Ministry of Education

Operational Review Report
Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord

March 2009

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This report details the findings and recommendations of the Operational Review of the Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord (hereinafter referred to as "the CSDCFN" or "the Board") conducted by the Operational Review Team composed of external consultants from Deloitte & Touche LLP and Ministry of Education staff. The Operational Review was conducted over three days beginning March 2, 2009.

Introduction

The Ministry plans to perform Operational Reviews of the 72 district school boards across the province over the next three years. The initiative supports Ministry goals and will increase confidence in public education. The Ministry's goal is to enhance management capacity within school boards by encouraging good stewardship of public resources and by the leveraging and sharing of best practices. By identifying opportunities for continual improvement, school board administration and operations will be aligned to support the government's highest priority: student achievement.

The Operational Review Team reviewed the school board's operations in four functional areas: Governance and School Board Administration; Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation; Financial Management; and School Operations and Facilities Management. The purpose of this was to assess the extent to which the Board has implemented the leading practices set out in the "Operational Review Guide for Ontario School Boards." The review also provides, where appropriate, recommendations on opportunities for improvement. Appendix A provides an overview summary of the Operational Review scope and methodology.

The review found that the CSDCFN is well managed. Noted strengths of the Board include a clearly articulated multi-year strategy for student success and a strong and aligned leadership that communicates effectively and shares a common vision. Management monitors student enrolment and staffing levels, invests in leadership development, and implements effective fiscal policy in an environment of declining economy. The following is a summary of the findings and recommendations identified in each of the functional areas reviewed. Details can be found in subsequent sections of the report.

Governance and School Board Administration

The Board has adopted a governance structure that includes the school trustees. An informal agreement delineates the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board's Chair and Director of Education, based on a hybrid model with well-defined board of trustee participation. The Board's members are the six school trustees. The Director of Education acts as the Board's *ex-officio* ClerkTreasurer. According to the provisions of

the *Education Act*, the Director of Education is the only employee reporting directly to the Board. Any communication is relayed through the Chair and the Director of Education.

As for the governance model, the Director of Education is assisted by the executive committee, which is composed of two superintendents of education, a superintendent of business, a director of the human resources department, and a director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department. The finance and IT managers also participate in executive committee meetings.

The Boardis committed to offering complete programs and services to foster student success. Every four years, the Board establishes a multi-year strategy with the help of external consultants. Executive committee members set the annual priorities together based on the multi-year strategic plan. Broad directions for the coming year are determined and presented to the board of trustees at the beginning of the budget planning process. The annual plan is reviewed and approved by the Board.

The primary responsibilities of the board of trustees are to develop the school board's policies, to communicate with parents, and to advocate on behalf of their communities. The Director of Education ensures that the executive committee develops and implements plans and procedures to ensure adherence to board policies and the accomplishment of key priorities.

The Board's governance model is supported by a collegial, transparent and cooperative relationship between the Director of Education and the board of trustees. This positive relationship promotes open communication and contributes to an effective process for agenda-setting and decision-making.

Recommendations:

- To complement existing agreements, the Board should create an official document that clearly delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees, the Director of Education and the executive committee.

- The Board should consider widening the scope of the annual board improvement plan to include human resources, finance management, and maintenance, health, safety and security management. The annual board improvement plan should identify initiatives that contribute to achieving long-term objectives, and that ensure alignment with operational departments. This will enable the departments to track and report progress of their defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

- The Board should consider establishing a formal refresh policy to ensure periodic review of policies across all functional areas. This could include forming a policy committee to consider policies for review or development.

Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation

The human resources (HR) department has demonstrated a good level of operational effectiveness overall. It has implemented many of the leading practices:

- The HR department provides various training sessions to all board and school employees. The annual training plan is based on a staff survey and an identification of employee training needs.

- Staff recruitment is planned annually, and includes a comprehensive hiring approach with strategic job postings and an annual presence at university job fairs in Sudbury and Ottawa. All employees are recruited and hired directly through the school board's HR office. Recruitment is defined by a board policy that includes the recruitment, selection and hiring process for its staff.

- The school board has well-defined procedures to govern the total staff allocation requirements. These procedures are driven by enrolment projections, student needs, class size requirements, preparation time and alignment to collective agreements.

- The Board has implemented "flexible vacation" days that can be used for appointments, family or other personal responsibilities. This initiative allows for better employee attendance management.

Recommendations:

- The HR department should consider developing an annual departmental plan aligned with the overall strategic plan. This will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

- The HR department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, with policies and procedures for specific categories of absenteeism. This would provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.

- Management should conduct periodic audits of the insurance company that manages the school board's medical and dental claims (administrative services only), in order to ensure that claims from the Board are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.

- Management should develop a formal plan for conducting periodic staff surveys. This would improve communication with staff and encourage input for professional development plans and HR policy.

Financial Management

The finance department has demonstrated positive results by implementing many of the leading practices used, namely:

- The finance department has developed an effective annual budget planning process that is transparent, clearly communicated and incorporates input from all key stakeholders.

- Enrolment projections are prepared and presented to the executive committee by the Superintendent of Business in collaboration with other superintendents and elementary and secondary school principals. System-wide enrolment projections are produced annually for both elementary and secondary schools, and are aggregated by grade, program, residency and age, and they also take into consideration recruitment and retention history.These projections are used for budget forecasts and reporting.

- The Board uses an integrated financial system (SAP) to record, track and report financial data. The SAP system is used by 11 French-language school boards that can rely on support from the SAP excellence centre.The system integrates general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget and purchasing modules. The financial system facilitates variance analysis and management reporting.

- School principals and the executive committee always have access, via SAP, to the financial analysis tools. They can access summary reports at any time. The finance department has recently installed an executive information system for school principals, the executive committee and the board of trustees.

- The Board has clearly communicated a policy for the use of purchasing cards, which is current as of May 2007. The administration uses around 50 purchasing cards for the entire school board and the schools. On average, the Board spends $36,000 per year with the purchasing cards.

Recommendations:

- The finance department should prepare a more formalized annual plan that demonstrates alignment to the Board's strategic plan and improvement plan. A more specific plan will provide greater clarity to departmental and other board

staff on the annual priorities. This will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

- Management should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls and adherence to board policies. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated cost for each option.

- Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the finance committee, whose mandate is to perform internal audits.

- The finance department should review and amend its purchasing policy to ensure that approval limit thresholds are aligned with the jobs and roles of managers. This would ensure that CSDCFN needs are in line with that of other school boards.

School Operations and Facilities Management

The maintenance, health, safety and security department has adopted a great number of leading practices in its caretaking and maintenance operations. The following significant practices are noted:

- The maintenance, health, safety and security department has developed a custodial allocation model for the optimum use of resources to implement the school board's cleaning standards and practices.

- For the cleaning standards and maintenance requirements, the school board has developed a list of specific "to do" tasks using the DANIELS software, in consultation with CUPE Local 2799 representatives, school principals and the HR department.

- Cleaning standards are checked by school principals. In the past few years, the department bought equipment to improve maintenance staff performance and to reduce the risk of physical injury: auto scrubbers, polishers, snow blowers, lawn tractors, etc.

- At the level of the maintenance, health, safety and security department, commitment to healthy schools can be found in the annual school renewal and refurbishment activities performed each spring and summer. Current projects include upgrades to school entrance accessibility, and reductions in slips and falls.

- The director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department is responsible for presenting renewal and construction updates to the board of trustees. Follow-ups are ensured through the board-wide review and analysis committee. In addition, the director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department prepares progress reports for the Board (e.g., once building designs are finalized). The Board becomes involved when the budget must be increased.

Recommendations:

- Given that the Board has recently bought new cleaning equipment, it should consider developing procedures to track its inventory and maintain a database on the age, location and state of the equipment.

- The maintenance, health, safety and security department should research the cost/benefit of a new automated work order system to streamline the management, dispatch, tracking and reporting of facility renewal and general maintenance work orders.

- The Board should concentrate its energy management initiatives. It should develop a systemwide, multi-year energy management plan, with appropriate consumption reduction targets. The Board should also ensure that it has tracking mechanisms in place to monitor consumption and energy costs for periodic reporting to the individual schools, the executive committee and the board of trustees.

- Management should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption, and reduce the workload in the accounts payable department.

1. Background and Overview

1.1 School Board Profile and Structure

The CSDCFN was created on January 1, 1998 upon the creation of the French-language school boards. Based in North Bay, the Board serves Sturgeon Falls, Mattawa, Astorville, Verner, Thorne and Bonfield.

The CSDCFN is responsible for French-language Catholic education in rural and urban communities that are bounded by North Bay on the north, Sturgeon Falls on the west, and Mattawa on the east. It is headquartered in North Bay. The CSDCFN currently serves 3,800 elementary and 2,000 secondary school students, with 14 elementary and 3 secondary schools[1] in 7 different communities.

The Board has declared 70% of its schools to be prohibitive to repair (PTR). To address the implications of such a high number, the school board has developed a capital plan and was allocated $58 million by the Ministry of Education to construct new schools to replace PTR schools.

Table 1: Organizational chart of the school board's executive committee
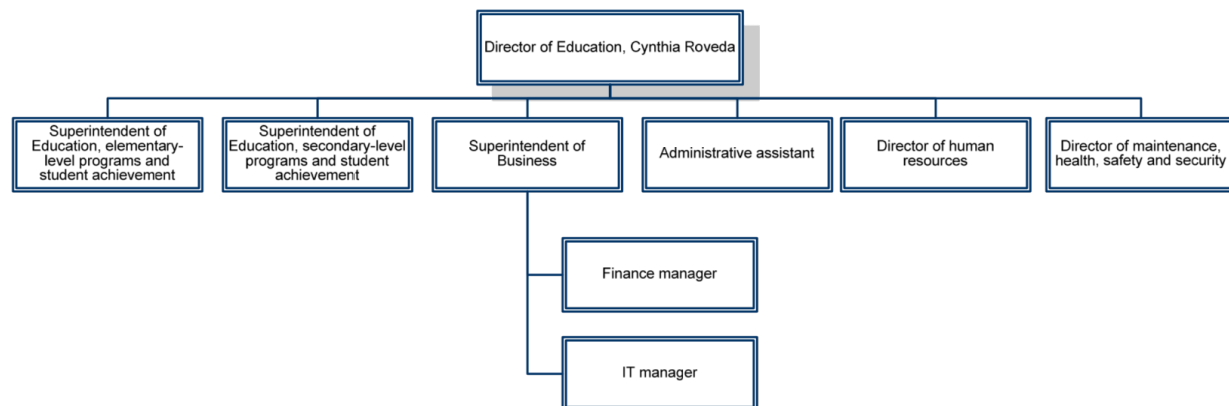
Table 1

1.2 Key Priorities of the Board

The school board's mission is as follows: "The conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord, in partnership with its families, parishes and communities, offers superior quality education to each student. French-language Catholic schools allow students to gain

[1] Source: CSCFN – http://www.franco-nord.edu.on.ca/franco-nord/_accueil/accueil.aspx, March 25, 2009 (available in French only),

educational and cultural experiences that are based on the teachings of Jesus Christ with a view to enriching our changing society."[2]

The school board aims to become the first choice in education of children and parents in its communities by committing to student success and growth. Students are encouraged to reach their potential through quality programs delivered by highly trained, caring staff, in an atmosphere of respect for individual needs.

The Board's 2005-2008 multi-year strategic plan lists seven key priorities/system goals:

- Maximize each student's performance

- Encourage the Catholic faith among students

- Develop a sense of Franco-Ontarian identity among students

- Maintain and improve staff training

- Identify and welcome Francophones into our school communities

- Strengthen efforts aimed at ensuring student safety

- Maintain communications and relationships with parents

Each of these priorities is supplemented by supporting strategies and conditions to ensure success. The school board's annual strategic plan is based on the multi-year strategic plan. The annual plan is supported by board improvement plans, one each for the elementary and secondary panels. The goals outlined in the plans are supported by targeted outcomes relating to implementation and monitoring, along with timelines and success metrics.

These system-wide goals and priorities for the upcoming academic year are identified and incorporated into the budget process.

1.3   Student Achievement

The school board has performed below the provincial average in the last few years. However, it is making strides to overcome the gap with the provincial average.

At the elementary school level, the results showed that Grade 3 student scores in reading have stayed the same in the past five years, but scores have increased in writing and math. The scores of Grade 6 students have increased in reading, writing and math. At the secondary school level, Grade 9 student scores in applied and

---

[2] Source: Conseil Scolaire de District Catholique Franco-Nord 2007-2008 Annual Report

academic courses and Grade 10 student scores on the Ontario secondary school literacy test (OSSLT) have either stagnated or decreased in the past five years.

To improve student performance, the Board launched on a number of initiatives for the 2007-2008 school year, including the following:

- Primary and secondary level teams assembled to plan ways of improving student achievement.

- A framework for school effectiveness was developed and used to ensure the implementation of successful practices in each primary school.

- Three members of the teaching staff were reassigned to offer assistance to their colleagues with literacy and numeracy at the primary level.

- Three secondary schools offered a certification day to their Grade 10 to 12 students, and also offered new specialist high skills majors (SHSM).

- Staff from three secondary schools implemented the *Destination Success* program, which included training on behaviour management, student motivation and engagement toward their attendance, literacy and critical thinking skills for learners.

The following charts illustrate the Board's EQAO and OSSLT results over the last five years.

Grade 3 EQAO Results

Grade 6 EQAO Results

Grade 9 EQAO Results

Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test Results
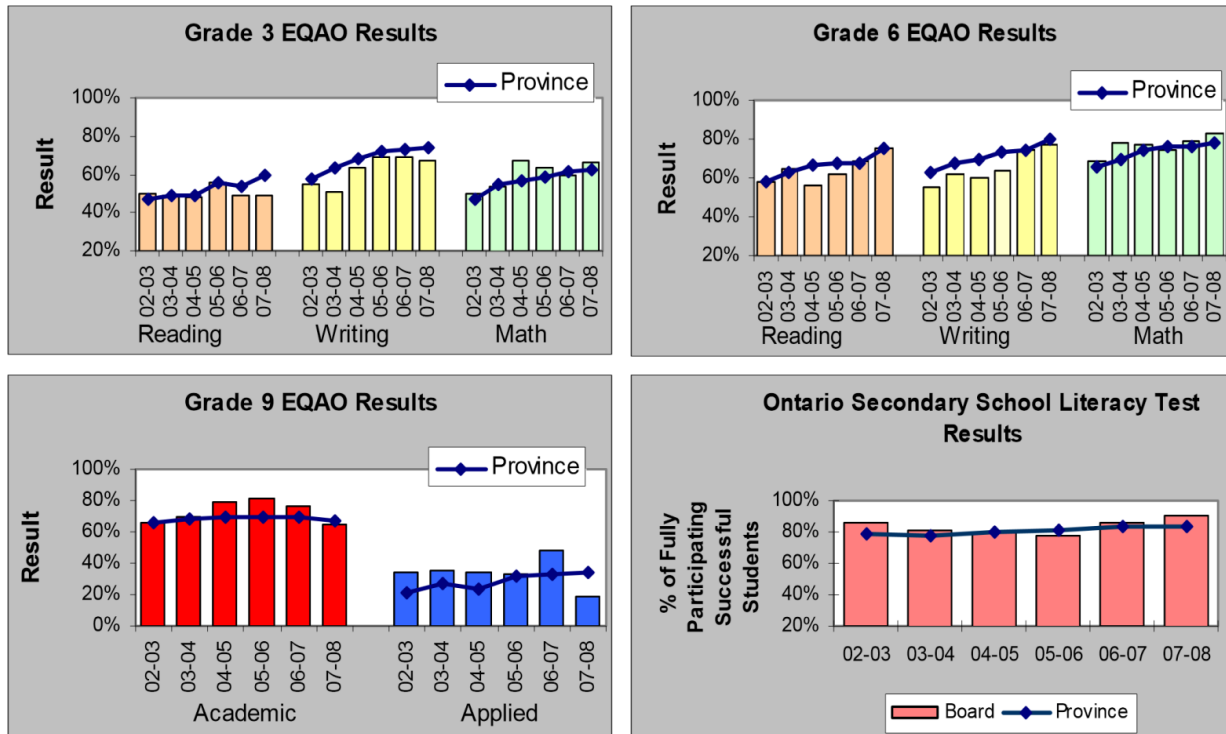
1.4 Fiscal Overview

The Board has consistently presented a balanced budget to the Ministry. This was accomplished in part through the use of some of the working funds reserve in the last few years.

