Ministry of Education

Operational Review Report
Greater Essex County District School Board

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Executive Summary

This report details the findings and recommendations of the Operational Review of the Greater Essex County District School Board (the school board or GECDSB) 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 October 26, 2009.

Introduction

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

The Operational Review Team 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 team found that the school board has implemented many leading practices. Noted strengths include the school board's stakeholder engagement and communications strategy, employee performance appraisal process, risk mitigation strategy, and its management of health, safety, and security. A summary of the findings and recommendations identified in each of the functional areas reviewed follows. Details can be found in subsequent sections of the report.

Governance and School Board Administration

The governance structure is supported by a board of 10 trustees (the Board). The board members' length of service ranges from five months to 31 years.

The school board has adopted a governance structure that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the board of trustees and senior administration. This is outlined in the board by-laws section 12 'Role of the Trustees and Chairperson', as well as in the document 'Role of the Director', which was adopted by the Board in April 2007.

The Director of Education and eight key positions form the Senior Administration Team (SAT), which has responsibility for implementing the Board's policies and managing the day-to-day operations of the school board's operations.

The eight positions include Superintendents of Education for School Operations and Information Technology, Special Education/Programs and Services, Accommodation and Safe Schools, Elementary School Staffing and Schools, and Secondary School Staffing and Schools. There is also Superintendent of Business and Treasurer, a Superintendent of Human Resources, and a Superintendent of Education for Program and Staff Development.

The Board meets monthly, and all Board and Standing Committee meetings are open to the public. In accordance with the Education Act, *in-camera* meetings are conducted to discuss matters of personnel, property, contract negotiations, and litigation. There are two standing committees, for education and operations and finance. Items requiring decisions are discussed with the SAT and at the standing committees, and then proceed to the Board for formal discussion and approval.

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 effective agenda-setting and decision-making.

The Board has approved a four-year strategic plan entitled *Board Continuous Growth Plan.* It outlines a number of agreed-upon key priorities that focus on achieving specific goals in each of the four areas mandated within the Board by-laws: teaching and learning, finance, employee relations, and community partnerships. The current plan includes a number of operational elements which can be separated and made into a formal operating plan.

The Director of Education reports regularly to the Board on the steps taken against the strategic plan, with a compliance and accountability report.

The Board has adopted a formal succession and talent development process for academic staff with its 'Aspiring Leaders' program. The school board has posted many of its policies on its website.

Recommendations:

- The school board is encouraged to develop a formal annual operating plan to cover all of its operations, including human resources, financial management, and facilities management. The format of the operating plan should be updated to demonstrate its alignment to the Board's multi-year strategic plan. This will also enable the departments to track and report progress of their defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

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

- The school board should expand its formal succession plan to include key management positions in non-academic functions. Currently the board has a leadership development program in place to support succession planning for academic staff, as outlined by the Ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy.

Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation

The Human Resources (HR) department at the school board demonstrates a good level of operational effectiveness overall. It has implemented many of the leading practices:

- HR management has policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.

- Payroll processing is segregated from employee data records, and changes to data are adequately controlled.

- HR management periodically conducts independent compliance audits of the board's insurance carrier, to ensure adherence to the benefit plans terms and conditions.

Recommendations:

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

- The department should continue in the implementation of their comprehensive attendance management program, including policies and procedures to address specific categories of absenteeism. This will provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.

- Management should periodically report to the Board and senior management on the effectiveness of its attendance management program, once it is in place.

Financial Management

The department achieves a number of positive results through the implementation of some of the leading practices:

- 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.

- The school board's integrated financial information system provides useful, timely, and accurate information for management and stakeholders.

- Management ensures adequate controls are in place to safeguard school-based funds, and to coordinate the annual reporting of revenues and expenditures from schools and school councils.

- Policies and procedures for the use of PCards and corporate credit cards are documented and communicated to users through regular training and monitoring.

Recommendations:

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

- Management is encouraged to document the annual budget development process, to enhance its transparency for participating Superintendents/ managers, and encourage internal discussion between departments in the development of the annual budget.

- Management should continue to participate in the emerging Ministry direction to establish regional models for internal audit across the school board sector.

- Management and the board of trustees should add external advisors to the Audit Committee to contribute to the committee's effectiveness.

- Management should perform a detailed review of the school board's purchase-topayment cycle, specifically three-way matching, which is currently limited to only those purchases over $3000.

- Management should periodically report to the Board on the performance of the investment activity, including not investing and the reason as to why, in accordance with the approved investment policy in accordance with the Education Act.

School Operations and Facilities Management

The department has adopted several of the leading practices in its custodial and maintenance operations. The following significant practices are noted:

- Management has defined common standards to ensure efficient procurement of supplies to minimize costs, promote energy and operating efficiency, and support environmental sustainability.

- Management's occupational health and safety strategy/plan reflects the board's occupational health and safety policies and administrative procedures, and ensures the school board is in compliance with associated occupational health and safety statutory requirements.

- The school board has an approved annual and multi-year capital plan that includes the related funding for the plan.

- Management uses cost-effective designs, standard footprints, energy conservation, and economical construction practices to minimize construction, maintenance, and operation costs.

Recommendations:

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

- Management should consider establishing a multi-year maintenance and renewal plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide the school board and its stakeholders with a clear forecast of critical needs over the next several years. The department is also encouraged to link the annual and multi-year maintenance plan to the departmental plan once the latter has been formalized.

- The department is encouraged to develop a green clean pilot program as a first step towards full implementation of a formal green clean program.

- The school board is encouraged to establish a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates measures to be implemented and the tools to monitor and manage the plan.

- Management should provide formal annual reporting to the board of trustees on the conservation savings achieved against the plan once it has been developed.

- The school board should add language to their procurement policy to support that where feasible, all new equipment will have an appropriate energy efficiency rating.

- Management should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption.

1. Background and Overview

1.1 School Board Profile and Structure

The Greater Essex County District School Board is committed to one common goal: success for every student. The collective goal of parents, teachers, support staff, administration, and trustees is to support, challenge, and inspire every student to achieve their full potential and find their most richly imagined future. Responsible for providing public education to almost 35,000 students, the school board offers a diverse range of programs in its 61 elementary and 16 secondary schools.

The school board's enrolment is below capacity for the elementary panel, and slightly above capacity for the secondary panels.

The Senior Administration Team at the school board is composed of the Director of Education and eight senior staff as follows:
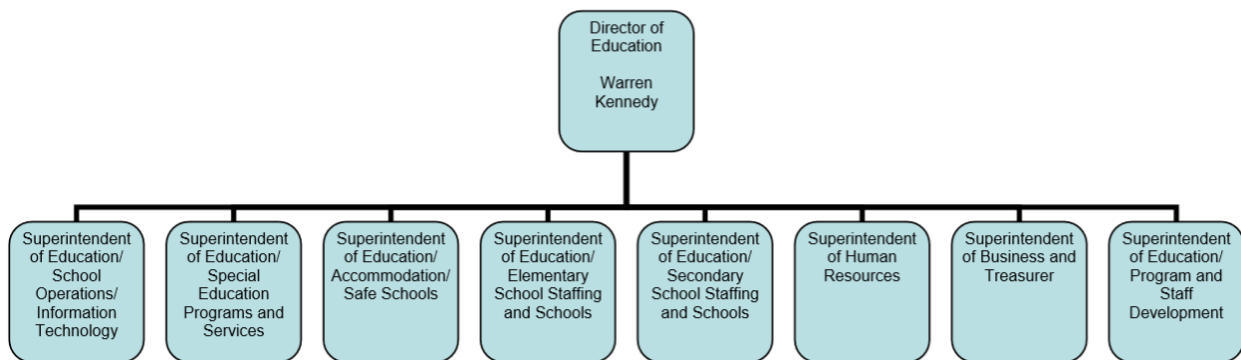
1.2 Key Priorities of the School Board

The vision of the Greater Essex County District School Board is: "**The educational success and well-being of students will be the cornerstone of every decision**". In support of this vision, the following mission statement has been developed for the school board:

The Greater Essex County District School Board, in partnership with the community, provides learning opportunities which support, challenge, and inspire all students to achieve their full potential and enable them to participate meaningfully in their communities.

To fulfill its mission and vision, the school board has adopted a set of beliefs that reflect the shared vision and values of everyone within the organization:

1. All students can learn.

2. A safe, stimulating, caring, and welcoming environment, which accommodates individual student learning styles and needs, promotes and facilitates the learning process.

3. Planned, comprehensive programs and services enrich the lives of learners.

4. Well prepared, motivated educators can make a significant positive difference in the lives of our students.

5. Family and community interaction with the school promotes and enhances student success.

6. Embracing diversity and celebrating creativity strengthens our school system and enriches all of us as Canadians.

7. Open, honest, interactive communication builds trust and commitment.

8. Skilled, caring and motivated employees are an integral part of our success and our future.

9. Effective planning and fiscally responsible decisions are necessary to direct our limited resources to maximize the learning process.

10. We are accountable for our decisions.

To support the implementation of its Strategic Plan, the school board adopted a Numeracy and Literacy Plan that supports these priorities. These components form the basis of an effective strategic plan for the organization, as will be discussed in section 2 of this report.

1.3   Student Achievement

The EQAO results for the school board show that student's math scores for both Grade 3 and 6 are at or above the provincial averages, while the reading and writing scores are slightly below the provincial average.

At the secondary level, Grade 9 EQAO results for academic students have been steadily improving since 2003-04, while the improving scores for applied students are well above the provincial averages. The following charts illustrate the school board's EQAO and OSSLT results over the last six years.
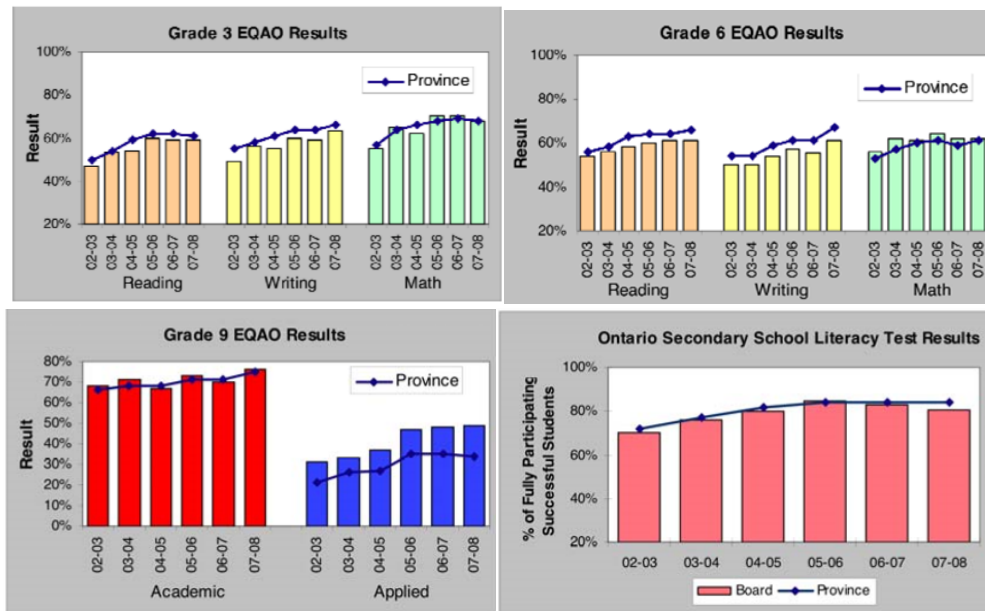
1.4   Fiscal Overview

The school board has consistently presented balanced budgets to the Ministry over the past few years.

The school board has been actively monitoring its ability to finance its capital commitments. The school board has completed its Capital Liquidity template, which demonstrates that its existing capital debt is fully-funded. Management will continue to work with Ministry staff as they go forward with any new capital projects.

