or training standards for employees. Because the maintenance department lacks well-documented procedures in some areas, the effectiveness of its activities is dependent on the individuals performing them and their individual familiarity with a particular job or facility. The department should identify key work tasks and develop written procedures that describe methodologies that regulate how and when these tasks are to be completed, as well as who completes them. The

## Facilities Maintenance

procedures should define a process for identifying, screening, planning, scheduling, evaluating, and cost accounting for each type of work task performed. The district's new maintenance supervisor recognizes the need for a more comprehensive maintenance procedures manual and is in the process of rewriting the existing maintenance manual. As part of this process he intends to add employee performance standards. In addition to addressing employee performance, the manual should include the department's mission statement, training standards, accountability measures, key departmental procedures and existing safety guidelines.

The newly created custodial supervisor position should develop a custodial manual that would encompass the custodial mission, key performance measures, key operating procedures, standards to assess the performance and productivity of custodial employees, training standards and safety guidelines.

Both the maintenance and custodial manuals should be in a format that is readily accessible to all staff and should be reviewed on an annual basis. Action Plan 8-2 outlines steps that may be taken to improve the standardization and communication of maintenance and custodial procedures.

### Action Plan 8-2

**The maintenance supervisor should continue his efforts to revise existing and develop additional written procedures. Newly defined procedures, specifically in the area of employee performance evaluation, should be implemented to improve the efficiency of the maintenance operation. The custodial supervisor should be required to develop a manual which outlines the district's custodial program.**

Action Needed	Step 1:	The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should review existing documentation and identify specific policies and procedures that should be included in department and program manuals. This should include the department's mission, procedures for key maintenance and custodial activities, and employee evaluation system. This manual should incorporate existing policies and procedures and the existing safety guidelines.
	Step 2:	Each proposed policy or procedure should be reviewed with staff and stakeholders and revised as appropriate.
	Step 3:	Policies which require the approval of the board should be referred.
	Step 4:	Policies should be provided to staff and be readily available.
	Step 5:	Maintenance and custodial staff should be trained on new policies and operating procedures.
	Step 6:	Implementation dates should be established and communicated.
	Step 7:	Policies and procedures should be reviewed annually to determine whether they are being followed in a consistent manner and identify needed training, policy changes, or additional procedures that should be included.

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Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor
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Time Frame	December 2003
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### 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 maintenance of the physical plant is critical to sustaining a suitable environment for teaching and student learning and to extending the useful life of a facility. Facilities should be maintained in a condition that supports efficient operation, maximum utilization, and provides appropriate working conditions for district employees. The district maintenance program should include routine condition inspections, a preventive maintenance component, regularly scheduled repairs, and methods of responding to emergencies, plans for the modernization of building systems, facility enhancements, and general renovations as primary functions.

In the Bradford County School District, the maintenance department depends on site-based administrators to identify maintenance needs on an ongoing basis. It also operates a summer maintenance program in which each school principal is asked to create a punch list of maintenance needs. The maintenance department schedules a specific portion of the summer to address the needs of each facility as identified by the site-based administrators.

However, the district is not using this best practice for two reasons. First, while the maintenance department conducts annual health and safety inspections, it does not regularly conduct a routine inspection of each district facility to identify maintenance needs. The maintenance department relies to a great extent on site-based administrators to recognize and report maintenance needs. The result has been inconsistent and inadequate identification and work order creation. A visual inspection of all schools by OPPAGA staff identified broken sidewalks, missing drain covers, wood rot, open space between window frames and structures, standing water, a sagging roof, mud under portable buildings and other maintenance items which were not scheduled for repair or correction.

Although department managers indicated that they are doing all that is possible within limited human resources, we observed that some facilities were better maintained than others which may be due to the age of the school or may reflect the site-based administrator's diligence in requesting maintenance through the work order system. The age of facilities owned by the Bradford School District varies considerably. New Starke Elementary was constructed in 1996 and has state-of-the-art facilities. In contrast, the first buildings at Lawtey Community School and Southside Elementary School were constructed in the late 1950s. Both Lawtey and Southside suffer from a deteriorating physical plant, poorly functioning plumbing, and severe drainage problems.

The maintenance department should conduct walk-throughs of all schools specifically for the purpose of identifying deferred maintenance needs. The district should then make sure all needed maintenance is included in the work order system and prioritized to address safety and health issues first. Failure to address maintenance needs may result in additional costs later.

Second, the quality of custodial services varies across schools. Administrators and teachers we spoke to had varying levels of satisfaction with custodial services and identified several issues such as training and absenteeism that need to be addressed. For instance, one principal who expressed dissatisfaction indicated that he had to show custodial employees at his school how to clean the floors. District administrators also indicated that it is often difficult to find replacements when custodians are absent sometimes leaving cleaning and other duties temporarily undone at some schools.

To address these issues, the new custodial supervisor should adopt cleaning methods which can be used districtwide. Employees should be trained in implementing these systems and progress toward cleaning consistency should be evaluated. Custodial staff should be able to perform their required duties. The custodial supervisor also should explore better ways to locate replacements when custodians are absent.

Action Plan 8-3 identifies the steps that should be taken to improve the maintenance and cleanliness of district educational and support facilities.

**Action Plan 8-3**

**The maintenance supervisor should conduct assessments of district facilities to identify maintenance needs. The custodial supervisor should evaluate facility cleanliness. Plans should be developed and implemented to improve the condition of district facilities.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The custodial supervisor should inspect and evaluate facilities' cleanliness districtwide. The maintenance supervisor should complete detailed written assessments of facilities districtwide to identify unreported maintenance needs. Experts may be needed for some assessments, such as roof condition.</p> <p>Step 2: The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should solicit input from site-based administrators regarding the condition of their facilities and needed improvements.</p> <p>Step 3: The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should use safety inspections and condition assessments to develop plans to improve the physical condition and cleanliness of district facilities within existing resources.</p> <p>Step 4: Once prioritization plans are developed timelines for accomplishing tasks should be identified.</p> <p>Step 5: Plans should be provided to the board for review and progress should be measured against established timelines.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor, custodial supervisor and school board
Time Frame	Plans should be established by March 2004

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

### Best Practice 6: Using

**The district regularly 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 needs to be to the level by which needed work is accomplished in an economical and efficient manner. It is expected in smaller districts with fewer staff will require staff to individually handle multiple areas of responsibility (such as facilities maintenance and transportation) that may be done by different individuals in larger districts.

The Bradford County School District is using this best practice. The square footage per maintenance and custodial employee exceed standards. The district’s square footage per maintenance employee, if all positions were filled, is approximately 1:52,000, which is within 15% of the Florida Department of Education recommended standard of 1:45,000. However, the district maintenance department has four positions which are currently unfilled and one position assigned to the transportation department resulting in an operating ratio of one maintenance employee to 84,500 gross square feet.

The district’s square footage per custodial employee, which is approximately 1:27,000, exceeds the standard of 21,429 net square feet per custodian recommended by the *American School and University*

*Magazine*. To operate efficiently with this level of staffing, each custodial worker must be able to work effectively. However, Bradford County has some staff that are unable to fully perform their duties.

The district can improve its supervision and allocation of custodial employees. Currently custodial employees are assigned to the site-based administrators at 12 locations in the district, usually school principals. Principals complain that supervising custodial staff is an additional duty that many of them do not want to undertake. Furthermore, without additional training principals may not be in the best position to oversee certain technical aspects of custodial services such as ensuring that hazardous chemicals are used properly. As previously mentioned in Best Practice 5 of this chapter, site-based administrators we spoke to stated that there are other custodial employees who perform poorly or who are inadequately trained. In addition, the lack of flexibility to move staff among schools affects the districts ability to keep schools consistently clean. If a specific site has a staff shortage due to illness or a position vacancy, there is no procedure to move staff between sites to provide adequate custodial coverage.

Although the district uses this best practice, and has taken positive steps to improve its custodial operations through the creation of a custodial supervisor position, the district should implement the recommendation below to enhance the effectiveness of the custodial program.

**To further improve the effectiveness of the newly created custodial supervisor position, we recommend that the district provide well-defined position responsibilities and lines of authority. In addition, we recommend that the custodial supervisor develop a system to reallocate custodians when necessary to meet district needs.**

### **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 employee in the department are essential to the development of such a workforce. The job descriptions should be readily available to school district employees and applicants, meet the district's needs, and they should have been developed by human resource professionals in cooperation with individuals having specific expertise in the job tasks to be performed. Districts should establish competitive compensation to ensure that they can attract and retain qualified candidates. Compensation includes salary and benefits, such as health, vacation, and retirement benefits. Districts should establish procedures to ensure that personal and professional references are obtained and contacted.

Job descriptions for maintenance employees are based on standard descriptions provided by the Northeast Florida Educational Consortium and revised for specific job requirements. In general, they are complete and accurately reflect the responsibilities of each position.

### **Best Practice 8: Using**

**The district provides 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 documentation of training may vary according to the size of the district. 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 available to it including vendors and manufacturers of their supplies and equipment, contract trainers, and professional association meetings. School districts also should take advantage of free training materials and programs available through the Florida Department of Education, subscribe to publications, and maintain memberships in organizations that provide information on new technologies, equipment, and procedures. Training programs should include an evaluation component so that employee feedback can be used to improve future training.

The Bradford County School District contracts with the Northeast Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC) to provide training programs for maintenance employees. The district has taken advantage of several safety courses including back injury prevention and bloodborne pathogens. Maintenance workers indicated that they have been supported by the department and able to attend skills training seminars when requested.

Custodial employees are also provided annual safety training through NEFEC. However, some safety training, such as chainsaw safety and herbicide/pesticide safety, has not been provided to the maintenance staff since 1996. In addition, the consortium offers other courses that may benefit the custodial staff but have not been accessed, such as Floor and Carpet Care and Custodial Essentials. Attendance at such seminars could improve services currently being provided and increase staff safety.

Although the district meets this best practice, the department could improve its training by reviewing employee records and training attended to identify specific training needs and to assure that required safety training is completed. The supervisor of maintenance indicated that he reviews consortium course offerings and establishes a training schedule each year. However, he has not reviewed individual training records to determine whether all employees have obtained needed training. As part of the department's plans for improving the performance of the custodial staff, it should take advantage of specific custodial training courses offered by the consortium.

**To enhance training of maintenance and custodial personnel, we recommend that the district determine whether employee training is up to date and schedule needed training. In addition, the custodial supervisor should take advantage of specific custodial training provided by the consortium.**

## 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, they 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 the shifting priorities. A school district budget should allocate sufficient resources to ensure that its plant operations and maintenance needs are adequately funded and rely on dollars which 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 assessments of the physical condition of the district's educational and ancillary facilities, 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 the accumulation of significant deferred maintenance projects. The budget also should provide for the correction of deficiencies identified in the annual safety, casualty, and fire safety inspection reports.

The Bradford County School District has developed an annual budget for Fiscal Year 2002-03, with spending limits that comply with the lawful funding for each category of facilities maintenance and operations. The district has deferred maintenance needs; however, the lack of measurements and procedures that produce an efficient maintenance program prevent us from determining if available resources are adequate to meet district needs. These issues are addressed in more detail in Best Practice 4 of this chapter.

### **Best Practice 10: Using**

#### **The district accurately projects 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.<sup>3</sup> A district can do this in a number of ways. For instance, cost estimates for these projects 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 also should be realistic in its project estimates so that once the five-year work plan is adopted, it is a valid indicator of the work that will actually be accomplished and the dollars that will both be needed and available.

In the Bradford County School District, most maintenance is minor and ongoing. The costs of major maintenance projects are accurately projected based on experience with prior projects, and discussion with contractors and the consortium consultant.

### **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 the facilities and equipment, the repair history of major systems such as HVAC and roofs, area climatic conditions, and the effectiveness of the district's preventive maintenance program are considerations that will 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 Bradford County School District maintains an adequate reserve to provide fiscal flexibility in case of the need to meet unforeseen maintenance needs. The reserve for Fiscal Year 2002-03 was budgeted at 2% of the general fund or \$500,000. The accounting system may provide for additional budgetary flexibility if needed. Because the district has deferred maintenance needs, many items in the five-year facilities work program are designed for emergency contingencies. For instance, money is set aside for AC unit replacement and general repair and replacement of roofing districtwide rather than identified for any specific facilities.

### **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 the requirements of Florida

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<sup>3</sup> Individual projects that are beyond the scope of routine maintenance work are considered major maintenance projects.

law but also ensure cost-efficient purchasing practices. The purchasing policies and procedures must be in a purchasing manual that is readily available to employees and the public. Periodically the district should 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 repair or refurbishment of existing equipment should be a part of the cost projections made for replacement equipment.

The Bradford County School District's Maintenance Department seldom makes equipment purchases and when it does they are relatively small in nature. Documentation indicates that the district is reasonably prudent in its purchases and rents equipment when it is more cost-efficient.

### **Best Practice 13: Using**

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

To be efficient and effective in completing 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 that are available for day-to-day use, but usually find it more cost-effective to rent less frequently used specialty tools. Some districts provide small hand tools while other districts require the employees to provide their own. Districts should have written operating procedures that outline acquisition, use, and return of tools, parts, materials and other equipment required for the day-to-day work and for special or emergency projects.

Bradford County School District maintenance employees indicate that they are provided adequate tools and equipment to meet their needs. Other equipment is purchased or rented as needed.

### **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 the continuing evaluation of building systems and the costs to maintain them, the development of districtwide equipment and building system standards, preventive maintenance programs, and the surplusing of property. Evaluative information developed by the maintenance department can be used to recommend standard building systems, which are cost-efficient, for future construction projects. Standardizing equipment and building systems reduces employee training and avoids the costs of maintaining multiple parts inventories. Standards should be developed for HVAC, energy management controls, roofing, plumbing fixtures, mechanical and electrical equipment, door hardware, the security and fire alarms, and commonly used finishes such as paint, carpet, and resilient flooring. While larger districts may need a computerized preventive maintenance program to schedule and track work orders, smaller districts may find paper-based systems cost-effective and sufficient for their level of activity. In addition, school districts should have policies and procedures in place to properly identify and dispose of surplus property in the most cost-effective manner.

The Bradford County School District operates with a reactive rather than a proactive maintenance department, depending heavily on non-technical staff (principals and teachers) to identify maintenance needs, rather than developing a plan of preventive maintenance and conducting regular facilities inspections. As a result, many needed repairs are not identified until something breaks down. Some items that should be included in a preventive maintenance program, such as roofing, are budgeted districtwide in the expectation that there are unforeseen needs. Lack of proactive maintenance for management of plant facilities can be more costly than a program of planned maintenance. To its credit,

the maintenance department has focused some efforts on replacing air conditioning filters on a regular schedule. In addition, some regular school maintenance, such as painting, is scheduled during the summer when the schools are not occupied.

Given the opportunities for the department to improve its efficiency through more effective use of the work order system (see Best Practice 18) and the evaluation of staff efficiency (see Best Practice 4), a plan for preventive maintenance can and should be developed. Manufacturer manuals may provide guidance about the timing of preventive maintenance and how it should be performed. For other building systems such as HVAC, kitchen equipment, and exhaust fans, the skills and experience of the maintenance staff can be used to establish preventive maintenance schedules. Also, since site-based administrators play a key role in identifying maintenance needs, the maintenance department should find ways to better educate school staff in early identification of maintenance problems that could prolong the life of their facility. Action Plan 8-4 outlines steps the department should make to develop a program of preventive maintenance.

**Action Plan 8-4**

**We recommend that the maintenance department develop a written plan of preventive maintenance to prevent premature failure and extend facility life.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The supervisor of maintenance along with staff should identify systems and components to be included in a plan of preventive maintenance. Such components may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• heating and air conditioning;</li> <li>• plumbing, electrical and roofing systems; and</li> <li>• kitchen equipment.</li> </ul> <p>Step 2: The supervisor of maintenance and maintenance staff should determine the present condition of all components identified for preventative maintenance.</p> <p>Step 3: The supervisor of maintenance and maintenance staff should establish routines and schedules for appropriate levels of maintenance for identified systems.</p> <p>Step 4: Preventative maintenance should be outlined in a written workplan.</p> <p>Step 5: The workplan should be implemented through the work order system or alternative manual system.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Supervisor of maintenance and maintenance staff
Time Frame	July 2004

**Best Practice 15: Not Using**

**The maintenance and operations department has not identified and implemented strategies to contain energy costs.**

A comprehensive energy management plan guides a school district in ways to lower energy use and utility costs. Plan development should be a collaborative effort of district stakeholders including maintenance employees, custodians, site-based administrators, instructional personnel, and 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 resources available to aid the district in their 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 assess major building system conditions regularly to identify anomalies indicating problems that need to be addressed.

In 1996 Bradford County School District completed a system-wide lighting retrofit and the installation of an energy management system. Both activities resulted in decreased energy costs. The maintenance

## Facilities Maintenance

department is also in an ongoing process of replacing windows in their two oldest schools, as finances permit, which should provide additional savings. However, the district does not actively pursue other energy savings which may be readily available.

The district does not use this practice for several reasons. The department has not created a comprehensive energy plan, or engaged in other activities which might evaluate energy usage and make changes that might reduce cost. The district does not analyze energy usage information and share this information with schools, does not implement strategies to change behavior and reduce consumption, and does not regularly assess building conditions for anomalies that may cause excess energy usage.

While district administrators commented that the costs of utilities at Starke Elementary School are much higher than those at other schools in the district, no analysis of the reasons for these higher costs has been performed. Starke Elementary School was built in 1996 from a prototype that has been used throughout Florida. OPPAGA found the electricity consumption per square foot to be almost double that of other district schools as shown in Exhibit 8-4. The HVAC is a terminal reheat system which is reported to be an inefficient design. The low efficiency may be compounded by high humidity levels, dust, and the lack of a regular program of preventive maintenance. The extensive technology included in the school may also contribute to the high energy cost. The maintenance department needs to develop strategies for lowering energy consumption that consider the various uses and potential inefficiencies.

Although the Bradford County School Board has not encouraged reductions in energy usage, it recently approved implementation of NEFEC's energy education program and has selected Southside Elementary School as a pilot school. This program will provide incentives by returning energy cost savings to the school. Given the consortium's estimate, the implementation of this program in Southside Elementary School should save \$6,000 - \$7,000 annually. NEFEC staff indicated that they did not know when or if they would initiate the program.

### Exhibit 8-4

#### Starke Elementary Energy Costs Are Double That of Other District Schools

School	Total Sq. Ft.	Electricity Costs	
		FYE 2002	
Southside Elementary	73,336	49,477.19	\$0.67
Starke Elementary	76,177	117,774.23	\$1.55
Lawtey Community	54,317	43,740.01	\$0.81
Hampton Elementary	25,851	21,475.57	\$0.83
Brooker Elementary	21,604	12,152.19	\$0.56
Bradford Middle	99,118	56,130.82	\$0.57
Bradford High	165,286	167,270.28	\$1.01
Other Facilities	169,324	82,498.40	\$0.49

Source: Bradford County School District.

Given the opportunity for energy savings districtwide, the district should consider implementing an energy education program and providing financial incentives to the schools to reduce energy usage. This could be achieved by including utility costs in individual school budgets and sharing savings realized from implementing cost-saving strategies. The energy management system should be used to provide reports about energy usage to the schools and should be reviewed by the maintenance department to monitor usage and identify anomalies. If energy costs were reduced by 5% for the entire district, the savings is estimated to exceed \$25,000 annually.

**Action Plan 8-5**

**The district should develop a comprehensive energy plan and provide incentives to individual schools to reduce their energy usage.**

Action Needed	Step 1: The district should develop a comprehensive energy plan to be adopted by the board.
	Step 2: The district should identify base levels of current energy consumption, by facility.
	Step 3: The board should revise the district’s budgeting system to include the costs of energy in the appropriate cost center.
	Step 4: The district should implement a program of energy education to lower energy usage and offer incentives to schools returning a portion of any cost savings to the individual school to be used as that school determines.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor, custodial supervisor
Time Frame	By July 2004

Although the district may decrease its energy costs with a program of energy savings through offering incentives, the consumption at Starke Elementary School remains costly. The mechanical systems should be evaluated for options to retrofit the system and reduce energy consumption. Potential options would have to be evaluated based on the practicality of making system changes, the costs of these changes and the expected cost recovery period.

**Action Plan 8-6**

**The district should determine whether there are any options to improve the efficiency of the HVAC system at New Starke Elementary School.**

Action Needed	Step 1: The district should contact the original building design firm and architect to identify any changes that could be made to the Starke Elementary School HVAC system that may decrease energy usage.
	Step 2: The district should conduct a life-cycle analysis to determine the long-term benefit of keeping the existing HVAC system or doing a mechanical retrofit with a more cost-efficient system.
	Step 3: The board should make a determination whether replacing or modifying the system is in the best interest of the district.
	Step 4: The district should seek other alternative to save energy at the facility within.
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor, custodial supervisor
Time Frame	By July 2004

**Best Practice 16: Using**

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

Ever-increasing energy costs and limited budgets make it advantageous for school districts to install comprehensive, modern energy management systems (EMS), which can substantially reduce energy costs. An EMS enables a school district to remotely operate and monitor HVAC equipment. The EMS controls 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 to identify inefficiently operating building systems that may need service or upgrading. Because total replacement or installation of a new energy management system can be an expensive undertaking, 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.

The Bradford County School District uses an energy management system which includes individual systems at most schools. The supervisor of maintenance has experience using this system and has trained

his current heating and air tradesman in its operation. The district expects to acquire additional employee training and to hire another HVAC employee with a working knowledge of the district's current energy management system

The district meets this best practice. However, because of limited staff resources the district has not been able to take full advantage of the system's reporting capabilities to identify and correct inefficiencies. Once the district completes the necessary employee training and hires the additional HVAC employee, it should use system information to identify inefficient systems and to encourage energy efficiency which is especially critical given the district's high energy consumption at some sites.

**The district has an energy management system in place but could reduce energy costs further by regularly reviewing system reports, sharing report results with users (schools), identifying inefficiencies, and seeking energy saving solutions.**

### **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, 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 made to confirm the effectiveness of the service and to verify that any anticipated cost savings have actually developed. Criteria that may support outsourcing services include opportunities to save money and management time, the opportunity to add specialized skills or training not available in-house, difficulty in hiring qualified employees, and the opportunity to improve the overall quality of the maintenance and operations function.

The Bradford County School District has used and has considered privatization to provide some services. The district outsourced its HVAC maintenance services but recently created positions which returned these functions to the district. The board considered privatizing the oversight of custodial services but made the decision to create an in-house custodial supervisor position.

The district meets this best practice; however, the district does not prepare cost comparisons to determine whether decisions to privatize maintenance functions or keep them in-house are more cost-effective. In addition, while resources are limited, the department does not analyze maintenance work orders to identify trade areas where more or fewer staff are needed or where this is potential for contracting these services.