The Board approved a total budget of around $47,807,687 in revenue and $48,991,901 in expenditures for the 2008/2009 budget year (the difference was covered by the reserve). During the budget process, a detailed review of revenues and expenditures is conducted by the trustees, finance committee, principals and executive committee.

The 2008/2009 budget year confirms CSDCFN's commitment to student academic success. Grants were used to finance a large number of pedagogical initiatives undertaken by the Board in order to fulfil its mission of offering superior quality education to each student.

The distribution of expenses shows that 71% of the school board's finances were allocated to educational activities (under allocations for teaching and other expenses that regroup special education projects).

The importance attributed to student success is also evident in the major investment in facilities for students. Expenditures financed through the capital fund include three ongoing projects worth $23.6 million, and five planned projects worth $34.6 million.

These investments into CSDCFN schools in the next few years are intended to offer students a positive learning environment.

The following tables provide a fiscal overview of the school board:

Summary Financial Data (Revenues)

Revenues	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
Legislative Grants	$35,760,359	$40,429,415	$39,154,977
Local taxation	$4,900,969	$4,856,968	$4,842,321
Board Revenues	$2,126,033	$1,776,207	$1,788,155
Other Operating & capital Grants	$3,647,307	$2,549,269	$2,392,355
Total Revenues	**$46,434,668**	**$49,611,859**	**$48,177,808**

Summary Financial Data (Expenditure)

Expenditures:	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
Operating expenditures	$41,142,469	$42,304,436	$44,912,396
Capital expenditures – Before transfers to/from reserves	$4,390,116	$5,268,491	$4,685,037
Transfer to from Reserves	$939,649	$2,038,931	-1419627
Total Expenditures	**$46,472,234**	**$49,611,858**	**$48,177,806**
In-year Surplus (Deficit)	**-37566**	**$0**	**$0**

School Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
Retirement Gratuities	$0	$0	$0
Reserve for Working Funds	$4,081,665	$5,670,515	$3,265,910
School Activities	$0	$0	$0
WSIB	$578,700	$713,935	$760,100
Miscellaneous	$0	$0	$0
Pupil Accommodation Debt Reserve	$2,103,820	$2,533,610	$1,019,338

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
GPL Reserve	$0	$0	$1,431,957
Total Reserve Funds	**$6,764,185**	**$8,918,060**	**$6,477,305**
Reserve for Working Funds	$2,639,724	$0	$0
Special Education Reserve	$0	$0	$0
Distant School Reserves	$15,200	$0	$0
Pupil Accomodation	$0	$0	$0
Program Improvement Reserve	$793,934	$0	$0
Improved Access to Special Education	$0	$0	$0
Other deferred operating revenue	$0	$0	$0
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve- School Buildings	$0	$0	$0
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve- Other	$0	$0	$0
MECR/ BECR Reserve	$311,640	$325,192	$325,340
Reserve for education development charges	$0	$0	$0
Other deferred capital revenues	$0	$0	$0
Total Deferred Revenues	**$3,760,498**	**$325,192**	**$325,340**
Total Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues	**$10,524,683**	**$9,243,252**	**$6,802,645**

1.5   Key School Board Statistics

The following table highlights key statistics for the school board. Of note is the decreasing enrolment trend. These statistics illustrate a unique and challenging operating environment for the school board.

Day School Enrolment

Day School Enrolment	2002-03 Actual	2007-08 Rev. Estimates
Elementary Day School ADE	2,210	1,867
Secondary Day School ADE	1,225	1,124
Total Day School Enrolment	3,435	2,990

Primary Class Size

Primary Class Size	2003-04	2007-08
% of Classes Less Than 20	86%	97%
% of Classes Less Than 23	99%	100%
Average Class Size - Jr/Inter	21.53	18.17
% of 3/4 Classes 23 & Under	100%	100%
% of Combined Classes	19%	20%

Staffing

Staffing	2002-03 Actual	2007-08 Rev. Estimates
School Based Teachers	243	272
Teacher Assistants	44	79
Other Student Support	17	37
School Administration	17	17
School Clerical	20	22
School Operations	41	39
Other Non-Classroom	26	30
Total Staffing	**407**	**496**
Teacher - Pupil Ratio	**1:14**	**1:11**
FTE Staff per 1,000 Pupils (ADE)[3]	**118.6**	**165.8**
Total Salary & Benefits as % of Net Operating Expenditures	**82.0%**	**83.4%**

Special Education

Special Education	2002-03 Actual	2007-08 Rev. Estimates
Special Education Incremental Expenditures	$3,311,935	$5,961,001
Special Education Allocation	$4,092,494	$5,381,245
Spending above Allocation (Reserve)	**-780559**	**$579,756**

---

[3] Note: Impacted by Class Size and Special Education

School Utilization

School Utilization	2002-03 Actual	2007-08 Rev. Estimates
Number of schools	17	17
Total Enrolment (ADE)	3,435	2,990
School Capacity (Spaces)	6,121	5,876
% of surplus capacity (insufficient capacity)	**56.1%**	**50.9%**
Board Area (Km2)	10,140	10,140
Number of Trustees	6	9

2. Governance and School Board Administration - Findings and Recommendations

The school board's governance model and administrative organizational framework make a significant contribution in helping the board of trustees, director, senior administration and community stakeholders support both "Student Achievement" strategies and effective school board operations.

The purpose of reviewing governance and school board administration processes is to:

- Understand how the governance model supports operational effectiveness and delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees and the administration;

- Assess the development of the annual plan (including the goals/priorities) and actions to engage and communicate with key stakeholders and the related reporting against the plan;

- Assess the processes for the generation and maintenance of policies and related procedures;

- Assess whether staffing levels and organization structures provide for clarity of roles and accountability sufficient to carry out the school board's objectives;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

This section provides a summary of the findings and recommendations of our assessment of the board's adoption of the leading practices relating to the governance and school board administration. Our findings are a result of our review of the data provided by the board and our field work, which included interviews with the Chair, the Director and senior staff of the Board.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for governance and board administration, and identifies where evidence showed that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Establishment of an Effective Governance Model

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board's governance model clearly delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees and the director of education. The board has established clearly defined duties and responsibilities to support on effective working relationship.	No

Development of the Board's Strategic Direction and the Annual Board Improvement Plan

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees develops and communicates a multi-year strategic plan that provides a framework for annual planning.	Yes
The director of education and senior management develop an annual board improvement plan of their goals/priorities, incorporating both academic and non-academic departments. The plan is aligned with the board's multi-year strategic plan and has goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely.	No
Senior management periodically/annually report to the board on the status and outcomes of the annual board improvement plan.	Yes

Decision Making Process

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management have established appropriate processes for decision making to address student achievement targets and operational performance.	Yes
The board of trustees and management have appropriate processes for the establishment and regular maintenance of policies for the efficient and effective operation of the board. Policies are posted on the board's web site.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The organizational structure has clearly defined organizational units that delineate roles and responsibilities, minimize administrative costs and ensure effective and efficient operation.	Yes

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The director has established a formal succession plan to manage retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.	Yes
A departmental organization chart (supplemented with a directory of key staff contact information) is publicly available on the board's web site.	Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis and through a variety of communication vehicles (e.g., websites, email, memos, town halls, etc.).	Yes
Key senior staff from all functional areas are members and participants in sector committees of provincial associations and Ministry workgroups.	Yes

Establishment of an Effective Governance Model

The Board has adopted a governance structure that includes the school trustees. An informal agreement delineates the respective roles and responsibilities of the Board's Chair and the Director of Education, based on a hybrid model with well-defined board of trustee participation. The Board's members are the six school trustees. Any communication is relayed through the Chair and the Director of Education.

As for the governance model, the Director of Education is assisted by executive committee, which is composed of two superintendents of education, one superintendent of business, a director of the human resources department, and a director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department. The finance and IT managers also participate in executive committee meetings.

The current Chair has been a trustee since 1980. The trustees are elected for a four-year term, with annual election of the Chair. In addition, three student trustees are selected from the student body to serve on the board of trustees for a one-year term.

The board of trustees sets and maintains policies according to its internal policy. The Director of Education is responsible for ensuring, through management, the implementation of operating plans and procedures (broad directions) consistent with the Board's key goal of improving student success.

Trustees participate in training sessions that are offered by the Association Franco-Ontarienne des Conseils Scolaires Catholiques (AFOCSC) on an as-needed basis.

All elected Board members participate, depending on their respective roles, in the following committees: Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), school calendar committee, special learning experiences committee, finance committee, education committee, review and analysis committee, parents committee, and appeals committee (suspensions and expulsions). As conditions warrant, the board of trustees establishes additional ad hoc committees to address a specific issue or task.

Development of the Board's Strategic Direction and the Annual Board Improvement Plan

The school board is committed to offering complete programs and services that encourage student success. Every four years, the Board establishes a multi-year strategy with the help of external consultants. The persons consulted during the development of the strategic plan include the following: members of the Board and executive committee, school staff, school council members, non-academic staff, students and parents.

The school improvement plans are written using the first draft of the strategic plan. Once finalized, the multi-year strategic plan is presented for Board approval. The following September, the Board starts implementing its strategic plan in partnership with school community members through educational projects and school improvement plans.

The following strategic directions were identified in 2005: ▪ Maximize each student's performance

- Encourage the Catholic faith among students

- Develop a sense of Franco-Ontarian identity among students

- Maintain and improve staff training

- Identify and welcome Francophones into our school communities

- Strengthen efforts aimed at ensuring student safety

- Maintain communications and relationships with parents

The Board is currently reviewing its strategic plan for 2009-2012. It will be presented for Board adoption in June 2009.

Executive committee members set the annual priorities together based on the multi-year strategic plan. This includes multiple planning sessions with the trustees and school principals to identify and prioritize system goals. Broad directions for the upcoming year

are determined and presented to the board of trustees at the beginning of the budget planning process. The annual plan is reviewed and approved by the Board.

The school board's numeracy and literacy focus provides the context for the annual priorities outlined in the strategic plan. Each of the goals is supplemented with measurable actions and outcomes to ensure the success of both the annual and multi-year plans.

The Board's strategic plan is supplemented by the annual board improvement plan for each of the elementary and secondary school panels. The Board improvement plans are developed by the superintendents in consultation with the school principals and program leads.

The objectives outlined in the Board's annual plan are supported by initiatives with timelines and indicators of success. However, the Board's annual plan does not include plans for the operational functions such as HR, finance and facilities. During the 2009-2012 strategic planning process, the departments (such as finance, HR, maintenance, health, safety and security) are planning to develop their respective strategic plans. The Board is encouraged to take steps to ensure that operational functions of human resources, finance and facilities are aligned with the school board's strategic plan.

Decision Making Process

The primary responsibilities of the board of trustees are to develop the school board's policies, to communicate with parents, and to advocate on behalf of their communities. The Director of Education ensures that the administrative team develops and implements plans and procedures to ensure adherence to board policies and the accomplishment of key priorities. The Board's governance model is supported by a collegial, transparent and cooperative relationship between the Director of Education and the board of trustees. This positive relationship promotes open communication and contributes to an effective process for agenda-setting and decision-making.

The trustees meet monthly for regular board meetings. In addition, each trustee participates in monthly meetings of the education, finance, transportation, and review and analysis committees. The Director of Education, in collaboration with the Chair of the Board, is responsible for setting the agenda.

Trustees also sit on both various Board committees and those required by regulation. In particular, committees such as the school calendar and special learning experiences committees meet on an as-needed basis and include between two and four Board representatives. The special education committee and parents committee meet five or six times a year and include two Board representatives.

The Director of Education, in collaboration with the Chair of the Board, is responsible for developing meeting agendas, and submitting recommendations for Board adoption. All matters to be placed on the agenda of a board of trustee meeting or committee meeting must be unanimously approved by the Board. Trustees wishing to have a matter included on an agenda must typically submit a request to the Chair of the Board in advance of the agenda review committee meeting. If the request is unanimously approved, the item is added to the agenda and discussed at the meeting.

The Board has established a set of policies (available on the school board website) that provide a framework for decision-making and guidelines for the effective operation of the school board. The Board also established a policy review procedure that requires policies to be revised annually. However, it was noted that many policies were last reviewed in 2002. The Board is encouraged to establish a detailed policy review calendar as well as a policy committee that can supervise and guide policy review.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The organization of the school board's administrative team is well established and operating effectively. Board operations are managed by the Director of Education, two superintendents of education, an administrative assistant, a superintendent of business, a director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department, a human resources director, a finance manager and an IT manager.

Each superintendent and administrative assistant has been assigned a distinct portfolio. One superintendent of education is responsible for junior kindergarten to Grade 6 student programming, and another superintendent is responsible for Grade 7 to 12 student programming. The special education program was integrated into the regular programming. In addition, the superintendents have responsibility for a family of schools, which involves overseeing the operations of each school within the family of schools. This structure also facilitates the development of common education strategies to improve student achievement. The roles and responsibilities of the superintendents of education have been clearly defined and documented.

The Superintendent of Business, the director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department, the HR department director, the finance manager and the IT manager all have their respective department-specific responsibilities. Collaboration and agreement between the different departments support the Board's day-to-day operations. However, there are no clear descriptions that outline roles and responsibilities. The Board is encouraged to develop documents describing the tasks that each person is responsible for.

The Director of Education manages retirements and resignations of executive committee members on an as-needed basis. The formal succession plan is currently

being developed. This will enable the Board to ensure the succession of its administrative team by naming assistants or future replacements for each superintendent and department head.

The names, titles, email addresses and telephone numbers of elected Board members and executive committee members are listed on the Board's website. The contact information of other employees is also provided on the site and is searchable by last and first names.

Stakeholder Engagement

The school board actively seeks stakeholder consultation. It recognizes that communication is a vital component of its mission, and that it needs to communicate with citizens, organizations, students and their parents in delivering educational services.

The Director of Education is responsible for communications and supporting effective two-way communication between all stakeholders. Various communication channels such as school newsletters, press releases, website postings and public consultations keep key stakeholders engaged throughout the year. The Director of Education regularly sends out to all Board staff a "From the office of the Director of Education" bulletin. In addition, the "Clin d'œil" magazine is distributed throughout the Board's school communities. The Director of Education also relies on local media (radio and newspaper) to disseminate information to the community. The Board uses its public website to disseminate information relating to its policies, the Director's report, and financial reports.