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

Summary Financial Data (Revenues)

Revenues	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Legislative Grants	$195,157,687	$210,411,347	$223,913,839
Local taxation	$96,421,658	$96,055,274	$96,004,641
Board Revenues	$4,094,927	$4,029,098	$2,005,849
Other Operating & capital Grants	$4,689,040	$4,767,664	$1,318,398
Total Revenues (Schedule 9)	**$300,363,312**	**$315,263,383**	**$323,242,727**

Summary Financial Data (Expenditure)

Expenditures:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Operating expenditures	$287,534,568	$298,012,201	$308,605,762
Capital expenditures - Before transfers from reserves	$13,737,438	$14,182,216	$14,665,795
Transfer to (from) Reserves	-$908,694	$3,068,966	-$28,830
Total Expenditures	**$300,363,312**	**$315,263,383**	**$323,242,727**
In-year Surplus (Deficit)	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**

School Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Reserve for Working Funds	$4,699,810	$7,768,776	$7,739,946
Pupil Accomodation Debt Reserve	$16,157,897	$17,178,167	$18,038,236
GPL Reserve	$9,800,000	$9,754,722	$9,600,522
Total Reserve Funds (Schedule 5)	**$30,657,707**	**$34,701,665**	**$35,378,704**
Other Operating Deferred Revenues	$751,763	$748,767	$0
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve- School Buildings	$423,019	$762,514	$762,514
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve- Other	$23,737	$23,737	$23,737
Total Deferred Revenues (Schedule5.1)	**$1,198,519**	**$1,535,018**	**$786,251**
Total Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues	**$31,856,226**	**$36,236,683**	**$36,164,955**

1.5   Key School Board Statistics

The following table highlights key statistics for the school board. There is a slight declining enrolment trend.

Day School Enrolment

Day School Enrolment:	2002-03 Actual	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Elementary Day School ADE	25,077	22,401
Secondary Day School ADE	12,250	12,310

Day School Enrolment:	2002-03 Actual	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Total Day School Enrolment	**37,327**	**34,711**

Primary Class Size:

Primary Class Size:	2003-04	2008-09
% of Classes Less Than 20	36%	97%
% of Classes Less Than 23	66%	100%
Average Class Size - Jr/Inter	27.28	24.10
% of 3/4 Classes 23 & Under	33%	100%
% of Combined Classes	16%	29%

Staffing:

Staffing:	2003-04	2008-09
School Based Teachers	2,124	2,190
Teacher Assistants	158	156
Other Student Support	312	288
School Administration	113	117
School Clerical	148	142
School Operations	269	286
Other Non-Classroom	87	114
Total Staffing	**3,211**	**3,294**
Teacher - Pupil Ratio	**1:18**	**1:16**
FTE Staff per 1,000 Pupils (ADE)[1]	**86.0**	**94.9**
Total Salary & Benefits as % of Net Operating Expenditures	**85.8%**	**86.1%**

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

Special Education:

Special Education:	2003-04	2008-09
Special Education Incremental Expenditures	$30,983,989	$39,302,506
Special Education Allocation	$29,418,710	$36,518,330
Spending above Allocation (Reserve)	**$1,565,279**	**$2,784,176**

School Utilization:

School Utilization:	2003-04	2008-09
Number of schools	80	78
Total Enrolment (ADE)	37,327	34,711
School Capacity (Spaces)	40,395	40,266
School Utilization	**92.4%**	**86.2%**
Board Area (Km^2)	**1,887**	**1,887**
Number of Trustees	**10**	**10**

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 school board and our field work, which included interviews with the Chair of the Board, the Director and senior staff of the school 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 and responsibilities between the board of trustees and the director of education to support an effective working relationship.	Yes

Development of the School Board's Strategic Direction and the Annual Operating Plan

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

Decision Making Processes

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and senior administration have appropriate processes for decision making to address student achievement targets and operational performance.	Yes
The board of trustees and senior administration have appropriate processes for the establishment and regular maintenance of policies and administrative procedures for the efficient and effective operation of the board.	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
A departmental organization chart (supplemented with a directory of key staff contact information) is publicly available on the board's web site.	Yes

Succession and Talent Development

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
As part of the Ministry's *Ontario Leadership Strategy*, the Director of Education, with support from HR, has established a formal Succession and Talent Development Plan to build and sustain leadership capacity.	No

Stakeholder Engagement

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and senior administration proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis and through a variety of communications 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 Board's governance structure is supported by 10 trustees, with 4 of those whose experience ranges from 6 to 31 years of service. A formal trustee orientation program includes a series of meetings with the Chair and Director, along with board governance and trustee workshops led by members of the senior administration team to identify areas of responsibility. Staff from a local law firm also spoke to the trustees on governance and their role in the school board.

The Board is guided by the objectives set forth in the continuous growth plan and holds the senior administration team accountable for meeting the strategic goals of the Board. The school board developed a code of conduct for all employees which the Board has adopted for all trustees.

The school board has adopted a governance structure that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees and senior administration. The Director of Education is supported by a team of eight senior staff:

- Superintendent of Education/School Operations/ Information Technology

- Superintendent of Education/ Special Education Programs and Services

- Superintendent of Education/Accommodations/ Safe Schools

- Superintendent of Education/ Elementary School Staffing and Schools

- Superintendent of Education/ Secondary School Staffing and Schools

- Superintendent of Business and Treasurer

- Superintendent of Human Resources

- Superintendent of Education/ Program and Staff Development

This group, referred to as the Senior Administration Team (SAT), has responsibility for all areas of the school board's operations.

As part of its governance model, the school board has guidelines that delineate the roles and responsibilities of the administration and trustees. The guidelines are contained in the Board's By-laws (section 12) *'Role of Trustees and Chairperson'* and in a document that was adopted by the board in April 2007 entitled *'Role of the Director'*.

The bylaws stipulate that the Board of Trustees is responsible for policy, while the Director is responsible for policy implementation and the operation of the school board. The Director's is responsible for educational leadership, cultural leadership, strategic leadership, organizational leadership, fiscal leadership, human relations leadership, and communications leadership.

The board reports that it has reviewed the Report of the Governance Review Committee. Three working groups were formed to examine the report recommendations and propose which aspects should be adopted by the Board. One group is reviewing how the board is currently functioning; the second group is reviewing the role of trustees and the Chair; and the third group is reviewing management and accountability. This activity may lead to the bylaws being re-written.

There are currently nine Board committees comprising two standing committees (education committee and operations/finance committee); two statutory committees (special education advisory committee and the supervised alternative learning committee); three permanent committees (negotiations' policy committee, community

action committee and the audit committee); and two *ad-hoc* committees (reviewing the accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act standard, and the Board by-laws and governance committee).

The Board's by-laws are available on the school board website, and provide a framework for decision-making. The by-laws also provide for the effective operation of the school board. Senior staff reported that the bylaws are currently procedural in nature, and that the Board will be refreshing them this year to separate the bylaws from standard operating procedures. The refresh of the by-laws is expected to be completed in advance of the trustee elections scheduled for the fall of 2010.

The Board of Trustees uses a formal process in annual performance appraisal of the Director of Education. The review is based on a commonly used evaluation model known as a 360 degree review. This model incorporates feedback from various groups and levels of stakeholders, including those external to the school board, such as the president of the local university and the president of the United Way. The board feels that such comprehensive external feedback is a requirement for supporting the board's commitment to being an integral member of the larger community.

Development of the School Board's Strategic Direction and the Annual Operating Plan

The *2009 Board Continuous Growth Plan* is a four- year strategic plan for the Greater Essex County DSB guided by the mission of the Board, and outlines a series of key priorities. It is designed to be a blueprint to focus the Board on achieving specific goals in two priority areas as follows:

A.   Key Priority - Teaching and Learning

    A.1   Engage parents, students, staff and other community members as partners in education.

    A.2   Improve literacy and numeracy for all students through precise guidelines and expectations to promote academic success and positive behaviour.

    A.3   Improve system strength by supporting a culture of respect and shared ownership and responsibility.

    A.4   Use relevant data to personalize education through ongoing, authentic assessment and evaluation.

    A.5   Improve the delivery of programs and services.

B   Supports to Our Key Priorities

    B.1   Finance

    B.2   Human Resources

    B.3   Community Partnerships

Each priority within the plan has a detailed description of the key priority, what occurred the previous year, a status update as of June 2009, and the focus for the current school year. The administrative liaison in charge of the key priority is also listed.

The goals and objectives are revisited at the last meeting of every month of the Director's Council. There is also an opportunity to make changes to the plan every six months if needed. The school board has also developed a shorter eight-page version of the plan that schools can use in developing their school improvement plan.

The school board's *Board Improvement Plan* contains information regarding the school board's numeracy and literacy initiatives. It identifies targets, implementation strategies, resources, and responsibilities. The plan is primarily focused on academic priorities, and although there are elements of operations within the plan, it does not comprehensively address the non-academic areas such as human resources, financial services, and facilities services.

The school board is encouraged to develop a formal annual operating plan. An operating plan should be aligned with the Board's multi-year strategic plan, and should assist in setting the goals, activities, responsibility and timelines for the respective departments of the school board. The current strategic plan includes a number of tactical elements usually found in an operating plan, and the board should consider extracting those elements to create an annual operating plan which is separate from the multi-year strategic plan. This would also allow the strategic plan to more concisely articulate the board's multi-year objectives, without being refreshed every six months.

Dividing the current strategic plan into two distinctive plans (one as a multi-year strategic plan focused on the high-level priorities of the board of trustees and the second as an operating plan focused on the operational priorities, targets, responsibilities, and timelines) will further delineate executive and management roles and responsibilities. This separation will allow the Director and senior management to focus and report on specific achievements of operational and academic targets identified in the annual operating plan, and determine how they contribute to the success of the Board's Strategic Plan.

In accordance with section 14 of the by-laws and regulations respecting the operational procedures of the Board, the Director of Education submits a *Compliance and*

Accountability Report to the Board. The January 2009 report outlines which strategic plan goal were met, and addresses the following matters:

    a) The steps taken and success achieved in implementing Board/Ministry policy

    b) The effect of Board policy and Ministry policy on the quality of education of the Board's students

    c) Matters which should be addressed by the Board in the ensuing twelve months

    d) Recommended Action.

The Director also released a *2008 Annual Report* providing an overview of the key initiatives and programs that support the beliefs and goals of the Board.

Decision-Making Process

The board of trustees' primary responsibility is to set policy and the strategic direction for the school board. The senior administrative team develops and implements plans and procedures to ensure adherence to Board policies, and manages the day-to-day operations of the school board. These responsibilities are clearly outlined in the Administrative and Organizational Structures policy, last updated in May 2008.

The Board meets the third Wednesday of every month, and all Board and Standing Committee meetings are open to the public. As per the Education Act, matters of personnel, property, contract negotiations, and litigation are discussed *in-camera.*

The board of trustees and senior administration have appropriate processes for decision making to address student achievement targets and operational performance. To ensure appropriate time for discussion and debate, recommendations are first presented to the education committee or the operations and finance committee of the board for discussion before they are brought to the Board Meeting. Depending on board motions, an *ad-hoc* committee could also be created to address a specific area of interest to the board.

The board has a standard process for agenda setting, though it is not formally documented. Board agenda items are reviewed at Director's Council. Agenda reviews for both private and public session meetings of the board are held with the Director, Chair, and Vice-Chair prior to the meeting. For the standing committees of the board (educational and operations and finance) agenda items are reviewed at Director's Council. Agenda review is also held with the appropriate superintendent and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the standing committee prior to the meeting. The order of business for meetings is outlined in section four of the board by-laws. The board is encouraged to

document the agenda-setting process, to ensure transparency and a common understanding of the process.

There is no formal policy review committee, and responsibility for policy review resides within each department. To change a policy, the department drafts a new version, and once feedback is incorporated from the SAT, system Principals/Vice-Principals, unions and other stakeholder groups, it goes to the Board for approval. Once it is approved, the policy becomes effective. Current policies and procedures are posted on the website, and include the last review date. All policies are reviewed every five years. The school board reported that they are currently undertaking an additional process and reviewing all policies and regulations approved in 2001 or earlier to ensure they have remained relevant. The school board is encouraged to consider establishing a formal refresh cycle for its policies, to ensure periodic review of all policies across functional areas. This could include forming a policy committee to consider policies for review or development.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The school board is supported by 10 trustees. The board of trustees is responsible for policy making. Each trustee has responsibility for a 'family of schools'. The Board notes that this structure provides the visibility across the system necessary to develop common education strategies that improve student achievement.

The Senior Administration Team has responsibility for all aspects of the administration of the system. The organization, roles, and responsibilities of the school board's administrative team have been formally defined and documented. The school board has also developed up-to-date job descriptions for the Director and superintendents, and has made their names and areas of responsibility available on the school board's website. An up-to-date school board organization chart is also available on the website.

Succession and Talent Development

The school board has adopted succession planning and talent development processes to build and sustain academic leadership capacity. The board has developed a program titled '*Aspiring Leaders*' which outlines five stages of leadership support. They include self-actualization, stability, control, survival and educational leader. Each stage has corresponding activities to develop the particular skill set. For example, in the selfactualization stage, individuals conduct a system leadership project such as developing a program for at-risk youth. There is currently no formal plan for non-academic succession planning.

