

**Ministry of Education**

**Operational Review Report  
Conseil scolaire de district du Centre  
Sud-Ouest**

**April 2010**

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## **Executive Summary**

This report details the findings and recommendations of the Operational Review of the Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest (the school board or CSDCSO) conducted by the Operational Review Team composed of external consultants from Deloitte and Ministry of Education staff. The Operational Review was conducted over four days beginning September 21, 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 leading 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 assessed the school board's operations in four functional areas: Governance and Board Administration; Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation; Financial Management; and School Operations and Facilities Management. The purpose of this was to determine the extent to which the school 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 CSDCSO is well managed. Other strengths identified in the school board include a clearly articulated strategy for student success and a solid administrative team composed of members united by the same spirit who communicate effectively and share a common vision. They follow the evolution of enrolment and monitor staffing levels, investing in measures to support students and implement effective fiscal policies in the current recessionary climate. The following section summarizes the findings and recommendations for each of the functional areas examined. Other sections of the report contain detailed information on each area.

## **Governance and School Board Administration**

The school board has adopted an appropriate governance structure, composed of a board of trustees (the Board) and an executive committee. There is a clear delineation between the respective roles and responsibilities of the trustees and the executive committee. The Board's main role is the establishment of policies, which guide the actions of the executive committee.

The board members are committed to providing programs and comprehensive services to promote improved student performance. The Board's primary goal is student learning and achievement. To this end, the Board establishes an annual strategic plan based on four guiding principles: communication, leadership, development and planning. For its annual planning, the executive team meets to identify the challenges and difficulties encountered during the previous year and make improvements to the operational plan. The board of trustees has also established open forums with different groups from all sectors of the school board, including principals and vice-principals. These forums are the foundation of its accountability framework. The Board establishes values (coherence, cooperation and respect for differences) which, along with the guiding principles outlined above, apply to schools as well as departments.

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

The school board's decision-making process is consistent in the majority of cases. The board of trustees, a committee or the executive committee request a decision or resolution of a particular topic. The head of the department concerned, with the assistance of the executive committee, is responsible for determining the best solution based on his or her analysis and knowledge of the situation. Where appropriate, a report is sent to the board that presents a resolution for approval, and a final decision is made.

Between Board meetings, fact sheets on various issues and instructional information are distributed to trustees, who are responsible for familiarizing themselves with discussion topics. Following the Board meeting, a list of decisions taken by the Board is prepared and sent to the executive committee so that an administrative follow-up can be conducted and the agenda can be set for the next meeting.

The board's organizational structure was clearly defined in terms of the responsibilities of the trustees, the executive committee and school administrators. The mandates for each committee and the executive committee are clearly established, and this appears to facilitate the organization and effectiveness of the administrative team and school board.

The board has launched an initiative to put in place a succession plan. To help plan for succession, a clause has been included in the Director of Education's contract. When a position such as Director of Education is about to be vacated, a report is submitted to the board of trustees along with a list of employees who are recommended to fill the position.

The board identified the need for a succession plan in cases where the Director of Education intends to retire. This practice allows the board to have a complete and well-considered plan in place to ensure that the position is filled. By contrast, no plan has been established to deal with the succession of senior managers.

The board of trustees recognizes the importance of building bridges with communities, other Boards, parents, and students. The trustees are involved in activities in their regions. Their contact information is listed in school newsletters so that parents are aware of their presence in the school community, and they visit schools for activities. The school board ensures that at least four board meetings are held in other regions during the school year in order to maintain a presence and visit different regions.

### **Recommendations**

- The board should consider establishing a timetable for policy review to ensure the periodic review of policy in all functional areas. This could include the establishment of a committee responsible for policy to determine which policies require review or which should be developed.
- The board should work towards establishing a formal succession plan for its senior management, in order to ensure that initiatives previously undertaken by the board are continued.

### **Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation**

It was found that the human resources (HR) department has a good level of operational efficiency. It has implemented many of the leading practices:

- The HR manager and his team have the qualifications and experience necessary to fulfil their duties. The manager regularly attends conferences on human resources and sits on provincial committees whose members deal with issues relating to the management of human resources and labour relations.
- The same selection process is used for all staff positions. A selection committee is established for each position. The composition of the selection committee varies according to the positions and may include: a school trustee, the Director of Education, the supervisory officers, the principal or vice-principal, a teacher and members of senior staff.
- The department's manager maintains consistency in staff recruitment and selection process through a standard evaluation criteria structure that is described in the recruitment policy and used by the selection committee.



- The payroll function reports to the finance department, not the HR department. A team of six people is responsible for managing the payroll data. This ensures segregation of duties between the HR and payroll functions. Updates to personnel records for pay and benefit changes or other compensation adjustments are performed by authorized staff only.

## **Recommendations**

- The board should consider establishing an annual policy awareness-training plan for principals, custodians, and support staff.
- HR management should develop policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.
- The HR department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, with policies and procedures for specific categories of absenteeism. This important initiative will provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, by engaging in positive reinforcement with employees and adopting standardized practices across all employee groups.
- HR management should periodically conduct independent compliance audits of the board's insurance carrier (management services only), which manages the processing of medical and dental claims, to ensure adherence to the benefit plan's terms and conditions.
- Management should consider developing a formal plan for conducting exit interviews. As with staff surveys, these interviews would provide input for HR policy, as well as process and program improvement.

## **Financial Management**

The business department has demonstrated positive results through the implementation of many of the following leading practices:

- The department's job descriptions clearly define the roles and responsibilities of staff, and the communication structure is reflected in the organization chart, which is updated regularly. Staff members have appropriate designations or relevant experience to perform their roles.
- The business department is composed of five units: finance, purchasing, payroll, IT services and transport. The department (excluding payroll, IT services and transport) has ten staff members. This structure ensures a clear division of tasks within the department regarding the preparation of reports and approval of expenditures.

- The annual budget process at the school board is transparent, clearly communicated, and well documented, and incorporates input from all key stakeholders, with the exception of the local community.
- The board works to reduce the margin of error in its forecasts. The numbers are closely monitored throughout the year, but especially between the months of May and September. Once the school year begins, forecasts are compared with the actual data. The school board budgets conservatively to avoid shortfalls. As of the current operational review, there were fifteen more students than expected at the primary level and one student more than expected at the secondary level.
- The school board uses an integrated financial system to record, track and report financial data. The system integrates general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget, and purchasing modules. The financial system facilitates variance analysis and management reporting.
- The school board uses only electronic funds transfer (EFT) for supplier payments and ensures that it only conducts business with suppliers who have the ability to accept EFTs.

## Recommendations

- The board should consider developing an annual training and policy awareness plan for its staff.
- The school board should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls. Management could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
- Management and the board of trustees should consider formalizing an audit committee that includes external advisors to contribute to the finance audit committee's effectiveness.
- The finance department's management should ensure that letters of recommendation from the auditor be sent to trustees and that the auditor's recommendations are acted on.
- Management should consider implementing an electronic supplier interface for ordering, processing and payment, including the use of supplier portals.

## School Operations and Facilities Management

The school operations and facilities management department has adopted several leading practices in its custodial and maintenance operations. The following significant practices are noted:

- The department reports to the departmental manager, who oversees the planning of repairs and capital expenditures as well as custodial and maintenance operations. The department has a team of 15 people divided into three units.
- Key department staff members have appropriate professional designations and related field experience, and are involved in various provincial committees to keep abreast with best practices and new directives.
- The board has developed a custodial allocation model for the optimum use of resources to implement the school board's cleaning standards and practices. The allocation of custodial staff is based on square footage of buildings, the number of students, the presence of tenants and occupancy of the building. This formula is optimized using split shifts and the sharing of custodians in some schools.
- One of the department's best practices is the enrolment of most of its staff in training sessions whenever a new school opens. This ensures that training is relevant to the maintenance staff while minimizing the costs of future training. This also ensures that staff members are trained in the use and maintenance of the school's systems.
- The board has established a central purchasing system to standardize products purchased by the board and minimize transportation costs. The building operations manager, working with the supplier and the purchasing manager, has developed a catalogue detailing the list of available products, their prices (negotiated by the board), their effectiveness, etc.
- The department keeps up-to-date information on all the board's schools. This information contains the characteristics of each school, including its capacity. Communities use school facilities on a fairly regular basis, and funds received from their use go towards covering any additional costs incurred.

## Recommendations

- Management should consider ensuring that the department's goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan that is aligned to the board's annual improvement plan accessible by key stakeholders. The plan should incorporate measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified accountability.

- The department should consider developing an annual training and policy awareness plan for school board staff.
- The board should consider developing a process that ensures compliance with these policies and new legislation.
- The board should consider clarifying the roles and responsibilities of department staff in order to ensure that these roles and responsibilities are well documented.
- Management, with participation of departmental managers, should consider formalizing the development process of a training plan for department staff.
- Management should continue its initiatives to search for a new work orders system that would streamline the management, distribution, monitoring and reporting of work orders related to the repair and general maintenance of facilities.
- The school board should consider developing the documentation that describes cleaning standards for schools and develop a standard set of processes and tools to monitor, manage, and report on results.
- The school board should establish a multi-year energy management plan that determines suitable objectives for reducing consumption.
- The board should ensure that they have put in place mechanisms to monitor consumption and energy costs, in order to create periodic reports for schools, the executive committee, and trustees.
- Management should ask utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption and reduce the workload of the accounts payable department.
- As part of energy conservation planning, management should examine purchasing practices to ensure that they support each school's energy conservation objectives.
- The board is encouraged to develop a clear policy and a procedure for sending vital information to parents in emergency situations.
- The board should establish a regularly updated list of suppliers, including suppliers of professional services, to encourage time savings.

# 1. Background and Overview

## 1.1 School Board Profile and Structure

The CSDCSO was established on January 1, 1998 with the creation of French-language school boards. Based in Toronto, the board serves the municipalities of Barrie, Borden, Brampton, Burlington, Guelph, Hamilton, Kleinburg, London, Mississauga, Niagara Falls, Oakville, Orangeville, Oshawa, Penetanguishene, Richmond Hill, St. Catharines, Sarnia, Toronto, Waterloo, Welland and Windsor. Due to its geographic location, the board has established a regional office in Welland to assist with its operational functioning.

The CSDCSO includes thirty-eight schools—29 elementary schools and 9 secondary schools—in an area of 68,180 km<sup>2</sup>. The board office is located in Toronto, and the most distant school is about 360 km away. These distances pose special challenges for communication and face-to-face meetings, especially during the winter. The CSDCSO currently serves 7,700 elementary and secondary students. Due to the distance between the school board and the schools, the trustees, the administrative council and school administrators have to travel for training and board conferences, and between the twelve French-language school boards.

Figure 1 shows the school board's organizational plan.

