

Ministry of Education

Operational Review Report Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario

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Executive Summary

This report details the findings and recommendations of the Operational Review of the Conseil scolaire des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (hereinafter referred to as "the CEPEO" or "the Board") conducted by the Operational Review Team composed of external consultants from PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Ministry of Education staff. The Operational Review was conducted over three days beginning April 7, 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 CEPEO is well managed. Noted strengths of the school board include a clearly articulated mandate for student success and a strong and aligned leadership that communicates effectively and shares a common vision. Management monitors student enrolment and staffing levels, invests in leadership development, and implements effective fiscal policy.

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 CEPEO's governance structure is outlined in the school board's internal administration policy, which clearly delineates the responsibilities of the board of trustees and the administration. According to this internal policy and the accompanying administrative guidelines, the board of trustees' role is to establish clear and consistent policies, whereas the Director of Education's role is to ensure their implementation.

The CEPEO is characterized by a relationship of trust and transparency between the administration and the trustees in which the Director of Education acts as the liaison between the members of his administration and the board of trustees.

The board of trustees' decision-making process is clearly described and documented. Procedural rules outlining the decision-making process and the organization of board meetings are documented and communicated to all trustees.

The board of trustees has 12 trustees and one student advisor. More than half of the trustees have served on the Board for more than 10 years. At the administrative level, the executive committee is composed of the Director of Education, three superintendents of education, the executive director of the academic services department, the finance manager, the human resources manager, the plant manager and the manager of technology services (SIBAT).

The CEPEO's strategic direction was revised in 2007 with the introduction of an accountability framework, which replaced the Board's former strategic plan. The accountability framework outlines three systemic objectives or strategic axes:

1. Improve student achievement;
2. Recruitment and retention of students and staff members;
3. Increased public confidence.

The Director of Education's annual report presents the CEPEO's annual progress for these three strategic axes.

The administration has created a multi-year improvement plan, called the 2009-2012 action plan, which outlines the strategic objectives to be met by 2012, the overall performance measures for each of the three strategic axes in the accountability framework, as well as the necessary steps to meet each year's objectives.

The Director of Education provides the board of trustees with a mid-year progress report on the school board's literacy and numeracy goals. The school board's student retention rate is presented annually to the board of trustees in a report that includes the rates and reasons for CEPEO student withdrawal, allowing the school board to implement strategies to improve student retention.

Recommendations:

- The school board should continue its efforts to develop an annual board improvement plan of its goals/ priorities that includes non-academic departments. Similar to what was accomplished for the student achievement strategic axis, the school board should also develop goals that are specific, measurable,

achievable, relevant and timely for the overall strategic goals of the three other strategic axes within its accountability framework, namely recruitment/retention, public confidence and technological innovation.

- The school board should consider planning a review date for policies and directives that currently do not have one. This would allow the Director of Education to develop the review plan specified in the school board's internal policy, which also requires presenting to the board of trustees the various roles and responsibilities, required resources and staff, and the assessment strategy and deadlines for the policy reviews.

Human Resources Management and School Staffing/Allocation

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

- The HR department communicates regularly with stakeholders on policies during training sessions at least three times per year.
- The HR department communicates openly and positively with the unions using a proactive approach to dealing with problems during joint meetings. Through these practices, only two grievances went into arbitration in the past two years.
- The HR department has procedures and systems in place to ensure attendance tracking of employees and to encourage their accountability. The HR department uses software that reports absences and manages automatic calls to substitutes, which increases departmental efficiency.
- The HR department developed policies and performance appraisal processes for academic and non-academic staff. The performance appraisal of teaching staff is managed with software developed by the Board, which includes an appraisal schedule and tools.
- The HR department regularly carries out formal, general staff surveys to solicit feedback on the priorities of the school board or on general attitudes.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual HR departmental plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link departmental objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform

senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the HR department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.

- The school board should conduct periodic reviews of the insurance carrier (Administrative Services Only) that manages medical and dental claims, in order to ensure that the school board's claims are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.
- The HR department should continue its efforts to introduce exit interviews for those who are leaving their positions.
- The HR department should ensure that payroll processing is segregated from changes to employee data by modifying the access rights of its staff in the BAS system so that one employee alone cannot perform several transactions for the same operational cycle.

Financial Management

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

- The school board has developed an enrolment projection process that is efficient, transparent and clearly communicated, and that incorporates input from all key stakeholders.
- Similar to the enrolment projection process, the school board's budget forecasting process considers both a top-down (board level, trend analysis) and a bottom-up (local, budget manager) approach.
- The annual budget presented for approval is clearly linked to the Board's goals and priorities, and provides useful information for all stakeholders.
- The finance department has adopted an integrated financial system, which combines general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget, purchasing, and recently, capital management modules.
- The finance department developed a guideline for the financial management of school funds in December 2006. A department officer is assigned full-time to manage school funds in collaboration with the schools. This officer's responsibilities are to inform school principals about school board guidelines on school funds and to conduct internal school audits.

- The school board has several policies governing the purchasing of school board goods and services.
- The school board participates in a large number of purchasing consortia, including those for school transportation, electricity and natural gas, school supplies and equipment, and custodial and maintenance supplies.
- The finance department has consolidated its banking operations with a single institution in order to minimize costs and to maximize interest rates on surplus funds.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual finance departmental plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities, and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link departmental objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the finance department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
- The finance department should implement processes to ensure compliance with financial policies, which could include periodic communication of the policies to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the policies.
- The finance department should regularly provide scheduled finance policy and procedures awareness, training and skills development educational sessions.
- The school board should consider documenting the risks linked to the budget and formally sharing them with members of the executive and finance committees and trustees who are unable to attend meetings, so that they are also aware of the potential risks, the status of risks and proposed mitigation strategies.
- The finance department should consider modifying the format of interim reports, according to the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report. This would contribute to a better understanding of financial information on year-to-date results.

- The school board should consider formalizing an independent internal audit function that would report to the audit committee. This would include an audit of financial and management controls for the entire school board and not just for school funds, as is currently the case. The finance department could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
- Once the independent internal audit function is created, the school board should ensure that internal audit plans are clearly documented and recommendations are followed up and acted upon by management.
- Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the audit committee.
- The school board should develop an investment policy in order to reduce its idle cash, in accordance to the *Education Act*.
- The finance department should develop periodic reports on the Board's cash position and the results of future investment activities, and share them with the board of trustees.
- The finance department should consider using electronic registration and payment systems for its non-grant revenues. For example, management could consider an electronic registration and payment system for its continuing education programs.
- The finance department should ensure that three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used for all of the school board's purchases, when appropriate.
- The school board should consider extending the use of credit cards within the school board. The school board should develop a policy and specific directives on credit card use in order to document the current control practices and to specify conditions of use for new holders.
- The finance department should continue to increase its use of electronic funds transfer (EFT) payments to all appropriate suppliers, to gain greater efficiency and minimize the risk of payments being altered prior to clearing the bank.

School Operations and Facilities Management

The plant department, which is responsible for school operations and facilities management, has adopted a great number of leading practices for its operations. The following significant practices are noted:

- The plant department has developed a custodial allocation model for the optimum use of resources in custodial activities.
- The plant department uses an electronic work order recording system to increase the effectiveness of facilities management.
- The plant department has undertaken different energy management activities in the schools within the school board, including energy audits of 10 school board buildings, the installation of solar panels and a wind turbine in one school, the installation of remotely controlled systems for mechanical layouts in some schools, and energy consumption monitoring for each school since 2008.
- The school board has developed appropriate health and safety procedures to ensure compliance with statutory health, safety and security requirements. The school board has developed emergency plans, administrative directives and policies for school safety. The school board has established a joint occupational health and safety committee and created an innovative occupational health and safety website.
- The school board has developed an annual training program for its maintenance and custodial staff. This program supports skills development and occupational health and safety.
- The plant department has developed a five-year maintenance plan that addresses its preventative, critical and deferred maintenance, in accordance with the school board's standards. The school board's maintenance and renewal activities are re-assessed annually through individual school assessments. Priorities are then integrated into the five-year maintenance plan. This helps ensure that schools are maintained in the best condition possible to support improved student learning and facilitate employee productivity.
- The school board has an approved pupil accommodation review policy.
- The school board has a multi-year capital plan and a capital liquidity template that were approved by the Ministry.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual plant department plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities, and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link the plant department's objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform

senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the plant department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.

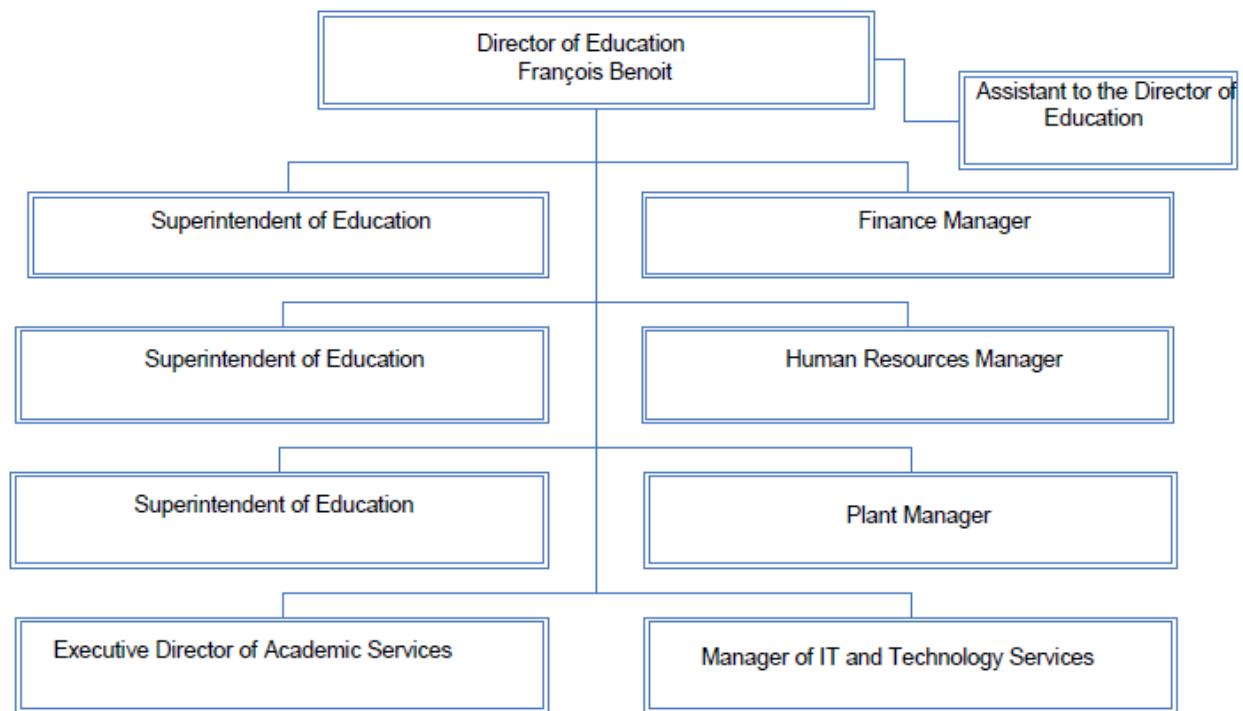
- The plant department should implement measures to ensure compliance with operational and facilities management policies. These processes should include periodic communication of the policies to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the policies.
- The plant department should establish cleaning standards in all the Board's schools to ensure consistent levels of service and monitoring at all sites. Once the standards are established, management should ensure that results are monitored, measured and reported annually.
- The plant department should go ahead with its plan of creating an inventory of cleaning and maintenance equipment to plan for equipment replacements.
- The school board should develop a comprehensive multi-year energy management plan that includes consumption reduction goals, key activities, timelines for completion, success indicators and assigned responsibilities to complement the school board's energy conservation strategy.
- Once the school board has created its multi-year energy management plan, the plant department should officially provide formal annual reporting on the conservation savings achieved against the plan.

1. Background and Overview

1.1 School Board Profile and Structure

The Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO) is responsible for French-language public education in the counties of Prescott and Russell, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, Leeds and Grenville, Ottawa, Renfrew, Lanark, Lennox and Addington, and Hastings and Frontenac. The school board serves a territory covering 37,000 square kilometres. According to school board data, it provides elementary and secondary education for an estimated 11,000 students located in nine secondary schools, 21 elementary schools, an adult education school, a technical school, an education and training centre with five campuses and one specialized school.

The following table presents the school board's executive committee:



1.2 Key Priorities of the School Board

The Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario's mission is to welcome any student looking for high-quality, French-language education. The CEPEO aims to work together with students, parents and the community to enhance each of their roles.

To meet student needs, the CEPEO offers:

- A learning environment that is French-speaking, dynamic, warm, and geared toward social, academic and personal success;

- A learning environment where diversity is recognized, appreciated and sought after;
- Methods to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for the personal development and success of students in a changing world.

The school board has three system-wide priorities:

- Priority 1: Improve student achievement
- Priority 2: Recruitment and retention
- Priority 3: Increase public confidence

In 2007, the school board defined measurable outcomes for improving student achievement in its literacy and numeracy improvement plan. For the 2008/2009 school year, the school board's objective was to improve test results from the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) as follows:

- Grade 3:
 - Improve reading results from 50% (May 2008) to 67% in May 2009;
 - Improve writing results from 70% (May 2008) to 77% in May 2009; and
 - Improve math results from 52% (May 2008) to 66%.
- Grade 6:
 - Improve reading results from 66% (May 2008) to 75% in May 2009;
 - Improve writing results from 75% (May 2008) to 80% in May 2009; and
 - Improve math results from 71% (May 2008) to 77% in May 2009.