High-performing individuals are supported financially and with a flexible work schedule to pursue the Supervisory Officer qualifications, through a program called *Project Beyond*. The school board also holds monthly professional roundtables based on leadership literature, with a focus on developing the emotional intelligence (EQ) skills of

individuals. There is also a formal mentorship program for individuals preparing to move into the Supervisory Officer category, which includes coaching from previous Supervisory Officers. A formal succession plan for the Director's position is also in place, which includes Supervisor Officers acting in the position.

The school board is also part of Ontario Leadership Strategy, a three year initiative developed by the province to improve leadership in schools and school boards. The school board should expand its formal succession plan to include key management positions in non-academic functions.

Stakeholder Engagement

Management actively consults with stakeholders. There is an experienced communications officer dedicated to support effective two-way communication among all stakeholders. There is also a key communicator (either a teacher or an administrator) in each school.

The school board has also developed a formal strategic communications plan to help create a climate of trust and understanding among students, parents and guardians, staff, and administration. The document outlines key messages and a number of communication vehicles such as the Director's memo, school newsletters, the board website, and the key communicator's network.

The school board uses its public website to disseminate information regarding its policies, the director's report, Board meeting agendas and minutes, and information on schools, programs, departments, and activities.

Members of the Senior Administrative Team (SAT) are actively involved at various provincial and national forums, such as the Council of School Business Officials (COSBO), and the committee on special education. The Board values staff participation in system committees, which ensures that the school board learns and shares best practices from across the sector.

Recommendations:

- The school board is encouraged to develop a formal annual operating plan to cover all of its operations, including human resources, financial management, and facilities management. The format of the operating plan should be updated to demonstrate its alignment to the Board's multi-year strategic plan. This will also enable the departments to track and report progress of their defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

- The school board should consider establishing a formal refresh cycle for its policies, to ensure periodic review of all policies across functional areas. This

could include forming a policy committee to consider policies for review or development.

- The school board should expand its formal succession plan to include key management positions in non-academic functions. Currently the board has a leadership development program in place to support succession planning for academic staff, as outlined by the Ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy.

3. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation – Findings and Recommendations
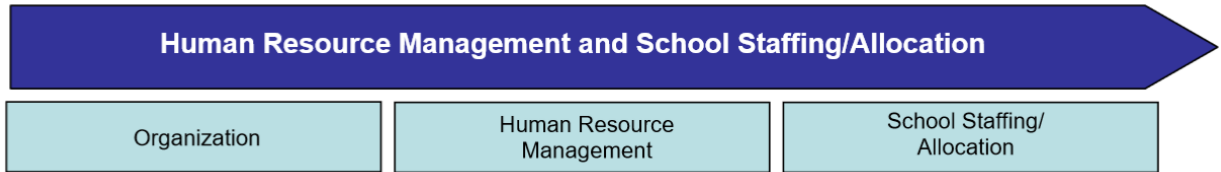
Effective management of human resources ensures an adequate number of qualified staff throughout the organization can perform their prescribed duties. Policies and procedures to develop staff are in place, through performance appraisals, professional development and support services. Staff allocations 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 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 Resources 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 responsibilities.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

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

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices – Human Resource Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
HR management has processes in place to monitor H R policy compliance by all staff and management.	Yes
HR management builds staff capacity in understanding of HR policies and administrative procedures.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The department does not currently develop an annual departmental plan. Instead, yearly priority areas are defined in the strategic plan, entitled the '*Board Continuous Growth Plan'*. The department has set five objectives for the 2009-10 school year, which are tracked through departmental status updates and progress reports to Senior Administration Team.

Management should consider formalizing their annual departmental plan by establishing measurable targets, designated accountabilities, and target timelines that are aligned with the board's annual operating plan. This would help link department priorities with

performance measures and accountabilities, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration among the team members, and provide a "roadmap" for the department.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The department performs several functions, including recruitment, employee benefits, workplace safety, and disability management. The HR functions report to the Superintendent of Human Resources, who is part of the Senior Administration Team.

The department's job descriptions are accurate and up-to-date, and the department has clearly-defined organizational units delineating roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is posted on the website, alongside contact information for key staff. The department also created a coordinator of human resources team that is responsible for the day–to-day operations of non-teaching employee groups, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and disability management.

Department staff are qualified through a combination of professional designations, including the certified human resources professional, and work experience.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

HR has responsibility over a number of HR policies, which are posted on the school board website. They include policies on recruitment, health and safety, employee discrimination, and harassment prevention and resolution, among others. New policies and procedures are communicated to staff through various means, including sending out emails informing staff of a new policy, and at professional development days. They are also sent to all union presidents for circulation.

HR policy compliance is monitored through the department's active involvement in all board activities with an HR component, as well as through the reporting of exceptions. For example, HR is present and actively involved in all employee interviews, including those for academic staff. This provides the department with a high degree of visibility where hiring policies are concerned.

The department builds staff capacity in the understanding of HR policies and procedures through various means. For example, training for teachers and principals is done on professional development days, and attendance is mandatory. Education sessions are also done for Supervisor Officers through the Superintendent of Human Resources at Director's Council. This information is then relayed to the departmental staff.

Recommendation:

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

3.2   Human Resource Management

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

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

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

- There are adequate systems and procedures 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 Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Recruitment policies and administrative procedures are reviewed annually, and are aligned with staff planning to support student achievement.	Yes
The hiring policies and administrative procedures are standardized into one package for the respective staff groups.	Yes

Labour Relations

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR management and the board of trustees have established labour/management committees.	Yes

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR management has established policies and procedures to minimize grievances.	Yes

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR management has policies and procedures for an employee evaluation/performance system for all staff.	Yes
HR management maintains and communicates formal disciplinary policies and procedures for all staff.	Yes
The HR department actively supports the professional development activities of the school board.	Yes

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board maintains appropriate processes and systems to monitor staff attendance on a timely basis.	No
Attendance management processes/programs exist that include employee supportive policies and procedures to minimize the cost of absenteeism.	No
Management periodically reports on the effectiveness of the attendance management process/programs to senior management and the board.	No

Management of HR and Payroll Data

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

Management of School Board's Employee Benefit Plans

Leading Practices – Human Resource 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.	Yes
Employee data is automatically synchronized between the board and the external carriers (i.e. OTPP, OMERS and the board's benefit provider).	Yes
Policies and/ or procedures ensure the board's benefit plans are managed appropriately.	Yes

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Confidential staff satisfaction surveys are performed periodically.	Yes
Confidential exit interviews are performed for all staff who resign, take early retirement, or transfer.	Yes

Staff Recruitment/ Hiring

The school board has developed procedures for academic and non-academic staff recruitment, driven in large part by the employee group's collective agreements. They are supported by a web-based staff recruitment tool, which outlines application procedures for teachers and professional staff. The school board does not have any specific policies guiding the recruitment process.

The school board reports that established practices exist for interviews, hiring and notification to candidates. The practices have been developed through a combination of requirements set out in the collective agreements, as well as practices that have been developed over the years. The school board is encouraged to document these practices and make them formal procedures, to ensure transparency in the recruitment process.

The school board has a dedicated position for recruitment that ensures recruitment needs are aligned with staff planning in support of student achievement.

Recruiting practices generate a sufficient number of qualified candidates. Turnover of staff is low, and the school board receives numerous applications for open vacancies. Recruitment is done on an on-going basis and applications are accepted at any time and kept on file for one year. For specialized positions, internal and external postings are used. The school board uses the school board website and local and national newspapers to advertise positions that are difficult to fill, such as the Director of

Education. The vast majority of teaching positions are filled from the occasional teacher pool.

New hire policies and procedures are standardized into one package for various staff groups. HR must approve every hire recommended by non-academic departments. Management organizes orientation sessions for new hires, in both academic and nonacademic departments.

The school board has adopted a statement on employment equity.

Labour Relations

The school board maintains nine different collective agreements with its employee groups, which consist of educational support staff, professional student services, employment services, occasional teachers, contract teachers, continuing education instructors, secondary teachers, elementary teachers, and custodial staff. These collective agreements are managed by HR staff. The collective agreements are administered via labour-management committees, which comprise members of the school board and union. Administration has indicated that it maintains collegial relationships with bargaining agents, and effort is made to maintain this close relationship, as exemplified by the Director's monthly breakfast meetings with union presidents.

HR has established policies and procedures (outlined in the collective agreements) to minimize grievances. Depending on the contract involved, negotiating teams can change slightly. However, the Superintendent of Human Resources is always the chief negotiator. The school board has created a number of resources to assist school administration in the avoidance of grievances, including a series of workshops that Superintendents provide vice-principals and principals on the discipline of staff. The school board also reports that there is an open culture, where administration is encouraged to call the department for questions and advice.

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

The school board has developed comprehensive procedures for conducting employee performance appraisals. This is in keeping with the school board's policy (HR-6) which states that *'The Greater Essex County District School Board believes that performance appraisals for employees are essential for acknowledgement of performance, continuous improvement and accountability'*. The school board was a participating research school board in the Ontario Education Support Committee Support Staff Training and Development project.

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 the first year, as part of the New Teacher Induction Program (NTIP). HR ensures that notations are reported to the Ontario College of Teachers for new teachers who have completed the NTIP. The teacher performance appraisal (TPA) is executed by principals and channeled to the respective superintendent of education, and subsequently filed at the central board office. In addition to the five-year cycle, a principal or superintendent may trigger a supplemental TPA as required.

Principals are responsible for conducting teacher performance appraisals, but may delegate this responsibility to vice principals. Superintendents are responsible for principal and vice principal performance appraisals, and manager/supervisory staff are responsible for administrative and support staff appraisals. Principals and vice-principals are provided with in-service training on how to conduct staff evaluations at the beginning of each school year.

Management has developed procedures for performance appraisals for educational support staff and professional support staff personnel which includes mentorship programs and opportunities for cross-training. In addition, all staff complete personal annual learning plans each year.

The school board has recently developed a comprehensive employee performance evaluation process for non-teaching staff that is being implemented this year.

The school board has a formal policy or process governing the formal discipline of staff in the form of their '*Resource Guide for Correcting Behaviors and Progressive Discipline*' and involves five steps:

1. Oral warning

2. Oral warning with memo to file

3. Written reprimand

4. Suspension without pay

5. Dismissal from employment

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

An effective attendance management system combines polices/procedures, information systems to record and analyze trends in absenteeism, and dedicated resources to develop a cohesive and consistent strategy. These elements, combined with employee wellness programs and return-to-work initiatives, form the basis of a comprehensive attendance management program.

The school board has drafted an attendance management program, and plans to implement it with assistance from SBCI (School Boards' Cooperative Inc.) in the 20092010 school year. To ensure the integrity of absence reporting, the department has rationalized the number and type of absence codes available through an absence reporting and automated call out system. At the time of the review, the board indicated that the facilities department had already begun implementation of the attendance management program, with support from HR.

The school board will also be assisted by SBCI in developing supporting policies and procedures for disability management. The school board considers disability management a critical component for the success of the attendance management program, and has created a dedicated position for it. This Employee Assistance Program position is located off-site to maintain the confidentiality of staff accessing the program. The board also has a nurse practitioner who performs employee health assessments and planning, and who is available 6 hours a week at the board office. The school board has also drafted back to work procedures which will be fully implemented in September 2010.

The school board currently reports on attendance management costs annually, and with the implementation of the new program, will be reporting on the financial costs of replacement of staff and absentee rates of each group.

The school board is encouraged to continue the implementation of its program, as a comprehensive attendance management program 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. An attendance management program will also ensure that HR can periodically report on the effectiveness of the attendance management process to senior management and the Board. The Board is encouraged to look at the Efficiency and Effectiveness Committee of COSBO for the *Report on Attendance Management* for additional support as required.

Management of HR and Payroll Data

The payroll function reports to the finance department, and HR manages all updates to personnel files. Each employee has a unique system login name and password that provides access to distinct areas of the HR/Pay system. This ensures segregation of duties and each department keeps their own employee records. Employees have access to an on-line portal to view their payroll information, and all staff are enrolled in direct payroll deposit.

HR records are current, including the formal tracking of teacher qualifications and experience. Superintendents and managers work together if there is a position on the non-teaching side that needs to be reclassified, and management works with unions if it

is a unionized position. An external consulting company is brought in to perform an assessment if there is a significant classification change or plans for a change. The department only performs synchronization for teacher qualifications with the Ontario College of Teachers database if there is a change. New hire qualifications are confirmed as part of the application documents teachers submit as part of the recruitment process.

The department has multiple pay equity plans in place. Each agreement has a maintenance clause that stipulates that management and the unions must meet annually to refresh the policy. The school board has approved pay equity plans for all employee groups. The school board does not have any outstanding pay equity issues or grievances.