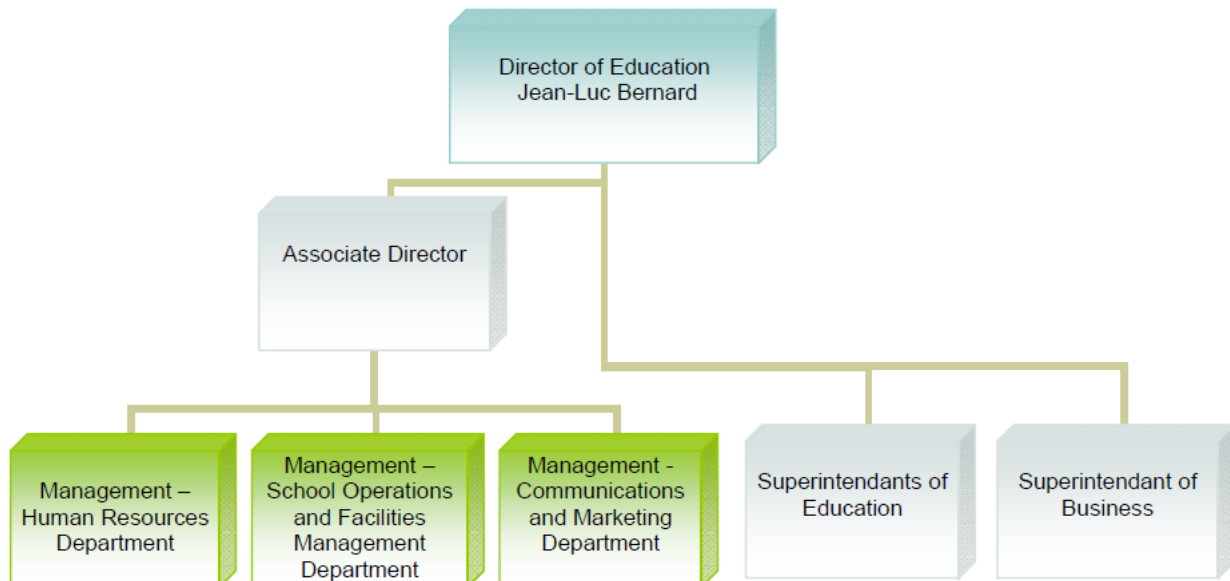


Figure 1

## 1.2 Key Priorities of the School Board

The board's vision is "A school board and schools dedicated first and foremost to students, providing a learning environment

- that is influenced by educational values based on ethics, commitment and effort, generosity and sharing, and respect for cultural diversity;
- that targets high-quality learning processes and skills, enabling students to realize their life goals in a modern society;
- where staff will be equipped to actively participate in creating the optimal conditions for our collective success."<sup>1</sup>

The school board's 2008-2009 strategic plan is comprised of the board's four main objectives:

- the Professional Learning Community;
- updating of the educational project;
- school enrolment: recruitment and retention;
- implementation of the Accountability Framework.

These objectives are supported by yearly success indicators, and the plan is supported by annual plans for school board improvement developed by secondary and primary schools. Each objective established by the plan is accompanied by implementation strategies, as well as timelines and indicators of success. The board's objectives and priorities for the upcoming school year are determined during the implementation of annual plan.

## 1.3 Student Achievement

The board has performed slightly below average in recent years. However, it is making efforts to eliminate the gap with the provincial average.

To improve student achievement, the board undertook the following support initiatives during the 2008-2009 school year:

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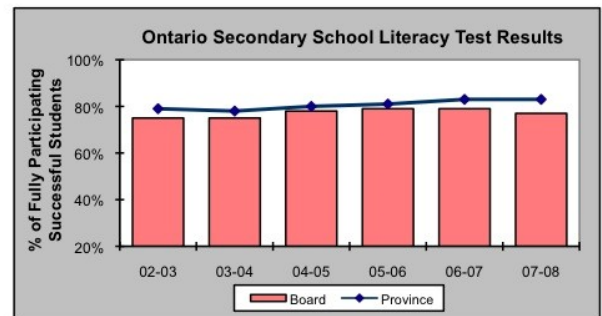
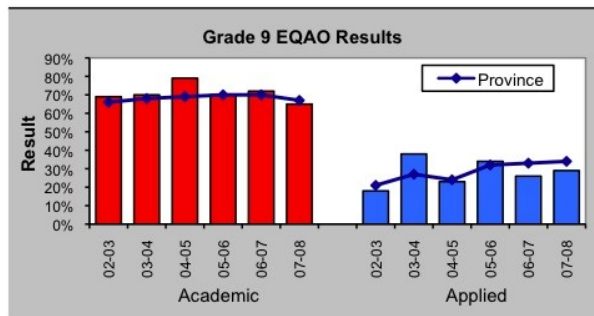
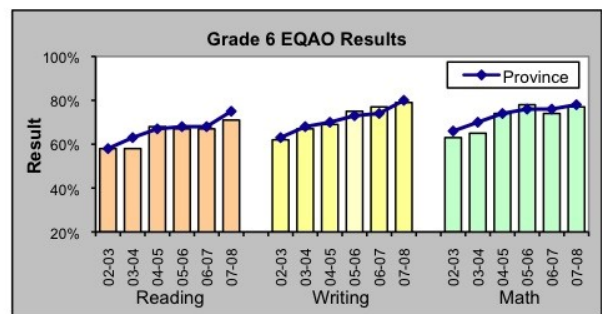
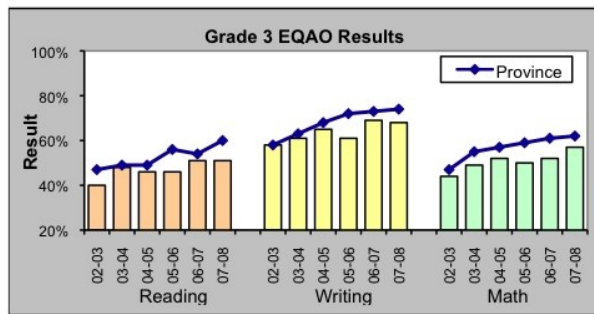
<sup>1</sup> Source: Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest's 2008-2009 Strategic Plan

- At the secondary level (Grades 7 to 12) the board has focused on student success, particularly by ensuring a better transition for students from Grade 6 to Grade 7, as well as Grade 8 to Grade 9 and Specialist High Skills Majors.
- At the primary level (from Kindergarten to Grade 6), management has identified several objectives: transmission of language and culture, learning and student achievement, evaluation, Differentiated Instruction and curriculum.

The following priorities were identified for the board:

- reading – reading for meaning strategies;
- communication – development of spoken vocabulary;
- literacy in all subjects, particularly the development of communicative competence;
- data management;
- Differentiated instruction.

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



## 1.4 Fiscal Overview

The school board has consistently presented balanced budgets to the Ministry. This was accomplished in part by using some of the working funds reserve or increasing the reserve, depending on the year.

For 2008-2009, the school board approved a total budget with revenues of \$104,390,286 and expenditures of \$104,390,272. The budget confirms the commitment of CSDCSO to the academic success of students. Indeed, a breakdown of expenditures shows that 73% of the board's financial resources are dedicated to carrying out educational activities.

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

### Summary of Financial Data (Revenues)

<b>Revenues:</b>	<b>2007-08 Financial Statements</b>	<b>2008-09 Financial Statements</b>	<b>2008-09 Financial Statements</b>
Legislative Grants	\$74,669,988	\$83,426,814	\$89,885,647
Local taxation	\$18,743,004	\$18,555,940	\$18,625,570
Board Revenues	\$4,503,715	\$2,896,924	\$661,589
Other Operating & capital Grants	\$3,539,246	\$3,098,744	\$2,974,689
<b>Total Revenues (Schedule 9)</b>	<b>\$101,455,953</b>	<b>\$107,978,421</b>	<b>\$112,147,495</b>

### Summary of Financial Data (Expenditures)

<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>2007-08 Financial Statements</b>	<b>2008-09 Financial Statements</b>	<b>2008-09 Financial Statements</b>
Operating expenditures	\$92,706,709	\$98,794,578	\$103,886,257
Capital expenditures - Before transfers from reserves	\$7,814,418	\$9,782,094	\$8,862,362
Transfer to (from) Reserves	\$934,826	-\$598,246	-\$601,124
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$101,455,953</b>	<b>\$107,978,426</b>	<b>\$112,147,495</b>
<b>In-year Surplus (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>



## School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Financial Statements	2008-09 Financial Statements
Retirement Gratuities	\$0	\$0	\$0
Reserve for Working Funds	\$1,022,041	\$1,032,232	\$727,490
School Activities	\$0	\$0	\$0
WSIB	\$263,303	\$263,303	\$263,303
Miscellaneous	\$1,831,930	\$1,789,953	\$1,493,571
Pupil Accommodation Debt Reserve	\$13,533,593	\$13,202,964	\$13,202,964
GPL Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Reserve Funds (Schedule 5)</b>	<b>\$16,650,867</b>	<b>\$16,288,452</b>	<b>\$15,687,328</b>
Reserve for Classroom Expenditures	\$0	\$0	\$0
Special Education Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Distant School Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$0
Pupil Accommodation Allocation Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Program Improvement Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Improved Access for Special Education Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Operating Deferred Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve- School Buildings	\$106,919	\$0	\$0
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve- Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
MECR/ BECR Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Education Development Charge Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other Capital Deferred Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0
Energy Efficient School-Operating	\$0	\$189,671	\$0
Energy Efficient School-Capital	\$0	\$274,761	\$0
<b>Total Deferred Revenues (Schedule 5.1)</b>	<b>\$106,919</b>	<b>\$464,432</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>Total Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues</b>	<b>\$16,757,786</b>	<b>\$16,752,884</b>	<b>\$15,687,328</b>

## 1.5 Key School Board Statistics

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

### Day School Enrolment

Day School Enrolment	2002-03 Actual	2009-10 Estimates
Elementary Day School ADE	4,368	5,509
Secondary Day School ADE	1,393	1,525
<b>Total Day School Enrolment</b>	<b>5,761</b>	<b>7,034</b>

### Primary Class Size

Primary Class Size:	2003-04	2009-10
% of Classes Less Than 20	39%	90.6%
% of Classes Less Than 23	64%	100%
Average Class Size - Jr/Inter	21.78	21.46
% of 3/4 Classes 23 & Under	25%	100%
% of Combined Classes	37%	38%

### Staffing

Staffing:	2003-04	2009-10
School Based Teachers	436	599
Teacher Assistants	39	66
Other Student Support	55	96
School Administration	41	47
School Clerical	41	51
School Operations	68	96
Other Non-Classroom	46	40
<b>Total Staffing</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>996</b>
<b>Teacher - Pupil Ratio</b>	<b>1:13</b>	<b>1:12</b>
<b>FTE Staff per 1,000 Pupils (ADE) ( Note: Impacted by Class Size and Special Education)</b>	<b>126.0</b>	<b>141.6</b>

<b>Staffing:</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
<b>Total Salary &amp; Benefits as % of Net Operating Expenditures</b>	<b>75.1%</b>	<b>75.6%</b>

## Special Education

<b>Special Education</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
Special Education Incremental Expenditures	\$5,532,986	\$8,524,687
Special Education Allocation	\$4,098,765	\$7,041,957
<b>Spending above Allocation (Reserve)</b>	<b>\$1,434,221</b>	<b>\$1,482,730</b>

## School Utilization

<b>School Utilization</b>	<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2009-10</b>
Number of schools	42	45
Total Enrolment (ADE)	5,761	7,034
School Capacity (Spaces)	10,811	13,677
<b>School Utilization</b>	<b>53.3%</b>	<b>51.4%</b>
<b>Board Area (Km2)</b>	<b>68,140</b>	<b>68,140</b>
<b>Number of Trustees</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>

## 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.

Governance and board administration processes are reviewed to:

- Understand how the governance model delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees and the administration and supports operational effectiveness;
- 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;
- Determine 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 school 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 of the board of trustees, 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 an effective working relationship.	Yes

## Development of the School 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.	Yes
Senior management periodically/annually report to the board on the status and outcomes of the annual board improvement plan.	Yes

## Decision Making Processes

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
The director has established a formal succession plan to manage retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.	No
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 staffs 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 school board has adopted an appropriate governance structure, composed of a board of trustees and an executive committee. There is a clear delineation between the respective roles and responsibilities of the elected trustees and the executive committee. The Board's main role is the establishment of policies, which guide the actions of the executive committee.

The Board appoints a chair and vice-chair, and is governed by a group of 12 experienced trustees elected to four-year terms. The trustees have the necessary experience to fulfil their function. There are also two student trustees. In addition, the school board has established a head office in Toronto, as well as two satellite offices located in Welland and Burlington to help the board's operations.

The board of trustees uses committees to ensure proper compliance with school board policy. The Board has 5 permanent committees, as well as ad hoc committees established to deal with temporary needs, such as building a new school. Each trustee represents a board region and is a member of various board committees. The standing committees of the board are: the special education advisory committee, the daycare committee, the communications committee, the regional advisory committee and the

accessibility committee. Each standing committee has a detailed description of its mandate, responsibilities and representation, ensuring proper monitoring of the board's management model.

Currently, the board has thirteen ad hoc committees. The Director of Education or the departmental head of each committee acts as resource person for the committee and uses the committee as a first step in making decisions relating to his or her department.