Executive committee members are actively involved in various national and provincial forums, including the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), Association des gestionnaires en éducation franco-ontarienne (AGEFO), Regroupement des surintendantes de l'éducation (RSE), Council of Senior Business Officials (COSBO), Regroupement des gens d'affaires (RGA), Conseil ontarien des gestionnaires en ressources humaines (COGRH), as well as other similar groups relating to the fields of IT and capital. They also actively collaborate with peers in similar Northern school boards. This ensures that the Board learns and shares leading practices from across the sector. While participation in provincial and national forums is an enriching activity for the Board, it should not in any way encroach upon the daily responsibilities of Board members. Participation in such activities should be strategic and must be outlined as part of professional development plans.

The school board maintains a positive relationship with neighbouring boards and shares leading practices at an informal level. In addition, neighbouring boards have recently

participated in consortia purchasing for transportation contracts and WAN (wide area network) installation to gain efficiencies and buying power.

Recommendations:

- To complement existing agreements, the school board should create an official document that clearly delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees, the Director of Education and the executive committee.

- The Board should consider widening the scope of the annual board improvement plan to include human resources, financial management, and maintenance, health, safety and security management. The annual board improvement plan should identify initiatives that contribute to achieving long-term objectives and that ensure alignment with operational departments. This will enable the departments to track and report progress of their defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

- The Board should consider establishing a formal refresh policy to ensure periodic review of policies across all functional areas. This could include forming a policy committee to consider policies for review or development.

3. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation — Findings and Recommendations
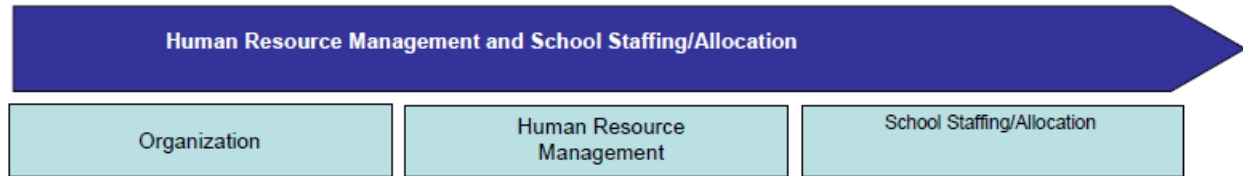
Effective management of human resources ensures an adequate number of qualified staff throughout the organization can perform their prescribed duties. Policies and procedures to develop staff are in place, through performance appraisals, professional development and support services. Staff allocations to schools and classrooms meet the Ministry's class size requirements, and are congruent with the school board's collective agreements and allocation models. The allocation models adopted by the school board ensure the most effective teaching and learning practices.

The following is a summary of our assessment of the Board's adoption of the leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of a review of the data provided by the school board and on-site field-work, which included interviews with all key HR staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

3.1 Human Resource Organization

The review of the organization of the HR department assesses:

- Whether appropriate policies and procedures have been established and maintained to support the HR functions and required priorities, and whether they are aligned with the school board's directions;

- Whether an annual departmental plan setting out the goals and priorities and their alignment to the school board's strategic directions has been established;

- Whether the roles and responsibilities of staff support the key functions, activities and practices of HR;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for HR management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full.

Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Leading Practices Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The HR department's goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan. They are aligned to the annual board improvement plan, accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The HR department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates the respective roles and responsibilities. A current organizational chart is available.	Yes
Senior HR staff has appropriate designations (e.g., Certified Human Resource Professional, etc.).	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor HR policy compliance.	Yes
HR Management provides regularly scheduled HR policy awareness, training, and education sessions.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The HR function currently does not develop its own annual departmental plan. The school board creates a single macro list of issues and priorities to be addressed within the academic year. The HR department identify objectives and priorities informally each year in line with the strategic plan.

Management should consider developing an annual departmental plan, complete with designated accountabilities and target timelines that are aligned with the overall strategic plan. This would link department priorities with performance measures and accountabilities, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration among the team members, and provide a roadmap of the department.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The HR department consists of six individuals. Job descriptions were defined during the pay equity process. They are currently being reviewed and will be ready in August 2009. The school board's organizational chart includes the HR department, and it is updated as soon as possible after changes.

The HR staff report to the HR director. The department performs criminal background checks, planning of staff training, benefits management and file management for academic and non-academic staff. The department is also responsible for payroll. Other roles, such as staff allocation and performance appraisals for the academic staff, are performed in collaboration with the superintendents of education or administration assistant.

Department staff have appropriate professional designations. They regularly attend HR conferences and provincial committees that focus on HR management and labour relations issues.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The HR department is the lead on monitoring and communication policies, including standard policies regarding criminal background checks for new hires, recruitment, promotion, and staff performance appraisals. HR policies are disseminated during orientation of new teachers. These policies are available to all employees through the intranet and are also posted on the school board's website.

The department monitors compliance with its recruitment policies by actively participating in the recruiting of employees. For the academic staff, consistency and policy compliance are maintained by developing standard evaluation criteria and having each candidate evaluated by members of the interview panel.

The Board offers numerous training sessions to its employees. The annual training plan for teaching staff is based on employee surveys and an identification of training needs. The executive committee and department heads plan training sessions for non-teaching staff, custodial and maintenance staff, educational assistants, school secretaries, principals and vice-principals, as well as teaching days and targeted training sessions for teaching staff.

Recommendation:

- The HR department should consider developing an annual departmental plan aligned with the overall strategic plan. This will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

3.2 Human Resource Management

The purpose of reviewing the HR management processes is to assess whether:

- Planning and processes are in place for the recruitment of the appropriate number of qualified staff to support the student achievement targets;

- Appropriate processes are in place to promote the personal and professional growth of all staff;

- Adequate systems and procedures are in place to manage employee compensation plans, labour relations, employee performance and attendance and other support services to foster employee satisfaction;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes can be identified.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for HR management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Staff Recruitment

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Recruitment policies and procedures are reviewed annually, and are aligned with staff planning to support student achievement.	Yes
New hire policies and procedures for the respective staff groups are harmonized.	Yes

Labour Relations

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management and the board of trustees have established labour/management committees.	Yes
Management has established policies and procedures to minimize the incidence of grievances.	Yes

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

Leading Practices - Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management has policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.	Yes
HR Management maintains and communicates formal disciplinary policies and procedures for all staff.	Yes

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

Leading Practices - Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Attendance management process/programs exist that include employee supportive policies and procedures to minimize the cost of absenteeism.	No
Management periodically reports on the effectiveness of the attendance management process/programs to senior management and the Board.	No

Management of HR and Payroll Data

Leading Practices - Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Payroll processing is segregated from employee data records, and changes to data are adequately controlled.	Yes
HR records are current, including the formal tracking of teacher qualifications and experience.	Yes
Management has implemented an approved pay equity plan which is maintained, reviewed periodically and amended as necessary.	Yes

Management of Board's Benefit Plans

Leading Practices - Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management periodically conducts independent compliance audits of the school board's insurance carrier to ensure adherence to benefit plan's terms and conditions.	No
Employee data is automatically synchronized among the school board and external carriers such as TPP, OMERS and the school board's benefit provider(s).	Yes

Leading Practices - Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Policies and procedures ensure the school board's benefit plans are managed appropriately.	Yes

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

Leading Practices - Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has established policies and procedures for staff/professional development and monitors staff take-up, budget, and outcomes.	Yes
Confidential staff satisfaction surveys are performed periodically.	No
Confidential exit interviews are performed for all staff who resign, take early retirement, or transfer.	Yes

Staff Recruitment

All employees are recruited and hired directly through the school board's human resources office. Management accepts unsolicited applications and considers drop-in applicants as required. The Board manages its hiring process annually to ensure the recruitment of teaching and non-teaching staff.

The Board has a recruitment, selection and hiring policy that was last reviewed in 2004. Vacancies and redundancies for academic staff are determined in a collaborative process among the Director, board of trustees and executive committee based on enrolment data and available funding for positions.

System-wide vacant positions are then posted on numerous sources: on the Board's homepage and in its worksites, on external websites such as Jobs in Education, Education Canada, Apply to Teach, and in local papers like the *North Bay Nugget*, *La Tribune* and the *Mattawa Recorder*. The HR team is also present every year at university job fairs in Sudbury and Ottawa.

The selection process is the same for everyone; however, the composition of the selection committee varies from one position to another, and may include the following individuals: responsible manager or his or her representative, Board member, executive committee member, superintendents, and school principals. Management uses standard evaluation criteria for each selection. The supervisor, the responsible manager or his or her representative and the HR officer all have clear roles for interviews and hiring of candidates.

A reference check for potential candidates is performed, and each candidate is responsible for submitting his or her personal information and criminal background check.

The Board maintains a list of qualified occasional educational assistants. The Board recruits from either the pool of qualified occasional educational assistants or externally when vacancies arise.

In collaboration with the executive committee, management organizes orientation sessions for newly hired teaching staff and principals to cover issues such as program support and educational support, special education services and requirements, resources available to new teaching staff, work health and safety, and workplace policies and requirements.

Labour Relations

The school board maintains different collective agreements with its employee groups, which consist of regular and occasional secondary and elementary teachers, the custodial maintenance group, the office/clerical/technical group and educational assistants. These collective agreements are managed by the HR staff in collaboration with the responsible department manager. Executive committee members indicated that they maintain collegial relationships with union representatives.

The grievance procedure at the school board is documented in the collective agreements that were negotiated by the management committee for each union group. The management committee is comprised of the HR director, who acts as a spokesperson at each bargaining table (with the exception of AEFO (regular academic staff) for whom the Board has hired an external lawyer to acts as a spokesperson), one or more supervisory officers or case managers, the Superintendent of Business, a school principal for each panel, and in some cases, a human resources officer.

Management committees meetings are used to discuss grievances and resolve emerging issues before they evolve into formal grievances. Joint committee meetings encourage discussion to avoid issues turning into grievances. The committee meetings are also used to discuss the interpretation of the collective agreements and to review adherence to the conditions they set out. The HR department has been tracking grievances, but does not typically present an annual report to the trustees.

Members of management committees adequately prepare for collective bargaining using information from the HR director, an environmental scan and information from the finance department.

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

The Board has three policies describing the evaluation process for academic staff, principals and vice-principals, and non-academic staff. In line with the Ministry of Education's "Supporting Teaching Excellence" document, the school board evaluates its experienced teachers on a five-year cycle. New teaching staff members are evaluated twice in the 12 months following the date of hire by the Board as part of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). The teacher performance appraisal is executed by principals and channelled to the respective superintendent of education and subsequently filed at the HR department. Principals and vice-principals are evaluated by superintendents on a four-year cycle. According to the policy, non-academic staff should be evaluated every three years. However, this is not the case in practice. The Board is encouraged to change the frequency of appraisals in its policy to better reflect practices.

Each September, HR management makes a list of the performance appraisals to be completed during the year in collaboration with the executive committee and superintendents. Staff members affected by the performance appraisals are notified by September 30. All performance appraisals are conducted using an evaluation form that is made available to selected staff. Each employee is evaluated on their current performance. A pre-appraisal meeting with the supervisor is the first step in the appraisal process. At this meeting, the appraisal objectives to be achieved by the end of the appraisal period are established. During the appraisal period, support and training sessions are available for employees based on their needs.

Training sessions on employee performance appraisals are available to school principals. The performance appraisal process is clear for all employees. The policies and evaluation forms used are made available to each employee.

The Board has adopted progressive discipline practices to reprimand and prevent staff misconduct. The disciplinary policy for staff misconduct outlines the process for addressing the issue. For union employees, collective agreements take precedence over this policy. Depending on the situation, the first step is an amicable discussion between the employer and the employee. In this case, the supervisor gives a verbal warning and notes the circumstances for the verbal warning for future reference. When the direct supervisor determines that the misconduct warrants a more serious reprimand, disciplinary measures are implemented. The Director of Education and the Board become involved in cases ending in termination. The steps of the progressive discipline process are as follows:

1. Written warning

2. Suspension without pay

3. Termination

This progressive discipline process allows for a standardized step-by-step approach for the Board and all its employees.

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

Currently, the Board does not have a formal attendance management program and policy. Recently, the Board has started a project with consultants specialized in attendance management programs, SBCI (School Boards' Co-operative Inc.). SBCI has completed an assessment of the current state of absences within the Board. The project's objective is to implement procedures and an attendance management program within a year's time. The HR department and superintendents of education support principals and supervisors in managing absenteeism among employee groups.

The Board installed software (SISA) to manage absenteeism. The system allows the majority of staff to notify the Board in the event of illness. This improves the Board's efficiency by reducing the need for support staff to manage absenteeism on a daily basis and allowing for the analysis of trends. In addition, the system performs automatic call-outs for substitute teachers.

Through the system, the Board realized that teachers and educational assistants used their sick days for other reasons than their intended purpose, such as doctor appointments and family responsibilities, etc. The Board's executive committee initiated negotiations with the unions to set aside four days of the year for "flexible vacation" days, which can be used for other needs, and which therefore restricts how employees use their sick days.

The Board should develop a comprehensive attendance management program to address specific categories of absenteeism. This important initiative will provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, by engaging in positive reinforcement to employees and adopting standardized practices across all employee groups. This comprehensive management program should be implemented at the same time as the SBCI project.

Management of HR and Payroll Data

All personnel records are managed through the SAP central system. Every employee hired by the Board is added to the system.

The payroll functions reside within the HR department. Changes in pay scale and all other updates to personnel records are the responsibility of the HR officer. The payroll clerk is responsible for payroll processing, which is then reviewed by the payroll supervisor. This ensures the appropriate distribution of duties related to record

maintenance and payroll functions. Updates to personnel records for pay and benefit changes or other compensation adjustments are performed by authorized staff only. Payroll deposits are directed to employee bank accounts through electronic funds transfer (EFT).

Management has developed effective processes to ensure that teacher qualifications and experience are formally tracked and updated. For unionized staff, position classifications are updated according to collective agreements. The Board performs updates for academic staff using Qualification Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO) data. Staff is required to send all the necessary documentation to the HR department to support the updates.

The HR director is responsible for classifying positions with input from the employer and the employee. The academic positions are re-classified with input from the QECO. Category changes for academic staff are initiated by the employee and validated by the HR department and the superintendent. A category change that has been validated is reflected in the SAP personnel file and the hard copy file. The qualifications and experience scattergrams for teachers are managed by the payroll supervisor and are updated as required throughout the year.

Promotions and updates for non-union employees are also managed by the HR department. The Board does not have any outstanding pay equity issues.

Management of the Board's Benefit Plans

The Board provides all permanent employees with benefit plans that are 100 percent self-funded and managed by the HR department in consultation with external consultants.

Currently, there is no benchmarking of the cost of the Board's benefits against that of other boards. HR staff does not undertake a monthly verification of benefits claims served by the external carrier. The insurance carrier provides management with annual reports that outline benefits usage and demographics as well as quarterly reports with the relative costs of benefits usage. However, the Board does not conduct audits to ensure that claims are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions. The Board is encouraged to consider implementing a system for performing periodic audits to ensure that its insurance carrier adheres to its contract with the Board.

The payroll supervisor transmits electronic data files to the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTTP) periodically to ensure accurate and timely enrolment of all eligible employees. In addition, both OTPP and the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS) are notified of new employees as required.

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

Management periodically surveys school staff on their professional development needs. Employees are questioned on their satisfaction level regarding their professional development on a four-year cycle during the strategic planning process.

Exit surveys are distributed when employees terminate their employment with the Board or one of its schools. However, results are not reliable given the low number of responders. While it is noted that the school board operates within a small community and is viewed as a local "employer of choice", practices such as staff surveys and exit interviews can provide management with valuable input, for staff professional development and policies impacting future employee relations.