Management of School Board's Employee Benefit Plans

Management reports that compliance audits of the board's insurance carrier are conducted annually by an HR staff member, to ensure adherence to the benefit plans terms and conditions. It was also reported that corrections have had to be made in the past, which were caught during the audit and subsequently rectified. HR staff also reviews the plan information used by the insurance company against newly signed collective agreements, to ensure that all plan changes are properly communicated to the insurance company.

The HR system automatically transmits employee and employer contributions to the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System, ensuring accurate and timely enrolment of all eligible employees.

In addition to the audits, the school board has also developed procedures to ensure its benefit plans are managed appropriately. Every employee group and retiree is covered under the school board's benefit plans and there is periodic reporting to the board of trustees on the cost of plans. A standard service agreement has been signed with their benefit provider. The school board checks the financial terms annually to ensure that rates, expenses, and fees are competitive. The plans are not managed as an Administrative Service Only arrangement.

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

Management has conducted staff satisfaction surveys on a pilot basis, with a sample from each employee group. The department is encouraged to continue formalizing the survey and ensure they are conducted periodically. The HR department is also currently developing a survey which will be available on-line. The department currently conducts exit interviews.

Recommendations:

- The department should continue in the implementation of their comprehensive attendance management program, including policies and procedures to address specific categories of absenteeism. This will provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.

- Management should periodically report to the Board and senior management on the effectiveness of its attendance management program, once it is in place.

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;

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

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

Processes for Annual Staff Planning and Allocation

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board's policies and procedures govern the development of an annual staffing plan and allocation process that reflects the priorities of the Board and Ministry initiatives.	Yes
The staff allocation process monitors adherence to key Ministry and board policy parameters, such as: class size, prep time, collective agreement requirements and other board directions.	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
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
Management's plan for providing student support services and staffing is based on student-needs analysis.	Yes

Processes for Annual Staff Planning and Allocation

The school board has documented procedures for the staff allocation of teaching and non-teaching staff. This process is driven by enrolment projections, student needs, class size requirements, and preparation time. The process for unionized staff references is driven by the various collective agreements.

The school board is currently facing declining enrolment, which has placed a much greater emphasis on the need for collaboration between superintendants and HR staff. In this regard, the HR department has recently taken measures to ensure that there is more proactive and timely communication with non-academic Superintendants and Finance, to support the process of allocating and monitoring staffing. The HR department has also implemented a process to ensure that whenever enrolment projections for a specific employee group or department have a variance of one percent, the responsible superintendant is notified to help HR ensure that staffing is in line.

The HR department has developed various procedures for academic and non-academic staffing. The process for each is supported by documented procedural guidelines

Academic Staff

The annual staffing allocation for elementary teachers is based on various factors, including primary class size requirements, Board-wide averages, and funding for special education resource teachers. Principals submit projected enrolment data, after which the HR department works in co-operation with the finance to determine FTE allocations for the next school year.

The process for secondary staffing begins in March. Principals submit projected enrolments to the Superintendent of Secondary School for final approval by March 31. These projections are then compared to actual student options data in the system, to

ensure accuracy of student numbers. School principals then complete staffing assignment forms, which are revisited in May to ensure alignment and accuracy with enrolment projections.

Enrolment is monitored weekly throughout the month of September to determine whether staffing adjustments are needed. Adjustments to staffing may be made immediately or in the second semester, as required.

Educational Support Staff

Secondary and elementary principals complete school profiles which confirm the number of exceptional students they will have in September, and the number of classes for each program (for example the number of self contained full day classes, and the number of .5 day programs). These profiles are signed and sent to the supervising principal of special education, who reviews the information with the school's educational co-coordinator.

In addition to this data, the number of educational support staff at each school, the number of high needs students entering the system, transfers from agency schools, and the unique needs of specialized programming are reviewed. Using this data and the collective agreement procedures, the supervising principal and the Superintendent of Special Education determine the allocation of educational support staff, including educational assistants and child and youth workers. Principals are then notified of changes orally, and changes may be made based on their input. After the union is consulted, the information is sent to the educational support staff electronically, at the same time the principals are officially notified.

Professional Student Services Personnel

The allocation of social workers, attendance counselors, psychology, and speech and language specialists to schools is largely determined by student needs and budget approval. Staff are assigned time allotments to meet the demands and issues that pertain to their service.

Secretarial and Clerical Staff

The allocation of support staff is based on projected enrolment numbers, which are submitted to HR in May. Confirmation of approved hours for the upcoming school year is confirmed by the Manager of Finance, and results are reviewed with the elementary and secondary staffing committees. Changes are presented to Director's council and approval for staff complement. Once the approval is in place, HR contacts the schools regarding their staffing compliment for the year. Staff are then contacted to provide them with their hours, in line with the collective agreement.

Custodial/ Maintenance Workers

The staffing allocation model for this group is based on square footage. The school board compares the custodial staff allocation model with other school boards. Although the school board is above average on the square feet cleaned per caretaker, management believes that the allocation model works well for the size of the board, optimizing all staff.

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

Staffing levels are consistently monitored by HR and the Superintendents of Education, in collaboration with school administrators. The Senior Business Official is also involved to ensure allocations are within budgeted levels. Special Education resources are approved at Director's Council.

Management periodically reports on the annual allocation of staff, and provides periodic staffing reports to the board of trustees as 'information to be received item'. It was also reported that the unions monitor the school board staffing closely. Adjustments to staff levels can be done in the second semester, and these changes are picked up in the revised estimates.

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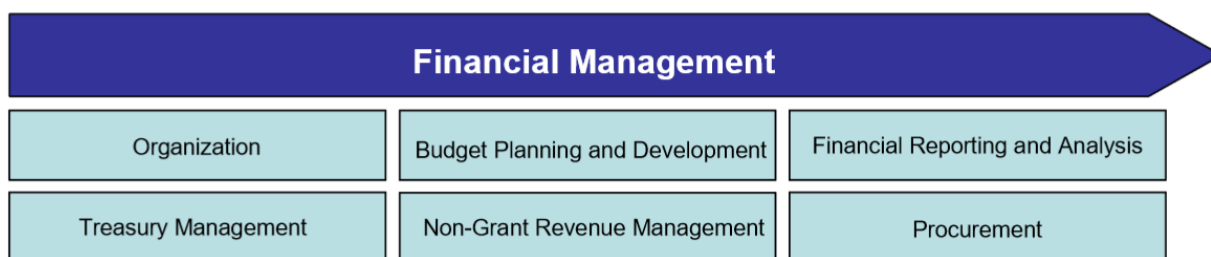
The financial management of the school board contributes to the efficient and effective use of fiscal resources. Financial management ensures that the annual budget is developed within the Ministry's allocation and is aligned with student achievement targets, and that appropriate financial policies and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

The financial and related business processes contribute to an appropriate level of transparency in the allocation and use of the budget by the various departments. They also ensure that the reporting of results to the board of trustees and other school board stakeholders reflects the approved goals/priorities relating to 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 services 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 operating plan accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines, and identified accountability.	No

Organizational 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 Policy

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Finance 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 sessions.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The department does not currently develop an annual departmental plan. Instead, departmental priorities are driven by yearly priority areas, which are aligned with the school board's *Continuous Growth Plan*. However, the finance branch, which falls under the business department, has developed a strong plan, which includes short term action items with due dates and long-term goals with due dates and measurable targets and progress reporting.

Management should consider expanding the process used to develop the finance branch plan to the annual departmental plan. The annual plan would include measurable targets, designated accountabilities and target timelines that are aligned with the annual operating plan. The direction identified in the annual departmental plan should be consistent with the Board's strategic direction. This would help link department priorities with performance measures and accountabilities, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration among the team members, and provide a "roadmap" for the department.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The Superintendent of Business is responsible for the areas of Financial Services, Facility Services and Transportation. Transportation is a shared consortium among all the school boards in the area. The finance branch has 24 full time employees.

The department's job descriptions are accurate and up-to-date, and the department has clearly defined organizational units delineating roles and responsibilities. A current organization chart is posted on the website, alongside contact information for key finance staff.

Staff in the department have appropriate financial designations, including CA, CPA, MBA, and the Canadian payroll designation, and the relevant experience to perform their duties.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The department is responsible for a number of finance and administrative policies, including borrowing and investing of funds, budget control, charitable donations, petty cash, and purchasing. All of the department's policies and administrative procedures are posted on the school board's public website.

Policy compliance is done on an exception basis, and the department reports that it has a good grasp of policy compliance. For example, the purchasing staff and accounts payable staff flag purchases that are over the threshold listed in the purchasing policy.

The department builds staff capacity in understanding of finance policies and procedures through various means. There are a number of meeting with principals and vice principals throughout the year, and the department has an internal team that goes out to schools and trains administrative staff on financial software and accounting procedures.

Recommendation:

- The department should consider developing an annual departmental plan aligned with the school board's annual operating plan and overall strategic direction. This action will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

4.2 Budget Planning and Development

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

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

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

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

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

Annual Budget Development Process

Leading Practices – Budget Planning and Development	Evidence of Adoption?
The annual budget development process is transparent, clearly communicated, and incorporates input from all key stakeholders including management (with principals), board of trustees and the community.	No
Management has adopted an integrated (at school board and school levels) approach to enrolment forecasting that drives the budget process.	Yes
Budget development processes account for all required cost and revenue changes.	Yes
Staffing costs are compared with similar school boards and the funding model to ensure efficient use of resources.	Yes

Risk Mitigation and Board Approval

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

Annual Budget Development Process

The school board has developed an annual budget development process that incorporates input from all key stakeholders, including management, the board of trustees, and the community. For example, sessions with the board of trustees are held to discuss staffing and other related issues, and the board of trustees advertises its public budget meetings to gather public input. However, the process is not formally documented, and is not transparent among the various departments

The annual budget presented for approval demonstrates that it is linked to the strategic goals and priorities of the board, including student achievement targets. The budget provides useful and understandable information, with notations regarding budget variances expressed in plain language. It provides relevant information for a wide audience of stakeholders.

To establish the current year budget, Excel working papers that include last year's budget for comparison are distributed by the finance branch to all Superintendents and managers, both academic and non-academic, in January. The superintendents of education perform the student enrolment forecasts in conjunction with the Senior Business Official, considering collective agreements and Ministry of Education requirements. The school board goes back to principals if there is a variance in enrolment of more than one percent.

Management is then asked to submit budget amounts by account to the finance unit by early March. Salaries and benefits are not budgeted in this manner. The finance department budgets salaries and benefits through the following process:

- confirming staff complement

- remove known retirements, and add teachers as needed based on the grid level of those in current long-term positions

- costing salaries based on end rates, expected grid increases, and salary increases

- benefit rates as discussed and reviewed with HR Benefits Officer

Grant information is calculated, and the forecasted surplus or deficit is determined. Trustees are then presented with the draft budget in private session, to assess the budget and discuss any potential revisions to ensure a balanced budget. There are frequent meetings between the department and trustees before the final budget is presented in June.

The budget development processes account for all required cost and revenue changes. The school board reports that they post balanced budgets every year, and have gone through budget reduction reviews when necessary. With the importance of enrolment to the board's budget, the administration closely monitors factors such as economic projections and areas of growth such as junior kindergarten.

To ensure efficient resource of funds, staffing costs are compared with those of similar school boards.

Management is encouraged to document the annual budget development process, to enhance its transparency for participating Superintendents/managers, and encourage internal discussion between departments in the development of the annual budget.

Risk Mitigation and Board Approval

One of the key risks faced by the school board is the degree of variance between enrolment and grant revenue. The department mitigates the risk of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels by closely monitoring the variance between enrolment forecasts and actual enrolment. The school board also has a reserve for working funds as part of its mitigation strategy. The board of trustees is informed of the budget throughout the cycle by periodic reporting, and the Senior Business Official prepares notes to budget, to provide additional detail for line items in the budget.