The executive committee members are the Director of Education, the HR manager, the two assistants to the superintendent, the superintendent of business, the Communications and Marketing manager, the Associate Director, the School Operations and Facilities Management manager, the two superintendents of education and the administrative assistant to the Education manager. The executive committee develops and implements operating plans and procedures, consistent with the school board's key goal of improving student achievement from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) offers training for trustees. The board of trustees attends OPSBA forums and participates in professional development. Trustees are encouraged to attend training—offered on an annual basis—according to their needs.

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

The board members are committed to providing programs and comprehensive services to promote improved student performance. The Board's primary goal is student learning and achievement. To this end, the Board establishes an annual strategic plan based on four guiding principles: communication, leadership, development and planning. For its annual planning, the executive team meets to identify the challenges and difficulties encountered during the previous year and make improvements to the operational plan. The board of trustees has also established open forums with different groups from all areas of the school board, including principals and vice-principals. These forums are the foundation of its Accountability Framework. The Board establishes values (coherence, cooperation and respect for differences) which, along with the guiding principles outlined above, apply to schools as well as departments.

Departments and schools must prepare their annual improvement plans based on data related to the Accountability Framework, which serves as a guide. On a three-year cycle, surveys check the degree to which the Accountability Framework has been implemented by the board. Data from these surveys should be analyzed and reviewed by the various departments in developing their plans. The surveys follow the cycle, with staff surveyed on year 1, parents on year 2 and students on year 3. The cycle will restart at year 1 in 2009-2010.

Currently, the board of trustee's strategic planning follows a rigorous annual process and is detailed in the document "Step by Step towards Success" published in 2005 for the 2005-2008 cycle. A version for the 2009-2012 cycle is in press.

Once the strategic plan is finalized, the executive committee members work together to reorganize their individual priorities and develop an action plan. This plan details activities and responsible individuals linked to each strategic priority. This plan is used as an operational plan for the board, and provides the basis for departmental management in the creation of their annual plans.

During the year, reports are produced to assess the performance and progress of improvement plan. At the end of the year, a report is produced to evaluate the process established during the year.

The board's strategic plan is supported by the improvement plan developed by each secondary and primary school. The school board improvement plan is prepared by management in collaboration with members of academic departments, student services and superintendents of education. The objectives outlined in the school board improvement are supported by specific initiatives with timelines and indicators of success.

## **Decision Making Processes**

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

The school board's decision-making process is consistent in the majority of cases. The board of trustees, a committee or the executive committee can request a decision on, or the resolution of, a particular topic. The head of the department concerned, with the assistance of the executive committee, is responsible for determining the best solution based on his or her analysis and knowledge of the situation. Where appropriate, a report is sent to the board that presents a resolution for approval, and a final decision is made.

The trustees meet nine times a year as part of school board meetings. In addition, the trustees participate in the meetings of the committees of which they are members. To prepare the agenda for Board meetings, the Director of Education follows the established policy on the procedure for deliberative assemblies, and writes a first draft that is reviewed and amended by the board chair. Once established, the agenda and reports are sent to trustees for the Board's monthly meeting. At Board meetings, decisions are made for each item based on the documentation sent prior the date of the meeting.



Between Board meetings, fact sheets on various issues and instructional information are distributed to trustees, who are responsible for familiarizing themselves with discussion topics. Following the Board meeting, a list of decisions taken by the Board is prepared and sent to the executive committee so that an administrative follow-up can be conducted and the agenda can be set for the next meeting.

The trustees closely monitor policy revision. Revisions are prepared by the executive committee, and submitted to the regional advisory committee for study. A report with comments is submitted to the board for approval, and the policies are updated as needed. There is no fixed timetable for review, although the board intends to review all policies over the next five years.

### **Organizational Structure and Accountability**

The board's organizational structure was clearly defined in terms of the responsibilities of the trustees, the executive committee and school administrators. The mandates for each committee and the executive committee are clearly established, and this appears to facilitate the organization and effectiveness of the administrative team and school board.

The board's operations are managed by the following departments: education, business, human resources, communications, administration, and school operations and facilities management. There is agreement and collaboration between members of the executive committee, which facilitates the board's operation.

Real or perceived conflicts of interest within the board can be a reality given the size of the communities in which the board is present. The board is very proactive in this regard, implementing policies that emphasize awareness of real or perceived conflicts of interest. Guidelines from the code of ethics are in place for trustees and for hiring and recruitment procedures. Real or perceived conflicts of interest must be declared by trustees at each Board meeting.

The board has launched an initiative to put in place a succession plan. To help plan for succession, a clause has been included in the Director of Education's contract. When a position such as Director of Education is about to be vacated, a report is submitted to the board of trustees along with a list of employees who are recommended to fill the position.

The board identified the need for a succession plan in cases where the Director of Education intends to retire. This practice allows the board to have a complete and well-considered plan in place to ensure that the position is filled. However, no plan has been established to deal with the succession of senior managers.

One of the challenges facing the board is hiring for departmental positions. With such a small talent pool in such a vast area, it is a challenge finding candidates willing to relocate to another region. For example, it is difficult to ensure that there are enough managers in the school operations and facilities management department. To remedy this, the board strongly encourages a mentoring system.

The board's organizational chart is up-to-date. However, it is not available on the school board's website, although the contact information of key departmental staff and their deputies is available.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

The board of trustees recognizes the importance of building bridges with communities, other Boards, parents, and students. The trustees are involved in activities in their regions. Their contact information is listed in school newsletters so that parents are aware of their presence in the school community, and they visit schools for activities. The school board ensures that at least four board meetings are held in outlying areas during the school year in order to visit different regions and maintain a presence in them.

Overall, the trustees are very involved in their communities. They participate in francophone associations and communities. Community involvement for trustees, principals, and members of the Executive Council is important. A communiqué is sent to each school detailing the activities of the Board and a close link is maintained between each trustee and each school council.

The Board recognizes that communications are an essential component of its mission, and it is encouraged to communicate with the citizens, community organizations, students and parents to whom it provides educational services. Using different channels of communication such as school newsletters, press releases, posts on the website and emails contributes to the engagement of key stakeholders throughout the year.

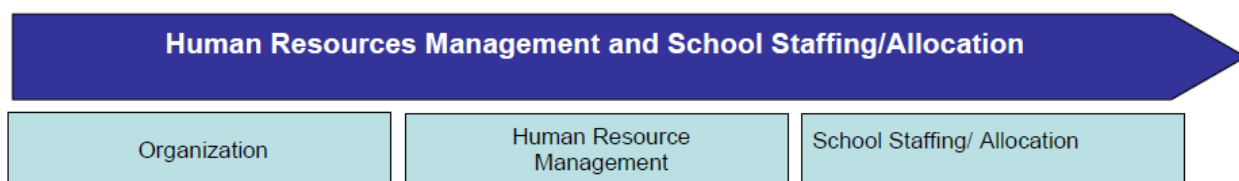
The school board uses its public website to disseminate information regarding its policies, the director's report, and financial reports.

The board's education staff actively participates in various national and provincial forums, including the Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques (CFORP), the Centre francophone de Toronto (CFT), the Provincial Advisory Committee on the formal resolution of differences in programs and services for students with special needs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Education working group on elementary curriculum, the Regroupement national des directions générales en éducation (RNDGÉ), the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), the Conseil ontarien des directions de l'éducation en langue française (CODELF), etc. Through this cooperation, the board finds out about best practices and shares them with its departments.

## Recommendations

- The board should consider establishing a timetable for policy review to ensure the periodic review of policy in all functional areas. This could include the establishment of a committee responsible for policy to determine which policies require review or which should be developed.
- The board should work towards establishing a formal succession plan for its senior management, in order to ensure that initiatives previously undertaken by the board are continued.

### 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 board's collective agreements and allocation models. The allocation models adopted by the board ensure the most effective teaching and learning practices. 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 school 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 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 organizations, 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 operating plan accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified accountability.	Yes

### 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 organization chart is available to the public.	Yes
Senior HR staff have appropriate designations (e.g., Certified Human Resource Professional, etc.).	Yes

### Monitoring and Communication of Policies

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
HR management has processes in place to monitor HR policy compliance by all staff and management.	Yes
HR management builds staff capacity in understanding of HR policies and administrative procedures.	No

### Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The HR department fully endorses the board's vision and the accountability framework. The HR department's annual improvement plan is developed using the results of a survey of board employees to gather perceptions on the board's underlying values and guiding principles. From the survey results, the department determines its three main strengths and three main challenges, which are incorporated into its annual improvement plan. The department is given a timetable to achieve its objectives, which are monitored at monthly departmental meetings.

The HR manager presents the improvement plan to the Director of Education. The plan includes activities to be undertaken for each of the overall objectives of the Accountability framework set by the board, which provides a link between board's priorities and the HR department's priorities. The plan identifies the administrator responsible, and describes the strategies, indicators of success, and timelines for each objective identified. The HR manager meets the Education manager and discusses the plan's progress to ensure that deadlines are respected. Moreover, the HR department holds meetings to ensure the practical implementation of the annual plan. These meetings also guide the progress of the mandates described in the improvement plan.

### **Organizational Structure and Accountability**

The HR department has 10 staff members: the HR manager, three managers, two administrative assistants, one officer and three clerks. Job descriptions were developed and revised according to the HR department's function. The board's organizational chart includes the HR department and is updated annually.

The HR manager and his team have the qualifications and experience necessary to fulfil their duties. The manager regularly attends conferences on human resources and sits on provincial committees whose members deal with issues relating to the management of human resources and labour relations.

### **Monitoring and Communication of Policies**

The HR department is responsible for a comprehensive list of around 20 policies and internal administrative guidelines, which include hiring and evaluating staff, disciplinary measures, health and safety, attendance and absenteeism, discrimination and harassment, criminal background checks, and staff leave. Some of these policies have been developed in close collaboration with the education department. They are usually sent for feedback to the working committee on education before being presented to the executive committee and submitted to the Board for approval.

When modifying or creating a new policy, the HR manager submits it to the executive committee for approval. When a change in the law or a negotiation has an impact on policy, the HR manager creates or revises policy and administrative guidelines as necessary. Most policies have been revised at least once since their inception and are accompanied by the necessary administrative guidelines.

Each school year, an orientation session for new teachers is offered jointly by the HR department and the payroll division. During their orientation, newly hired teachers are informed about policies relating to human resources. All policies are available to employees on the school board's website or in the policy binder in each school. When new policy is implemented, staff are sent a memo by the HR department or the school administration. If the policy requires special training, the HR department organizes it.

School staff meetings are used to inform staff of new policies and any resultant administrative guidelines. Unions are also informed when a new policy is implemented. The process established by the school board for policy and administrative guideline development and consultation is respected.

The board of trustees offers many training courses to its employees. The teachers, as well as all principals and vice-principals, receive the training required by the Ministry, following an annual training plan prepared by the education department in collaboration with academic services and student services management staff. Student services also offers training for teaching assistants and specialized educators. By contrast, custodians and support staff do not receive training on a regular basis from the HR department. Support staff members are not directly involved in planning training, whereas the teaching staff have the opportunity to get involved by receiving each region's overall training schedule.

### **Recommendation**

- The school board is encouraged to develop an annual training plan and policy awareness plan for school administrators, custodians, and support staff.

## **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 and hiring 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/Hiring

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

## Labour Relations

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

## Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

Leading Practices – Human Resources Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR management has policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.	No
HR management maintains and communicates formal disciplinary policies and procedures for all staff.	Yes

## Attendance Management Processes/Programs

Leading Practices – Human Resources Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Attendance management processes/programs exist that include employee supportive policies and procedures to minimize the cost of absenteeism.	Yes
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 Resources 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
HR management has implemented an approved pay equity plan, which is reviewed periodically and amended as necessary.	Yes

## Management of the School Board's Employee Benefit Plans

Leading Practices – Human Resources Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR management periodically conducts independent compliance audits of the board's insurance carrier to ensure adherence to the benefit plans terms and conditions.	No
Employee data is automatically synchronized among the board and external carriers such as TPP, OMERS and the board's benefit provider(s).	Yes
Policies and procedures ensure the board's benefit plans are managed appropriately.	Yes

## Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

Leading Practices – Human Resources Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Confidential staff satisfaction surveys are performed periodically.	Yes
Confidential exit interviews are performed for all staff.	No

## Staff Recruitment

Staff hiring and recruitment are managed on an annual and centralized basis through the HR department. The board has in place an operating guide that describes the policies and the detailed process on the recruitment and hiring of management, administrative, teaching and support staff, which defines the selection criteria, the process for advertising positions, the selection process and procedures, and some administrative procedures.