Recommendations:

- The HR department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, with policies and procedures for specific categories of absenteeism. This would provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.

- Management should conduct periodic audits of the insurance company that manages the school board's medical and dental claims (administrative services only), in order to ensure that claims from the Board are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.

- Management should develop a formal plan for conducting periodic staff surveys. This would improve communication with staff and encourage input for professional development plans and HR policy.

3.3   School Staffing/Allocation

The purpose of reviewing school staffing/allocation processes is to:

- Assess whether accurate and efficient processes are in place to forecast and plan for staffing needs to support student achievement target strategies;

- Ensure staff optimization allocation processes are in place, supported by an effective attendance management system; and

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for School Staffing/Allocation, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice

was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Planning and Processes for Annual Staff Allocation

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Policies and/or procedures govern the annual staff allocation process.	Yes

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Systems are in place and accessible by both HR and Finance staff to establish and track an approved level of staff.	Yes
Systems and processes monitor adherence to key Ministry and board policy parameters, such as: class size, prep time, collective agreement requirements and other board directions.	Yes
Management periodically reports on the actual allocation of staff, compared to the original approved allocation plan and budget (FTEs by function, department and program, actual versus budget).	Yes
Procedures are in place to enable adjustment of staff allocations for school based staff, if estimates for enrolment and funding change after budget approval.	Yes
Plans for student support services and staffing are based on a student-needs analysis.	Yes

Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Staff costs are compared with similar school boards and the funding model to ensure efficient use of resources.	Yes

Planning and Processes for Annual Staff Allocation

The Board has well-defined procedures that govern the determination and allocation of total staff requirements. These procedures are driven by enrolment projections, student need, class size requirements, preparation time and alignment to collective agreements. After consideration of thefactors that impact the school board's total anticipated enrolment for the following year, a school-byschool staffing projection is prepared and

reviewed by the superintendents. Principals determine their school's staff allocation according to the staffing plan and demographics.

The staffing policy is an integral part of the collective agreements for each employee group. The AEFO joint committee, on behalf of academic staff, is involved in the process. First, as part of the budget process, the finance department determines theoretical school-by-school and board-wide staffing projections based on an estimate of available grants and other revenue for the upcoming budget year. The HR department then prepares salary budget estimates according to the theoretical staff allocation estimates, as modified and validated by senior education management, and sends them to the finance department.

A similar procedure exists for academic support staff. As part of the budget process, a theoretical staff allocation for special education is prepared by the finance department based on an estimate of available grants and other revenue for the upcoming school year. The Superintendent of Education responsible for special education determines, in consultation with the special education resource person and school principals, the projected deployment of educational assistants by job category and by panel for the upcoming school year. This projection takes into consideration a number of factors including student needs, first and foremost, as well as the skills and abilities required for the tasks, seniority, current job category, distance, and the personal preference of educational assistants. The HR department then prepares salary budget estimates according to the theoretical staff allocation estimates, as modified and validated by the Superintendent of Education responsible for special education, and sends them to the finance department.

The projected staffing allocations and related expenditures for teaching and special education staff are modified as needed during the budget year according to Board's priorities and available resources. Upon Board approval of the projected allocation, the HR department prepares a preliminary staffing plan and distributes it to the school principals, who determine the allocation of each staff member. The joint committee (senior education management, HR management and two AEFO representatives) reviews the staff allocations and deployments in each school before finalizing the staffing plan.

The proposed staff allocation for the elementary and secondary panels is presented to the board of trustees for approval in April. The report is approved by the board of trustees with an understanding that appropriate updates will be made in September. Based on these numbers, management posts vacant positions on different websites for staff recruitment.

In September, teaching staff is added or transferred in accordance with specific enrolment numbers at each school. The updates are typically presented to the board of

trustees as information items. If there is a large discrepancy from the original estimates, the item will be formally tabled with the board of trustees.

The HR department is also responsible for custodial staff allocation. As part of the budget process and based on the staffing formula for custodial staff, the maintenance, health, safety and security department determines its deployment needs for the upcoming school year. Then, the procedure is the same as the one applied for teaching staff.

Overall, the school board pursues conservative staffing allocation to hedge against significant variances between forecasts and actual enrolment. The accuracy of forecasting has allowed it to make effective staffing decisions, even in an environment of declining enrolment.

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

Staffing levels are consistently monitored by the Board's executive committee in collaboration with school principals. In September, actual enrolment numbers are reviewed against estimates. If additional teaching staff is required, vacancies are posted, and if possible, candidates are hired from existing pools.

According to established procedures, every long-term occasional (LTO) teacher has to re-apply and go through the interview process. Each year, management refreshes the occasional substitute teacher list by implementing an opt-in process during the summer.

Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

The Board compares its costs with that of other school boards. It uses comparative tables to benchmark the salaries and work conditions of its management, principals and support staff against that of other boards.

In addition, management attends provincial negotiation forums and stays updated on negotiation trends at other boards through shared online resources, such as the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) portal. The Board maintains good relationships with other French-language school boards and coterminous boards.

4. Financial Management – Findings and Recommendations
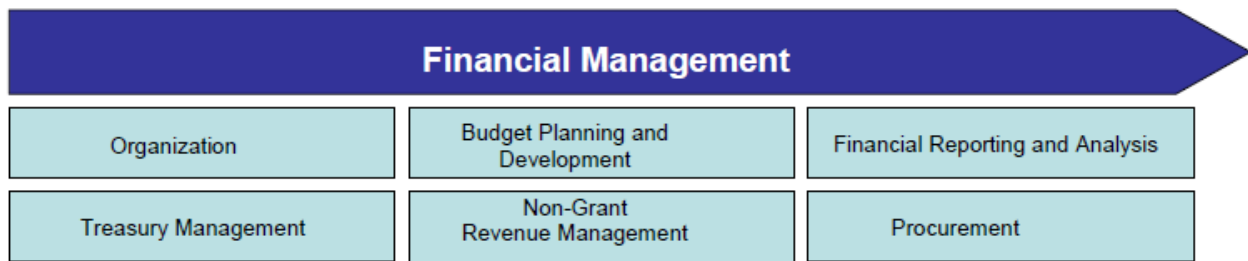
The financial management of the Board contributes to the efficient and effective use of fiscal resources. Financial management ensures that the annual budget is developed within the Ministry's allocation and aligned with student achievement targets. It also ensures that appropriate financial policies and procedures are in place to manage resources.

Financial and related business processes contribute to an appropriate level of transparency in the allocation and use of the budget by the various departments. They also ensure that the reporting of results to the board of trustees and other board stakeholders reflects the approved goals/priorities relating to student achievement.

The following is a summary of our assessment of the Board's adoption of the leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of a review of the data provided by the Board and on-site field work, which included interviews with all key finance management staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

4.1 Finance Organization

The purpose of reviewing the organization of the finance department is to assess:

- The establishment of policies and procedures to support the key finance functions, activities and required business priorities and their alignment with student achievement targets;

- Finance department support of the overall goals/priorities and accountability measures established by the school board;

- The efficiency and effectiveness of the departmental structure and whether roles and responsibilities support the key functions, activities and practices;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for the Finance organization, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The finance department's goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan that is aligned to the annual board improvement plan accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified accountability.	No

Organization Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The finance department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates the respective roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is available.	Yes
Finance department staff has the appropriate finance/accounting designations and experience.	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policies

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor finance policy compliance.	Yes
Management provides scheduled finance policy and procedures awareness, training and skills development educational sessions.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The finance department does not have a clear or defined mandate, even though its broad goal is to ensure it meets the school board's and the Ministry's reporting requirements through relevant, accurate and timely financial information. During its annual planning session, the finance department meets as a team to review accomplishments and plan ahead.

The department uses an annual planning document that describes the tasks that are planned for the upcoming year. The document contains task descriptions, the names of responsible individuals and timelines. A plan of the finance department's core activities is prepared, along with a detailed plan for the Superintendent of Finance, the head of finance, and the audit and administrative support officer. This plan is categorized by department (e.g., policy, IT, capital, internal audit, etc.). This plan is a working document that is not aligned with the Board's annual strategic planning process. Certain improvement objectives are identified and added to the annual plan during discussions on financial statements.

The finance department reports to the Superintendent of Business, who reports directly to the Board's general management. The finance committee, comprised entirely of trustees, convenes several times a year, particularly during the decision-making process associated with the budget and financial statements. The finance committee meets at least every quarter during the academic year.

While the department should be recognized for adopting some level of annual planning, there are opportunities to improve the rigor and alignment of this process. Specifically, the plan can be strengthened by aligning it directly with the school board's overall strategic plan and annual board improvement plan. The finance department could also develop a specific mandate statement.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The finance department reports to the Superintendent of Business, who oversees the review of the finance department's policies, the operational expenditure analysis, the annual planning process (done in collaboration with other departments), and the budget setting process. The finance manger oversees the following functions: financial services, procurement and payments, and tax collection. The audit and administrative support officer supervises the following functions: internal audit, school fund management, enrolment and the Ontario School Information System OnSIS. This structure ensures clear segregation of duties between management reporting and expenditure authorization. The finance department has job description documents that clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of every department member.

The roles and responsibilities of the department's staff are clearly outlined in an organization chart that is kept current. Department staff have appropriate financial designations or relevant experience to perform their roles.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The department maintains a set of policies covering certain aspects of financial management, including school fund accounting, budget preparation and review, purchases and purchasing card use. These policies are available on the Board's

website. In addition, the department also retains a copy of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants handbook, Public Sector Accounting Board guide and the Ministry of Education's accounting standards.

The finance department ensures that policies are understood and followed by all staff in several ways. New principals and department managers receive orientation sessions on purchasing, financial and banking policies and on financial systems like the Board's SAP. As needed or in case of policy non-compliance, the finance department sends out procedural reminders, such as the procedures for work-order management. The finance department must also ensure compliance with the policies it is responsible for. Each policy is assigned a lead person with specific tasks that must be carried at certain intervals to ensure policy compliance.

However, it was noted that management does not have specific processes in place to update and refresh policies. Several policies have not been refreshed since 2002. This is an opportunity area for the school board.

Recommendation

- The finance department plan should prepare a more formalized annual plan that demonstrates alignment to the Board's strategic plan and improvement plan. A more specific plan will provide greater clarity to departmental and other Board staff on the annual priorities. This will enable the department to track and report progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

4.2   Budget Planning and Development

The purpose of reviewing budget planning and development processes is to:

- Understand the linkages between the board of trustees' goals and priorities and the operational budgeting process;

- Assess whether sufficient transparency and controls exist in the budget planning and development process;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for budget planning and development, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Annual Budget Development Process

Leading Practices – Budget Planning and Development	Evidence of Adoption?
The annual budget development process is transparent, clearly communicated, and incorporates input from all key stakeholders including management (with principals), board of trustees and the community.	Yes
The annual budget presented for approval demonstrates that it is linked to the board-approved goals and priorities including student achievement targets. It provides useful and understandable information for all stakeholders.	Yes
Budget planning processes account for all required cost and revenue changes.	Yes

Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development

Leading Practices – Budget Planning and Development	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has adopted an integrated (at school board and school levels) approach to enrolment forecasting. This supports development of the staffing plan and the annual budget.	Yes

Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Leading Practices – Budget Planning and Development	Evidence of Adoption?
Management identifies and documents all significant risks during the budget planning process, and develops strategies to mitigate the risks of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels.	Yes

Annual Budget Development Process

The annual budget process at the Board is transparent, clearly communicated, and well documented. It incorporates input from all key stakeholders except from the local community. If possible, the Board should consider implementing a procedure to include the opinions of the local community.

The budget process extends from January to June every year. The executive committee meets in January for approval of the budget process. In February, the executive committee identifies the financial stakes and the broad directions for the following year. Capital projects, educational initiatives, the multi-year strategic plan, and the allocation table are reviewed to ensure that the budget's broad directions are aligned with these documents.

The executive committee sends a budget package with two years of history. Input is solicited from all departments, the Director of Education and school principals to update various sections of the budget package. A template created by the finance department is used to determine staffing needs in schools. The template contains around thirty indicators based on the Ministry's formula. Good communication between departments ensures teamwork. Once completed, the staffing budget document is presented to the Board in late April.

Specifically, the budget considers estimated enrolment, staffing allocations, employee benefits, and funding requests for various administrative, capital and educational projects.

Once the school board's revenue is confirmed against the proposed Grants for Student Needs (GSN), planned budget expenditures are reviewed and rationalized. The executive committee meets several times to review budget submissions and balance the existing constraints with improvement opportunities, in order to meet academic and operational objectives.

The finance department then brings forth the proposed budget to the Board for discussion, review and further direction. This document contains detailed information that includes key highlights along with original and revised budget estimates from prior years. It includes new expenditures and enhancements, an analysis of reserve fund balances, a comparison of grants by year, and a comparison of costs versus revenue for special education. Once the budget is approved by the Board, it is submitted to the Ministry of Education.

Management also builds contingency into its annual budget, primarily for school operational expenses and school capital projects. This information is shared with the finance committee. The use of these funds must be approved by senior management and ratified by the board of trustees.

Budget revisions, if any, are presented for Board approval in November. The revisions are generally in response to changes in the staffing model or funding changes announced by the Ministry.

Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development

Enrolment projections are prepared by the Superintendent of Business, in collaboration with superintendents and school principals responsible for elementary and secondary schools, and are presented to the executive committee. System-wide enrolment projections are produced annually for both elementary and secondary schools, are aggregated by grade, program, residency and age, and take into consideration past recruitment and retention rates. These projections are used for budget forecasts and reporting.

For enrolment projections, the Board relies on census data from Statistics Canada and demographic projections from external consultants (CN Watson). This information is combined with the schoollevel projections provided by the principals to create minimum projections for the next five years.

For secondary school projections, a grade-to-grade enrolment retention model is developed from historical data and in-year tracking of students who registered in or transferred out the system. Student enrolment numbers from Trillium are submitted by school principals on a monthly basis to ensure that the Board is kept informed of these numbers. As the budget development process includes school-level input, any significant change in the enrolment forecast is incorporated in the budget.

Staff planning is started early in the budget development process. A formal staffing plan is developed as part of the expenditure forecast by the superintendents of education responsible for elementary and secondary schools. The supervisor of payroll combines staff allocation with the qualifications and experience scatter grams and anticipated changes to salaries, and reflects this in the budget document. This enables finance staff to develop preliminary high-level expectations of the anticipated changes in revenue/cost compared to the previous year.

Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The key risk faced by the school board is the relationship between enrolment and grant revenue. The department mitigates the risk of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels by closely monitoring enrolment forecasts versus actual enrolment. It also ensures that the final expenditure budget incorporates all known cost changes, and that it is balanced against the Ministry grants. The budget always contains manoeuvring room for departments where risks are higher, specifically the maintenance, health, safety and security department. Contingencies are included in the budget at various degrees. For example, a contingency for two teaching positions (out of a total of 250) exists in the deployment budget. Administration manages enrolment risks by developing conservative staffing estimates, to gain flexibility if there is significant variance between forecasts and actual enrolment data.

The risks of spending beyond authorized or budgeted levels are mitigated through the procurement and budgeting controls of the current financial system, which uses commitment-based accounting. A purchase requisition that exceeds the available budget is flagged by the system. The requisition is forwarded to the purchasing supervisor who investigates the request further with the requisitioner. In addition, management also defers maintenance activities towards the end of the year to accommodate unforeseen maintenance emergencies that might occur during the school year.

