Ministry of Education

Operational Review Report
Rainy River District School Board

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Executive Summary

This report details the findings and recommendations of the Operational Review of the Rainy River District School Board (the school board) conducted by the Operational Review Team composed of external consultants from Deloitte & Touche LLP and Ministry of Education staff. The Operational Review was conducted over three days beginning January 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 reviewed the school board's operations in four functional areas: Governance and School Board Administration; Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation; Financial Management; and School Operations and Facilities Management. The purpose of this was to assess the extent to which the school board has implemented the leading practices set out in the "Operational Review Guide for Ontario School Boards". The review also provides, where appropriate, recommendations on opportunities for improvement. Appendix A provides an overview summary of the Operational Review scope and methodology.

The review found that the Rainy River District School Board (RRDSB) is well managed. Noted strengths of the school board include a clearly articulated system plan for student success, effective budget management, and a strong and aligned leadership team that communicates effectively and shares a common vision. Management proactively monitors student enrolment and staffing levels, and implements effective fiscal policy in an environment of declining enrolment. 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 school board has adopted a governance structure that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Trustees (the Board) and the senior administration team. The senior administration team is composed of the Director of Education, the Superintendent of Education, Aboriginal Education Leader, Student Success Leader, Effective School Leader, and the Superintendent of Business.

The governance structure is supported by a board of seven experienced trustees. The current chair has been a trustee for more than 20 years. The trustees are appointed for a four-year term with annual election of the chair and the vice-chair. In addition, a student trustee is elected to serve on the Board of Trustees for a one-year term.

The Board of Trustees sets and maintains policy. The senior administration team develops and implements operating plans and procedures consistent with the Board's key goal of improving student success.

A school board planning team (BPT) consisting of the Board chair, vice-chair and Director of Education supports the development of an effective agenda for each regular Board of Trustees meeting. The agenda considers the timeliness and thoroughness of items, action versus information items, open and closed session agendas, and other items as appropriate. This approach also helps to ensure that board meetings run efficiently and that the agenda covers the key priorities of the school board.

The positive working relationship between the Director and the trustees promotes an open dialogue, and contributes to an effective decision-making process. This process is further supported by various sub-committees of the Board. Some of the committees are established as a result of legislation or Ministry of Education mandate, while others are adhoc or designed to address specific matters before the Board. In order for Board subcommittees to continue to meet the needs and objectives of the Board, and operate in an efficient and effective manner, the Board should re-examine the composition and mandate of the sub-committees.

Over the years, Trustees and Administration have used a strategic planning framework to support the Board's mission and vision. Known as the Seven Correlates of Effective Schools, it is derived from empirical investigations of school effectiveness studies. The correlates describe the cultural and academic climate that the Board wishes to provide for its students. They are:

- A Clear and Focused Mission

- High Expectations for Success

- Instructional Leadership

- Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

- Opportunity to Learn

- Safe and Orderly Environment

- Positive Home & School Relations

The administration collaboratively identifies annual priorities in planning sessions. These annual goals are developed to support the seven correlates and are outlined in the system plan that is presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. The following goals have been identified for 2008-09, and are aligned with the seven correlates listed above:

- To maximize every student's opportunity to succeed to the highest level.

- To communicate our shared mission statement in all of our schools and communities, and to ensure actions at all levels reflect the mission statement.

- To provide a safe environment where all students, community members and staff feel welcome and eager to learn and work.

- To strengthen communication with parents and the community to actively encourage their meaningful involvement with the teaching and learning of children.

- To strengthen consistent practices for monitoring, assessing, and reporting student progress to ensure student and school improvement.

- To develop a positive learning and teaching environment where all students, staff, parents and community members collaborate to improve individual student achievement to the maximum potential.

- To enhance staff, student and parent leadership development for sustainability of current and new leaders, recognizing that leadership is an action and not a position.

While the system plan can be characterized as a Board Improvement Plan (BIP), it does have some elements of a multi-year strategic plan. Management should consider expanding the scope of its system plan to position it as a multi-year strategic plan. The annual system plan sets the stage for school improvement plans (SIP) that are developed by principals. The system plan should also be expanded to include the operational functions such as HR management, financial management and school operations and facilities management.

Recommendations:
- The board of trustees, in conjunction with the Director, should develop a multiyear strategic plan that defines key objectives, timelines and performance measures for the entire system. This would provide an over-arching framework for the school board to develop its annual system plan, set the context for school

and departmental plans, and allow the Director to report on the achievement of specific outcomes.

- The Board should consider consolidating the business functions (such as HR, finance and facilities) into the board system plan. This will enable the departments to link their respective operational plans to the annual plan, and align operational goals with an overarching strategic direction.

- The Board should establish a formal succession plan to manage the retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.

Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation

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

- Professional development programs are in place for academic staff. These are held throughout the school year, and include various instructional strategies for teachers and workshops on assistive technology.

- The department has procedures to govern total staffing and monitor the allocations. These procedures are driven by enrolment projections, student need, class size requirements, preparation time, and alignment to collective agreements.

- The department negotiates various collective agreements with its bargaining units. The Board maintains good working relationships with these units. Regular meetings of the labour/management committee help resolve issues quickly.

- The department has minimized lost time by implementing an effective modified work program. Management supports employees with tools and templates and hires external experts (e.g. ergonomists and physiotherapists) to accelerate the return to work process.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual departmental plan that is linked with the school board system plan. This would align department priorities with the overall board direction and provide staff with better visibility of the system roadmap.

- The department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, including policies and procedures to address specific categories of absenteeism. This would provide management with a consistent and structured

approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.

- Management should document its practice of progressive disciplinary action, to ensure clear communication to all employees.

- Management should develop a formal plan for conducting exit interviews. Like staff surveys, these interviews will provide input for HR policy and process and program improvement.

Financial Management

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

- Management maintains adequate controls over student funds administered within schools. The approved procedure for school generated funds standardizes the process for use of petty cash, making deposits and creating cheques, for elementary and secondary administration offices and elementary and secondary staff.

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

- Management relies on enrolment forecasts submitted by school principals to develop a system-wide estimate. As the budget development process continues with input from the school level, any significant change in the enrolment forecast is incorporated in the budget.

- The finance department has adopted an integrated financial system, which combines general ledger, accounts payable and purchasing modules. The purchasing module supports the use of commitment accounting.

- The department has established a finance committee to assist the Board of Trustees in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. Among other functions, the committee monitors the integrity of the school board's financial reporting process and its system of internal controls for financial reporting and accounting compliance.

Recommendations:

- The Finance department should develop a plan that is clearly aligned with the objectives in the board system plan. This would provide management and staff with the visibility necessary to track and manage departmental progress against the school board's goals.

- Management should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls and adherence to board policies as described in section 4.3 of this report. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated cost for each option.

- Management and the Board of Trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the finance committee's effectiveness.

- The finance department should develop a formal cash flow model to forecast and monitor the school board's cash flow activities. This would allow the school board to optimize investment income and minimize interest costs.

- Management is encouraged to report to the board on the performance of the school board's investment activity.

- Management is encouraged to review the school board's banking relationship, and consider tendering these services to ensure competitive rates on key financial terms.

- Management is encouraged to document its practices to provide band councils with clear guidelines for the collection of tuition fees. This will ensure consistent practices and establish a standard framework for managing related accounts receivable.

- Management should evaluate the use of PCards for small dollar purchases, to reduce the volume of supplier invoices processed by accounting. It should perform a transaction/spend analysis of purchase orders (including standing purchase orders) to identify optimum threshold limits that will maintain budgetary control while managing the volume of invoices.

School Operations and Facilities Management

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

- Management reviews maintenance work orders and consults with school principals, maintenance and custodial staff to develop an annual maintenance plan. The plan is reviewed by the senior administration and presented to the Board for approval.

- The department has a comprehensive training program for its employees, including annual professional development days for the custodial and maintenance staff.

- The department uses a work-order system to schedule maintenance tasks across multiple sites. The work orders are reviewed centrally at the plant office, where they are prioritized and assigned to the various maintenance staff. The completed work orders are entered into the system by the department secretaries. This ensures a closed-loop system that minimizes outstanding workorders.

- Management maintains the ReCAPP database on a regular basis. Renewal and significant maintenance activity is reflected in the database and used for subsequent planning purposes.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual departmental plan that is linked with the school board system plan. This would align department priorities with the overall school board direction and enhance visibility of the system roadmap for staff.

- The school board should establish cleaning standards across its school sites to ensure consistency in service levels and monitoring.

- Management should consider establishing a three to five year preventative maintenance plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide a prioritized forecast of the school board's critical needs over the next several years.

- The school board should continue to investigate the cost-benefit of enhancing its work order system to streamline the management, dispatch, tracking, costing and reporting of facility renewal and general maintenance work orders.

- Management should establish a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates the measures and the tools to monitor and manage it. The plan could include various initiatives identified by external consultants, prioritized with certain criteria.

- The school board should encourage sharing of successful energy conservation initiatives across its multiple school sites. This could be accomplished with things like newsletters and incentives to increase the adoption of energy saving projects at all school sites.

- The school board should develop a system to track consumption, budget expenditures, and identify opportunities for further energy management savings.

- The school board should continue to seek consolidated billing in an electronic format from its utility providers. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption, and increase efficiency in the accounts payable department.

- Management should examine the benefits of coordinating its various health, safety, and security initiatives/activities. Management should create a single health, safety and security plan which would assist in prioritizing goals with assigned accountabilities and timelines for completion. The plan should be linked to the system plan and approved by the Board.

1. Background and Overview

1.1 School Board Profile and Structure

Rainy River District School Board (RRDSB) is responsible for English-language public education in the rural and urban communities in the area between Atikokan and Rainy River, approximately 320 km east to west and north to Nestor Falls. RRDSB currently serves approximately 1750 elementary and 1300 secondary students, who attend 12 elementary and three secondary schools respectively.[1] This includes the Mine Center District School Authority elementary school, which was recently amalgamated into RRDSB. Aboriginal students represent approximately 28 per cent of the student population.

The school board is experiencing declining enrolment, a pattern consistent with the majority of Ontario school boards. For 2008-09, elementary enrolment has declined by 6.15%, while secondary enrolment has remained stable. The school board has excess capacity of 43 per cent[2]. Declining enrolment impacts the school board's revenue, requiring management to routinely review its expenditure levels in all areas of operations.

The school board recently completed an accommodation review process to consolidate its infrastructure. The review committee recommended amalgamation of two schools. The school board is now initiating the tendering process.

Figure 1 identifies the membership of the senior administration team.
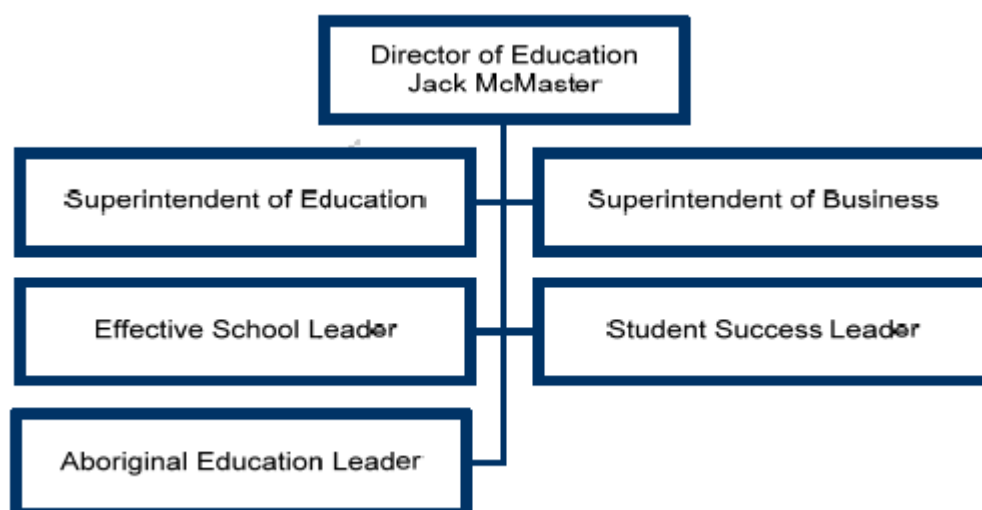
1.2 Key Priorities of the School Board

The school board's mission is "to empower all students to dream of the possibilities, to believe in themselves and to achieve."

The school board's belief statement maintains that, "The Rainy River District School Board believes the strength of our past and unity in our present will guide our future." The board believes in, "…excellence, partnerships, safe environment, staff development, equity, and positive communication..."

The approach to strategic planning by the school board identifies the following multi-year goals, based upon the concept of Seven Correlates of Highly Effective Schools.:

- To maximize every student's opportunity to succeed to the highest level.

    o Correlate: Opportunity to Learn

- To communicate our shared mission statement in all of our schools and communities, and to ensure actions at all levels reflect the mission statement.

    o Correlate: Clear and Focused Mission

- To provide a safe environment where all students, community members and staff feel welcome and eager to learn and work.

    o Correlate: Safe and Orderly Environment

- To strengthen communication with parents and the community to actively encourage their meaningful involvement with the teaching and learning of children.

    o Correlate: Positive Home School Relations

- To strengthen consistent practices for monitoring, assessing, and reporting student progress to ensure student and school improvement.

    o Correlate: Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

- To develop a positive learning and teaching environment where all students, staff, parents and community members collaborate to improve individual student achievement to the maximum potential.

    o Correlate: Climate of High Expectations

- To enhance staff, student and parent leadership development for sustainability of current and new leaders, recognizing that leadership is an action and not a position.

  o Correlate: *Leadership*

The System Plan (or Board Improvement Plan) for 2008-09 uses these goals to create specific actions, assign timelines, and designate leads to ensure accountability and success in academic areas. The system plan is supplemented with a set of smart goals as indicators of success. This plan should be expanded to address the non-academic functions of the school board. The system plan is then adopted and customized by each school into school improvement plans (SIP) with specific strategies to achieve the goals at each school.