Due to its small size, staff members represent the various trades; electrical, HVAC, plumbing and carpentry, which are needed to keep the facilities operating. Recent concerns that contracting with a local HVAC company might be cost prohibitive resulted in eliminating the contract and creating two HVAC positions in house. No cost-benefit analysis was performed and some staff questioned whether the move was cost-efficient.

**We recommend that prior to any future privatization or before eliminating any existing private contract, the district should perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine the most cost-efficient way to provide services and to support their decision.**

## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

### Best Practice 18: Not Using

#### **A computerized control and tracking system is not used to accurately track work orders and inventory.**

Word order systems enable school districts to effectively track maintenance work orders and warehouse inventory, and improve maintenance response time and efficiency. Larger school districts should use an electronic word order system to coordinate day-to-day activities including workflow, personnel, budget, and inventory associated with maintaining educational facilities.<sup>4</sup> There are several types of computerized maintenance management systems available, some specifically designed for a single organization as well as “off the shelf software.” Any system in use should include work order control, scheduling, assignment and billing, inventory, and preventive maintenance scheduling and record keeping as integrated functions. The system should provide statistical information that can be used to assist managers in determining employee productivity, and in developing cost reports and estimates, equipment histories, and facilities condition assessments, while interfacing with other district financial programs. District administrators should receive sufficient training to maximize the potential of the system.

The Bradford County School District’s work order system is used to track maintenance inventories and individual word orders. Each work order captured in the database program includes such elements as employee, type of work, cost of materials, number of hours to complete the work order, and building and room where work was completed. While the information has the potential to be used as a planning and evaluation tool, it is not being used effectively in management decision making. Work order reports are not reviewed to identify facilities with repetitive problems, the cost of maintenance by individual school or individual employee workload and work statistics. The maintenance supervisor occasionally uses the system to determine which work orders are outstanding. He also reviews information associated with completed work orders for unusual costs or service time. However, employees are not evaluated on their workload or task completion time frames reports and other reports which could be used to better manage the maintenance program are not produced.

The work order software is a pre-packaged program supported by an outside vendor. While the new maintenance supervisor has indicated his intention to use the system to better manage the department, recent upgrades to the software have resulted in data retrieval problems that require vendor intervention. The district has recently contracted with a vendor to make corrections to the work order system. Until these problems are corrected, full use of program capabilities cannot be accomplished.

The district should develop reports that could be used by the maintenance supervisor to manage employees and to quantify and analyze maintenance costs. Action Plan 8-7 identifies steps that the district can take to improve management of its maintenance program through the use of existing information.

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<sup>4</sup> Automated word order and billing systems are not required by all districts to ensure the effective and efficient operation of their maintenance department. Smaller districts with a limited number of daily work order requests and school buildings may find a well-designed, paper-based system provides the same type of control as a computerized system in a larger district.

**Action Plan 8-7**

**The maintenance department should use the work order system as a management tool to increase the performance and cost-effectiveness of the maintenance department. Should the computerized database not be capable of producing needed reports, the district should develop alternative formats.**

Action Needed	Step 1: The maintenance department should review existing work order system to identify opportunities to increase cost-effectiveness, efficiency and reduce costs. Step 2: The maintenance department should review the type of reports that are a part of the work order system to determine how those pre-existing reports can be used to assist in reviewing maintenance costs and program efficiency. Step 3: The maintenance department should set up a procedure to routinely generate work orders for analysis. Step 4: The maintenance department should meet with staff to identify strategies to increase productivity and reduce costs. Step 5: The maintenance department should use data/operational information to make operational improvements and establish timeframes for routine tasks. Step 6: The maintenance department should discuss expectations with maintenance staff on ways to work more efficiently and effectively. Step 7: The maintenance should routinely report performance and cost-efficiency results to staff. Step 8: The maintenance department should use data to make routine comparisons between actual and budgeted costs. Step 9: The maintenance department should evaluate performance and costs to include potential for cost-saving alternatives for providing services.
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Who Is Responsible	Maintenance supervisor
Time Frame	By 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. Work orders submitted by district employees define the scope of a maintenance department’s reactive workload. Additional services provided by the department keep the facilities clean and operating efficiently. Written guidelines and operating procedures should be established for emergency, routine, and preventive maintenance activities. The guidelines should define what is to be considered an emergency, the individuals responsible for reacting to the emergency and the appropriate response to the emergency. 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 to be considered an emergency. Finally, the priority system should address routine and ongoing preventive maintenance activities in a way that ensures all district facilities receive equal attention and service for all of their needs.

The Bradford County School District’s maintenance department does not effectively prioritize maintenance needs. Currently, work orders are input either by the school based administrator or by the data entry clerk in the maintenance department. The work is assigned to an individual tradesman depending on the skills of that individual and whether the work is electrical, heating and air conditioning, carpentry or plumbing. Each maintenance staff member is responsible for completing the assigned work orders. While there are priorities for emergency work or urgent work, the only constraints on the other word orders are that they should be completed within 30 days. Maintenance workers are responsible for prioritizing the work orders themselves. The work order system allows classification of word orders into three categories. However, for those work orders that do not require an immediate response, actual

prioritization of the work is the responsibility of the individual tradesperson to whom the work is assigned. In addition, maintenance staff are sometimes used for small construction projects. While this avoids the cost of hiring outside labor, it may result in prioritizing new projects while needed maintenance is delayed. An example of such a construction project was a field house constructed in Fiscal Year 2002-03 which required 111 carpentry man hours.

We recommend maintenance needs be prioritized throughout the district. Action Plan 8-8 identifies steps that should be taken to develop and implement processes to improve maintenance efficiency.

**Action Plan 8-8**

**The maintenance department should develop a facilities maintenance plan that addresses priority needs of the district.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The maintenance department should conduct meeting with stakeholders, including parents, district staff and administrators and maintenance staff to identify maintenance concerns.</p> <p>Step 2: The maintenance department should review its work order system, safety and fire inspections, condition assessments and five-year plan to identify all needed maintenance work.</p> <p>Step 3: The maintenance department should identify the funding that would be required to complete outstanding and deferred maintenance work. If adequate funding is not available to meet outstanding needs, the department should work with the board to plan for future funding for outstanding needs.</p> <p>Step 4: The maintenance department should establish priorities and targets for accomplishing identified needs and periodically measure its progress toward meeting those goals and priorities.</p> <p>Step 5: The maintenance department should report back to stakeholders on its efforts and accomplishments in meeting required maintenance needs.</p> <p>Step 6: The maintenance department should refrain from using maintenance staff on non-maintenance projects.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Maintenance supervisor
Time Frame	By July 2004

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

### Best Practice 20: Using

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

Florida law requires school districts to develop policies and procedures establishing a comprehensive program of safety and sanitation to protect the occupants of educational facilities.<sup>5</sup> All districts are required to conduct annual inspections of each educational and ancillary plant to determine compliance with the sanitation and casualty safety standards prescribed in the rules of the State Board of Education. Florida law also requires that inspectors certified by the Division of State Fire Marshal conduct annual fire safety inspections. Districts should have established written health and safety standards and ensure that documented evaluations are made of the condition of each educational plant and ancillary facility. Districts should have a written plan for maintaining healthy indoor air quality, which includes monitoring of indoor air quality and corrective action plans necessary to address indoor air quality issues.

The Bradford County School District is using this best practice. The supervisor of maintenance is certified as a fire safety inspector and attends annual training on state requirements for educational

<sup>5</sup> See s. 1013.12, F.S.

facilities in addition to other health and safety-related training. While the maintenance department was delayed in completing its previous annual safety inspection report, it is currently on target with its inspection for the 2002-03 fiscal year. It has also made concerted efforts to correct safety violations in a timely manner within available resources. Maintenance issues which affect the health or safety of district students and staff are given priority over general maintenance work.

Indoor air quality has been addressed within the resources of the district. The New Starke Elementary School experienced problems with its air handling system which resulted in air quality problems. The district made changes to the mechanical system, increased custodial training, and added a custodial person to do environmentally specific cleaning. The supervisor of maintenance notes that they have had no additional indoor air quality complaints at the facility.

### **Best Practice 21: Using**

#### **The school district complies 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 district should have established health and safety training programs in place for their maintenance and custodial work force which complies with federal and state regulations such as the EPA guidelines, Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Regulations—29 CFR, hazardous materials handling, the proper reporting of accidents, and asbestos handling and abatement. Focused training on the safe use of specialized equipment and building systems should be delivered to all custodial and maintenance employees and supervisors.

The Bradford County School District has developed procedures for hazardous substance notification, a chemical hygiene plan, and a bloodborne pathogens control plan. The district uses the Northeast Florida Educational Consortium to provide safety and health training to its employees.

Although the district is using this best practice, it can make improvements to further reduce safety risks. For instance, although custodial employees have received some safety training, the lack of centralized oversight of the custodial staff has resulted in a lack of accountability for ensuring that all custodial employees are adequately trained. Due to the inconsistent nature of district and consortium training records we were unable to determine whether training had been provided to all employees or had been provided in a timely manner. Several janitorial employees have been injured on the job and are receiving workers compensation. These injuries may have resulted from inadequate training and oversight. In addition, on two separate occasions we found the janitorial area open and unattended giving elementary students access to a variety of dangerous cleaning chemicals and equipment.

Although the district meets this best practice it could improve the safety and health of its employees and students by providing adequate and timely safety training to its custodial staff.

**We recommend that compliance with facility health and safety mandates be improved through a comprehensive program of custodial training. Developing such a program and maintaining training records should be included as a part of the job requirements of the new custodial supervisor position.**

### **Best Practice 22: Using**

#### **The district is aware of and 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 (FBC). Under the FBC, 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.

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 a building department internally. 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 Bradford County School District has joined with the North East Florida Educational Consortium to purchase the services of a Uniform Building Code Inspector who is aware of and prepared for the permitting and inspection requirements of the Florida Building Code. The inspector lives in Bradford County and has been provided office space in the Bradford County School Board administration building. The arrangement provides for readily available inspection services. The district has provided copies of its annual maintenance construction permit. Other permit requirements for construction of major facilities are handled by the consortium employee.

# 9 Transportation

## *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using 19 of the 20 transportation best practices. The district effectively transports some 1,900 students to and from school each day; however, it can improve accountability and efficiency. To meet the remaining best practice standards and ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its transportation program, the district needs to develop an accountability system for transportation functions.

## *Background*

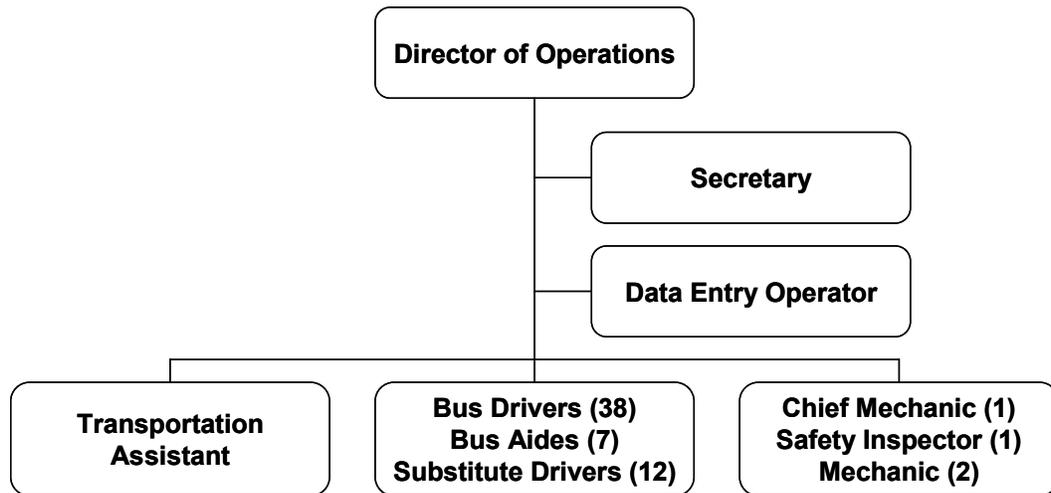
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Bradford County is a rural county in the northeastern part of Florida. The county has 273 miles of paved and 286 miles of non-paved roads serving an area of 293 square miles. For the school year 2000-01, the district reported it provided transportation to 1,987 eligible students of its 4,161 students (47.74%). Currently, the district serves 1,016 students in exceptional student education programs including 50 students who 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 largest school districts in the state. However, small districts must accomplish these required tasks with significantly fewer personnel. The Bradford 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 director of operations. The director of operations supervises all bus drivers, bus attendants, and vehicle maintenance employees as well as personnel responsible for warehouse operations (see Exhibit 9-1). The transportation assistant performs functions, such as bus routing, school district liaison to Bradford County's community traffic safety team, operations coordination and dispatch, and back-up driver, and is the person directly responsible for fielding parental complaints.

**Exhibit 9-1**  
**The Bradford County School District Transportation Department has 65 Employees**



Source: Bradford County School District.

District school buses were driven 518,803 miles during the 2000-01 year, including 90,377 extracurricular activity trip miles (17.42% of the district's total). Of the 47 buses in current service, 38 are in daily service on the district's school bus routes. Most buses operate one route each morning and afternoon, typically providing transportation to elementary school, middle school, and high school students.

For the 2002-03 school year, the district employs 38 bus drivers, 7 bus attendants, 12 substitute drivers, and one transportation employee member who can drive buses. Additionally, two teachers at the vocational-technical school have received training that allows them to drive school buses.

Exhibit 9-2 presents selected student transportation data for the Bradford County School District and five peer districts in the state for the 2000-01 school year. The Bradford County School District is the smallest in square mileage, has the second smallest student population, and transports the lowest percentage of its students in comparison to its peer districts.

**Exhibit 9-2  
Comparative Student Transportation Data for  
Bradford County School District and Five Peer Districts**

Measure	Bradford	Columbia	Lafayette	Jackson	Suwannee	Walton	Peer Average
Square miles	293	797	545	924	690	1,066	808
Number of students enrolled	4,161	9,590	1,085	7,424	5,810	5,877	5,957
Number of eligible students transported	1,987	4,773	673	4,383	3,356	4,466	3,530
Percentage of students transported	47.74	49.77	62.03	59.04	57.76	75.99	59.27
Number of buses in daily service	38	87	14	84	58	74	63
Number of miles driven	518,803	1,792,462	175,115	1,101,670	730,311	1,117,364	983,384
Student transportation expenditures	\$1,347,399	\$3,576,112	\$525,874	\$2,303,945	\$1,969,012	\$2,282,185	\$2,131,426
Student transportation expenditures per annual mile	\$2.13	\$1.79	\$2.27	\$1.96	\$2.70	\$1.70	\$2.08
Student transportation expenditures as a percentage of total district expenditures	5.18	6.32	7.93	4.85	5.56	6.31	5.85
Average bus occupancy	52	55	48	52	58	61	54.8
Percentage state funding	61.84	55.61	49.01	79.74	66.38	77.02	65.55
Percentage local funding	38.16	44.39	50.99	20.26	33.62	22.98	34.45
Total transportation expenditures (including reported bus purchases) per student	\$661	\$745	\$776	\$523	\$586	\$508	\$628

Source: Q-Links: Florida District Transportation Profiles, July 2002 for School Year 2000-01, Florida Department of Education and OPPAGA.

**Activities of particular interest**

The Bradford County School District not only participates in the Medicaid reimbursement program, which allows the district to recoup a portion of the costs for some services for eligible students, but also serves as the Medicaid billing agent for Baker County, which enables Baker County to also recoup a portion of its costs in a similar manner.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Transportation Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice	Page No.
<b>Planning, Organization and Staffing</b>	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. <sup>1</sup>	Yes	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	9-8
	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
<b>Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance</b>	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.	Yes	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.	Yes	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	9-13
	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
<b>Operations, Management and Accountability</b>	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

<sup>1</sup>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 the 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	9-17
	18. The district monitors the fiscal condition of transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and reviewing them against the budget.	Yes	9-18
	19. The district has reviewed the prospect for privatizing transportation functions, as a whole or in part.	Yes	9-18
	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 the transportation function is in the best position to know what the transportation needs of the district are, what priority should be assigned to these needs, and the costs associated with particular options to address each need, transportation staff should be involved in major decisions that will affect transportation operations. These needs and priorities along with cost-saving options should be presented to the school board and public during the budget process along with the factual information needed to assist the school board in making appropriate decisions. In a similar manner, the district transportation function needs to provide the school board and public information on the financial impact certain district decisions such as those involving staggered school start times and school choice programs will have on transportation. Also, because the location of a new school can have a significant effect on a district's transportation costs, the district transportation function also should be involved in the community and school district planning processes as related to community growth and the need for new schools. Failure to be involved and inform decision makers of the impact these decisions will have on district transportation can be very costly and negatively affect district transportation for many years.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. Transportation employees work with district planning staff to assess the needs of the transportation department. The chief mechanic also reports the status of fleet as well as other vehicle maintenance needs. While there is coordination of long-term planning and budgeting for transportation services within the school district and the community, the district does not regularly analyze transportation operations to identify transportation priorities as well as potential areas of cost savings to present to the school board and the public. For example, the district has not actively worked to reduce the number of courtesy riders (the district transported 418 non-eligible riders, 17% of all students transported, during 2000-01 school year). Best Practice 3 of this chapter discusses the transportation of courtesy riders in more detail. In addition, staff members have not studied the cost effectiveness of moving from a single-tiered routing system to a two- or three-tiered routing system, which would likely increase bus occupancy and reduce the number of bus routes. District employees believe a multi-tiered routing system could save the district money but have not presented data to confirm their belief.

**To further improve the district's long term planning and budgeting for student transportation, we recommend that the district identify and present potential areas of transportation cost savings to the school board and the public on a regular basis. Specifically, the director of operations could develop a process to identify potential areas of cost savings particularly in the areas related to courtesy bus riders and staggered school start times and report this information to the superintendent, school board, and public on a biennial basis.**

### 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 student transportation costs in the state are paid for through the FEFP-based primarily on the number of eligible students in various categories who ride school buses. The school districts determine the number of students riding their buses through sample counts conducted during October and February of each school year and report this information to the Florida Department of

Education. Because these counts ultimately determine the level of transportation funding each school district receives, it is important for this information to be accurate. Ridership records are reviewed by state auditors on a periodic basis and, if the district can not justify its claims for state transportation funds, funds are taken away from the district. The student ridership counts used in this program are useful to district staff in establishing trend lines for the prediction of district student transportation needs.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The most recent Auditor General review (for the school year ending June 2000) found the transportation counts for the Bradford County School District to be in compliance, in all material respects, with state laws and administrative rules. The district works to ensure that all students ride during student count week. Because the district is small, employees generally know which students are not riding and will try to take care of any problems preventing students from riding. This includes making phone calls to students' parents to encourage ridership.

### **Best Practice 3: Using**

#### **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.**

Routing is probably the single most important factor in establishing an effective, cost-efficient, and safe district student transportation system. Efficient bus routes incorporate features such as having fewer bus stops that serve larger numbers of students, avoiding transporting students who could safely walk to school and are ineligible for state transportation funding (generally called "courtesy riders"), using school starting and ending times that allow individual buses to have separate bus runs for elementary, middle, and high schools ("three-tiered routing"), and providing sufficient time between school starting and ending times that 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, reducing speed limits, installing sidewalks, and other safety measures to permit safe walking to school. Larger school districts with complex routes usually need the assistance of computerized routing systems to design cost-efficient bus routes, while smaller districts can develop efficient routes manually.

Bradford County School District policy provides for the provision of school transportation to students who live two miles or more from their assigned school, a student with a physical or mental impairment as determined by the director of exceptional student education, or students having special authorization granted by the school board. The district does not have any hazardous walking conditions as defined by *Florida Administrative Code*.

*Florida Administrative Code* also recommends that ride times be no longer than 50 minutes for elementary school children and no more than 60 minutes for middle and high school children. Of the 12 routes reviewed, 2 routes with a combined total of at least 53 elementary school children had ride times longer than the recommended 50 minutes. This occurs because these students live in rural areas, and it takes buses long periods of time to travel to their assigned schools.

Although the district generally meets this best practice, it can enhance its operations by addressing two areas. First, the district transported 418 non-state funded students that reside within two miles of their designated school during the 2000-01 school year. Many of these students live near Highway 301, and district employees have concerns about the traffic on the highway. However, the district has not established written safety criteria for the evaluation of walking conditions in the county. Establishing district specific safety criteria would help to ensure the district is transporting only students facing unsafe walking conditions. Ensuring that students who can walk safely to school do so may eliminate some non-state funded riders. Second, district policy requires that student loading and unloading stops be established at least two-tenths (.2) miles apart, except when students' safety and welfare may be involved. While the district has not determined distances between bus stops, our review found some stops to be less

than one minute apart; thus, they may be closer than the two-tenths mile recommended by district policy. Short distances between bus stops increase the time necessary to complete a bus route, create more wear on buses, increase fuel consumption, and can potentially back up traffic.

**To further improve the district’s student transportation services, we recommend that the district develop written criteria to determine unsafe walking conditions in the district. Using these criteria, the district should determine which students living within two miles of their assigned school should be provided transportation. We also suggest that the district consider changing its policy to increase the distance between bus stops to up to one-half mile.<sup>2</sup>**

### **Best Practice 4: Using**

#### **The organizational structure and staffing levels of the district’s transportation program minimizes administrative layers and processes.**

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 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 will result in minimized administrative and managerial costs while providing sufficient managerial controls to ensure operations are properly carried out. Staffing needs to be to the level by which needed work is accomplished in an economical and efficient manner. It is expected in smaller districts that smaller staff sizes require staff to individually handle multiple areas of responsibility (such as repairing buses and ordering replacement parts) that would be done by different individuals.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice; its transportation organizational structure is relatively flat. Such a structure emphasizes personal responsibility and accountability of individuals in the program as management is reduced to a minimal level. The transportation department consists of 65 employees; this includes the director of operations, 38 bus drivers, 12 substitute bus drivers, seven bus attendants, three administrative staff positions, a chief mechanic, two mechanics, and a safety inspector. The director of operations directly supervises all transportation employees as well as three warehouse operations employees.<sup>3</sup> Such a large span of control coupled with numerous other responsibilities has the potential to prevent the director of operations from having sufficient time to perform certain managerial functions. These functions include strategic planning as well as the establishment and implementation of a formal transportation accountability system (for more information, refer to Best Practices 1 and 20 of this chapter). The district is planning to create a supervisory position for transportation and a supervisory position for warehouse operations and eliminate the director of operations position in the 2003-04 school year.<sup>4</sup> These changes will increase the time available for performing various managerial functions related to transportation.

### **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 of having enough trained personnel to properly maintain vehicles while not having an excessive number of employees, which increases costs and reduces

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<sup>2</sup> We would expect the school board to allow the transportation department to make exceptions to one-half mile-between-bus-stops policy to prevent bus stops from being in unsafe locations or having bus stops that would require students to walk in hazardous conditions described in s. 1006.23, *F.S.*, or district-determined unsafe walking conditions.