The recruitment process is supervised by the HR department and the superintendents of education. To ensure compliance with policies, the HR department is present during all steps of the hiring process. In general, the board has difficulties recruiting qualified staff for some specialized positions.

Positions with the school board are posted on several external resources: the board's website, in the workplace and on the Education Canada and Workopolis external websites. Each year, the HR team also maintains a presence at the job fairs of faculties of education from several universities across the province and elsewhere in Canada (such as the Université de Moncton in New Brunswick and several universities in Quebec).

The same selection process is used for all staff positions. A selection committee is established for each position. The composition of the selection committee varies according to the positions and may include: retired school principals for teaching and educational support staff, principals and assistant principals, and members of the executive committee.

The HR manager maintains consistency in its staff recruitment and selection process through the establishment of standard evaluation criteria that are described in the recruitment policy and used by the selection committee. The references of candidates are verified and candidates must provide their personal information and criminal background checks. Candidates are selected based on their skills, experience and qualifications, and on the requirements of the position. Candidates must pass written and oral French exams; they must also pass written and oral English exams for positions requiring the other official language. Once the board has recommended the hiring of a candidate for a position, he or she is sent an orientation package.

## **Labour Relations**

The school board has negotiated collective agreements with various unions representing teaching, support and maintenance staff. The HR manager is involved in all negotiations with the unions. The board has retained the services of an external lawyer to support it in this task. The superintendent of business is also a member of the negotiation committees and of the executive committee, which varies according to the union concerned. The members of the negotiation committee prepare adequately for the negotiation of collective agreements.

Relationships between the school board and the unions are good. Minor problems are quickly resolved.

There is a very detailed grievance procedure for collective agreements and a handbook on the procedure, which is an internal reference for the department. The complaint procedure enables union members to meet with their supervisor in order to obtain the

details of the grievance. If the complaint is not resolved, the complainant moves to the second step, which is to inform the HR department of the problem. The department will assess whether a particular intervention could resolve the complaint. If the complaint remains unresolved, the member may file a grievance. The process for union grievances is outlined in the collective agreement.

The HR manager, in collaboration with the superintendents and the labour relations manager, maintains good relationships with the union representatives. To avoid various procedure grievances, the HR manager ensures that all hires and dismissals are carried out in conformity with the collective agreements and the board's policies. The school board's grievance procedure is described in the collective agreements. To further ensure compliance with collective agreements, joint committees are established to maintain communication between the unions and the board.

### **Employee Performance Evaluation Processes**

The board has three policies that describe the evaluation process for experienced teachers, new teachers and maintenance personnel. These policies were developed in collaboration with the education department and they are in compliance with Ministry requirements for teaching staff. The evaluation process is clearly explained. Evaluation policies are available to all staff on the board's website. There are no detailed policies on the evaluation of non-teaching staff.

The evaluation process begins with a preliminary meeting to prepare for the evaluation by identifying the variables to be evaluated. Management is present to make observations. Following the meeting, a summary report is written and submitted to the person being evaluated who then acknowledges receipt and adds his or her comments. Management enters into the evaluation plan the name of the employee to be evaluated and sends it to the board. Once the evaluation has been completed, the board enters the information into SAP. Superintendents of education and school principals are responsible for the evaluation process. Principals and department managers receive training following major modifications to evaluation processes or the creation of new Ministry rules. The superintendent of education is responsible for managing this training. The HR department only becomes involved when performance problems are involved.

A different process is used for each of the school board staff groups. 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 teachers are reviewed twice during their first 12 months teaching, in compliance with the New Teacher Induction Program. Teacher performance evaluation is carried out by principals and assistant principals. Results are communicated to the board.

To correct and avoid wrongful conduct by staff members, the school board has adopted progressive discipline practices. The policy and guideline on disciplinary measures describe the progressive discipline process in place.

In all cases, the management of the disciplinary process is centralized. In the case of wrongful conduct, the school principal, vice-principal or concerned supervisor must always request support from the HR department for the entire process. The school principal or concerned supervisor must complete a form entitled “Compte rendu d’enquête” (investigation summary), which is submitted to the HR department. A second validation of the information is carried out by the HR department. The HR department then recommends a strategy for the school principal or concerned supervisor. The school principal or concerned supervisor obtains the staff member’s version of the facts and completes the investigation summary. Following this, the HR department analyzes the information received, carries out the required research and recommends particular actions. Once consensus has been reached, the HR department drafts the correspondence required and submits it for the signature of the school principal or concerned staff member, who gives it to the staff member involved, if appropriate. The HR department is informed of all the steps to ensure that the process is carried out in compliance with the collective agreement.

If the situation is not resolved through this process, or if there is no improvement in the staff member’s behaviour, the process begins again but with progressive disciplinary measures. The full progressive discipline progress is described in the policy on disciplinary measures. This process enables a step-based approach that is standardized throughout the board and applies to all board staff.

### **Attendance Management Processes/Programs**

The board has two internal guidelines on absenteeism and workplace injuries. These guidelines explain the various holidays available to staff in addition to workplace leave.

Absenteeism is governed by the collective agreement. For prolonged absences, a supporting medical note must be provided. If not, the HR department takes several steps to ensure that a supporting medical note is provided. In the case of prolonged absences, the board promotes a progressive return to work or modified work.

The number of sick days taken by employees is monitored at each pay. Every two weeks, school principals and department managers provide payroll staff members with a statement of earnings that shows all absences recorded within their workplace. Each absence must have been previously approved by the supervisor, and the staff member must have completed the form entitled “Demande de congé et rapport d’absence” (request for time off and absence report).

The board has a reward program for staff who accumulate 240 or 270 sick days, depending on the applicable collective agreement. This program is only available to staff who have been in their position since 1998 and who chose to keep this plan. Staff hired after this date are not eligible.

The board compares its absenteeism rate with other school boards. According to the school board's analysis, its absenteeism rate is comparable to that of other boards. The board has also noticed that its rate of absenteeism is higher for the custodial services staff group.

The board should develop a complete attendance management program to correct problems with certain kinds of absenteeism. This important initiative will provide the HR manager with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, by engaging in positive reinforcement with employees and adopting standardized practices across all employee groups.

### **Management of HR and Payroll Data**

A team of six people is responsible for payroll data management. The team is composed of the compensation manager, the compensation analyst, the SAP officer and three compensation officers. The business department, and not the HR department, is responsible for payroll. Three remuneration officers are responsible for updating personnel records for pay and benefit changes or other compensation adjustments). The SAP compensation officer is responsible for the management of positions according to OnSIS requirements, the annual updating of wage schedules for various employee groups, and she also carries out mass modifications (lay-offs during the holidays, for example). The compensation analyst is responsible for the processing of the full payroll cycle for each pay period. This ensures segregation of duties between the record updating and payroll. Updates to personnel records for pay and benefit changes or other compensation adjustments are performed by authorized staff only.

All employee information is managed internally through the SAP centralized system. Each employee hired by the school board is enrolled in the system. The school board uses electronic funds transfer (EFT) to directly deposit pay into staff members' bank accounts.

Data input/output is carried out by using an Excel spreadsheet and uploading/downloading the information to and from the SAP system. An extraction from the pay system and a validation of differences from one pay to the next are also carried out. This validation process is mostly manual and requires significant effort from the compensation analyst. The compensation manager must approve the validation of differences before the pay is processed.

Each month, the compensation analyst prepares reconciliations for each payroll general ledger account, which are validated by the compensation manager and then sent to the administrative services manager for review and final approval.

The HR manager has developed effective processes to ensure that staff qualifications and experience are formally tracked and updated. For unionized staff, the job classifications are updated in accordance with collective agreements. For updates to teaching staff classifications, the board uses data from the Qualification Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO).

### **Management of School Board's Employee Benefit Plans**

The school board offers to all its permanent staff benefit plans through a third party. Employees are reimbursed for their medical and dental expenses according to a percentage defined in collective agreements or policies. The board does not carry out audits to ensure that the payment of claims is in adherence to the policies offered to employees.

The manager writes an annual report for the department manager in which the use of benefit plans and demographic statistics are described, as well as the costs related to the use of benefit policies. The report includes a comparative analysis of various insurers and the manager's recommendation. The HR manager closely reviews this report.

The school board manages its employee benefit plan through a third party in consortia with the other 11 French-speaking school boards. For the annual renewal of services, the board attentively reviews benefits use by the different employee groups.

At the end of the regular payroll cycle (every two weeks) the compensation analyst exports data to a text file, which is then electronically sent to the Ontario Teacher's Pension Plan (OTTP) in order to synchronize data. Next, gaps between the OTTP's records and the school board's must be explained.

The compensation officer reconciles remuneration statements (T4s) in the payroll register at the end of each pay period, which results in time saved during the annual reconciliation. A similar reconciliation is carried out for the pension plan using an Excel file.

## Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

In terms of the Board's accountability, a general satisfaction survey is sent to teaching and nonteaching staff every three years. The survey does not measure staff satisfaction with regards to a particular department, but rather it enables the collection of the perceptions of department employees of the implementation of the Accountability framework. The data collected provides indicators of employees' feelings of belonging to the school board and to their respective department in terms of stated values and guiding principles.

Exit interviews take place between the Director of Education and non-unionized staff. These interviews remain confidential and are not shared with the HR department. If an exit interview does not take place, the employee fills out a questionnaire and returns it to the Director of Education. For unionized employees, an informal exit interview may take place at the discretion of the concerned school principal. Results of these interviews are not recorded and the information is not shared. We would encourage the board to continue in its efforts to implement processes to monitor staff satisfaction.

## Recommendations

- HR management should develop policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.
- The HR department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, with policies and procedures for specific categories of absenteeism. This important initiative will provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, by engaging in positive reinforcement with employees and adopting standardized practices across all employee groups.
- HR management should periodically conduct independent compliance audits of the board's insurance carrier (management services only), which manages the processing of medical and dental claims, to ensure adherence to the benefit plan's terms and conditions.
- Management should consider developing a formal plan for conducting exit interviews. As with staff surveys, these interviews would provide input for HR policy, as well as process and program improvement.

## 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 that staff optimization allocation processes are in place, supported by an effective attendance management system;
- 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 Staffing and Allocation

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Policies and 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 principals.	Yes
Management periodically reports on the actual allocation of staff, compared to the original approved allocation plan and budget (FTE's 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?
Staffing costs are compared with similar school boards and the funding model to ensure efficient use of resources.	Yes



## Planning and Processes for Annual Staffing and Allocation

The board has implemented a detailed annual allocation process. The superintendent of education responsible for staffing works with the business department in order to estimate the allocation of teaching staff through the use of a formula that takes into account Ministry policies and Board guidelines. Staffing procedures are affected by the following factors: enrolment size and fluctuation, foundation grants, funding for specific projects, budgetary envelopes, Ministry requirements, distances, available space, the particular needs of each school, and community and preparation time. The staffing procedure is an integral part of the collective agreements for each employee group.

In December, the superintendent of business verifies the formula's validity by taking into account current enrolment, and calculates the number of staff required. Allocation is reviewed by the executive committee before being presented to the board of trustees within the budget framework. Results are then compared to actual needs. In February, the formula is used to make calculations at the school level, which are then validated to ensure that each school has the staffing it requires.