The department has also developed procedures to mitigate the risk of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels, as described below:

1. Revenue – Accuracy of enrolment estimates / revenue recognition

   a. Principal enrolment estimates are provided to Superintendents who then review and adjust as deemed necessary

   b. In addition, secondary enrolment is reviewed by the Superintendent and an estimate of the attrition rate from October to March is applied (based

on the past 3 years) in determining the final average daily enrolment for funding purposes

   c. Notes to the budget provide an overview of enrolment for the current and prior years. Significant changes are explained.

   d. If there is a significant decrease in enrolment from budget to Oct 31

      i. the teaching complement is reviewed and adjusted as necessary in the fall

      ii. it is communicated to the trustees and noted that the reserve for working funds will likely be required to balance the year end financials

2. Expenditures – Salaries and Benefits

   a. These expenditures represent 90 percent of the budget

   b. Current payroll information is used as the basis

      i. staff complement is confirmed by the Finance Dept with Managers and Superintendents

      ii. The payroll system is used to move all staff up the salary grid as required

   c. Benefits estimates are based on information from the Benefits Officer and the Board's carrier

3. Expenditures – Other

   a. The Superintendent maintains a list of high dollar expenditures that should be reviewed when determining significant cost reductions (if needed to balance the budget).

      i. i.e. maintenance of swimming pools, offering courses outside of the curriculum (design & tech), noon-hour busing, etc.

   b. The list is reviewed with the trustees in private session prior to finalizing the budget

4. Expenditure Review – these procedures help ensure that expenditures are carefully monitored and risks of overspending are minimized. The risk of

spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels is partially mitigated through the budgeting controls of BAS2000.

a. Budget holders are expected to monitor their budgets closely throughout the year, and address any potential budget issues as they arise.

b. A system generated warning if the account is over budget when requisitions are entered.

c. The accounting department reviews the percentage of budget spent monthly basis for each school. Abnormal amounts are followed up with the school administration.

d. The accounting department reviews the individual Superintendents budgets. Abnormal variances are followed up with administration.

e. Accounts Payable clerks notify the Supervisor of Accounting and/or Accounts Payable Supervisor if a budget account is over budget when posting an invoice. The Supervisor follows up with the appropriate budget holder to ensure they are aware of the status of the account.

f. A quarterly report to the trustees is prepared analyzing budget to actual amounts

g. For other one-time EPO grants received, expenditures are monitored monthly to ensure expenditures do not exceed funding. The senior accounting clerk emails the grant contact reconciliations monthly.

5. Salaries

a. Trustee / Board approval is required to add permanent non-teaching staff after the budget is approved i.e. usually required for special education.

Recommendation:

- Management is encouraged to document the annual budget development process, to enhance its transparency for participating Superintendents/ managers, and encourage internal discussion between departments in the development of the annual budget.

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 efficiencies of all processes.

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

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

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

Interim and Annual Financial Reporting

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

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

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

The school board uses an integrated financial system, Budgetary Accounting Systems 2000 (BAS 2000) to record, track, and report financial data. The system integrates general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget, and purchasing modules. The financial system also facilitates variance analysis and management reporting. Finance staff set up the chart of accounts in the financial system, maintain aliases, and manage access rights to the system. General ledger accounts are created by finance staff, and require the accounting supervisor's approval. Superintendents and Principals can run their own reports through BAS2000.

Interim and Annual Financial Reporting

A number of factors (including variances in actual enrolment versus projections, contract negotiations, macro-economic trends, and Ministry directives) can produce in-year percentage variances between budget estimates and actual costs. Interim financial reporting allows management to track such variances and communicate them to the trustees and other key decision-makers. To that end, finance staff at the school board prepare quarterly variance reports for the board of trustees that compare budget to actual. The report to the Board is initialed by the Superintendent of Business and the Manager of Financial Services, and submitted to the Board. Interim reports are sent to the board of trustees on the Friday before the board meeting the following Wednesday, to provide trustees with sufficient time to review the reports.

The department reports that it will be expanding on existing report templates to incorporate the recommendations made by the Committee on Interim Financial Reporting for School Boards which were released September 2009. Enhancements will include calendarized reporting that uses historical expenditures as a benchmark for comparison, providing more accurate information on whether variances are in line with historical spending trends. Formal sign off of approval on interim financial reports should be performed by senior management, which will ensure accountability for the integrity of the reports.

The school board reports that it submits all required financial reports to the Ministry and Board of Trustees on time.

Audit

The school board currently does not have an internal auditor. However, the school board's Accounts Payable Supervisor and School Fund Liaison, who reports to the Accounting Supervisor, review a number of school fundraising accounts annually, and all schools are covered within a three year period.

The internal auditor provides added assurance that the internal controls established by management are operating effectively, and in compliance with policies and procedures. Developing a mandate for the internal audit function would assist the executive leadership team and the board of trustees in their overall governance and accountability roles. The internal audit function can also help develop performance measures and indicators for programs and services. The function should report to a committee of the Board. The annual audit plans would be presented to and approved by the committee. All reports would be presented to the committee.

The ministry's direction on internal auditing in school boards continues to evolve, with a regional model emerging as the preferred option. The school board should further enhance its internal audit capabilities, once there is a clear boundary on the scope of the function and the associated delivery / funding model.

The school board also reports that it does not have external members on the audit committee, which is currently composed of three trustees and is a permanent committee of the Board. The committee meets twice a year, and additional meetings can be called by the Chair. The current purpose of the audit committee is as follows:

To assist the Greater Essex County District School Board's (GECDSB) Board of Trustees in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities with respect to:

1. the quality, integrity and appropriateness of the financial reporting process

2. the quality, integrity and performance of the system of internal control over financial reporting

3. the audit process including the quality, performance and independence of the external auditors

4. the process for monitoring compliance with laws and regulations as it relates to financial reporting

The addition of external advisors to the audit committee should be considered, because along with significant changes in accounting in recent years, annual financial statements are becoming more complex. External members support audit committee members in understanding what constitutes sound internal accounting and operational control processes.

The external advisors would not be voting members, since current legislation only recognizes trustees as voting members on school board standing committees. The professional backgrounds of the external members could include professional accountants, lawyers or other professionals, depending on the needs of the committee and its mandate. This would ensure that an objective third-party view is applied to the review of financial statements, the auditor's report, and in-year reports produced by management.

The school board provided copies of the external auditor's annual management letters, with management's response for the past three years. The external auditor presents its annual audit plan to the audit committee. Management is required to report to the audit committee on actions taken to address the auditor's recommendations for change.

Recommendations:

- Management should continue to participate in the emerging Ministry direction to establish regional models for internal audit across the school board sector.

- Management and the board of trustees should add external advisors to the Audit Committee to contribute to the committee's effectiveness.

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?
Existence of an efficient cash management process to maximize interest income, using short-term investments where appropriate and to ensure that the board's debt service costs can be met to maturity.	Yes
Cash management activities are consolidated with a single institution.	Yes
Management periodically reports to the board on the performance of the investment activity, in accordance with the approved investment policy in accordance with the *Education Act.*	No
Management periodically compares the board's banking terms and conditions to those of similar school boards.	Yes
Management monitors financial risk related to cash/investment management, and has a plan to mitigate associated risks.	Yes

Cash and Investment Management

The school board's cash management process is efficient, minimizing idle cash by monitoring daily cash flows against forecasts and making short term investments. The department uses their financial system to monitor and report on cash flow. Bank reconciliations are performed daily by a separate function within finance. This is then reviewed by the accounting supervisor monthly. The school board currently has one sinking fund, which is fully funded.

The school board has an investment policy. However, it does not report periodically to the school board on the performance of its investment activity, since there are currently no investments. The department reported this is due to their reserve for working funds being used to reduce short term borrowing during construction until it is permanently financed by debenture. Due to the amount of construction that is taking place, the department reported that it continues to have a need for these funds to fund construction until the permanent financing is arranged. It was reported that this is a cheaper way to fund construction in progress than borrowing all the costs at a higher interest rate. These funds are used as interim financing only and not permanent financing for construction projects.

Management has consolidated cash management activities for the school board with a single institution. Secondary schools and elementary schools can choose a bank that is best for the school. The school board reported that this is to provide flexibility for schools particularly in small towns where there are only a select number of banks. Each year the board of trustees also approves bylaw 2:14, which stipulates the signing officers of the Board. The school board regularly compares banking terms and conditions to those of similar schools. The school board reviews its banking services/agreement every five years.

Management actively monitors financial risk related to cash/investment management, and has a plan to mitigate associated risks in accordance with the limits set out in the Education Act. Reports are generated for unusual accounting transactions and other critical exceptions. Approval is required from the board of trustees to move funds.

Recommendation:

- Management should periodically report to the Board on the performance of the investment activity, including not investing and the reason as to why, in accordance with the approved investment policy in accordance with the *Education Act.*

4.5 School-based Funds and Non-Grant Revenue Management

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

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

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

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

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.

Management of School-Based Funds

Leading Practices – School-based Funds and Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management ensures adequate controls are in place to safeguard school-based funds and coordinate the annual reporting of revenues and expenditures from schools and school councils.	Yes

Management of Non-Grant Revenue

Leading Practices – School-based Funds and Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management ensures adequate controls are in place to safeguard non-grant revenue and coordinate the annual reporting of revenues and expenditures from all sources.	Yes
Board budget identifies revenue and expenditure for each EPO program. Management monitors activity to ensure compliance with terms and conditions.	Yes

Management of School-Based Funds

Management ensures adequate controls are in place to safeguard school-based funds, and coordinates the annual reporting of revenues and expenditures from schools and school councils. The department has developed clear procedures for school-generated funds, which includes accounting procedures for school fund accounting. These procedures cover roles and responsibilities, process for banking, reporting, financial review and audit, field trips and lotteries.

The school board also has a Board- approved Canvassing and Fundraising policy, which guides the management of school-based funds. School councils must identify in advance of raising funds what the funds will be used for. They also must decide on the use of funds not used in the current school year. Various individuals including volunteers, teaching and administrative staff are responsible for collecting funds at the school-level. Schools are encouraged to do timely deposits, and there is a vault or lock box at all secondary schools. Principals approve all requisitions, and the finance department reviews a sample at year-end.

The department is responsible for the accounting of funds generated by schools and school councils, which is done through an off the shelf accounting package. The finance department has full access to the bank account documentation at the school level, when requested, and checks the accounts periodically as part of the central oversight. There is fundraising for playground equipment and other related items.

Management of Non-Grant Revenue

The school board reported that non-grant revenue is minimal, and procedures for governing non-grant revenue have been created at the departmental level. There is also a Board-approved policy on what the school board can charge for renting space.

EPO grants received by the school board are designated to appropriate superintendents and/or managers, with a note of file that includes reporting deadlines. A 'standard information form' for EPO grants asks the project lead to indicate the quantity and

description of accounts needed to track the grants, any special considerations such as using the grant to cover the salary of an individual, and the names of the schools that will be involved in the grant.

A new account is created for each EPO grant in the financial system, and assigned a G/L code with revenue and expense lines. The finance department has also created a procedure where the receiving project lead cannot expense the funds against the EPO before finance confirms it against the grant requirement.

The Superintendent of Business presents the Board with a yearly report along with the financial statements, which includes an overview of EPO grants received during the year.

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.

Policies and Procedures

Leading Practices – Supply Chain/ Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Approved procurement policies and procedures are clearly communicated to staff with purchasing authority, and are periodically reviewed and updated.	Yes
Approved procurement policies clearly outline circumstances under which the board will use competitive versus noncompetitive procurement methods.	Yes

Leading Practices – Supply Chain/ Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Contract award criteria include elements other than the lowest cost, such as total cost of ownership, value, quality, vendor performance, etc.	Yes
Purchasing managers monitor purchasing activities for compliance with the board's procurement policies and procedures.	Yes

Participation in Group Purchasing Initiatives

Leading Practices – Supply Chain/ Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Management evaluate and develop strategies to increase purchasing power and minimize the cost of goods and services procured.	Yes
The school board actively participates in purchasing consortia/ cooperatives and/or group buying initiatives.	Yes

Purchasing Levels of Authority

Leading Practices – Supply Chain/ Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Purchasing authorization levels are commensurate to job roles and responsibilities, 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?
The school board's finance department performs three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) before invoices are paid.	No
Commitment accounting is in place to monitor budget utilization.	Yes
Management has implemented electronic supplier interface for ordering, processing and payment.	Yes

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer

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

Policies and Procedures

The Board developed a Purchasing Procedures Handbook effective February 9, 2009. This document is aligned with the mandatory elements of the Supply Chain Secretariat's Supply Chain Guideline 1.0, and covers purchase orders, competitive purchasing, small purchase funds, petty cash, and travel and conference costs. The policy also includes a section on procurement ethics and green procurement. Hospitality and travel expenses are covered in a separate policy, which is aligned with the Ministry directive and posted on the school board's website. The school board plans to align the purchasing policies with version 2.0 of the Supply Chain Guideline in time for the April 1, 2010 target date.

Circumstances under which the school board will use competitive versus noncompetitive procurement methods are covered in the handbook. Sole source contracting occurs infrequently, and only where there is a specific product that only one vendor provides. Managers must provide a written justification for sole sourcing. The school board uses a pre-qualification process, and purchases over $50,000 require a Tender or Request for Proposal. The school board has many blanket purchase orders and/or VOR arrangements, many of which resulted from a competitive bid process. These include snow removal and grass cutting.