<sup>3</sup> Warehouse operations include functions related to the receipt and distribution of supplies to programs and schools within the district.

<sup>4</sup> The director of operations currently has supervisory responsibilities related to the district’s warehouse operations.

operational efficiency. The number of vehicle maintenance personnel needed can vary depending on factors such as the number of different types of buses being maintained, whether vehicle maintenance maintains the district “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 an adequate number of maintenance personnel, districts need to invest resources into updating the skills of their vehicle maintenance personnel to improve vehicle maintenance efficiency. Such resources include the district providing training opportunities for employees and incentive pay for those who achieve certification in applicable work areas.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The transportation department currently employs a chief mechanic, one safety inspector, and two mechanics. According to a Florida Department of Education distributed spreadsheet, the district’s staffing level is .5 FTE above that which is needed to maintain its fleet. Vehicle maintenance personnel are encouraged to improve job skills through training classes, and travel dollars are made available to employees wishing to attend training. The district does not conduct regular in-service training for its technicians; however, with the small size of vehicle maintenance operations (a total of four employees), this does not appear to have an adverse effect on employee retention or skills. Although the district does not currently provide any financial incentives for technicians to achieve technical proficiency certifications, it is attempting to establish such incentives.

### **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 higher compared to that of other classes of district employees. Contributing to this high turnover is the fact that, unlike many other district employees, bus drivers and attendants are generally part-time employees who must report to work early in the morning and finish late in the day. In addition, bus drivers face many other challenges that make their jobs particularly difficult and stressful, such as trying to drive safely while maintaining discipline on a bus. Because of the relatively high rates of turnover among bus drivers and attendants, school districts need to have an effective system for recruiting and retraining these individuals. 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 takes to keep drivers and attendants working and performing well for the district. Once the district determines why 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.

Although the Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice, it can enhance its operations. The district uses one primary technique to recruit bus drivers and substitute drivers: position vacancy announcements advertised by the district personnel office. The district had a total of four bus driver vacancies over the last two school years. Three bus drivers left district employment during the 2001-02 school year for a turnover rate of approximately 10%, and one left during the 2002-03 school year resulting in a turnover rate of approximately 3%. The district has taken steps to provide incentives. For example, the district has an annual dinner for bus drivers and gives out awards for perfect attendance and bus cleanliness. It has not collected data on wages offered by alternative local employers (both public and private sectors) to ensure driver pay and working conditions remain competitive.

**To further improve effective and efficient recruitment and retention processes, we recommend that the district periodically collect information on wages, benefits, and hours of work of local employers who are likely to compete for personnel interested in driving school buses.**

### **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 (a commercial driver license is required to drive a school bus) on a no-cost basis in order to successfully recruit bus drivers. Since this license also can 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 as school bus drivers shortly after completing their driver training. Management also has responsibilities to supervise its drivers to ensure that necessary rules and regulations are followed with buses being safely operated. Supervision responsibilities include direct observation of bus handling, assisting drivers with student bus discipline problems, administering drug and alcohol tests, and enforcement of driving policies. Management can improve job performance by providing in-service training and resolving drivers' job-related problems.

The Bradford County School District meets best practice standards. Prospective bus drivers attend and pay for a majority of their 40-hour training class that allows them to receive a class "B" (school bus) driver's license. The district provides training and testing for current bus drivers and monitors their performance. In addition, each driver receives 8 hours of annual in-service training. School district policy requires drivers to pass an annual physical examination, which the district pays for, to ensure that the drivers are medically capable of safely operating buses. The drivers also receive yearly dexterity testing during in-service training.

The district monitors its drivers through reviews of the state's traffic violation database on a monthly basis with driving printouts placed in personnel files. We reviewed a random sample of 12 drivers' records and found all included current physical examination records, driver licenses, and reviews from the state's traffic violation database. In addition, the Bradford County School Board has adopted a safe driver policy.

### **Best Practice 8: Using**

**The district has processes 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, so long as a high occupancy level can be maintained. Districts should buy vehicles through economical methods such as state pool purchase programs. Once vehicles are purchased and inspected, districts should track vehicle maintenance costs and age to determine when the optimal time is to remove and replace the vehicle (assuming the need for the vehicle still exists). Districts should minimize the number of spare vehicles 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 the disposal of the vehicle, such as fixing minor cosmetic flaws to encourage higher bids at auctions.

The Bradford County School District generally meets best practice standards. The district orders new buses via the Florida Department of Education's annual pool purchase agreements. It uses the Florida Sheriff's Association pool purchase agreement to acquire other vehicles. All newly purchased buses are inspected prior to being placed in service and are usually assigned to the longest routes. The district acquired five new school buses in school year 2001-02. The district gave two "salvage" buses to the Florida State Prison during school year 2001-02 because the prison system has provided a number of services, such as grounds work, to the district. In addition, during school year 2001-02 the district sold two buses for an average price of \$950. During school year 2002-03, the district sold five surplus school buses for an average price of \$1,670. The Bradford County School District has adopted a policy that allows for the replacement of 10% of school buses each year if funds are available. For the last five years the district has purchased five new school buses a year. The policy was established in 1997 and has not been revised since.

Although the district generally has processes in place to meet best practice standards, it could enhance its operations in two ways. First, the district should determine how many buses are needed to meet its student transportation requirements and keep its bus fleet to this number. The number of buses a district needs can be determined by adding the number of buses needed to service its bus routes to the peak daily number of spare buses needed to replace those that are out of service for maintenance, needing inspections, or required for field trips that cannot be met by using buses available for regular route buses or charter bus service.<sup>5</sup> Based on information from the district, the number of daily route buses is 38, and the number of buses needed to replace those that are out of service for inspections is 3. However, the district could not provide the peak number of daily out-of-service buses or the daily number of buses that are required for field trips that cannot be met by using buses available for regular route buses or charter bus service.

**To further improve the district's processes to minimize the number of spare buses, we recommend that the district conduct an analysis to determine the number of buses needed. The analysis should include the number of daily route buses, the peak number of out-of-service buses, the number of spare buses needed daily to replace those undergoing mandatory 20-day inspections, and the number of buses needed to provide field trip transportation. Using this information, we recommend that the district acquire and retain only the number of buses necessary to meet its student transportation requirements.**

Second, the district should adopt a bus replacement policy based on age, repair history, and other district-specific criteria. As seen in Exhibit 9-3, as of April 2003, the district has purchased five school buses during the past 3 years; however, 32% of its fleet is 12 years of age or older.

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this review, "field trips" are considered all trips taken by students for athletic competitions, extracurricular, and education-enhancing purposes in which the individual schools are responsible for scheduling and supervising.

**Exhibit 9-3**

**Approximately One-Third of the District’s Bus Fleet Is 12 Years of Age or Older**

Age in Years	Number of Buses	Percentage of Total
13 or more	8	17.1%
12	7	14.9%
11	3	6.5%
10	2	4.2%
9	1	2.1%
8	5	10.6%
7	3	6.5%
6	1	2.1%
5	1	2.1%
4	1	2.1%
3	5	10.6%
2	5	10.6%
1	5	10.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Bradford County School District.

The district’s policy on the periodic replacement of vehicles provides only general guidance that allows for the replacement of 10% of school buses each year if funds are available. Despite this plan, 32% of the district’s buses are at least 12 years old (15 of 47). The district has ordered and anticipates receiving five new buses for the 2003-04 school year. However, replacing five buses that are 12 years old or older means 21% of the district’s bus fleet is still 12 years old or older. A formal bus replacement policy based on age, repair history, and other district specific criteria will be useful in guiding future bus purchases.

There is no state policy on how often districts should replace their buses. However, some Florida school districts are successfully using bus replacement schedules that range from 12 to 15 years. Districts should establish school bus life cycles based on formal policies to periodically replace older buses that become unreliable and generally are more costly to maintain than newer buses using district-specific data and practices followed by exemplar districts.

**To further improve the district’s bus replacement processes, we recommend that the district adopt and use a formal bus replacement policy based on age, repair history, and other district specific criteria.**

**Best Practice 9: Using**

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

Good stewardship of district resources dictates district vehicles should be properly maintained to operate properly 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 tracks vehicle maintenance for all district on-road vehicles to ensure that 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 manpower to do so) but can be done on an outsourced basis. Quality control reviews by district employees need to be conducted to make sure that servicing and repairs (both those done by district employees and those done by vendors) are done in an economical and timely manner.

The Bradford County School District meets best practice standards. State-required 20-day bus inspections are the foundation for most bus-related repair work in the district. These inspections cover all major operating and safety systems. Buses with items not meeting specifications are repaired before being returned to service. Bus drivers have a reminder of the month and date of their next inspection mounted on the dashboard of their bus. In addition, bus maintenance employees maintain a schedule of all inspections on an eraser board calendar in the vehicle maintenance office. While the district does not have a preventative maintenance program for non-bus vehicles, it uses a 40-day inspection cycle which serves as the foundation for most vehicle repairs and maintenance. The district also utilizes the manufacturer's recommendations for vehicle preventative maintenance. The district has a vehicle maintenance management system that provides monthly data on each vehicle that includes maintenance and repair costs per month, year, and over the lifetime of the vehicle. Our review of five randomly selected bus files and five randomly selected vehicle files showed routine mileage based servicing was performed on vehicles.

### **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 cost-effective systems that ensure that fuel is purchased at the lowest possible cost, prevent unauthorized use of fuel, and that fueling stations are accessible to vehicles. Cost-effective purchases of fuel 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 to 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 that are designed specifically to prevent unauthorized fuel disbursements and monitor fuel tank levels as well as log the amount of fuel individual vehicles taken. Leaking fuel tanks can be a major cost for the district. Failure to promptly deal with fuel leaks found either through automated fueling systems or during inspections by governmental environmental agencies can result in large district costs to clean up ground contamination especially if the fuel tanks are underground and contamination is in the groundwater.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district operates an automated fueling system to supply vehicles with fuel. The system alerts district employees when to replenish fuel supplies. The system is secured within the bus compound and requires two cards (a card for each vehicle and a card for each driver), a personal identification number (PIN), and an odometer reading for fuel dispensing. This system allows tracking of fuel disbursed to each vehicle, who was operating the pump, and the rate of fuel consumption (miles per gallon). Current records of inspections by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection indicate that the district's fuel facility is in compliance with environmental regulations.

### **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 represent a significant expense 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 distances district vehicles have to travel for servicing yet have access to vehicle parts houses and delivery services. Service areas should be equipped with parts rooms, administrative areas, specialized tools, and covered and hard surfaced working areas so that technicians can concentrate on their assigned jobs rather be distracted/prevented from work due to weather, lack of tools, etc. The

## *Transportation*

maintenance facilities will generate hazardous wastes such as antifreeze, which need to be stored and properly disposed of. In general, district vehicles should be parked in secure compounds at the end of the working day to reduce transportation costs for the district. The only time that vehicles should be allowed to be taken home is if it can be shown to be in the district's best financial interests to allow certain vehicles to be taken home. One example of this exception is when it is cheaper for the school district to allow a bus driver to take a bus and park it at home instead of taking it to a distant bus compound. It is also appropriate for district employees in an on-call status (such as district facility personnel) to park vehicles at their homes instead of a district compound if the drivers are frequently responding to calls after normal working hours involving the transport of materials not easily transported in personal passenger vehicles (such as heavy welding equipment or sheets of plywood).

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The district operates one transportation facility that consists of three covered bays, a parts room, an administrative office, and a bus compound. Hazardous waste generated through servicing of vehicles such as used oil and oil filters are disposed of properly. Prior to disposal, the district stores used oil in a 500-gallon drum and oil filters in a wire cage. An environmental services company disposes of the hazardous waste. Most of the areas in which the mechanics work are covered and the shop is well organized and clean. Tools are kept on shadow boards; thus, mechanics have easy access to tools and can easily identify missing items.

Vehicle spare parts are generally housed in a parts room above the transportation department's administrative offices. Not all spare parts are able to be stored in the parts room. High temperatures caused by inadequate ventilation in the parts room has led to premature deterioration of some spare parts such as seals and gaskets. Other parts such as brake drums are too heavy to be safely stored in the parts room. Heavy spare parts and heat sensitive items are stored at ground level in the garage. The department has requested a new parts room.

### **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 for maintenance lessens disruptions to district services and reduces the number of vehicles required to support the district's transportation needs. Thus, keeping vehicles on the road in good mechanical condition saves the district money. Several factors affect vehicle maintenance time and costs. For instance, insufficient parts inventories can result in longer maintenance downtime for buses and the need to maintain extra spare buses. Conversely, excessive parts inventories can cost the district needed funds that can be used to meet other district transportation needs. Ideally, districts should have the minimum number of parts and supplies necessary to efficiently operate the fleet. Strategies for achieving this goal include standardizing engines and bodies and the using just-in-time inventories. Parts and supplies that are purchased also need to be secured to safeguard district assets using management tools such as restrictions on who can be in parts rooms, maintaining inventory tracking systems, and periodically conducting part inventory audits. Districts also need to make sure that they fully use the warranties provided by bus manufacturers, thus avoiding paying for repairs and parts that are covered by warranty.

The Bradford County School District generally meets best practice standards but could enhance operations by ensuring an appropriate inventory turnover ratio. The district obtains parts and supplies through blanket purchase orders with local vendors. Parts are checked against purchase orders to ensure that each is correct and properly priced. In addition, parts are properly inventoried. The chief mechanic reviews all parts and supplies that are delivered to ensure the correct items are delivered, billing is correct, and services are satisfactory. The transportation department's data entry person inventories and tracks all supplies via a computer system. While district vehicle maintenance employees do some warranty repair work, they take major warranty repair work in to be repaired. The district maintains records of all

warranty repair work in vehicle files. However, the district does not conduct an independent audit and does not calculate its inventory turnover of spare parts.

**To further improve the district's management of spare parts, we recommend that the district conduct an annual independent audit and set a target to have 3 to 4 inventory turnovers per year.**

## 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 carried out in an efficient and effective manner and that districts are in compliance with federal and state laws. 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 cost of training when there is employee turnover. Districts need effective procedures to handle 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 costs of field trips, districts should also have a policy to charge schools 100% of all transportation costs for these trips.

The Bradford County School District has procedures to deal with breakdowns and unexpected contingencies. Bus drivers are provided with a copy of the procedures for handling breakdowns and accidents. All buses are equipped with two-way radios and in the event of a breakdown or accident drivers use the radios to call for assistance. The district also has effective procedures to handle incidences in which regular drivers are unable to perform their assigned routes and buses are overcrowded. The district may have as many as 57 elementary students who ride buses for longer time periods than recommended by the state. This occurs because these students live in rural areas, and it takes buses long periods of time to travel to their assigned schools.

The district generally meets the intent of this best practice. However, the district could improve its operations by ensuring that schools are billed for the entire cost of field trips including administrative costs. District school buses were driven 518,803 miles during the 2000-01 year, including 90,377 extracurricular activity trip miles (17.42% of the district's total). The transportation department bills schools for all education, extracurricular, and athletic trips including fuel (50 cents a mile) and pay for the driver (\$6 an hour). However, schools are not charged for other costs associated with field trips such as driver benefits, maintenance on buses, and administrative costs associated with the scheduling of field trips. Transportation employees were unable to provide data on how much it underbilled schools for field trips.

**To further improve the district's processes for recovering costs for field trips, we recommend that the district determine the administrative costs of field trips to include total driver cost, use of bus cost, and administrative costs and bill schools appropriately.**

## **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 students with disabilities (i.e., students in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs).<sup>6</sup> While necessary, these services can be very costly to a district. Many ESE students can ride on regular buses with no assistance or equipment. However, others may require accommodations such as specially equipped buses that lift a student and wheelchair into the bus and secure it for transport. To ensure their compliance with law while controlling costs, school districts need effective systems for determining ESE students' need for special transportation. Districts need policies that clearly outline circumstances that require specialized transportation to guide the teachers, ESE employees, and parents who meet to determine what students will receive specialized transportation. These policies also should identify circumstances in which alternative transportation modes, such as paying parents to drive children who need special supervision, should be considered. Finally, districts should seek to recover Medicaid reimbursement for specialized transportation whenever possible, as this federal program will reimburse school districts for transporting Medicaid-eligible students on certain approved bus runs. It is rare for the cost to complete Medicaid paperwork to exceed the amount of the reimbursement. Every Medicaid dollar coming into the district frees up a general fund dollar for another district need.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet best practice standards. The district identifies specialized student transportation needs in staff meetings in which an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is drawn up for each exceptional education student. Upon notification of specialized transportation requirements, transportation personnel adjust bus routes to provide needed services. Our review of 15 IEPs found appropriate documentation of the need for specialized transportation. The district's total ESE student population during the fall of 2003 was 1,016 students of whom 50 were transported on four specially equipped buses. ESE staff workers identify ESE students who qualify for Medicaid funding. The district makes claims for Medicaid reimbursement. During the 2001-02 school year, the district received \$3,582 for Medicaid reimbursement.

## **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 in a safe, efficient and effective manner, proper officials are notified, and the district complies with federal and state laws.<sup>7</sup>

The Bradford County School District has procedures in place to effectively deal with breakdowns and meets the intent of this best practice. All buses are equipped with two-way radios, and bus drivers are knowledgeable about the process to use in the event of an accident or breakdown. The district had three accidents involving its school buses during school year 2002-03; one accident resulted in property damage over \$500. School bus drivers were not reported as the causal factor in two of these accidents. In the three-year period beginning with the 1999-2000 school year through the 2001-02 school year, the district had only one accident resulting in property damage over \$500.

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<sup>6</sup> The ESE population in a school district can include gifted students, slow learners, emotionally handicapped students, and physically handicapped students.

<sup>7</sup> 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 from their responsibility to drive their buses safely and can potentially result in accidents, cause injury to students and others, and saddle the school district with costly legal liabilities. Therefore, school districts need effective methods to manage the behavior of students while they are being transported. District staff that is primarily responsible for ensuring the appropriate conduct of students on school buses should work together to develop these behavior management methods. For example, school principals are responsible for the conduct of students on buses from the time students get on the buses until the time they leave them. School bus drivers assist the principals in the maintaining appropriate student behavior on school buses through various behavior management techniques and by writing disciplinary referrals to principals when appropriate. Principals can assist bus drivers in maintaining student bus discipline by informing them of what disciplinary actions are taking place in response to written disciplinary referrals.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to ensure that student behavior is maintained on buses, and that when disruptive behavior results in property damage to buses those students' parents are held accountable for financial consequences. To help bus drivers face discipline problems on their buses all buses are equipped with video camera equipment with which district administrators can view students' disciplinary infractions.

Although the district meets best practice standards, it could enhance its operations in two areas: informing bus drivers of what disciplinary actions were taken and recouping costs for repairs. First, interviews with bus drivers indicate that they report disciplinary infractions, but school staff members do not always report to drivers what disciplinary actions were taken. Second, district policy requires that parents of students damaging buses are assessed the repair costs. District staff indicated uncertainty as to whether all damages are paid for. The district collected \$406.45 in restitution during the 2001-02 school year. However, district personnel were unable to determine if this restitution was a result of disciplinary infractions on school buses or other school property.

**To further improve the district's processes to ensure students are held accountable for misbehavior related to transportation, we recommend that the district ensure that bus drivers are informed of student disciplinary actions taken for inappropriate behavior. In addition, we recommend that the district establish procedures to ensure that damage and repair costs resulting from student transportation vandalism can be tracked. We recommend that the district ensure students' parents are assessed for total repair costs and that those funds are tracked and returned to the transportation department.**

## **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, as well as less expensive. For instance, technology can assist school districts in mapping 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. This includes providing computers to access databases with driver traffic histories maintained by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and to maintain data such as vehicle maintenance histories, fuel disbursements, and parts inventories. Districts also need diagnostic tools to accurately troubleshoot bus engine problems. In

very small districts, districts may be able to maintain some of this data manually, but most districts require computer systems to enable management to make more informed and appropriate decisions.

The Bradford County School District has processes in place to meet the intent of this best practice. The transportation office has a computer information system that can track monthly and annual labor time, parts and costs associated with work. The district's preformatted vehicle maintenance reports also provide data regarding whether certain vehicles are requiring more than expected repairs over the life of the vehicle. The district has sufficient technological resources to obtain driver traffic histories. Due to the small size of the district, employees are able to develop bus routes, schedule inspections, and generate work orders manually.

### **Best Practice 18: 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 decisions during the budget process to control expenses and maximize funds available to support their primary mission, educating students. Exceeding these budgets may require the district to reduce funds to the classroom, forgo other needs, or to dip into reserves to meet unanticipated expenses. Thus, transportation management must monitor operations and control costs to ensure that budgets are not exceeded. 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 deriving accurate budgeted expenditure figures or controlling actual expenditures. In either case, transportation management can prevent budgeting problems through analysis of expenditures and comparing those expenditures to budgeted items. Such analyses will help alert transportation management to unexpected patterns of expenditures as well as identifying opportunities to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of operations.

The Bradford County School District monitors its expenditures in an adequate manner. The director of operations reviews each item on the budget monthly to ensure that the department knows where they stand in relationship to the time left in the school year and the balance in each budget category (e.g., diesel and gas costs, repair parts costs). In addition, vehicle maintenance employees maintain records of all maintenance and repairs conducted on all vehicles and the costs associated with those repairs.

### **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, school districts should continually evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations including examining the benefits of alternative service delivery methods to reduce costs and maximize funds available for classroom instruction and/or to improve performance. 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 a job that will only be used 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, of providing services (such as oil changes, paint and body work, and engine rebuilds) so that they can compare their costs to the prices charged by private vendors.

Although the Bradford County School District generally meets the intent of this best practice, it could enhance its operation by determining the potential for additional privatization of transportation related functions. The district currently contracts out certain vehicle maintenance functions such as the

rebuilding of engines. The chief mechanic reviews in-house capabilities, timeliness, and the cost to outsource these services in order to determine whether or not to contract out maintenance functions. Vendors are selected based on availability, warranties, and experience with the quality of services provided by various vendors. The mechanic supervisor checks the quality of the services received to ensure standards are met.

**To further improve the district's processes related to the privatization of transportation functions, we recommend that the district assess the potential for additional privatization of transportation functions. This analysis should include the identification of major vehicle maintenance and servicing functions that could be privatized such as transmission work. In addition, the analysis should include the unit cost to the district to perform these functions, the availability and competitiveness of private vendors to perform these functions, and estimates of unit costs for a private vendor to perform these functions.**

## **Best Practice 20: Not Using**

**The district needs to improve its accountability system for transportation including regularly tracking and making public reports on its performance in comparison with established benchmarks.**

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 that allows managers at both the district and program level to evaluate performance and make informed decisions regarding 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 monitor some performance measures on a regular, 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 (oil changes, inspections not conducted, etc.) delayed, and overtime paid. Districts should monitor other performance measures on an annual basis, such as the number of courtesy students served, annual operational cost per student, vehicle breakdowns per 100,000 miles, the percentage of buses that are spare buses, accidents per million miles, and on-time performance. District should compare their performance to those of peer districts as well as against established benchmarks. Transportation department performance should be reported on a regular basis to the district superintendent, school board, and the public.