Beginning in the month of May, enrolment forecasts are verified on a weekly basis by the superintendent of business, and staffing is revised according to new needs identified during the review. The superintendent of business validates the staffing plan in view of the budget. A tracking file is prepared and used to update the annual budget. It should be noted that the board has never found itself in a situation of surplus teaching staff. With the use of weekly reviews, the board has ensured that staffing meets school's actual needs based on enrolment.

Once the school year has begun, the superintendents of education continue to monitor staffing levels in collaboration with the superintendent of business and the HR manager. They collaborate to ensure that any staffing changes take place by the end of October, in conformity with the collective agreement.

The school board uses a formula to determine maintenance staffing needs. Staffing levels are generated by the capital expenditures, maintenance and planning manager. Staffing numbers are presented to the executive committee and then approved by the board of trustees.

For student services staff, the superintendant of education identifies the needs in schools while taking into account the allocated budget.

All staffing is reviewed by the executive committee and discussed to ensure that the needs of the school board as a whole are met while respecting budgets.

The size of the school board and the fact that school principals know their communities well enable accurate enrolment forecasting and staffing levels that meet actual needs.

## **Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation**

Staff allocation is based on enrolment. The superintendents of education also know their schools and their schools' needs very well, and the superintendents are board members. Staffing requests are adjusted according to actual needs. The superintendents of education prepare a realistic scenario with a preliminary exercise in which they begin with a conservative enrolment figure that generates staffing levels for teachers. This figure is adjusted as needed to ensure that the needs are met if they can be justified by enrolment levels.

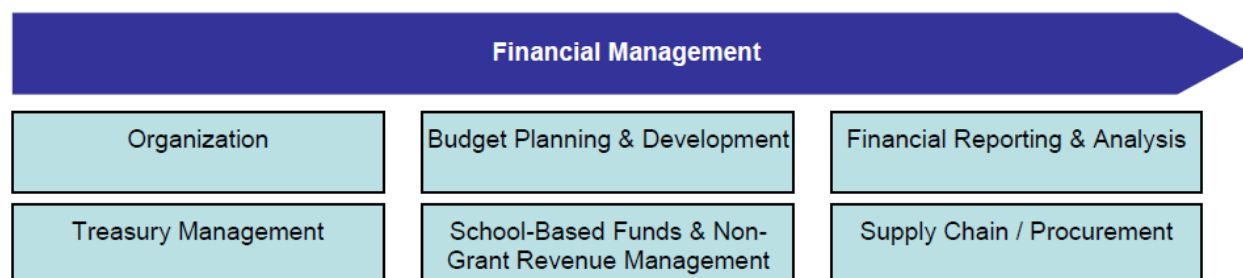
The executive committee monitors staffing levels. Beginning in the month of May, actual enrolment is compared to initial estimates. Required changes to teaching staff are carried out by October 31 at the latest. Adjustments to special education support staff take place throughout the school year. Needs are reviewed by the student services manager, who makes recommendations to the superintendent of education. If a budget increase is required, it is validated by the superintendant of education.

The board has implemented a monitoring process that contributes to the effective management of staff allocation. Throughout the year, the HR department prepares reports for the Board, which enables trustees to monitor on a monthly basis the staffing levels and decisions made throughout the year. Trustees receive reports on enrolment on a monthly basis and reports on staffing levels during the budget planning. All permanent positions added during the year must first be approved by the board of trustees.

## **Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding**

The school board does not compare its costs with other school boards on a regular basis. However, the HR department prepares a comparative analysis of salaries with 12 school boards. Given the new Ministry formulas for provincial-level negotiations, the board has only a small margin for maneuver. An analysis is carried out within the board, which includes a comparison of the salaries of different positions with their levels of responsibilities. However, the HR manager participates in various provincial negotiation forums and keeps up-to-date through shared online resources on negotiating trends within other school boards.

## 4. Financial Management - Findings and Recommendations



The financial management of the school board ensures 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 to the various departments. They also ensure that the reporting of results to the board of trustees and other school board stakeholders reflects the approved goals and priorities for student achievement.

The following is a summary of our assessment of the school 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 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;
- Financial department support of the overall goals/priorities and accountability measures established by the school board;
- The efficiency and effectiveness of department structure and support of the roles and responsibilities for the key functions, activities and practices;
- 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.	Yes

### 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 have 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 by all staff and management.	Yes
Management provides scheduled finance policy and procedures awareness, training and skills development educational sessions.	No

### Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The business department's mission is to serve the schools and to respect the board's vision. The business department's improvement plan is developed based on the results of surveys of school board employees on accountability, as well as on the ongoing feedback received from staff. Based on the survey results, the department identifies three main strengths and challenges, which are then incorporated into the departmental operational plan. The department sets a timeline for the translation of its objectives into results, which is updated during monthly department meetings. The annual plan is

reviewed and approved by the Director of Education. The superintendent of business holds regular meetings with team members to ensure that the annual plan is being followed.

### **Organizational Structure and Accountability**

The business department is composed of five units: finance, purchasing, compensation, computer services and transportation. The business department (excluding compensation, computer services and transportation) has ten employees: the superintendent of business and her administrative assistant, an administrative services manager, two financial analysts, an accounts payable clerk, a junior accountant, a purchasing manager, a junior buyer and a purchasing clerk. This structure enables a clear division of duties related to report preparation and expense authorization within the department.

The roles and responsibilities of department staff are clearly defined in the job descriptions, and the communication structure is reflected by the organization chart, which is regularly updated. Staff have appropriate professional designations and experience to perform their roles.

In order to ensure efficient organization, the board has an efficiency committee that is composed of school principals and staff members from all board administrative departments. The committee's objective is to improve efficiency so that more time can be spent focusing on student achievement. The committee meets on a monthly basis to review operational procedures and improve them; although it has several members the committee has produced satisfactory results.

### **Monitoring and Communication of Policies**

The finance unit is responsible for 13 policies and administrative guidelines on financial management, including purchasing and tender calls, petty cash, management and auditing of school funds, credit cards and travel costs. Policies are updated according to a five-year cycle.

The unit carries out many actions to ensure that its policies are understood by all staff members. Changes made to policies are communicated to staff when a revision is approved by the board of trustees. The superintendent of business informs staff of changes to the school board's administrative guidelines and procedures through ad-hoc meetings or memoranda. In some cases, training is offered, often in the workplace, and it is personalized to ensure it is understood well. However, there is no training and policy awareness plan. The school board should consider establishing an annual training and policy awareness plan for board staff. The unit communicates to new employees the policies that affect them, such as those on purchasing or expense

reimbursement. The business department ensures compliance with these policies by implementing various control processes.

### Recommendation

- The board should consider establishing an annual policy awareness-training plan for principals, custodians, and support staff.

## 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 – Planning and Budget	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 – Planning and Budget	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has adopted an integrated (at school board and school level) approach to enrolment forecasting that drives the budget process. This supports development of the staffing plan and the annual budget.	Yes

## Risk Mitigation and Board Approval

Leading practices – Planning and Budget	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 school board's annual budget process is transparent, clearly communicated, and well documented, and incorporates input from all key stakeholders, with the exception of the local community.

The budget process begins in January and ends in June. At the beginning of the process, the business department establishes a detailed timeline that includes all duties required for the establishment of the annual budget. The timeline includes specific dates.

Between January and March, the executive committee establishes an annual direction based on factors including a presentation of financial data prepared by the business department. The committee also ensures that the Board's annual priorities are taken into account, in particular those related to student achievement. In addition, each department manager or superintendent identifies his or her annual priorities and ensures that they are taken into account, subject to the approval of the executive committee and the availability of funds.

Next, the business department provides each department with an Excel budget template, including the expenditures from the four first months of the preceding year. The department, in collaboration with other members of the executive committee, also establishes the staffing levels for teachers according to Ministry requirements, support staff, administrative staff and management positions according to the needs identified by school principals and department managers. Finally, the business sector identifies computer technology needs across the school board.

In April, the superintendent of business presents the Board with the changes made to general legislative grants and managers submit their budgets to the business department. This data is compiled and a first draft of the budget is presented to the executive committee in May. This draft is as precise as possible, due to the use of actual salary forecasts and Ministry templates. After these meetings, the superintendent of business makes the required changes and presents the budget draft to the board of trustees. The Board then decides on the changes it wishes to make to the budget. The budget is finalized by the executive committee in June. At the end of June, the final version of the budget is reviewed and approved by the Board, after which it is submitted to the Ministry of Education.

If there are changes made to the budget throughout the year, they are submitted to the Board for approval. These changes are usually the result of changes to enrolment, specific student needs or funding announced by the Ministry. Special grants are incorporated into the budget as much as possible, and they are allocated according to Ministry guidelines.

### **Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development**

Enrolment forecasts are prepared by the capital, maintenance and planning manager in collaboration with school principals and the executive committee. The executive committee approves the final version. Enrolment forecasts are made each year and incorporate the upcoming four to five years.

The board seeks to minimize the margin of error in its forecasts; as such, enrolment is closely monitored throughout the year, especially in May and September. Once the school year has begun, the forecasts are compared to actual enrolment. The board budgets in a conservative manner to ensure it does not lack funds. At the time of the operational review, there were fifteen more elementary students and one more secondary student than forecast enrolled in the current year.

Teacher staffing is an integral part of the annual budget. The superintendent of business and the superintendent of education responsible for staffing prepare a formula that respects Ministry requirements (e.g., 20:1). This formula is then validated with a class-organization simulation. Staffing plans are then reviewed and approved by the executive committee before being submitted to the Board. After school principals prepare organizational plans for their respective schools, their respective needs are identified and submitted to the executive committee for review.

Staffing for other positions in schools is carried out in a similar way, using formulae that take into account enrolment for each school. For department staffing, needs are identified within each department and reviewed by the executive committee, which approves each new position. The HR department is responsible for ensuring that the annual hiring plan takes staffing needs into account. The business department has



implemented control mechanisms in collaboration with the HR department to ensure that staff are only hired for budgeted positions.

### **Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies**

Due to the school board's size and geographic situation, the main risk faced by the school board is the relationship between regional enrolment and the grant revenue it generates. School board enrolment can vary from one year to another across the regions, but the transfer of resources is limited by the geographic situation. The board mitigates the risk of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels by closely monitoring the variance between enrolment forecasts and actual enrolment. It also seeks to minimize absenteeism and to ensure that the revised budget integrates all known changes in costs and grants.

The comparison between budgeted amounts and actual expenditures is carried out centrally by the business department. The business department advises school principals and department managers when current trends indicate that there will be an annual budget, in order to avoid overbudgeting.

Management can generate SAP system reports to manage their expenditures, which they do regularly. Automated controls in the SAP system and procedures established in the purchasing and reimbursement process are also factors that also help to mitigate the risk of overbudgeting.

## **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 school board activities;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency 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
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 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.	No

## Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

The school board uses an integrated financial system to record, track and report financial data. The SAP is used by 11 French-language school boards and it is supported by the SAP centre of excellence in Ottawa. This system integrates general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, payroll, budget and purchasing. It facilitates the analysis of variances between actual results and the budget, as well as producing management reports.

The administrative services manager must approve any changes to users in the SAP system. The financial system enables budget holders (such as school principals or budget managers) to print their own budget monitoring reports.

### **Interim and Annual Financial Reporting**

Interim financial reports are prepared and presented to the executive committee and board of trustees on a quarterly basis in order to keep them updated on the financial situation. The report shows variances between the planned budget and actual expenses. If substantial variances are forecast, they are communicated to the board of trustees.

Financial reports are not signed by management; however, they are presented with a cover page indicating that the reports are prepared by the superintendent of business and submitted by the director of education.

An informal timeline, in the form of a tracking file, of financial reports is updated at the beginning of each school year. The board respects the deadlines for submitting financial reports to the Ministry.

### **Audit**

The primary function of the internal auditor is to ensure that the internal controls established by management are operating effectively and in compliance with Board policies and procedures. The school board does not currently have a designated internal auditor. However, audits of school accounts are carried out annually by the financial analyst according to a set timeline. These reports are reviewed by the administrative services manager and the concerned superintendents of education.