The school board's current purchasing policy and procedures consider factors other than lowest price in vendor selection. This includes consideration of the quality of product, qualifications and experience of staff, company background, service, timely delivery, references, and past experience with the school board.

The Supervisor of Purchasing and Supply monitors purchasing activities for compliance with the board's procurement policies and procedures through the finance system. Purchases exceeding policy limits (defined in Purchasing level of Authorities below) must be made through the BAS 2000 online requisition system. Tendered items, regardless of their value, must also be made through the BAS 2000 online requisition system.

A school board catalogue, Webstock, has been developed as a tool for all staff to view tendered items, complete with specifications and some with pictures. Certain items, regardless of their value, must also be made through the BAS 2000 online requisition system including:

- U.S. / out of country purchases (for customs reasons);

- automatically recurring charges, except as approved by the Purchasing Department;

- videos/films (require public performance rights and hold harmless clause);

- computer hardware, software and peripherals, audio-visual equipment (to ensure support and repair through a central budget);

- WHMIS-compliant items i.e. chemical, science, art and shop supplies;

- service and maintenance agreements/contracts and related products; and

- ergonomic products such as chairs or furniture.

This is reinforced in the purchasing procedures. Training sessions on the procurement policy also occur as part of the administrative training procedures developed for BAS2000.

Participation in Group Purchasing Initiatives

Management has developed strategies to increase purchasing power and minimize the costs of goods and services procured, and actively participates in purchasing consortia. The Board participates in a provincial energy purchasing consortium, as well as a local natural gas consortium. The school board is an active participant of the Ontario Education Collaborative Marketplace (OECM), and is currently participating in developing and evaluating the RFP for classroom furniture with the OECM.

In addition, the Board participates in a consortium for:

- pool chemicals, managed through the City of Windsor (St Clair College, City of Windsor and the Board)

- plain & printed envelopes (City of Windsor, Windsor Essex Housing Corp, St. Clair College, Enwin Utilities and the Board)

The Board also issues co-operative tenders for:

- Fine Paper (shared with City of Windsor, Windsor Public Library, Enwin Utilities, St. Clair College, *Conseil Scolaire de District des Ecoles Catholiques du Sud-Quest*, University of Windsor and Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board)

- Phys. Ed. Equipment & supplies (shared with City of Windsor and Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board)

- Fire Extinguisher RFP (shared with the University of Windsor and St. Clair College)

Purchasing Levels of Authority

There are a number of purchasing authorization levels (depending on the job position and function) which are monitored and controlled by financial services, and outlined the Purchasing Policy and Regulation, BA-01, which can be found on the school board's public website. Price quotations, tenders and Request for Proposals are to be obtained by the Supervisor of Purchasing and Supply within the limitations as defined except as follows:

I.   Miscellaneous expenditures to a value of $1,500 may be purchased at the discretion of the Purchasing Department.

II. $1,500 to $5,000 – solicit at least two (2) verbal or written quotations where possible/feasible as determined by the Purchasing Department, except the Facility Services Department which may use a work order for purchases up to $5,000.

III. $5,000 to $50,000 – solicit at least three (3) written quotations on firm's letterhead or Board's Price Request Form.

IV. $50,000 and upwards - formal tender or Request for Proposal from vendor lists compiled by the Purchasing Department.

Changes to purchasing thresholds must be approved by the Board. The policy does indicate however, that the Supervisor of Purchasing and Supply shall be allowed discretion in making purchases that are urgently needed or particularly specified. This would entail approving an exception, not changing the threshold. Negotiations can only be entered into only with the approval of the Superintendent of Business. A quarterly report is also presented to the Board for all tenders accepted in excess of $250,000 before taxes.

The department has segregated the procurement roles, as identified in the Supply Chain guidelines. A travel and expense policy currently exists, and the department is also working on a separate policy which will cover miscellaneous expenses.

Policies and Procedures for PCard and Corporate Card Use

The school board has an approved administrative procedure on PCards entitled 'Purchasing/ Credit Card Program' which can be found on the school board's intranet. The rationale for the procedure is to establish a more efficient, cost effective method of purchase and payment for small dollar transactions, up to $1,500.

The procedure was effective as of March 2007, revised in February 2009, and outlines a number of control processes in place to ensure proper use of the card. In addition, staff go through a training session on the use of PCards and the PCard procedures with a Purchasing Department staff member before a card is issued. Statements for purchases made on PCards are issued electronically. Each school has a PCard.

The school board reported that trustees also have credit cards which are governed by the school board's credit card procedures. Accounts are set up in the general ledger for each trustee's expenses and credit card payments are approved by the Superintendent of Business.

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

The board's finance department currently performs three-way matching among purchase orders, vendor invoices, and packing receipts for items over $3,000 only. Items under $3000 are matched two-ways. Staff who receive the goods examine the invoice to ensure that it matches the receiving documentation (packing slip). Principals are also required to sign off on the invoice before it is paid. However, the invoice is not matched to the original PO, nor is the invoice or receiving information entered into the financial system for automated matching or manual matching by the department of finance staff. Instead, invoices are sent from the ship-to location to the department, where accounts payable pays all invoices received unless notified by the receiver to hold payment.

Commitment accounting is in place to monitor budget utilization, and pre-commit funds through BAS2000. The school board's on-line supplier catalogue, Webstock, ensures that staff can incorporate the correct vendor information (such as ID's) directly into their online requisitions.

Although the board performs three way matching on higher dollar value purchase orders it should examine the potential impacts and benefits of expanding this matching process to all POs. As part of this analysis, the overall dollar volume of spending driven through PO's lower than $3000 should be assessed in to determine whether it presents a greater material risk to the board than those single PO's that exceed $3000.

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer

The school board uses Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) for vendor payments.

Recommendation:

- Management should perform a detailed review of the school board's purchase-topayment cycle, specifically three-way matching, which is currently limited to only those purchases over $3000.

5. School Operations and Facilities Management – Findings and Recommendations
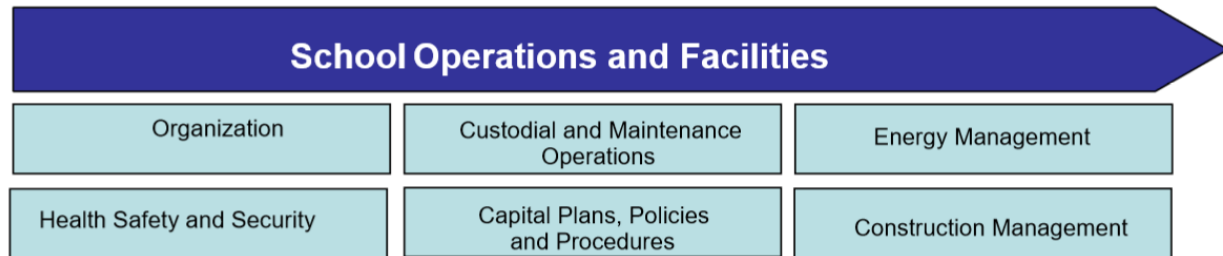
Efficient and effective management of the school board's facilities (particularly schools) is an important factor in student achievement. Along with providing a positive learning environment for students, this function sets and meets standards of cleanliness and maintenance, examines opportunities to 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 field work, which included interviews with all key school operations and facilities management staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

5.1 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 School Operations and Facilities Management 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 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 organizational chart is available to the public.	Yes
Senior operations and facilities staff have appropriate designations (e.g. P.Eng.) and qualifications.	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor school operations and facilities management policy compliance by all staff and management.	Yes
Management builds staff capacity in understanding of school operations and facilities policies and administrative procedures.	Yes
Processes exist to monitor new legislation and regulations and implement necessary changes.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The department does not develop an annual departmental plan. Instead, departmental priorities are driven by yearly priority areas, which are aligned with the board's

Continuous Growth Plan. The department has developed a mission statement and quality policy statement, which reflect their goal to deliver service in a creative, effective and timely manner; to measure performance; and to ultimately enhance enrolment and support academic performance by partnering with all stakeholders to provide the best learning environments.

Management should develop an annual departmental plan, complete with measurable targets, designated accountabilities, and target timelines that are aligned with the school board's annual operating plan, once developed. These plans would need to be aligned with the Board's overall strategic direction. This would help link department priorities with performance measures and accountabilities, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration among the team members, and provide a "roadmap" for the department.

The department has already put into practice the process of tracking initiatives and accountability through a custom-built 'Objectives Meeting Minutes' application, which tracks issues, dates, status, designated accountabilities, target dates and closure dates. The department is therefore encouraged to expand this concept into the development of an annual departmental plan.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The department reports to the Superintendent of Business through the Manager of Facility Services. The Manager of Plant Services oversees a management team, which is composed of a Coordinator of Operations, a Coordinator of Maintenance, a Coordinator of Engineering, and a Health and Safety officer.

The department's job descriptions are accurate and up-to-date, and include major duties and responsibilities, and the skills and knowledge required. The department has clearly defined organizational units delineating roles and responsibilities. An up-to-date organization chart is posted on the website, alongside contact information for key plant services staff.

Department staff are qualified through a combination of professional designations (including P.Eng.) and work experience.

Monitoring and Communication of Policies

The department has responsibility for a number of policies, including joint occupational health and safety, safe schools, alterations to school buildings, and vandalism. All of the department's policies and administrative procedures can be found on the school board's website.

New policies and procedures are communicated to staff through various means, including a mandatory staff meeting once a month which includes both maintenance and custodial staff, and emails to all administrative staff.

Policy compliance is driven in large part by the department's ISO 9001 designation, which requires the department to provide quality management in the following areas:

- customer's quality requirements,

- applicable regulatory requirements

- enhance customer satisfaction

- achieve continual improvement of its performance in pursuit of these objectives

To maintain the standards the department has set, there is also mandatory training for all maintenance staff and compulsory training for trades people that includes such things as the introduction of new policies, the maintenance and safe operation of vehicles, communication, safety, asbestos and WHMIS training , service quality, and emergency response.

Recommendation:

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

5.2   Custodial and Maintenance Operations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board has adopted cleaning standards for schools and has developed a standard set of processes and tools to monitor, manage, and report on results.	Yes
The school board has implemented a formal green clean program as part of its overarching Education Environmental Policy.	No
Management's custodial/ maintenance allocation model optimizes the use of staff and considers various factors (e.g. square footage, portables, gyms etc).	Yes

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
Using a consultative process, senior administration develops and communicates a multi-year (three to five years) plan for major maintenance and renewal projects. The plan addresses the board's preventative and deferred maintenance priorities, optimizes the use of available funding (Annual Renewal Grant and Good Places to Learn funding). The plan is approved by the Board and is accessible by the public.	No

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

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

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
Management uses an inventory system to track and control major cleaning and maintenance equipment.	Yes

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has defined common standards to ensure efficient procurement of supplies in order to minimize costs, promote energy and operating efficiency, and environmental sustainability.	Yes

Project Management, Monitoring and Support Systems

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
An automated (computerized) work-order system and process records, monitors, and evaluates projects ensuring the effective use of resources.	Yes
Senior administration regularly evaluates the overall effectiveness and efficiency of its maintenance and custodial service delivery model.	Yes

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

To maintain a consistent level of school cleanliness across the system, the department has developed cleaning procedures and standards for its custodians. The department has created a Service Quality System- Custodial Manual as part of its ISO 9001 designation, which has been maintained for the past four years

The Service Quality System is based on four steps:

1. Say what you do

2. Do what you say

3. Measure what you are doing so that you can improve it

4. Improve on what you do

The department has created best practices guidelines for cleaning which is classified according to area (i.e. auditorium, gymnasiums and stages, libraries, etc). It includes daily tasks, their frequency, and what equipment and chemicals should be used. The department utilizes custodian log books to monitor, manage and report on cleaning standard results. Daily and monthly inspection results are reported in the custodian log books, which are regularly reviewed by supervisors.

The allocation model for custodians is based on square footage. The school board has compared the custodial staff allocation model with other school boards. The school board is slightly above average in its custodial staff numbers. The allocation model works well for the size of the board, and optimizes all staff. For example, certain staff members open schools before going to their home school as a day custodian.