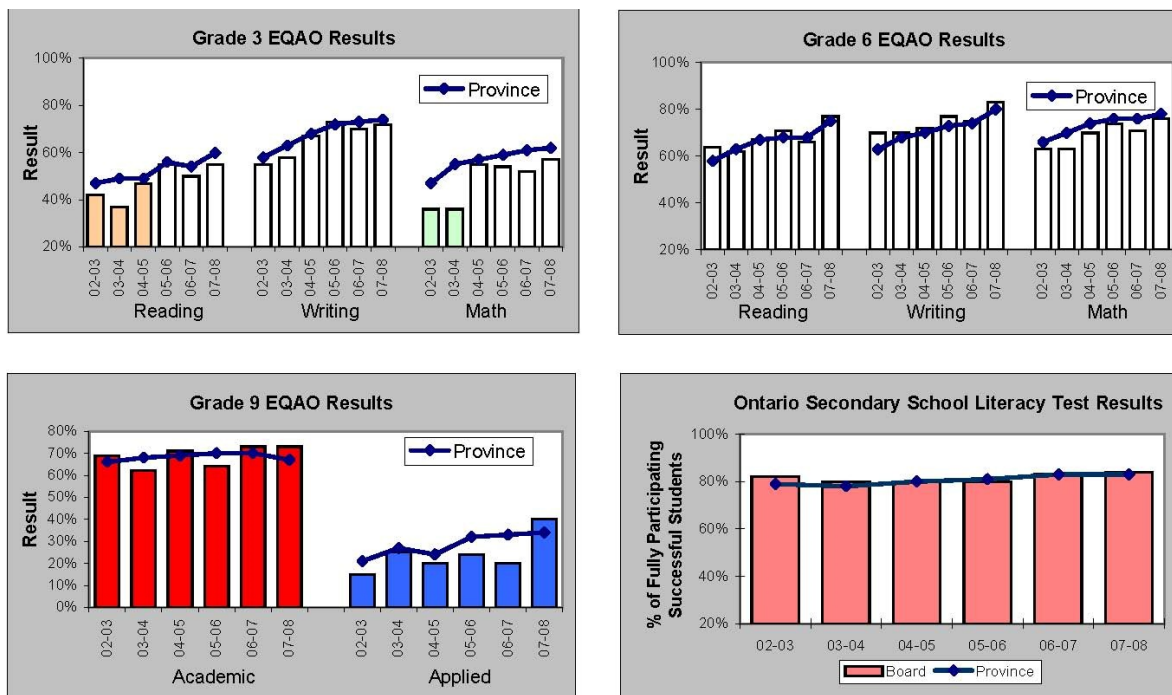
The school board follows recruitment and retention data and publishes select statistics in its annual report.

1.3 Student Achievement

The Board has made a concerted effort to improve student achievement outcomes, as is evident from the EQAO results.

The school board has developed a system-wide strategic improvement plan. This plan focuses on better student literacy and numeracy results.

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



1.4 Fiscal Overview

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

Summary Financial Data (Revenues)

Revenues	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Legislative Grants	\$99,459,123	\$102,143,712	\$109,202,504
Local taxation	\$22,302,423	\$23,591,675	\$23,826,505
Board Revenues	\$2,618,216	\$3,777,186	\$2,687,250
Other Operating & capital Grants	\$6,299,789	\$6,810,342	\$5,077,945
Total Revenues	\$130,679,551	\$136,322,915	\$140,794,204

Summary Financial Data (Expenditure)

Expenditures:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Operating expenditures	\$103,139,901	\$110,374,766	\$124,405,266

Expenditures:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Capital expenditures – Before transfers to/from reserves	\$22,867,169	\$24,330,010	\$17,088,980
Transfer to/from reserves	\$-11880	\$1,216,582	\$-298,484
Total Expenditures	\$125,995,190	\$135,921,358	\$141,195,762
In-year Surplus (Deficit)	\$4,684,361	\$401,557	\$-401,558

School Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Retirement Gratuities	\$0	\$0	\$0
Reserve for Working Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0
School Activities	\$0	\$0	\$0
WSIB	\$289,312	\$0	\$0
Miscellaneous			
Renewals: Madeleine-de-Roybon		\$600,000	\$600,000
Renewals: L'Équinoxe		\$140,000	\$140,000
Renewal projects 2008-2009		\$337,265	\$337,265
Establishing partnerships	\$54,331		
Pupil Accommodation Debt Reserve	\$10,786,477	\$11,269,437	\$10,970,953
GPL Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Reserve Funds	\$11,130,120	\$11,130,120	\$12,048,218
Reserve for Working Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0
Special Education Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Distant School Reserves	\$0	\$0	\$0
Pupil Accommodation	\$0	\$0	\$0
Program Improvement Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0
Improved Access to Special Education	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other deferred operating revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve-School Buildings	\$0	\$0	\$0
Proceeds of Dispositions Reserve-Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
MECR/ BECR Reserve	\$0	\$0	\$0

School Board Reserve and Deferred Revenues:	2006-07 Financial Statements	2007-08 Financial Statements	2008-09 Revised Estimates
Reserve for education development charges	\$9	\$705	\$9
Other deferred capital revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Deferred Revenues	\$9	\$705	\$9
Total Board Reserves and Deferred Revenues	\$11,130,129	\$12,347,407	\$12,048,227

1.5 Key School Board Statistics

The following table highlights key statistics for the school board.

Summary Board Statistics

Day School Enrolment

Day School Enrolment	2002-03 Actual	2008-09 Rev. Estimates
Elementary Day School ADE	6,211	6,602
Secondary Day School ADE	2,997	3,361
Total Day School Enrolment	9,207	9,962

Primary Class Size

Primary Class Size	2003-04	2007-08
% of Classes Less Than 20	39%	90%
% of Classes Less Than 23	71%	100%
Average Class Size - Jr/Inter	23.44	23.4
% of 3/4 Classes 23 & Under	50%	100%
% of Combined Classes	8%	28%

Staffing

Staffing	2003-04	2007-08
School Based Teachers	571	753
Teacher Assistants	98	740
Other Student Support	56	1

Staffing	2003-04	2007-08
School Administration	34	0
School Clerical	67	1
School Operations	80	0
Other Non-Classroom	63	0
Total Staffing	969	1,495
Teacher - Pupil Ratio	1:16	1:13
FTE Staff per 1,000 Pupils (ADE)¹	105.2	150.1
Total Salary & Benefits as % of Net Operating Expenditures	78.2%	78.1%

Special Education

Special Education	2003-04	2007-08
Special Education Incremental Expenditures	\$8,510,137	\$12,690,065
Special Education Allocation	\$8,775,789	\$12,462,113
Spending above Allocation (Reserve)	\$-265,652	\$227,952

School Utilization

School Utilization	2003-04	2007-08
Number of schools	36	43
Total Enrolment (ADE)	9,207	9,962
School Capacity (Spaces)	11,164	13,881
% of surplus capacity (insufficient capacity)	82.5%	71.8%
Board Area (Km²)	37,514	37,514
Number of Trustees	12	13

¹ 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 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.	Yes
The director of education and senior management develop an annual board improvement plan of their goals/priorities, incorporating both academic and non-academic departments. The plan is aligned with the board's multi-year strategic plan and has goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely.	No
Senior management periodically/ annually report to the board on the status and outcomes of the annual board improvement plan.	Yes

Decision Making Processes

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

Organizational Structure and Accountability

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The organizational structure has clearly defined organizational units that delineate roles and responsibilities, minimize administrative costs and ensure effective and efficient operation.	Yes
The director has established a formal succession plan to manage retirements and resignations of key managers/administrators.	Yes
A departmental organization chart (supplemented with a Directory of key staff contact information) is publicly available on the board's web site.	Yes

Stakeholder Engagement

Leading Practices – Governance and School Board Administration	Evidence of Adoption?
The board of trustees and management proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis and through a variety of communication vehicles (e.g., websites, email, memos, town halls, etc.).	Yes
Key senior 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 CEPEO's governance structure is outlined in its internal school board administration policy, which clearly delineates the responsibilities of the board of trustees and the administration. According to this internal policy and its accompanying administrative guidelines, the board of trustees' role is to develop the school board's directions and to establish clear and consistent policies, whereas the Director of Education's role is to ensure their implementation and to report the school board's results against the established objectives.

The CEPEO is characterized by a relationship of trust and transparency between the administration and trustees in which the Director of Education acts as the liaison between the members of his administration and the board of trustees. The current Director of Education has been in his current position since 2006.

The board of trustees has 12 trustees and one student advisor. More than half of the trustees have served for more than 10 years on the board, and more than three have teaching experience. Trustees serve four-year terms. The Chair serves for a one-year term. This is the second term for the current Chair.

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

The CEPEO's strategic direction was revised in 2007 and introduced an accountability framework, which replaced the former school board's strategic plan. The accountability framework was developed by the administration and validated by the board of trustees.

The accountability framework outlines three systemic objectives or strategic axes for the CEPEO:

1. Improve student achievement,
2. Increase recruitment and retention of students and staff members,
3. Increase public confidence.

The Director of Education's annual report presents the CEPEO's annual progress for the three strategic axes. After having read the last Director of Education's report, we noted that school enrolment increased by nearly 25% since the Board's inception, and that by the end of the 2007/2008 school year, the CEPEO had surpassed all of the 75% provincial targets for Grade 6 EQAO test results that were slated for 2011. The Director of Education provides the Board with a mid-year progress report on the school board's literacy and numeracy goals. The school board's student retention rate is presented annually to the board of trustees in a report that includes the rates and reasons for CEPEO student withdrawal, allowing the school board to implement strategies to improve student retention (e.g., a broader choice of options for the secondary level).

With the help of an external consultant, the administration has created an annual improvement plan, called the 2009-2012 action plan, which outlines the strategic objectives to be reached by 2012, the overall performance measures for each of the three strategic axes within the accountability framework, as well as the scheduled steps to meet these objectives for each year within the 2009-2012 time period. CEPEO's annual improvement plan also presents a fourth strategic axis or cross strategic axis that deals with technology innovation, along with the strategic objective to be achieved by 2012 and relevant annual actionable steps. At the time of this review, the annual improvement plan had not yet been approved by the trustees. The administration expects to submit its multi-year improvement plan to the board of trustees for approval in June 2009.

With regard to student achievement, the CEPEO's annual improvement plan is supported by the school board's annual improvement plan for literacy and numeracy and the improvement plans of individual schools. The annual improvement plan for literacy and numeracy is developed by the Director of Education and the Student Success Leader. School improvement plans are created by school principals in

collaboration with the superintendents and academic services department. The school board's improvement plan and the school improvement plans contain measurable targets. Improvement targets for the EQAO tests, based on the class profiles for each school as well as CEPEO's overall improvement targets for the EQAO tests, have been developed for each school since 2007.

The first strategic axis, which consists of improving student achievement, is the only one with measurable targets. The school board has not yet identified measurable targets for the three other strategic axes found within the CEPEO's accountability framework.

For the non-academic departments such as human resources, finance and facilities management, the administration has developed a multi-year planning table that outlines the school board's priorities for all administrative departments. In the past two years, the school board's highest priority for administrative departments has been the stabilization of the school board's financial situation. For the 2008/2009 school year, the plan included a stabilization of administrative departments and specified the top three priorities for each of the following departments: finance, human resources, plant department, and IT and technology services. The priorities for each administrative department for the 2009/2010 school year have not yet been identified. Management plans to use the services of a contracted consultant to develop an action plan and work with the administrative departments to develop a CEPEO operational action plan that contains the future priorities and the improvement plans of the administrative departments.

Decision-Making Process

The board of trustees' decision-making process is clearly described and documented. Procedural rules outlining the decision-making processes and the organization of board meetings are documented and communicated to all trustees. These procedural rules define the minimum or standard agenda content of annual and scheduled board meetings. They define the necessary quorum for scheduled, unscheduled and special meetings as well as the procedures for modifying the agenda. A monthly table with subject matters to be studied by the board of trustees has been in place for a few years and is used as a launching pad for developing the agenda.

The trustees meet every third Tuesday of each month for regular board meetings. As is specified in the procedural rules, the board of trustees forms statutory committees to help with decision making. It may also create standing or ad hoc committees as well as workgroups to help with the decision-making process when needs/specific issues arise. The board's Chair and Vice-Chair as well as the Director of Education are ex officio members of all the committees. Three trustees are selected every year to sit on each board committee. School trustees who are not members of these committees are invited to participate in committee meetings on a voluntary basis.

The CEPEO's standing committees whose mandates are outlined in the board's procedural rules are the education committee, the business committee and the audit committee. The transportation committee and the special education advisory committee are also part of the CEPEO's standing committees. Their mandate, composition, meeting agendas and minutes are posted on the school board's website.

Among the CEPEO's committees, the business committee is the one responsible for examining issues concerning the management of administrative departments in accordance with the board's policies. The business committee's mandate is to be aware of all files related to the CEPEO's general administration and departmental management, and to analyze and recommend appropriate measures to promote and/or improve business management programs at the CEPEO. The Director of Education, three school trustees as well as the directors of the four administrative departments are members of the business committee. The business committee meets monthly and supports the board of trustees in its decision making on CEPEO's operational management. Proposals for new policies or changes to existing policies are systematically presented to the business committee by management before they are presented for approval in full board of trustee meetings.

Subjects addressed by the business committee are identified and discussed first by the school board's executive committee. The executive committee is composed of the key members of the administration, such as the Director of Education, the three superintendents of education, the executive director of the academic services department, the finance manager, the HR manager, the plant manager, the IT and technology services manager and an administrative assistant. The executive committee meets weekly to discuss subject matters that have an impact on finances, strategy or the results of the school board. Items that need to be submitted to the board of trustees for discussion or decision making are added to the draft agenda, which the Director of Education presents monthly to the board's Chair or Vice-Chair for approval one week prior to a scheduled board of trustees or business committee meeting, depending on the nature or status of the subject matter to be added. Board members may also add subject matters for discussion or decision making to the agenda by communicating them before noon the day of a scheduled or unscheduled board meeting. During meetings, an agenda may be changed by a vote of two-thirds of the board members in attendance.

The school board has more than a hundred policies and more than forty administrative guidelines that can be found on its website. All policies and administrative guidelines have an adoption date and an effective date, but only some policies mention a revision date. The school board's internal policy specifies that the Director of Education is responsible for reviewing policies regularly, but it does not specify a systematic review cycle. Currently, existing policies and administrative guidelines are generally reviewed in response to new Ministry or legislative requirements.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The organization of the Board's senior administration appears to be well founded and operating effectively. Non-academic departmental directors have been on the executive committee since 2006. They present their respective on-going business, and they are informed of the priorities of other departments, including academic services. According to the board of trustees' Chair, the Director of Education and the departmental directors, this horizontal organizational structure allows for a better collaboration and cooperation between non-academic, academic and administrative departments.

The responsibilities of the three superintendents of education are clearly defined and documented. Each superintendent was assigned a portfolio of responsibilities (supervision of the community development officer, supervision of classroom consultants and special education) as well as a group of 10 schools. The duties of management and the superintendents with regard to planning, implementation and monitoring the school improvement plans are also clearly defined and documented. Superintendents are supported by the school board's academic services, which include the classroom consultants, identity building worker, technology integration advisors, as well as the data research, analysis and management services, which report to the executive director of planning, accountability and research. As for non-academic departments, the division of responsibilities between the departments is clearly defined for the majority of shared procedures, such as the staffing procedure.

Management has established a formal succession plan for principals and vice-principals in order to manage departures. The first step in the succession plan includes inviting all teachers to participate in a first module on school leadership so they can learn about the Principal's Qualification Program (PQP) and CEPEO's accountability framework. Interested individuals are encouraged to complete the program. Once the modules are completed, the superintendent responsible for the succession plan and the school principal in question develops a complete profile for each candidate, including strengths and areas for improvement as well as professional development. Candidates who have participated in the succession program and have met the requirements will be invited to participate in the selection process for the list of qualified candidates.

To ensure the succession of managers at the Board's administration level, management and the board of trustees rely mainly on the current superintendent and assistant manager positions in non-academic departments to prepare future candidates for the Director of Education and manager positions. In order to assist with the identification and development of future managers or directors, management has also developed a staff development program called "Bâtisseurs d'excellence" (Creating Excellence). Once it is approved by the Board, the program should be formally launched by the end of April 2009. In May 2009, staff members will be invited to submit their candidacy, which will be reviewed by the selection committee. Selected candidates will be invited to a

recognition ceremony where they will receive an award. The list of award winners will be included in a press release.

Detailed organizational charts that include the different superintendents and administrative departments are published on the school board's website. For the majority of departments, a description of the departments along with a directory of key staff contact information is published on the school board's website. As a next step, the school board could ensure that a description and mandate of each department and as well as key staff contact information are published on the school board's website.

Stakeholder Engagement

The board of trustees and management proactively engage internal and external stakeholders on a regular basis. Through a variety of communication vehicles (website postings, emails, memos, posters, press releases, forums and public consultations) are used to ensure the participation of key stakeholders throughout the year. The CEPEO also relies on its website to communicate to external stakeholders the Director of Education's report, minutes of meetings of the board of trustees and its committees, and the school board's financial statements.

In 2001, the school board hired a consultant to develop a communications and marketing strategy to refine its student recruitment strategy. In 2010, the school board plans to hire another consultant to review and update the school board's marketing and communications plan. The CEPEO plans to implement a community development model to maintain and increase student enrolment for the 2009/2010 school year. Five community officers will be assigned throughout the CEPEO's territory in order to forge strategic partnerships with parents and the community. The role of community officers will be to provide support to CEPEO schools in forging relationships with their community, welcoming and integrating newcomers, and developing early childhood services. The school board's community development strategy was documented and submitted to the board of trustees in early April 2009.

The CEPEO conducts surveys with parents of the school board's students every two years. Through the school principals, who explain the survey methodology to the school councils, forms are distributed to parents and sent back directly to the school board for processing. Satisfaction of secondary students and employees is also surveyed every two years. As a next step, the school board could consider reporting annually on parent, student and employee survey results.

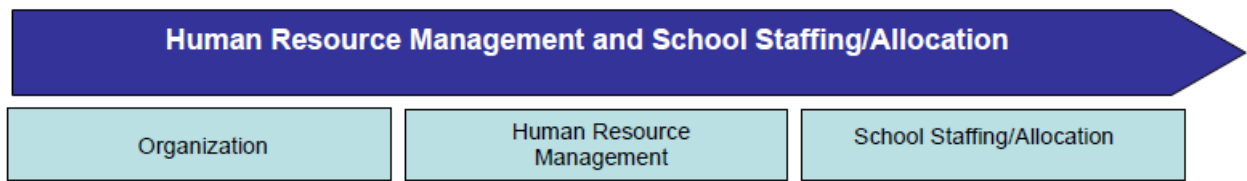
Board administration members are actively involved in various national and provincial forums, including the Fédération nationale des conseils scolaires francophones (FNCSF), the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), the Conseil ontarien des directions de l'éducation en langue française (CODELF) and the Ontario Public

School Boards' Association (OPSBA). The finance manager sits on the Council of Senior Business Officials committee (COSBO). The HR manager sits on the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA). The transportation coordinator sits on the provincial transportation committee. This ensures that the school board learns from and shares best practices from across the sector.

Recommendations:

- The school board should continue its efforts to develop an annual board improvement plan of their goals/priorities that includes non-academic departments. Similar to what was done for the student achievement strategic axis, the school board should also develop goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely for the overall strategic goals of the three other strategic axes within its accountability framework, namely recruitment/retention, public confidence and technological innovation.
- The school board should consider planning a review date for policies and directives that currently do not have one. This would allow the Director of Education to develop the review plan specified in the school board's internal policy, which also requires presenting to the board of trustees the various roles and responsibilities, required resources and staff, and the assessment strategy and deadlines for the policy reviews.

3. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocation – Findings and Recommendations



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

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

3.1 Human Resource Organization

The review of the organization of the HR department assesses:

- Whether appropriate policies and procedures have been established and maintained to support the HR functions and required priorities, and whether they are aligned with the school board’s directions;
- Whether an annual plan setting out the goals and priorities and their alignment to the school board’s strategic directions has been established;
- Whether the roles and responsibilities of staff support the key functions, activities and practices of HR;
- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

The following table summarizes the leading practices defined for HR 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 – 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 organization chart is available.	Yes
Senior HR staff has appropriate designations (e.g., Certified Human Resource Professional, etc.).	Yes

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

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

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The mandate of the CEPEO’s HR department is to provide advice, recommendations and specialized services to all regular, occasional or contractual school board employees on HR management and practices. The HR department’s mandate and objectives are available on the school board’s website. The HR department’s goals include the following: to ensure that staff is managed according to legislative requirements, current collective agreements and school board policies; to manage and maintain personnel files in compliance with legislative requirements and school board policies; to manage the collective agreement bargaining process and labour relations with employee group representatives; to collaborate with managers on the staffing, recruiting, hiring and appointment procedures; to implement various procedures, such

as staff performance appraisal as well as the HR component of the BAS software; and to offer consultation and support services to managers, schools and administrative departments.

The HR function currently does not develop its own annual departmental plan. For non-academic departments, which include the HR department, the administration developed a multi-year planning table that identifies the school board's priorities for all administrative departments. For the 2008/2009 school year, the priorities of the HR department, as were presented in the administrative departments' annual planning overview, were: 1. union contract renewals, 2. standardization of work conditions, 3. employee recognition. The priorities for the 2009/2010 school year have not yet been documented, but they should include: higher quality substitute teachers, monthly orientation days for new employees, attendance tracking of non-teaching staff, as well as the training and professional development of support staff.

The HR manager reports weekly to the executive committee and monthly to the business committee on issues relating to human resources and collective bargaining. A monthly personnel report outlining appointments, resignations, retirements and terminations is presented in camera to the board of trustees.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The HR manager reports to the Director of Education and is a member of the executive committee. The HR manager is currently supported in her HR management role by three team supervisors: an HR coordinator, a payroll and benefits administrator and an employee relations manager who acts as the assistant HR manager. An officer responsible for attendance and substitute teachers as well as the department's administrative staff report directly to the HR manager. The HR manager works directly on files such as labour relations, collective bargaining, and recruitment and coordination activities with the finance department for the staffing of teachers.

The HR coordinator, who is responsible for the staffing of all teaching or support staff groups, and the payroll and benefits administrator each supervise three employees, who are in turn responsible for about 10 schools each. This structure seems to provide a better customer service in that it allows schools within the school board to work with the same HR employees (i.e., one payroll clerk and one staffing clerk, instead of six possible HR contacts). The assistant manager supervises one assistant as well as the health, safety and security officer and coordinator, who are responsible for the management of Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) files.

The roles and responsibilities of each HR staff member are clearly defined. A detailed organizational chart of the HR department is published on the school board's website. The division of schools between the HR clerks or supervisors is regularly communicated to school principals, superintendents and departmental managers by email. As a next

step, the school board should ensure that all functions are documented and updated for all staff and that they are easily accessible by publishing them, for example on the school board's intranet.

Department staff have appropriate HR qualifications or relevant experience.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

HR policies are published on the school board's website. The school board has developed more than 20 policies on topics such as: hiring of staff, employment equity, teaching supervision and evaluation, criminal background checks, disciplinary measures, recognition upon retirement, etc. The policies are not subjected to a documented, systematic review cycle; however, a review of the material demonstrates that the department is focused on maintaining and updating them so that they remain up to date. As a next step, the Board should consider adding review dates to policies and procedures that currently do not have one.

The HR department communicates regularly with stakeholders on existing policies and administrative procedures through meetings held at least three times a year with managers, i.e., all school board employees who supervise staff. Three training sessions were organized this year by the HR department, including one on staffing, one on attendance and another one on labour relations. In order to ensure that the information is shared with all staff, the HR department asks school principals to allocate 15 minutes during a professional activity day to speak with staff about policies and administrative guidelines that affect them. This level of communication facilitates policy training and creates a broad awareness and understanding of the Board's HR policies and procedures.

Despite the school board's vast territory, the department's organization is centralized with the exception of the interview process. The centralization of HR management processes at the school board headquarters helps to ensure a consistent implementation of policies and administrative guidelines.

To ensure policy compliance, the HR department also uses several controls, such as the requirement to have two signatures for certain procedures like the launch of competition, or the requirement to obtain the Director of Education's signature for other procedures like hiring.

To ensure adherence to the school board's policies on criminal background checks for staff and nepotism, the HR department uses an online application for recruitment and another software called ICOD from which the staff list is downloaded annually. All school board employees are invited to fill out the online form and answer questions on their criminal background and possible relationships within the CEPEO. This tool allows

the school board to ensure compliance with both these policies in a simple and effective manner.

To ensure policy compliance, the HR department created a table, which clearly outlines the current controls in place for each HR policy. This table should be shared within the school board and used by other administrative departments within the CEPEO.

Recommendation:

- Management should develop an annual HR departmental plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link departmental objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the HR department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.

3.2 Human Resource Management

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

- Planning and processes are in place for the recruitment of the appropriate number of qualified staff to support the student achievement targets;
- Appropriate processes are in place to promote the personal and professional growth of all staff;
- Adequate systems and procedures are in place to manage employee compensation plans, labour relations, employee performance and attendance and other support services to foster employee satisfaction;
- Opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes can be identified.

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

Staff Recruitment

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

Labour Relations

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

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

Leading Practices – Human 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.	Yes
Management periodically reports on the effectiveness of the attendance management process/programs to senior management and the board.	Yes

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.	No

Leading Practices – Human Resource Management	Evidence of Adoption?
HR records are current, including the formal tracking of teacher qualifications and experience.	Yes
HR Management has implemented an approved pay equity plan, which is reviewed periodically and amended as necessary.	Yes

Management of the School Board's Benefit Plans

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

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

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

Staff Recruitment

The CEPEO has a policy for the staff hiring process. According to this policy, the responsibility of hiring staff, with the exception of academic services managers, rests with the Director of Education. A form must be filled out and signed by the finance department and the Director of Education for each new hire. The determination of academic positions to be filled is done annually by the superintendents in consultation with the school principals and the school board's finance department, based on needs and funded positions. The determination of non-academic positions to be filled is done by the administrative departments in consultation with the finance department, based on needs and available funds. All school board hires need to be formally validated by the Director of Education, who includes the new hires in his monthly report to the board of trustees on staff changes.

The HR department develops an annual recruitment plan, which contains the actions, timelines and responsibilities for the preparation of promotional and recruitment materials for CEPEO representatives to use in various job fairs. In addition to job fairs and recruitment campaigns in newspapers, the school board relies on its public website to attract potential candidates and to manage the receipt and processing of online applications. For the 2008/2009 school year, nearly 90% of the 750 applications were completed on the school board's website. The online application allows the HR department to categorize applicants by region and by qualification, which dramatically reduces the amount of time needed for identifying candidates who meet the needs of schools. Once a candidate is pre-selected, he or she is invited to an interview by the principal. Candidates who receive a hiring recommendation must be approved by the respective superintendent, and then are asked to take a French test. This test is organized and graded within the school board's headquarters in order to ensure consistency in the hiring process.

The recruitment process for non-academic staff is similar to the recruitment process for school staff with the exception of the language tests, which are not required for nonacademic staff who have received a hiring recommendation. The school board recognizes that not all candidates have access to the internet. For these candidates, the school board proposes filling out the online applications using the information that candidates filled out on their paper applications. For non-academic positions, the online application also offers the possibility of filling out a shorter "express" application in order to encourage a greater number of applicants to use the CEPEO's online application tool.

As part of its recruitment strategy, the Board asks principals to submit a report with recommendations for teachers who had either an internship or substitute position within the CEPEO. This procedure is useful for maintaining the CEPEO's database with quality candidates with prior school board experience.

Labour Relations

In 2008, the school board renewed six collective agreements with its employee groups, which are composed of regular and occasional secondary and elementary teachers, the custodial maintenance group, and administrative and teaching support staff. These collective agreements are managed by the HR manager and assistant manager. Since the start of 2009, management has continued implementing the new collective agreements, including new procedures for staffing and training of principals on the new terms and conditions. This year, management is occupied with standardizing the work conditions of employees in different unions. The HR department created a table comparing the various clauses found in the collective agreements to assist the school board's senior management in managing their staff.

The school board has joint committees in place. During joint meetings, which are held at least three times per year, alignment to collective agreement is examined and potential problems or contentious issues are discussed.

The training of senior management on the terms of collective agreements as well as the development of support tools for senior management, such as the comparative table mentioned above, have allowed the school board to reduce the number of grievances related to the interpretation of collective agreements. The organization of joint meetings, where contentious issues are discussed, limits the number of grievances. Since 2007, only two of the school board's 15 grievances have gone to arbitration.

Employee Performance Evaluation Processes

The school board has developed policies on employee performance evaluations for academic and non-academic staff.

The performance appraisal of teaching staff conforms to the current requirements of the Ministry of Education. In accordance with Ministry requirements, experienced teachers are evaluated on a five-year cycle, while new teachers are evaluated twice during their first two years as part of the New Teacher Induction Program. The Board does not have a formal evaluation process for substitute teachers with the exception of the collective agreement, which mentions the possibility for school principals to conduct an evaluation when a substitute teacher's competencies are in question. In practice, the HR department asks principals to submit a report that provides recommendations on substitute teachers working within the CEPEO. As a next step, the school board could formalize this practice in an administrative guideline to ensure that performance appraisals for substitute staff are completed by all principals.

The appraisal policy for non-academic or support staff indicates that an evaluation must be conducted after 18 months. In practice, non-teaching staff are evaluated every three years, as senior management are required to rate 33% of their support staff each year. To support management in this task, the HR department sends a table containing a list of their staff members and the date of their last evaluation at the beginning of the school year. This table helps management to identify the staff members to be evaluated in the upcoming year.

The management of teaching staff performance appraisals is supported by software developed by the school board, which is called "EvalEns". EvalEns is organized according to the six steps of the evaluation process for teaching staff. The software includes an appraisal schedule and tools for teaching staff. An automated tracking system reminds principals and supervisors of the different appraisals to be performed in a given timeframe. EvalEns thus enables the HR department to ensure that requirements for teaching staff performance appraisals are met.

The school board has a policy on disciplinary actions that is based on the progressive discipline principle and that places the emphasis on rehabilitation and not on punishment. The CEPEO's progressive disciplinary process includes a verbal warning prior to disciplinary actions. The HR department provides extensive support for managers and supervisors on matters of discipline during an annual training session on disciplinary actions conducted by either internal experts or lawyers, and which includes the use of practical cases. Disciplinary action is administered jointly by the school principals and the HR department. All disciplinary warnings are sent by the school to the school board's headquarters. An HR employee is present for all interviews related to a disciplinary action. The disciplinary action policy specifies the level of responsibility required from the supervisor to send a reprimand letter, to suspend an employee without pay or to recommend a termination, and it also specifies that all terminations must be approved by the Director of Education.

Attendance Management Processes/Programs

The attendance rate for the CEPEO's teaching staff has been decreasing by about 1% each year since 2005/2006. The school board has established procedures for tracking employee attendance and encouraging their accountability. For example, after three consecutive days of absence, employees must submit a medical certificate to the principal. Upon request, they may be required to submit a doctor's note after one day of absence. All medical certificates are sent to the HR department where they are validated. Advance medical certificates are not accepted, and the length of recovery is verified against the recovery standards published by the WSIB. The health, safety and security coordinator, who is responsible for WSIB records, coordinates long-term illnesses and recoveries with employees and their doctors in order to facilitate their return to work, notably through workplace accommodations.

The CEPEO uses the software called Supply Employee Management System (SEMS), for reporting absences and automating calls for substitute teachers. When an employee is absent due to illness or is on leave, the employee is required to call the SEMS and enter his or her absence code. There is an interface between the SEMS and the school board's integrated system for payroll and the management of personnel records, BAS, which allows the HR department to generate periodic reports on absenteeism among teaching staff. Attendance is monitored daily by the HR department. Each year, absenteeism reports are subjected to a comprehensive analysis, and are formally presented to the board of trustees. During the year, a report for each school is sent to principals every quarter. As a next step, the school board could consider tracking absenteeism among support staff.

Management of HR and Payroll Data

As part of a consortium with other French-language school boards, the CEPEO bought a BAS licence, which includes a payroll management module. The Board's payroll is managed in-house. Payroll functions are managed by three payroll clerks who are supervised by a payroll officer and an administrator who both report to the HR manager. Official employee records are kept in the school board's main office. Personnel files are maintained by HR staff. When a change must be made to an employee record, an HR officer working in the staffing division fills out a change notice form. Then, the form is sent to the payroll division where the payroll clerks make the change in the BAS. As was identified by an external auditor, this work method diminishes the quality of the monitoring system that is based on the division of duties between the management of HR data and payroll.

Management has developed effective processes to ensure that teacher qualifications and experience are formally tracked and updated. An HR officer is responsible for tracking and updating classification information, through regular downloads from the Ontario College of Teachers database.

The school board developed an equity plan for all its employee groups in 2002. The equity plans were reviewed regularly (every two years) until 2005, when several functions were changed. As a next step, the school board should consider reviewing equity plans in order to ensure that the school board's pay equity program is up-to-date.

Management of the School Board's Benefit Plans

The school board offers a range of employee benefits. The school board manages its benefits plan through an insurance company's management services, as part of a consortium with 11 other French-language school boards in Ontario. Neither the CEPEO nor the consortium of French-language school boards employs external consultants to annually review the insurance company and to verify the validity and accuracy of claims processing.

School board employees are informed of the benefits available to them through their information packages from the insurance company. The HR department has not identified a need to develop supplementary communication materials.

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

Monitoring Staff Satisfaction

The HR department carries out formal, general staff surveys to solicit feedback on the priorities of the Board or on general attitudes. The last staff survey carried out by an external consultant dates back to 2005. The recommendations from the survey, such as the poor staff satisfaction regarding decision making, were taken into consideration by management for the reorganization of the school board. This year, the school board hopes to be able to give the survey again to track staff satisfaction levels.

The Board does not currently conduct formal employee exit interviews. Confidential interviews are organized for special cases; however, this practice is applied on a case-by-case basis. A policy and administrative guidelines on exit interviews are currently being drafted. The HR department's objective is to create a standard exit letter that proposes to the exiting individual the possibility of either attending an exit interview or filling out a form attached to the exit letter with a pre-paid envelope in order to increase feedback.

Recommendations:

- The school board should conduct periodic reviews of the insurance carrier (Administrative Services Only) that manages medical and dental claims, in order to ensure that the school board's claims are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.
- The HR department should continue its efforts to introduce exit interviews for those who are leaving their positions.
- The HR department should ensure that payroll processing is segregated from changes to employee data by modifying the access rights of its staff in the BAS system so that one employee alone cannot perform several transactions for the same operational cycle.

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 Staffing and Allocation

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

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

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

Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

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

Planning and Processes for Annual Staffing and Allocation

The teacher staffing process is managed jointly by the planning department of facilities management, the HR department, the finance department and the responsible superintendents. Staffing for other employee groups is managed together by the HR department, the finance department and the responsible superintendent, in the case of school staff.

The planning department is responsible for the CEPEO's student enrolment projections. In March 2009, the department developed a guide entitled *Guide de calcul des prévisions d'effectifs et étapes à suivre* (Guide for calculating enrolment projections) for the school board's management, which describes the method used to calculate enrolment projections. The planning office uses the enrolment patterns of the past five years to calculate its school-by-school enrolment projections using ratios. For each school, ratios are calculated based on the quotient of the number of students for each grade level in the past year over the number of students are moving on to the grade level in the following year. The planning office presents four tables per school to the business committee:

1. Enrolment projections calculated using the average ratios of the past four school years.
2. Enrolment projections calculated using the maximum ratios of the past four school years.
3. Enrolment projections calculated using the minimum ratios of the past four school years.
4. Enrolment projections calculated using trend-based ratios from the planning office, which take into consideration variables such as population growth, the number of housing development projects in construction, families relocating, language, immigration, emigration, culture and religion.

The guide also outlines the chronological order of the steps to be followed for developing and then formalizing enrolment projections.

The annual allocation planning process starts in January when enrolment projections are presented to the business committee, and then to the Ministry of Education. This is then followed by the determination of school board's directions and priorities for staff allocation by the executive committee. Based on enrolment projections and allocation priorities identified by the executive committee, the finance department develops preliminary staffing levels that it submits to the executive committee in March. The staff allocation projection process is developed on a school-by-school basis, and considers both a top-down and a bottom-up approach. In early April, the finance department sends each school an Excel file entitled "calculatrice", or "calculator", containing the preliminary staffing levels. Schools are then invited to propose staff allocations by level and by class while respecting the total anticipated by the finance department's preliminary staffing levels. Afterwards, superintendents propose changes to the school staffing levels based on enrolment variances or on specific needs to the executive committee for approval. If additional staff is required, the executive committee seeks the approval of the board of trustees again. Any changes made to the staffing level after the year-end must be sent to the HR department with the finance department's approval

form signed by the finance manager and the Director of Education. The form must indicate the board's resolution number or the funding source for new needs, as applicable.

The planning process for special education staff is based on a detailed student needs analysis that is conducted jointly by the schools, the special education department's management and the superintendent of special education. Other school-based support staff allocations are based on past formulas, taking into account budget constraints in the final determination.

The staffing plan approved by the board of trustees during the validation period of the regular budget is reviewed in October to integrate any changes. Overall, the school board pursues conservative staffing allocation to hedge against significant variances between forecasts and actual enrolment. Any changes to the board-approved staffing plan must be made through a form that must be signed by the finance department and the Director of Education.

Monitoring and Reporting on Staff Allocation

The executive committee is responsible for ensuring that school staffing is carried out according to Ministry directives on matters such as class size, preparation time and collective agreement requirements. Responsibility for monitoring staff allocation is shared among executive committee members. The Board develops a conservative staff allocation plan to avoid surplus staff, and periodically follows up on the original allocation plan by monitoring actual staff allocation.

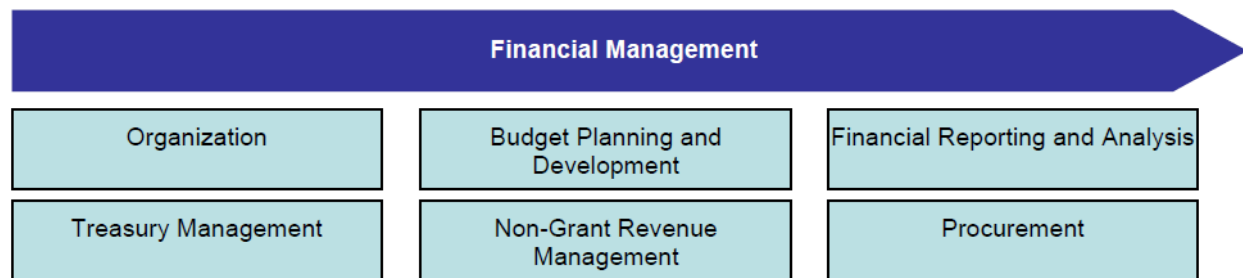
Benchmarking Costs with Other Boards and Funding

The school board regularly receives from the labour relations office that serves all 12 French-language school boards comparisons of the working conditions of its management and support staff with that of similar school boards. The HR manager tracks several efficiency measures, such as the number of employees on the payroll, turnover rate and the ratio of staff per 1000 full-time equivalents. In order to gather information for comparison with other school boards or other employers, the HR manager looks at the OPSBA portal and reviews surveys, and participated in a survey conducted by the Human Resource Benchmarking Network (HRBN) every year until 2007 (the HR manager hope to rejoin an HR benchmarking network in 2009 if the budget permits). The HR department performs regular comparisons to ensure the efficient use of resources within the department.

Recommendation:

- There are no recommendations for this section.

4. Financial Management – Findings and Recommendations



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

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

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

4.1 Finance Organization

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

- The establishment of policies and procedures to support the key finance functions, activities and required business priorities and their alignment with student achievement targets;
- Financial services branch support of the overall goals/priorities and accountability measures established by the school board;
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the departmental structure and support of the roles and responsibilities for the key functions, activities and practices;

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

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

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

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

Organizational Structure and Accountability

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

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

Leading Practices – Finance Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor finance policy compliance.	No
Management provides scheduled finance policy and procedures awareness, training and skills development educational sessions.	No

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The finance department is responsible for budgeting, accounting, accounts payable, accounts receivable and school board transportation coordination. The school board’s purchases are managed by the planning and purchasing coordinator of the CEPEO’s plant department. The finance department’s mandate and objectives are not posted on the school board’s website.

The finance department does not currently have an annual plan. For non-academic departments, the administration has developed a multi-year planning table that identifies the school board's priorities for all administrative departments. For the 2008/2009 academic year, the finance department's priorities, as presented in the annual planning summary for administrative departments, were:

1. Capital asset accounting,
2. Implementing controls to meet new timelines for financial statements and revised projections, and
3. Establishing an audit committee.

The priorities for the 2009/2010 academic year have not yet been formally documented.

The finance manager provides reports on financial matters for the weekly executive committee meetings and monthly business committee meetings.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The finance manager reports to the Director of Education and is a member of the executive committee. The finance manager is supported by the budget and accounting coordinator, finance coordinator, data management and BAS training coordinator, transportation coordinator and administrative assistant. The budget and accounting coordinator is responsible mainly for tracking and monitoring school board expenses. She is assisted by an officer in preparing and monitoring the budget process for expenditures, and also by an accounting officer and an accounts payable clerk. The finance coordinator is primarily responsible for tracking and monitoring school board revenue, debt service and capital assets. She is supported by an officer in preparing and monitoring the budget process for revenue, and also by a school fund officer. Preparing the Board's financial statements is the joint responsibility of the budget and accounting coordinator and the finance coordinator. With the assistance of a transportation clerk, the transportation coordinator tracks and coordinates the delivery of services of three transportation consortia in which the CEPEO participates.

The roles and responsibilities of the members of the finance department are clearly defined and documented in most cases. A detailed organizational chart is available on the school board's website.

Informal exchanges are held daily within the finance department to share priorities and initiatives. Department staff have appropriate financial designations or relevant experience to perform their roles.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The department has a dozen policies that are posted on the school board's website. The policies cover most pertinent aspects of financial management, including budget projections, budget adoption, signing and approval authority, banking operations, procurement, expense reimbursement, and funding to external organizations. The policies are not subjected to a documented, systematic review cycle; however, a review of the material demonstrates that the department is focused on maintaining and updating them so that they remain up-to-date and applicable. As a next step, the school board should consider adding a review date to policies and directives that currently do not have one.

With the exception of the annual training session on the BAS and the system's new functions, the finance department does not currently provide scheduled awareness sessions and/or training and skills development sessions on finance policies. In practice, the department relies on informal contacts with different budget holders and the Board's staff, and communicates new procedures to finance staff to ensure policy compliance. The finance department created a document called "descriptions narratives", or narrative descriptions, which outlines the various steps for payments, receiving merchandise, deposits, and bank reconciliations to assist departmental staff members in implementing the required controls. As a next step, the school board could consider using this document for occasional assessments of staff compliance with the school board's administrative guidelines and policies.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual finance departmental plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link departmental objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the finance department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
- The finance department should implement processes to ensure compliance with financial policies, which could include periodic communication of the policies to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the policies.

- The finance department should regularly provide scheduled finance policy and procedures awareness, training and skills development educational sessions.

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 all significant risks during budget planning, and develops strategies to mitigate the risk of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels.	No

Annual Budget Development Process

The school board has developed a budget adoption policy that outlines the characteristics of budget estimates, and that includes a formal budgeting schedule.

- Presentation of budget estimates to the finance committee on the second Tuesday of April;
- Review of budget estimates;
- Recommendation of the finance committee to the board of trustees on the second Tuesday of June;
- Board adoption of budget estimates on the third Tuesday of June.

The annual staff allocation planning process starts every year in January with the presentation of enrolment projections by the planning department to the business committee and then the Ministry of Education. This is then followed by the determination of school board's directions and priorities for staff allocation by the executive committee. Teacher allocation is processed first. The finance department provides a preliminary calculation of funded positions based on enrolment projections. Then, the executive committee makes the teacher allocation recommendations to the trustees.

For the finance department, the budget development process starts in February with the calculation of forecasted salaries based on the executive committee's direction and the teacher allocation approved by the board of trustees. Once the salaries have been calculated, the budget and accounting coordinator works on the operational expenditure

forecasts. The Excel expenditure budget templates are sent to budget holders in early March. The budget holders are invited to review their budgets based on the previous year's budgets. In early April, the expenditure forecasts, which have been created by the budget holders, are reviewed by the budget and accounting coordinator, and then inputted into the EFIS to create a preliminary budget. The following budget envelopes are reviewed separately at the executive committee meeting:

- Administration,
- School principals and vice-principals,
- School administration – secretaries,
- School operations – custodians,
- Coordinators and consultants,
- Student transportation, • Continuing education, • Special education, and
- School renewals.

The preliminary budget is presented to the executive committee for approval in May.

After the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) announcement and after receiving the technical document, the budget is modified by the executive committee in April, May and June. The regular budget validated by the executive committee is presented to the trustees for approval at the end of July. The finance department updates the EFIS and submits the budget to the Ministry of Education by June 30.

Then, the budget is revised in October based on actual enrolment. The revised budget is presented to the board of trustees in January as an information item. The business committee, comprised of three trustees and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the board of trustees, deliberates over the budget and discusses initiatives throughout the budget development process.

The school board's policy on budget estimates and on its control mechanism specifies that the Director of Education is responsible, as the chief executive officer, for budget administration. Except for emergencies, the policy states that the use of contingency funds must be approved by the board of trustees and a report to that effect must be submitted. All other non-budgeted expenses must be approved by the board of trustees by specifying the funding source. According to the same policy, any board of trustees' resolution with financial impacts that were not included in the budget must clearly

indicate where the necessary funds to carry out the resolution are expected to come from.²

The annual budget presented for trustee approval demonstrates that it is linked to the goals and priorities that were approved by the board of trustees, including student achievement targets. Footnotes containing explanatory notes are included for each funding envelope to provide useful and understandable information on budget decisions and their impact on the school board's performance objectives and indicators.

Enrolment Forecasting Linked to Budget Development

The planning department is responsible for developing enrolment forecasts whereas the finance department is responsible for the accuracy and budgetary impact of the enrolment forecast.

In November and December, enrolment forecasts are calculated by the CEPEO's planning department using updated enrolments received in October. In February, the planning office consults principals on the October 31 enrolment forecasts for each level in order to approve trends or provide input and adjust numbers. Principals use current registrations to provide input. Principals are presented with enrolment tables for each level at their school in the past five years and enrolment forecasts for each level for next October 31. In early March, superintendents meet with the planning coordinator to verify the enrolment forecasts submitted by principals. The superintendents adjust the expected numbers for next October 31, as needed. The enrolment forecasts are finally reviewed by the executive committee in late March in order to recommend to the board of trustees that they become official. A report formalizing the enrolment forecasts is presented to the board of trustees. In April, the official enrolment forecasts are used by the school board to prepare the budget and staffing levels for the upcoming school year.³

The planning department monitors very closely the accuracy of enrolment forecasts. In an annual report created in October, the planning department compares enrolment forecasts against the actual enrolment, the margin of error as represented by the number of students and its equivalence in grant money. For the 2008/2009 school year, the margin of error was less than 2.5% for the October 31, 2008 enrolment figures.

² <http://www.cepeo.on.ca/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=n5vgWWr0OY4%3d&tabid=171>: Collection of policies, fin99-02, finances, Budget estimates – control mechanism (in French only)

³ Guide de calcul des prévisions d'effectifs et étapes à suivre [Guide for calculating enrolment projections], CEPEO.

Identification of Risks and Mitigation Strategies

According to the finance department, the key risk faced by the school board is the relationship between enrolment and grant revenue. The school board mitigates the risk of spending beyond authorized/budgeted levels by closely monitoring enrolment forecasts versus actual enrolment. The finance department ensures that the final expenditure budget incorporates all known cost changes, and that it is balanced against the Ministry grants. The administration manages enrolment risks by developing conservative staffing estimates, to gain flexibility if there is significant variance between forecasts and actual enrolment data.

The finance department noted that risks identified during the budget development process are orally communicated to the members of the executive committee and the finance committee.

Recommendations:

- The school board should consider documenting the risks linked to the budget and formally sharing them with members of the executive and finance committees and trustees who are unable to attend meetings, so that they are also aware of the potential risks, the status of risks and proposed mitigation strategies.

4.3 Financial Reporting and Analysis

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

- Assess whether procedures are in place to ensure that management, the board of trustees and the Ministry receives timely, accurate and complete financial information of all school board activities;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

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

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

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

Interim Financial Reporting Accountability

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.	No
Senior management is held accountable for the integrity of financial reporting through formal sign-off and approval procedures.	Yes
Management completes and files all financial reports in accordance with established timelines.	Yes

Audit

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

Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

The school board uses an integrated financial system to record, track and report financial data. The Board bought a BAS licence as part of a consortium with 10 other Frenchlanguage school boards.

The system integrates general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, budget and purchasing modules. The financial system facilitates variance analysis and management reporting. The Board has recently added a capital management module.

The finance department's budget and accounting coordinator sets up the chart of accounts in the financial system, and manages access rights to the system with the budget officer. New vendors are set up in the financial system by the administrative assistant

The financial system allows the budget holders to print their own budget tracking reports at any time.

Interim and Annual Financial Reporting

The finance department prepares quarterly financial reports for the business committee. As needed, the finance department also prepares interim financial reports at the request of management or budget holders.

The CEPEO's interim financial reports include the budget estimates submitted in June to the Ministry, actual expenses and revenues for the current year and an estimate of results for the end of the current year. The report also presents revised mid-year budget estimates for financial reports presented after January. Variances between the budget and expected results for the end of the current year are presented at nominal value. The letter that accompanies the interim report contains a note on the projected fiscal outlook to establish whether there will be a balanced budget, a surplus or a deficit for the year. However, interim financial reports do not contain accompanying explanatory notes that provide further description of the nature and impact of any possible variances during the year.

The format of monthly or quarterly financial reporting varies significantly among school boards. As with other school boards in the province, the CEPEO's interim financial reporting can be enhanced to provide additional information to support informed decision making. A more informative format would include:

1. Comparison of the annual approved budget with the actual spending to date, expressed as a percentage of the budget.
2. A comparative percentage for each expenditure/revenue category. This would reflect what the "expected spending to date" should be, relative to either historical averages, prior year's experience or, in the case of salaries and benefits, the number of staff and pays processed to date.
3. Written explanations of any significant variations from the normally expected percentage spent to date. Management would need to define what is "significant" for the reporting of variances.

Management completes and files all financial reports in accordance with established timelines.

The school board's senior management is held accountable for the integrity of financial reporting through formal sign-off and approval procedures. The Director of Education and the finance manager sign financial statements and interim financial reports before they are presented to the Ministry or the board of trustees. Schools' monthly bank reconciliations are signed by principals.

Audit

The Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario does not have an internal audit function. However, the finance department created a school funds officer position two years ago. This individual performs audits of school funds for the Board's schools. Reports are generated after school visits. The school board expects to audit each school during the 2008/2009 school year. In addition, external auditors audit several schools each year, as part of their annual audit of the school board's financial statements.

Developing a mandate for the internal audit function would assist the administrative council and the board of trustees in their overall governance and accountability roles. The internal audit function can also help develop performance measures and indicators for programs and services. The function should report to the finance audit 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.

In September 2008, the school board established an audit committee composed of the finance manager, the board of trustees' Chair and Vice-Chair, and three trustees. The CEPEO's audit committee's mandate includes:

- Recommending annual internal and external audit plans to the board of trustees and specifying which administrative areas should be audited for operational efficiency and effectiveness;
- Receiving and reviewing the findings of internal audit reports;
- Receiving audit reports on each school/operational sector and on the use of funds allocated by the board of trustees or generated by the schools;
- Receiving and reviewing the external auditor's report on all findings from the annual audit that were the subject of comments and managing the response to them;
- Selecting an external auditor and recommending their appointment to the board of trustees;

- Performing a review of policies, administrative guidelines, systems and procedures for schools, principals and central departments.

The audit plan, the annual reports and the management letter issued by the external auditor are presented to the audit committee. As outlined in its terms of reference, the audit committee reports to the board of trustees on measures that were taken and will be taken to address the auditor's recommendations. The external auditor's recommendations along with management's response are presented annually to the trustees as information items.

The audit committee does not have external members as advisors.

Recommendations:

- The finance department should consider modifying the format of interim reports, according to the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report. This would contribute to a better understanding of financial information on year-to-date results.
- The school board should consider formalizing an independent internal audit function that would report to the audit committee. This would include an audit of financial and management controls for the entire school board and not just for school funds, as is currently the case. The finance department could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
- Once the independent internal audit function is created, the school board should ensure that internal audit plans are clearly documented and recommendations are followed up and acted upon by management.
- Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the audit committee.

4.4 Treasury Management

The purpose of reviewing treasury management processes is to assess:

- Whether processes are in place to ensure the optimal use of cash, investments and borrowings within school boards;
- Whether sufficient internal controls exist to support cash management, investments and borrowings;

- Identify 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 consolidated with a single financial 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 <i>Education Act</i> .	No
Management periodically compares the school board’s banking terms and conditions to those of similar school boards.	Yes
Management monitors financial risk related to cash/investment management, and has a plan to mitigate associated risks. Management performs regular cash/funding forecasting to ensure that the school board’s debt service costs can be met to maturity.	Yes

Management of School-Based Funds

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

Cash and Investment Management

The finance department has consolidated the school board’s cash management activities with a single institution that was selected through a tendering process issued as part of a consortium with other French-language school boards located throughout the province in 2008.

The school board does not have an investment policy.

The school board has one account and benefits from a prime rate of less than 1.75% on the average monthly cash balance.

Cash balances are checked daily, and bank reconciliations are performed weekly by the budget/finance officer. The finance coordinator tracks the school board's cash flows quarterly using a cash flow forecasting model in Excel that allots anticipated accounts payable and receivable, such as supplier cheques, automatic debits, payroll, cash flow from the Ministry and anticipated external grants. These forecasting models are not subject to formal periodic reports on the school board's cash position to the business committee or to the board of trustees. In the future, these formal reports could be used to identify surplus funds for long-, medium- and short-term investments.

The Board maintains reserve funds to attend to unforeseen circumstances. Management requires the board of trustees' approval to use reserve funds. The CEPEO currently has \$10 million in reserve funds whose use has already been allocated for the school board's capital plan. The board of trustees and management should establish a policy or administrative guideline on a healthy reserve level for the school board, and consider developing a plan to replenish the working fund reserve.

As a next step, the school board could consider presenting an annual summary report on investments and sinking funds and a detailed report of reserves with details of interest and maturity dates to the board of trustees. Interim reporting on the Board's cash position could be presented to the business committee.

Management of School-Based Funds

Schools are responsible for their own bank account. The school board has limited the number of bank accounts to one single account per school. Schools have the option to use the same banking institution as the school board. This is not mandated by the central Board office due to the remote locations of certain schools. In December 2006, the CEPEO's financial department developed a guideline on the financial management of school funds that was revised in August 2008. The guideline clearly defines the sources and the uses of school funds. It presents general accounting principles, outlines the necessary controls for cash receipts and disbursements, and specifies the accounting method for financial transactions. Banking management for elementary and secondary schools within the CEPEO is done through the banking management application (AGB) in the integrated financial system (BAS). This banking management module allows each school to include revenues and expenses into the internal budget, such as field trips, school fees, and fund collection. Principals and secretaries are trained to use the AGB during their orientation, and a user's guide for the module was also created.

Each school has on hand a collection of banking management policies and administrative guidelines and a copy of the school fund management guideline. Principals are made aware of the importance of implementing and complying with the school fund management guideline and administrative procedures by the finance officer

responsible for school funds, who visits all of the schools within the school board throughout the year.

On a monthly basis, schools provide the finance department with a bank reconciliation signed by the principal. The school funds officer ensures that documents are signed, that the general ledger statement matches with the balance in the monthly books, and that the bank statement matches the balance of the bank account statement.

Throughout the year, the school funds officer performs internal audits of several schools. The internal audit procedures, such as who to meet with, points to discuss with schools, points to verify against the guideline and the recommendation template, were also duly documented. Between December 2007 and March 2009, all schools were subjected to an internal audit. The external auditor conducts school-based audits every year, and audited six schools in 2007 and seven schools in 2008.

Recommendations:

- The school board should develop an investment policy in order to reduce its idle cash, in accordance to the *Education Act*.
- The finance department should develop periodic reports on the Board's cash position and the results of future investment activities, and share them with the board of trustees.

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 school board. The school board receives Education Programs – Other (EPO) funding from the Ministry for specific initiatives, which requires it to focus on the non-grant revenue line.

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

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

Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues

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

Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues

Leading Practices – Non-Grant Revenue Management	Evidence of Adoption?
Electronic registration and payment system are used where appropriate (e.g., ConEd, permitting of facilities, leasing, etc.).	No
Staff monitor all sources of revenue to ensure completeness and compliance with policies. Action plans and processes maximize collections including obtaining credit/risk assessments.	Yes
School board budget identifies revenue and expenditure for each EPO program. Management monitors activity to ensure compliance with terms and conditions.	Yes

Policies and Procedures and Planning to Support Non Grant Revenues

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

- Donations;
- Community use of schools;
- Daycare operations;
- Continuing education classes;
- Services (e.g., outsourcing Board employees to FARE or the Ministry); and
- Rental.

The finance department estimates the amount of non-grant revenue every year using historical data. Then, the data is integrated into the school board's overall budget.

The community use of schools and daycare operations in CEPEO buildings are subject to a policy and administrative guidelines. Rentals are subject to formal agreements and rental leases. Donations, continuing education classes and outsourcing of services are not subject to a specific policy.

Fee schedules for community use of schools are posted on the school board's website. In a document called "Guide de location ("Rental guide"), the fee schedules are presented by category of community-based organizations (non-profit community organizations serving youths, summer camps, etc) and by room type (gymnasium, kitchen, auditorium, etc.). In accordance with the "Community Use of Schools" agreement between the CEPEO and the Ministry of Education, the CEPEO's fee schedules for community use of schools are reduced for non-profit organizations, as defined in appendix A. The rental permit form is also publicly accessible on the school board's website.

The finance department sends reminders for accounts receivable and overdue payments, which is also applicable to non-grant revenue (e.g., unpaid rent).

Procedures for all Non-Grant Revenues

The school board currently does not use an electronic registration and payment system for non-grant revenue management.

Education Program Other (EPO) grants received by the school board are allocated to the appropriate superintendents and/or project leads. The finance department created a specific project code for each new EPO grant. Monthly reports on the project's budget status are created by the finance department and communicated to those responsible for external grants.

Recommendation:

- The finance department should consider using electronic registration and payment systems for its non-grant revenues. For example, management could consider an electronic registration and payment system for its continuing education programs.

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 school board processes ensure the receipt of value for money from all acquired goods and services;
- Identify 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 practices are clearly communicated to staff with purchasing authority, and are periodically reviewed and updated.	Yes
Vendor selection criteria include elements other than lowest cost, such as total cost of ownership, value, and quality and competitive procurement (including the use of public advertising for RFPs and tenders over a defined level).	Yes
Purchasing managers monitor and ensure compliance with the Board's procurement policies and procedures.	Yes

Participation in Buying Consortia

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
The procurement strategy includes the participation in consortia/cooperatives for cost savings.	Yes
Management evaluates and develops 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.	No
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 for Greater Efficiency

Leading Practices – Procurement	Evidence of Adoption?
Management maximizes use of electronic funds transfers (EFT) for payments.	No

Procurement Policies and Procedures

The school board has several policies governing various aspects of purchasing, such as the acquisition of goods and services, expense reimbursement process and invitation to tender process. These policies are published on the school board's website.

The finance manager is responsible for establishing and maintaining appropriate purchasing practices. The CEPEO's purchasing policy for goods and services aims to:

- Ensure that no purchase of goods or services presents a conflict of interest (actual or potential) for the staff;
- Encourage the use of eco-friendly products;
- Remind concerned individuals of the school board's participation in the interprovincial agreement on the liberalization of government contracting (federal/provincial) as well as applicable provincial agreements; and

- Encourage CEPEO's collaboration with other school boards and organizations to implement healthy practices for the reduction of service duplication, cost reduction, and a fair cost distribution among partners.

Contracted services (real estate agency, travel agency, advertising agency, architect, lawyer, accountant, consultant, benefits advisor) and other services such as school transportation are subject to a specific policy that requires the board of trustees to review its professional services agreement in the 12 months following the organization of a new board of trustees and to decide on their future management, by means of resolutions, through a renewal or a tender/request for proposal (RFP).

The school board has approved policies in accordance with the directions given by the Ministry in the spring of 2007. The following policies have been adopted and revised in accordance with the directions given by the Ministry:

- Travel approval and expense claims (includes a section on credit cards);
- Advertising;
- Advocacy.

The Board does not offer training sessions to reinforce the compliance of staff with procurement policies and procedures, but rather, it mainly relies on informal policy reminders.

To make a purchase, CEPEO employees must use the "Guide d'achat" ("Purchasing Guide"), which includes all information related to making purchases. The Purchasing Guide provides for each purchase type the school board's supplier, the resource person at the company, the contract number, the CEPEO resource person, and the name of other school boards who participated in the negotiations for the purchasing contract. Purchase orders are created electronically in the BAS system. Only authorized individuals can order through the BAS. The person authorized to initiate purchases is the same person who has signing authority. In schools, the authorized purchaser is the principal, and in the departments, it's the manager or superintendent. If a teacher or another staff member wants to purchase something, they make a request through the school secretary who enters it into the BAS system. Afterwards, the principal validates the request and issues a purchase order in the BAS. The Purchasing Guide was last revised in February 2009.

A policy on purchase orders is currently being developed. It should specify in which circumstances a purchase order is mandatory.

Participation in Buying Consortia

The school board participates in a large number of purchasing consortia, including for the purchase of school supplies or equipment (e.g., photocopiers, fax machines, art, office, or school supplies, science or physical education supplies and equipment) or the purchase of maintenance and custodial supplies (e.g., hardware supplies or uniforms). The CEPEO also participates in consortia for the purchase of electricity and natural gas or for services such as lawn mowing or snow removal.

In regards to transportation, the CEPEO's territory covers three areas: 1. Prescott & Russell/Stormont, Dundas & Glengarry, 2. Ottawa/Renfrew, 3. Limestone/Hastings. To cover the breadth of its territory, the CEPEO participates in three consortia for school transportation services:

1. Ottawa school transportation consortium (Ottawa/Renfrew)
2. Tri-Board Student Transportation Services (Limestone/Hastings)
3. Eastern Ontario school transportation consortium (Prescott-Russell & SDG)

The school board also used the purchasing consortium of the French-language school boards for the acquisition of a BAS licence and a videoconferencing system, for banking negotiation purposes, and for acquiring labour relations services.

Purchasing Levels of Authority

The procurement policy specifically outlines that all departments must adhere to the following limits for securing supplier quotations:

- At least three verbal offers are required for any purchase or rental of goods and services estimated to be over \$10,000;
- At least three written quotations are required for any purchase or rental of goods and services estimated to be over \$10,000 but under \$50,000;
- A "closed" tender/request for proposal (RFP) is required for any purchase or rental of goods and services estimated to be over \$50,000 but under \$100,000;
- An "open" tender/request for proposal (RFP) is required for any purchase or rental of goods and services estimated to be over \$100,000.

The invitation to tender process is not subject to a specific policy that details the various steps and responsibilities of the school board and its employees during the process.

The CEPEO's purchasing coordinator reports to the plant manager. He is responsible for updating the "Purchasing Guide," managing the school board's invitations to tender, and performing other tasks related to the management of suppliers, contracts, and purchasing consortia. He ensures school board adherence to the procurement policy on centralized purchasing.

Administrative guidelines on signing and approval authority provide for specific procurement authorization levels. Superintendents and administrative department managers have the authority to make procurement or service requests, or to spend up to \$100,000 on behalf of the board of trustees. For principals and vice-principals, the executive director of the academic services department and the student services director, the purchasing authority is limited to \$25,000. Persons designated by the school or department budget holders have a purchasing limit of \$2,000. The plant department officers and capital project managers are authorized to sign for the payment of operational bills. The plant manager reviews and signs any document related to billing.

The transportation and planning coordinator is authorized to sign for all bill payments, membership cards, and monthly school bus passes. The finance manager is authorized to sign promissory notes for short-term loans authorized by the board of trustees. Expense claims for the Director of Education and the secretary-treasurer are approved by the Chair or the Vice-Chair of the board of trustees, and are validated by the finance manager. Expense claims for the board of trustees' Chair are approved by the Director of Education and the secretary-treasurer or his or her representative, and are validated by the finance manager.

Policies and Procedures for Purchase Card/Corporate Card Use

The school board does not have a specific policy on the use of credit cards. Administrative guidelines on travel approval and expense claims include a section on credit cards that forbids credit card cash advances and any personal purchases.

The CEPEO has a limited number of credit cards. At the time of the review, less than 20 credit cards were being used by management, the Chair of the board of trustees, superintendents and principals who are required to travel frequently. The monthly credit card limit varies from \$2,000 to \$10,000 according to function and need. Requests for corporate credit cards as well as monthly purchases must be approved by the immediate supervisor of the card holder. The statements are sent to the Board's office. A copy of the statement is sent to the credit card holder, who is responsible for reconciling, attaching receipts and getting approval from his or her respective supervisor before the end of each month. The credit card is paid electronically by the school board.

For employees without credit cards who must travel, the school board currently provides cash advances. However, it must be noted that this practice is limited to a few cases per

year. In 2008/2009, only five cash advances were provided. In order to reduce the administrative work related to cash advances and the subsequent expense claim validation procedures, the finance department plans on extending the use of credit cards to a larger number of employees or to implement a travel card system (i.e., credit cards whose purchases are limited to transportation and lodging).

As a next step, the Board should perform an analysis of credit card usage by user, by department, by transaction value and by merchant category code. A similar analysis for cash advances and reimbursements would allow the Board to develop an optimal PCard program to maximize purchasing efficiency and ensure budgetary control.

Accounting for Completeness of Purchase/Payment Cycle

The Board predominantly relies on the procurement module of its finance system to process its purchase-to-payment cycle.

The majority of purchases are currently assigned a purchase order in the financial system. For these purchases, an automated three-way matching (purchase order, receipt and invoice) is used. Purchases without purchase orders are checked through a manual matching process between the invoice, receipt and contract copy or original invoice. The lack of a policy or guidelines for this process results in incomplete manual three-way matching due to missing purchase orders or receipts.

The Board has a commitment accounting process in place to monitor budget utilization. Once a purchase order has been approved and submitted into the financial system, it automatically encumbers those funds against the budget.

To order from suppliers, the school board uses the automatic send function in the BAS that faxes out purchase orders.

Use of Electronic Funds Transfer

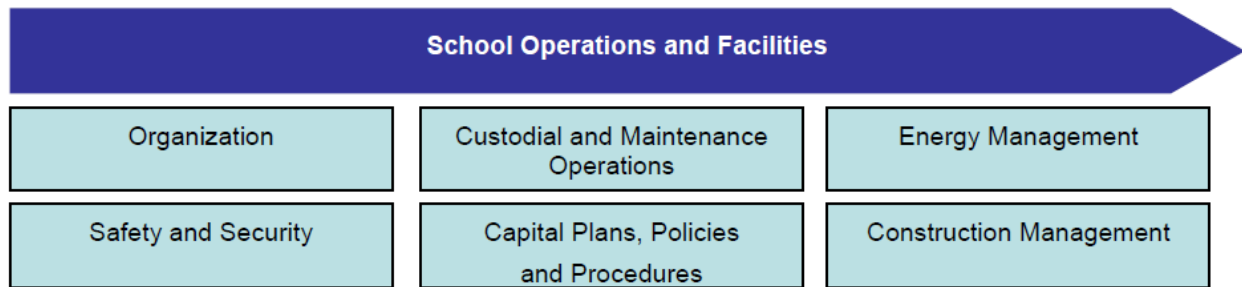
The school board currently uses electronic funds transfer (EFT) to process 80% to 85% of its payments. The remaining payments are made using cheques. Any CEPEO supplier that still receives cheques from the school board also receives a form that strongly encourages them to use the EFT system.

Recommendations:

- The finance department should ensure that three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used for all of the school board's purchases, when appropriate.

- The school board should consider extending the use of credit cards within the school board. The school board should develop a policy and specific directives on credit card use in order to document the current control practices and to specify conditions of use for new holders.
- The finance department should continue to increase its use of electronic funds transfer (EFT) payments to all appropriate suppliers, to gain greater efficiency and minimize the risk of payments being altered prior to clearing the bank.

5. School Operations and Facilities Management – Findings and Recommendations



Efficient and effective management of the Board's facilities (particularly schools) is an important factor in student achievement targets and strategies. Along with providing a positive learning environment for students, teachers and staff, it also helps the Board achieve a standard of cleanliness and maintenance that meets the expectations of the school community.

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;
- Identify 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 organization 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 Policy

Leading Practices – Operations and Facilities Organization	Evidence of Adoption?
Management has processes in place to monitor departmental policy compliance.	No
Processes exist to monitor new legislation and regulations and implement necessary changes.	Yes
Management provides scheduled policy and procedure awareness, and training to address ongoing skill development and emerging regulatory issues.	Yes

Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

School operations and facilities management are administered by the school board's plant department. The plant department's role is to ensure the maintenance of school board facilities and the construction/management of school buildings. The plant department's mandate is to do everything possible to ensure that CEPEO students learn in a safe environment. The mandate and objectives of the plant department are posted on the school board's website.

The plant department does not currently have a specific annual plan. For non-academic departments, which include the plant department, the administration developed a multiyear planning table that identifies the priorities of the school board for all administrative departments. For the 2008/2009 school year, the plant department's priorities, as presented in the administrative departments' annual planning summary, were: 1. creating an administrator position for custodial services, 2. participating in Project LEED, which includes the energy audit of 10 school board facilities, and 3. developing a renewal plan that is aligned with capital grants received. The department's priorities for the 2009/2010 school year have not yet been formally documented.

The plant manager reports on operations and facilities organization at weekly executive committee meetings and monthly business committee meetings.

Organizational Structure and Accountability

The plant manager reports to the Director of Education and is a member of the executive committee. He is supported by a construction/maintenance project coordinator, who is in turn supported by two maintenance technicians, a facilities management administrator who supervises four employees, a planning and purchasing coordinator who is assisted in planning and transportation tasks by two employees, a custodial services administrator, a budget clerk and an administrative secretary.

The roles and responsibilities for all positions are clearly outlined in their respective job descriptions, and are well understood by the organization. A detailed organizational chart of the plant department is publicly accessible on the school board's website. As a next step, the school board should ensure that all functions are easily accessible by posting their contact information on the school board's intranet, for example.

Informal exchanges are held daily within the plant department to share information on priorities and initiatives between the manager, coordinators and department staff. Management and coordinators set aside time in their schedules every Tuesday to solve potential problems and to ensure the monitoring of certain files.

Key plant department staff have appropriate professional designations and/or related field experience, and are involved in various provincial committees to keep abreast with best practices and new directives.

Monitoring and Communication of Policy

The plant department has a dozen policies on the school board's website. These policies deal with various aspects of operations and facilities management, including pupil accommodation review, operating budget review for tax purposes, the school water distribution network, school planning, the availability of CEPEO property, facility rentals, daycare operations in CEPEO facilities, playgrounds, efficient use and reallocation of school facilities, and use of pesticides.

In order to ensure compliance with the school board policy's on water flushing, the plant department takes water samples and organizes an annual training session on water flushing for custodians. Informational binders containing memos were sent to each school and custodian to ensure that water flushing was performed according to the Ministry of Environment's standards in each school. Beyond the steps taken for water flushing, the plant department does not currently have formal processes in place to ensure facility policy compliance. In practice, the department relies on informal contact with departmental staff to monitor policy compliance.

The policies are not subjected to a documented, systematic review cycle; however, a review of the material demonstrates that the department is focused on maintaining and updating them so that they remain up-to-date and applicable. As a next step, the Board should consider adding a review date to policies and guidelines that currently do not have one.

Recommendations:

- Management should develop an annual plant department plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities, and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link the plant department's objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the plant department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports
- The plant department should implement measures to ensure compliance with operational and facilities management policies. These processes should include

periodic communication of the policies to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the policies.

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;
- Identify 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 Supports the Board’s 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 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	Yes

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
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.	

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

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

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

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

Project Management, Monitoring and Support Systems

Leading Practices – Custodial and Maintenance Operations	Evidence of Adoption?
A work-order system and process that 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

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

In 1998, the plant department developed a caretaking staff allocation model, which provides for the optimal use of resources. The school board's custodial allocation model is based on several parameters, including surface area and the presence of portables, as well as occupancy parameters, such as occupancy rate, the number of children in daycare or the use of facilities outside of school hours.

The CEPEO employs about 100 custodians who report to their respective principal. The school board does not currently have formal written standards for cleanliness at the

school level. Custodians rely mainly on a custodian guide that includes task descriptions, but does not include written cleaning standards that the school board could use to evaluate the performance of custodial staff. In order to create cleaning standards on a board-wide basis and standardize custodial management, the school board created within the plant department an administrator function for custodial services in 2008. This new employee will act as a consultant for schools on custodial matters. His or her role will consist of reviewing and arbitrating incidents, complaints from principals on cleanliness or complaints from custodians about workload. One of the priorities of the custodial services administrator will also be to track custodian attendance and to manage absences by putting in place a “reserve” custodial team to avoid overtime costs.

Development of Annual/Multi-Year Maintenance Plan

The plant manager develops an annual maintenance plan that addresses its preventative, critical and deferred maintenance. The school board’s maintenance and renovation activities are assessed annually through individual school visits by different members of the plant department. Priorities are then incorporated into the annual plan. This helps ensure that schools are maintained in the best condition possible to support improved student learning and facilitate employee productivity.

Management uses the ReCAPP database as one of its primary sources for developing the annual major maintenance and renewal priorities for the coming year. This has been supported by the Ministry’s Good Places to Learn funding, enabling the Board to carry out critical renewal work in its schools. During the 2008/2009 school year, a five-year maintenance plan was developed using the ReCAPP database.

Training to Support Skills Development and Safety

The Board has established a training program to provide ongoing skills development to plant staff, and to address emerging regulatory issues. Training needs are identified by a joint committee with representatives from the union and school board, including the plant manager and the health, safety and security coordinator.

Appropriate training sessions on regulatory requirements are organized for plant staff by the health, safety and security coordinator. Training sessions deal with different subjects such as the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) and protocols to follow in case of a work accident. Training sessions also allow the Board to comply with various regulations, laws and prevention programs related to first aid, asbestos and ergonomics.

As part of the orientation process, new custodial employees are paired with an experienced employee for two to five days.

Standardization of Cleaning and Maintenance Supplies

The school board participates in a purchasing consortium with the three other school boards of the Ottawa region for its cleaning and maintenance products. This consortium has a contract with one single supplier.

A budget for cleaning and maintenance supplies is calculated for each school by the plant department using the surface area and granted each year to principals. Principals are free to use this budget to order cleaning and maintenance supplies via the supplier's portal. Schools are only authorized to order school board-approved products through the portal. This practice contributes to the standardization of cleaning and maintenance supplies.

The school board does not currently have a centralized inventory of cleaning and maintenance equipment by school. In the future, the plant department plans to create a central inventory of custodial equipment.

Project Management, Monitoring and Support Systems

The plant department is assisted in its management of maintenance projects by an electronic work order recording system, called "PerlDesk." Maintenance and repair work orders are completed by principals or custodians directly into "PerlDesk". Work orders are reviewed on a daily basis by the administration, and then prioritized and given to contractors based on factors such the urgency of the repair, health, safety and security as well as the availability of the appropriate tradespeople. Approved work orders given to contractors are also assigned a purchase order in the school board's financial system (BAS).

At the time of the review, the plant department mentioned the scheduled replacement of PerlDesk with another software with additional features, called "School Dude," which is already being used by other school boards. As a next step, the school board could consider developing an interface between School Dude and BAS, in order to eliminate the need for creating a purchase order task in the BAS.

Assessment of the Board's Service Delivery Model

Custodial services are provided by school board employees. The school board uses external contractors to deliver maintenance services.

The school board regularly evaluates the overall effectiveness and efficiency of its maintenance and custodial services, in particular by doing comparisons with similar school boards who subcontract custodial services or with school boards whose building tradespersons are school board employees.

Recommendations:

- The plant department should establish cleaning standards in all the Board's schools to ensure consistent levels of service and monitoring at all sites. Once the standards are established, management should ensure that results are monitored, measured and reported annually.
- The plant department should go ahead with its plan of creating an inventory of cleaning and maintenance equipment to plan for equipment replacements.

5.3 Energy Management

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

- Whether adequate planning and communication exist to support the reduction of energy consumption;
- Whether school board structure and processes are in place to ensure that energy is procured for the lowest cost;
- Identify opportunities to support continual improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of all processes.

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

Energy Management Plan

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

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

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

Energy Management Plan

The school board participates in two consortia for the purchase of electricity and natural gas. The planning manager participates in meetings of the Comité d'Immobilisations et d'Entretien (CIEP) of the Association des Gestionnaires Francophones (AGF) on energy management.

The Board's purchasing policies do not require that new equipment be energy efficient (e.g., Energy Star products). In practice, the plant department still considers energy efficiency when purchasing materials. Energy efficiency is also considered for construction projects when choosing a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified architect. As a next step, the Board should review its purchasing policies to ensure that energy efficient goods and services are purchased system-wide, either directly or through subcontractors.

Since 2008, the CEPEO has undertaken several innovative energy management activities as part of its “green” campaign. The school board organized the following energy conservation activities:

- Installation of solar panels and a wind turbine: The École secondaire publique Gisèle-Lalonde had installed a renewable energy system on its roof last year. In its first stage, six solar panels and one wind turbine were installed at the school.
- Energy audit: 10 CEPEO schools participated in an LEED study designed to assess schools for energy efficiency.
- Promoting energy efficiency: The CEPEO joined with Hydro Ottawa to promote energy efficiency among students during the holiday season by asking them to exchange two strings of incandescent holiday lights for one new string of LED (light emitting diode) lights that gives off less heat and uses less energy.

The CEPEO implemented an environmental committee composed of one plant department representative and several school representatives. This committee has worked on formalizing garbage-free days and recycling programs in every school within the school board.

In September 2009, the plant manager plans to create a report for the board of trustees on the results of the various CEPEO energy management initiatives. In addition to the report on the impacts of the steps already taken, management should establish a multi-year energy management plan with appropriate system-wide consumption reduction targets, which could be adapted for each school board building.

Tracking and Reporting Energy Conservation

The Board has started establishing baseline consumption data on a school level basis. Detailed expenditure and water, electricity and gas consumption data are logged for each school by the construction project and maintenance coordinator using spreadsheets. The Board intends to undertake detailed analysis of consumption data to identify opportunities for cost savings and develop targets/benchmarks for individual facilities.

As part of the consortia for the purchase of electricity and natural gas, the school board hired an external company to audit and consolidate utility bills for sites and facilities in the Ottawa region. For other regions, utility bills from different schools are manually consolidated using an Excel tool by the construction project and maintenance coordinator.

Control systems that automate energy regulation and conservation are used in several Board buildings. For the past three years, the CEPEO has emphasized the use of “webaccess,” which is the remote control of schools’ mechanical equipment, such as heating, lighting and cooling systems, using an electronic portal. For older schools that cannot have new remote control systems installed, the school board adopted initiatives such as the installation of motion triggered lights or timers to conserve energy.

Recommendations:

- The school board should develop a comprehensive multi-year energy management plan that includes consumption reduction goals, key activities, and timelines for completion, success indicators and assigned responsibilities to complement the school board’s energy conservation strategy.
- Once the school board has created its multi-year energy management plan, the plant department should officially provide formal annual reporting on the conservation savings achieved against the plan.

5.4 Health, Safety and Security

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

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

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

Leading Practices – Health, Safety and Security	Evidence of Adoption?
The maintenance of health, safety and security policies and the development of appropriate plans ensure compliance with statutory health, safety and security requirements.	Yes
The security code policy includes alert codes that reflect the situation and threat level, and identify departmental responsibilities.	Yes
Security incidents are tracked by type of incident (e.g. property damage, intrusion, etc.).	Yes
Operations management 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 Board is focused on health and safety issues and has adopted a policy on school safety. This policy was recently revised after the implementation of Bill 212, which modified the *Education Act*. In 2009, the school board also developed no less than 19 administrative guidelines to complete the revised safe school policy. These guidelines

deal with various safety aspects, such as field trips, bomb alerts, bullying, school violence, lockdown, school security or use of progressive discipline.

The administrative guidelines will be ratified by the board of trustees in September 2009, and will then be published on the school board's website. In the meantime, the school board's school safety and security consultant will be holding training sessions for principals and vice-principals.

In accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, the CEPEO has established a joint occupational health and safety committee (JHSC) through which the employer and employees work together to manage occupational risks. The school board created a website specifically for occupational health and safety <http://www.sst.cepeo.on.ca/> on which the committee's mandate is also made available. The JHSC's mandate consists of identifying and assessing, and whenever possible, eliminating health and safety hazards for staff members. The website provides several resources for staff members, such as a quarterly newsletter called "Saviez-vous que..." ("Did you know...") that provides tools and advice on occupational health and safety, FAQs, and an occupational accident declaration form. The website also has photos and short clips featuring students highlighting potentially dangerous situations or behaviours at work, in order to educate all stakeholders about prevention. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education recently used the CEPEO's occupational health and safety website as a basis for a health and safety project that it is sponsoring.

The CEPEO has implemented an accessibility working group whose mission is to research possible barriers for persons with disabilities in buildings, policies, regulations, programs, methods and departments throughout the school board. The working group, led by the school board's plant department, develops an annual accessibility plan that identifies construction/conversion work or supply needs to accommodate the specific needs of disabled students, staff members, parents, guardians, volunteers and community members. With the exception of the 2008/09 school year, the accessibility plan is evaluated periodically according to identified barriers and conversion needs for the year.

In 2007/2008, the CEPEO was one of the first French-language school boards in the province to develop and implement in each of its school, a crisis prevention and response plan, a risk and threat assessment protocol, a stress management initiative for critical incidents and a crisis management team that plans and implements appropriate measures for all emergency situations. In September 2007, a specialized training session was provided by an internationally known Canadian expert in risk and threat assessment. The school board also prepared an emergency procedures guide that was distributed to all schools within the school board. The guide serves as a decision-making tool that will reduce response time and risks for students and staff by defining roles and responsibilities in case of suspicious odours, presence of toxic products, fire,

evacuation, school securement, suspicious objects, bomb threats, lockdown or suspicious or threatening behaviour. According to the administrative guideline on school lockdowns, every CEPEO school must perform two lockdown drills per year in order to develop life-saving habits and reflexes among students and staff in the case of violent incidents.

The school board monitors the number of vandalism incidents in schools and uses the PerlDesk software to track the costs associated with these types of incidents. A report on total operating costs including the costs of vandalism-related reparations is sent to schools every year.

The school board promotes health among all students by forbidding the sales of soft drinks in schools and by ensuring that the air quality allows students to grow in a healthy environment. The plant department is working to develop a monitoring protocol for air quality in order to clarify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders when there are complaints about air quality. In accordance with the 2005 Sabrina's Law, the CEPEO developed policies and guidelines on anaphylaxis and drug administration. All employees also received first aid training.

In accordance with the Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, the CEPEO developed a bullying prevention and intervention program in all schools within the school board. As outlined in the administrative guideline on bullying, the school board invites schools to adopt prevention strategies such as putting in place procedures to allow students to report bullying incidents safely and confidentially or providing training to other adults who have regular contacts with students.

As required by the MOE, trained staff members take water samples in every school once a year. The samples are analyzed by an external laboratory, and the results are communicated to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Environment when lead is detected in water.

Recommendation:

There are no recommendations for this section.

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
Capital forecasts and related funding plans are assessed annually and adjusted to meet current needs and changes to original assumptions such as enrolment projections and capital grants.	Yes
The accuracy of capital forecasts and related funding plans is assessed annually to reflect current needs and changes to original assumptions, such as enrolment projections.	Yes
An accurate and up-to-date assessment of facility conditions is maintained, based on industry standards (using RECAP methodology).	Yes

Development of Annual and Multi-Year Capital Plans

The CEPEO has developed and submitted its 10-year capital plan to the Ministry through the SFIS. This plan includes the Board's capital requirements over the next 10 years as well as the facility renewal needs. In compliance with Ministry requirements, the Board has completed its capital liquidity template, which was approved by the Ministry in the fall of 2008.

Each year, the plant department develops a five-year plan for facilities renewal, complete with cost estimates, which is presented for approval to the board of trustees. Facility renewal projects are based on the multi-year ReCAPP analysis, experience within the schools and input from plant department coordinator, maintenance technicians and custodians. The five-year plan is reviewed annually based on regular updates of the ReCAPP database. The Board actively coordinates renewal projects with the capital plan (i.e. prohibitive to repair schools, Good Places to Learn funding and primary class size) to gain economies of scale in the process.

The Board has an approved pupil accommodation review policy.

A school facility review process is currently underway due to the overcrowding of one school in Ottawa. In 2008, the consolidation of two schools was reviewed in consultation with the two school councils of the affected elementary schools.

The Board is currently expanding, and expects to proceed within the next four years with the construction of a new school in South Kanata, which will offer K-12 and the replacement of the École élémentaire publique Madeleine-de-Roybon to serve Kingston's French-speaking community.⁴ The CEPEO is also working on finalizing an agreement that would allow Kingston to have the elementary and secondary panels (Milles-Iles) and Madeleine-de-Roybon under the same roof.

The plant manager periodically updates the trustees on the status of capital projects through the business committee. For construction projects, trustees are updated by the construction committee that has several members who are also trustees.

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

The CEPEO developed a policy on the efficient use and reallocation of school facilities. As part of the administration guidelines that accompany this policy, the school board is committed to implementing a process aimed at assessing school facilities using certain criteria, including:

⁴ SFIS: Capital plan overview for Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario.

- Variance between school capacity and registrations;
- Viability of services and school programs;
- Availability of facilities for programs;
- Functioning, operational, renovation and transportation costs.

The monitoring and planning of school capacity is reported within the framework of the Student Facilities Inventory System (SFIS). The Board maintains accurate and up-to-date inventories of school capacity and utilization. SFIS financial data are reviewed annually. Facilities department staff currently use ReCAPP as a tracking tool for projects funded by the Renewal Grant and Good Places to Learn funding.

Recommendation:

There are no recommendations for this section.

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;
- Identify 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 also 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

Leading Practices – Construction Management	Evidence of Adoption?
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 five-year cycles.	Yes

Cost Effective Practices in the Design and Construction of Facilities

The school board has not established policies specifying construction standards such as standard footprints or preference for certain materials. In practice, for recent projects, the Board has used the Ministry of Education's templates and parameters on elementary and secondary school standards. The CEPEO also uses energy conservation and economical construction practices to minimize construction, maintenance and operation costs. The architect selected for recent construction projects is LEED certified. This ensures that new school board constructions are the most efficient possible in terms of energy conservation. For worksites, the school board also plans to adopt economical construction practices by reusing some of the construction materials.

Management has periodically compared its costs per square foot against those of other school boards during meetings of the Comité d'Immobilisations et d'Entretien (CIEP) of the Association des Gestionnaires Francophones (AGF), where members willingly share best practices regarding capital investments.

Monitoring and Reporting on Progress of Construction Projects

Construction projects are tracked regularly in terms of their budget, quality and schedule. To manage ongoing construction projects and sites, the school board relies

mainly on the architect who is responsible for attending all worksite meetings and updating the school board on changes or possible delays through minutes or meeting reports. For large-scale projects, plant department staff goes to worksites several times a year to report on progress.

Construction project bills are sent to the plant department's budget clerk who inputs them into the BAS. Bills are checked against price quotations, and are approved for payment only after a construction site audit by a school board staff member.

The progress of construction projects is a standing item on the executive committee's agenda. For all plant projects, the plant department's budget clerk creates a monthly report using BAS data, which is then put on the network for the plant manager and project coordinators.

Trustees are regularly kept informed of the progress of construction work.

As a next step, the school board could consider documenting the project management practices in place in a procedural document to clarify plant staff roles and responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on progress of construction projects.

Maintaining Current Approved Professional Service Providers

The school board has an approved official list for architectural services. The plant department proceeded with pre-qualifying six architects in 2008. When the school board identifies a renovation project, pre-qualified architects are invited to provide an estimate. For identifying and selecting other service providers for capital projects, the CEPEO uses the recommendations of the selected architect.

Recommendation:

There are no recommendations for this section.

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

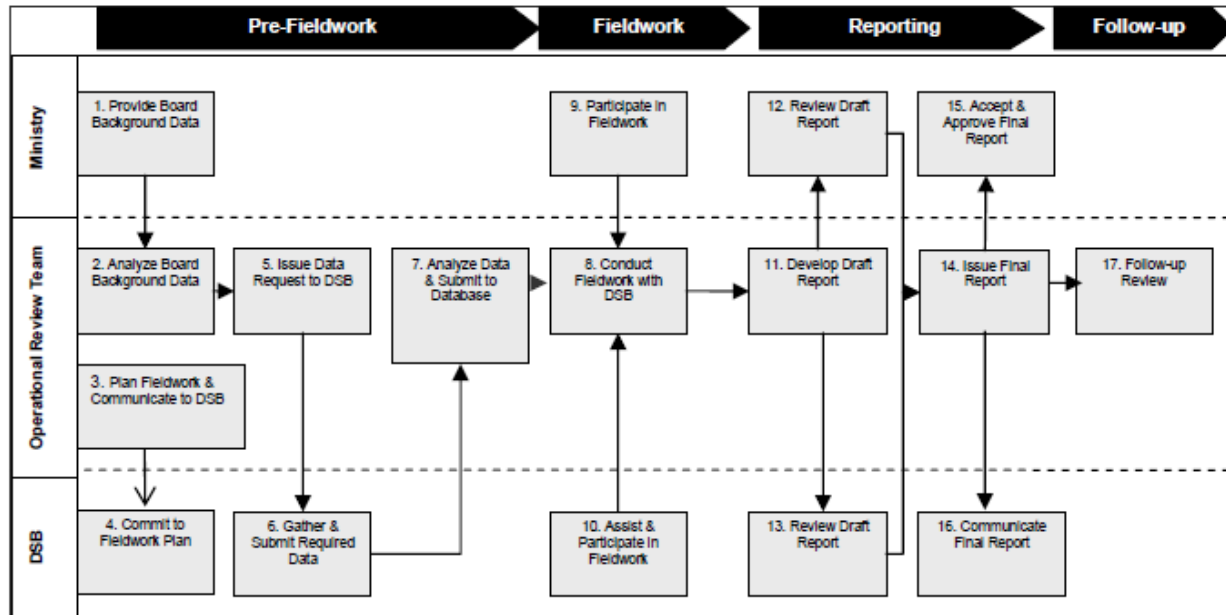
The scope of the Operational Review consists of the following functional areas which have been divided into key processes as shown below. The processes represent the end-to-end lifecycle of activities performed by school boards under each functional area. Each of the processes was examined based on its 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-to-end process will vary depending on school board size and complexity.

Observations and assessments are made by the Operational Review Team based on a set of agreed upon leading practices designed for each functional area. The onsite reviews allow the team to validate ministry and board data; provide a better understanding of the environmental conditions and allow the team to review materials that support the existence leading practices.



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

Phase: Pre-Field Work

Key Activity	Description
Provide School 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 School 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 school boards before the start of the next review cycle.
Commit to Fieldwork Plan	Boards are required to commit to the Operational Review schedule. The Ministry and the review team will attempt to accommodate scheduling conflicts.
Issue Documentation Request to School Board	Before the start of fieldwork, a request for supporting documentation is generated to gather operating and other information for each focus area. The review team uses this information to enhance its understanding of the board before the start of field work.
Gather and Submit Required Documentation	Upon receipt of the request for supporting documentation, each school board compiles the requested data. School 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 school board and adds the results to a sector-wide database to compare the results for each school board.

Phase: Field Work

Key Activity	Description
Conduct Fieldwork with School Board	The fieldwork is conducted for each school 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 school board.
Participate in Fieldwork	Ministry staff support the review team in the performance of fieldwork, to ensure continuity and knowledge transfer of school board operations.
Assist and Participate in Fieldwork	School board staff participate in the fieldwork. The number of participants involved will vary depending on the size of the board.

Phase: Reporting

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

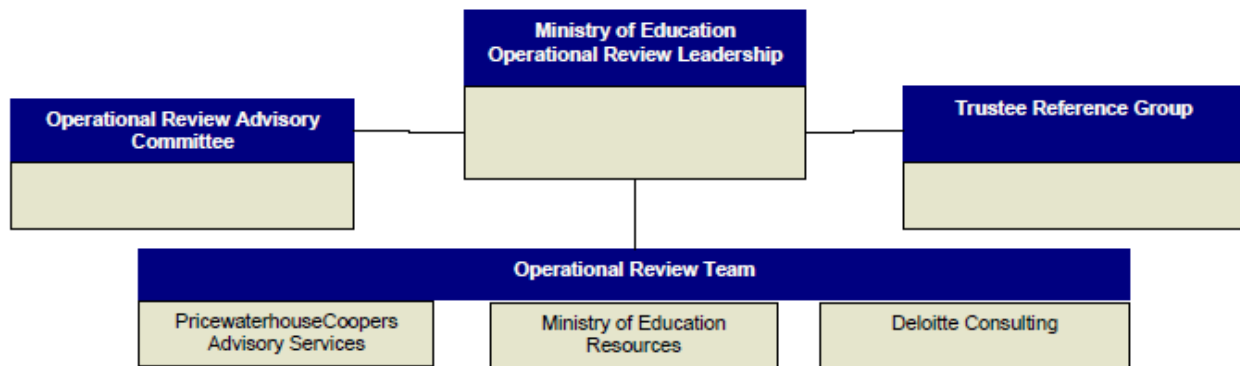
Phase: Follow up

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

The Operational Review Team

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

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



Limitations of this Review

The purpose of this Report is to document the results of the Operational Review of the Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario. The review has been conducted using the methodology as previously described. The review is not of the nature or scope that constitutes an audit made in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards.

Appendix B: Summary of Recommendations

Governance and School Board Administration

No.	Recommendations
1.	The school board should continue its efforts to develop an annual board improvement plan of its goals/ priorities that includes non-academic departments. Similar to what was accomplished for the student achievement strategic axis, the school board should also develop goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely for the overall strategic goals of the three other strategic axes within its accountability framework, namely recruitment/retention, public confidence and technological innovation.
2.	The school board should consider planning a review date for policies and directives that currently do not have one. This would allow the Director of Education to develop the review plan specified in the school board's internal policy, which also requires presenting to the board of trustees the various roles and responsibilities, required resources and staff, and the assessment strategy and deadlines for the policy reviews.

HR Management and School Staffing/Allocation

No.	Recommendations
3.	Management should develop an annual HR departmental plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link departmental objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the HR department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
4.	The school board should conduct periodic reviews of the insurance carrier (Administrative Services Only) that manages medical and dental claims, in order to ensure that the school board's claims are processed according to the plan's terms and conditions.
5.	The HR department should continue its efforts to introduce exit interviews for those who are leaving their positions.
6.	The HR department should ensure that payroll processing is segregated from changes to employee data by modifying the access rights of its staff in the BAS system so that one employee alone cannot perform several transactions for the same operational cycle.

Financial Management

No.	Recommendations
7.	Management should develop an annual finance departmental plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities, and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link departmental objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the finance department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
8.	The finance department should implement processes to ensure compliance with financial policies, which could include periodic communication of the policies to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the policies.
9.	The finance department should regularly provide scheduled finance policy and procedures awareness, training and skills development educational sessions.
10.	The school board should consider documenting the risks linked to the budget and formally sharing them with members of the executive and finance committees and trustees who are unable to attend meetings, so that they are also aware of the potential risks, the status of risks and proposed mitigation strategies.
11.	The finance department should consider modifying the format of interim reports, according to the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report. This would contribute to a better understanding of financial information on year-to-date results.
12.	The school board should consider formalizing an independent internal audit function that would report to the audit committee. This would include an audit of financial and management controls for the entire school board and not just for school funds, as is currently the case. The finance department could start by identifying options for the mandate and scope of this function and the estimated cost for each option.
13.	Once the independent internal audit function is created, the school board should ensure that internal audit plans are clearly documented and recommendations are followed up and acted upon by management.
14.	Management and the board of trustees should consider including external advisors to contribute to the effectiveness of the audit committee.
15.	The school board should develop an investment policy in order to reduce its idle cash, in accordance to the <i>Education Act</i> .
16.	The finance department should develop periodic reports on the Board's cash position and the results of future investment activities, and share them with the board of trustees.
17.	The finance department should consider using electronic registration and payment systems for its non-grant revenues. For example, management could consider an electronic registration and payment system for its continuing education programs.
18.	The finance department should ensure that three-way matching (purchase order, receipt/invoice and inspection) is used for all of the school board's purchases, when appropriate.

No.	Recommendations
19.	The school board should consider extending the use of credit cards within the school board. The school board should develop a policy and specific directives on credit card use in order to document the current control practices and to specify conditions of use for new holders.
20.	The finance department should continue to increase its use of electronic funds transfer (EFT) payments to all appropriate suppliers, to gain greater efficiency and minimize the risk of payments being altered prior to clearing the bank.

School Operations and Facilities Management

No.	Recommendations
21.	Management should develop an annual plant department plan that incorporates measurable targets, specific timelines and identified responsibilities, and that is aligned with the accountability framework. This would link the plant department's objectives and priorities with the school board's improvement plan, facilitate clear definition of roles, enable collaboration between the team members, and provide a general overview of the department's roadmap. This plan would also inform senior administration of the details of the activities and facilitate the annual reporting on accomplishments. Once the plant department's annual improvement plan is created, the school board could then consider submitting it to the business committee for approval at the same time as the periodic progress reports.
22.	The plant department should implement measures to ensure compliance with operational and facilities management policies. These processes should include periodic communication of the policies to the appropriate staff, as well as occasional assessments of staff compliance with the policies.
23.	The plant department should establish cleaning standards in all the Board's schools to ensure consistent levels of service and monitoring at all sites. Once the standards are established, management should ensure that results are monitored, measured and reported annually.
24.	The plant department should go ahead with its plan of creating an inventory of cleaning and maintenance equipment to plan for equipment replacements.
25.	The school board should develop a comprehensive multi-year energy management plan that includes consumption reduction goals, key activities, and timelines for completion, success indicators and assigned responsibilities to complement the school board's energy conservation strategy.
26.	Once the school board has created its multi-year energy management plan, the plant department should officially provide formal annual reporting on the conservation savings achieved against the plan