The Bradford County School District transportation department has not established an accountability system for transportation services and activities. To improve its operations and meet best practice standards, the transportation department needs to develop an accountability system. The transportation department should develop a set of measures that allows it to routinely monitor and evaluate performance. The measurement set should include both short-term internal measures to evaluate day-to-day transportation operations, such as driver absentee rates, and long-term measures for major aspects of the transportation department, such as the operating costs per student, age of its bus fleet, and timeliness of service provided. The transportation department should also use the performance information to provide district management and the board with an annual report summarizing program results.

**Action Plan 9-1 <sup>1</sup>**

**We recommend that the district develop an accountability system for transportation functions and operations and report performance to the school board on an annual basis.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of operations along with transportation department staff should establish performance goals and measurable, performance-related key indicators.
	Step 2.	The director of operations should measure its performance by key indicators.
	Step 3.	The director of operations should compare its performance to peers and exemplars using the key indicators.
	Step 4.	The director of operations should establish benchmarks for measuring future performance.
	Step 5.	The director of operations should report its goals and performance to the district administration and the board.
Who is Responsible	Director of operations, transportation department staff, superintendent, and school board.	
Time Frame	June 2004	

<sup>1</sup> This action plan should be implemented in conjunction with Action Plan 3-1 in the Performance Accountability Chapter.

# 10

## Food Service Operations

### *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using 5 of the 11 food service operations best practices. The district's food service program is organized with clear lines of responsibility, provides training to meet basic program needs, has developed a fairly comprehensive procedures manual, annually inspects critical program components, and has passed its most recent state and federal inspections. However, in order to meet the remaining best practice standards and to ensure the performance, efficiency, and effectiveness of its food service program the district must improve program operations in several areas. The district's food service program needs to develop a strategic plan and improve its overall planning, budgeting, and accountability system by setting and using performance measures and benchmarks during the school year. The food service program also needs to perform better cash and account management by absorbing its fair share of all program expenses and optimize its financial opportunities by making the best use of its commodity allocations and modifying certain procurement practices. Finally, the program needs to develop a customer feedback system to identify barriers to meal participation and methods to overcoming those barriers.



As seen in Exhibit 10-1, the district has several opportunities to reduce costs and increase revenues in this 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 these action plans, 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 10-1**

#### **Our Review Identified Several Ways the District Could Reduce Costs and Increase Revenues in the Area of Food Service Operations**

Best Practice Number	Fiscal Impact: Savings and Increased Revenue					Total
	Year 2003-04	Year 2004-05	Year 2005-06	Year 2006-07	Year 2007-08	
6 Improve its use of commodities	\$13,650	\$13,650	\$13,650	\$13,650	\$13,650	\$68,250
6 Utilize a procurement co-op	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$22,000	\$110,000
6 Expand breakfast program	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$20,000
9 Reduce labor costs	\$10,000	\$40,000	\$67,000	\$67,000	\$67,000	\$251,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$49,650</b>	<b>\$79,650</b>	<b>\$106,650</b>	<b>\$106,650</b>	<b>\$106,650</b>	<b>\$449,250</b>

# Background

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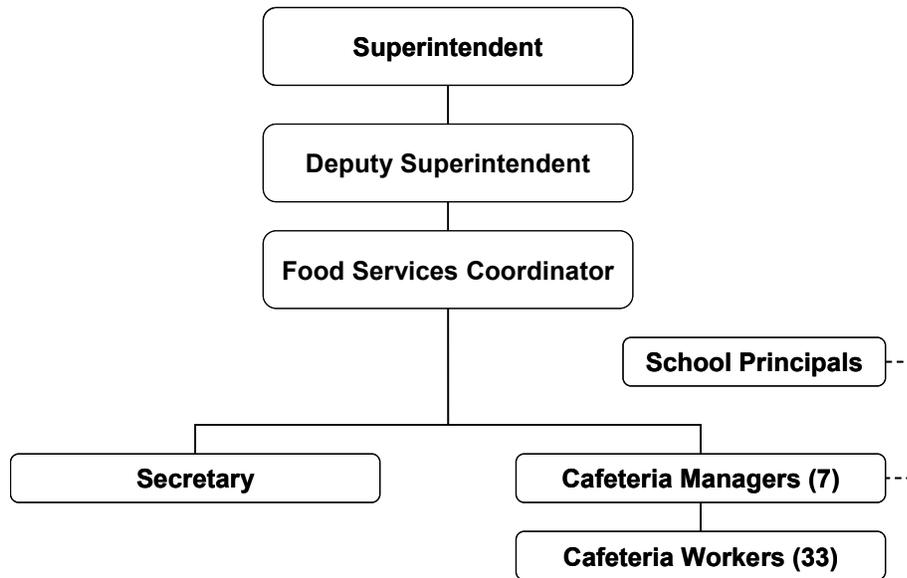
The Bradford County School District’s food service program provided approximately 555,000 meals during the 2001-02 school year. In doing so, it produced approximately 140,000 breakfasts and 415,000 lunches and sold the equivalent of 72,000 meals in the form of a la carte items at seven schools and three satellite locations. To run its operations, the program employed 32 full-time and 14 part-time food service staff at seven school locations in addition to 2 staff members at the central office. The food service budget for the 2002-03 school year is approximately \$1.4 million.

The district’s food service coordinator manages all aspects of the food service program, including managing food service staff on-site at each school. The current food service coordinator has been overseeing the program for almost eight years.

## Program organization

The program lines of authority are typical for most small district food service operations. The food service coordinator has additional duties, but her main focus is the business aspect of the program. As shown below in Exhibit 10-2, the coordinator reports directly to the district’s deputy superintendent and directly oversees all of the cafeteria managers. District-level food program staff is minimal, with the coordinator and a secretary performing all district-level program duties.

**Exhibit 10-2**  
**The District Has 48 Food Service Employees**



Source: Bradford County School District.

## National School Lunch Program participation

The district participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), which is regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This program assists states through grants-in-aid and other means, such as menu design in establishing, maintaining, operating, and expanding school feeding programs. The purpose of the federal program 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).

The program is administered jointly 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. The school board, superintendent, and the food service department share local responsibility for program administration within the district.

As a participant in the program, the district receives monthly federal reimbursement income for the free, reduced, 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 the 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 reduced-price meals served. Under the program guidelines, Bradford County receives the \$0.22 reimbursement rate. Students pay the full, reduced, or free meal rate based on individual family economic conditions according to rules 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 Bradford County School District also has opted to offer breakfast to its middle and high school students.

**Exhibit 10-3  
USDA Reimbursement Rates and Fees Per Meal for School Year 2002-03**

Meal	Federal Assistance	Fees Paid by Student	Program Total Revenue
<b>Elementary Schools—Bradford County</b>			
Full price paid			
Breakfast	\$0.22	\$0.75	\$0.97
Lunch	\$0.22	\$1.25	\$1.47 <sup>1</sup>
Reduced price			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.65	\$0.30	\$1.17 <sup>2</sup>
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.54	\$0.40	\$2.16 <sup>1</sup>
Free			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.95	\$0	\$1.17 <sup>2</sup>
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.94	\$0	\$2.16 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Middle and High Schools—Bradford County</b>			
Full price paid			
Breakfast	\$0.22	\$0.75	\$0.97 <sup>2</sup>
Lunch	\$0.22	\$1.50	\$1.72 <sup>1</sup>
Reduced price			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.65	\$0.30	\$1.17 <sup>2</sup>
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.54	\$0.40	\$2.16 <sup>1</sup>
Free			
Breakfast	\$0.22 + \$0.95	\$0	\$1.17 <sup>2</sup>
Lunch	\$0.22 + \$1.94	\$0	\$2.16 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In addition, the state quarterly pays partial matching funds to the district. For school year 2001-02, this equaled about \$0.03 per lunch served.

<sup>2</sup> For individual schools classified as having “severe need,” the federal program provides an additional \$0.23. All eight Bradford County schools serving breakfast are classified as having severe need.

Source: United States Department of Agriculture and Florida Department of Education.

As Exhibit 10-4 illustrates, Bradford County’s food service program account balance has decreased two of the past three years because of operational losses. As is typical for school food programs, 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.

**Exhibit 10-4  
Bradford Food Service Program Has Lost Money  
from Operations in Two of the Last Three Fiscal Years**

	Fiscal Year			
	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
<b>REVENUE</b>				
<b>Food Sales Revenue</b>				
Federal Meals Program	\$706,777	\$682,441	\$698,466	\$703,331
State Supplement	32,802	31,283	31,038	29,207
Meal Sales	244,382	237,812	281,288	249,153
A La Carte Sales	191,375	177,334	166,288	217,413
Other Food Sales	2,743	2,277	1,827	3,194
<b>Other Revenue</b>				
USDA Donated Food	111,166	55,049	71,071	79,192
Interest	12,644	13,275	9,439	3,351
Other Revenue	25	2,755	1,870	0
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,301,914</b>	<b>\$1,202,226</b>	<b>\$1,261,287</b>	<b>\$1,284,841</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>				
Salaries	\$442,256	\$473,162	\$514,866	\$498,034
Employee Benefits	184,456	198,750	218,636	210,485
Purchased Services	17,779	16,487	17,949	15,676
Energy Services	3,506	3,350	3,118	2,453
Material and supplies	531,986	507,320	521,094	514,407
Capital Outlay	72,078	8,215	27,435	13,924
Other Expenses	26,238	27,447	27,871	27,668
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,278,299</b>	<b>\$1,234,731</b>	<b>\$1,330,969</b>	<b>\$1,282,647</b>
<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b>\$23,615</b>	<b>(\$32,505)</b>	<b>(\$69,682)</b>	<b>\$2,194</b>
<b>Fund Balance as of June 30</b>	<b>\$386,025</b>	<b>\$361,625</b>	<b>\$283,362</b>	<b>\$285,559</b>

Source: Bradford County School District.

**Peer districts used for comparison**

To evaluate the Bradford County School District food service program, we compared food operations in this district to a set of similar, or peer, districts. Through an analysis process conducted by OPPAGA and approved by the Bradford County School District, the five peer districts selected were Columbia, Jackson, Lafayette, Suwannee, and Walton counties. As shown in Exhibit 10-5, Bradford County's food service program is serving the lowest number of meals per student among its peers even though it has about the same proportion of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.

**Exhibit 10-5  
General Comparison of Peer Districts for the 2001-02 School Year**

Districts	Reported Student Population <sup>1</sup>	Total Schools in District Serving NSLP Meals	Total NSLP Claimed Meals Served	NSLP Meals Served per Student for the Year	Free and Reduced Eligibility Percentage (Elementary)
Bradford	4,096	10	384,332	94	63.0%
Columbia	9,560	15	949,587	99	61.3%
Jackson	7,311	17	725,467	99	61.3%
Lafayette	1,030	2	109,851	107	60.7%
Suwannee	5,797	7	555,386	96	64.0%
Walton	5,968	12	676,157	113	58.3%

<sup>1</sup> Unweighted FTE, all programs.

Source: Florida Department of Education data sources.

# Conclusion and Recommendations

## Bradford County School District Met Five Food Service Operations Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Planning, Organization, and Staffing</b>	1. The program has developed strategic or operational plans that are consistent with district plans and the program budget, and approved by the district.	No	10-7
	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	10-8
	3. Program management has developed training designed to meet basic program needs as well as improve food services, both based on a needs assessment.	Yes	10-10
<b>Management</b>	4. Program management has developed comprehensive procedures manuals that are kept current.	Yes	10-11
	5. The district performs sound cash and account management.	No	10-12
	6. District and program management optimizes its financial opportunities.	No	10-13
<b>Performance and Accountability</b>	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	10-16
	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.	Yes	10-17
	9. District and program administrators effectively manage costs of the food service program and use performance measures, benchmarks, and budgets on a regular basis to evaluate performance and use the analysis for action or change.	No	10-18
	10. The food service program and district complies with federal, state, and district policy.	Yes	10-20
	11. The district conducts activities to ensure that customer needs are met and acts to improve services and food quality where needed.	No	10-20

# PLANNING, ORGANIZING, AND STAFFING

## **Best Practice 1: Not Using**

**The food service program has not developed strategic or operational plans that are consistent with district plans and the program budget and that are approved by the district.**

A well-managed food service program should have coordinated, approved plans that give the program a logical direction. These plans should include a mission statement, goals, objectives, and strategies that describe what the program desires to accomplish. However, the extensiveness of such plans may differ according to the size of the district. For instance, larger districts should have more highly developed, detailed plans for their food service operations, whereas smaller districts may need less extensive, more general plans. Because school districts generally have seemingly unlimited demands for available funds, the food service program budget should be an extension of the district's plan and financial decisions should reflect the program's priority goals and objectives. The budget also should have school-level, detailed forecasts of revenue and expenses. In addition, the food service coordinator should be involved in major capital projects, such as kitchen-related design or renovation.

The Bradford County School District food service program has a well-defined mission to provide nutritious meals to students in order to help them learn and succeed within the school system. We believe that this mission statement is appropriate and provides team members with a common, agreed-upon purpose. The program is also actively involved in planning the high school cafeteria and kitchen renovations. The district facilities construction director has been receptive to changes that the program coordinator has proposed, which may help the district avoid costly modifications to the cafeteria and kitchen in the future.

However, the food service program can improve operations and meet best practice standards by addressing two areas. First, the program needs to develop a strategic plan that establishes long-range goals, short-term objectives, priorities, and plans of action. While the program has a mission statement, it has not developed goals to support its mission statement or quantifiable objectives to measure progress toward goal accomplishment. Goals and objectives establish a framework for making key decisions and taking actions regarding the program. In addition, goals and objectives help program management to identify which data to collect to assess whether the program is meeting expectations and which strategies and program activities could be changed to better serve students. Furthermore, with an adequate set of program-level goals and objectives, program management can prepare a budget based upon the specific goals and objectives that it is trying to meet, thus providing cafeteria managers with direction to contain costs and maximize revenues. Therefore, the food service program needs to develop a strategic plan that provides direction to all those involved in the program.

Second, the program needs to prepare a budget that is based on the district's plan, goals and objectives, rather than a budget that is limited to historical, incremental increases. Once a program establishes a strategic plan, its budget should reflect the program's priorities and target areas of needed improvement both at the program level, such as increased training for all food service workers and, at the school level, paying for kitchen renovations, replacing older equipment, and buying walk-in freezers. Currently, the food service coordinator designs the budget for the upcoming year based upon the current year's revenue and expenditures and does not include any long-range planning in the budget for atypical expenses, such as kitchen renovations or equipment purchases. By not establishing a budget based upon program-level and school-level priorities, goals, and objectives, the food service coordinator cannot provide rationale for and build consistency behind critical financial decisions that must be approved by district administrators and school board members.

The program should develop a long-range (five-year) strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives to provide direction for the program and an opportunity to assess performance. This plan should be

developed with input from district and program management, cafeteria managers, and principals. The goals should have a long-range end towards which the program directs its efforts and should relate to the district’s mission, values, goals, priorities, and expectations. Program objectives should

- be action statements, which define how program goals will be achieved;
- be measurable and quantifiable;
- identify data needed to assess whether progress toward an objective is being made; and
- indicate the performance outcome (result) or improvement target desired.

For example, a goal could be that the food service program increases student meal participation. An objective that corresponds with this goal could be to introduce a new lunch meal suggested by students once a month in order to increase student participation by 2% during the upcoming school year. Once a strategic plan is established, the program should then consider and incorporate costs into the budget that reflect its long-term and short-term goals and objectives and target specific areas of improvement, both at the district level and at the school level.

**Action Plan 10-1**

**We recommend that the food service program develop a long-range strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives to provide direction for the program and an opportunity to assess performance.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	Collect input regarding the development of a strategic plan from key stakeholders, including district management, cafeteria managers, and principals.
	Step 2.	Develop priorities, goals, objectives, and plans of action to maximize food service program efficiency and effectiveness.
	Step 3.	Present to appropriate authorities for final approval.
	Step 4.	Create an annual budget that reflects the strategic plan. Priorities at specific schools should be included in this budget. Prior financial statements from each school should be used as a starting point for the first draft.
	Step 5.	Refine the budget annually and link budget forecasts to annual program goals.
Who Is Responsible	Food service coordinator	
Time Frame	May 2004	

Note: For more detailed information on developing goals and objectives, refer to Action Plan 3-1 in the Performance Accountability chapter.

**Best Practice 2: Using**

**The food service program has clear lines of responsibility and sufficient authority to succeed, but the program could improve communication with school principals and could review staffing levels more frequently.**

For the food service program to function well, the district food service coordinator, the school’s cafeteria manager, and the school principal 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. Food service staffing at both the district and the school cafeteria level should balance efficiency and effectiveness. Supervising too few workers is wasteful, but supervising too many can result in a loss of control. Management theorists generally agree that managers should oversee between 3 and 10 employees; more than 10 may be supervised if they are in close proximity to the manager and perform very routine or similar duties, such as in a cafeteria. All districts, even those with few employees, should maintain basic organizational charts to help management and employees understand their organizational relationships, explain lines of authority, assign responsibilities, and avoid conflicts.

The Bradford County School District food service program is organized with clear lines of responsibility and in a manner that provides it with sufficient authority to succeed. The food service coordinator has been given both the responsibility and authority to manage the program and to help prepare its budget. In addition, both the coordinator and cafeteria managers have an appropriate span of control, with the coordinator overseeing seven cafeteria managers and the managers supervising two to nine workers. Thus, district management has minimized administrative layers in the program and appropriately positioned the food service program in the district organization to have sufficient authority to fulfill its responsibilities.

Although the district is using this best practice, the program can enhance its operations in two areas. First, the program can establish better communication with the school principals, specifically regarding personnel evaluations and establishing meal times. Currently, the food service coordinator annually evaluates all cafeteria managers, and the cafeteria managers annually evaluate the workers whom they supervise, but principals at certain schools are not involved in these evaluations. The evaluation process would be strengthened if principals had a more formal means of providing input. Thus, if disciplinary action is ever considered, documentation on performance would exist from more than just the food service coordinator or cafeteria manager.

In addition, the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers are not involved in all decisions made by the principals that affect the food service program, especially those regarding meal times. We talked to cafeteria managers and principals and found that two principals shortened meal times without informing the food service program, and as a result, both schools had crowding problems in their cafeterias at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. The overcrowding may have been avoided if the principals had consulted with the food service coordinator and managers. We believe that principals involving the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers in decisions affecting the food service program will prevent similar problems from happening in the future. Specifically, program staff should work with school principals to establish meal times that will allow for optimal student participation without hindering the overall educational service delivery system.

**To enhance operations, we recommend that the food service coordinator and school cafeteria managers solicit and document feedback from principals when conducting annual personnel evaluations and be more actively involved with the principals in making decisions that affect the food service program.**

Second, the food service coordinator can improve operations by reviewing staffing levels more frequently. While the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers received training on controlling labor hours during the summer of 2002, the coordinator has not yet implemented the labor cost control measures and only reviews each school's staffing level at her discretion. This infrequent monitoring can result in certain cafeterias being understaffed and not having adequate meal preparation and serving time, while allowing other cafeterias to have excess labor costs. Instead, the food service coordinator should monitor school-level staffing levels at least twice a year in order to regulate the labor hours and maintain a cost-efficient operation. The first analysis should occur five to eight weeks into a new school year in order to allow school attendance and meal participation to stabilize. The district should re-evaluate the staffing levels in the middle of the year to allow for any necessary fine-tuning of total labor hours that could improve program performance. To adequately review these staffing levels, the coordinator needs to establish a meals-per-labor-hour standard for each school, taking into account such factors as the number of participating students, layout of the kitchen, number of serving lines, satellite situations, ratio of a la carte service to reimbursable meals, meal times, and analysis of profit and loss data for the program. The coordinator should consider the standards recommended by inTEAM Associates, Inc., a nationally recognized group promoting cost control for school food services that provided last summer's training. For more discussion of the use of this standard, see Action Plan 10-6.

### **Best Practice 3: Using**

#### **Program management has developed training designed to meet basic program needs as well as improve food services.**

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. Thus, school districts should have a process for identifying and tracking employee training needs. All food service employees should be required to 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 should have an annual training plan that addresses routine and special needs. Care should be taken to ensure that all levels of food service employees (managers, assistant managers, and line-production staff) receive the appropriate level of training. The district also should have a strategy for addressing cafeteria manager turnover, such as an intern program or an assistant manager program. The sophistication of the training plan, training documentation, and training methods may vary by the size of the district. Very large districts may designate an employee as a trainer, while training in small districts may be the responsibility of the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers. All districts should be taking advantage of training materials available from DOE.

The Bradford County School District food service program provides opportunities for employees to attend professional workshops and activities, including self-paced training modules that can be completed at home. Each year, the Northeast Florida Education Consortium (NEFEC) provides training to several districts' school managers and coordinators on various topics based upon input received from the food service programs. The food service coordinator said that this training is very helpful, since several districts combine resources to pay for more professional training than they can purchase by themselves. In addition, 22 food service workers are members of the American School Food Service Association (ASFSA), which provides structured school food service training and certifies workers after taking a certain number of classes. Finally, the program is creating an assistant manager position for a current food service worker to be trained to replace or substitute for a manager. We consider this a wise strategy, since currently the coordinator typically fills in when a manager is absent.

Although the district is using this best practice, the food service program can enhance its operations in two areas. First, it can develop a training plan based on a needs assessment. Currently, the food service program does not have a training plan to ensure that its workers are properly trained in all areas of food services. While managers provide individualized, on-the-job training to their workers, no minimum standards are established for the managers to follow. As a result, food and worker safety may be compromised and food service operations may be hindered. In addition, the food service program has not identified individual training needs, which helps the district to concentrate its training efforts on critical areas of deficiency. One way to identify individual training needs is through the use of personnel evaluations. When used properly, personnel evaluations provide district management with information regarding common employee performance deficiencies and can be used to identify training priorities.

Thus, the food service program should develop a training plan that is comprehensive and covers all of the program's essential functions, which are identified in the program's *Food Service Handbook* (see Best Practice 4 in this chapter for more discussion regarding the handbook). The training plan should also require the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers to identify and record individual training needs and a timeline for meeting these needs. The coordinator should monitor the training provided by managers to ensure that it is being conducted and is appropriate and comprehensive.

Second, the food service program can enhance its training efforts by making optimal use of the training provided through the American School Food Service Association. As workers are certified, the coordinator can ensure that the food service workers take classes that are applicable and helpful to the food service operations in Bradford County. The program can also consider rewarding employees for

their certification in ASFSA, such as a 25-cent per hour raise (\$10 per week for a full-time worker, or an average of one hour of training per week). Providing an incentive for the certification and ensuring that employees take the classes most helpful to them may increase the number of employees participating in ASFSA and help the district take maximum advantage of the structured training program. The food service program should examine the model established in the Wakulla County School District, which extensively uses the Florida chapter of ASFSA to fulfill its training needs within the constraints imposed by limited resources. The district requires all employees to become certified by ASFSA within three years of their hiring and retain certification through ASFSA's continuing education program. In exchange for off-duty certification and training, the district provides food service staff members a pay incentive that remunerates those who become and stay certified.

**To further improve its training efforts, we recommend that the food service program develop a comprehensive training plan that covers all program areas and identifies individual training needs through personnel evaluations and needs assessments. In addition, we recommend that the food service program make optimal use of the training offered by the American School Food Service Association and, if resources are available, consider rewarding employees for earning and retaining their ASFSA certification.**

## MANAGEMENT

### Best Practice 4: Using

**Program management has developed a fairly comprehensive procedures manual that is kept current.**

Up-to-date procedures, when coupled with appropriate policies, ensure that activities are carried out in an efficient and effective manner and that districts are in compliance 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 staff turnover. To ensure that employees know and use program policy and directives, 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. The district should conduct a scheduled and documented review process to keep manuals current and complete.

The Bradford County School District food service program has established a fairly comprehensive *Food Service Handbook*, covering essential areas of responsibility, such as cash control, receipt of goods, inventory procedures, production record keeping, and ordering of foods and supplies. In addition, certain cafeteria managers have added portion control, heating, and food storage and preparation procedures learned in past training sessions to their handbooks, and most cafeterias have a booklet, which contains general emergency rules distributed by the Bradford County Health Department, hanging on the wall for easy access. During our site visits, cafeteria managers stated that the handbook has been very helpful and is used on a routine basis. The handbook is reviewed and updated annually to ensure that the policies and procedures are kept current and complete and that other updates or new materials are added as needed.

Although the district is using this best practice, the district can enhance its operations by adding certain program-related functions to the *Food Service Handbook*. First, the handbook does not have safety guidelines. During our site visits, certain cafeteria managers were unable to locate emergency procedures. These procedures should include basic safety guidelines and instructions specific to the district and each school in order to ensure that the needs of all cafeteria workers and patrons are met as far as possible in emergency situations. Several cafeteria managers' handbooks also do not have portion control and food safety/hygiene guidelines, which are covered under the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) guidelines and Ch. 64E-11, *Florida Administrative Code*, Food Hygiene. Finally, the handbook does not discuss the coordinator's responsibility to warehouse and procure foods, the food service workers' responsibility to report equipment and facility maintenance problems, and district

warehouse operations, including procedures for receiving deliveries and monitoring inventory. These instructions are important to include both for training purposes and for establishing clear lines of responsibility.

**To further improve the food service program, we recommend that the Food Service Handbook be expanded to include emergency and safety procedures, instructions on portion control, food safety/hygiene guidelines, and procedures regarding equipment and facility maintenance. The program also should document the program coordinator's responsibility to warehouse and procure foods and to oversee operations at the district warehouse.**

## **Best Practice 5: Not Using**

### **The district could perform better sound cash and account management.**

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 that it does not drain general account dollars from the classroom. Management also should 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 Bradford County School District food service program executes certain sound cash and account management practices. The program had a fund balance of \$285,559 at the end of Fiscal Year 2001-02 (see Exhibit 10-4), which remains sufficient to operate the program and to cover any unanticipated emergencies. This amount is in line with the benchmark established by DOE, indicating that the district's reserve fund should not exceed about \$370,000 at current operation levels. The program coordinator has also been timely in the submission of claims for federal grant funds in support of the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs.

However, the district can improve its operations and meet best practice standards by ensuring that the food service program pays for all program-related expenses. The food service fund operates as an enterprise fund and should be charged for all costs associated with operating the food service function. However, the food service account has not been billed for its share of utilities, personnel and accounting services, janitorial services, labor costs associated with both district warehouse operations and the repair of program equipment by district maintenance staff, and trash removal. This means that the food service financial statements do not accurately reflect the actual program costs and results in the district having to use general account funds to subsidize the food service program. By charging the food service program for all program-related expenses, the district would be better able to assess the appropriateness of program costs and meal prices as well as maximize the use of general account funds for classroom-related activities.

While the fiscal impact of allocating all costs associated with the food service program to the program budget will be neutral to the district, we estimate that it will increase costs to the program of almost \$100,000 per year (see Exhibit 10-6). We recommend that the food service coordinator work with the finance director and other district management to develop a fair share formula that determines how much the food service program should pay for each program-related cost currently covered by general account funds and begin paying for these costs as soon as possible. Since the allocation of these costs to the program will cause a decline in program reserves, implementation of Action Plan 10-2 should closely coincide with the implementation of our recommendations in Action Plans 10-3, 10-4, and 10-6.

**Exhibit 10-6  
Bradford County School District's General Account Subsidized the Food Service Program with an Estimated \$94,000 in Fiscal Year 2001-02**

Food Service Program Expense	Amount Paid by Food Service Program in 2001-02	Estimated Amount Paid by District in 2001-02 <sup>1</sup>
Utilities	\$2,174	\$12,000
Personnel and Accounting	\$0	\$23,000
Janitorial Services	\$0	\$10,000
District Warehouse Operations	\$0	\$5,500
District Maintenance Operations	\$0	\$16,000
Trash Removal	\$0	\$27,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,174</b>	<b>\$94,000</b>

<sup>1</sup> The following criteria were used to develop the estimates. Utility costs were calculated using \$0.02 per breakfast meal and \$0.03 per lunch meal, which are the average amounts in the DOE statewide food program cost report. Personnel and accounting costs were based upon the indirect cost rate, which was 3.04% for Fiscal Year 2001-02. The fair share cost for janitorial services was calculated by comparing the number of square feet cleaned for food services to the total number of square feet cleaned for all district programs. The cost of district warehouse operations was based upon the workers spending 10% of their time working for the food service program. District maintenance costs were calculated using the work orders completed for food services. Trash removal costs were based upon the food service program contributing 50% of the trash at each of the seven schools in which it operates.

Source: OPPAGA.

**Action Plan 10-2**

<b>We recommend that the food service program assume responsibility for all program-related expenses.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Identify all expense categories, which are incurred by the general fund on behalf of food services.
	Step 2.	Determine the appropriate fair share charges to the food service program and bill accordingly.
	Step 3.	Revise the general fund and food service budgets to reflect the actual costs of indirect services. Plan for additional expenses in the food service program budget, beginning with the budget for Fiscal Year 2004-05.
Who is Responsible	Food service coordinator and district finance director	
Time Frame	May 2004	

**Best Practice 6: Not Using**

**The food service program could further optimize its financial opportunities by making optimal use of its commodity allocation, evaluating all procurement options including a procurement co-op, expanding its breakfast program, and developing a meal pricing strategy.**

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. For instance, 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. In addition, meal prices should be reasonable but sufficient to provide for quality food and service, as well as to enable the district to make needed capital investments and pay employees a fair wage. To respond to changing conditions and control costs, the district also should periodically review core processes, such as warehousing and procurement. These reviews should help the district to make informed decisions as to which functions the program should perform and which should be outsourced.

The Bradford County School District food service program has not optimized several financial opportunities and, therefore, is not using this best practice. As discussed in Best Practice 5 of this

chapter, the program needs to pay for its fair share of district costs, and as a result the program will need to take action to increase program revenues and/or decrease program costs. Two areas that should be improved to meet best practice standards are the program’s use of commodity foods and procurement methods.

First, the program has not made optimal use of its allocation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Donated Food to assist in reducing food costs. One way to better use its commodity allocation is to order the maximum dollar amount allotted to the district. Bradford was allotted about \$75,000 worth of commodities (called the planned assistance level, or PAL) for the 2002-03 school year, but it only requested 93% of this amount. This means that the district passed on at least \$5,250 worth of free food. In addition, the program has not made the best use of commodity allocations by choosing only those USDA items that are at lower prices than the contracted prices. Over the last two fiscal years, the program purchased several commodities at higher prices than the prices offered through its purchased food contract and lost almost \$5,000. If the program had only bought USDA items that were at lower prices than the contracted prices, it could have made better use of over \$16,000 of its PAL allocations.<sup>1</sup> The program also has failed to use commodity processing to better optimize its commodity allocations. By sending commodity items directly to a processor, the district can save storage space and reduce labor hours in making such items as pizza and chicken nuggets. Utilizing commodity processing could save the district 8% of its PAL allocation, or about \$6,000 annually.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we estimate that the program could realize a minimum annual cost savings of \$13,650 by ordering its full allocation, purchasing only those USDA items that are at lower prices than the contracted prices, and making use of commodity processing.<sup>3</sup>

**Action Plan 10-3**

**We recommend that the food service program make better use of its commodity allocations by ordering its full allocation, purchasing only those USDA items that are at lower prices than the contracted prices, and making use of commodity processing.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. Identify the USDA items that are at lower prices than the contracted prices and choose from these commodities. The program should select about 120% of the PAL allocation level, since some items may not be available.</p> <p>Step 2. Identify and partner with other districts, such as other members of NEFEC, to make use of commodity processing.</p>
Who is Responsible	Food service coordinator
Time Frame	Summer 2004

Second, the food service program does not participate in a procurement co-op, which could lower its food costs. In small districts like Bradford, the use of a procurement co-op in conjunction with other school districts can leverage buying power and be financially advantageous. The North Florida Regional Buying Group provides this opportunity by bringing North Florida school districts into a cooperating organization that increases the volume of purchases in order to reap the benefit of economies of scale and provide a greater variety of goods for all districts involved. However, the food service program has not participated in this or any other purchasing consortium. Our analysis of the program’s purchased food products revealed that joining a consortium would be financially advantageous. We compared the district’s prices with the North Florida Regional Buying Group’s prices and found that many of the consortium prices were cheaper than the prices of one of its two contracted vendors. For example, our analysis of one

<sup>1</sup> Certain commodities did not have a contracted price, so these items were not included in the analysis. The PAL allocations for Fiscal Year 2001-02 and 2002-03 were \$65,558 and \$75,071.

<sup>2</sup> The 8% conservative estimate is based upon savings experienced in other school districts taking similar actions. This percentage can be increased depending upon commodities, end products, and processors selected by the district.

<sup>3</sup> Calculated as follows: \$5,250 (7% of \$75,071 not ordered) for ordering full allocation + \$2,400 (average loss over last two years) for purchasing only those USDA items that are at lower prices + \$6,000 (8% of \$75,071) for using commodity processing = \$13,650 total cost savings.

invoice found that the district would have saved \$572 on a purchase order of \$4,517 (13%) by using the consortium instead of its current vendor. We conservatively estimate that if the district saved 5% on its purchases by using the consortium, it would save over \$22,000 annually.<sup>4</sup> Since the North Florida Regional Buying Group is rewriting its current agreement and expanding its membership base, the district could join this group and realize cost savings immediately.

**Action Plan 10-4**

<b>We recommend that the food service program evaluate its procurement options and consider the use of a procurement co-op, such as the North Florida Regional Buying Group.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Beginning in May 2004, the food service program should send its request for proposals to co-ops, such as the North Florida Regional Buying Group, among other vendors.
	Step 2.	Evaluate all procurement options by comparing the number and type of available items and their unit prices and choose the proposal that best serves the needs of the program.
Who is Responsible	Food service coordinator	
Time Frame	Summer 2004	

Although not required to meet best practice standards, the food service program can enhance its operations in two ways. First, the food service program can increase program revenues by providing bag breakfasts to students who arrive by bus too late to eat in the cafeteria. In interviews with two cafeteria managers, we were told that certain buses arrive too late for students to eat breakfast. After analyzing the bus schedule, we found that five buses drop off a combined total of 83 elementary students at Starke Elementary School and Lawtey Community School too late for them to eat breakfast in the cafeteria. To serve these students before school each morning, the food service program could offer brown bag breakfasts, which include nutritional items that can be eaten on their way to class. These breakfasts are easily prepared and require little clean-up for workers. We estimate that serving bag breakfasts to just one-fifth of the 83 students at these two schools daily would generate \$4,000 in additional revenue annually.<sup>5</sup> If the bag breakfasts are well-received, the program can then offer bag breakfasts to students who arrive by car too late to eat in the cafeteria.

**To improve its financial operations, we recommend that the food service program consider expanding its breakfast program by providing bag breakfasts to those students who cannot eat in the cafeteria.**

Second, the food service program can enhance its operations by developing a meal pricing strategy. The use of a meal pricing strategy ensures that the district considers such factors as program production and overhead costs, volume, anticipated participation, food account reserve status, comparative district pricing, and program investment needs, such as equipment or automation, when deciding whether price adjustments are appropriate. Once a meal pricing strategy is established, the district can determine whether a price increase is necessary. Based upon our review, we believe that the district can adjust its meal prices to increase revenues. While Bradford County’s prices are similar to its peers’ prices (see Exhibit 10-7), they are much lower than the federal reimbursement rate shown in Exhibit 10-3. In other words, the revenue gained for the students who can afford to pay full price is much less than for those students eating meals at a reduced rate or free. For example, an elementary student paying full price generates \$1.47 per lunch, while an elementary student paying a reduced rate or eating free generates \$2.16. Thus, we recommend that the district develop a meal pricing strategy and then consider raising full meal prices. If the district decides to increase prices, we recommend that the district raise them in

<sup>4</sup> Calculated as follows: \$441,151 (total purchases for Fiscal Year 2001-02) x 5% estimated cost savings = \$22,058.

<sup>5</sup> Calculated as follows: 1/5 of 83 students eating breakfast x \$1.35 per breakfast x 180 days = \$4,033.80. We chose one-fifth because 19% of the students districtwide participated in the breakfast program last year (see Exhibit 10-9). We estimated that the district would gain \$1.35 in revenue per breakfast, since most students eat breakfast at free and reduced prices, which gains \$1.40 per meal (see Exhibit 10-3).

increments of \$0.05 per meal, since we have found that customer acceptance of price adjustment occurs best when introduced in small amounts.

**To enhance its financial operations, we recommend that the food service program develop a meal pricing strategy and consider increasing full meal prices.**

**Exhibit 10-7  
Bradford County Meal Prices Are Similar to Its Peers' Prices**

	Bradford	Columbia	Jackson	Lafayette	Suwannee	Walton	Peer Average
<b>Lunch</b>							
Elementary	\$1.25	\$1.40	\$1.50	\$1.35	\$1.25	\$1.40	\$1.38
Middle	1.50	1.65	1.50	1.75	1.50	1.65	1.61
High	1.50	1.65	1.50	1.75	1.50	1.65	1.61
Adult	2.50	2.40	2.50	2.00	2.00	2.50	2.28
<b>Breakfast</b>							
Elementary	\$0.75	\$0.75	\$0.60	\$0.75	\$0.60	\$0.75	\$0.69
Adult	1.00	1.10	1.25	1.50	0.90	1.15	1.18

Source: Florida's 2002-03 National School Lunch Program applications by county.

## PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

### Best Practice 7: Not Using

**Food service program management has not developed comprehensive performance and cost-efficiency measures that provide management with information to evaluate program performance and better manage operations.**

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, such as food services. To accomplish this, school districts should have a performance measurement system that allows managers at both the district and program level to evaluate performance and make informed decisions regarding the use of limited resources. A comprehensive set of program measures should include input, output, outcome, and cost-efficiency measures. Districts need to periodically verify that their performance information is reliable by testing its accuracy and assure its validity by assessing whether it is useful. Managers also need to occasionally review performance benchmarks and efficiency standards for appropriateness. The degree of sophistication of the district's performance measurement system may vary with the size of the district. Smaller districts may have a less formal reporting system and simpler methodology for the development and validation of benchmarks.

The Bradford County School District food service program does not have a performance measurement system that assists the food service coordinator, cafeteria managers, school board members, and other district management in evaluating performance and making informed decisions regarding the use of limited resources. However, the program can create a system of performance measures by using data that is readily available, such as data in current program records and reports required for NSLP participation, the district's accounting system, and the program's automated point-of-sale system. For example, the program calculated meals per labor hour for each school at a training seminar last summer, but it does not employ this measure as a tool to adjust staffing levels during the school year. Other measures that can be calculated with data currently available include food and labor costs as a percentage of total expenditures, net income margin (total expenses as a percentage of total revenue), and participation rates for full pay, reduced-price, and free students. Routinely calculating and monitoring this data can help the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers investigate the areas and causes of poor performance, both district-

wide and school-wide. In addition, food service management can learn lessons from schools that are performing well in certain areas to improve overall program operations.

To improve operations and to meet best practice standards, the district should develop a set of key performance measures and accompanying benchmarks to be maintained both at the program level and at the school level. These would include such measures as meals per labor hour, food and labor costs as a percentage of total expenditures, net income margin, and participation rates. After developing these measures and benchmarks, the coordinator should establish a reporting mechanism to facilitate discussion and analysis of the information with cafeteria managers. Such a mechanism also would provide for reporting performance statistics to the school board, district management, and appropriate school administrators on a regular basis. See Best Practice 9 of this chapter for more discussion of the use of the performance measurement system.

**Action Plan 10-5**

**We recommend that the food service program develop a performance measurement system and a mechanism to periodically analyze and report performance.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. Develop program performance measures. These measures should include, at a minimum, meals per labor hour, food and labor costs as a percentage of total expenditures, net income margin, and participation rates for full pay, reduced fee, and free students at breakfast and lunch.</p> <p>Step 2. Identify past program performance and peer district performance for the measures in order to determine appropriate benchmarks for each measure. After establishing benchmarks, re-evaluate and adjust benchmarks bi-annually.</p> <p>Step 3. Analyze program performance at least two times a year by comparing actual performance to the established benchmarks. The analysis should seek to identify causes, trends, and opportunities to improve performance.</p> <p>Step 4. Develop corrective actions to resolve any issues identified that hinder program performance.</p> <p>Step 5. Communicate the performance of each school and the district in an annual comprehensive assessment to school board members, district management, appropriate school administrators, food service personnel, and other interested stakeholders, beginning in June 2004.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Deputy superintendent, food service coordinator, and cafeteria managers
Time Frame	June 2004

Note: For more detailed information on developing a performance accountability system, refer to Action Plan 3-1 in the Performance Accountability chapter.

**Best Practice 8: Using**

**At least annually, the program has inspected and evaluated its operational components and the system as a whole, and then taken action to initiate needed change.**

School districts should have a system for inspecting individual cafeterias and for evaluating overall program operation to ensure efficiency and compliance with public safety standards. Cafeteria inspections should address, at a minimum, program assets, safety, food preparation, and training. Evaluations of the program should analyze functions, such as procurement and accountability. District managers should use inspection and evaluation results to ensure that corrective actions are taken and to make changes to improve the program. As part of overall operational efficiency and to assist in budgeting and planning, the district should have a long-range equipment replacement plan and a preventive maintenance program.

The Bradford County School District food service program has a fairly straightforward inspection system. Each year, the food service coordinator performs an inspection at each school using a checklist developed by the Florida Department of Education that focuses primarily on compliance with the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). At the end of each inspection, the coordinator discusses the results with

cafeteria managers and resolves any problems identified immediately. In addition, while the food service coordinator is only required to conduct a formal monitoring once a year, she visits the schools frequently and addresses problems as they arise, so corrective action usually does not occur at the time of annual inspections.

Although the program is using this best practice, the district can enhance its operations in two ways. First, the district can expand its annual inspection system. We reviewed the coordinator's inspection checklist and found that it does not cover all essential program areas, including warehousing, safety procedures, and cafeteria inventory. Since most of the supplies, paper products, and commodities are maintained at a central warehouse, the coordinator should validate the warehouse operations to ensure that they are efficient and effective. In addition, inspecting safety procedures and cafeteria inventory are necessary to ensure the safety of workers and students and maintain cost-efficient operations. For example, we found that food service employees clean exhaust hoods over deep fryers, which is a job that should only be performed by someone with specialized training and equipment and could result in safety hazards if an untrained person performs it. Besides the chance of a worker getting hurt, there is an increased possibility of fire due to hoods not being cleaned properly. We also found numerous food items that were not dated in all seven cafeterias, which is another potential health hazard. Both practices could have been eliminated if inspections included safety standards and inventory procedures. Thus, the program should expand its annual inspection system to include the monitoring of the procedures related to the district warehouse, safety, and cafeteria inventory.

Second, the food service program can enhance its operations by developing a preventive maintenance and long-range equipment replacement plan. Presently, the district's maintenance department typically responds to school cafeteria manager requests for equipment repair on an as-needed basis. Although the managers reported that the district's maintenance department handles repairs in a timely manner, a preventive maintenance plan could extend the life of equipment and minimize potential disruptions to the food service program. Studies have shown that equipment undergoing routine preventive maintenance (e.g., lubricating gears, replacing worn belts, and recalibrating controls) lasts longer and therefore costs less over time than equipment that is only serviced when a component breaks. Further, the district does not have a corresponding list of expected replacement dates for each major piece of equipment. Without a replacement plan, expenditures for major equipment purchases are not included in the annual or five-year cash flow budgets. Consequently, the program must allocate funds for unbudgeted major pieces of equipment. Thus, we recommend that the program establish a viable plan for preventive maintenance and long-range equipment replacement. Specifically, the program should inspect and document current equipment conditions at each school, develop equipment maintenance plans to maximize the life of the product and minimize replacement costs, and identify equipment replacement needs and costs projected five years into the future.

**To enhance its operations, we recommend that the food service program expand its inspections to include district warehouse, safety, and inventory procedures. We also recommend that the food service program develop a preventive maintenance and long-range equipment replacement plan.**

### **Best Practice 9: Not Using**

**District and program administrators have not effectively managed costs of the food service program and have not used performance measures, benchmarks, and budgets on a regular basis to evaluate performance and to use the analysis for action or change.**

School district and program administrators should make informed management decisions based on a goal-driven, performance measurement system that is linked to the district's overall mission and 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 for management to use. 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 Bradford County School District food service program has not met best practice standards, since it has not yet established any measures and benchmarks for the program's major functions. As discussed in Best Practice 7 of this chapter, the food service program has not developed a measurement system that allows it to routinely monitor and evaluate performance. The lack of such a system limits the management's ability to timely identify problem areas or make informed management decisions and develop corrective actions during the year. It also prevents the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers from working together to assess the performance of new initiatives, such as introducing a new meal or increasing a la carte and meal prices. Without a performance measurement system, the program also cannot provide district management and the school board with a program report summarizing performance results.