The school board's maintenance staff are employees of the school board. The Coordinator of Maintenance has a team composed of a mechanical maintenance supervisor, a structural maintenance supervisor, an electrical maintenance supervisor, and a preventative maintenance supervisor. There are 16 preventative maintenance workers who are allocated to a family of schools, and anywhere from 14 to 20 maintenance staff. The maintenance staff carry their own minor equipment and are paid mileage for using their own vehicles. All large tools or pieces of equipment are approved by the maintenance supervisor and are based on the needs of each trade. The school board reported that an inventory of tools and equipment exists but has not been recently updated.

The school board contracts out snow removal and grass cutting.

The school board has not implemented the use of environmentally friendly cleaning products as part of its environmental policy, since the costs are not sustainable. The department is currently awaiting the new Ministry guidelines regarding green clean programs, and is encouraged to revisit their policy and cost assessments as planned for January 2010 in light of the report recommendations.

The department is encouraged to develop a green clean pilot program as a first step towards full implementation of a formal green clean program.

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

Management develops an annual plan of renewal and maintenance projects to address preventative, critical and deferred maintenance. The annual plan is based on the department's work orders, some of which are recurring, such as those for HVAC and boiler maintenance. The plan is also based on priority items developed by individual schools. Each school receives an allocation of $3000 a year in maintenance and renewal funding, and have the ability to prioritize how the funding will be applied to the needs of the school.

This information is the basis of the plan, which includes assignment, budget, budget remaining, and forecast costs, and is developed through an in-house work order system that the school board has developed. Schools have access to the work order system to see the priority of their requests. The ReCAPP system has been useful in helping to prioritize its renewal efforts.

The department prioritizes its workload based on meetings with staff and input from principals to develop its annual plan. Once a month, the department also meets with the Director and Superintendent of Accommodations to understand the school board's priorities and potential decisions around managing its declining enrolment status. They also meet as a team two or three times a year to discuss capital projects. The annual plan is submitted to the Board for approval, and there is a note to budget that the

department reserves the right to change priorities during the year to deal with urgent concerns.

While the current plan covers one year, management should consider establishing a multi-year maintenance and renewal plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide the school board and its stakeholders with a clear forecast of critical needs over the next several years. The department is also encouraged to link the annual and multi-year maintenance plan to the departmental plan once the latter has been formalized.

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

The school board has an extensive training program in place for its custodial and maintenance workers. This includes e-training, a mandatory full day training for all plant staff, and professional development training covering a wide range of areas such as first aid, emergency response, shop safety and storage, and WHMIS Training. The facilities department also delivers a facilities mechanic training program for staff members in the plant department who are interested in either building maintenance or preventative maintenance positions. This program is an apprenticeship program taught at a local college.

Vendors who bring in products are required to provide training on product use and any safety requirements.

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

The department has given each school custodian the responsibility for managing their own stock and supplies. Supplies are ordered through a supplier with a dedicated on-line ordering system, and an order can take place every 30 days. Invoices are sent directly to accounts payable to be paid. Pricing is attached to each item and the system also tracks orders to ensure the school does not go past its budget for supplies.

Management has defined common standards to ensure efficient procurement of supplies, and all purchases much be approved by the supervisor on-site. Items are delivered directly to the location ordering them.

Project Management, Monitoring and Supporting Systems

The school board uses a computerized program that was developed in-house to track and prioritize work orders by location and type of work performed. The priority is based is based on three factors: if it is a recurring item, how long it is overdue, and a sense of urgency. The latter can be triggered by the principal, who can access the system and raise an item's priority rating. Items can also be coded as an immediate, two-week or unscheduled priority.

This system allows staff to prioritize their work day, as work orders can be pulled up by room number. In addition, there is a contact name with each work order, to ensure the individual can be informed once the work order is complete and for any questions. The school board notes that this system allows schools to feel that their immediate concerns are being addressed in a timely manner.

Recommendations:

- Management should consider establishing a multi-year maintenance and renewal plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide the school board and its stakeholders with a clear forecast of critical needs over the next several years. The department is also encouraged to link the annual and multi-year maintenance plan to the departmental plan once the latter has been formalized.

- The department is encouraged to develop a green clean pilot program as a first step towards full implementation of a formal green clean program.

5.3   Energy Management

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

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

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

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

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

Energy Management Plan

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
In reference to the *Ontario Green Energy Act, 2009,* senior administration has established a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates measures to be implemented and the tools to monitor and manage the plan.	No

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Procurement practices support the objectives and targets of the energy management plan	No
Successful conservation initiatives are communicated across all schools and with other school boards.	Yes

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

Leading Practices – Energy Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management provides formal annual reporting on the conservation savings achieved against the plan.	No
A comprehensive system exists to budget expenditures, track and regulate consumption, and identify opportunities for further savings.	Yes
Billing for all board facilities is consolidated from each utility.	No
The Board has established an overarching environmental policy that addresses both environmental education and responsible management practices.	Yes

Energy Management Plan

The school board reports that it is making some inroads in energy conservation in utility costing and performing energy retrofits. Although the school board does not have a formal energy management plan, it is reviewing the energy management policies of other school boards to draft its own plan.

The school board has completed an energy audit of all its schools, which has provided administration with detailed reports on energy saving opportunities. This data will form the basis of the energy management plan.

In the meantime, the school board is focused on changing behaviours at the local school level. It has set up an EcoSchools Committee, which oversees EcoTeams at each school. These teams are made up of at least one administrator, teacher, student and custodian. The group is responsible for guiding their school community in an effort to reduce, reuse, and recycle. The school board is commended for their initiative in the implementation of the EcoSchools Committee.

Successful conservation techniques are communicated across all schools and with other school boards, to help build recognition of energy management across the system. As part of the EcoSchools initiative, there is a 'Leaping Forward' program, which financially recognizes schools making advances in environmental initiatives. The monies received can be put towards additional environmental initiatives.

The school board should continue expanding its energy management program, and establish a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates measures to be implemented and the tools to monitor and manage the plan. The board should also incorporate training and education programs for staff and students, and add energy conservation to the curriculum as part of the larger energy management plan.

While the school board's procurement policy includes references to green products, it does not include a formal clause requiring all new equipment to be energy efficient. As part of the multi-year energy management plan, the school board will also be looking at amending its procurement practices to support the principles of energy efficiency. The board belongs to consortia for gas (Windsor-Essex public sector gas consortium) and electricity (Ontario school boards).

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

The school board performs energy consumption data comparisons on gas, water and electricity, which allow them to compare costs from the previous year. However there is no reporting on the conservation savings achieved against each plan. The school board noted that it is aware of the Ministry sponsored Utilities Consumption Database, and is migrating towards using it.

The school board has recently completed an audit of all schools, which has provided administration with detailed reports on energy saving opportunities. Targets for each school will be developed after analyzing this data, which will also include greenhouse emissions which the school board is currently tracking. The school board has a centralized system that automates energy regulation and conservation.

Vendor billing is not currently consolidated from each utility. Management should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption.

The school board has developed a policy on Environmental Stewardship, and through approval of this policy the board of trustees has adopted the concept of sustainable development as "meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Recommendation:
- The school board is encouraged to establish a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates measures to be implemented and the tools to monitor and manage the plan.

- Management should provide formal annual reporting to the board of trustees on the conservation savings achieved against the plan once it has been developed.

- The school board should add language to their procurement policy to support that where feasible, all new equipment will have an appropriate energy efficiency rating.

- Management should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption.

5.4 Health, Safety and Security

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

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

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

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

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

Health, Safety and Security Management

Leading Practices – Health, Safety and Security	Evidence of Adoption?
Develop, implement and monitor an occupational health and safety strategy/plan that reflects the board's occupational health and safety policies and administrative procedures and ensures the school board is in compliance with associated occupational health and safety statutory requirements.	Yes
Develop, implement and monitor a security strategy/ plan that reflects the board's security and student safety policies and administrative procedures and ensures the board is in compliance with statutory/policy security requirements.	Yes
Develop, implement and monitor a health strategy/plan that reflects the board's health policies and procedures and ensures the school board is in compliance with statutory health requirements.	Yes

Health, Safety, and Security Management.

The health and safety portfolio is led by a Health and Safety officer, who reports to the Manager of Facility Services. The school board has an approved health and safety plan which is reviewed annually to ensure it is in accordance with applicable requirements legislated under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The policy can be found on the school board's website. A copy of the policy is also found at all work sites.

The school board's comprehensive Health & Safety Management Program is built on the foundation of accident injury prevention. The program contains specific guidelines for workplace safety, procedures and processes, all designed to reduce and prevent accidents and injuries. Additional components include: WHMIS Management Program, Asbestos Management Program and the Workplace Violence Prevention Management Program. Key areas of focus are ergonomics and slips, trips and falls. As part of the effort to focus on these areas, the school board implemented a new health and safety awareness program titled "Think". This is an information campaign with six different original posters which focus on accident and injury prevention in the following categories:

- Slips, Trips & Falls

- Decorating using Ladders & Step Stools

- Housekeeping and Safe Storage

- Ergonomics

- Personal Protective Equipment

- Violence Prevention

The health and safety team organizes training twice a year, and there is mandatory training for all contractors.

The school board has a central joint health and safety committee composed of three principals and three managers who meet three or four times a year to discuss systemwide issues. Each individual school also has a joint health and safety committee, which is responsible for implementation. The joint health and safety committee issues periodic reports to the Director as required.

The school board has a security and student safety plan in the form of their Safe Schools Policy. In addition, the school board also has an Emergency Management Response Plan, and each school site has an emergency management team which performs two drills a year. Evacuation sites are interlinked with the coterminous board.

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This plan was developed in conjunction with the local police. Updates to either of these plans require approval from Director's Council.

The school board has established a local police and school board protocol and police are involved with schools to conduct safety assessment. The fire department is also involved at the local level, with fire safety protocol and fire alarm drills.

The school board developed a health strategy titled 'Response to a National Health Risk' which includes H1N1 preparedness. The school board has also developed a separate policy on Sabrina's Law. The superintendents of elementary and secondary education are spearheading the initiative on healthy schools.

The school board monitors water and air quality standards.

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;

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

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

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

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

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

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board maintains accurate and up-to-date inventories of school capacity and inventories using SFIS.	Yes
An accurate and current assessment of facility conditions is maintained, based on industry standards (using RECAPP methodology).	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

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

In compliance with Ministry requirements, the school board has completed its capital liquidity template. The school board also developed an Annual Accommodation Planning Report in June 2009 under the leadership of the Director and the Superintendent of Accommodation. This provides an overview of accommodation issues, including enrolment, space requirements, portables, and alternative use for space. The Annual Accommodation Plan is presented to the board of trustees by the Director as an information item.

The board of trustees has also approved the Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline. The school board is part of the Ministry's pilot program on pupil accommodation review.

The school board is currently facing overall declining enrolment, with some growth in certain areas of the city. As a result, the plan is currently based on the highest priority needs, and roofing, asphalt and boiler repairs are the current areas of focus for the school board. The Superintendent of Accommodation is undertaking a system-wide survey of facilities, with the goal to accommodate growth within the school board's current facilities.

The capital plan is coordinated with the renewal plan under the supervision of the Coordinator of Engineering. Management gets a budget based on the scope of work

require before a capital project is started; this list of budgets is then applied to preliminary projects and subsequently prioritized depending on data such as enrolment numbers and feedback from schools.

The school board reported that all capital debt commitments are covered.

Ongoing Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning

To maintain the accuracy of capital needs, the school board keeps accurate and timely inventories of school capacity and utilization through SFIS and ReCAPP. These programs are maintained by the Coordinator of Engineering and staff. The school board noted that SFIS is adequate at meeting the needs of the school board. Communities are encouraged to use school facilities, and must have a certificate of insurance. The school board is currently at full capacity for community use of schools. The school board has developed a policy for community use of schools which is posted on the public website.

ReCAPP methodology is also used at the school board. The school board is encouraged to prioritize the data available through ReCAPP, and ensure it is updated to maintain an accurate and current assessment of facility conditions.

5.6 Construction Management

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

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

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

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

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Management uses cost-effective designs, standard footprints, energy conservation, and economical construction practices to minimize construction and future maintenance and operation costs.	Yes

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
In constructing, acquiring, operating and managing school facilities, the school board is guided by the principles outlined in the *Ontario Green Energy Act, 2009*	Yes
Senior administration maintains standard policy and/or procedures to rationalize construction projects, including benchmarking against other school board construction costs and design standards (including coterminous boards).	Yes

Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects

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

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Senior administration periodically evaluates and updates the approved list of contractors, architects, and related professionals no less than once every five years.	Yes

Cost-Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

Staff and management minimize construction, future maintenance and operations costs with cost-effective designs, standard footprints, energy conservation, and economical construction practices. To control school renewal and construction project costs, management maintains as much standardization as possible. For example, classrooms are all built with the same configuration on 750 square feet. Standardization has the added benefit of reducing maintenance costs as well.