Management noted that risks identified during the budget development process are orally communicated to the finance committee. As a next step, management is encouraged to document and share budget risks to ensure that committee members/trustees unable to attend meetings are also aware of the potential risks, the status of risks and proposed mitigation strategies. This becomes even more critical given the declining trend in the Board's reserves over the last few years.

4.3 Financial Reporting and Analysis

The purpose of reviewing Financial Reporting and Analysis processes is to:

- Assess whether procedures are in place to ensure that management, the board of trustees and the Ministry receives timely, accurate and complete financial information of all board activities;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiencies of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for Financial Reporting and Analysis, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

Leading Practices – Financial Reporting and Analysis	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board's integrated financial information system provides useful, timely and accurate information for management and stakeholders.	Yes

Interim and Annual Financial Reporting

Leading Practices – Financial Reporting and Analysis	Evidence of Adoption?
Interim financial reports provide sufficient detail (including a comparison of actual to budget and to appropriate benchmarks and with appropriate variance explanations) for a clear understanding of the status of the current year's budget and the outlook for the year.	Yes
Senior management is held accountable for the integrity of financial reporting through formal sign-off and approval procedures.	Yes

Leading Practices – Financial Reporting and Analysis	Evidence of Adoption?
Management completes and files all financial reports in accordance with established timelines.	Yes

Audit

Leading Practices – Financial Reporting and Analysis	Evidence of Adoption?
Management maintains an independent internal audit function.	No
Internal and external audit plans are clearly documented. Internal audit report recommendations are followed up and acted upon by management.	Yes
The board has an audit committee with external members as advisors.	No
The external auditor's planning and annual reports are presented to the board's audit committee, and any recommendations are acted upon by management.	Yes

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

The Board uses an integrated financial system (SAP) to record, track and report financial data. The SAP system is used by 11 French-language school boards that they are supported by the SAP centre of excellence. The system integrates general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget and purchasing modules. The financial system facilitates variance analysis and management reporting.

The supervisor of accounting sets up the chart of accounts in the financial system, maintains aliases, and manages access rights to the system, which are established by the audit and administrative support officer. The financial system allows budget holders (i.e., principals, managers and superintendents) to print their own budget tracking reports directly.

Interim Financial Reporting Accountability

It is recognized that variance in actual enrolment versus projections, combined with contract negotiations, macro-economic trends, Ministry directives and other circumstances, can produce inyear variances between budget estimates and actual costs. Interim financial reporting allows management to track these variances and communicate them to the trustees and other stakeholders. To that end, the finance staff prepares financial reports for review by the executive committee and the board of trustees as information items.

Quarterly summary reports are prepared for the executive committee for special projects. Interim financial statements for classroom and non-classroom expenditures are presented to the Board and the finance committee twice a year. The report includes budget versus actual for expenses and revenues along with the percentage expended up to that point in the year. The report points out variances and the reasons for them. The report is presented to the Board. However, the report does not provide variances against previous year spending trends.

School principals and the executive committee have permanent access to financial analysis tools via SAP. They can access summary reports whenever they wish to do so. However, some managers are more skilful than others at accessing the information. To address this problem, the finance department should ensure that access to summary reports is granted as needed. On the other hand, the finance department has recently implemented an executive information system intended for school principals and the executive committee.

The Board signs off on annual financial statements before they are presented to the Ministry and follows up on the management letter provided by external auditors.

Management completes and files all financial reports in accordance with established timelines as discussed with Ministry officials.

Internal Audit Function

The primary function of the internal auditor is to provide added assurance that internal controls established by management are operating effectively and in compliance with policies and procedures. The Board currently does not have an internal auditor. Management noted the lack of available funds to sustain such a position. Nevertheless, an audit and administration support officer is responsible for some aspects of internal audit, such as school activities.

Developing a mandate for the internal audit function would assist the executive committee and the board of trustees in their overall governance and accountability roles. The internal audit function can also help develop performance measures and indicators for programs and services. The function should report to the finance committee. The annual audit plans would be presented and approved by the committee, and all reports would be presented to the committee.

The Board has established a finance committee to assist it in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. The finance committee's primary duties and responsibilities are to:

- Identify and monitor the management of the principal risks that could impact the financial reporting of the Board.

- Monitor the integrity of the Board's financial reporting process and system of internal controls regarding financial reporting and accounting compliance.

- Monitor the independence and performance of the Board's external auditors

- Provide an avenue of communication between the external auditors and the Board which may include reporting to the board of trustees.

The finance committee comprises all trustees. A chair is elected by majority vote of the committee members. The committee meets at least once every quarter.

The committee chair prepares or approves the agenda in advance of each meeting, in consultation with the Board's staff, other committee members and external auditors. The committee relies on the Superintendent of Business and the finance manager or their designate as resources.

The committee is governed by terms of reference that are reviewed annually and submitted to the Board for approval if there are changes. The committee reviews the Board's annual audited financial statements and related documents. This includes discussion with management and external auditors of significant issues regarding accounting principles, practices, and significant estimates and judgments.

The Board has had the same external auditors since its inception in 1998. Management intends to issue an invitation to tender for auditing services in the next few years. We encourage this initiative.

The committee also consults with senior administration and the external auditors to review the integrity of the Board's financial reporting processes and controls, and to discuss significant financial risk exposures and the steps management has taken to monitor, control and report such exposures. In addition, the committee reviews significant findings prepared by the external auditors together with management's responses.

The finance committee is mandated to review the independence and performance of the auditors, recommend to the Board the appointment of the external auditors, and recommend any discharge of auditors when circumstances warrant. The committee also recommends the budget for fees and other significant compensation to be paid to the external auditors. It reviews the external auditors' audit plan and considers the external auditors' judgments about the quality and appropriateness of the Board's accounting principles, as applied in the financial reporting.

Upon submission of the financial statements, the finance committee reviews any legal matters that could have a significant impact on the financial statements, such as

compliance with applicable laws and regulations, and inquiries received from regulators or governmental agencies.

Along with significant changes in accounting in recent years, the complexity of the annual financial statements is increasing. Finance committee members must understand what constitutes sound internal accounting and operational control processes. Consideration should be given to adding external members to the finance committee who can act as advisors. The advisors would not be voting members, since current legislation recognizes only trustees as voting members on the Board's standing committees. The professional backgrounds of the external members could include accountants, lawyers or other professionals, depending on the needs of the committee and its mandate. This will ensure that an objective third-party view is applied to the review of financial statements, the auditor's report and in-year reports produced by management.

Recommendations

- Management should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls and adherence to Board policies. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated cost for each option.

- Management and the board of trustees should consider recruiting external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the finance committee.

4.4   Treasury Management

The purpose of reviewing treasury management processes is to assess:

- Whether processes are in place to ensure the optimal use of cash, investments and borrowings within school boards;

- Whether sufficient internal controls exist to support cash management, investments and borrowings;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for treasury management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Cash and Investment Management

Leading Practices – Treasury Management	Evidence of Adoption?
There is an efficient cash management process to maximize interest income, using short-term investments where appropriate.	Yes
Cash management activities are consolidated with a single institution.	Yes
Management periodically reports to the board on the performance of the investment activity, in accordance with the approved investment policy in accordance with the *Education Act*.	Yes
Management periodically compares the board's banking terms and conditions to those of similar school boards.	Yes
Management monitors financial risk related to cash/investment management, and has a plan to mitigate associated risks. Management performs regular cash/funding forecasting to ensure that the board's debt service costs can be met to maturity.	Yes

Management of School-Based Funds

Leading Practices – Treasury Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management ensures adequate controls are in place to safeguard non-school board funds and coordinate the annual reporting of revenues and expenditures from schools and school councils.	Yes

Cash and Investment Management

The Board has an account at the Caisse Populaire Desjardins that is governed by an agreement negotiated by the cluster of 11 French-language school boards. This cluster of school boards issues an invitation to tender on a three-year cycle. The Board maintains an annual credit line of $7 million and negotiates a prime rate of 1.75% on the average bank balance. The finance department has consolidated cash balance management with a single institution. Management analyzed financing opportunities and concluded that the prime rate was the best they could receive. The school board does not have any other investments besides the amounts in its high-yield account. The reserve has also been placed in an account with the same prime rate.

The finance department does not have to monitor cash balances, because the Board has sufficient funds in the bank. However, the finance department conducted a cash balance projection using estimates for five-year capital projects. As a result of this analysis, the Board recognizes that it will need to borrow funds in the next five years to pay for its capital projects. The Board is encouraged to continue monitoring its future capital needs, to estimate them regularly and to secure financing in advance.

The division of duties is ensured by daily bank reconciliations, which are approved by the accounting supervisor. Each quarter, comprehensive reconciliations are performed and approved by the accounting supervisor. The reconciliation of school taxes is performed with assistance from the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) that provides class category assessments for each municipality.

The required documents relating to agreements and contracts with financial institutions are classified systematically, and electronic copies are saved to prevent any information loss. Electronic signatures are used for cheques and other official documents. However, signatories are rarely asked to approve the use of their electronic signatures. The finance department is encouraged to implement a procedure that allows signatories to access a master list of cheques that were signed under their name.

The Board must also reserve funds to attend to unforeseen circumstances. Specifically, the Board holds reserves in the following categories – capital, carry-over funds, working funds and service and retirement gratuity. Management requires board of trustee approval to move funds from the operating or capital funds to the appropriate reserve. The Board's reserve funds have been drawn upon in the last few years to pay for special education expenses, management and operating expenses, educational projects and other unforeseen circumstances. The board of trustees and management should establish a guideline on a healthy reserve level specific to CSDCFN, and consider developing a plan to replenish the working fund reserve, as required.

Management of School-Based Funds

Schools maintain their own bank accounts. The Board recommends using the financial institution it has an agreement with, except when a branch does not exist nearby. The school board has adopted the "Guidelines for School Generated Funds" as developed by the finance committee of the Ontario Association of School Business Officials. These guidelines have been distributed to the schools, and a policy, revised in June 2005, was implemented.

School Cash.Net software is currently used to track the financial records of school-specific fundraising activities and to ensure the integrity of accountability for school-based funds. The Board is considering migrating financial records to the SAP system to centralize the system. The principals and secretaries were trained on the system, and new principals and secretaries are trained on the system as required. Schools are required to complete monthly bank reconciliations. Annually, schools submit a set of approved reports for in-year transactions and year-end bank reconciliation. The audit officer and external auditors conduct school-based audits every year.

The school secretaries are responsible for collecting funds at the school level. Even though the school board office provides standard forms for receiving cash at the school, the process is neither formalized nor consistently applied within all schools.

4.5 Non-Grant Revenue Management

The purpose of reviewing non-grant revenue management processes is to:

- Assess whether procedures are in place to ensure the timely, complete and accurate recording of the different types of non-grant revenue;

- Assess whether internal controls exist to support appropriate cash handling and cash management;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

Non-grant revenue management is a smaller functional area for the Board. The Board receives Education Programs – Other (EPO) funding from the Ministry for specific initiatives, which requires the Board to focus on the non-grant revenue line.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for non-grant revenue management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Policies, Procedures and Planning to Support Non-Grant Revenues

Leading Practices – Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
The board has established policies and/or procedures for the application of its fee structures.	Yes

Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues

Leading Practices – Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Electronic registration and payment systems are used where appropriate (e.g., continuing education, permitting of facilities and leasing).	Yes
Staff monitor all sources of revenue to ensure completeness and compliance with policies. Action plans and processes maximize collections including obtaining credit/risk assessments.	Yes
Board budget identifies revenue and expenditure for each EPO program. Management monitors activity to ensure compliance with terms and conditions.	Yes

Policy, Procedures and Planning to Support Non-Grant Revenues

The Board has the following potential sources of non-grant revenue:

- Community use of schools;

- Tuition agreements with band councils;

- Daycare operations (no revenue for 2007-2008).

The Board developed a policy that is available on the Board's website on the use and renting of schools by external organizations. This policy is used as a guideline for renting facilities, payment of permits and application of the fee structure.

The Board has good working relations with the Native bands. Management has noted that they have had no problem with the recovery of tuition fees due to the very low number of Natives in schools.

Monitoring Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenue

The Board currently does not use automated systems to collect non-grant revenue. However, the sums are very modest and represent less than $350,000 for the entire Board. In addition, the sums are fixed monthly amounts for the majority of schools (rental of school facilities), and the collection of those funds is not currently a problem.

The finance department has set up discrete accounts receivable to manage revenue from the band councils, as determined by the tuition agreements. The band councils are invoiced twice a year on 30-day payment terms. The recoveries made on this account are reported as a separate line item to the trustees in the quarterly financial reports.

EPO grants received by the school board are designated to appropriate superintendents and/or project leads. A new project code is created for each EPO grant in the financial system and assigned a G/L code with revenue and expense lines. The project leader assigned to these projects closely monitors the account and tracks in-year expenses.

Any carry-over of funds to the next academic year is reviewed by the executive committee and approved by the Director of Education and the Superintendent of Business.

4.6   Procurement

The purpose of reviewing procurement processes is to assess:

- Whether procurement policies and practices are in place to ensure that the school board acquires goods and services through an open, fair and transparent process;

- Whether appropriate internal controls exist to support the procurement and related payment process;

- Whether Board processes ensure the receipt of value for money from all acquired goods and services;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for Procurement, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Procurement Policies and Procedures

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Approved procurement policies and procedures are clearly communicated to staff with purchasing authority, and are periodically reviewed and updated.	No
Vendor selection criteria include elements other than the lowest cost, such as total cost of ownership, value, quality and competitive procurement (including the use of public advertising for FRPs and tenders over a defined level).	Yes
Purchasing managers monitor and ensure compliance with the board's procurement policies and procedures.	Yes

Participation in Buying Consortia

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
The procurement strategy includes the participation in consortia/ cooperatives for cost savings.	Yes
Management evaluate and develop strategies to increase purchasing power and minimize the cost of goods and services procured.	Yes

Purchasing Levels of Authority

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Purchasing authorization levels are commensurate to job title/role, and are monitored for compliance by a supervisor or department head.	No

Policies and Procedures for PCard/Corporate Card Use

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Policies and procedures for the use of PCards and corporate credit cards are documented and communicated to users through regular training and monitoring.	Yes

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Automated three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used.	Yes
Commitment accounting is in place to monitor budget utilization.	Yes
Management has implemented electronic supplier interface for ordering, processing and payment, including the use of supplier portals.	Yes

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Management maximizes its use of electronic funds transfer (EFT) for payments.	Yes

Procurement Policies and Procedures

The Board has an approved purchasing policy for the acquisition of quality goods and services, for all of its schools and departments. The policy is available on the Board's website, and was last revised in 2002. This policy must be reviewed, specifically because the approval limit thresholds are no longer current.

The Superintendent of Business assumes the overall responsibility for establishing and maintaining appropriate purchasing practices. The purchasing policy has been developed to:

- Ensure that good standards are maintained in the purchase of all goods and services;

- Ensure economical and efficient expenditure of tax dollars, by purchasing all goods and services on a competitive basis at the lowest cost consistent with the quality required;

- Provide a level of service to ensure goods and services are obtained within the timeframe requirements of the schools and departments;

- Avoid duplication, waste and obsolescence through standardization where applicable with respect to all purchases;

- Monitor all purchases and maintain consistency;

- Provide controls that will ensure compliance with all policies and procedures.

As stated in the policy, the school board endorses the procurement of supplies, equipment and services based on quality and not only on price.

Management ensures that new principals and trustees are informed of purchasing policies during initial orientation. Policies are further reinforced at monthly meetings with the principals where noncompliance issues are raised.

The school board has approved policies in accordance with the direction given by the Ministry in the spring of 2007. The following have been adopted and posted on the school board's website:

- Purchasing cards (reviewed in May 2007)

- Business trips (reviewed in November 2005)

- Purchasing (June 2002)

Participation in Buying Consortia

The Board collaborated with the Catholic School Boards Services Association (CSBSA) for the acquisition of electricity.

The Board participates in numerous consortia, such as:

- Purchasing services for pedagogical, office and custodial supplies with the CSC du Nouvel Ontario (Sudbury)

- Nipissing Parry Sound school transportation services with four neighbouring school boards

- Teleconferencing services with the 12 French-language school boards

- Bond services through the Ontario School Board Financing Corporation (OSBFC)

- Research and support relating to labour relations through the Labour Relations office for the 12 French-language school boards

- SAP support services through the SAP excellence centre for 11 French-language school boards

- Liability and property insurance through the Ontario School Board Insurance Exchange (OSBIE) for Ontario school boards

- Workplace safety insurance through School Board Cooperative Insurance (SBCI)

- Group purchasing of administrative services and tendering for collective insurance with the 12 French-language school boards

Purchasing Levels of Authority

The purchasing policy outlines the following dollar thresholds/requirements for purchasing, which are too low and must be reassessed when the policy is updated:

- For purchasing orders between $1,000 and $3,000, written quotations are requested from three known possible suppliers.

- For purchases over $3,000, public advertisements are placed for an invitation to tender, provided the items lend themselves to competitive bidding.

The finance management team ensures adherence to policy requirements. However, the policy does not outline specific purchasing authorization levels. Management should consider revising the policy to include approval levels that are commensurate to job title/role.

It was also noted that the purchasing policy has neither been reviewed nor updated since 2002. Management has identified a policy review in this year's operational plan in respect of new requirements for capital accounting. Once reviewed, the finance department should communicate the changes to staff throughout the Board.

Policies and Procedures for Purchase Card/Corporate Card Use

The Board has clearly communicated a policy for the use of purchasing cards, which is current as of May 2007.

All requests for purchasing cards must be approved by the Director or his or her designate, who then reviews the policy with the employee upon approval. Expense receipts are submitted to the secretary of the Superintendent of Business, or a

designate, and statements with attached receipts are approved by the Director and Superintendent of Business or designates.

Similar to other school boards in northern Ontario, some staff incur significant travel expenditures. The administration uses about 50 purchasing cards for the entire Board and its schools. On average, the Board spends $25,000 per month with the purchasing cards.

Currently, the Board does not distribute corporate credit cards. Purchasing cards offer maximum purchasing efficiency while ensuring budgetary control, and therefore, they are the preferred practice.

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

The Board predominantly relies on the procurement module integrated into its finance system to process its purchase-to-payment cycle. School secretaries or department secretaries create an electronic requisition in the SAP system. The principal or department head approves the requisition in the system. The requisition is automatically approved if the requisition is under the approved limit. If the requisition is over the approved limit, the system denies the transaction.

The electronic requisition is then reviewed by the central purchasing department for policy compliance, to ensure proper taxes are applied and to isolate requisitions that exceed the available budget. The creation of an electronic requisition in the system generates an accounting commitment. Once the requisition has been approved and submitted online, it automatically encumbers those funds against the budget. A system-generated warning appears if a purchase order exceeds the budget. In those cases, requisitions are forwarded to the finance department head for further approval. All other requisitions are saved and approved, and a purchase order (PO) is automatically created. A preliminary list of invoices is printed and reviewed by the accounting supervisor before payment is authorized.

Goods are shipped directly to the site except when bulk purchases are made by the central Board office, in which case the goods are received at the Board office. At the receiving location, two-way matching is done between the packing slip and the PO. The Board office receives the invoice from the vendor and matches it against the PO. These invoices are entered in the system with a hold that is released only after confirmation is received from the schools.

To complete the purchase-to-payment cycle, the preliminary invoice batch listing is reviewed for accuracy against actual POs. Following a review of the final invoice listing, an electronic payment is made or cheques are issued to the vendors. Invoices received by the finance department without a matching PO are sent to the schools for approval and account details.

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer for Greater Efficiency (EFT)

The Board currently uses electronic funds transfer (90%) to process payroll remittances, while other payments are made by cheque. The Board has recently taken the initiative to encourage its suppliers to use EFT. This practice is exemplary and should be continued.

Recommendation

- The finance department should review and amend its purchasing policy to ensure that approval limit thresholds are commensurate with job title/role. This would ensure that CSDCFN needs are in line with that of other school boards.

5. School Operations and Facilities Management – Findings and Recommendations

Efficient and effective management of the board's facilities (particularly schools) is an important factor in student achievement. Along with providing a positive learning environment for students, this function sets and meets standards of cleanliness and maintenance, examines opportunities to increase energy efficiency, and addresses the health, safety and security requirements of the board. Management uses cost efficient and effective processes in the design and construction of new facilities.

The following is a summary of our assessment of the board's adoption of the leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of the review of data provided by the board and on-site field work, which included interviews with all key school operations and facilities management staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

5.1 Operations and Facilities Organization

The purpose of reviewing the organization of operations and facilities is to assess:

- Whether the board of trustees and management have established policies and procedures that support the key departmental functions and activities, strong internal controls and financial management;

- Whether the department supports the overall goals, priorities, and accountability established by the school board in support of student achievement targets and strategies;

- The efficiency and effectiveness of the departmental structure and whether roles and responsibilities support the key functions/activities and the required business practices;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for the operations and facilities organization, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The operations and facilities department's goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan that is aligned to the annual board improvement plan and is accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified accountability.	Yes

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The operations and facilities department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates respective roles and responsibilities. A current organizational chart is available.	Yes
Senior operations and facilities staff have appropriate designations (e.g. P.Eng.) and relevant field experience.	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policies

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor departmental policy compliance.	Yes
Processes exist to monitor new legislation and regulations and implement necessary changes.	Yes
Management provides scheduled policy awareness, and training to address ongoing skill development and emerging regulatory issues.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The maintenance, health, safety and security department develops a brief annual operating plan that includes objectives rated by priority. Each objective is paired with a lead department, allocated budget and proposed timelines. The first priority of the maintenance, health, safety and security department remains health, safety and

security. Some of the highlights from the department's 200809 operating plan include the implementation of standard operating procedures, updating the 10-year capital plan, the upgrade of equipment and invitations to tender for 2008-09 facility renewal projects.

While the department should be recognized for adopting some level of annual planning, there are opportunities to improve the rigor and alignment of this process. Specifically, the plan can be strengthened by aligning it directly to the Board's overall strategic plan and its annual improvement plan. It would also be useful to provide more details on a few activities so that departmental and other Board staff can better understand the annual priorities.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The maintenance, health, safety and security department reports to the director of maintenance, health, safety and security, who oversees facility renewal and capital planning as well as maintenance and custodial services. The director of maintenance, health, safety and security is supported by a maintenance, health, safety and security officer, a handyperson and a custodian. The Board also has 40 custodians and 19 replacement custodians across the system.

The roles and responsibilities for these positions are clearly outlined in the organization chart, and are well understood within the organization. Key department staff have appropriate professional designations and/or related field experience, and are involved in various provincial committees to keep abreast with best practices and new directives.

A particularity of the CSDCFN is that maintenance, system renovations and renewal projects are all performed by suppliers, and none of them are employed directly by the Board, except for custodians who report directly to schools. It was noted that no cost comparisons has been performed between Board employees and external suppliers. The Board should consider performing a cost analysis to ensure that the current procedure offers the best value.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The Board has various policies and operating procedures relating to the management of its facilities and operations. Policies cover areas such as asbestos management, school construction and renewal, and safety and fire inspections. Management oversight ensures policy compliance.

The maintenance, health, safety and security department also coordinates the following periodic initiatives: monthly fire alarm testing, monthly and annual fire extinguisher verifications, boiler cleaning and maintenance, daily water flushing and recording, annual lead testing in water systems and annual comprehensive hazardous waste management program.

The director of maintenance, health, safety and security is responsible for communicating policy and regulatory changes to the administration, school principals, custodians and community on an as needed basis. Custodians participate in training session annually and as needed throughout the year.

5.2 Custodial and Maintenance Operations

The purpose of reviewing all processes relating to custodial and maintenance operations is to assess:

- Whether custodial and maintenance services are responding effectively and efficiently to maintaining an optimized learning environment for students;

- Whether the department has the appropriate organizational structure to effectively manage service delivery;

- Whether appropriate internal controls exist to effectively manage custodial and maintenance operations and expenditures;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for custodial and maintenance operations, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

The Board's Staffing Model/Allocation Supports the Cleaning Standards and Maintenance Requirements.

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
The board has adopted cleaning standards and has developed a standard set of processes and tools to monitor, manage, and report on results.	Yes
Management's custodial/maintenance allocation model optimizes the use of staff.	Yes

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
Using stakeholder input, management develops an annual and multi-year (three to five years) maintenance plan that addresses preventative and deferred maintenance priorities. Outcomes improve the learning environment for students. The plan optimizes the use of available funding (Annual Renewal Grant and Good Places to Learn funding) and is approved by the board.	Yes

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
A monitored annual training plan for staff addresses ongoing skill development and emerging regulatory issues.	Yes

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
An inventory system tracks and controls major cleaning and maintenance equipment.	No
Common standards ensure efficient procurement of supplies to minimize costs and promote energy and operating efficiency.	Yes

Project Management, Monitoring and Support Systems

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
A work-order system and process records, monitors, and evaluates projects ensuring the effective use of resources.	No
Management regularly evaluates the overall effectiveness and efficiency of its maintenance and custodial service practices.	Yes

Staffing Model Supports the Board's Cleaning and Maintenance Standards

The maintenance, health, safety and security department developed a list of specific tasks to accomplish using DANIELS software and in consultation with CUPE Local 2799 representatives, school principals and the HR department. Employees must also use their judgement to prioritize some of their daily tasks, because resources are not sufficient to accomplish every task on a daily basis.

Cleaning standards are checked by school principals. In the past few years, the department bought equipment to improve maintenance staff performance and to reduce the risk of physical injuries: auto scrubbers, polishers, snow blowers, lawn tractors, etc.

The maintenance, health, safety and security department has developed a custodial allocation model for the optimum use of resources to implement the school board's cleaning standards and practices. Custodial staff allocation is based on two factors: building size and student population. The formula is different for elementary and secondary schools. The actual allocation is slightly higher than it should be by around 40 to 50 hours per week for the entire Board, which means on average two to three hours for each school per week. Work is divided between school day schedules and evening schedules to maximize staff allocation. In small schools (less than 100 students), 100 percent of maintenance work is performed by the day custodian. In large schools, day custodians perform between 25 to 40 percent of the cleaning and maintenance work.

In the past six years, the capital department has reduced the maintenance allocation to reduce the deficit in the operational budgeting and to align itself with Ministry grants. Cuts have always been made through attrition in order to minimize job loss. During the same period, additional duties were imposed on maintenance staff to ensure compliance with various regulations and the Board's risk management program. The amalgamation of the St-Joseph and Écho-Jeunesse schools in Sturgeon Falls as well as the amalgamation of Ste-Anne and St-Paul in North Bay will help the Board in its operations and will allow it to add more maintenance staff in its schools.

The Board currently has 40 full and part time employees and 19 casual employees in the custodial department. On average, one custodial employee is needed for every three classrooms.

The department has developed standard operating procedures to maintain consistent cleanliness standards across the multiple sites. A custodial manual has been developed to:

- Provide instructions and guidelines to promote uniform and safe standards across the district

- Provide a comprehensive document to assist all custodial staff in accomplishing daily tasks

- Improve standards and work practices

- Ensure compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Except for a handyperson who works for the Board, the CSDCFN does not of have anyone on the maintenance staff who carries out small maintenance jobs, nor does it have handypersons in its schools. The Board relies on external contractors to perform the majority of these tasks.

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

The Board's infrastructure comprises 16 schools, all of which are aging; 93% of the total footage is over 35 years of age, and 29% is over 45 years of age. Out of the total, 75% of schools were declared prohibitive-to-repair. Management conducted a comprehensive site review in February 2005 to develop a multi-year maintenance plan. The maintenance, health, safety and security department uses the ReCAPP software to perform a comprehensive inventory of all the Board's schools. The collected data is combined with maintenance work orders. Based on this and consultations with the school principals, maintenance supervisors and custodial and maintenance staff, a 10-year multi-year maintenance plan was developed. The plan was reviewed by the executive committee before being submitted for board of trustee approval.

Major renewal and maintenance projects are issued directly from the ReCAPP software, and are prioritized according to the software's program. Urgent problems are relayed directly to the director of maintenance, health, safety and security by telephone.

The department solicits annual input from principals, which allows each school community to participate in establishing requirements for learning environments. The annual planning allows the Board to receive feedback, to identify capital needs and to develop annual maintenance programs.

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

Management supports the skills development of its custodial staff. The department has developed an orientation package for new hires that includes information on protocols, collective agreements and administrative requirements. This is supplemented with an annual professional development day and other one-time training sessions throughout the year. Training focuses on diverse topics such as procedures when working alone, ladder safety, health and safety standards, first aid, the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), the use of cleaning products, falls, slips, trips, reasonable diligence and workplace inspection.

The maintenance, health, safety and security department does not have any facility staff, such as architects, electricians, plumbers, etc., and therefore does not have a professional development plan for this category.

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

Custodial supplies are managed by school administrations. Schools are free to manage their supplies as they see fit. A purchasing consortium for maintenance supplies was implemented with the Nouvel-Ontario school board, and some maintenance supplies are bought through this consortium. The total costs of maintenance supplies are minimal, representing around $4,000 to $6,000 annually for each school. According to school principals, these small expenditures do not justify implementing a management procedure for maintenance supplies.

In 1988, the Board conducted an in-depth study of maintenance supplies, their costs and their performance, and developed a list of the best products, which was then distributed to schools. The Board intends to conduct another similar study, but it is currently waiting for the results of the analysis of environmental-friendly products undertaken by theCouncil of Senior Business Officials (COSBO) committee.

The Board's recent purchases of mostly new equipment do not yet require implementing a maintenance and inventory procedure. Despite the fact that the Board is small and maintenance costs are minimal, the Board is nevertheless encouraged to implement a management procedure for maintenance supplies in schools to ensure that purchased maintenance supplies and equipment are the most effective and efficient.

Project Management, Monitoring and Supporting Systems

The Board has developed a custodial/maintenance procedures manual with standard operating procedures and guidelines to promote consistent and safe standards. Custodial supervisors conduct quality assurance audits every month. These audits are reviewed by the manager, and a copy is maintained both at the Board office and at the schools.

Currently, the director of maintenance, health, safety and security, with the assistance of school principals, manages projects by identifying minor maintenance work and renewal projects. The director of maintenance, health, safety and security monitors this list and identifies when each project must be completed and by whom (either by the Board's handyperson, consultants such as architects and engineers and/or external contractors or suppliers). If the work is carried out in-house, a message is relayed to the handyperson, who performs the work and notifies the Board upon completion. If the work is carried out externally, the director of maintenance, health, safety and security is responsible for managing projects using the list of projects.

In 1999, the Board considered purchasing a work order software (Edulog, now known as School Dude). Despite the advantages of such a system, its cost of $50,000 could not be justified considering the Board's size and the small amount of work and annual projects. However, the size and scope of the Board's projects in the next five years will

increase significantly. The Board is encouraged to assess the cost/benefits of a new work order system.

Recommendations

- Given that the school board recently bought new cleaning equipment, it should consider developing procedures to track its inventory and maintain a database on the age, location and state of the equipment.

- The maintenance, health, safety and security department should research the cost/benefit of a new automated work order system to streamline the management, dispatch, tracking and reporting of facility renewal and general maintenance work orders.

5.3   Energy Management

The purpose of reviewing all related energy management processes is to assess:

- Whether adequate planning and communication exist to support the reduction of energy consumption;

- Whether school board structure and processes are in place to ensure that energy is procured for the lowest cost;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for energy management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Energy Management Plan

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has established a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates measures to be implemented and the tools to monitor and manage the plan.	No
Purchasing practices support energy conservation objectives (e.g., Energy Star products, leveraging consortia membership).	Yes
Successful conservation initiatives are shared across all schools and with other school boards.	Yes

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management provides formal annual reporting on the conservation savings achieved against plan.	No
A comprehensive system exists to budget expenditures, track consumption, and identify opportunities for further savings.	No
Billing for all board facilities is consolidated from each utility.	No
Centralized technology that automates energy regulation and conservation (e.g., light control, desktop power) is used wherever practical.	Yes

Energy Management Plan

Management has a multi-year energy management strategy that focuses on replacing aging building components (boilers, windows and roofs) in order to gain significant energy savings. A Good Places to Learn (GPL) project summary report for 2008-18 was prepared and presented to the trustees.

The energy management initiatives are led by the director of the maintenance, health, safety and security. Projects are prioritized based on the estimated payback period. Energy conservation projects are typically financed by GPL funding. The Board works in collaboration with the NouvelOntario school board to share effective practices for renewal and energy management.

The Board has also incorporated energy management into its school curriculum, and all its facilities participate in a recycling program. The Board implemented a recycling program, "moins de déchets, ça s'fait" [Waste, *not!*], intended for the local community, parents and students.

One of the major obstacles to implementing an energy management solution in CSDCFN schools is the large number of PTR schools. The Board cannot implement energy efficiency measures in buildings that are to be replaced with new schools in the next few years. However the Board is focusing its efforts on the optimization of energy costs. Each year, the Board determines the amount of gas to buy at a fixed rate in November. The fixed rate was $0.36/m³ for 2008-2009, and then the rate varied between $0.213/m³ and $0.25/m³ between November 2008 and March 2009. The Board saved significantly, having bought only 15% of gas at the fixed rate. If prices continue to fall at its current rate, the Board intends to buy a larger amount of gas to ensure the best value for the 20092010 school year.

The Board's purchasing policy does not require the purchase of energy efficient new equipment, such as Energy Star products. Equipment for new school sites is specified

by engineers, which is then approved by management. The purchasing policy should be reviewed annually to ensure that energy efficient goods are purchased system-wide.

The Board should continue to expand its existing energy management initiatives. Furthermore, management should develop a system-wide, multi-year energy management plan, with appropriate consumption reduction targets.

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

Management prepares reports that track annual costs of utilities for all sites, including electricity, heating and water/sewage, along with the cost per square foot. In some schools, the Board implemented a building monitoring system that regulates inside temperatures according to usage and outside temperatures and turns off ventilation systems when the building is not in used. This initiative is exemplary, but it has not yet been expanded to all of the Board's schools. Management is encouraged to track energy and water consumption in all its schools to effectively monitor the results of conservation initiatives.

The Board does not have consolidated billing across its multiple sites. Given the geographical diversity of the Board, schools are attached to different utility companies. As a result, the Board will not likely be able to consolidate utility billing across all sites. However, management is encouraged to explore opportunities to consolidate utility billing to facilitate administrative work.

Recommendations

- The Board should concentrate its energy management initiatives. It should develop a systemwide, multi-year energy management plan, with appropriate consumption reduction targets. The Board should also ensure that it has tracking mechanisms in place to monitor consumption and energy costs for periodic reporting to the individual schools, the executive committee and the board of trustees.

- Management should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption, and reduce the workload in the accounts payable department.

5.4   Health, Safety and Security

The purpose of reviewing all the Health, Safety and Security processes is to assess:

- Whether adequate planning and communication exist to support the provision of a safe teaching and learning environment;

- Whether school board structure and processes are in place to implement safety precautions;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for health, safety and security, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development, Monitoring, and Tracking of Policies and Plans for Health, Safety and Security

Leading Practices – Health, Safety and Security	Evidence of Adoption?
The maintenance of health, safety and security policies and the development of appropriate plans ensure compliance with statutory health, safety and security requirements.	Yes
The security code policy includes alert codes that reflect the situation and threat level, and identify departmental responsibilities.	Yes
Security incidents are tracked by type of incident (e.g., property damage, intrusion, etc.).	Yes
Operations management follows Ministry guidelines, policy and legislation on healthy schools.	Yes
Safe school teams responsible for school safety (e.g., PPM 144) are implemented in every school.	Yes
Water and air quality standards are monitored and issues are reported for corrective action.	Yes

Development, Monitoring and Tracking of Policies and Plans for Health, Safety and Security

The health and safety portfolio is led by the health and safety officer, who reports to the director of the facilities department. The administrative assistant is responsible for issues relating to student health.

The Board has an approved health and safety policy that is current as of December 2008. Management and employees are jointly responsible for implementing and maintaining a joint health and safety committee (JHSC) to promote health and safety and prevent incidents leading to occupational injuries and illnesses. The JHSC prepares an annual health and safety plan that is approved by the trustees.

According to the policy, the trustees are responsible for supporting and facilitating the JHSC's mission, and dedicating resources for preventative activities. The HR department is responsible for communicating with the maintenance, health, safety and security department when there are staff changes, and for updating orientation kits with prevention documents produced by the maintenance, health, safety and security department. Board supervisors (which include principals, superintendents, etc.) must provide information, training, equipment and resources to support the internal accountability system. Managers, principals and supervisors are responsible for the safety of their staff, and for ensuring compliance with statutory and Board requirements.

The JHSC, composed of seven union and non-union representatives and seven management representatives, meets four times a year to discuss Board-wide issues.

The health and safety officer along with the director of the facilities department and Superintendent of Business are available as resources for the committee.

Health and safety initiatives recommended by either the joint health and safety committee or the health and safety officer are submitted to the Director of Education for feedback and approval. The Director brings the subject to the executive committee, and relays the response back to the JHSC. Approved initiatives are communicated to principals and managers, who are provided with the necessary resources to implement them.

Health and safety training is provided to all new Board employees. In addition, training is provided to the school principals and site managers on laws and regulations related to legal liability and health and safety issues. The department has developed a health and safety manual that outlines information pertaining to health and safety responsibilities, legislative requirements and procedures around workplace accidents, health and safety concerns, fire safety, lock-out procedures, WHMIS information, chemical safety, asbestos management program, potential hazards and protective equipment.

Vandalism is not a major issue at the Board, but it is tracked on an incident basis. The Board has implemented a policy to promote an anti-bullying environment, which is the responsibility of the superintendents of education.

The priority of healthy schools for students is the responsibility of all staff. "Safe and healthy schools" is one of the conditions reflected in the strategic plan. The Board has engaged its local public health unit to support these initiatives. The administrative assistant negotiated with school cafeteria suppliers and distributers to follow the Ministry's recommendations to ban trans fats, soda, etc.

At the level of the maintenance, health, safety and security department, commitment to healthy schools can be found in the annual school renewal and refurbishment activities

performed each spring and summer. Current projects include upgrades to school entrance accessibility, and reductions in slips and falls.

The superintendents of education and school principals are responsible for school safety. The CSDCFN has developed an emergency booklet that includes alert codes to reflect the situation and threat level, and identifies specific departmental responsibilities.

The school board also has an active asbestos management program across all its sites.

5.5   Capital Plans, Policies and Procedure

The purpose of reviewing capital plans, policies and procedures is to:

- Assess whether school capital assets are being utilized effectively and efficiently;

- Assess how well management is planning for future capital requirements, based on enrolment forecasts and the capacity/maintenance issues of the existing asset base, relative to the funding available from the Ministry (i.e. NPP funding);

- Assess whether management is appropriately prioritizing the maintenance and renewal expenditures in light of the available Ministry funding and multi-year capital programs;

- Identify appropriate controls and transparency within the current planning process;

- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for capital plans, policies and procedures, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board has an approved annual and multi-year capital program that includes the related funding plan.	Yes
The school board has an approved pupil accommodation review policy.	Yes

On-going Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board maintains accurate and up-to-date inventories of school capacity and utilization.	Yes
Capital forecasts and related funding plans are assessed annually and adjusted to meet current needs and changes to original assumptions such as enrolment projections and capital grants.	Yes
The accuracy of capital forecasts and related funding plans is assessed annually to reflect current needs and changes to original assumptions, such as enrolment projections.	Yes
An accurate and current assessment of facility conditions is maintained, based on industry standards (using ReCAPP methodology).	Yes

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

In January 2005, after extensive rationalization and renewal planning, the board of trustees approved a long-term capital investment plan for 2005-2010. In compliance with Ministry requirements, the Board has completed its capital liquidity template, which was approved by the Ministry in October 2008.

The Ministry created the Good Places to Learn (GPL) initiative to deal with high and urgent needs identified in the Renewal Capital Asset Planning Process (ReCAPP). The department prepares an annual list of capital projects (including facility renewal projects and GPL projects) that will be undertaken in the upcoming academic year. The Ministry provides each project with budget estimates, funding sources, designated lead, total costs and status update. This is supplemented by periodic reports that track the completion status of these projects. Annual renewal projects are primarily selected from the ReCAPP database combined with consultations with the school principals and maintenance and caretaking departments. Projects are short-listed based on historic maintenance costs, potential energy savings, payback period and potential implication on other components. Projects not identified in ReCAPP may also be chosen based on the specific needs of a school.

The Board's focus to date with GPL funding has been on roofs, boilers and windows in the schools. For Phase 2 of the GPL funding, the Board has identified eight schools to be replaced, which are included in its five-year capital plan.

The maintenance, health, safety and security staff conducts annual site visits to assess and monitor facility conditions. The area coordinator incorporates the utility and operating costs trends from the last five years in the capital planning process. For the current academic year, the Board chose renewal projects totalling $1.3 million. The

projects include roof replacements, exterior facility upgrades, flooring replacements, public address system upgrades, heating/ventilation/electrical upgrades and site upgrades/paving.

The school board has an approved policy on pupil/school accommodation review that was last updated in September 2002. The fire safety inspection process for the Board's student facilities includes the following inspection intervals:

- Daily, weekly and monthly inspections performed by custodians,

- Annual and bi-annual inspections performed by contractors.

The Board completes a pupil accommodation review process each year to determine renewal needs for the upcoming year. The Board requested $94.8 million in Prohibitive-to-Repair (PTR) funding to replace six out of the eight schools judged to be prohibitive to repair.

The decision was preceded by public consultation meetings, and local accommodation review committees (ARCs) were appointed by the Board in four schools. Their mandate was to:

- review the capital planning process and the Ministry prohibitive-to-repair funding and accommodation review policy;

- finalize the valuation framework;

- develop a final report for the executive committee based on public input.

Senior board management prepared administrative recommendations after assessing the deliberations of the ARC public meetings and the recommendations in the ARC final reports.

Ongoing Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning

The department follows a specific process to update the ReCAPP database. The director of facilities sets priorities for the coming year with regard to facility upgrades. The director identifies problem areas and items of concern for possible upgrade or replacement. A ReCAPP report is printed out to determine which elements have been flagged in the database, and a comparison is made to prioritize projects. The information is used to determine the projects that will proceed to the planning stage.

Subsequently, further investigation of the project is conducted to determine the exact condition of the components, resulting in further updates to the ReCAPP database. The project is then budgeted and tendered. Completed projects are entered into the ReCAPP database annually in one of two categories – one category includes all GPL

projects, and the other includes all facility renewal projects completed for that year. The database is then archived. The Board recognizes that updates to the ReCAPP database are sometimes delayed due to the amount of time it takes to enter all necessary data. The Board is encouraged to keep the ReCAPP updated whenever possible.

The Board maintains a detailed inventory of school capacity, which includes the number of students and schools, by using the Student Facilities Inventory System (SFIS). In order to identify the net operating cost of each school, the Board develops a financial profile of schools every two years. This financial profile compares incoming grant revenue with classroom and non-classroom costs. This analysis provides details on variances. The Board encourages the community to use school facilities in collaboration with local partners, such as Collège Boréal.

5.6   Construction Management

The purpose of reviewing all related construction management processes is to assess and identify:

- Whether processes are in place to ensure that school boards complete construction projects on-time, on-budget and with due regard to economy;

- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for construction management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management uses cost-effective designs, standard footprints, energy conservation and economical construction practices to minimize construction, maintenance and operation costs.	Yes
Management maintains standard policy and procedures to rationalize construction projects, including benchmarking against other school board construction costs and design standards (including coterminous boards).	Yes

Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
An effective management process monitors and controls construction projects and their costs. This includes periodic project status updates and post-construction project evaluation.	Yes

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management evaluates and updates the approved list of contractors, architects, and related professionals periodically, ideally in 5-year cycles).	Yes

Cost-Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

The Board is currently planning to replace the following elementary schools: Écho-Jeunesse, St Paul, Ste Anne (North Bay), Cité des Jeunes, Lorrain, Mariale, Ste Anne (Mattawa) and St Thomas d'Aquin. Standard footprint management does not apply to this Board due to the low number of new schools being constructed. As for site selection, the Board tries to construct on existing sites to avoid the high costs of new construction sites. For each new school built to replace an old school, the Board will undertake a comparative study of available sites to lower costs. The Board always consults with specialists and external consultants during the design phase to ensure that the design complies with legislation.

The Board undertakes renewal projects each year. Capital projects are implemented according to the Board's multi-year plan and needs. The Board does not have a site acquisition policy, because the Board constructs mainly on existing sites. If the director of maintenance, health, safety and security recommends the purchase of a construction site, the director will then request official Board authorization. Even though leading practices are in place, the Board is encouraged to write an official policy on site acquisitions.

The director of maintenance, health, safety and security compares per-square-foot construction costs between the Board's different projects and with those of other school boards. The director reports twice a year to senior administration and the board of trustees to justify budget variances.

Monitoring and Reporting of Progress on Construction Projects

At this point, all capital projects are managed by the director of maintenance, health, safety and security. The director of maintenance, health, safety and security is also

responsible for implementing procedures to monitor the budgets of capital projects. The director works in close collaboration with the Superintendent of Finance. Estimations for each step are used to ensure that the project does not exceed the budget. If the project is over budget, the director finds opportunities to reduce costs in other areas or seeks additional financing opportunities.

The director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department is responsible for presenting renewal and construction updates to the board of trustees. Follow-ups are ensured through the board-wide review and analysis committee. In addition, the director of the maintenance, health, safety and security department prepares progress reports for the Board (e.g., once building designs are finalized). The trustees become involved when the budget must be increased. In order to ensure formal follow-ups on capital projects, a comprehensive report on renewal and construction funding could be presented to the board of trustees annually or semi-annually (in addition to the annual budget activities).

The loans needed by the maintenance, health, safety and security department are calculated several ways. First, the Board requests funding from the Ministry. If the Ministry is unable to provide funding for pre-approved projects, the Board can borrow the necessary funds while it waits for the next provincial funding round. This system allows the Board to ensure timely bill payments. A credit rating agency gave the CSDCFN an AA rating.

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

Contractors for all capital projects are selected through a tendering process. Contractors are reviewed after every project by management for future projects. The Board intends to undertake numerous renewal and construction projects in the next five years to replace PTR schools. The Board established a master list of approved vendors/suppliers for these projects.

In addition, the Board has a formal approval process for vendors/suppliers. When the Board issues an invitation to tender, a criteria list is used to select the best supplier. This list varies from one tender to another, but it generally contains the following criteria:

- Vendor profile

- Employee résumés

- Vendor's similar experiences

- Methodology

- References

- Vendor's understanding of project, ideas and opinions

- Proposed timeline

- Interview

- Price

The Board has a policy on the tendering process for capital construction projects (under the purchasing policy), which was last revised in 2002. Given the current construction projects, management should consider reviewing the policy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of the Operational Review
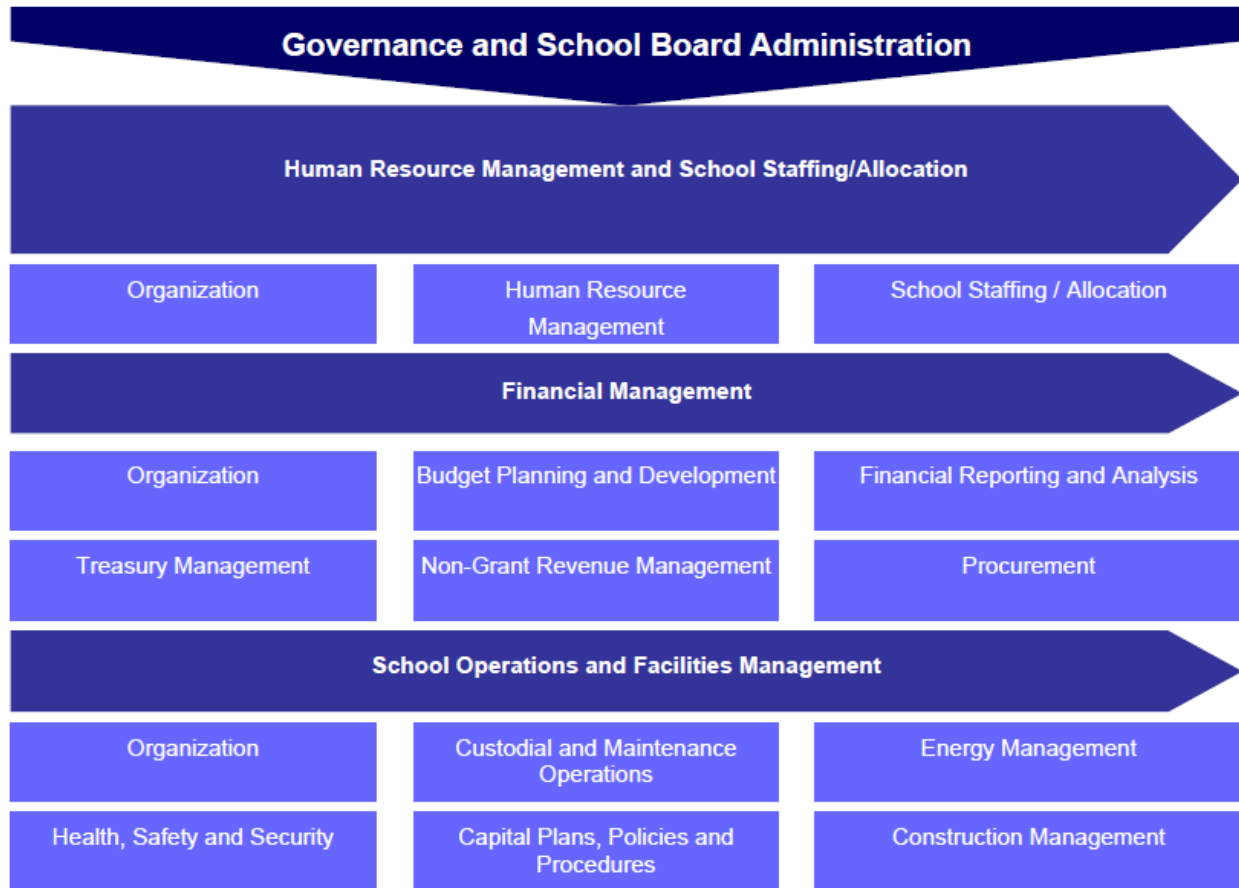
Operational Review Objectives

In order to perform an effective and consistent operational review, the Ministry has worked with independent consultants to develop a Sector Guide that defines consistent standards and leading practices against which the operational reviews and analysis will be based.

Recognizing the unique characteristics of each DSB, the specific purpose of the Operational Reviews is to:

- Strengthen management capacity in school boards by developing recommendations that support improvement in non-academic operations;

- Highlight existing successful business practices used by school boards, to the sector and to school board communities;

- Leverage "Best Practices" across the education sector;

- Provide support and assistance to ensure that school boards are financially healthy, well managed, and positioned to direct optimum levels of resources to support student achievement;

- Provide the Ministry with important input on DSB capacity/capabilities for consideration in the ongoing development of policy and funding mechanisms.

Operational Review Summary Scope

The scope of the Operational Review consists of the following functional areas, which have been divided into key processes as shown below. The processes represent the end-to-end lifecycle of activities performed by school boards under each functional area. Each of the processes was examined based on its activities and its adoption of sector agreed leading practices, including alignment and support of student achievement strategies.

Governance and School Board Administration

Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation

| Organization | Human Resource Management | School Staffing / Allocation |

Financial Management

| Organization | Budget Planning and Development | Financial Reporting and Analysis |
| Treasury Management | Non-Grant Revenue Management | Procurement |

School Operations and Facilities Management

| Organization | Custodial and Maintenance Operations | Energy Management |
| Health, Safety and Security | Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures | Construction Management |

Operational Review Summary Approach

The high level Operational Review approach is shown below. The timing for the end-to-end process will vary depending on school board size and complexity.

Observations and assessments are made by the Operational Review Team based on a set of agreed upon leading practices designed for each functional area. The onsite reviews allow the team to validate ministry and board data, provide a better understanding of the environmental conditions, and review materials that support the existence leading practices.
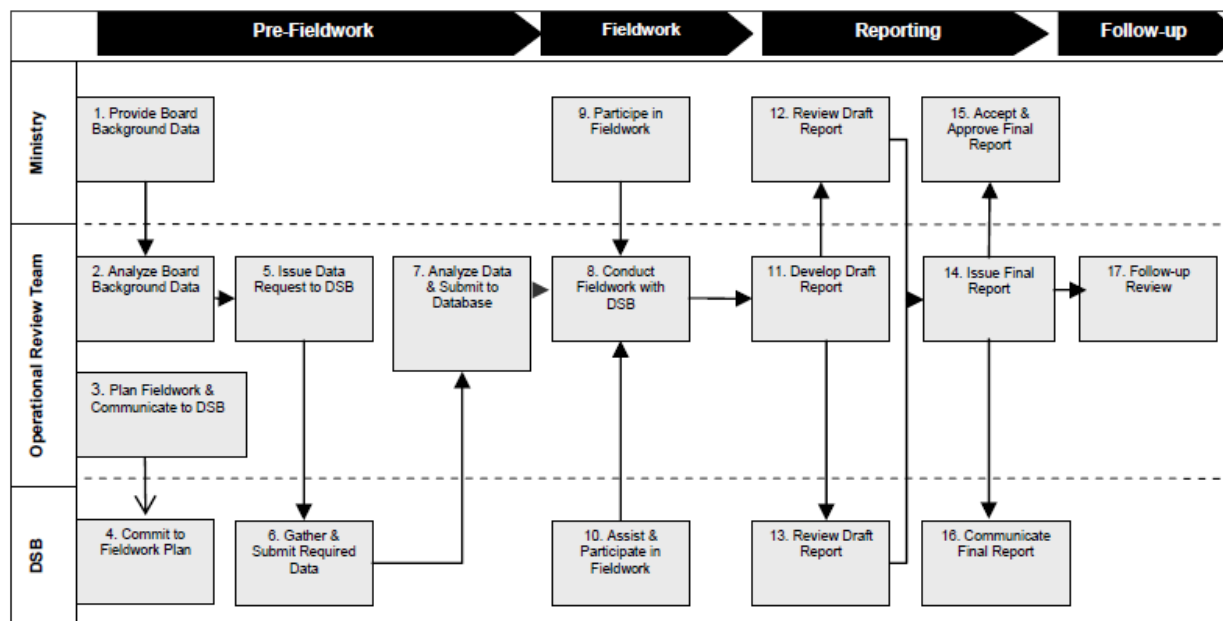
The table below defines the key phases and activities which comprise the operational review methodology.

Phase: Pre-Fieldwork

Key Activity	Description
Provide Board Background Data	The Ministry collects and maintains significant quantities of board data. The Operational Review team has developed a standardized data request from the Ministry to provide background data for each board.
Analyze Board Background Data	Before the start of the fieldwork, the Operational Review team reviews board background data to understand the financial and operating characteristics. This review identifies specific issues and focus areas.
Plan Fieldwork and Communicate to Board	The Ministry and the Operational Review team develop a review schedule that is communicated to boards before the start of the next review cycle.
Commit to Fieldwork Plan	Boards are required to commit to the Operational Review schedule. The Ministry and the review team will attempt to accommodate scheduling conflicts.
Issue Documentation Request to Board	Before the start of fieldwork, a request for supporting documentation is generated to gather operating and other information for each focus area. The review team uses this information to enhance its understanding of the board before the start of field work.
Gather and Submit Required Documentation	Upon receipt of the request for supporting documentation, each board compiles the requested data. Boards have at least three weeks to complete this process prior to the start of the fieldwork.

Key Activity	Description
Analyze Data and Submit to Database	The review team analyzes the data provided by each board and adds the results to a sector-wide database to compare the results for each board.

Phase: Fieldwork

Key Activity	Description
Conduct Fieldwork with Board	The fieldwork is conducted for each board according to the previously agreed upon review cycle. The time required for fieldwork ranges between five and 10 days, based on the size of the board.
Participate in Fieldwork	Ministry staff support the review team in the performance of fieldwork, to ensure continuity and knowledge transfer of board operations.
Assist and Participate in Fieldwork	Board staff participate in the fieldwork. The number of participants involved will vary depending on the size of the board.

Phase: Reporting

| Key Activity	Description
Develop Draft Report	Based on the results of the fieldwork and data analysis, the operational review team writes a draft report. The draft report contains a synopsis of findings and, where appropriate, recommendations for improvement.
Review Draft Report (Ministry)	The Ministry reviews the draft report and provides feedback to the review team.
Review Draft Report (Board)	The review team meets with board senior staff to review and obtain feedback.
Prepare Final Report	The review team incorporates the feedback from the both the Ministry and the board and prepares a final report.
Accept and Approve Final Report	The final report is issued to the Ministry for approval and release.
Communicate Final Report	The Ministry issues a final report to the board.

Phase: Follow-up

Key Activity	Description
Follow-up Review	Eight to 12 months after the release of the final report, the review team conducts a follow-up review to determine the extent the board's adoption and implementation of the recommendations.

The Operational Review Team

The Ministry has assembled an Operational Review Team to ensure that these reviews are conducted in an objective manner. The Operational Review Team is designed to leverage the expertise of industry professionals and consulting firms to review specific aspects of each school board.

Management consultants from PricewaterhouseCoopers and Deloitte were hired to complete the Operational Reviews. The Ministry assigned an internal consultant with school board experience to provide the Review Team with valuable insight into school board operations in Ontario. The team has also received guidance and feedback from an Advisory Committee and a Trustee Reference Group convened by the Ministry of Education.
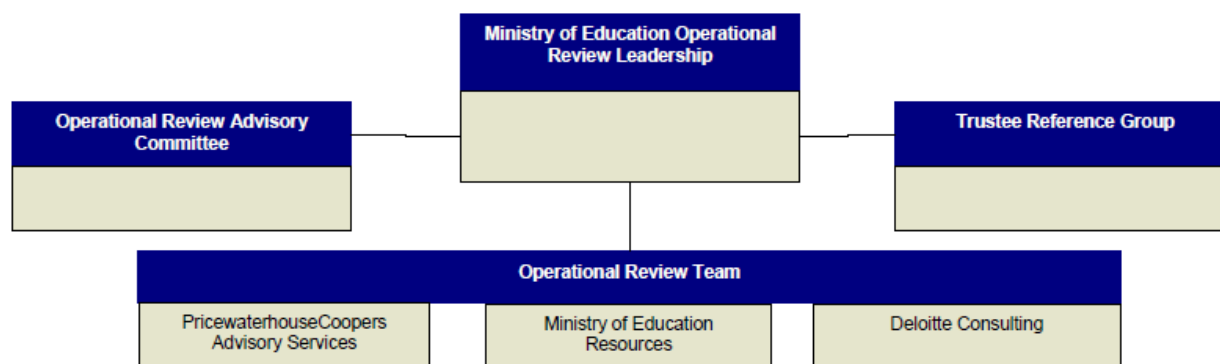
Limitations of this Review

The purpose of this Report is to document the results of the Operational Review of the Conseil scolaire de district catholique Franco-Nord. The review has been conducted using the methodology as previously described. The review is not of the nature or scope that constitutes an audit made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations

Governance and School Board Administration

No.	Recommendation
1.	To complement existing agreements, the Board should create an official document that clearly delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees, the Director of Education and the executive committee.
2.	The Board should consider widening the scope of the annual board improvement plan to include human resources, finance management, and maintenance, health, safety and security management. The annual board improvement plan should identify initiatives that contribute to achieving long-term objectives, and that ensure alignment with operational departments. This will enable the departments to track and report progress of their defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
3.	The Board should consider establishing a formal refresh policy to ensure periodic review of policies across all functional areas. This could include forming a policy committee to consider policies for review or development.

HR Management and School Staffing/Allocation

No.	Recommendation
4.	The HR department should consider developing an annual departmental plan aligned with the overall strategic plan. This will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
5.	The HR department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, with policies and procedures for specific categories of absenteeism. This would provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.
6.	Management should conduct periodic audits of the insurance company that manages the school board's medical and dental claims (administrative services only), in order to ensure that claims from the Board are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.
7.	Management should develop a formal plan for conducting periodic staff surveys. This would improve communication with staff and encourage input for professional development plans and HR policy.

Financial Management

No.	Recommendation
8.	The finance department should prepare a more formalized annual plan that demonstrates alignment to the Board's strategic plan and improvement plan. A more specific plan will provide greater clarity to departmental and other board staff on the annual priorities. This will

No.	Recommendation
	enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
9.	Management should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls and adherence to board policies. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated cost for each option.
10.	Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the finance committee, whose mandate is to perform internal audits
11.	The finance department should review and amend its purchasing policy to ensure that approval limit thresholds are aligned with the jobs and roles of managers. This would ensure that CSDCFN needs are in line with that of other school boards.

School Operations and Facilities Management

No.	Recommendation
12.	Given that the Board has recently bought new cleaning equipment, it should consider developing procedures to track its inventory and maintain a database on the age, location and state of the equipment..
13.	The maintenance, health, safety and security department should research the cost/benefit of a new automated work order system to streamline the management, dispatch, tracking and reporting of facility renewal and general maintenance work orders.
14.	The Board should concentrate its energy management initiatives. It should develop a system-wide, multi-year energy management plan, with appropriate consumption reduction targets. The Board should also ensure that it has tracking mechanisms in place to monitor consumption and energy costs for periodic reporting to the individual schools, the executive committee and the board of trustees.
15.	Management should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption, and reduce the workload in the accounts payable department.