1.3 Student Achievement

The Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) achievement results for 2007-08 have improved since 2003-04, with the exception Grade 6 mathematics. Grade 3 Reading declined over the previous year, but remained consistent with the provincial results. Grade 3 writing results have also improves, but remained slightly below the provincial results. Grade 3 mathematic results have improved and are slightly above the provincial results.

The school board is working towards the provincial target of 75 per cent of students reaching the provincial average by 2011 in Grade 6 reading, writing, and mathematics. Both Grade 6 reading and writing results improved over the previous year, although writing is below the provincial results. Grade 6 mathematics is declining and below the provincial results.

Grade 9 mathematics assessment shows an increase in both the academic and applied programs. Since 2002-2003, the results for students enrolled in the applied program have improved by 17 per cent, while students in the academic program showed an improvement of 24 per cent. The 2007-2008 Grade 9 academic assessment results earned Fort Frances High School a 'Success Story' acknowledgement from the EQAO.

In 2008-2009, two groups of junior teachers within the school board were assigned to focus their attention on classroom activity, on co-teaching and learning, and on sharing best practices to improve instruction and student performance.

At the secondary level, the 2007-2008 results for the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) indicate that the district's students continue to perform well in the areas of reading and writing. 83 per cent of students passed both components of the assessment in comparison to the provincial success rate of 84 per cent.

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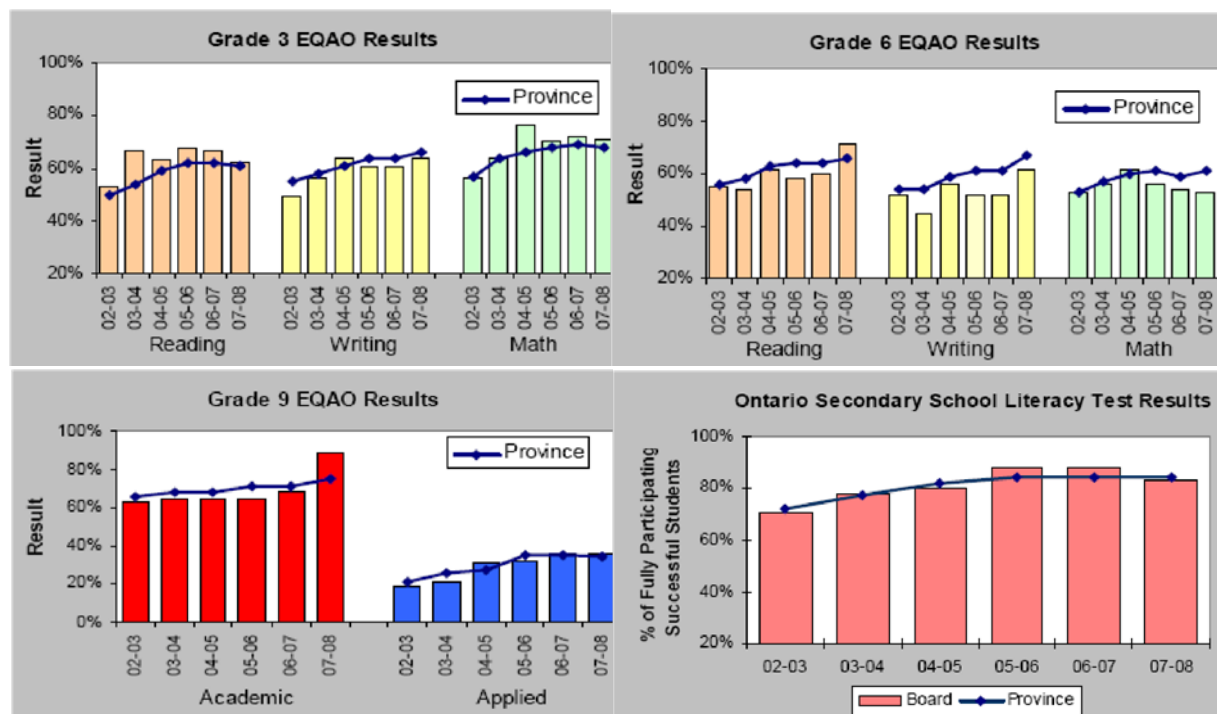
1.4 Fiscal Overview

The school board has consistently presented a balanced budget to the Ministry. It ended the August 2008 year with a surplus of $2.6 million, which was transferred to the working funds reserve.

The school board has submitted a budget of $39.9 million for the 2008-09 academic year. The school board's grant allocation and subsequent expenditure levels are driven directly from enrolment that has been projected to decrease in the elementary panel by 6.15 per cent from 2007-08, while expecting to stay constant in the secondary panel.

The following tables provide a fiscal overview of the Board:

Summary Financial Data (Revenues)

Revenues	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
Legislative Grants	$26,366,064	$27,247,477	$28,180,494
Local taxation	$5,691,190	$5,567,679	$5,602,530
Board Revenues	$5,252,866	$5,222,482	$4,332,732

Revenues	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
Other Operating & capital Grants	$1,265,685	$935,268	$1,754,851
Total Revenues (Schedule 9)	**$38,575,805**	**$38,972,906**	**$39,870,607**

Summary Financial Data (Expenditure)

Expenditures	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
Operating expenditures	$34,875,077	$34,317,422	$37,129,189
Capital expenditures - Before transfers from reserves	$2,442,517	$3,398,887	$2,767,388
Transfer to (from) Reserves	$1,258,211	$1,256,597	-$25,971
Total Expenditures	**$38,575,805**	**$38,972,906**	**$39,870,606**
In-year Surplus (Deficit)	**$0**	**$0**	**$0**

School Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues	2005-06 Financial Statements	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Revised Estimates
Reserve for Working Funds	$2,788,247	$4,121,141	$4,176,141
Computer/Mentoring/Transportation	$50,615	$25,970	$0
Professional Development Reserve	$18,146	$23,467	$23,967
LH Reserve	$361,255	$375,351	$389,351
Capital Reserve	$1,645,117	$1,667,901	$1,690,901
Total Reserve Funds (Schedule 5)	**$4,863,380**	**$6,213,830**	**$6,280,360**
Reserve for Classroom Expenditures	$3,498,013	$3,487,657	$3,536,657
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve-School Buildings	$120,793	$132,553	$134,453
MECR/ BECR Reserve	$17,835	$18,082	$18,332
Total Deferred Revenues (Schedule5.1)	**$3,636,641**	**$3,638,292**	**$3,689,442**
Total Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues	**$8,500,021**	**$9,852,122**	**$9,969,802**

1.5 Key School Board Statistics

The following table highlights key statistics for the school board. Of note is the decreasing enrolment trend, the increasing spending in special education and employee benefits, and the geographic dispersion of the school board. These statistics illustrate a challenging operating environment for the school board.

Day School Enrolment

Day School Enrolment	2002-03 Actual	2007-08 Rev. Estimates
Elementary Day School ADE	1,632	1,409
Secondary Day School ADE	1,243	1,125
Total Day School Enrolment	**2,874**	**2,534**

Primary Class Size

Primary Class Size	2003-04	2007-08
% of Classes Less Than 20	54%	93%
% of Classes Less Than 23	90%	100%
Average Class Size - Jr/Inter	25.31	24.29
% of 3/4 Classes 23 & Under	67%	100%
% of Combined Classes	38%	57%

Staffing

Staffing	2003-04	2007-08
School Based Teachers	193	206
Teacher Assistants	49	80
Other Student Support	11	26
School Administration	15	17
School Clerical	16	18
School Operations	38	36
Other Non-Classroom	21	22
Total Staffing	**342**	**404**
Teacher - Pupil Ratio	**1:15**	**1:12**

Staffing	2003-04	2007-08
FTE Staff per 1,000 Pupils (ADE)[3]	119.1	159.3
Total Salary & Benefits as % of Net Operating Expenditures	87.7%	91.2%

Special Education

Special Education	2003-04	2007-08
Special Education Incremental Expenditures	$3,023,752	$4,252,863
Special Education Allocation	$2,663,065	$3,942,667
Spending above Allocation (Reserve)	$360,687	$310,196

School Utilization

School Utilization	2003-04	2007-08
Number of schools	17	14
Total Enrolment (ADE)	2,874	2,534
School Capacity (Spaces)	4,677	4,296
School Utilization	61.5%	59.0%
Board Area (Km[2])	10,054	10,054
Number of Trustees	7	7

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

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 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;

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

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

This section provides a summary of the findings and recommendations of our assessment of the board's adoption of the leading practices relating to the governance and board administration. Our findings are a result of our review of the data provided by the board and our field work, which included interviews with the Chair, the Director and senior staff of the 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 between the board of trustees and the director of education. The board has established clearly defined duties and responsibilities to support on effective working relationship.	Yes

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

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

Decision Making Processes

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management have established appropriate processes for decision making to address student achievement targets and operational performance.	Yes
The board of trustees and management have appropriate processes for the establishment and regular maintenance of policies for the efficient and effective operation of the board. Policies are posted on the board's web site.	Yes

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The organizational structure has clearly defined organizational units that delineate roles and responsibilities, minimize administrative costs and ensure effective and efficient operation.	Yes
The director has established a formal succession plan to manage retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.	No
A departmental organization chart (supplemented with a directory of key staff contact information) is publicly available on the board's web site.	Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis and through a variety of 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 school board has adopted a governance structure that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the board of trustees and the administration. The senior administration is composed of the Director of Education, Superintendent of Education, Superintendent of Business, Effective School Leader, Student Success Leader and Aboriginal Student Leader. The governance structure is supported by a board of seven experienced trustees, two of whom have served for four terms or more. The current chair has been a trustee for over 20 years. The trustees are appointed for a four-year term with annual election of the chair and the vice-chair. In addition, a student trustee is elected to serve on the board of trustees for a one-year term.

The Board of Trustees sets and maintains policy, while the Director of Education is responsible for its implementation. The Senior Administration Team develops and implements operating plans and procedures consistent with the school board's key goals of improving student success. The by-laws govern the business of the Board and its committees and define the roles and responsibilities of the Chair and the Vice-chair. The Board has adopted "Robert's Rules of Order" by General Henry M. Robert as the reference guide for conducting the business of the Board.

The trustees attend training sessions offered by the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA). In addition, the chair organizes workshops to introduce new trustees to school administration, operational issues, roles and responsibilities. The more experienced trustees spend time training, mentoring and supporting new trustees.

The Board recognizes that the committee structure is an effective process for the identification and close study of issues for its consideration. The Board of Trustees has five standing committees: Executive Committee, Policy Committee, Finance/Property Committee, Transportation Committee and Special Education Advisory Committee.

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

The school board has developed a mission statement "Empowering all students to dream of the possibilities, to believe in themselves and to achieve" that is based on input from the trustees, staff, school councils, and the community. The mission statement has been in place for several years.

The School Board's System Plan (or Annual Board Improvement Plan) is the mechanism used by the school board to further its mission, vision and beliefs through the use of consistent goals and implementation strategies. The current plan includes the *Seven Correlates of Effective Schools,* which aim to provide the best possible learning environment for all students. These correlates are:

- A Clear and Focused Mission

- High Expectations for Success

- Instructional Leadership

- Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress

- Opportunity to Learn

- Safe and Orderly Environment

- Positive Home & School Relations

An annual planning retreat is held with the trustees and administration, with an agenda that focuses on student achievement and implementation strategies of the seven correlates.

The 2008-09 System Plan identifies specific actions, assigned timelines, and designated leads to ensure implementation accountability and success of the academic

programs. The system plan is supplemented with a set of "smart" goals as indicators of success.

Over the last three years, the Board has been using annual goals in a system plan that is based on the seven correlates. Strategic planning focuses on a long-term direction and sets out what must be done in order to achieve long-term objectives and goals. The Board has not extended the system plan beyond one year.

However, the school board has made an effort to ensure that there is alignment between the objectives identified in the school improvement plans (SIP) and the current system plan. Once the system plan is adopted, it is customized by each school into a school improvement plan (SIP) that sets out specific strategies to achieve the goals at each school.

Management updates the Board of Trustees on the progress made against the system plan twice during the academic year. The updates provide an opportunity for internal reflection at the senior administration level.

While the school board has aligned the school improvement plans with the system plan, management has not aligned its annual departmental plans to demonstrate specific alignment between business functions (e.g. human resources, finance, facilities management) and the overall system plan. An opportunity exists to include the annual plans for the business functions within the board system plan.

Decision-Making Process

The Board has established procedural by-laws that were last reviewed in September 2008. These by-laws set guidelines for the trustees and the staff for conducting the business meetings of the Board and its committees.

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

Trustees meet at regular board meetings monthly with the exception of July and August, when the Board meets at the call of the Chair in consultation with the Director. The notice of meeting, agenda and other supporting material is provided to the Trustees 72 hours ahead of the meeting. The notice of the meeting is provided to the local media representatives at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting along with the meeting agenda.