Developing a mandate for the internal audit function would assist the executive committee and the trustees in their overall governance roles. The internal audit function can also help develop performance measures and indicators for programs and services. It should report to the school board's business working committee. The annual audit plans could also be presented to this committee for approval, in addition to all reports.

We would encourage the Board to strengthen the mandate of the business working committee by adding a mandate for auditing and by designating external members to sit on the committee. The professional backgrounds of the external members could include accountants, lawyers or other professionals, depending on the needs of the committee and its mandate. As such, thirdparties could participate in the review of financial statements, the auditing report and reports produced by management throughout the year.

## Recommendations

- The school board should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls. Management could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
- Management and the board of trustees should consider formalizing an audit committee that includes external advisors to contribute to the finance audit committee's effectiveness.
- The finance department's management should ensure that letters of recommendation from the auditor be sent to trustees and that the auditor's recommendations are acted on.

## 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

Leading Practices - Treasury Management	Evidence of Adoption?
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 school 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 school 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 school board has an agreement with the Caisse Populaire Desjardins, which was negotiated within the framework of a purchasing consortium composed of the 11 Frenchlanguage school boards. This consortium launches a call for tenders every three years. The school board benefits from a prime rate on the average monthly cash balance. As a result, the business department has consolidated the majority of cash management activities with its local Caisse Populaire Desjardins. The board's schools also manage their banking activities with the Caisse Populaire Desjardins, if there is a branch in their region.

With the exception of surplus funds kept at the Caisse Populaire, the Board has created a sinking fund, invested with CIBC Mellon, to create a reserve for the reimbursement of capital expenditures. Given the prime rate received at the Caisse and as the funds are available upon request, the finance unit does not prepare reports on investment activities for the board. However, investments are included in the auditors' financial statements, which are presented to the Board on an annual basis.

The business department receives monthly reports on working funds to ensure the monitoring of cash assets. It also receives a quarterly report on the sinking fund. The appropriate division of duties is ensured by the monthly preparation of bank

reconciliations by the junior accountant, and their approval by the administrative services manager.

Critical documents, such as agreements and contracts with financial institutions, and acts of ownership, are methodically classified and filed in a concrete, fire-resistant vault. When available, electronic versions are saved to avoid loss of information.

The school board maintains reserve funds for contingencies such as additional needs to help improve student achievement. The superintendent of business must obtain the approval of the Board to establish or use the reserve funds. The Board seeks to promote the proper use of funds allocated to school budgets. As such, if a budget is not used up during a school year, it may be carried over for use in the subsequent years. This enables schools to plan and anticipate initiatives that could be implemented over several years by avoiding the tendency to wastefully spend funds for fear of “losing” them.

### **Management of School-Based Funds**

Throughout the school year, schools organize several activities requiring fundraising. The board has a policy and administrative guidelines in place to govern fundraising. The administrative guideline on fundraising in schools describes the process to ensure that funds are efficiently managed and that risks of loss are minimized.

The Board uses the banking management application, which is an SAP system module, to manage the funds of each school. This module gives the finance unit ongoing access to school books and minimizes the risk of loss.

Each school manages a budget for purchases by their custodial staff through the use of a purchasing card with an annual limit of \$250 or \$500 for elementary and secondary schools, respectively. This card is used for one-time and urgent purchases according to an established procedure. This limits the cost of administering minor amounts.

## **4.5 Management of Non-Grant Revenue**

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

Non-grant revenue management is a smaller functional area for the school board. The school board receives Education Programs – Other (EPO) funding from the Ministry for specific initiatives, which requires it 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 and Procedures and Planning to Support Non-Grant Revenues

Leading Practices – School-Based Funds and 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 – School-Based Funds and Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Electronic registration and payment system are used where appropriate (e.g., ConEd, permitting of facilities, leasing, etc).	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
School board budget identifies revenue and expenditure for each EPO program. Management monitors activity to ensure compliance with terms and conditions.	Yes

### Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues

The school board has the following sources of non-grant revenues:

- community use of the schools, gym leasing;
- nineteen daycares.

On the whole, these revenues are minimal and the board recovers only its costs. The objective of these initiatives is to ensure that these facilities are available to the community in accordance with Ministry requirements.

## Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues

The school board does not use an automated system to collect other revenues. However, amounts are minimal and the collection of amounts owing does not currently pose a problem. Amounts are collected either by cheques sent to the business department or by EFT. The financial analyst and the junior accountant are responsible for monitoring accounts receivable.

The board would like to acquire a web-based electronic registration system that would enable third parties to electronically make requests for use of the school board's facilities. The board intends to set up a web-based electronic payment system.

Special grants given to the school board are monitored by various members of the executive committee. Ministry memoranda, signed TPA contracts and the Ministry's website are the principal source of information on special grants. For each grant allotted, the finance unit creates a new project account (order) in SAP to enable the separate recording of all revenues and expenditures related to the grant. The financial analyst closely monitors the projects and monitors monthly expenditures. A separate file is also created, and it contains the signed contract, the budget, a copy of the grant, all related reports and a timeline of important events, such as the date the funds will be received and the deadline for the final report.

## 4.6 Supply Chain / 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 school 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 - Supply Chain / Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Approved procurement policies and practices are clearly communicated to staff with purchasing authority, and are periodically reviewed and updated.	Yes
Vendor selection criteria include elements other than lowest cost, such as total cost of ownership, value, and quality and competitive procurement (including the use of public advertising for RFPs and tenders over a defined level).	Yes
Purchasing managers monitor and ensure compliance with the Board's procurement policies and procedures.	Yes

## Participation in Group Purchasing Initiatives

Leading Practices - Supply Chain / 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 - Supply Chain / Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Purchasing authorization levels are commensurate to job title/role, and are monitored for compliance by a supervisor or department head.	Yes

## Policies and procedures for PCard and Corporate Card Use

Leading Practices - Supply Chain / 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 - Supply Chain / Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Automated three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used.	Yes

Leading Practices - Supply Chain / Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Commitment accounting is in place to monitor budget utilization.	Yes
Management has implemented an electronic supplier interface for ordering, processing and payment, including the use of supplier portals.	No

### Use of Electronic Funds Transfer for Greater Efficiency

Leading Practices - Supply Chain / Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Management maximizes use of electronic funds transfers (EFT) for payments.	Yes

### Procurement Policies and Procedures

The school board has a purchasing policy approved for the acquisition of goods and services, which extends to all schools and administrative units. The policy is available on the school board's website. It was last updated in 2000, but it is currently being reviewed. In compliance with the policy, the Board has a selection process that includes criteria such as quality, product/service effectiveness or ease of use, delivery and terms of payment.

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

- Use of corporate credit cards (2007)
- Reimbursement of trustees expenses incurred during the exercise of their duties (2007)

### Participation in Buying Consortia

The board makes purchases in partnership with other school boards and is a member of many buying consortia, including the following:

- Niagara Public Purchasing Committee
- Ontario School Board Financing Corporation (OSBFC)
- Collaborative School Board Services Association (CSBSA)
- Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM)
- Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du Centre-Est (CECLFCE)

- Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques (CFORP)
- Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO)
- Conseil scolaire de district catholique du Centre-Sud (CSDCCS)

For the purchase of school supplies such as paper or cleaning products, the school board groups the purchases as much as possible to reduce costs. The purchasing manager prepares cost analyses to identify savings resulting from tender calls. The data are presented to the Board.

### **Purchasing Levels of Authority**

The purchasing policy prescribes the following requirements for tender calls according to its value:

- From \$0 to \$20,000: at the discretion of the purchaser
- From \$20,001 to \$100,000: invitations to tender are usually sent by the purchasing unit to at least three bidders who have at least five (5) working days to submit their proposal. Any deviation from this process must be approved by the director of education.
- More than \$100,000: invitations to tender are sent by the purchasing unit to at least three bidders who have at least ten (10) working days to submit their proposal. The approval of the board of trustees is required.

Schools and departments may place orders up to \$500 directly with suppliers by creating their own purchase orders in the purchasing system. For orders above \$500, the purchasing unit carries out a review and, as required, makes adjustments in order to receive lower prices.

The person responsible for managing purchases within the business department ensures compliance with the policy.

### **Policies and procedures for PCard and Corporate Card Use**

The school board has clearly communicated the credit card use policy, which was under review throughout the 2009 year. The board uses approximately 125 credit cards, which are given to upper management, school principals and department managers. The control of credit card use is very efficient, thanks to the following process:

- Card holders sign a document that informs them of the privileges related to using the card and the consequences of abusing the card.

- Card holders receive their monthly statement at their workplace and then fill out a report on the card's use, which they submit with original receipts. This report is approved by their supervisors and sent to the business department for processing.
- The reports are systematically reviewed by the business department. Expenditures that are personal in nature or that are not justified by a receipt are billed to the employee responsible for the card or deducted from his or her monthly reimbursement claim.

Staff members who do not submit their credit card expense report and supporting documents will not be reimbursed until this documentation is provided. Purchasing cards are taken away from staff members who do not comply with the policy.

### **Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle**

The school board predominantly relies on the procurement module of its SAP finance system to process its purchase-to-payment cycle. Principals or finance department managers can enter purchase orders in the SAP.

A release code system assigned to each user and setting the user's clearance limit is used to manage orders and ensure compliance with the limits defined by policy. Any order generated that meets the policy limits creates a commitment in the budget account used. The system generates a warning if the order exceeds the budget. Where appropriate, applications are returned to requesters or forwarded to the administrative services manager or the Superintendent of Business for approval.

Goods are sent directly to requesters, with rare exceptions. The requesters confirm the receipt of goods, and they match them to the order in the system. The invoice is entered by the finance unit, and it is matched to the purchase order. The order can now be closed. In the case of services, the purchasing department confirms receipt of services after approval of invoices by the unit concerned confirming that services were rendered satisfactorily. The purchasing clerk can then process the invoices.

A bank transfer is carried out weekly by the business department and is initiated by the financial analyst who reviews some of the bills to be paid before the final payment. Invoices received by the finance unit without a purchase order are returned to vendors.

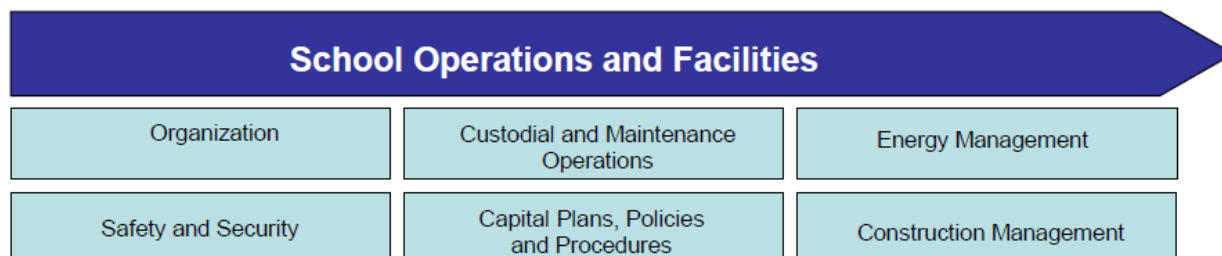
### **Use of Electronic Funds Transfer**

The school board uses EFT for payroll and vendor transactions. The board of trustees is assured that it only conducts business with vendors that have the capacity to accept EFTs.

**Recommendations:**

- Management should implement an electronic supplier interface for ordering, processing and payment, including the use of supplier portals.

## 5. School Operations and Facilities Management – Findings and Recommendations



Efficient and effective management of the school 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 school 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 school 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 school board and on-site fieldwork, 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 responsibilities.	No

### Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices - Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
The School Operations and Facilities department has clearly defined organizational units and delineates the respective roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is available.	No
Senior operations and facilities staff have appropriate designations (e.g. engineer) 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.	No
Processes exist to monitor new legislation and regulations and implement necessary changes.	No
Management provides scheduled policy and procedure awareness, and training to address ongoing skill development and emerging regulatory issues.	Yes

## **Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities**

The school operations and facilities management department has an annual process to identify priorities and objectives for the year. The department is divided into three units: the planning and construction projects unit, the buildings operation unit, and the renewal, energy conservation and preventative maintenance projects unit. The three units meet annually and establish priorities and departmental objectives that are sent to the executive committee, which adds its comments. The department does not establish a formal plan, but a preliminary list of work to be done during the year, which is presented to the executive committee and board of trustees.

The department plans to visit each school five times during the year according a schedule prepared at the beginning of the school year, collecting work requests in the form of written reports signed by the school principal. The department manager is made aware of inspection reports in order to stay abreast of work requests and schedule preventive maintenance.

Although it should be recognized that the department has adopted certain principles of annual planning, it is always possible to make the process more rigorous and consistent. More precisely, the process can be strengthened by the establishment of a formal plan, consistent with the board's overall strategic plan and annual improvement plan. It would also be useful to provide more details on a smaller number of activities so that the department staff and the board have a better understanding of annual priorities.

## **Organizational Structure and Accountability**

The department reports to the departmental manager, who oversees the planning of capital repairs as well as custodial and maintenance operations. The department has a team of 15 people divided into three units: the buildings operation manager and three buildings supervisors; the renewal projects manager, two project managers and an engineer; and the planning and construction projects manager, a project manager and a planning officer.

The school board also has 40 custodians and 19 substitute custodians assigned to schools.

The roles and responsibilities of these positions are not formally documented in job descriptions but they are clearly defined, and the communication structure is reflected in the organizational chart, updated annually. Key department staff have appropriate professional designations and related field experience, and are involved in various provincial committees to keep abreast of best practices and new guidelines.



## Monitoring and Communication of Policies

The school board has various policies and procedures to manage its facilities and operations. These policies cover the review of school facilities, advertising in schools, building safety, use of facilities by community groups, child care, the use of private property, health and safety, and intervention in crisis situations.

To ensure that policies are put into practice, all schools receive an annual inspection of cleanliness, health and safety and maintenance needs by a board representative. For maintenance needs, custodians or principals notify the buildings supervisor directly during their visits, except in emergency cases.

There is no formalized plan for systematic policy updates. Instead, policies are updated on an *ad hoc* basis. Management should consider establishing an official improvement policy that would ensure that departmental policies are periodically reviewed. This could include the establishment of a committee responsible for policy to determine which policies require review and which should be developed.

## Recommendations

- Management should make sure that the school operations and facilities management department's goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan that is in line with the board's board improvement plan and is accessible by key stakeholders. The plan should incorporate measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities.
- The department should consider developing an annual training and policy awareness plan for school board staff.
- The board should consider developing a process that ensures compliance with these policies and new legislation.
- The board should consider clarifying the roles and responsibilities of department staff in order to ensure that they are well documented.

## 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.**

<b>Leading Practices - Custodial and Maintenance Operations</b>	<b>Evidence of Adoption?</b>
The board has adopted cleaning standards and has developed a standard set of processes and tools to monitor, manage, and report on results.	No
Management's custodial/maintenance allocation model optimizes use of staff.	Yes

### **Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan**

<b>Leading Practices - Custodial and Maintenance Operations</b>	<b>Evidence of Adoption?</b>
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**

<b>Leading Practices - Custodial and Maintenance Operations</b>	<b>Evidence of Adoption?</b>
A monitored annual training plan for staff addresses ongoing skill development and emerging regulatory issues.	No

## 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.	Yes
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 that 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

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

The school board does not have standards for cleanliness and maintenance in the form of a standardized manual for all schools. Instead, every custodian has a logbook with a description of daily tasks. Each school has different needs, so the responsibility of establishing tasks falls to principals. The department provides support to schools when principals need assistance. During their five annual visits to schools, building supervisors evaluate the quality of maintenance.

A central health and safety committee is responsible for annual health and safety inspections. Maintenance complaints are handled first by the principal and then by the school operations and facilities management department during their visits. Staff complaints are handled by principals and the deputy member, and the CMCSST committee follows up if the complaint was not resolved earlier.

The board has developed a custodial allocation model for the optimum use of resources to implement the school board's cleaning standards and practices. The allocation of custodial staff is based on the square footage of buildings, the number of students, the presence of tenants and occupancy of the building. This formula is optimized using split shifts and the sharing of custodians in some schools.

## **Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan**

The department manager and the renewal projects manager work together to develop the annual renewal plan for schools. For example, a plan to replace school roofs is developed with the help of an engineering consultant who has inspected the roofs, assessing their age and need for replacement. These observations are incorporated into the development of the multiyear plan. The plan classifies projects in order of priority. The strategic framework and annual priorities guide the development of the plan. The board's priority is to ensure that maintenance projects will improve learning environments and make schools more welcoming. The board of trustees then approves the plan.

The board develops an annual renewal and maintenance plan based on the information gathered by the department and the ReCAPP database, wherever practical. Urgent problems related to facilities are brought directly to the attention of the department manager and renewal projects manager. These processes ensure the development of an annual maintenance plan that prioritizes the urgent and long-term needs of the board's facilities.

## **Training to Support Skills Development and Safety**

The department manager supports the professional development of custodial and maintenance staff. The department organizes a training program and modules for members of the joint committee. A first aid training plan has been developed for deputy members and new staff. There is a web site that allows schools to register for WHMIS training for new staff.

There is no formal training plan for maintenance personnel. However, department managers choose several conferences to attend for their professional development. When an employee determines that a workshop or training session would be beneficial, he or she obtains permission from the manager to attend. Custodians can take college courses at their own expense.

One of the department's best practices is the enrolment of most of its staff in training sessions whenever a new school opens. This ensures that training is relevant to the maintenance staff while minimizing the costs of future training. This also ensures that staff members are trained in the use and maintenance of the school's systems.

## **Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies**

The principal handles the management of custodial supplies. When a school has used up its budget, the buildings operations manager becomes involved. The buildings operations manager is responsible for buying equipment for schools. An inventory is established for school maintenance equipment.

The board has established a central purchasing system to standardize products purchased by the board and minimize transportation costs. The building operations manager, working with the supplier and the purchasing manager, has developed a catalogue detailing the list of available products, their prices (negotiated by the board), their effectiveness, etc.

### **Project Management, Monitoring and Supporting Systems**

The board has established processes for monitoring renewal and maintenance projects. When school visits take place, the principal and custodians discuss the school's needs with the renewal projects manager. The department manager and unit managers prioritize a list of work for the year and submit it to the executive committee and subsequently the board of trustees for approval. Some projects are incorporated into annual planning, and others into multi-year planning.

The process for maintenance work orders begins with a numbered request form completed by a maintenance staff member or teacher. The forms are collected during building supervisor's five annual school visits. In emergencies, the maintenance manager is contacted directly. The work requests are entered into the SAP system and an order is prepared and faxed to the vendor. A member of the custodial team must be present when the work is carried out to ensure that the work is completed satisfactorily.

Acts of vandalism are concentrated in abandoned schools.

Custodians are present during the day in schools, and cleaners at night. Their work is supervised by principals during the school year and by building supervisors during the summer and holidays.

As necessary, the board meets the requirements of the duty to accommodate (modified work) and takes steps to reduce workplace accidents. The choice of equipment allows the improvement of working conditions through the purchasing of equipment to facilitate daily tasks.

### **Recommendations**

- Management, with the participation of departmental managers, should consider formalizing the development process of a training plan for department staff.
- Management should continue its initiatives to search for a new work orders system that would streamline the management, distribution, monitoring and reporting of work orders related to the repair and general maintenance of facilities.

- The school board should consider developing the documentation that describes cleaning standards for schools and develop a standard set of processes and tools to monitor, manage, and report on results.

### 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;
- 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)).	No
Successful conservation initiatives are communicated across all schools and with other school boards.	No

#### Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

Leading Practices - Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management provides formal annual reporting on the conservation savings achieved against the plan.	No
A comprehensive system exists to budget expenditures, track consumption and identify opportunities for further savings.	No

Leading Practices - Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
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

Unit management does not have a plan or policy relating to energy management. However, during maintenance or renewal projects, there is an emphasis on replacing aging building components (high efficiency heaters, more efficient lights, waterless urinals, switches, etc.) to optimize energy savings. Moreover, during the construction of its new schools, the board ensures that they include all possible energy efficiency measures, including a design that ensures the maximum amount of natural light.

All schools within the school board participate in a recycling program.

According to the school board's purchasing policy, it is not a requirement that new equipment promote energy efficiency. However, the board often buys Power Save products. In addition, the council is part of an electricity purchasing consortium and the "School and Energy Coalition", which negotiates rates for school boards. Moreover, in its construction projects since 2001, the board has included measures to meet LEED requirements, generating substantial energy savings for future years.

The school board is encouraged to continue expanding the scope of its energy management initiatives, and establish a board-level multi-year energy management plan that incorporates appropriate measures to reduce the consumption of energy.

## Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

Presently, energy conservation reports are produced and presented to the Ministry of Education, for example for the "Jeunes sans frontières" school. The board has established cost reporting for each school's facilities, including the cost of electricity, heating and water, as well as the cost per square foot. The analysis of energy conservation shows that the board has achieved its targeted LEED project results for the Jeunes sans frontières school. However, the board has no plan, so the reports generated cannot be compared or monitored.

The school board has not implemented consolidated billing for all of its schools. Given the geographical diversity of the school board, the board has to deal with various public utility companies, depending on the location. As such, it is unlikely that the board will consolidate utilities billing for all schools. However, the department manager is encouraged to explore opportunities to consolidate utilities billing in order to reduce the amount of administrative work.

## Recommendations

- The school board should establish a multi-year energy management plan that determines suitable objectives for reducing consumption.
- The board should ensure that mechanisms are put in place to monitor energy consumption and costs, in order to create periodic reports for schools, the executive committee, and trustees.
- Management should ask utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption and reduce the workload of the accounts payable department.
- As part of energy conservation planning, management should examine purchasing practices to ensure that they support each school's energy conservation objectives.
- The board should consider forwarding information on their energy conservation initiatives to schools and other school boards in memos or reports published on its web site.

## 5.4 Health and Safety

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.



## Health, Safety and Security Management

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 follow 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 managed by the facility services manager. The board has a health and safety policy that has not been updated since 2002. The board also has a policy on emergency measures that was approved in January 2009. The board of trustees is responsible for establishing and maintaining a joint committee on health and safety that promotes health and safety and prevents illness and accidents. The members of the committee are the facilities department manager, two school principals, one representative from each union and two nonunionized representatives.

The committee has implemented plans and strategies for health and safety in schools. These plans are reviewed as needed, and explain the alert codes used to indicate the type of problem and the threat level, as well as the responsibilities of each department. Principals are responsible for ensuring safety in schools. The emergency plan is updated annually by schools and is reviewed by the buildings operations manager. There is also an emergency measures guide that summarizes all school-specific plans. A facilities department employee is responsible for keeping it updated. Although its content has not changed since 2001, a committee composed of one member from each board department is currently responsible for ensuring that its content is kept up to date. This committee also identifies and reviews the full range of emergencies situations that schools and administrative offices could face. This committee is chaired by the communications department manager.

All new board employees are provided with SIMDUT health and safety training. The board has also organized regional training sessions for emergency school containment exercises ("lockdown", "hold and secure" and "shelter-in-place") with the Toronto Police Service. The board ensures that water and air quality standards for students are met.

Schools are equipped with alarm systems and magnetic cards have replaced traditional keys. The cards are centrally managed, allowing hours and history of use to be monitored. There is a hierarchy in the key system and key boxes that contain the school's important keys for emergency services or board employees who need them to carry out their duties. The card system provides remote access in cases where the board needs to fix a problem or an employee does not have access to the school. The three building supervisors are responsible for keeping a pager on at all times in case of emergency.

For emergency situations, the board has not yet established a clear policy for disseminating information about the emergency to the community or to parents. However, such situations require the support of the communications manager, who, with the education manager, is responsible for follow-up and external communications. The board is encouraged to develop a procedure for sending vital information to parents in emergency situations.

## 5.5 Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures

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;
- 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 plan that includes the related funding plan.	Yes
The school board has an approved pupil accommodation review policy.	Yes

### Ongoing 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 RECAP methodology).	Yes

### Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

The school board has implemented a ten-year capital planning plan. The department is involving the board of trustees in the development of this plan. Based on that plan, the board is preparing a plan with short-term forecasts for the next four or five years. The operational capital plan contains a list of projects prioritized by schools for the next four years. The ten-year capital plan has been reviewed and approved by the board of trustees. It was developed based on sources such as Statistics Canada reports, school history, the ReCAP database, expert studies, etc.

The Board hires expert consultants to conduct capital field research as needed. An *ad hoc* committee—the construction working committee—is created, and the Board and parent groups are also consulted to determine capital requirements for any given project. School accessibility is a priority for the board. A report on accessibility is

currently under Board consultation, and its approval is expected before the end of this year.

In terms of capital repairs, the board relies on ReCAPP data, school inspections and the needs communicated by principals.

The school board is expanding, necessitating the use of mobile classrooms. The board is encouraged to develop a policy detailing the use of mobile classrooms in order to ensure that they are a temporary solution only.

The school board has a pupil accommodation review process. The board conducts an annual comprehensive review of pupil accommodation to determine renewal needs for the next year. The board is in the process of establishing standards for new construction through an ad hoc committee.

### **Ongoing Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning**

The board keeps an accurate inventory of school capacity, including the number of pupils and the number of schools, using the Ministry's school facilities inventory system. The renewal projects manager is responsible for the monitoring and updating of data in the inventory system. The department keeps up-to-date information on all the board's schools. This information contains the characteristics of each school, including its capacity. Communities use school facilities on a fairly regular basis, and funds received from their use go towards covering any additional costs incurred.

The department has a process for updating the ReCAPP database. Information is entered in ReCAPP on an annual basis and each project is divided into several components. Experts analyze the state of schools, and the renewal project manager makes annual inspections. All this data is used to determine which projects will be necessary in the coming years.

The board uses grants for the following facility requirements: creating positive learning environments, adjusting transitional facilities, covering closing costs for prohibitive-to-repair facilities, and providing a stronger start and smaller class sizes at the primary level. These programs, and the grants for schools classified as remote schools are required to keep the board's schools open.

## **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

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities	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

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities	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

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities	Evidence of Adoption?
Management evaluates and updates the approved list of contractors, architects and related professionals periodically, ideally in five-year cycles.	No

### Cost-Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

The board has opened seventeen schools since its inception, of which three were new constructions and several others were major renovations. As such the board has considerable construction experience. The board has no standard school design which is reused in all new school construction. However, the board will sometimes reuse a

school design. Once a school has been approved, the board hires a consultant to help study the potential of the land to be purchased as needed. Once the site is found, an architect is selected following a competitive process and formal studies are conducted to estimate the costs of the construction project. Construction budgets also contain a 5% margin to manage contingencies that may arise during construction. Thanks to these precautions, the board ensures that schools are built on budget.

The board compares construction costs with the other 12 French-language school boards. The board also compares costs with the provincial committee on Francophone capital projects as well as and the English-language school boards in the region (Peel, York and Halton). This analysis is used to explain cost differences from one board to another. The board has exemplary design processes, which could be further supported by the implementation of policies such as a site acquisition policy.

### **Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects**

The board has detailed processes for monitoring the budget of its construction projects. The board organizes design and architectural competitions or invites pre-qualified architects to participate in an expression of interest competition for the selection of an architect. Architects are responsible for managing project costs, along with the planning and construction projects manager and the department manager. The architect provides detailed monthly reports on project costs, detailing discrepancies in the budget and the progress of the project.

When there is a risk of budgetary overrun, the architect contacts the planning and construction projects manager, who offers solutions and shows the amount of the overrun. The planning and construction projects manager then works with the architect to see where costs can be reduced in order to keep within the budget. A change of order process is established, in which any change to the budget must be approved by the board of trustees. During construction projects, the department manager provides verbal reports at Board meeting. The business department also monitors the cost of new buildings to ensure they meet budgets.

### **Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers**

The board does not have a permanent updated list of vendors that includes available professional services providers. The SAP system does contain a list of pre-approved vendors. To find the required vendors, the board consults neighbouring boards for their recommendations on professional services providers. The board of trustees also has a process for pre-qualifying professionals or certain vendors as needed.

The board has a formal process for vendor approval described in its purchasing policy. When the board issues invitations to tender, the lowest price bidder is usually chosen if it meets all criteria.

## **Recommendations**

- The board should establish a regularly updated list of suppliers, including suppliers of professional services, to encourage time savings.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Overview of the Operational Review

#### Operational Review Objectives

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.

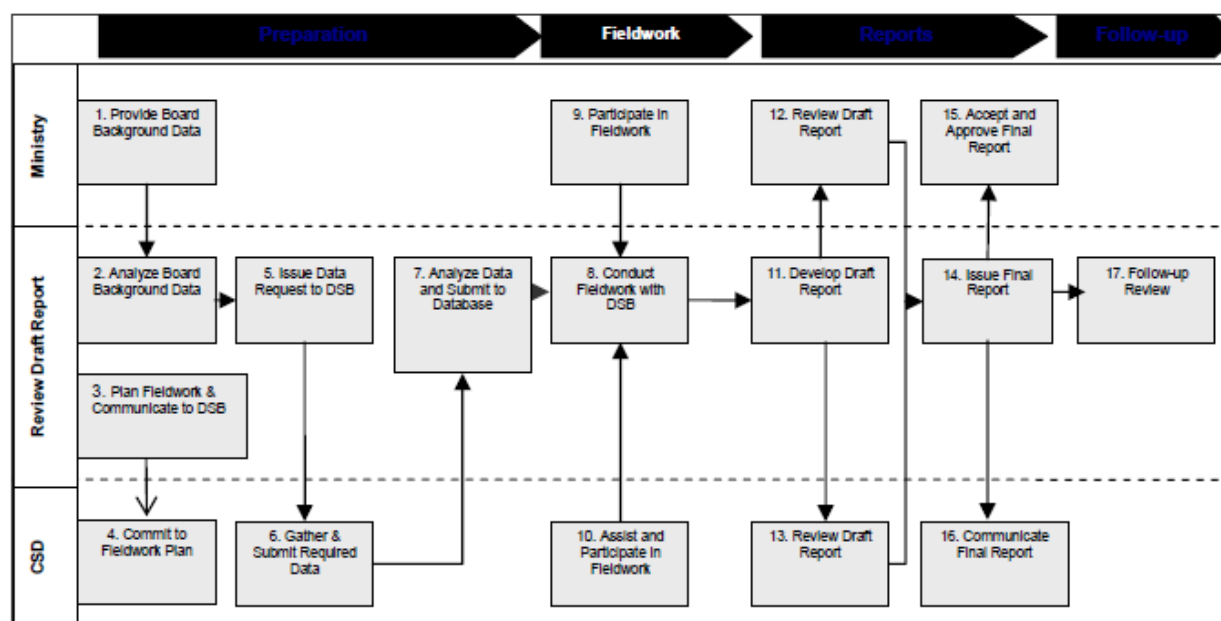




### Operational Review Summary Approach

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 allow the team to 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 School 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.

Key Activity	Description
Gather and Submit Required Documentation	Upon receipt of the request for supporting documentation, each board compiles the requested data. School boards have at least three weeks to complete this process prior to the start of the fieldwork.
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 School 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 school board operations.
Assist and Participate in Fieldwork	School board staff participate in the fieldwork. The number of participants involved will vary depending on the size of the board.

## Phase: Reports

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
Review Draft Report (Ministry))	The Ministry reviews the draft report and provides feedback to the review team.
Review Draft Report (School 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.

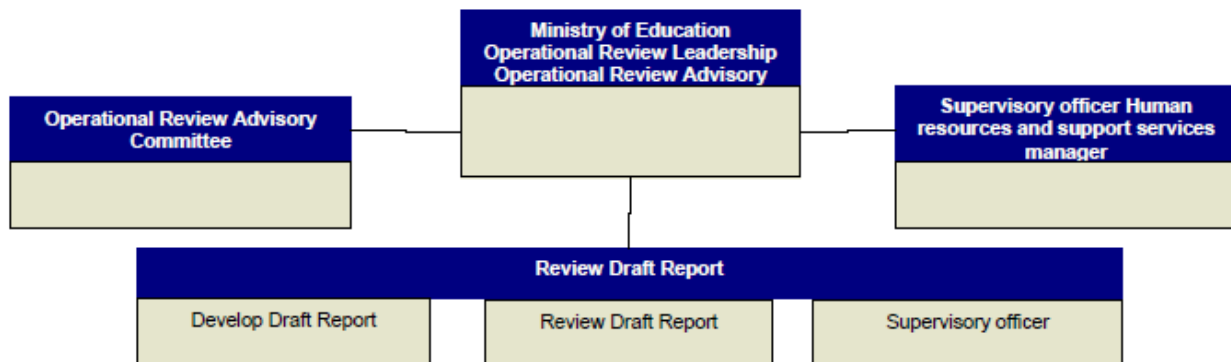
## Phase: Follow-up

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 of 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 Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest. 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

N°	Recommendations
1.	The board should consider establishing a timetable for policy review to ensure the periodic review of policy in all functional areas. This could include the establishment of a committee responsible for policy to determine which policies require review or which should be developed.
2.	The board should work towards establishing a formal succession plan for its senior management, in order to ensure that initiatives previously undertaken by the board are continued.

### Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation

N°	Recommendations
3.	The board should consider establishing an annual policy awareness-training plan for principals, custodians, and support staff.
4.	HR management should develop policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.
5.	The HR department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, with policies and procedures for specific categories of absenteeism. This important initiative will provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, by engaging in positive reinforcement with employees and adopting standardized practices across all employee groups.
6.	HR management should periodically conduct independent compliance audits of the board's insurance carrier (management services only), which manages the processing of medical and dental claims, to ensure adherence to the benefit plan's terms and conditions.
7.	Management should consider developing a formal plan for conducting exit interviews. As with staff surveys, these interviews would provide input for HR policy, as well as process and program improvement.

### Financial Management

N°	Recommendations
8.	The board should consider developing an annual training and policy awareness plan for its staff.

N°	Recommendations
9.	The school board should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls. Management could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
10.	Management and the board of trustees should consider formalizing an audit committee that includes external advisors to contribute to the finance audit committee's effectiveness.
11.	The finance department's management should ensure that letters of recommendation from the auditor be sent to trustees and that the auditor's recommendations are acted on.
12.	Management should consider implementing an electronic supplier interface for ordering, processing and payment, including the use of supplier portals.

## School Operations and Facilities Management

N°	Recommendations
13.	Management should consider ensuring that the department's goals and priorities are documented in an annual department plan that is aligned to the board's annual improvement plan accessible by key stakeholders. The plan should incorporate measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified accountability.
14.	The department should consider developing an annual training and policy awareness plan for school board staff.
15.	The board should consider developing a process that ensures compliance with these policies and new legislation.
16.	The board should consider clarifying the roles and responsibilities of department's staff in order to ensure that these roles and responsibilities are well documented.
17.	Management, with participation of departmental managers, should consider formalizing the development process of a training plan for department staff.
18.	Management should continue its initiatives to search for a new work orders system that would streamline the management, distribution, monitoring and reporting of work orders related to the repair and general maintenance of facilities.
19.	The school board should consider developing the documentation that describes cleaning standards for schools and develop a standard set of processes and tools to monitor, manage, and report on results.
20.	The school board should establish a multi-year energy management plan that determines suitable objectives for reducing consumption.
21.	The board should ensure that they have put in place mechanisms to monitor consumption and energy costs, in order to create periodic reports for schools, the executive committee, and trustees.
22.	Management should ask utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption and reduce the workload of the accounts payable department.

N°	Recommendations
23.	As part of energy conservation planning, management should examine purchasing practices to ensure that they support each school's energy conservation objectives.
24.	The board is encouraged to develop a clear policy and a procedure for sending vital information to parents in emergency situations.
25.	The board should establish a regularly updated list of suppliers, including suppliers of professional services, to encourage time savings.