The food service coordinator, with help from cafeteria managers, should establish and use a performance accountability system and conduct an annual program-wide analysis to present to district management, the school board, and any other stakeholders. The analysis should include an overview of the program's accomplishments, shortfalls, recommendations, and issues where assistance beyond program management's authority is needed. Open discussions also should be held with these parties to discuss any identified barriers to program performance, such as principal-directed meal periods, bus arrival times that limit breakfast participation by students, inadequate dining areas, meal prices, and personnel issues. Adjustments and attention to these areas can significantly improve both communication among district employees and program performance. **Action Plan 10-5 includes the steps needed to address this issue.**

While the program has not used measures to assess and report its performance, we examined the labor cost as a percentage of total expenditures measure and found that the program's labor cost is relatively high. According to inTEAM Associates, a nationally recognized group promoting cost control for school food services, labor costs should not exceed 40% of the total expenditures for a food service program to be financially viable. The Bradford County School District food service program's labor costs accounted for 55.2% of total expenditures last year, which suggests that the program spends too much of its revenue on labor costs. The program should work to reduce its labor costs to less than 50% of its total expenditures over the next two years and should continue to move closer to the 40% standard in future years. As discussed in Best Practice 2 of this chapter, the program should use the meals-per-labor-hour standard as a guide for reducing the number of workers and the number of labor hours for retained workers. To reduce the labor costs, the program should consider not replacing workers as they leave/retire and reducing the labor hours of retained workers by doing less in-house baking and buying more pre-prepared foods. If the program reduces its labor cost to less than 50% of its total expenditures, it will realize a savings of over \$67,000 annually by the third year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Calculated as follows: \$708,519 (labor cost in Fiscal Year 2001-02) - \$641,324 (50% of total expenditures) = \$67,195. Since implementation would occur during the first and second years, the full savings of \$67,000 would not be gained until the third year. Using a conservative first-year savings of only \$10,000 and a second-year savings of \$40,000, the five-year savings is estimated to be at least \$251,000. Calculated as follows: \$10,000 + \$40,000 + \$67,000 + \$67,000 + \$67,000 = \$251,000.

**Action Plan 10-6**

**We recommend that the food service program reduce its labor cost to less than 50% of its total expenditures. It should use the meals per labor hour standard as a guide for reducing the number of workers and the number of labor hours for retained workers.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. Establish a meals-per-labor-hour standard for each school that will ensure that the district overall has labor costs of less than 50% of its total expenditures. Consider the meals-per-labor-hour standards recommended by inTEAM Associates, Inc.</p> <p>Step 2. Compare each school’s meals per labor hour to the standard established.</p> <p>Step 3. Reduce labor hours first from those schools that are farthest from meeting the meals per labor hour standard. To assist in this endeavor, through attrition and transition, the program should reduce its in-house baking and increase its use of pre-prepared foods.</p> <p>Step 4. Semi-annually communicate the program’s performance in reducing labor costs to school board members and district management. The Fiscal Year 2005-06 budget should reflect labor costs accounting for less than 50% of total expenditures.</p> <p>Step 5. Continue to evaluate staff allocations five to eight weeks into each new school year and in the middle of the year and adjust school staffing as needed in order to reduce labor costs and move towards the standard of having labor costs at 40% of total expenditures.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Food service coordinator
Time Frame	May 2005

**Best Practice 10: Using**

**The food service program and district have complied with federal, state, and district policy.**

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 internal periodic 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. For example, 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 Bradford County School District passed all of its most recent formal inspections, including the Coordinated Review Effort (CRE), School Meals Initiative (SMI), and USDA Donated Foods reviews. These scheduled inspections cover compliance with requirements of the National School Lunch Program, nutrition standards, and accountability of USDA-donated commodity foods. In addition, the school board has an approved policy, which is in compliance with the federal and state rules for the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value, such as soft drinks and candy. During site visits to cafeterias and schools, we observed no violations of the competitive food rules or other school board policies.

**Best Practice 11: Not Using**

**The district has not conducted activities to ensure that customer needs are met and has not acted to improve services and food quality where needed.**

Like most businesses, to be successful, school district food service programs must be responsive to customers, particularly students, teachers, and other employees. Therefore, food service programs should solicit feedback actively 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 use a variety of mechanisms to obtain this information, such as individual

cafeteria evaluations, regular customer surveys, suggestion boxes, customer taste tests, and website access.

The Bradford County School District food service program has developed certain promotional campaigns to increase meal participation. In order to increase adult participation, the program sponsors a parent and grandparent day to have family members eat with their children. It also sends memos to the parents during National Breakfast Week and National Lunch Week inviting them to eat at the cafeteria. In addition, the food service program makes sure that lunch menus are included in each school’s monthly newsletter and on the district website.

However, the program can improve its operations and meet best practice standards by seeking to identify and eliminate barriers to student participation through the use of customer feedback. While the close community atmosphere and relatively small school size facilitate open communications with student customers, the program has made no formal effort to obtain feedback from stakeholders (students, parents, principals, and teachers) about food service operations. This feedback can assist the program coordinator in evaluating such issues as satisfaction with meals, ways to improve service, and whether the length of meal times is sufficient. Customer feedback could be especially helpful in this district, since its lunch participation rate was the lowest among peer districts during the 2001-02 school year (see Exhibit 10-8). If the district increased its lunch participation rate to the average rate among its peer districts, it would sell an additional 36,900 meals and generate over \$73,000 in additional revenue per year.<sup>7</sup>

**Exhibit 10-8  
Bradford County School District Had the Lowest  
Lunch Participation Rate Among Its Peers  
During the 2001-02 School Year**

Districts	Lunch Participation Rate	Breakfast Participation Rate
Bradford	52%	19%
Columbia	55%	14%
Jackson	55%	24%
Lafayette	59%	11%
Suwannee	53%	18%
Walton	63%	23%
Peer Average	57%	19%

Source: Florida Department of Education data sources.

To identify barriers to student participation and methods to increase its breakfast and lunch participation rates, the program should develop an organized system to obtain customer feedback. For example, the district could implement a suggestion system by making feedback cards available in each cafeteria asking students, teachers, and other school staff for ways to improve the food service program. Then the food service coordinator and cafeteria managers periodically could meet to discuss these suggestions and identify needed changes. Another suggestion is the district could survey a sample of students about improving food quality and service in each cafeteria and/or include a few questions in each school’s improvement plan student survey. The survey could especially be helpful at the high school, where asking for new ideas could be conducted in conjunction with the cafeteria renovations. To potentially increase breakfast participation, the program could use the point-of-sale system to identify elementary students who eat free and reduced-price lunches but do not eat breakfast at school and then ensure that

<sup>7</sup> Calculated as follows: 205 (5% increase to reach 57%) additional students eating lunch x 180 days = 36,900 meals x \$2 per lunch = \$73,800. We estimated that the district would gain an average of \$2 in revenue per lunch, since 2/3 of the lunches sold last year were at free and reduced prices, which gains \$2.16 per meal, and the other 1/3 was sold at full price, which gains \$1.47 at elementary schools and \$1.72 at the middle and high schools (see Exhibit 10-3).

their parents are informed about the breakfasts made available to their children. The food service program could also develop a survey asking these parents why their children are not currently eating breakfast at school in order to identify any barriers to participation as well as ways to increase participation.

**Action Plan 10-7**

**We recommend that the food service program increase efforts to identify barriers to student participation by developing an organized system to obtain customer feedback.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	Meet with cafeteria managers and principals to brainstorm ideas on how to obtain and use input from students, parents, teachers, and other school staff regarding food service issues.
	Step 2.	Implement ideas to obtain customer feedback, beginning in January 2004.
	Step 3.	Periodically meet with cafeteria managers to review customer feedback and discuss potential barriers and consider possible changes for improvement to student participation. These meetings should begin by August 2004.
	Step 4.	Incorporate findings into the food service strategic plan and work to eliminate the identified barriers.
Who Is Responsible	Food service coordinator	
Time Frame	August 2004	

# 11

## Cost Control Systems

### *Summary*

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The Bradford County School District is using 19 of the 22 cost control systems best practices. The district has adequate staffing and financial information systems to provide useful, timely, and accurate cost control information. The district also ensures that it receives an annual external audit to improve its operations, periodically reviews cash management activities, and has established written policies and procedures to provide for effective management of capital assets, debt, risk, purchasing, and inventory. To meet the remaining best practice standards, the district needs to establish written procedures that promote ethical financial management practices and provide for confidential reporting of suspected improprieties, develop a strategic plan that will provide management with measurable goals and objectives, and perform a risk assessment of its operations. After developing its strategic plan, the district should establish budget planning processes that link the development of the budget to the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.

### *Auditor General's Scope, Objectives, and Methodology for Cost Controls*

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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 Bradford 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:

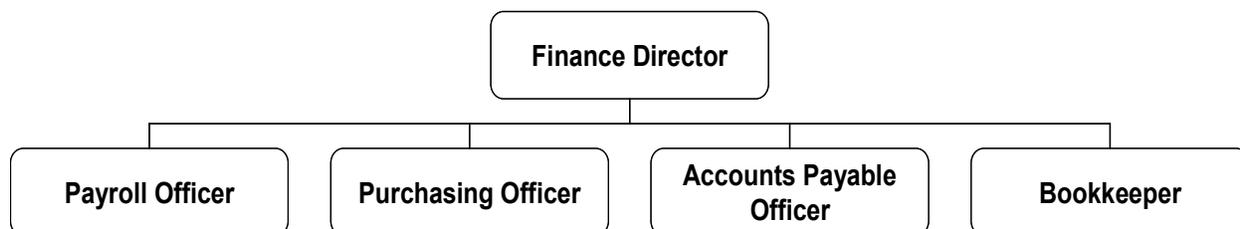
- Reviewed and tested compliance with state laws and rules applicable to cost control systems.
- Examined and tested compliance with district policies and procedures applicable to cost control systems.
- Reviewed district prepared preliminary survey documents regarding best practice standards and indicators 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 Bradford County School District’s cost control activities are primarily managed by the finance function. Operational units of the finance function include general accounting, food service accounting, payroll, purchasing, accounts payable, etc. The finance function consists of the finance director and four fiscal assistants. The finance function’s budget for the 2002-03 fiscal year was \$344,338.

Finance and accounting functions are centralized; however, input of time and attendance information for payroll processing and purchase requisition information is decentralized. A centralized warehouse is used for receiving goods purchased and for maintaining school, transportation, maintenance, and food service inventories. The current finance director is a certified public accountant and has been with the district for 2 years. Additionally, the finance director has approximately 13 years of previous experience in accounting and auditing with private and governmental employers, including one and one-half years with another Florida school district. The finance function’s current organizational structure is shown in Exhibit 11-1 below:

**Exhibit 11-1  
Organizational Structure for the District’s Finance Activities**



Source: Bradford 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 and trust funds) and a proprietary fund (an internal service fund that accounts for a consortium program). Substantially all of the district’s resources are accounted for in the governmental funds. Exhibit 11-2 shows that the district reported revenues of \$26.8 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
\$21,819,376	\$3,656,609	\$117,586	\$1,249,177	\$26,842,748

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 acquisition of real property and 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
\$424,947	\$17,663,525	\$3,730,904	\$21,819,376

Source: Audited financial statements.

The state provided over 80% of the district’s general fund resources during the 2001-02 fiscal year. Four sources administered by the Florida Department of Education comprise the majority of state revenue accounted for in the district’s general fund. First is the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) 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, instructional materials, and transportation. Third is workforce development funds used for adult and other vocational educational services. Fourth is lottery funds earmarked for educational enhancement and school advisory council activities.

Local revenues are primarily generated from ad valorem (property) taxes and represent 15% of the district’s general fund resources.

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 80% 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
\$12,700,660	\$1,656,114	\$7,149,673	\$21,506,447

Source: Audited financial statements.

Instruction and instructional support expenditures represented approximately 67% 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, lifelong learning, 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% of total general fund expenditures for the 2001-02 fiscal year. Although technically not a part of general support services, community services are included in this category because they represent a very small portion of the overall general fund expenditures. 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, supplies inventories, etc.), pupil

## Cost Control Systems

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 current 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

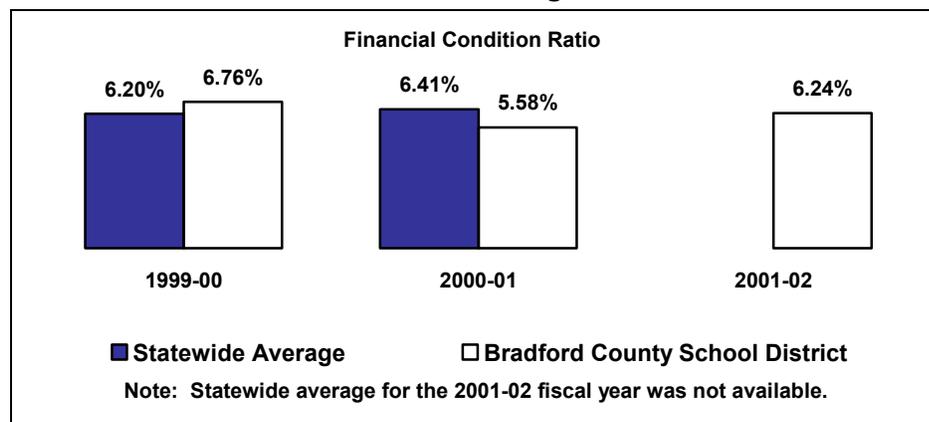
Salaries	Employee Benefits	Purchased Services	Energy Services	Materials and Supplies	Capital Outlay	Other Expenses	Total
\$14,245,761	\$3,863,978	\$1,585,618	\$636,430	\$796,256	\$58,047	\$320,357	\$21,506,447

Source: Audited financial statements.

As primarily a service organization, the district's major expenditure objects are salaries and employee benefits, which comprise approximately 84% of total expenditures. Purchased services, energy services, materials and supplies, capital outlay, and other expenses were consistent with prior years, although total current expenditures decreased by \$864,881, or 3.9% compared to the previous year, due mainly to hiring and spending restrictions implemented to address state funding cuts made subsequent to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

We analyzed the fund balance in the general fund to determine whether 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 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, often referred to as the "rainy day" fund, is actually available to offset unexpected needs. 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 Consistent with the Statewide Average



Source: Audited financial statements.

As can be seen in Exhibit 11-6, the district's ratio of unreserved fund balance to revenues was consistent with the statewide average.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Summary of Conclusions for Cost Control Systems Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
<b>Financial Management</b>	1. The district periodically analyzes the structure and staffing of its financial services organization.	Yes	11-7
	2. Management has developed and distributed written procedures for critical accounting processes and promotes ethical financial management.	No	11-7
	3. The district has adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information.	Yes	11-9
	4. District financial staff analyzes significant expenditure processes to ensure that they are appropriately controlled.	Yes	11-10
<b>Internal Controls</b>	5. The district has established adequate internal controls.	Yes	11-10
	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.	Yes	11-11
	8. Management analyzes strategic plans for measurable objectives and results.	No	11-12
<b>External and Internal Auditing</b>	9. The district ensures that it receives an annual external audit and uses the audit to improve its operations.	Yes	11-12
	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
<b>Cash Management</b>	12. The district periodically reviews cash management activities, banking relationships, investment performance, and considers alternatives.	Yes	11-15
<b>Capital Asset Management</b>	13. The district has established written policies and procedures and periodically updates them to provide for effective management of capital assets.	Yes	11-15
	14. The district ensures that significant capital outlay purchases meet strategic plan objectives.	Yes	11-16
<b>Debt Management</b>	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
<b>Risk Management</b>	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

*Cost Control Systems*

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
	19. The district prepares appropriate written cost and benefit analyses for insurance coverage.	Yes	11-18
<b>Purchasing</b>	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
<b>Inventory Management</b>	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.	Yes	11-20

# FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

## Best Practice 1: Using

**The district periodically analyzes the structure and staffing of its financial services organization, but could improve its payroll function by cross-training staff in the payroll process to ensure timely and accurate payrolls.**

In recent years, a variety of external factors have had direct and indirect effects on district finances. Some districts have experienced significant changes in student population size, most 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 Bradford 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 finance director 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. Financial services organization staff receive training in the use of the accounting system when hired and also receive annual training updates. Also, the finance director attends state finance officers' association meetings and receives training for school finance-related emerging issues.

Although the district is using this best practice, there is one area in which the district could improve its financial services organization. As shown in Exhibit 11-2, *Organizational Structure for the District's Finance Activities*, the district has only four employees assisting the finance director, and only one which is responsible for payroll processing. No other employees are cross-trained to assist with or handle the payroll process in the absence of the payroll officer. Because of the critical nature of the payroll function, another individual should be cross-trained and available to assist with the payroll process.

**We recommend that the district cross-train staff in the payroll process to ensure timely and accurate payrolls.**

## Best Practice 2: Not Using

**Management has not developed and distributed written procedures for critical accounting processes and does not have procedures to promote ethical financial management practices.**

It is critical that districts be able to continue day-to-day financial operations. Even small 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 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 document the intent of those policies;

## Cost Control Systems

- Protect the institutional knowledge of an organization, so that as experienced employees leave, new employees will benefit from the experience of prior employees;
- 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 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.

The Bradford County School District can improve its operations and be considered to be using this best practice by addressing three issues. First, it has not established written procedures manuals for its critical financial and accounting processes.

### Action Plan 11-1

**We recommend that the district establish comprehensive procedures manuals that address all critical financial and accounting processes.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	Develop procedures manuals for critical financial and accounting processes.
	Step 2.	Standardize and index these manuals into comprehensive procedures manuals.
	Step 3.	Develop a methodology for revisions and updates to the manuals.
Who Is Responsible	Finance Director	
Time Frame	December 2004	

The second issue is that, although a strong emphasis is placed on professional and ethical conduct of district business, the district does not have a formal ethics policy that applies to all personnel.

### Action Plan 11-2

**We recommend that the district develop a formal 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 a formal 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	The Board and Superintendent	
Time Frame	June 2004	

The third issue is that the district has not developed procedures for the confidential reporting of suspected improprieties.

**Action Plan 11-3**

<b>We recommend that the district develop a process for employees to report suspected improprieties without fear of reprisal.</b>	
Action Needed	<p>Step 1. Develop a policy for the confidential reporting of suspected improprieties and present the policy to the board for approval.</p> <p>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.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Finance Director
Time Frame	June 2004

**Best Practice 3: Using**

**The district has adequate financial information systems that provide useful, timely, and accurate information, but could improve its monthly financial reports to the board by providing information relating to the district’s overall financial condition and its progress in meeting the board’s strategic goals and priorities.**

Florida school districts are subject to significant federal, state, and local (board) oversight of their financial activities. Also, given the limited financial resources provided to 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 Bradford 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 and detail balance 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 develops financial report products to meet user needs. The district’s financial services staff are satisfied with the system’s reporting package and believe that its ease of use permits the timely completion of the annual financial report well before the required due date.

Although the district is using this best practice, there are two areas in which the district could improve its financial information systems. The first area relates to the information presented to the board with the monthly financial statements. The monthly financial statements show budgeted and actual revenues and expenditures from the district’s accounting system, and budgeted ending fund balances; however, these statements provide little or no information relating to the district’s overall financial condition or its progress in meeting the board’s strategic goals and priorities.

**We recommend that the district improve its monthly financial reports to the board by providing information relating to the district’s overall financial condition and its progress in meeting the board’s strategic goals and priorities.**

The second area relates to the direct deposit of payroll checks. Currently, only 43% of the district’s employees authorize the direct deposit of their pay. The district could achieve greater payroll processing and accounting efficiencies with 100% 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

by using direct deposit. Although the district may not derive significant cost savings from using direct deposit, the increased control over payroll processing would add greater efficiencies to the overall process. The efficiencies gained will allow the district to reallocate resources to other district priorities.

**We recommend that the district try to achieve 100% employee participation in the payroll direct deposit program.**

### **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 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 Bradford County School District assigns payment monitoring for specific high cost and complex contracts to the director of operations or department heads. These individuals review all bills and invoices related to the 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 finance director 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 finance staff who is 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 noted.

## **INTERNAL CONTROLS**

### **Best Practice 5: Using**

**The district has established adequate internal controls.**

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 Bradford 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 indicated 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, 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. Districts demonstrate effective financial management when they proactively respond to internal control weaknesses identified in external audits and other monitoring reviews.

We reviewed the Bradford 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 indicated that district staff took appropriate steps to promptly correct internal control weaknesses reported for critical asset categories and significant transaction processes.

## Best Practice 7: Using

### **The district produces an annual budget that is tied to short-term (annual) priorities and provides useful and understandable information to users, but could enhance its budgetary process by linking the budget to long-term strategic goals and 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 Bradford County School District has produced an annual budget that was developed and adopted pursuant to applicable state laws and rules. District staff uses appropriate revenue-estimating practices when developing estimated budget sources for appropriation, including comparisons to prior years and consideration of projected student enrollments. The district has also established a budget planning process and timeline that is clearly communicated to appropriate district staff, and includes the input of school principals and school advisory council members. As part of the budget process, the respective chairman of each school advisory council approves the school budget.

Although the district is using this best practice, there is one area in which the district could improve its budgetary process. The district does not have a formal strategic plan which identifies its long-term strategic goals and objectives. Action Plan 11-4 includes the steps necessary for the district to implement such a strategic plan. After the district develops its strategic plan, it should enhance its budgetary process by linking the budget to long-term strategic goals and objectives.

**We recommend that the district enhance its budgetary process by linking the budget to long-term strategic goals and objectives.**

### Best Practice 8: Not Using

**The district has not developed a strategic plan to provide management with measurable goals and 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 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.

The Bradford County School District is not using this best practice because it has not established a strategic plan. The board did hold a strategic planning workshop during March 2003 to discuss the process for developing the strategic plan and related goals and objectives.

#### Action Plan 11-4

**We recommend that the district develop a strategic plan that will provide management with measurable goals and objectives.**

Action Needed	Step 1. Establish a strategic planning team to be responsible for developing the strategic plan. Step 2. Hold public hearings and workshops to solicit input on the strategic plan from the community, schools, district and school staff, and the board. Step 3. Based on the input received, develop a draft strategic plan, including measurable goals and objectives and specific strategies, responsibility assignments, and timelines for the superintendent and district administrative staff. Step 4. The superintendent and staff should review the draft and present it to the board for comment. Step 5. Incorporate the board's comments into a final draft. Step 6. The superintendent should present the final draft to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	The Board and Superintendent
Time Frame	December 2004

## 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, but could improve its processes to ensure that audit findings are timely resolved.**

Sections 11.45(2)(d), and 218.39, *Florida Statutes*, require school districts to annually obtain a financial audit. 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.

The Bradford 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 district has made reasonable efforts to resolve findings noted in the annual audit reports.

Although the district is using this best practice, there is one area in which the district could use its external audit to improve its operations. The district has historically taken steps to promptly correct internal

control weaknesses reported for critical asset categories and significant transaction processes; however, other audit findings that are not critical to day-to-day operations and more difficult to correct, such as those related to strategic planning, procedures manuals, capital asset records, property inventories, and facilities inspections, have been noted in several previous audit reports and not timely resolved. The district could improve its operations by taking steps to timely resolve all audit findings.

**We recommend that the district improve its processes to ensure that all audit findings are timely resolved.**

## **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 Bradford 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:

- Safeguarding of assets;
- The reliability of financial reporting;
- The effectiveness and efficiency of operations; and
- 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 could also address other risks identified in an annual risk assessment. 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 for district staff to conduct its own 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**

<b>We recommend that the district conduct annual risk assessments.</b>	
Action Needed	<p>Step 1. Conduct annual risk assessment using district staff.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Step 3. Review the results of the risk assessment, prioritize high-risk activities, and assign responsibility for addressing and resolving prioritized risks.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Finance Director
Time Frame	August 2004—the start of the 2004-05 school year

**Best Practice 11: Using**

**The district ensures that audits of internal funds and its discretely presented component unit (foundation) are performed timely.**

Pursuant to Florida law, school districts may have related organizations such as foundations and charter schools. Due to the nature of these organizations, their financial activity generally should be included with that of the school district. However, this law requires that these organizations provide for their annual financial audits. Similarly, the financial transactions of individual school activities and organizations are accounted for in the school internal accounts (funds). The law requires that the school districts provide for the annual audits of the school internal funds. Districts frequently provide little if any oversight of these organizations other than to monitor their activity. Districts frequently monitor these organizations’ activity by reviewing the annual audit reports. Accordingly, it is important that the districts receive timely audits of these organizations and perform appropriate review of the reports.

The Bradford County School District has one foundation, the Bradford County Education Foundation, Inc. State law provisions require that the foundation provide for its own annual financial audits. Although the foundation is responsible for its own audit, the district monitors the progress of the audit to ensure its timely completion for use in preparing the district’s annual financial report.

State law provisions require that the district provide for the audit of the district’s school internal accounts. The district has a contract in place for auditing the internal accounts after the June 30 fiscal year-end, and having an audit report prepared by August 25 for use in preparing the district’s annual financial report.

Each fiscal year, audits of the foundation and the school internal accounts are conducted, as required by law, and the district receives and maintains copies of the 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 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 Bradford County School District uses three bank accounts and an investment account in its cash management activities. The district currently uses 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.

The district's policy manual includes policies for cash and investment activities. The district receives the majority of its cash from the state by direct wire transfers to the district's investment account, or from the local tax collector by checks which are promptly deposited to a local bank account. The Finance Department has sufficient personnel to provide segregation of duties for the cash receipt and disbursement functions. The district's reconciliation process is performed by the purchasing officer, who has no access to cash assets.

District finance staff forecast 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 simple conservative investment approach allowing deposits to remain invested and withdrawals to be made as needed without penalty.

## 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 Bradford 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 capital assets. The district's Finance Department is responsible for purchasing tangible personal property and maintaining capital asset control accounts. The Operations Department is responsible for maintaining capital asset subsidiary records. School principals and department managers have custodial responsibilities for property charged to and under their area of responsibility.

Although the district is using this best practice, there are three areas in which procedures over capital assets could be improved. First, subsidiary records for the buildings and fixed equipment and improvements other than buildings capital assets categories should be established and maintained. The district reports balances for these categories that are based on an accumulation of capitalized expenditures; however, detailed cost information has not been maintained by location for buildings and fixed equipment and improvements other than buildings.

**We recommend that the district establish and maintain detailed subsidiary records for buildings and fixed equipment and improvements other than buildings.**

The second area relates to the district's accountability procedures for tangible personal property. The district maintains detailed subsidiary records for its tangible personal property; however, reconciliations of the subsidiary records to the respective capital assets control accounts were not prepared. Such a procedure would provide assurance that the balances reported in the control accounts are accurate and complete.

**We recommend that the district perform periodic reconciliations of capital assets subsidiary records to the respective control accounts.**

The third area relates to the adequacy of the district's procedures over tangible personal property inventories and disposals. The district did not complete physical inventories of tangible personal property for the 2001-02 fiscal year for 10 of the district's 23 cost centers with tangible personal property of approximately \$4.5 million. Also, the district did not maintain required information related to the disposal of tangible personal property items for updating of the individual property records. Complete annual physical inventories and adequate records of property disposals are necessary to ensure the accuracy of tangible personal property records and the propriety of tangible personal property disposals.

**We recommend that the district provide for complete annual physical inventories of all tangible personal property, appropriate follow-up for items not located, and updating of the individual property records for dispositions.**

## **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.

Although the Bradford County School District does not have a formal board-established strategic plan, it has prepared capital project budgets which are consistent with district objectives. The district prepares a five-year facilities work program addressing long-range goals that is used in developing annual capital projects budgets. The five-year facilities work program is updated annually and, pursuant to state law, the district's annual capital project budget is developed concurrently with and is based upon the first year of

the five-year facilities work program. 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 Bradford County School District does not enter into long-term financing arrangements on a regular or frequent basis. The district does have some bonded debt; however, this debt is managed through the State Board of Education and the district's responsibility is limited to properly recording the transactions in its financial records. As such, detailed procedures are not required. When needed, the district contracts with an experienced financial advisor in evaluating the best financing alternatives given the district's specific needs, and uses the financial advisor or, when appropriate, the State Board of Education to assist in the issuance of debt instruments. The district 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 Bradford County School District does not anticipate additional debt financing for capital asset acquisition at the present time. 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.

## 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 district operations. Rising costs of property, liability, and other insurance coverage has forced districts to carefully evaluate the risks they are insuring and to identify ways to contain costs. Effective risk management involves:

## *Cost Control Systems*

- 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.<sup>1</sup>

The Bradford County School District participates in a risk management consortium, which performs most of the duties set forth above. The district's risk manager, the director of operations, oversees the process of providing the risk management consortium with all pertinent information and is responsible for 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 legal requirements, the Bradford 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 Bradford County School District's risk management function has established processes for evaluating insurance coverages. Annually, with the assistance of 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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<sup>1</sup> 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 amount and periodically considered the benefits of establishing a purchase card program.**

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 Bradford County School District consolidates and bids recurring purchases when feasible. When practical, the district 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 \$15,000 shall be made on the basis of competitive sealed bids.

Although the district is using this best practice, there are two areas in which the district could potentially improve its purchasing processes. The first area involves the district's competitive bid threshold. Formal competitive bid processes are generally time and resource consuming. The district's current competitive bid threshold is \$15,000, which is lower than the statutorily established amount (currently \$25,000).

**We recommend that the district raise its \$15,000 threshold for competitive bids to the statutorily established amount (currently \$25,000).**

The second area relates to the fact that the district has not established a purchasing card program. The district's small size may limit potential cost savings resulting from establishing a purchasing card program; however, an effective purchasing card program could result in time and resource efficiencies.

**We recommend that the district periodically review its purchasing practices and consider the benefits of establishing a purchase card program. These changes could possibly allow the district to achieve resource efficiencies that could be reallocated to other essential district needs.**

## 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 inventory assets are appropriately controlled, safeguarded, and accounted for.

The Bradford County School District has established a policy for inventory management. The district maintains limited inventories for school, transportation, maintenance, and food service operations. 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: Using**

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

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. 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 Bradford County School District informally compares the costs of its warehousing operation located in Starke with inventory supply vendors to identify potential enhancements to its inventory operations. Transportation and maintenance inventories are maintained to facilitate timely repairs and maintenance. School and food service inventories are maintained for all schools in a central warehouse. The district has nine schools, only three of which are located outside of Starke, and all within 20 miles of the warehouse. Because of the close proximity, the district considers central warehousing to be the most practical and cost-effective method for providing supplies and materials to the various schools to eliminate duplication of effort. The district's warehousing operation requires only a full-time delivery person and a part-time fiscal assistant for maintaining inventory records. The district purchases in bulk to the extent practical to achieve cost savings. Additionally, schools do not have storage facilities for accommodating large quantities of inventory, particularly when controlled climate is required, and inventory safeguarding is enhanced when maintained centrally. The district meets this best practice when these factors are considered.

# A

## Appendix A

### 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.	

# B

## Action Plan

### *Management Structures*

#### Action Plan 2-1

**We recommend that the district revise its board policies to reflect current state statutes.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	Assign sections of the NEFEC prototype policies to appropriate district administrators.
	Step 2.	Tailor prototype policies to district practices, as needed.
	Step 3.	School board attorney reviews and approves the revised prototype policies.
	Step 4.	Distribute revised policies to board members for review.
	Step 5.	Schedule and hold a public workshop to discuss the revised policies.
	Step 6.	Board approves the revised policies at the next board meeting after the workshop.

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Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendent, district-level administrators, school board attorney, school board.
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Time Frame	July 2003
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#### Action Plan 2-2

**We recommend that the district develop written procedures for key operational areas.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	District-level administrators determine the district's highest risk areas in consultation with the school board attorney,
	Step 2.	District-level administrators develop written procedures for the identified risk areas within the purview of their department.
	Step 3.	The school board attorney reviews and approves the procedures.
	Step 4.	The district holds a public workshop to discuss the proposed procedures.
	Step 5.	Board members approve the procedures at the next board meeting.

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Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendent, district administrators, school board attorney, school board.
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Time Frame	August 2003
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**Action Plan 2-3**

<b>We recommend that the district develop a strategic plan.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Determine whether a consultant will be used to facilitate the development of the strategic plan and who this consultant will be.
	Step 2.	Identify funds to pay for the consultant.
	Step 3.	Identify which district personnel will be involved in plan development.
	Step 4.	Identify and involve district stakeholders in plan development.
	Step 5.	Identify key tasks and deadlines.
	Step 6.	Present draft plan to district stakeholders in a public workshop.
	Step 7.	Prepare and disseminate final plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendents, board members.	
Time Frame	August 2003.	

## *Performance Accountability Systems*

**Action Plan 3-1**

**In conjunction with its development of a strategic plan, we recommend that the district develop a program-level accountability system to assess and improve the performance and cost of its programs and support services.**

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 A.
	Step 2.	For each measure, identify the data needed and determine the information below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Who will collect performance data and how often?</li> <li>▪ What is the source of the data (e.g., state or district reports)?</li> <li>▪ In what format is the data needed?</li> <li>▪ How often should the data be collected?</li> <li>▪ Who (program staff, department head, assistant superintendent, superintendent, school board) will the data be reported to and how often?</li> <li>▪ How should the data be used?</li> </ul>
	Step 3.	Identify and prioritize data needs by classifying data into the following two categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ data currently available, accessible, and in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives and</li> <li>▪ data currently either not available, accessible or in the format needed to determine progress toward program goals and objectives.</li> </ul>
	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;
- 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. 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	The board, the superintendent, principals, directors, and coordinators
Time Frame	August 2003

# *Educational Service Delivery*

## **Action Plan 4-1**

**We recommend that the district adopt a more formal, systematic approach to data analysis that addresses a variety of academic and nonacademic indicators and that addresses the needs of student subgroups by disaggregating data.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum gathers input from other district-level and school-level staff and develops a plan for routinely analyzing a variety of academic and nonacademic indicators of student success.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Curriculum formally identifies the persons responsible for collecting and analyzing each type of data and establishes timeframes for reporting data.</p> <p>Step 3. The district provides additional training in data analysis to all persons responsible and consults with Department of Education staff for technical assistance, if needed.</p> <p>Step 4. Designated persons conduct data analysis according to the established timeframes, using techniques such as disaggregation by student subgroup and comparison with peer districts.</p> <p>Step 5. The director of Curriculum reviews data and works with directors and principals to develop strategies for addressing any problems revealed through the data analysis, consulting with Department of Education staff for technical assistance, if needed.</p> <p>Step 6. Results of data analyses are reported annually to the school board.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum
Time Frame	Develop a plan and establish timeframes by September 2003.

## **Action Plan 4-2**

**We recommend that the district develop a system to ensure the timely evaluation and placement of ESE students.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Exceptional Student Education builds a system to track the date of referral, the date of parent consent, the date of evaluation, the date of placement, and the number of days of student attendance during each of these timeframes.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Exceptional Student Education periodically uses this system to determine the percentage of students who are evaluated within 60 days of student attendance from the date of parent consent.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of Exceptional Student Education examines and addresses any systemic problems contributing to delays in the evaluation process and reports progress on this issue to the school board at least annually.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Exceptional Student Education
Time Frame	Establish tracking system by October 2003.

**Action Plan 4-3**

**We recommend that the district develop strategies to ensure that the procedures used to identify students for ESE programs do not contribute to the observed disproportionality.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Exceptional Student Education consults with Department of Education staff to identify possible causes for disproportionality.
	Step 2.	The director of Exceptional Student Education develops strategies for addressing the causes of disproportionality as well as a timeframe for implementation of those strategies.
	Step 3.	The district provides and/or coordinates training for regular teachers in identifying students with disabilities.
	Step 4.	The district continues to implement Plan B for identifying students who are gifted and periodically evaluates the plan's effectiveness.
	Step 5.	The director of Exceptional Student Education reports progress on this goal to the school board once per year.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum	
Time Frame	Develop strategies and timeframe by beginning of 2003-04 school year.	

**Action Plan 4-4**

**We recommend that the district ensure that all students are being served in the least restrictive environment and that all district staff understand the significance of this requirement.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum ensure that all teachers (regular and ESE) and principals have received training on ESE accommodations by tracking teacher attendance and sending reminders to teachers. Training can be provided by the district or coordinated through NEFEC and ISRD.
	Step 2.	The director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum review the services provided at the Renaissance Center to determine whether students should continue to be served there or in a regular public school setting.
	Step 3.	The director of Exceptional Student Education and director of Curriculum review data reported by school principals twice annually to ensure that all students are being served in the least restrictive environment.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Exceptional Student Education, director of Curriculum, and principals	
Time Frame	Conduct initial review of data by September 2003; continue reviewing data at least annually; aim for 90% of teachers to receive training by May 2004.	

**Action Plan 4-5**

**We recommend that the district develop procedures to ensure the timely identification, evaluation, placement, and removal of students into and out of the ESOL program and to assess the needs of the ESOL population.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of federal programs works with ESOL teachers and school principals to determine the causes of delays in the identification, evaluation, placement, and removal of students into and out of the ESOL program.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of federal programs works with Department of Education staff to identify strategies for improving timeliness and establishes timeframes for implementation of those strategies.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of federal programs reports to the school board annually on the timeliness of identification, evaluation, placement, and removal of students.</p> <p>Step 4. The director of federal programs works with Department of Education staff to determine whether the current ESOL program meets the needs of the district's ESOL population as a whole, with a goal of determining how the program could be improved.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of federal programs
Time Frame	Report to school board at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year; determine causes of delays by October 2003; develop strategies by December 2003.

**Action Plan 4-6**

**We recommend that the district ensure that all teachers of ESOL students have completed the legally required training as specified by the Department of Education.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of federal programs identifies all teachers with ESOL students in their classes at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of federal programs reviews the personnel files of identified teachers to determine their training needs.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of federal programs works with NEFEC, Department of Education staff, University of Florida, and other relevant parties to ensure that teachers have adequate opportunities to receive ESOL training.</p> <p>Step 4. At the mid-point of the school year, the director of federal programs sends reminder notices to teachers who have not yet received the required training.</p> <p>Step 5. At the end of the school year, the director of federal programs reports progress on this action plan to the school board.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of federal programs
Time Frame	Identify teachers by September 2003; send reminder notices in January 2004; report to school board in May 2004; continue this cycle in each subsequent school year.

**Action Plan 4-7****We recommend that the district clarify the purpose and mission of the Renaissance Center.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum works with the School Advisory Council of the Renaissance Center in order to develop a formal mission statement, a policy and procedures manual, and to complete a school improvement plan with measurable goals and objectives. The director of Curriculum will also work with school-based administrators and teachers to ensure that they understand the purpose of the Renaissance Center.</p> <p>Step 2. Submit school improvement plan for school board approval.</p> <p>Step 3. The ESE director and lead teacher of the Renaissance Center work together to design clearly defined criteria for entry to ensure that students are being served in the most appropriate environment. They will also work together to design clear exit strategies.</p> <p>Step 4. The ESE director and lead teacher of the Renaissance Center work together to provide center teachers with training and support in needed areas such as ESE, behavior management, and social skills. They will also provide training and guidance to teachers to help provide curriculum that corresponds with student needs.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum, Renaissance Center lead teacher, ESE director, school advisory council
Time Frame	Clarify purpose and develop criteria by December 2003; training by February 2004 and ongoing thereafter.

**Action Plan 4-8****We recommend that the district develop a system to improve the quality of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) by providing training, feedback, and monitoring to schools.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum arranges district-level training with the Department of Education Office of School Improvement. The district offers this training at the beginning of the school year at a time and place convenient to most SAC members and ensures that all SAC members receive notification of the training well in advance.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Curriculum provides ongoing support and technical assistance to SACs as they develop their SIPs.</p> <p>Step 3. The director of Curriculum, with guidance from the Office of School Improvement, establishes a method for systematically reviewing each school's SIP for completeness and the quality of objectives, data analysis, strategies for improvement, and proposed methods of evaluation. The director of Curriculum will provide formal written feedback to each school.</p> <p>Step 4. After the director of Curriculum provides this feedback and revisions are made, each school advisory council (SAC) will briefly present the SIP goals and objectives to the school board for approval.</p> <p>Step 5. The SACs will return to the school board to report on progress made on their SIP objectives. The SAC will compare their goals and objectives to their actual results to determine whether the school made adequate progress.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum, school advisory councils
Time Frame	Establish training, feedback, and monitoring system by beginning of 2003-04 school year.

**Action Plan 4-9**

<b>We recommend that the district develop written policies and procedures for the purchasing, selection, maintenance, and disposal of instructional materials.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Curriculum forms a committee of district directors, school principals, and teachers to develop policies and procedures regarding instructional materials.
	Step 2.	The director of Curriculum presents policies and procedures to the school board for approval, if necessary.
	Step 3.	The director of Curriculum issues the policies and procedures and distributes memos to all district and school staff to notify them of any subsequent changes in the policies and procedures.
	Step 4.	School principals review the policies and procedures at faculty meetings to ensure that all teachers are aware of the new policies.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum	
Time Frame	Begin meeting with committee in August 2003; develop written policies by January 2004.	

**Action Plan 4-10**

<b>We recommend that the district improve efforts to collect fees assessed for lost and damaged textbooks by raising the collection rate to 75% over the next five years.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Curriculum works with the director of Finance to develop guidelines regarding the collection of fees for lost and damaged textbooks.
	Step 2.	Each school keeps accurate records of the number of textbooks lost by each student, the fees assessed for each textbook, and the amount collected.
	Step 3.	Schools report their fees assessed and fees collected twice annually to the director of Finance.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum and director of Finance	
Time Frame	Schools issue reports to the school district in January 2004 and June 2004.	

**Action Plan 4-11**

<b>We recommend that the district improve library and media services through better coordination, formal solicitation of feedback, and resource development.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of Curriculum appoints a committee composed of all school media specialists, and the committee designates one member as the chair.
	Step 2.	The committee meets once per month to share information, discuss strategies to address priority issues, and identify issues affecting library/ media services in the district.
	Step 3.	The district considers ensuring that each school has a library that remains open during school hours.
	Step 4.	The district ensures that all schools have a media specialist for at least one day per week by assigning certain media specialists to more than one school. The district could staff additional hours at the library with volunteers, PTA and SAC members.
	Step 5.	The committee develops and annually administers a survey instrument for obtaining feedback from teachers, students, and parents.
	Step 6.	The committee develops and annually administers a survey instrument for obtaining feedback from teachers, students, and parents.
	Step 7.	The committee analyzes the survey results annually, presents them to the school board, and uses the information to improve library/ media services.
	Step 8.	The committee works together to identify and pursue funding opportunities.
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum and committee chair	
Time Frame	Committee begins meeting in September 2003; survey administered by December 2003; report to school board in February 2004 and annually thereafter.	

**Action Plan 4-12**

**We recommend that the district provide greater support for instructional technology through training, technical assistance, and facilitating an exchange of information among schools.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The director of Curriculum works with the Technology Committee to develop a list of instructional courseware to be shared with teachers and updated at least twice per year.</p> <p>Step 2. The director of Curriculum facilitates training in the use of instructional technology in the classroom with an emphasis on integrating technology into the curriculum and ensures that teachers are informed of training opportunities (see also Action Plan 5-2).</p> <p>Step 3. The Technology Committee formally solicits feedback from principals, teachers, parents, and students at least once per year on student and teacher usage of technology in the schools (see also Action Plan 5-3).</p> <p>Step 4. The Technology Committee chair reports at least twice annually to the school board on whether teacher and student usage of technology is increasing over time.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum and Technology Committee chair
Time Frame	Report to the school board on the above initiatives in June 2004, and twice annually in December and June thereafter.

**Action Plan 4-13**

**We recommend that the district improve the efficiency and effectiveness of student support services by developing a comprehensive student support services plan and by holding staff more accountable for their job performance.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1. The district seeks technical assistance from Department of Education staff, Student Support Services staff, and/or other districts on developing a needs assessment and comprehensive student support services plan.</p> <p>Step 2. The deputy superintendent works with the director of Curriculum and the director of Exceptional Student Education to conduct an assessment of student needs to be administered annually in the school district.</p> <p>Step 3. In conjunction with Department of Education staff, the district develops a comprehensive student support services plan based on the results of the needs assessment. The plan will detail the responsibilities of all relevant district and school staff, list performance standards for each of the support service areas, and establish a system for holding staff accountable.</p> <p>Step 4. Persons responsible for each student support service area report to the deputy superintendent monthly on progress made towards the goals established in the comprehensive plan.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Deputy superintendent
Time Frame	Develop comprehensive plan by October 2003; begin monthly reports in November 2003.

# ***Administrative and Instructional Technology***

## **Action Plan 5-1**

**We recommend the district improve the technology plan by encouraging broader stakeholder input and more commitment of technology committee members; and refining, tracking, and evaluating the implementation of goals.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	To obtain broader stakeholder input, the technology committee should invite parents and an identified liaison of each school's advisory council to its meetings. In addition, the committee should recruit members that are more available to participate, since several meetings had to be cancelled due to poor attendance. The technology committee should use NEFEC's services for steps 2 through 5.
	Step 2.	The technology committee should survey and evaluate district and school-level technology needs on an annual basis. NEFEC could work with this committee to develop an instrument to meet this purpose.
	Step 3.	The technology committee should develop feasible, clearly defined and measurable, outcome-based objectives for the technology plan that link technology initiatives to the district budget, identifying the funding commitment required for each initiative.
	Step 4.	The technology committee should include specific, time-bound steps necessary to attain the goals in the plan. For example, the survey in step 2 should be conducted and evaluated prior to the academic year.
	Step 5.	At least annually, the technology committee should meet to evaluate goal achievement and modify or abandon failed strategies and update the plan accordingly. The technology committee should review and approve the plan, ascertaining that updates are current.
	Step 6.	A member of the technology committee should present the revised plan to the school board annually for approval, summarizing the progress of the previous year's efforts.
	Step 7.	The district should use the board-approved technology plan to prioritize and allocate technology funding decisions.
Who Is Responsible	District technology committee, NEFEC, and the district school board	
Time Frame	Prior to the 2004-05 school year	

**Action Plan 5-2**

**We recommend that the district improve the professional development training of its employees by conducting needs assessments and expanding technology training opportunities; tracking and evaluating training.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The technology committee should adopt standards developed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) for technology professional development of teachers.</p> <p>Step 2: The technology committee or school-based administrators should survey and identify administrators' and teachers' skills in technology and the extent to which teachers integrate technology in the classroom. Existing assessment tools such as the School Technology and Readiness (STaR) Chart, the Florida Learning Alliance Survey, and DOE's Technology Resources Survey could be employed in this effort.</p> <p>Step 3: Once the district identifies training needs through surveys, the technology committee should develop a schedule of expanded and coordinated training through NEFEC or designated local mentors. Expanded and coordinated training opportunities should also include more locally held sessions with NEFEC to alleviate traveling for teachers. The technology committee should periodically invite a representative from NEFEC to its meetings to obtain and provide feedback concerning technology issues. Incentives such as extra pay from grants or extra time off from school duties may encourage better attendance.</p> <p>Step 4: Principals should use survey results to allocate training opportunities to teachers and consider offering training sessions during teacher planning and early release days.</p> <p>Step 5: To improve communication about training opportunities, the technology committee should consider assigning one of its members the responsibility of disseminating training information. This responsibility could be rotated among members to avoid burdening one person. To improve disseminating this information at the school level, each school's technology contact or other designated person should be responsible for forwarding this information to all teachers.</p> <p>Step 6: The technology committee should explore using existing district tracking systems used for in-service training hours or Florida Learning Alliance's free tracking system on the web, at <a href="http://www.my-points.org">www.my-points.org</a> to track training.</p> <p>Step 7: The technology committee and principals should assess the effectiveness of training to guide in the decision to pursue only training that produces desired results or to modify the training schedule. The district could pursue the option to use the STaR chart in evaluating training.</p> <p>Step 8: Principals should use teacher technology skills and use of technology in the classroom as criteria in the evaluation process.</p>
Who Is Responsible	MIS Director, district technology committee, principals and the district school board
Time Frame	Prior to the 2004-05 school year.

## ***Personnel Systems and Benefits***

### **Action Plan 6-1**

**We recommend that the district ensure that exit interviews (written or face-to-face) and climate surveys are done to assess the level of job satisfaction in the district.**

Action Needed	Step 1: Ensure that separating employees complete the Department of Education's exit interview form beginning with the 2003-04 school year.
	Step 2: Compile and review this information on a quarterly basis to identify specific reasons for turnover that are within the control of the district.
	Step 3: Present the findings to the board annually.
	Step 4: Develop a climate survey for all levels of employees to gauge morale and worker satisfaction at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
	Step 5: Conduct the survey during the school year; compile and analyze results.
	Step 6: Present survey findings to the board annually.
	Step 7: Compare the results from year to year to detect trends in the work environment of the district.

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Who Is Responsible	Deputy Superintendent
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Time Frame	June 2004
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### **Action Plan 6-2**

**We recommend the district assess the training needs of district employees, develop and implement a standard evaluation form for district training courses, and institute a mentoring program for new teachers.**

Step 1:	Develop a training needs assessment instrument at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
Step 2:	Using this instrument, assess the training needs of district employees at the beginning of each school year.
Step 3:	Develop and implement a standard evaluation form to assess district training activities at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
Step 4:	Compile and analyze this information after each internal or external training program.
Step 5:	Identify experienced teachers who could serve as mentors at the beginning of the 2003-04 school year.
Step 6:	Institute a mentoring program for new employees by the end of the 2003-04 school year.

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Who Is Responsible	Director of Curriculum
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Time Frame	June 2004
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**Action Plan 6-3**

**We recommend that the district update and improve its performance appraisal system.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Update performance appraisal instruments to reflect the provisions of Ch. 2002-387, <i>Laws of Florida</i>, by basing the evaluations primarily on student performance.</p> <p>Step 2: After revisions are made to the performance appraisal system, develop a district wide training program to ensure that all employees responsible for evaluations consistently apply evaluation criteria and can identify adverse performance.</p> <p>Step 3: Develop a district wide orientation program for administrators and instructional employees to inform them of the new performance appraisal system and procedures.</p> <p>Step 4: Implement the new performance appraisal system during the 2003-04 school year.</p> <p>Step 5: Use employee appraisals to better identify and address training needs in areas such as technology and performance deficiencies.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Deputy Superintendent and Curriculum Director
Time Frame	June 2004

# Facilities Construction

## Action Plan 7-1

<b>We recommend that the district establish a facilities planning committee. The committee will be responsible for the planning and organization of any and all new construction in the district.</b>	
Actions Needed	<p>Step 1: Establish a facilities planning committee that will meet every month (or as needed).</p> <p>Step 2: Develop written procedures to be followed by the committee when reviewing facilities construction projects and plans for future facilities needs to ensure all legal requirements are being met.</p> <p>Step 3: Require the facilities planning committee to ensure FISH data is updated annually and whenever changes to facilities occur.</p> <p>Step 4: Require the facilities planning committee to prepare written evaluation documents of proposed facility construction projects addressing site, educational specifications, design, cost, statutory requirements and availability of funds.</p> <p>Step 5: The committee should forward the written evaluation of project and all related documents (including construction plans) to the school board.</p> <p>Step 6: Require facilities planning committee to report results of annual facilities assessments to the district staff and school board at the end of each assessment period or fiscal year. The assessments should include such information as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ structural integrity,</li> <li>▪ mechanical systems,</li> <li>▪ electrical systems,</li> <li>▪ plumbing and sewer systems,</li> <li>▪ fire, safety, health and sanitation systems,</li> <li>▪ educational environment,</li> <li>▪ educational suitability,</li> <li>▪ site size, layout, space and adaptability,</li> <li>▪ operations and maintenance costs,</li> <li>▪ technological currency,</li> <li>▪ capacity utilization, and</li> <li>▪ users' satisfaction.</li> </ul> <p>Step 7: The committee should use the results of this survey to project the district's five-year needs relating to, renovation, remodeling, and new construction including ancillary space, and long-term maintenance concerns.</p> <p>Step 8: Apply the facilities assessment tool and use the information to adjust the capital outlay and five-year work plans.</p> <p>Step 9: Consider these needs in relation to projected capital outlay revenues and inflationary factors.</p> <p>Step 10: Develop linkages to the district's long-term strategic plan.</p> <p>Step 11: Present the capital outlay and five-year plans to the superintendent and publish and disseminate this information to the public.</p> <p>Step 12: The superintendent can make changes deemed necessary and annually report long-term anticipated capital outlay needs to the board.</p>
Who is Responsible	The committee will involve, but not be limited to, the facilities and maintenance supervisor, the deputy superintendent, the district architect, at least one principal and at least one teacher.
Time Frame	By January 1, 2004
Fiscal Impact	This can be implemented with existing resources.

**Action Plan 7-2**

**We recommend that the district develop a written process that requires the facilities planning committee to review all projects with a projected budget over \$400,000 and that consider the possibility of a bidding process for architectural services.**

Actions Needed	Step 1:	The facilities and maintenance supervisor will prepare a project description and present it to the other members of the facilities planning committee.
	Step 2:	The committee will evaluate the description and make determinations as to whether the project needs to be increased in budget or scope to meet educational specifications.
	Step 3:	If the committee determines that the project needs to be larger or that the budget for the project may increase the committee will recommend to the board, in writing, that the project be competitively bid for architectural services.
	Step 4:	The committee will forward this decision and any related evaluation documents to the school board for review and formal adoption.
	Step 5:	The school board will distribute approved decision to responsible employees and construction project members.
Who is Responsible	Facilities and maintenance supervisor and facilities planning committee	
Time Frame	January 1, 2004	
Fiscal Impact	This can be implemented with existing resources.	

***Facilities Maintenance*****Action Plan 8-1**

**The maintenance department and custodial program should annually survey principals and teachers regarding their satisfaction with maintenance and custodial work and use this information to target areas needing improvement.**

Action Needed	Step 1:	The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should develop survey instruments to assess customer satisfaction with maintenance and custodial work.
	Step 2:	Annually, the maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should survey principals, teachers and staff about their current level of satisfaction with maintenance and custodial work to establish a baseline for future measurement.
	Step 3:	The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should subsequently survey principals and a sample of teachers on an annual basis and report survey results to district and school personnel.
	Step 4:	Survey results should be used to target areas needing improvement and make recommendations to the superintendent and school board about any need for districtwide change.
Who Is Responsible	Maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor	
Time Frame	July 2004	

**Action Plan 8-2**

**The maintenance supervisor should continue his efforts to revise existing and develop additional written procedures. Newly defined procedures, specifically in the area of employee performance evaluation, should be implemented to improve the efficiency of the maintenance operation. The custodial supervisor should be required to develop a manual which outlines the district's custodial program.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should review existing documentation and identify specific policies and procedures that should be included in department and program manuals. This should include the department's mission, procedures for key maintenance and custodial activities, and employee evaluation system. This manual should incorporate existing policies and procedures and the existing safety guidelines.</p> <p>Step 2: Each proposed policy or procedure should be reviewed with staff and stakeholders and revised as appropriate.</p> <p>Step 3: Policies which require the approval of the board should be referred.</p> <p>Step 4: Policies should be provided to staff and be readily available.</p> <p>Step 5: Maintenance and custodial staff should be trained on new policies and operating procedures.</p> <p>Step 6: Implementation dates should be established and communicated.</p> <p>Step 7: Policies and procedures should be reviewed annually to determine whether they are being followed in a consistent manner and identify needed training, policy changes, or additional procedures that should be included.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor
Time Frame	December 2003

**Action Plan 8-3**

**The maintenance supervisor should conduct assessments of district facilities to identify maintenance needs. The custodial supervisor should evaluate facility cleanliness. Plans should be developed and implemented to improve the condition of district facilities.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The custodial supervisor should inspect and evaluate facilities' cleanliness districtwide. The maintenance supervisor should complete detailed written assessments of facilities districtwide to identify unreported maintenance needs. Experts may be needed for some assessments, such as roof condition.</p> <p>Step 2: The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should solicit input from site-based administrators regarding the condition of their facilities and needed improvements.</p> <p>Step 3: The maintenance supervisor and custodial supervisor should use safety inspections and condition assessments to develop plans to improve the physical condition and cleanliness of district facilities within existing resources.</p> <p>Step 4: Once prioritization plans are developed timelines for accomplishing tasks should be identified.</p> <p>Step 5: Plans should be provided to the board for review and progress should be measured against established timelines.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor, custodial supervisor and school board
Time Frame	Plans should be established by March 2004

**Action Plan 8-4**

**We recommend that the maintenance department develop a written plan of preventive maintenance to prevent premature failure and extend facility life.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The supervisor of maintenance along with staff should identify systems and components to be included in a plan of preventive maintenance. Such components may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ heating and air conditioning;</li> <li>▪ plumbing, electrical and roofing systems; and</li> <li>▪ kitchen equipment.</li> </ul> <p>Step 2: The supervisor of maintenance and maintenance staff should determine the present condition of all components identified for preventative maintenance.</p> <p>Step 3: The supervisor of maintenance and maintenance staff should establish routines and schedules for appropriate levels of maintenance for identified systems.</p> <p>Step 4: Preventative maintenance should be outlined in a written workplan.</p> <p>Step 5: The workplan should be implemented through the work order system or alternative manual system.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Supervisor of maintenance and maintenance staff
Time Frame	July 2004

**Action Plan 8-5**

**The district should develop a comprehensive energy plan and provide incentives to individual schools to reduce their energy usage.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The district should develop a comprehensive energy plan to be adopted by the board.</p> <p>Step 2: The district should identify base levels of current energy consumption, by facility.</p> <p>Step 3: The board should revise the district's budgeting system to include the costs of energy in the appropriate cost center.</p> <p>Step 4: The district should implement a program of energy education to lower energy usage and offer incentives to schools returning a portion of any cost savings to the individual school to be used as that school determines.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor, custodial supervisor
Time Frame	By July 2004

**Action Plan 8-6**

**The district should determine whether there are any options to improve the efficiency of the HVAC system at New Starke Elementary School.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: The district should contact the original building design firm and architect to identify any changes that could be made to the Starke Elementary School HVAC system that may decrease energy usage.</p> <p>Step 2: The district should conduct a life-cycle analysis to determine the long-term benefit of keeping the existing HVAC system or doing a mechanical retrofit with a more cost-efficient system.</p> <p>Step 3: The board should make a determination whether replacing or modifying the system is in the best interest of the district.</p> <p>Step 4: The district should seek other alternative to save energy at the facility within.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Assistant superintendent, maintenance supervisor, custodial supervisor
Time Frame	By July 2004

**Action Plan 8-7**

**The maintenance department should use the work order system as a management tool to increase the performance and cost-effectiveness of the maintenance department. Should the computerized database not be capable of producing needed reports, the district should develop alternative formats.**

Action Needed	Step 1:	The maintenance department should review existing work order system to identify opportunities to increase cost-effectiveness, efficiency and reduce costs.
	Step 2:	The maintenance department should review the type of reports that are a part of the work order system to determine how those pre-existing reports can be used to assist in reviewing maintenance costs and program efficiency.
	Step 3:	The maintenance department should set up a procedure to routinely generate work orders for analysis.
	Step 4:	The maintenance department should meet with staff to identify strategies to increase productivity and reduce costs.
	Step 5:	The maintenance department should use data/operational information to make operational improvements and establish timeframes for routine tasks.
	Step 6:	The maintenance department should discuss expectations with maintenance staff on ways to work more efficiently and effectively.
	Step 7:	The maintenance should routinely report performance and cost-efficiency results to staff.
	Step 8:	The maintenance department should use data to make routine comparisons between actual and budgeted costs.
	Step 9:	The maintenance department should evaluate performance and costs to include potential for cost-saving alternatives for providing services.

Who Is Responsible Maintenance supervisor

Time Frame By July 2004

**Action Plan 8-8**

**The maintenance department should develop a facilities maintenance plan that addresses priority needs of the district.**

Action Needed	Step 1:	The maintenance department should conduct meeting with stakeholders, including parents, district staff and administrators and maintenance staff to identify maintenance concerns.
	Step 2:	The maintenance department should review its work order system, safety and fire inspections, condition assessments and five-year plan to identify all needed maintenance work.
	Step 3:	The maintenance department should identify the funding that would be required to complete outstanding and deferred maintenance work. If adequate funding is not available to meet outstanding needs, the department should work with the board to plan for future funding for outstanding needs.
	Step 4:	The maintenance department should establish priorities and targets for accomplishing identified needs and periodically measure its progress toward meeting those goals and priorities.
	Step 5:	The maintenance department should report back to stakeholders on its efforts and accomplishments in meeting required maintenance needs.
	Step 6:	The maintenance department should refrain from using maintenance staff on non-maintenance projects.

Who Is Responsible Maintenance supervisor

Time Frame By July 2004

## *Transportation*

### Action Plan 9-1 <sup>1</sup>

**We recommend that the district develop an accountability system for transportation functions and operations and report performance to the school board on an annual basis.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	The director of operations along with transportation department staff should establish performance goals and measurable, performance-related key indicators.
	Step 2.	The director of operations should measure its performance by key indicators.
	Step 3.	The director of operations should compare its performance to peers and exemplars using the key indicators.
	Step 4.	The director of operations should establish benchmarks for measuring future performance.
	Step 5.	The director of operations should report its goals and performance to the district administration and the board.
Who is Responsible	Director of operations, transportation department staff, superintendent, and school board.	
Time Frame	June 2004	

<sup>1</sup> This action plan should be implemented in conjunction with Action Plan 3-1 in the Performance Accountability Chapter.

## *Food Service Operations*

### Action Plan 10-1

**We recommend that the food service program develop a long-range strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives to provide direction for the program and an opportunity to assess performance.**

Action Needed	Step 1:	Collect input regarding the development of a strategic plan from key stakeholders, including district management, cafeteria managers, and principals.
	Step 2:	Develop priorities, goals, objectives, and plans of action to maximize food service program efficiency and effectiveness.
	Step 3:	Present to appropriate authorities for final approval.
	Step 4:	Create an annual budget that reflects the strategic plan. Priorities at specific schools should be included in this budget. Prior financial statements from each school should be used as a starting point for the first draft.
	Step 5:	Refine the budget annually and link budget forecasts to annual program goals.
Who Is Responsible	Food service coordinator	
Time Frame	May 2004	

Note: For more detailed information on developing goals and objectives, refer to Action Plan 3-1 in the Performance Accountability chapter.

**Action Plan 10-2**

<b>We recommend that the food service program assume responsibility for all program-related expenses.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Identify all expense categories, which are incurred by the general fund on behalf of food services.
	Step 2:	Determine the appropriate fair share charges to the food service program and bill accordingly.
	Step 3:	Revise the general fund and food service budgets to reflect the actual costs of indirect services. Plan for additional expenses in the food service program budget, beginning with the budget for Fiscal Year 2004-05.
Who is Responsible	Food service coordinator and district finance director	
Time Frame	May 2004	

**Action Plan 10-3**

<b>We recommend that the food service program make better use of its commodity allocations by ordering its full allocation, purchasing only those USDA items that are at lower prices than the contracted prices, and making use of commodity processing.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Identify the USDA items that are at lower prices than the contracted prices and choose from these commodities. The program should select about 120% of the PAL allocation level, since some items may not be available.
	Step 2:	Identify and partner with other districts, such as other members of NEFEC, to make use of commodity processing.
Who is Responsible	Food service coordinator	
Time Frame	Summer 2004	

**Action Plan 10-4**

<b>We recommend that the food service program evaluate its procurement options and consider the use of a procurement co-op, such as the North Florida Regional Buying Group.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Beginning in May 2004, the food service program should send its request for proposals to co-ops, such as the North Florida Regional Buying Group, among other vendors.
	Step 2:	Evaluate all procurement options by comparing the number and type of available items and their unit prices and choose the proposal that best serves the needs of the program.
Who is Responsible	Food service coordinator	
Time Frame	Summer 2004	

**Action Plan 10-5**

**We recommend that the food service program develop a performance measurement system and a mechanism to periodically analyze and report performance.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Develop program performance measures. These measures should include, at a minimum, meals per labor hour, food and labor costs as a percentage of total expenditures, net income margin, and participation rates for full pay, reduced fee, and free students at breakfast and lunch.</p> <p>Step 2: Identify past program performance and peer district performance for the measures in order to determine appropriate benchmarks for each measure. After establishing benchmarks, re-evaluate and adjust benchmarks bi-annually.</p> <p>Step 3: Analyze program performance at least two times a year by comparing actual performance to the established benchmarks. The analysis should seek to identify causes, trends, and opportunities to improve performance.</p> <p>Step 4: Develop corrective actions to resolve any issues identified that hinder program performance.</p> <p>Step 5: Communicate the performance of each school and the district in an annual comprehensive assessment to school board members, district management, appropriate school administrators, food service personnel, and other interested stakeholders, beginning in June 2004.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Deputy superintendent, food service coordinator, and cafeteria managers
Time Frame	June 2004

Note: For more detailed information on developing a performance accountability system, refer to Action Plan 3-1 in the Performance Accountability chapter.

**Action Plan 10-6**

**We recommend that the food service program reduce its labor cost to less than 50% of its total expenditures. It should use the meals per labor hour standard as a guide for reducing the number of workers and the number of labor hours for retained workers.**

Action Needed	<p>Step 1: Establish a meals-per-labor-hour standard for each school that will ensure that the district overall has labor costs of less than 50% of its total expenditures. Consider the meals-per-labor-hour standards recommended by inTEAM Associates, Inc.</p> <p>Step 2: Compare each school's meals per labor hour to the standard established.</p> <p>Step 3: Reduce labor hours first from those schools that are farthest from meeting the meals per labor hour standard. To assist in this endeavor, through attrition and transition, the program should reduce its in-house baking and increase its use of pre-prepared foods.</p> <p>Step 4: Semi-annually communicate the program's performance in reducing labor costs to school board members and district management. The Fiscal Year 2005-06 budget should reflect labor costs accounting for less than 50% of total expenditures.</p> <p>Step 5: Continue to evaluate staff allocations five to eight weeks into each new school year and in the middle of the year and adjust school staffing as needed in order to reduce labor costs and move towards the standard of having labor costs at 40% of total expenditures.</p>
Who Is Responsible	Food service coordinator
Time Frame	May 2005

**Action Plan 10-7**

<b>We recommend that the food service program increase efforts to identify barriers to student participation by developing an organized system to obtain customer feedback.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1:	Meet with cafeteria managers and principals to brainstorm ideas on how to obtain and use input from students, parents, teachers, and other school staff regarding food service issues.
	Step 2:	Implement ideas to obtain customer feedback, beginning in January 2004.
	Step 3:	Periodically meet with cafeteria managers to review customer feedback and discuss potential barriers and consider possible changes for improvement to student participation. These meetings should begin by August 2004.
	Step 4:	Incorporate findings into the food service strategic plan and work to eliminate the identified barriers.
Who Is Responsible	Food service coordinator	
Time Frame	August 2004	

## *Cost Control Systems*

**Action Plan 11-1**

<b>We recommend that the district establish comprehensive procedures manuals that address all critical financial and accounting processes.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Develop procedures manuals for critical financial and accounting processes.
	Step 2.	Standardize and index these manuals into comprehensive procedures manuals.
	Step 3.	Develop a methodology for revisions and updates to the manuals.
Who Is Responsible	Finance Director	
Time Frame	December 2004	

**Action Plan 11-2**

<b>We recommend that the district develop a formal ethics policy that applies to all personnel and that includes remedies for unethical behavior as a means to strengthen the overall control environment.</b>		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Develop a formal 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	The Board and Superintendent	
Time Frame	June 2004	

**Action Plan 11-3**

<b>We recommend that the district develop a process for employees to report suspected improprieties without fear of reprisal.</b>		
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	Finance Director	
Time Frame	June 2004	

**Action Plan 11-4**

**We recommend that the district develop a strategic plan that will provide management with measurable goals and objectives.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	Establish a strategic planning team to be responsible for developing the strategic plan.
	Step 2.	Hold public hearings and workshops to solicit input on the strategic plan from the community, schools, district and school staff, and the board.
	Step 3.	Based on the input received, develop a draft strategic plan, including measurable goals and objectives and specific strategies, responsibility assignments, and timelines for the superintendent and district administrative staff.
	Step 4.	The superintendent and staff should review the draft and present it to the board for comment.
	Step 5.	Incorporate the board's comments into a final draft.
	Step 6.	The superintendent should present the final draft to the board for approval.
Who Is Responsible	The Board and Superintendent	
Time Frame	December 2004	

**Action Plan 11-5**

**We recommend that the district conduct annual risk assessments.**

Action Needed	Step 1.	Conduct annual risk assessment 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	Finance Director	
Time Frame	August 2004—the start of the 2004-05 school year	