The executive committee or the Board Planning Team (BPT) consisting of the Chair, Vice-chair and the Director develops the agenda for regular Board meetings. The

committee organizes the business of the Board, reviews the dates of meetings and the length of agendas. The committee meets on a monthly basis or as required, to review the agenda prior to the Board meeting and to discuss other significant educational issues. Trustees wishing to have matters considered by the Board submit requests to the Chair or through the Director to the Chair. The Chair decides on agenda items and all refusals are communicated in writing. The agenda setting by the BPT ensures that Board of Trustees meetings are run efficiently and that the agenda covers the key priorities of the Board.

In addition, the System Planning Team (SPT) consisting of the senior administration, operational managers and a principal representative meets twice every month to identify agenda items for Board meetings. After the second SPT meeting, the Director meets with the BPT to refine and finalize the agenda. The SPT also plans the board leadership team (BLT) meetings, with the school administrators and reviews system items for decision making.

The standing committees consider issues and items initially tabled with the Board and then referred by the Board to the standing committees. The standing committees report back to the Board with recommendations for final action which are subject to the approval of the Board and may be amended, accepted or rejected by the Board. A member of the senior administration is assigned to each standing committee.

In accordance with the Education Act, a school board may establish sub-committees composed of members of the Board to make recommendations to the Board of Trustees in respect of education, finance, personnel and property. In addition, the Board may constitute sub-committees according to Ministry of Education mandate or other reasons.

Although it is not without precedent, the Rainy River Finance Committee is constituted as a "committee of the whole". This approach may not leverage the specific expertise and experience that some trustees may have, nor is it consistent with the practice of delegating authority to a school board sub-committee.

The school board should consider reexamining the composition and mandate of its subcommittees to ensure that they continue to effectively and efficiently meet the needs and objectives of the Board.

The school board has established a set of policies (available on its website) that provide a framework for decision-making and guidelines for the effective operation of the Board. The policy committee consists of the Director, the HR Manager, a trustee representative, and a principal representative. The committee meets monthly to review new and existing policies which provide a framework for decision-making and guidelines for the effective operation of the system.

The Board has developed a policy that sets out the guidelines and process for policy development to ensure thoroughness and consistency in approach, formulation and format. The model suggests a nine-step process that starts at identification of issues for policy development followed by review by the Director, draft policy development, review by the policy committee, preliminary Board approval, stakeholder review of policy before final Board approval. The approval is followed by policy implementation and establishment of a subsequent policy review date. It was noted that some policies include detailed implementation frameworks and procedural guidelines. To that end, the Board should consider reviewing its policies to segregate policy guidelines from procedural details.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The school board is governed by a group of seven trustees, representing communities from across the district, who are elected for a four-year term. The current term extends to 2010 and membership includes new trustees along with trustees who are on their fifth term. A student trustee also represents the interests of the students at the Board level.

The organization of the school board's administrative team is well founded and operating effectively. School board operations are managed by the Director along with a team of senior administrators comprising the Superintendent of Education, Aboriginal education leader, student success leader, effective schools leader, and Superintendent of Business. The school board's organization chart is available online and is also supplemented with a portfolio-based organization chart that outlines functional responsibilities.

The Senior Administration Team manages succession planning by informally identifying potential candidates for key positions. A representative from the principal group (rotated annually) represents the group at the SPT. The experience and exposure gained by the principal is seen by the school board as good training for potential candidates for management positions.

The school board participated in the Ministry led principal/vice-principal mentoring pilot project, to develop organic leaders and facilitate administrators' transitions into new roles. The school board has also provided Stephen Covey Training seminars to senior staff, principals and school secretaries to improve individual management and leadership skills. Given the small number of staff and administration's limited capacity to sustain the loss of key members, the school board should continue its efforts to develop and groom candidates, but also develop a more formal succession plan.

Stakeholder Engagement

Management is committed to stakeholder engagement, as shown by its system goal to strengthen communication with parents and community. To that end, the school board

has a dedicated communications officer to support effective two-way communication among all stakeholders. Various communication channels such as press releases, website postings, and public consultations keep key stakeholders engaged through the year. Management also relies on local media (radio and newspaper) to disseminate information to the community. The school board has also engaged parents, though the implementation of a password protected website that enables them to review their children's attendance, test scores and course credits.

The school board's external newsletter, *Connecting with the Community,* is distributed through district newspapers to extend its reach to community members. The school board uses its public website to disseminate information relating to its policies, the Director's report, Board meeting agendas and minutes, and financial reports to external constituent groups. Management and the Board solicit stakeholder input during the budget development process, policy development process, accommodation reviews and the building of new schools.

In addition to the local community and school councils, the school board is also engaging the aboriginal community through the Aboriginal Student Leader, who facilitates discussion with the Native bands and councils

Members of the Senior Administration Team are actively involved at various provincial forums to learn and share best practices from across the sector. Management noted that the remote location of the school board prevents it from further engagement at the provincial level.

Recommendations:

- The board of trustees, in conjunction with the Director, should develop a multiyear strategic plan that defines key objectives, timelines and performance measures for the entire system. This would provide an over-arching framework for the school board to develop its annual system plan, set the context for school and departmental plans, and allow the Director to report on the achievement of specific outcomes.

- The Board should consider consolidating the business functions (such as HR, finance and facilities) into the board system plan. This will enable the departments to link their respective operational plans to the annual plan, and align operational goals with an overarching strategic direction.

- The Board should establish a formal succession plan to manage the retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.

3. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation – Findings and Recommendations
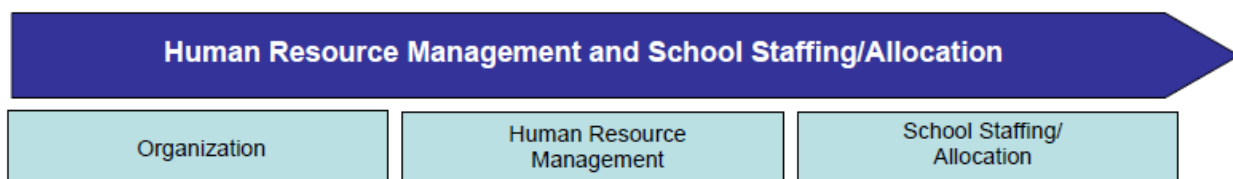
Effective management of human resources ensures an adequate number of qualified staff throughout the organization can perform their prescribed duties, Policies and procedures to develop staff are in place, through performance appraisals, professional development and support services. Staff allocations 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 board's adoption of the leading practices under the processes identified above. All findings are a result of a review of the data provided by the board and on-site field work, which included interviews with all key HR staff, as well as follow-up and confirmation of information.

3.1 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 board's directions;

- Whether an annual plan setting out the goals and priorities and their alignment to the 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 improvement plan, accessible by key stakeholders. The plan incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities.	No

Organizational Structure and Accountability

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

Monitoring and Communication of Policies

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

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The HR department is driven by the following mission statement: 'We recruit, support, serve and celebrate all board employees in the promotion of student learning.'

The department has developed a 2008-09 departmental action plan that includes three broad goals with identified strategies, resources, a designated lead, and measures of success. The department provides a year-end annual report highlighting the progress made throughout the year and associated priorities for the following year.

Although HR Management and staff have developed a departmental plan, it is not linked with the school board's system plan. HR Management should consider developing an annual departmental plan with SMART goals that are aligned with the goals in the

school board system plan. This would align department priorities with an overall strategic plan, and provide staff with enhanced visibility of the system roadmap.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The HR department consists of an HR officer reporting to an HR manager, who reports directly to the Director. The school board contracts legal services to assist with labour negotiations and performance issues.

The department performs functions such as: maintaining employee profiles and administering employee benefits in SDS, as well as supporting labour relations. At the start of the academic year, the HR manager creates a calendar of tasks that is reviewed in weekly meetings with the staff.

Other roles, such as staff allocation and performance appraisals for the academic staff, are led by the Superintendent of Education, while the payroll function reports to the Finance Manager.

The current HR Manager was instrumental in developing the Board's first HR department 10 years ago and is an active participant in the Human Resources Network Northwest. All HR staff has appropriate qualifications and experience in the sector.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The HR department is the lead on monitoring and communicating policies, including those to ensure reference checks, background checks for new hires, recruitment, hiring and promotion, and teacher performance appraisals. HR policies are communicated to new employees during orientation.

Revised policies and non-compliance issues are discussed at Board Leadership Team meetings and highlighted by the Superintendent of Education and/or management to school administrators. The policies are available to the employees on the Board's website. Since the HR department is represented on the policy committee, staff are aware of new policies in the development and stakeholder consultation stages.

The department monitors compliance with its recruitment policies by actively participating in the recruitment of CUPE staff. For the academic staff, consistency and policy compliance is maintained with evaluation of the candidate by at least three independent members of the interview panel. However, there is limited representation or participation from the HR department in the interview process for academic positions. For better support of staff compliance with evaluation policies, the HR department should consider expanding the scope of its involvement in academic position interviews.

Recommendation:

- Management should develop an annual departmental plan that is linked with the school board system plan. This would align department priorities with the overall board direction and provide staff with better visibility of the system roadmap.

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

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

Labour Relations

Leading Practices – Human 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

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

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

Management of HR and Payroll Data

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

Management of Board's Benefit Plans

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR Management periodically conducts independent compliance audits of the board's insurance carrier to ensure adherence to the benefit plans terms and conditions.	Yes

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Employee data is automatically synchronized among the board and external carriers such as TPP, OMERS and the board's benefit provider(s).	Yes
Policies and procedures ensure the board's benefit plans are managed appropriately.	Yes

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

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

Staff Recruitment

The school board's policy on interviews and appointments was last reviewed in 2005. Vacancies and redundancies for academic staff are determined in a collaborative process among the school administrators and Superintendent of Education, based on enrolment data and available funding for positions. This information is reviewed along with anticipated succession and retirements to determine the net number of available positions.

Principals send in staff requisitions to HR identifying vacant positions and associated job requirements. Vacant teacher's positions are advertised in local district news papers, posted on the public website, and emailed to candidates. HR staff has developed a standard information package that is distributed during recruiting events at local universities and colleges.

While candidates are drawn from all regions of Ontario, the most successful hires have been from northwestern Ontario. Past experience suggests that a focused recruitment effort in the northwest has helped to ensure continuity and stability of staffing levels. Historically, the majority of hires from other regions have not stayed with the school board for more than a year or two. These employees often note that personal challenges in adapting to the remote region are one of the key reasons for leaving the school board.

Applications are reviewed by principals to develop a list of potential candidates to be considered for interviews, while HR coordinates interview logistics. When the hiring cycle is complete, the hiring manager completes the new hire form and returns it to the

HR department for input in the SDS system. A similar process is followed for hiring within other staff groups such as education support personnel and CUPE staff.

To ensure compliance with the interview process and minimize grievances, HR participates in the interview panel for the recruitment of custodians. These interviews are followed by debriefing sessions for unsuccessful candidates, with support from a representative from the HR Department.

Management organizes orientation sessions for new staff that cover issues such as health and safety. A standard orientation package containing health, safety, benefits, and other information has been developed for the various staff groups, including academic staff, education assistants and custodians to provide information to the selected candidates. The new hires must submit a criminal background check before the orientation session.

Labour Relations

The collective agreements are administered by separate labour-negotiation committees. The school board has four labour negotiation committees for its contract and occasional teachers in the elementary and secondary panel. The administrative representation at these committees includes the Director, Manager of Human Resources and the Superintendent of Education. In addition, the school board has also formed labournegotiation committees with CUPE staff and education assistants. Meetings are held monthly to discuss grievances and resolve emerging issues before they evolve into formal grievances. Informal grievances are reviewed at schools by principals. Formal grievances are managed through the central HR office by the HR Manager. Management noted a collegial relationship with all its bargaining agents.

Management does not provide formal training to its school administrators for managing labour relations. However, it was noted that, as required, informal discussions among principals, the Superintendent of Education and the HR Manager provide the necessary support.

Before any negotiation, management gathers labour relations information from coterminous boards and provincial forums. Negotiations are led by a lawyer hired by the school board, with support from the HR manager, Superintendent of Business and a representative from the principals group. School administrators are provided with the memo of settlements after negotiations are complete, and receive a summary of any material changes in the agreements during BLT meetings.

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

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 evaluated twice during their first 12 months with RRDSB. Once new teachers have completed the new teacher induction program (NTIP) within the first 24 months, they are placed on a five-year evaluation cycle. In addition to the five-year cycle, a principal or Superintendent can trigger a supplemental teacher performance appraisal (TPA) as required.

Each year, HR staff identifies teachers that are scheduled for evaluation and notify the school principal. Principals confirm the list and may add other teachers if circumstances warrant. Teachers who move from the new to the experienced teacher appraisal process must develop an annual learning plan that includes professional growth goals, a proposed action plan and timelines for achieving the objectives. As directed by the Ministry, the school board is currently developing a performance appraisal system for the principals group, along the same lines as the TPA.

According to the Board's policy, the Director is evaluated by the board of trustees every two years, on providing professional feedback, ensuring effective leadership and fostering a spirit of trust and cooperation between the Board and management.

The job performance of non-academic staff is evaluated in the probationary term for new support staff, and every five years for permanent staff. The school board has a procedure that outlines the performance appraisal of non-academic staff. The procedure details the responsibilities along with timelines for the supervisor, employee and HR. The school board has standard templates for performance appraisals that are completed and sent to the HR department for recording in the SDS system. In addition to the five-year cycle, *ad hoc* reviews may also be conducted as warranted by circumstances.

The school board practices a progressive disciplinary process that includes dialogue with both the employee and with union representation. Any disciplinary issue of employees is managed by the school principal and delivered at an individual level. In cases of non-satisfactory performance of academic staff, the principal discusses the matter with the Superintendent of Education. Subsequent dialogue may occur with the teacher, in the presence of a union representative. Management tracks progress, produces appropriate documentation and tracks correspondence to ensure a proper paper trail. Management also consults with its lawyers to obtain expert advice and learn from similar experience elsewhere.

The school board has reported that its progressive disciplinary process is working well to support the expected staff competencies and behaviors. However, the school board is encouraged to formally document and communicate the process to its entire staff, to ensure that there is a consistent understanding between management and all employee groups. A formal policy and set of procedures will further strengthen the issue

management process, by providing a baseline against which issues may be examined and evaluated before they are escalated for arbitration.

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

The school board has agreements in place to ensure that teachers report their absence by calling their immediate supervisor or principal. Administrative staff at the school initiate an automated call-out system to supply teachers. The education assistants and CUPE staff are required to notify absence to both their supervisor and the central dispatch line. This practice of speaking to what is commonly referred to as a live "sentinel" was noted by the school board as having a positive effect on reducing absenteeism.

A daily absence report that also includes reason for absence is completed by schools and forwarded to the central board office, where it is recorded in the SDS system. The data is automatically rolled-up by the SDS system monthly to process accruals.

The attendance management module in SDS also allows trained principals and managers to access and monitor live school-based data and trends on employee attendance. Attendance management reports are prepared each year during the budget development process. These are provided to the principals with a summary of the accrual balances for all employees for each school year.

The HR manager works directly with an employee's immediate supervisor and external experts (e.g. physiotherapists and ergonomic experts) to develop a customized 'return to work' plan. The Board has developed a policy to and a procedure to support modified work programs. In addition, management has developed informational brochures and templates that help guide employees as they enter the program starting with medical consultations.

HR liaises with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), if required, and maintains a database of information on the number and type of employee workplace accidents/illnesses. The school board notes that the consistent management and coordination of the return to work program has increased satisfaction of those staff transitioning back to work.

The board has not developed or implemented a formal attendance management program and policy to increase staff attendance. Management should develop a comprehensive attendance management program to address specific absenteeism. This important initiative will provide them with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, by engaging in positive reinforcement to employees and adopting standardized practices across all employee groups.

Management of HR and Payroll Data

The department utilizes the SDS system to manage employee records and is accountable for maintaining HR data such as employee accruals related to attendance, sick leave, vacation, float and personal leave days. Every employee hired by the school board is set up in the system, and information is validated by the employee before and after orientation.

The payroll function resides with the finance department and reports to the Superintendent of Business. This division of duties ensures segregation between the HR and payroll functions. The separate SDS modules for HR and payroll ensure the segregation of data at the board level. Updates to personnel records for pay and benefit changes, or other compensation adjustments, are performed by authorized staff only. Payroll deposits are directed to employee bank accounts through electronic funds transfer (EFT).

Management has developed effective processes to ensure that teacher qualifications and experience are formally tracked and updated. The pay grids are set up in the payroll module and revised in accordance with the collective agreements.

Teaching positions are re-classified with input from the Ontario Secondary Schools Teachers Federation (OSSTF) and the Qualification Evaluation Council of Ontario (QECO). Category changes for academic staff are initiated by the employee and validated by the HR department and the Superintendent before having any payroll impact. Qualification and experience scatter grams are submitted to the Ministry, along with budget and revised estimates.

Management of the Board's Benefit Plans

The Board offers benefit plans to all permanent employees. The plan is managed by a third-party insurance carrier through an administrative service only (ASO) arrangement. Benefit committees with representation from employee groups have been established to select a menu of benefits offerings and allow employees to customize their benefit packages.

Management also hires an external consultant to annually review the benefit plan provided by the insurance carrier and ensure accuracy of claims paid. The consultant completes the analysis of benefits usage and compiles trends that are reported back to the management. The analysis includes cost per employee for the various benefit plans, benchmarked against other boards.

The external consultant negotiates with the insurance carrier on behalf of the school board, and advises management on whether it should continue the plan with their

insurance carrier. The school board has been with its current insurance carrier for more than 10 years.

The external consultant provides management with annual reports that outline benefits usage and demographics. However, no formal in-year reports are produced to track benefits cost. Management should consider in-year reporting on benefit claims to monitor costs.

HR staff perform a monthly reconciliation of the employee, premium and pay-out information provided by the carrier, compared with the information tracked in SDS. This provides the board with the information necessary to audit carrier compliance with the terms and conditions of the benefits plan. Any change in employee benefit status as recorded in the SDS system and with the carrier is followed by a letter to the employee advising them of the change.

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

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

The HR department and school board are committed to staff development. The school board provides various professional development workshops for academic and nonacademic staff which are managed centrally at the school board office.

HR creates an annual calendar of professional development activity for all staff groups.

Professional learning communities meet monthly to review employee needs, curriculum, participation and budget. Training sessions and participation in conferences is encouraged for the principals and vice-principals. The school board has maintained these staff development budgets as a priority.

The school board received funding during the 2007-08 academic year from the Ministry to pilot the Principal/Vice-Principal Mentoring Project. The project provided two formal mentor/coaching training sessions for all principals and vice-principals. Its goal was to enhance leadership competencies in school administrators and support leadership development through successful coaching and mentoring.

Management has conducted a leadership survey across all of its employee groups in 2008 for feedback on policies and initiatives related to professional development and leadership...

Management does not conduct confidential exit interviews for staff. Informal conversations with immediate supervisors sometimes include the reason for leaving.

Recommendations:

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

- Management should document its practice of progressive disciplinary action, to ensure clear communication to all employees.

- Management should develop a plan for conducting formal exit interviews on a consistent basis. Like staff surveys, these interviews will provide input for HR policy and process and program improvement.

3.3   School Staffing/Allocation

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

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

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

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

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

Planning and Processes for Annual Staff Allocation

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

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

Leading Practices – School Staffing/Allocation	Evidence of Adoption?
Systems are in place and accessible by both HR and Finance staff to establish and track an approved level of staff.	Yes
Systems and processes monitor adherence to key Ministry and board policy parameters, such as: class size, prep time, collective agreement requirements and other board directions.	Yes
Management periodically reports on the actual allocation of staff, compared to the original approved allocation plan and budget (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
Plan for student support services and staffing are based on student-needs analysis.	Yes

Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

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

Planning and Processes for Annual Staffing and Allocation

The school board does not have a formal policy on annual staffing and allocations. There are administrative procedures that define the responsibilities of the principals, Superintendent of Education, HR manager, and Superintendent of Business in recruiting teachers and educational support staff within approved staffing allocations. The procedures require a check against the budget and staff allocations before starting the recruitment process.

The Superintendent of Business provides detailed charts with the full time equivalent (FTE) staffing for elementary and secondary panel based on enrolment and budget allocation. The FTE complement is derived based on average cost of a teacher, including salary and benefits that has been rolled up on the qualification and experience grid.

The proposed staff allocation for all staff groups is presented to the Board for approval during the budget deliberations.

The school board should formally document how the annual staffing and allocations are determined, to supplement the "draft" administrative procedures on staffing. A formal policy and procedure would add transparency to the decision-making process.

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

Staffing levels are consistently monitored by the central board office, in collaboration with school administrators. Additional staffing after September is compared to budget based on projected enrolment and actual enrolment on October 31 and March 31.

The department uses their HR system to monitor and report on current and future staffing allocations, as well as the variances between actual and approved staffing. The system provides effective date position analysis, which allows the department to review staffing allocation for any period of time. Compliance reports are produced through the system during the year, to report to management on the actual staffing complement compared to the approved allocation. Staffing allocation is also reviewed in comparison to budget during two key financial reporting periods - once in November while preparing revised estimates and once in January while developing the next year's budget. Full comparisons of FTE and grid placements are done and exceptions are reported to the appropriate department or the Superintendent for follow-up.

Personnel reports that highlight changes in the staffing complement are approved by the trustees in regular Board meetings. New staff or staff returning to the school board from an extended absence must schedule a meeting and report in person to the HR department in the central board office before returning to their position.

Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

The school board compares its staffing costs with similar-sized boards though the negotiation process of collective agreements. The HR manager attends provincial negotiation forums and stays updated with the negotiation trends at other boards through shared online resources, such as the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) portal and Northern Ontario Education Leaders (NOEL) forum. The school board also reviews and analyzes compensation and staff cost data supplied by the Ministry of Education for both unionized and non-unionized positions.

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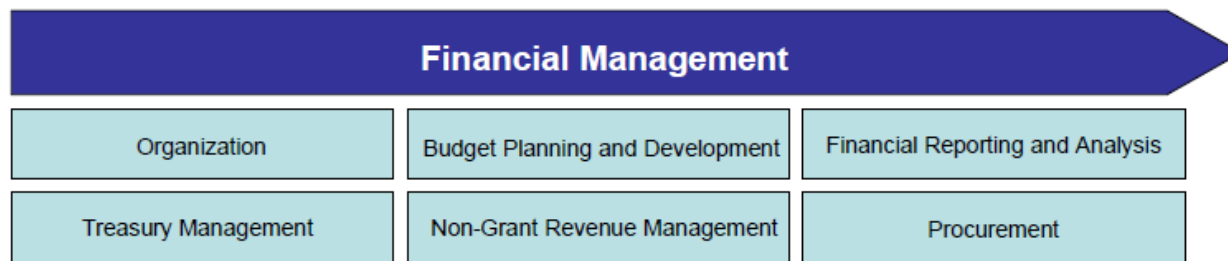
The financial management of the school board contributes to the efficient and effective use of fiscal resources. Financial management ensures that the annual budget is developed within the Ministry's allocation and is aligned with student achievement targets, and that appropriate financial policies and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

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

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

4.1 Finance Organization

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

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

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

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

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

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

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

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

Organization Structure and Accountability

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

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

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

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

In 2007-08 the finance department developed an action plan with five goals:

a) Improve efficiency and delivery of financial data

b) Improve financial management of school funds

c) Implement policy and procedure on access to board's charity number for grant applications for student programming

d) Improve communications of Transportation Consortia to public

e) Improve transportation delivery services

The Superintendent of Business meets with the staff and consults with the Director to discuss the action plan. The document also includes responsibilities, timelines and indicators of success, but is not linked to the system plan.

Management should consider linking the annual departmental plan with the board system plan. This would align department priorities with the overall strategic plan and provide staff with visibility towards the system roadmap

The plan is reviewed periodically by the senior administration team. The Superintendent also meets with the Director for an informal annual review of goals and progress made.

Organization Structure and Accountability

The Superintendent of Business is responsible for the finance department. Eight staff carry out financial services, transportation services, enrolment, budget, payroll and procurement functions, reporting to the superintendent.

The roles and responsibilities of the department staff are clearly outlined in a business organization chart and documented in job descriptions for the staff. Department staff have appropriate financial designations or relevant experience to perform their roles.

Monitoring and Communication of Policies

The department maintains 20 policies covering various aspects of finance and transportation. The policies cover topics such as purchasing, contracted services, board credit cards, travel expense, and professional development. These policies are posted on the school board's website.

The policies are drafted by the finance staff and reviewed by the finance committee before being presented to the school board's policy committee for review. After initial review by the board of trustees, the policy is distributed for stakeholder review prior to final approval of the Board. The stakeholder groups selected for providing feedback depend on the nature of the policy. New policies are brought forward through the system planning team (SPT) and are also disseminated at monthly BLT meetings to the school administrators. These policies are supplemented by procedures and guidelines.

New procedures are developed by the Superintendent of Business, with input from the SPT and accounting staff. Finance staff provides training to school administrators and secretaries to manage school-generated funds in orientation sessions and at professional development days.

Recommendation:

- The Finance department should develop a plan that is clearly aligned with the objectives in the board system plan. This would provide management and staff with the visibility necessary to track and manage departmental progress against the school board's goals.

4.2   Budget Planning and Development

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

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

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

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

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

Annual Budget Development Process

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

Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development

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

Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies

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

Annual Budget Development Process

The annual budget process is transparent, clearly communicated, well documented and incorporates input from all key stakeholders. The Board has a policy on its budget process that was last reviewed in January 2008. The budget process extends from January to June every year. Management prepares an annual preliminary budget that is presented to the finance committee for consideration, and subsequently presented to the Board for final approval.

The finance committee membership includes all trustees, providing an opportunity for their involvement in school board finances and allowing them to make recommendations for operational budget allocation. In line with the observation in the Governance section of this report, the school board should reexamine the composition and mandate of its Finance Committee to ensure it is meeting the needs and objectives of the Board.

The budget process starts with enrolment projections provided by the principals. These estimates are fairly reliable given the size of the communities. The Superintendent of Business reviews these numbers against historical trends and local economic factors. The enrolment projections are then used to determine the estimated revenue base.

In January, the finance committee, in consultation with administration, formulates guidelines for the budget managers (i.e., superintendents, principals and business managers). Input sessions are held throughout the district to gather input from stakeholders.

Management then reviews the budget expenditure data collected to date and identifies possible items to recommend to the finance committee that reflect the priorities of the Board and meet the needs of the students.

In February, forms are sent to the budget managers, along with guidelines. Completed forms are returned by the end of February and budget managers collaborate with the Superintendent of Business to arrive at their respective department budgets, based on new or discontinued initiatives and changes in cost factors.

Finance prepares revenue estimates as soon as they receive funding information on the Grants for Student Needs (GSN). The senior administration team reviews the system goals and prioritizes actions based on available revenue. The expenditure and revenue estimates are incorporated into a preliminary global budget.

Trustees receive a detailed budget workbook that includes the prior year budget, actual expenditures, variances and preliminary estimates for the current year. The workbook provides account-by-account details sorted according to the Ministry-established funding structure or the board-determined envelope. The finance committee considers the budget recommendations presented by the administration to balance the existing pressures against enhancements, and to meet academic and operational objectives.

The finance committee then brings forward the proposed budget to a regular Board meeting for final approval. The final budget is approved by the Board and submitted to the Ministry of Education.

Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development

Each December the principal of each school is responsible for assisting the Superintendent of Business in projecting the next year's enrolment. The Superintendent of Business compares the data submitted by elementary school principals against historical trends and HR staff enters these enrolment forecasts into a student information system. JK enrolments are projected by reviewing local birth rates and average enrolment over past five years.

The proposed staff allocation for secondary schools is developed in consultation with principals and is based on projected enrolment for each school, the number of option sheets received from each school, and the course selection made by students (i.e. credit counts).

Enrolment projections are then shared with the senior administration for budgeting and programming. In March of each year, the schools update the projections for the Superintendent of Business.

The estimated GSN revenue base is combined with the qualifications and experience scatter grams and anticipated changes to salaries to arrive at a staffing complement that is reflected in the budget document. A formal staffing plan/chart is developed as part of the expenditure forecast by the Superintendent of Education responsible for elementary and secondary schools in collaboration with principals and HR manager.

Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The key risk faced by the school board is the relationship between enrolment and grant revenue. The finance department mitigates the risk of over spending by closely monitoring forecasted versus actual enrolments. Administration manages enrolment risk by closely monitoring the local economy and developing conservative staffing estimates to ensure positive variance between actual and estimated staffing numbers. The school board's system of estimating enrolment has a 98.5 per cent accuracy rate.

Management ensures that the final budget incorporates all known cost changes, and that it is balanced against Ministry grants. Potential risks are highlighted in the cover letter accompanying the budget workbook that is distributed to all trustees. The Superintendent of Business also builds in a modest contingency, to assist with unanticipated in-year costs.

Trustees are advised if management has to manage risk through cost reduction measures. Trustees are also advised of the accumulated reserve impacts and discussions are held on potential draw down on reserves for immediate or future capital plans.

The risks of over-spending are mitigated through the procurement and budgeting controls of the current financial system, which has commitment accounting and spending authorization in place. A purchase requisition that results in an over-budget situation is flagged by the system.

4.3   Financial Reporting and Analysis

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

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

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

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for Financial Reporting and Analysis, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was

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

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

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

Interim and Annual Financial Reporting

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

Audit

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

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

The Board uses an integrated financial system (School Data System) to record, track and report financial data. The system integrates general ledger, accounts payable,

budget, HR, payroll and purchasing modules. The financial system facilitates variance analysis and management reporting. Management is adding the account receivable module on the current system.

The financial accountant sets up the chart of accounts in the financial system, maintains aliases and manages access rights to the system after the Superintendent of Business has approved access requisitions. The financial system allows the budget holders (i.e. principals, and managers) to print their own budget tracking reports and monitor changes. The Superintendent of Business performs a monthly review of budget and expenses and presents the report to the senior administration team on a periodic basis.

Interim Financial Reporting Accountability

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

Summary financial reports are prepared by the staff, at a minimum, every quarter and presented to the finance committee. The level of detailed expenditure and revenue presented is based on the preferences of management and the board of trustees. The report tracks budget for expenses and revenues against actual spending year-to-date (YTD), expressed as a percentage of the budget.

The report also includes prior year spending trends (i.e. YTD percentage expended in prior year) to present a comparative outlook. The report also includes notes to the financial information that explains the reason for any variances. Management noted this was the first year with prior year YTD comparisons, and plans to continue with the format of reporting. Finance committee meeting minutes are presented at regular Board meetings and recorded in Board meeting minutes that are published on the public website of RRDSB.

The department maintains a schedule of critical dates for reporting purposes. The Superintendent of Business ensures that financial reports are completed and filed in accordance with established timelines. Senior management signs off on annual financial statements presented to the Ministry, and follows up on the management letter provided by external auditors.

Internal Audit Function

The primary function of the internal auditor is to provide added assurance that internal controls established by management are operating effectively and comply with policies and procedures. The Board currently does not have an internal auditor. Management is amenable to creating the position of an internal auditor, but noted the lack of available funds to sustain such a position.

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

The Board engages external auditors for a five-year term to review its financial statements prior to submission to the Ministry. The external auditors for the Board audit select schools each year, as part of their annual audit. This is in addition to informal school reviews conducted by the finance staff through the year. External auditors present an annual audit report that is presented to the finance committee for review, along with the management letter. The Superintendent of Business follows up on the recommendations highlighted in the report.

Audit Committee

The Board has established a finance committee that includes all trustees to assist it in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. This committee receives financial and property information from staff, and makes recommendations to the full Board at regular board meetings on matters related to the financial management and property acquisition. Each December, membership of the committee is re-evaluated. The Superintendent of Business acts as the administrative liaison to this committee.

The committee meets at least every quarter, or more frequently as circumstances dictate. The committee reviews the school board's annual audited financial statements and related documents. It reviews the external auditors' audit letter and the Business Superintendent's plan for implementing the external auditors' recommendations regarding the quality and appropriateness of the school board's accounting principles.

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

The committee also reviews the community use of schools fee schedule, property matters, capital plan and priorities and enrolment projections that drive the budget development process.

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

Recommendations:

- Management should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls and adherence to board policies as described in section 4.3 of this report. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated cost for each option.

- Senior Administration and the Board should consider including external advisors to contribute to the finance 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?
There is an efficient cash management process to maximize interest income, using short-term investments where appropriate.	No
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.	No
Management monitors financial risk related to cash/investment management, and has a plan to mitigate associated risks. Management performs regular cash/funding forecasting to ensure that the board's debt service costs can be met to maturity.	Yes

Management of School-Based Funds

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

Cash and Investment Management

The finance department has consolidated the school board's cash management activities with a single institution. The school board also maintains credit facilities for capital projects with another institution approved by the trustees. Management has not tendered the school board's banking services in more than 10 years, and has recently been approached informally with offers from other banking institutions to discuss their arrangement. The school board should use this opportunity to review all of its banking services and ensure it is getting the best value.

The school board does not currently have a formal cash management policy, process or plan. Staff does not forecast cash flow, and an average of $2 million dollars is often in the bank account. However, the school board is earning interest on its cash, and is in compliance with the Education Act's provisions on eligible investments given its investment in GICs. Management noted that the lack of service in investment management at its designated bank has discouraged it from making alternative investment decisions.

Management is in the process of performing an evaluation its options and is considering tendering for banking services that will include the consolidation of its financing options and investment management.

Bank reconciliations are performed regularly by the financial accounting clerk and reviewed and approved by the Superintendent of Business. Staff also reconcile the amount of school taxes allocated to the school board versus what was received at year end.

The school board maintains reserve funds to attend to unforeseen circumstances, as well as the following categories: a capital reserve that has been ear-marked for construction of new school, a benefit reserve fund that is reviewed annually, and an extended health coverage reserve fund. Management requires approval from the board of trustees to release funds from reserves for ear-marked expenditures.

During the annual budget procedures, the Board may authorize increases and decreases to the reserves for working funds. If there is a surplus at the end of the year, it is verified by the auditor and transferred to the Reserve for Working Funds account. The use of the reserves for working funds is determined by the Board each year. The Superintendent of Business maintains accounting of the reserves for working funds in each panel, and administers Board authorized increases and decreases to the funds.

Management of School-Based Funds

Management has developed and approved a procedure to maintain adequate control over student funds administered within a school. It was last reviewed in April 2000. Schools maintain their own bank accounts and a record of them is maintained in the school office. Financial statements are prepared by the treasurer quarterly, and are audited at the end of the school year.

The procedure for school generated funds standardizes the process for deposits and cheques, for elementary and secondary administration offices and elementary and secondary staff. The procedures also provide supplementary worksheets and standard forms for consistency.

School banking software is used to track the financial records of school-specific fundraising activities and to ensure integrity of accounting. The principals and secretaries are trained on the system and process. Schools are required to complete monthly bank reconciliations. Schools submit a set of approved reports for in-year transactions and a year-end bank reconciliation annually. The staff accountant conducts informal reviews of schools, along with school-based audits conducted every year by external auditors. The Superintendent of Business has central access to the banking software to monitor school-based activity.

The school board has a policy on petty cash funds that limits payments from the fund to a maximum of $50 per transaction upon submission of original receipts signed by the purchaser. The principal, department head or supervisory official holds responsibility for and control of school/department petty cash funds and the supporting documents. Petty cash funds are reconciled prior to the end of each school year.

The school board's fundraising policy, approved in January 2008, requires each school to maintain a standard ledger to monitor fund raising activity. Each school submits a copy of the standard ledger to the Superintendent of Business annually. The principal and or staff responsible for the fund raising project are accountable for maintaining accurate records, while the principal or vice-principal is designated as the signing authority.

Recommendation:

- The finance department should develop a formal cash flow model to forecast and monitor the school board's cash flow activities. This would allow the Board to optimize investment income and minimize interest costs.

- Management is encouraged to report to the board on the performance of the school board's investment activity.

- Management is encouraged to review the school board's banking relationship, and consider tendering these services to ensure competitive rates on key financial terms.

4.5 Non-Grant Revenue Management

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

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

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

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

Non-grant revenue management is a smaller functional area for the board as revenue generated outside of provincial grants makes up approximately 1%[4] of the Board's

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[4] Based on 2007-2008 Financial Statements. Includes $3.8 M in Federal grants and fees, 0.016M in Other Revenues – School Boards, and $0.14 M in Other Fees and Revenues on a total revenue of ~$32M. Please note revenue from local taxes was excluded in the analysis since RRDSB will not be

overall budget, excluding interest income and "other grants". The Board receives Education Programs –Other (EPO) funding from the Ministry for specific initiatives, which requires the Board to focus on the non-grant revenue line.

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

Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues

Leading Practices – Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
The board has established policies and/or procedures for the application of its fee structures.	No

Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues

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

Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues

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

- Community use of schools

- Tuition agreements with band councils

- Interest Income

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collecting local taxes effective January 2009.

- Rental Income

Only the fees collected based on tuition agreements with band councils form a significant portion of the school board's non-grant revenue. The school board has good working relations with the regional Native bands. Management has noted that they are quickly moving towards 100 per cent recovery of tuition fees, as a result of ongoing negotiations with selected band councils.

The school board relies on the Aboriginal student leader to facilitate discussions with the band councils, including collection of any outstanding tuition fees. The current model is working well, but management is encouraged to document its practices to provide band councils with clear guidelines for the collection of tuition fees. This will ensure consistent practices and establish a standard framework for managing related accounts receivable.

The school board has established a policy on the community use of schools that is available on the public website.

The school board currently does not have any material volume or demand for community use of schools. The school board notes that a simple cost / benefits analysis would clearly indicate that the manual registration and payment system for community use of schools is sufficient and cost effective, considering the current volume of transactions and materiality of revenue.

Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenue

Permits for the community use of schools are managed centrally by a coordinator who has the authority for issuance, control, coordination, suspension or termination of any permit for use of school facilities after school hours, with consultation of the principal as required.

Tuition fee arrangements with Native band councils are set up as discrete accounts receivable in the financial management system, to manage revenue from the band councils, as determined by the tuition agreements. Collection rates have improved over the last several years, through additional efforts being applied to stakeholder engagement activities. The development of a standard procedure that covers the collection of all non-grant revenues in addition to community use of schools would further support a common understanding between the Board and the band council.

Managing the EPO Grants

EPO grants received by the school board are designated to appropriate managers and/or project leads. A new project/account codes is created for each EPO grant in the financial system after a transfer payment agreement has been received. The project

leader assigned to these projects closely monitors the account and tracks in-year expenses, while the Superintendent of Business reviews the activity on a quarterly basis.

Recommendation:

- Management is encouraged to document its practices to provide band councils with clear guidelines for the collection of tuition fees. This will ensure consistent practices and establish a standard framework for managing related accounts receivable.

4.6   Procurement

The purpose of reviewing procurement processes is to assess:

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

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

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

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

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

Procurement Policies and Procedures

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

Participation in Buying Consortia

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

=Purchasing Levels of Authority

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

Policies and Procedures for PCard/Corporate Card Use

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Policies and procedures for the use of PCards and corporate credit cards are documented and communicated to users through regular training and monitoring.	No

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

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

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer

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

Procurement Policies and Procedures

The school board has an approved purchasing policy for acquisition of quality goods and services for all of its schools and departments. The policy is available on the website and was last revised in September 2008.

As stated in the policy, purchasing decisions at the school board are considered based on timing of delivery, quality of goods, vendor services, legal risk, cost and educational impact. Management noted that purchasing decisions are made with a focus on the total cost of the ownership and service provided through the life cycle of the product, rather than just the cost of acquisition.

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

- Board credit cards (April 2007)

- Travelling Expenses (April 2007)

- Hospitality (April 2007)

- Advertising (April 2007)

- Purchasing (September 2008)

Accounting controls on purchase orders (PO) are established in line with policy. All purchase orders (PO) over $5,000 must be approved by the Superintendent of Business who reviews purchases to ensure compliance with policies. All invoices that do not have POs are authorized by budget managers and the Superintendent of Business. In addition, the Superintendent of Business approves all personal expense claims of all employees.

Participation in Buying Consortia

The school board is a member of several purchasing consortia. It is a member of the Northwest Purchasing Consortium and participates in a joint tender and acquisition of photocopy paper and supplies, arts and craft supplies, general paper and notebooks and general stationery supplies. Management noted the shipping premium paid by the school board as a result of its remote location.

The school board has also formed a transportation cooperative with its coterminous board (Northwest Catholic DSB) to provide transportation services to students in the Rainy River district. Due to its small size, a separate legal entity was not established.

The LAS Natural Gas Procurement Program (formerly known as GASAMO) is designed to achieve savings for municipalities through the bulk procurement of natural gas. The program currently purchases more than 10,000GJ of natural gas at low prices for over 2,200 physical locations within 175 municipalities and other public sector organizations. The school board is a participant in this program.

Purchasing Levels of Authority

The accounts payable clerk and the Superintendent of Business can initiate and approve purchases (accounts payable clerk approves purchases up to $5000 while the Superintendent of Business approves all purchases above $5000).

The purchasing policy outlines the following dollar thresholds / requirements for purchasing:

- Purchases amounting to not more than $5,000 are processed directly by the budget manager with or without calling for a quotation or tender depending upon the emergency of the need.

- Purchases amounting to more than $5,000 but not more than $20,000 are purchased by quotation or tender.

- Purchases amounting to more than $20,000 are purchased by tender according to the tendering procedure.

Management advertises tenders and request for quotes in local newspapers and publications. Quotations up to $5,000 are opened and awarded by the budget manager. Quotations above $5,000 are opened and awarded by the tendering committee subject to the approval of the Board. The tendering committee consists of the Superintendent of Business, the budget manager, and the purchasing clerk. Trustees approve contract awards and renewals.

The school board has very few single source suppliers. Where a determination has been made to use a particular type of hardware or equipment, or in the rare case there is only one supplier, application is made to the Superintendent of Business for permission to waive the tendering procedure outlined in this policy. The Superintendent of Business reports the reasons for acceptance or rejection of such applications to the Board.

Typically, the tendering committee awards the tenders subject to the approval of the Board. In extenuating circumstances, the Board may make the award, directly, at any regular meeting, without referring the tender to the committee. It was noted that management has developed a standard RFP package for procuring information technology goods that is independent of generic procurement guidelines.

Purchasing policy requirements are monitored for compliance by the purchasing clerk and through the financial system, with authorization limits monitored by the Superintendent of Business.

Policies and Procedures for Purchase Card/Corporate Card Use

The Board has a clearly communicated procedure for corporate credit cards, which is current as of April 2007.

The Board has distributed 25 corporate credit cards to school principals, the senior administration team and budget managers. Credit cards held by staff have a maximum limit of $5000. In addition, management has also issued locked fuel cards to its maintenance staff.

All requests for corporate credit cards are approved by the Superintendent of Business, and a copy of the policy is reviewed with the employee upon approval. Credit card statements for all card-holders are centrally received at the school board office. Statements are then forwarded to the card-holder who attaches the expense receipts and necessary approval. The payables clerk checks for compliance with administrative policies before making direct remittance to the credit card company. Expense forms for the Director are signed by the Chair, while expense forms for trustees are signed by the Chair or the Director.

A preferred practice is the use of personal credit cards, with reimbursement of business expenses through the regular expense reimbursement process. The Board should review its current policy and procedure, to ensure financial control and the validity of corporate credit card expenditures.

The Board currently does not issue PCards. Instead it relies on standing purchase orders with selected retailers for consumables (such as office supplies) that capture small dollar value purchases. This is an opportunity area for the school board, since not all purchases have standing purchase orders, and not all vendors are willing to accommodate standing purchase orders. Consideration should be given to consolidate procurement and payment activities of frequent small dollar purchases.

As a next step, the school board should perform an analysis of purchase orders by user, by department, by transaction value and by purchasing category. This would allow the school board to develop an optimal PCard program that maximizes purchasing efficiency while ensuring budgetary control.

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

The board has set aside budget for each school. Principals and their authorized designate (secretaries) have the ability to use the on-line purchasing system for

purchases over $50 dollars. Purchases under $50 are paid by petty cash using schoolgenerated funds. Electronic purchase orders submitted by school board management, principals or their approved designates are reviewed by the central purchasing department for policy compliance, to ensure proper taxes are applied and to isolate requisitions that exceed available budget. The creation of an electronic PO creates an accounting commitment and automatically encumbers those funds against the budget. A system-generated warning appears if the purchase order exceeds the budget, but it does not prevent the transaction from being completed. The POs are then automatically transmitted via email or fax to vendors for processing.

The goods are shipped directly to the school, except when bulk purchases are made by the central school board office, in which case the goods are received at the school board office. At the receiving location, electronic receipting is done after matching the PO with the receipt. Invoices received by the purchasing department without a matching PO are sent to the schools/requisitioner for approval and account details.

Invoices for purchases made by staff without purchase orders, including purchases made under standing purchase orders, are remitted based on an authorization payment sheet that is approved by the budget manager, reviewed by the purchasing clerk and signed off by the Superintendent of Business.

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer

The Board currently uses electronic funds transfer (EFT) to process payroll and Revenue Canada remittances, utility vendors and transportation contractors and is transitioning towards EFT with the remaining vendors. The Board is encouraged to continue with the initiative, especially as it tenders for its banking services, to achieve increased process efficiencies.

Recommendations:

- Management should evaluate the use of PCards for small dollar purchases, to reduce the volume of supplier invoices processed by accounting. It should perform a transaction/spend analysis of purchase orders (including standing purchase orders) to identify optimum threshold limits that will maintain budgetary control while managing the volume of invoices.

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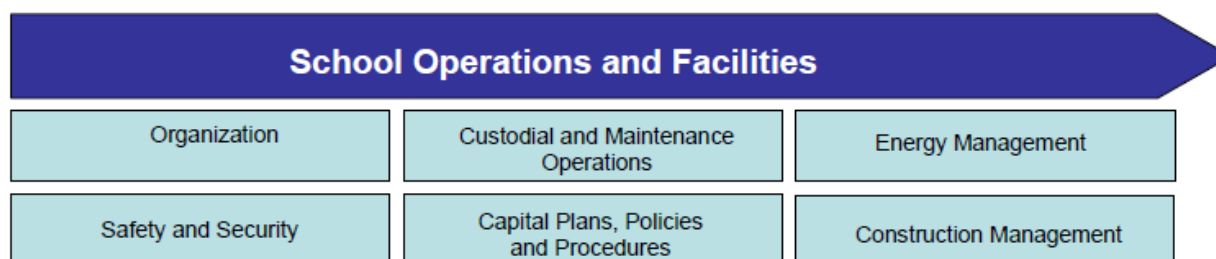
Efficient and effective management of the school board's facilities (particularly schools) is an important factor in student achievement. Along with providing a positive learning environment for students, this function sets and meets standards of cleanliness and maintenance, examines opportunities to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

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

5.1 Operations and Facilities Organization

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

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

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

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

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

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

Development and Reporting of Annual goals and Priorities

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

Organizational Structure and Accountability

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

Monitoring and Communication of Policies

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

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

An action plan for 2007-08 identifies six work strategies, assigned responsibilities, timelines, resources and measures of success. The department's accomplishments are

highlighted in the Director's annual report to the Board. A departmental plan for 2008-09 wasn't available.

The department should develop an annual plan with SMART goals linked with the board system plan. This would help to ensure alignment between department priorities with the overall strategic plan, and would provide staff with visibility towards the system roadmap.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

A Manager of Plant/Maintenance reports to the Director of Education. The department's functional responsibilities include maintenance programs, caretaking services, occupational health and safety, facilities and planning and CUPE labour management. Custodial staff report to their principal on daily work assignments. In some larger schools the custodians report to a head custodian.

For the purposes of completing maintenance activities, the school board is split into two geographic areas (i.e. Rainy River/Fort Frances and the Atikokan area.) Each location has a maintenance depot led by a maintenance supervisor, who manages work orders and maintenance personnel.

The roles and responsibilities of the department staff are clearly outlined in an organization chart, and documented in job descriptions for the staff. Department staff have appropriate qualification or relevant experience to perform their roles.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The school board has policies and operating procedures to manage its facilities and operations. Policies cover the use of school facilities, safe water, school plant security, fire security and pupil accommodation review, among others.

New policies are initiated at the System Planning Team (SPT) which also includes the plant manager. Existing policies are reviewed by the policy committee, stakeholders and the manager of plant/ maintenance on their respective review dates, typically three to five years. New procedures are developed by the plant manager with input from the maintenance staff. Appropriate staff training on new policies and procedures is provided by the manager to required staff. Any new regulation affecting the operation of a school (e.g. water flushing) is relayed to the principals through the Board Leadership Team (BLT) meetings and memos from the manager.

The manager monitors external groups (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Environment, OASBO- Ontario Association of School Business Officials, and ESAO – Education Safety Association of Ontario) for information regarding new policy, regulations or other requirements.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual departmental plan that is linked with the school board system plan. This would align department priorities with the overall school board direction and enhance visibility of the system roadmap for staff.

5.2 Custodial and Maintenance Operations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
Using stakeholder input, management develops an annual and multi-year (three to five years) maintenance plan that addresses preventative and deferred maintenance priorities. Outcomes improve the learning environment for students. The plan optimizes the use of available funding (Annual Renewal Grant and Good Places to Learn funding) and is approved by the board.	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?
An inventory system tracks and controls major cleaning and maintenance equipment.	Yes
Common standards ensure efficient procurement of supplies to minimize costs and promote energy and operating efficiency.	Yes

Project Management, Monitoring and Support Systems

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
A work-order system and process records, monitors, and evaluates projects ensuring the effective use of resources.	Yes
Management regularly evaluates the overall effectiveness and efficiency of its maintenance and custodial service practices.	Yes

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

Caretaking/custodial staff is allocated to each school based on the school's total square footage. Management has determined a square feet cleaning requirement for an eight hour shift. The formula varies whether it is an elementary or secondary school. The department manager uses a software application (Plan Assist) to assign custodial tasks

and develop schedules. Comparative studies across the region have been conducted to validate the calculated custodial allocation. Any difference in FTEs (i.e. between calculated and actual allocation) is usually allocated to the maintenance staff.

The school principal supervises the caretaking staff, tracks their attendance using standard templates, authorizes over-time, and evaluates performance. The principal also manages any informal performance or disciplinary issues. Any formal labour management issues are dealt with at the labour-management committee, where the plant manager acts as an administrative lead.

The school board has developed a caretaking handbook with standard operating procedures and guidelines to promote consistent and safe standards. The handbook outlines the roles and responsibilities of the caretaking staff and highlights areas that require daily and weekly cleaning. The manual also provides estimated time periods for carrying out specific tasks that can be used as a reference point by the staff. In addition, it covers topics such as preventative maintenance, sanitation through the school plant, operational methods, procurement and storing of supplies and equipment. However, the board has not established any cleaning standards for schools to ensure consistency in service levels and cleanliness.

A proposal to update the existing version of the handbook (1999) has been submitted to senior administration team. It will address defined levels of cleanliness or a cleaning standard. An annual inspection of each school facility is done by the principal and manager of plant operations and maintenance.

Maintenance staff have diverse skills and qualifications that include electrician, carpenter, millwright, plumber and gas fitter. Maintenance staff have been assigned to Atikokan and Fort Frances/Rainy River area, including one head to manage activity in each of these jurisdictions. The Board also relies on external contractors to perform work not usually done by internal maintenance staff, large work orders and emergency projects.

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

Management prepares an annual plan of renewal projects to maintain its aging infrastructure. The department solicits annual input from principals that lets each school community identify its desired requirements for its learning environment. Staff review the timelines suggested by the ReCAPP database, and review maintenance work orders from the prior year. Based on this and consultations with school councils, the maintenance supervisor and custodial staff, an annual maintenance plan is developed, with renewal projects for schools.

The document details planned renewal activity at each school, including estimated budget and account code. The school level plan is reviewed with the principals. This

document is also shared with trustees and SPT (System Planning Team) as information items and for additional input. Recommendations made by the joint occupational health and safety committee are also included in the maintenance plan during the year.

Currently, the staff does not prepare a multi-year renewal/maintenance plan. Management should consider establishing a multi-year, say three to five years, preventative maintenance plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide a clear forecast of the school board's critical needs.

Management uses the ReCAPP database and notes its usefulness for planning purposes. The data is updated for any material maintenance changes. Management noted that while good place to learn (GPL) dollars are used to fund renewal projects, the operating budget is used to fund small maintenance projects.

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

Management supports the skills development of its maintenance staff. The Board has established a committee, with representation from CUPE and administration, to determine on the training agenda.

Management provides bi-annual professional development days that include review of various operational procedures. Training consists of diverse topics such as WHMIS, use of cleaning chemicals, fall protection fundamentals and musculoskeletal injuries. New custodians are trained on the job, during three different trainings shifts that are led by three different training leads. It was noted that orientation for new custodial staff can be further strengthened if the school board were to include in-class sessions that focus on standard operating procedures outlined in the caretaking handbook.

As part of the contract, vendors supplying cleaning supplies are required to provide site-specific training to custodial staff. In addition, management also organizes training sessions with external consultants such as Honeywell to focus on energy awareness and building automation systems. Maintenance staff have scheduled training days to ensure that the staff maintains its skill certificates. Energy efficiency training is also provided to principals, custodians and maintenance staff.

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

Custodial supplies are managed centrally through the school board office. Management requires purchases to be made through a central purchasing system. Custodial supplies are tendered, and a supply catalogue is updated after every three year tender cycle. Purchase orders are created by school secretaries with authorization from principals.

The contract for cleaning supplies is refreshed every two years, with a third year renewal option. The manager of plant operations monitors cost per square foot

occasionally to monitor budget. The vendor providing cleaning supplies has provided the sites with dispensing systems to effectively manage the consumption of cleaning supplies. The vendor visits each site four times a year to maintain equipment and answer questions. The Board is also testing and evaluating the feasibility of using "green" cleaning products at two of its schools.

Management maintains a list of preferred vendors for the purchase of materials for work orders. Standing purchase orders have been established with local hardware stores for maintenance supplies. Invoices are signed off by maintenance staff and the manager before payment is remitted.

A central inventory of custodial equipment is maintained at the Board office. Staff does not formally track its maintenance equipment, and noted that the small team of maintenance staff keeps track of equipment on an informal basis. Minor in-house maintenance of custodial equipment is done annually. It was noted by the Manager of Plant and the SBO that given the small number of pieces of equipment and the relative size of the maintenance department, the cost of implementing and managing formal or automated equipment tracking system would outweigh the intended benefits.

Project Management, Monitoring and Supporting Systems

Maintenance staff uses a paper-based work order system across its school sites, processing about 1200 work orders per year. At the start of the year, the department issues blank work orders to the schools. During the year, custodial staff or principals identify a maintenance issue, and a work order is faxed to the maintenance depot. The work orders are prioritized and assigned to the maintenance staff. Department staff enters work orders into the school board's email system that acts as a work-order application. The configuration of the email system allows principals to track the status of their work orders. The completed work orders are returned by maintenance staff and status is updated in the online application. This closed-loop system minimizes outstanding work-orders.

Staff records completion time on the work order. Completion times are not centrally tracked or recorded in the online application for analysis or reporting purposes. The department believes that there is limited value in analyzing completion times and work order performance, because of significant differences in travel time over such a large geographic area.

Management is currently investigating the cost-benefit analysis of an automated workorder system that will consolidate service requests for plant operations and IT. The school board is encouraged to continue with this initiative.

Recommendations:

- Management should consider establishing a three to five year preventative maintenance plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide a prioritized forecast of the school board's critical needs over the next several years.

- The school board should establish cleaning standards across its school sites to ensure consistency in service levels and monitoring.

- The school board should continue to investigate the cost-benefit of enhancing its work order system to streamline the management, dispatch, tracking, costing and reporting of facility renewal and general maintenance work orders.

5.3   Energy Management

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

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

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

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

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

Energy Management Plan

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

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

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

Energy Management Plan

Management hired external consultants and used the list of projects they recommended to develop an energy retrofit program. The school board has implemented various energy conservation initiatives under the broad categories of: lighting measures, control system measures, mechanical system measures, building envelope measures and water measures.

The plant department implemented the building automation system (BAS) across all sites in 2007 and trained its staff on the new system. BAS is managed centrally at the school board office and at maintenance depots. The school board receives the benefit of an agreement between the Fort Frances Power Corporation and the Abitibi-Bowater Mill in Fort Frances on electricity savings. This savings is $0.15 per kWh on electricity used by Board properties in the Town of Fort Frances. The school board is also partnering with local utility companies to identify alternative sources of energy.

The school board is also making a transition to T8 light bulbs and motion triggered lights to conserve energy. In addition, computers are shut down at 7 p.m. across the system to conserve electricity. The school board participates in a recycling program across all its sites.

Energy management initiatives are also actively led by the students and teachers at school sites and supported by the plant office. Initiatives such as water conservation programs and environmental school clubs are led by students. The school board has also incorporated energy management in its school curriculum, and invites Dearness Environmental group to hold sessions with grade three and grade five teachers.

It is noted that the total utility budget at the school board is under $1 million which may not appear significant. However, the school board should continue to expand its existing energy management initiatives. An important step for management would be to develop

a system-wide, multi-year energy management plan, with appropriate consumption reduction targets.

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

Management relies on external consultants to consolidate and present the site-specific cost savings achieved from energy saving initiatives. Within the first eight months, the Board had saved approximately $70,000 in energy costs and continues to save as outlined in the plan. The consultants estimate that the Board will save approximately $160,000 per year for 10 years since the energy conservation plan was initiated on November 1, 2007.

In addition, management also prepares internal reports to track cost of utilities i.e. electricity, gas and water and compares it against prior years at each school site. The annual cost of utilities varies in accordance with the market prices. To that end, management is also encouraged to track energy consumption in energy units to effectively track trends in consumption patterns against weather patterns.

School teams present successful energy conservation initiatives at Board meetings. Such initiatives are also profiled in media releases. As the next step, management should also facilitate the process of information exchange across the system, so schools can learn and build upon the knowledge gained from each other.

Given the geographical area covered by the school board, school sites are attached to different utility companies. Except for one utility provider, the school board does not have consolidated billing across its multiple sites. As a result, the school board will likely not be able to consolidate utilities billing across all sites.

Recommendations:

- Management should establish a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates the measures and the tools to monitor and manage it. The plan could include various initiatives identified by external consultants, prioritized with certain criteria.

- The school board should encourage sharing of successful energy conservation initiatives across its multiple school sites. This could be accomplished with things like newsletters and incentives to increase the adoption of energy saving projects at all school sites.

- The school board should develop a system to track consumption, budget expenditures, and identify opportunities for further energy management savings.

- The school board should continue to seek consolidated billing in an electronic format from its utility providers. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption, and increase efficiency in the accounts payable department.

5.4   Health, Safety and Security

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

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

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

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

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

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

Leading Practices – Health, Safety and Security	Evidence of Adoption?
The maintenance of health, safety and security policies and the development of appropriate plans ensure compliance with statutory health, safety and security requirements.	No
The security code policy includes alert codes that reflect the situation and threat level, and identify departmental responsibilities.	Yes
Security incidents are tracked by type of incident (e.g., property damage, intrusion, etc.).	Yes
Operations management follow Ministry guidelines, policy and legislation on healthy schools.	Yes
Safe school teams responsible for school safety (e.g., PPM 144) are implemented in every school.	Yes
Water and air quality standards are monitored and issues are reported for corrective action.	Yes

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

The Rainy River District School Board is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for employees. The school board works towards the reduction and elimination of workplace injuries/accidents and workplace illnesses.

The Board has established a joint occupational health and safety committee (JOHSC) that is co-chaired by the HR manager and the union representative. Given the school board's geographic boundary, two multi-workplace sub-committees, both approved by the Ministry of Labour (Atikokan and Fort Francis / Rainy River) and a Mine Centre workplace committee are supporting the joint committee. The Members of all committees meet quarterly to discuss health and safety issues.

The school board has a policy that specifies the mandate of the committees, but there is no formally documented Health and Safety (H&S) Plan. The committees identify annual action items based on accident statistics from the prior year. The JOHSC reviews training dates and the agenda for an annual joint 'health and safety training day'. Incident reports are sent to HR, and if an injury results in lost time, the WSIB process is triggered. The JOHSC reviews incident/accident frequencies reports prepared by HR.

The school board attempts to identify all potential or actual hazards through monthly workplace inspections. Any hazards that require immediate attention and correction are followed up on. The committee has prepared a standardized approach for workplace inspections and is currently seeking feedback from principals to develop a training module for inspection teams. Training is scheduled for the fall professional development day. The committee also receives hazard identification summary reports and follows-up on the work orders generated by the inspections.

Most of the health, safety and security initiatives are driven through the adoption of Ontario legislation and/or the creation of Board policy. For example, the school board:

- regulates access to all structures within the system to reduce vandalism and theft by using a key control system

- installed and maintains fire detection, egress devices and firefighting equipment to ensure safe and speedy exit by the occupants of buildings during fires

- identified procedures to help prevent the spreading of fire within a building

- developed uniform emergency procedures to protect the safety and wellbeing of the staff and students within its jurisdiction

- conducts air quality testing periodically

- maintains safe water conditions at all schools, with high standards, frequent testing, and prompt reporting of adverse water condition

- engaged a public health nutritionist to assist with the implementation nutritional standards outlined in Bill 8, An Amendment to the Education Act

- has an accessibility committee that meets twice a year and develops an accessibility plan that is executed by the plant operations department.

In addition, the school board is committed to the healthy schools initiative, and has assigned a principal to lead its introduction across the school board. An action plan for healthy school engagement includes training for secondary principals and vice-principals and a funding allocation to each school.

Management has developed a multi-year daily physical activity (DPA) action plan that includes goals and action plans with designated leads. The plan description also highlights indicators to measure success and records progress made to date. To support the DPA plan, management provides focused workshops and training sessions to school administrators that have been recommended by the Ontario Physical Health Education Association (OPHEA).

To support and promote safe schools, the school board has developed a multi-year implementation plan related to character education curriculum. The plan includes specific tasks and strategies that are categorized by the seven correlates. As part of the plan, management has provided Bill 212, Safe Schools training to all staff, maintains safe school teams within each school, and has the Safety Trust Attitude Respect (STAR) program to include Internet bullying and safety.

The accountability for implementing safe school teams lies with the Superintendent of Education. Each school has a safe school team that is also responsible for promoting an anti-bullying environment. Management adopted the Ministry-suggested safe school survey and administered it across the school board. The survey data was used to develop action plans specific to each school which are monitored by the principals.

Recommendation:

- Management should examine the benefits of coordinating its various health, safety, and security initiatives/activities. Management should create a single health, safety and security plan which would assist in prioritizing goals with assigned accountabilities and timelines for completion. The plan should be linked to the system plan and approved by the Board.

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

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

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
The school board maintains accurate and up-to-date inventories of school capacity and utilization.	Yes

Leading Practices – Capital Plans, Policies and Procedures	Evidence of Adoption?
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
An accurate and current assessment of facility conditions is maintained, based on industry standards (using RECAPP methodology).	Yes

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

The Superintendent of Business works with the Manager of Plant Operations to develop a capital plan that is presented to the SPT and the trustees. The capital plan was originally presented to the finance committee in December, 2005 before submission to the Ministry in January 2006. The plan was revised and approved by the trustees and the capital liquidity template was submitted in October 2008.

The Ministry provides Good Places to Learn (GPL) funding to deal with high and urgent needs identified in the Renewal Capital Asset Planning Process (ReCAPP). The capital plan is developed using 10 year enrolment projections, renewal needs as suggested by the ReCAPP database, and schools identified as prohibitive to repair. The department prepares an annual list of capital projects (including facility renewal projects and good places to learn projects) that will be undertaken in the academic year complete with budget estimate, funding sources and the chosen contractor to complete the project.

Annual renewal projects are primarily selected from the ReCAPP database, with consultations with the school principals and maintenance and caretaking staff. Department staff conduct periodic site visits to assess and monitor the facility conditions. The plant manager reviews the proposed capital projects with the senior administration and following approval by the finance committee, arrives at the final list.

The school board has an approved pupil accommodation policy, and has customized the school valuation framework to meet its specific needs. The school board is experiencing significant under-utilization of facilities, and recently completed a community-based pupil accommodation review process in 2008 to consolidate facilities. The review committee comprised a Board member, academic and business Superintendent, principals, teachers, First Nation representatives, community members, school council members and community business members. Following public consultations, the committee made a recommendation that was brought to a special Board meeting for final approval.

Ongoing Monitoring and Maintenance of Data to Support Capital Planning

The department follows a specific process to update the ReCAPP database. Prior to the end of October each year, the Manager of Plant Operations and Maintenance collects capital project data, including project name, total project cost, building name, building section, component, type of upgrade performed, percentage of component affected (upgrades affecting less than 25 per cent of a component are not recorded) and cost attributable to the event.

The plant manager performs conditional assessments before and after completion of the project, and inputs this capital project data into the ReCAPP database. The Facility Condition Index (FCI) is recalculated every year as projects are completed or rolled over from one year to the next. The manager produces a capital asset report at the end of the academic year that outlines renewal projects completed at each site, along with total cost and allocating the cost as maintenance vs. betterment for capitalization purposes.

The plant manager meets with the maintenance supervisors to discuss priorities for the coming year with regards to facility upgrades. The team identifies problem areas and items of concern for possible upgrade or replacement. A ReCAPP report is printed out to determine the identified events from the database, and a comparison is made to prioritize projects. The information is used to determine the projects that will proceed to the planning stage. The staff also look at opportunities to consolidate and dovetail activities to realize efficiencies.

SFIS data is updated annually by the plant manager. The Superintendent of Business reviews the enrolment and capacity data to ensure that appropriate top-up grants are received by the Board. In addition, the Superintendent also monitors the cost of operating the school versus funding received per school, to review how well funding allocations are meeting the current and forecasted needs of the school.

5.6 Construction Management

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

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

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

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for construction management, and identifies where evidence was found to indicate that the practice was adopted in full. Where the evidence was not present or the practice was not completely

adopted at the time of the review, a "No" indicates that an improvement opportunity exists.

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

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

Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects

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

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

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

Cost-Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

The school board is currently (January 2009) planning for a new elementary school in the Fort Frances area. Management acknowledges its lack of experience in building new schools. Since it is a small school board with declining enrolment, RRDSB does not have a standard footprint, and is actively collaborating with the architects to develop an efficient construction plan.

Management is in the midst of the design process with architects. A core team consisting of the principal, Superintendent of Education, Manager of Plant Operations, and the Director is actively participating in the design phase, with support from the building committee that comprises the core team along with Board members, principal, teachers, school council members and First Nations representatives to provide input and feedback through the programming and design process of a new school. The

committee meets bi-monthly or as required. Management has also organized public information nights to provide information to community stakeholders and gather input in the design process.

Management notes that the school board's construction costs are higher than the provincial average because of its location. Management is actively collaborating with peer school boards and reviewing the Ministry's standard footprint to design the new schools. The Board has also reported efficiencies and consistency in quality by engaging the same architectural firm to design and oversee the development of two sites.

Monitoring and Reporting of Progress on Construction Projects

Management acknowledges the need for a project manager to manage the construction of the proposed new schools. At this point, all capital projects are managed by the Manager of Plant Operations and Maintenance, with periodic updates to the trustees. Management recognizes that the current arrangement will not be sustainable once the new school construction begins and will be reviewing options as the construction phase approaches.

Management was on budget and on time for the last construction project and aims to meet the same benchmarks for its current project. Trustees are provided with monthly updates by the Manager of Plant Operations and Maintenance.

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

In the face of declining enrolment, the school board does not expect to construct many schools. As a result, it does not maintain a list of approved architects and related service providers. For the construction of the proposed new school, an RFP was issued to engage architectural services. A committee, consisting of the Superintendent of Business, plant manager, school principal, Superintendent of Education, school council and board chair were used to select the architect firm. The architect for the project was appointed subsequent to Board approval.

The committee adapted the evaluation framework compiled by the Ontario Association of Architects to evaluate bids. Experience with building schools in north western Ontario was weighted as an important criterion.

The finance committee participates in the selection of contractors for all capital projects through a tendering process, and evaluates candidates based on a matrix scoring system. Management engages in an informal dialogue with other local school boards to streamline the selection process. The final approval is given by the trustees at Board meetings.

Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of the Operational Review

Operational Review Objectives

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

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

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

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

- Leverage "Best Practices" across the education sector;

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

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

### Operational Review Summary Scope

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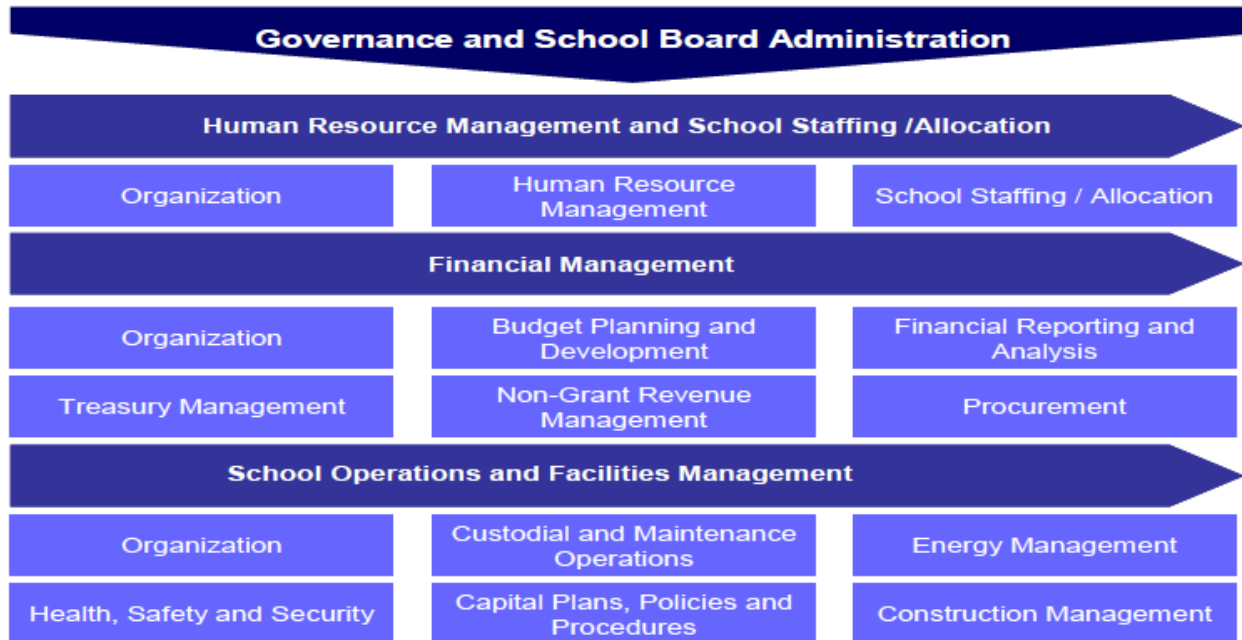
Operational Review Summary Approach

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.
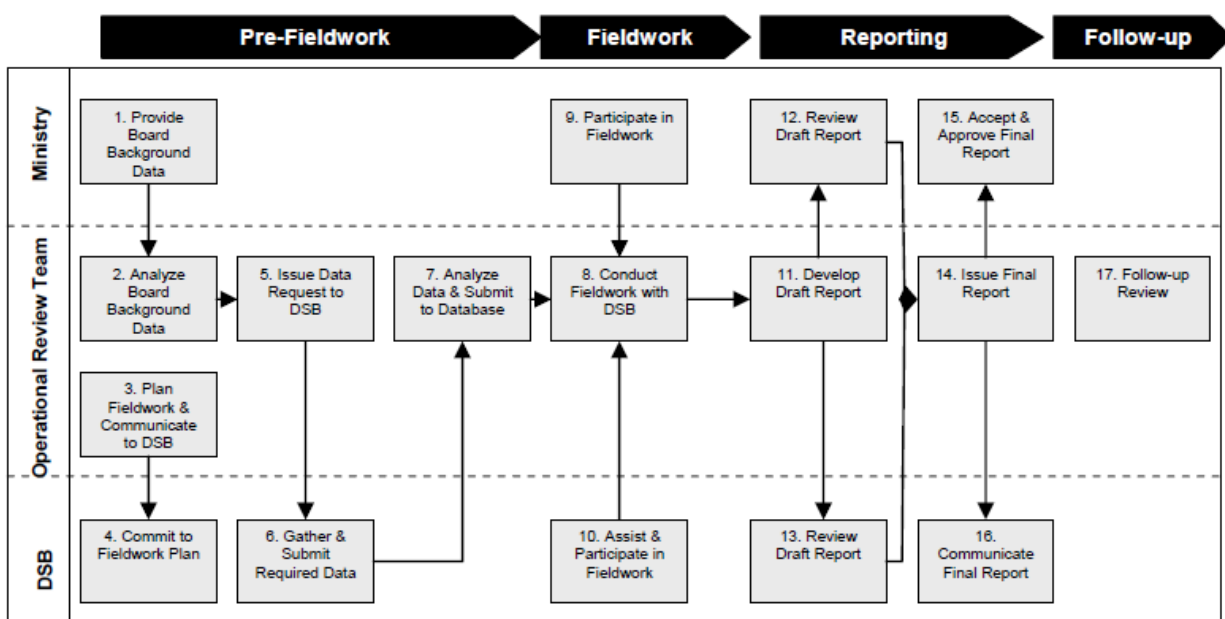
The Table below defines the key phases and activities which comprise the Operational review Methodology.

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

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

Phase: Fieldwork

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

Phase: Reporting

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

Phase: Follow-up

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

The Operational Review Team

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

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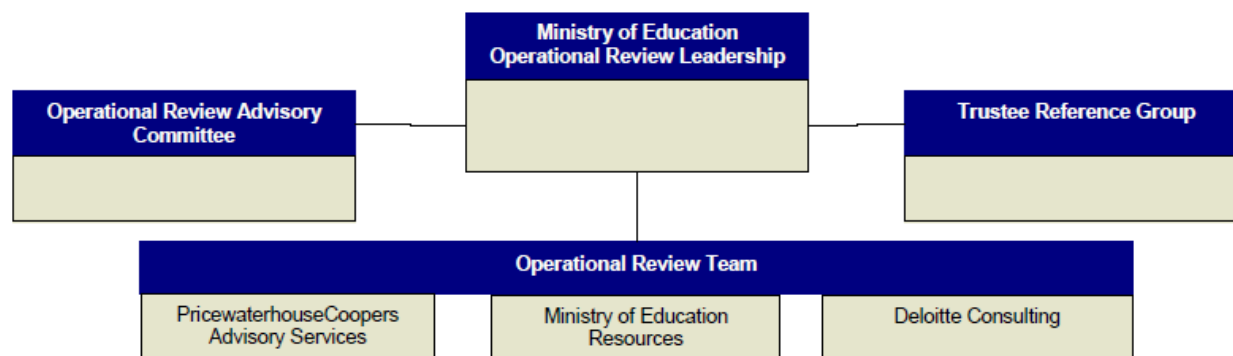
Limitations of this Review

The purpose of this Report is to document the results of the Operational Review of the Rainy River 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 to be completed following the debrief

Governance and School Board Administration

No.	Recommendation
1.	The board of trustees, in conjunction with the Director, should develop a multiyear strategic plan that defines key objectives, timelines and performance measures for the entire system. This would provide an over-arching framework for the school board to develop its annual system plan, set the context for school and departmental plans, and allow the Director to report on the achievement of specific outcomes.
2.	The Board should consider consolidating the business functions (such as HR, finance and facilities) into the board system plan. This will enable the departments to link their respective operational plans to the annual plan, and align operational goals with an overarching strategic direction.
3.	The Board should establish a formal succession plan to manage the retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.

HR Management and School Staffing/Allocation

No.	Recommendation
4.	Management should develop an annual departmental plan that is linked with the school board system plan. This would align department priorities with the overall board direction and provide staff with better visibility of the system roadmap.
5.	The department should develop a comprehensive attendance management program, including policies and procedures to address specific categories of absenteeism. This would provide management with a consistent and structured approach to improve attendance, including positive reinforcement for employees and standardized practices across all employee groups.
6.	Management should document its practice of progressive disciplinary action, to ensure clear communication to all employees.
7..	Management should develop a formal plan for conducting exit interviews. Like staff surveys, these interviews will provide input for HR policy and process and program improvement.

Financial Management

No.	Recommendation
8.	The Finance department should develop a plan that is clearly aligned with the objectives in the board system plan. This would provide management and staff with the visibility necessary to track and manage departmental progress against the school board's goals.

No.	Recommendation
9.	Management should consider formalizing an internal audit function. This would include a broader audit of financial and management controls and adherence to board policies as described in section 4.3 of this report. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated cost for each option.
10	Management and the Board of Trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the finance committee's effectiveness.
11.	The finance department should develop a formal cash flow model to forecast and monitor the school board's cash flow activities. This would allow the school board to optimize investment income and minimize interest costs.
12.	Management is encouraged to report to the board on the performance of the school board's investment activity.
13.	Management is encouraged to review the school board's banking relationship, and consider tendering these services to ensure competitive rates on key financial terms.
14.	Management is encouraged to document its practices to provide band councils with clear guidelines for the collection of tuition fees. This will ensure consistent practices and establish a standard framework for managing related accounts receivable.
15.	Management should evaluate the use of PCards for small dollar purchases, to reduce the volume of supplier invoices processed by accounting. It should perform a transaction/spend analysis of purchase orders (including standing purchase orders) to identify optimum threshold limits that will maintain budgetary control while managing the volume of invoices.

School Operations and Facilities Management

No.	Recommendation
16.	Management should develop an annual departmental plan that is linked with the school board system plan. This would align department priorities with the overall school board direction and enhance visibility of the system roadmap for staff.
17	The school board should establish cleaning standards across its school sites to ensure consistency in service levels and monitoring.
18.	Management should consider establishing a three to five year preventative maintenance plan, including the funding available to support the plan. This would provide a prioritized forecast of the school board's critical needs over the next several years.
19.	The school board should continue to investigate the cost-benefit of enhancing its work order system to streamline the management, dispatch, tracking, costing and reporting of facility renewal and general maintenance work orders.
20.	Management should establish a multi-year energy management plan that incorporates the measures and the tools to monitor and manage it. The plan could include various initiatives identified by external consultants, prioritized with certain criteria.

No.	Recommendation
21.	The school board should encourage sharing of successful energy conservation initiatives across its multiple school sites. This could be accomplished with things like newsletters and incentives to increase the adoption of energy saving projects at all school sites.
22.	The school board should develop a system to track consumption, budget expenditures, and identify opportunities for further energy management savings.
23.	The school board should continue to seek consolidated billing in an electronic format from its utility providers. This would support more efficient monitoring and forecasting of energy consumption, and increase efficiency in the accounts payable department.
24.	Management should examine the benefits of coordinating its various health, safety, and security initiatives/activities. Management should create a single health, safety and security plan which would assist in prioritizing goals with assigned accountabilities and timelines for completion. The plan should be linked to the system plan and approved by the Board.