Before new facilities are constructed, the school board conducts an outreach process with the community for input from schools and parents. Before construction can begin, the Accommodations Advisory Committee approves the final plans. During the process, a committee composed of the Superintendent of Accommodations, the Manager of Facilities, the Coordinator of Engineering and the architect meet monthly, or more frequently depending on the need, to assess progress and deal with any issues that come up.

The school board is aware of the principles outlined in the Ontario Green Energy Act. The school board is currently building a LEED Platinum certified school, the Dr. David Suzuki Public School, and has hired a consultant to validate the LEED process. The

construction of the school will include energy efficient measures such as windmills, green roofs, and underground heating tubes.

The school board benchmarks its costs with those of other school boards. The school board reports that it is above average in construction costs, since the local building and construction trades union agreements does not allow it to tender projects outside of the union.

Monitoring and Reporting of Progress on Construction Projects

Management has an effective process in place to monitor and control construction projects and their costs. Before construction begins, administration provides the school board with all costs and a 10 per cent contingency is built into the approved budget.

Increases in the budget up to $50,000 can be approved by the Coordinator of Engineering; those between $50,000-$100,000 need the approval of the Manager of Facilities and anything between $100,000-$500,000 requires the approval of the Senior Business Official. Increases above $500,000 go to the Director. Once the budget has been approved, the responsibility for the construction lies with the construction administrator, who effectively becomes the project manager, and reports to the Coordinator of Engineering. There are monthly meetings between the Advisory Accommodation Committee, and the architect and the project manager are on site for the entire process.

All school construction projects (completed, in progress, and planned) are listed on the school board's public website.

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

The school board outsources all new construction through competitive bids from prequalified vendors of record. To control school renewal and construction costs, management works with its prequalified list of approved contractors. General contractors and sub-trades are also pre-qualified. Due to local union agreements in place that require that the local building and construction trades union have priority in the tendering process, the school board reported that they are limited in who they can seek construction expertise from. Management evaluates and updates its approved list of contractors annually, according to its standard policies and procedures for procurement, as well as past performance on projects.

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.
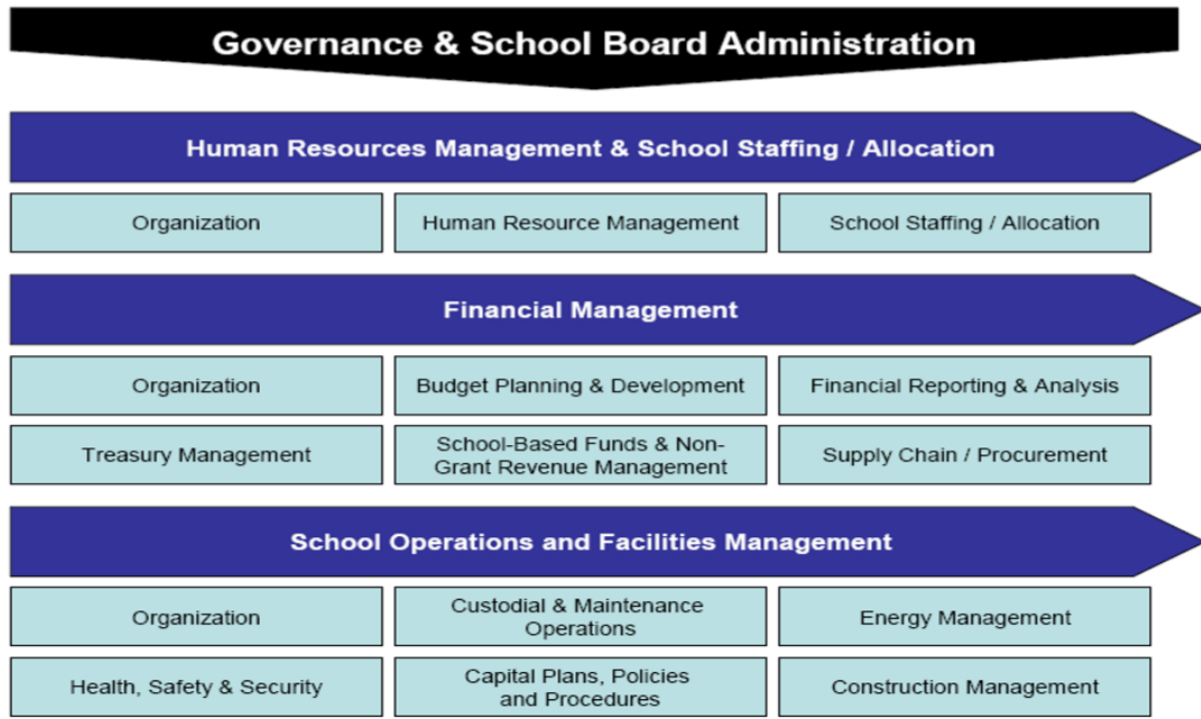
Operational Review Summary Approach

The high level Operational Review approach is shown below. The timing for the end-toend 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.
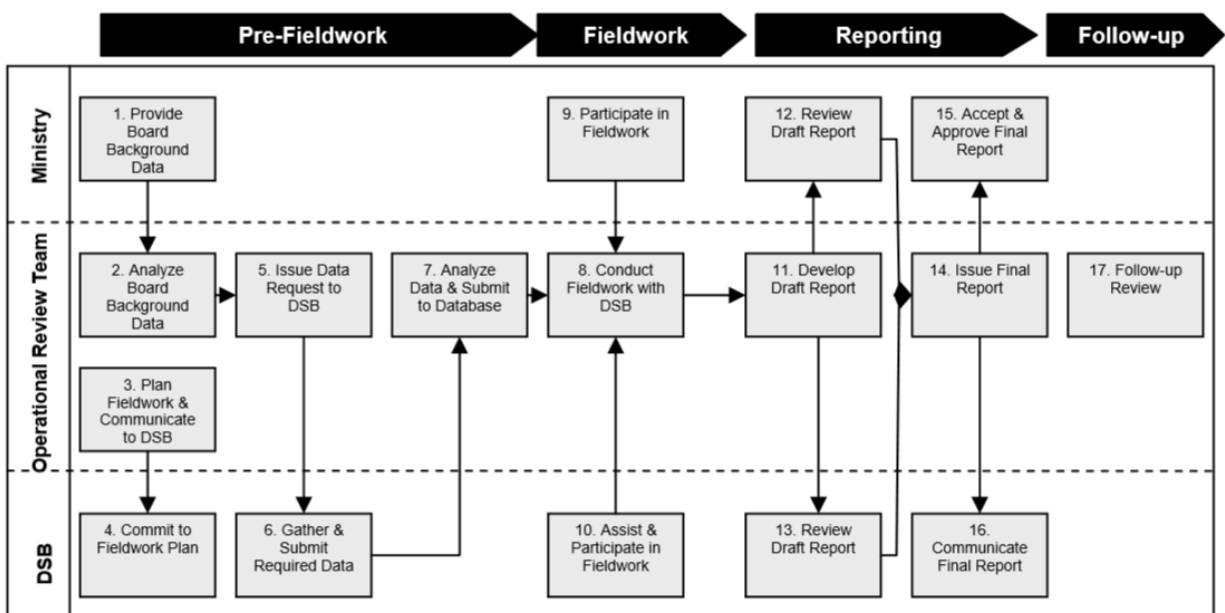
The Table below defines the key phases and activities which comprise the Operational review Methodology.

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

Phase: Fieldwork

Key Activity	Description
Conduct Fieldwork with board	The fieldwork is conducted for each board according to the previously agreed upon review cycle. The time required for fieldwork ranges between five and 10 days, based on the size of the board.
Participate in Fieldwork	Ministry staff support the review team in the performance of fieldwork to ensure continuity and knowledge transfer of 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: Reporting

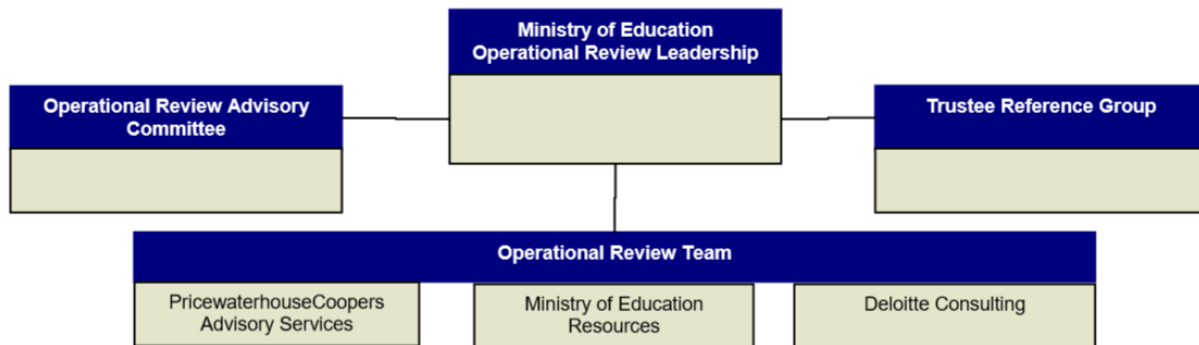| Key Activity	Description
Develop Draft Report	Based on the results of the fieldwork and data analysis, the operational review team writes a draft report. The draft report contains a synopsis of findings and, where appropriate, recommendations for improvement.
Review Draft Report (Ministry)	The Ministry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

Phase: Follow- up

Key Activity	Description
Follow-up Review	Eight to 12 months after the release of the final report, the review team conducts a follow-up review to determine the extent 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.

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Limitations of this Review

The purpose of this Report is to document the results of the Operational Review of Greater Essex County District School Board. The review has been conducted using the methodology as previously described. The review is not of the nature or scope that constitutes an audit made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations

Governance and School Board Administration

No.	Recommendation
1.	The school board is encouraged to develop a formal annual operating plan to cover all of its operations, including human resources, financial management, and facilities management. The format of the operating plan should be updated to demonstrate its alignment to the Board's multi-year strategic plan. This will also enable the departments to track and report progress of their defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
2.	The school board should consider establishing a formal refresh cycle for its policies, to ensure periodic review of all policies across functional areas. This could include forming a policy committee to consider policies for review or development.
3.	The school board should expand its formal succession plan to include key management positions in non-academic functions. Currently the board has a leadership development program in place to support succession planning for academic staff, as outlined by the Ministry's Ontario Leadership Strategy.

Human Resources Management and School Staffing/ Allocation

No.	Recommendation
4.	The HR department should consider developing an annual departmental plan aligned with the operating plan and overall strategic plan. This will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
5.	The department should continue with the implementation of their comprehensive attendance management program, including policies and procedures to address specific categories of absenteeism. This will provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.
6.	Management should periodically report to the Board and senior management on the effectiveness of its attendance management program, once it is in place.

Financial Management

No.	Recommendation
7.	The department should consider developing an annual departmental plan aligned with the operating plan and overall strategic plan. This will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
8.	Management is encouraged to document the annual budget development process, to enhance its transparency for participating Superintendents/ managers, and encourage internal discussion between departments in the development of the annual budget.
9.	Management should continue to participate in the emerging Ministry direction to establish regional models for internal audit across the school board sector.

No.	Recommendation
10.	Management and the board of trustees should add external advisors to the Audit Committee to contribute to the committee's effectiveness.
11.	Management should periodically report to the Board on the performance of the investment activity, including not investing and the reason as to why, in accordance with the approved investment policy in accordance with the Education Act.
12.	Management should perform a detailed review of the school board's purchase-to-payment cycle, specifically three-way matching, which is currently limited to only those purchases over $3000.

School Operations and Facilities Management

No.	Recommendation
13.	The department should consider developing an annual departmental plan aligned with the operating plan and overall strategic plan. This will enable the department to track and report the progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.
14.	Management should consider establishing a multi-year maintenance and renewal plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide the school board and its stakeholders with a clear forecast of critical needs over the next several years. The department is also encouraged to link the annual and multi-year maintenance plan to the departmental plan once the latter has been formalized.
15.	The department is encouraged to develop a green clean pilot program as a first step towards full implementation of a formal green clean program.
16.	The school board is encouraged to establish a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates measures to be implemented and the tools to monitor and manage the plan.
17.	Management should provide formal annual reporting to the board of trustees on the conservation savings achieved against the plan once it has been developed.
18.	The school board should add language to their procurement policy to support that where feasible, all new equipment will have an appropriate energy efficiency rating.
19.	Management should ask the utility companies to provide consolidated billing in an electronic format. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption.