



Golden Valley Unified School District

Purchasing, Maintenance and Operations, Staffing and Transportation Review

April 18, 2007



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Violet L. Chuck, Interim Superintendent
Golden Valley Unified School District
37479 Avenue 12
Madera, CA 993636

Dear Interim Superintendent Chuck,

In January 2007, the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team and the Golden Valley Unified School District entered into an agreement for a review of the district's maintenance, purchasing, transportation, staffing formulas/ratios and master schedules. Specifically, the agreement asked FCMAT to do the following:

1. Review the district's Maintenance and Operations department's efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of staffing, productivity, organizational structure and policies and procedures and provide recommendations for changes, if needed.
2. Review the Purchasing department's efficiency and effectiveness in current processes and procedures and provide recommendations for changes, if any.
3. Review the district's current high school staffing formulas/ratios and master schedules and provide recommendations, if any, to ensure there is a tool in place to ensure adequate funding is in place for elective classes offered (i.e., class sizes not too small).
4. Review the district's Transportation department staffing, procedures, and budget and provide recommendations to minimize the encroachment on the general fund, particularly in view of eventual growth of the district.

The attached final report contains the study team's findings and recommendations.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve you and we extend our thanks to all the staff of the Golden Valley Unified School District.

Sincerely,



Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer

FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

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Foreword

FCMAT Background

The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) was created by legislation in accordance with Assembly Bill 1200 in 1992 as a service to assist local educational agencies in complying with fiscal accountability standards.

AB 1200 was established from a need to ensure that local educational agencies throughout California were adequately prepared to meet and sustain their financial obligations. AB 1200 is also a statewide plan for county offices of education and school districts to work together on a local level to improve fiscal procedures and accountability standards. The legislation expanded the role of the county office in monitoring school districts under certain fiscal constraints to ensure these districts could meet their financial commitments on a multiyear basis. AB 2756 provides specific responsibilities to FCMAT with regard to districts that have received emergency state loans. These include comprehensive assessments in five major operational areas and periodic reports that identify the district’s progress on the improvement plans

Since 1992, FCMAT has been engaged to perform more than 600 reviews for local educational agencies, including school districts, county offices of education, charter schools and community colleges. Services range from fiscal crisis intervention to management review and assistance. FCMAT also provides professional development training. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools is the administrative agent for FCMAT. The agency is guided under the leadership of Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer, with funding derived through appropriations in the state budget and a modest fee schedule for charges to requesting agencies.

Total Number of Studies 628

Total Number of Districts in CA..... 982

● Management Assistance..... 594 (94.59%)

● Fiscal Crisis/Emergency 34 (5.41%)

Note: Some districts had multiple studies.

● Districts (7) that have received emergency loans from the state.

(Rev. 2/7/07)

Study Agreements by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Number of Studies
92/93	10
93/94	15
94/95	23
95/96	29
96/97	26
97/98	26
98/99	27
99/00	47
00/01	48
01/02	58
02/03	34
03/04	71
04/05	73
05/06	78
06/07	80 (Projected)

Golden Valley Unified School District

Introduction

Background

The Golden Valley Unified School District is located in Madera, California and serves approximately 2,030 students in southeastern Madera County as of October 2006. The district is comprised of two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school and one continuation school. District enrollment is growing. A new middle school is currently being built and additional elementary schools are planned.

In January 2007 the district and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team entered into an agreement for a review of the district's maintenance, purchasing, transportation, staffing formulas/ratios and master schedules. As stated in the agreement, FCMAT agreed to address in its review the following scope points:

1. Review the district's Maintenance and Operations department's efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of staffing, productivity, organizational structure and policies and procedures and provide recommendations for changes, if needed.
2. Review the Purchasing department's efficiency and effectiveness in current processes and procedures and provide recommendations for changes, if any.
3. Review the district's current high school staffing formulas/ratios and master schedules and provide recommendations, if any, to ensure there is a tool in place to ensure adequate funding is in place for elective classes offered (i.e., class sizes not too small).
4. Review the district's Transportation department staffing, procedures, and budget and provide recommendations to minimize the encroachment on the general fund, particularly in view of eventual growth of the district.

Study Guidelines

FCMAT visited the district on February 16 and 17, 2007 to conduct interviews, collect data and review documents. This report is a result of those activities and is divided into the following sections.

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Purchasing
- III. Maintenance and Operations
- IV. High School Staffing and Master Schedule
- V. Transportation

Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

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Paso Robles, CA

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*As members of this study team, these consultants were not representing their respective employers but were working solely as independent contractors for FCMAT.

Executive Summary

Purchasing

The district has added a management position that is responsible for overseeing purchasing and facilities. However, the district does not have a purchasing department. The director of facilities and purchasing currently spends all of his time overseeing facilities and should take a more active role in purchasing operations.

The district's requisition approval process is inefficient. To operate effectively and ensure compliance, the department needs a more active manager and additional assistance to input information and coordinate paperwork. The district should consider assigning an additional employee to perform routine purchasing and paperwork when funding is available and to provide greater internal control.

Currently, sites and departments select products and vendors and issue their own contracts, with little or no standardization of products or consolidation of orders. This compromises control and the integrity of the process. The purchasing department should consolidate orders, develop standard specifications and process annual bids for furniture and all other products that will exceed the bid limit, as well as one-time purchases as they arise. The director of facilities and purchasing should set up multiyear bids or quotes for products such as office supplies and custodial supplies. The district also lacks guidelines for securing quotes. These guidelines should be developed.

The Quintessential School System (QSS) online purchasing module has been implemented only in the purchasing department, even though other QSS modules are accessible to all sites and departments. The inability of sites and departments to access the online purchasing module prevents them from entering requisitions, knowing when the requisitions are entered, and ensuring that an adequate budget exists when the requisition is entered. The district should implement the online purchasing module districtwide. The director responsible for purchasing should oversee its implementation.

District staff reported that a significant number of vendors are currently invoicing at a higher price than the purchase order indicates. Because a purchase order is a contract for goods and services, vendors may not change the prices without the district's authorization. Doing so is illegal and the district is under no obligation to pay unauthorized price increases. Each purchase order should include a statement that no change in unit cost of shipping is permitted without prior approval from the district.

Maintenance and Operations

The workload of the director of maintenance, operations and transportation (MOT) appears to be excessive and the position has too many employees reporting directly to it. Because of the department's workload and staffing levels, the director spends significant time in the field and is not able to function fully as an administrator. The district might consider adding a mid-level management position, such as a working maintenance and

operations supervisor, to set priorities and oversee daily assignments for maintenance, operations and grounds staff, freeing the director to focus on administrative duties.

Although there is a backlog of maintenance work orders, the recent addition of the second maintenance position to the maintenance and operations department and the use of outside contractors have allowed the department to keep pace with the district's needs better than in the past.

The district's growing landscape maintenance needs are greater than current staff can meet. Establishing an additional groundskeeper/mowing position would resolve this issue. All maintenance and operations staff interviewed felt the department was understaffed. FCMAT agrees with this assessment.

It appears that the custodial staff functions well and FCMAT found that all campus sites appear to be well maintained. The district does not hire extra summer help with grounds-keeping, although this is a common practice in school districts and could be effective.

The district lacks a standard training program for MOT staff. The director of MOT should immediately develop a thorough, standardized training program to bring all district procedures, departments, and sites into compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. All mandated training must be scheduled and monitored.

The maintenance and operations department does not have a policies and procedures manual. A manual should be developed, and legal and procedural mandates should be communicated to help department employees stay in compliance and work effectively.

The district should implement a comprehensive scheduled preventive maintenance program for its facilities and equipment to ensure regular inspection and maintenance before facilities deteriorate or equipment breaks down.

The district has several construction projects scheduled to begin in 2007-08. These projects are not sufficient to warrant a full time position focused only on facilities. FCMAT believes that the current facilities director position could be more effective if its job duties were expanded to include the purchasing functions and assisting the MOT director. It is vital that the MOT director and the facilities and purchasing director work collaboratively.

The district has not implemented a five year plan for deferred maintenance and should do so. The district is required to submit its revised five year plan annually; however, no district employee appears to be completely familiar with the deferred maintenance program.

High School Staffing and Master Schedule

The current administrative and counseling staffing ratio for Liberty High School is sufficient. Site administrators' concerns about the inability to meet all of the requests and needs of the educational community are common for high schools of this size and not related to understaffing.

Changes to the high school master schedule will require a change from how it has been developed in the past. A methodical, well-conceived system must be established that

includes input from the district and the high school so that the master schedule reflects the district's overall vision of expectations, philosophies, directions and minimum class size parameters. The district office will need to take the leadership role in scheduling by disseminating data, setting and holding the high school accountable for staying within the established parameters. The high school and the district must communicate regularly to ensure that the needs of students, staff and the local educational community are met.

The district must communicate to the board and community that a decision to provide small classes will involve greater costs and result in less district money for other areas. Because salaries and benefits are the largest expenditure categories in any school district's budget, the district may need to reconsider providing smaller classes that require higher staffing levels.

The district currently surveys students and the community regarding their preferences for electives. However, it is unrealistic to expect that many of the preferred electives will occur soon because facilities and/or staff are limited.

It is critical that all small school districts have a good working relationship with the county office regarding teacher credentialing requirements. A designated and trained district-level employee is needed to ensure compliance, monitor the master schedule and provide guidance to school sites when needed. The new mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and rapidly changing laws make it difficult for smaller districts to be aware of all of the requirements for a highly qualified and fully credentialed teacher.

The district has conducted an internal review of certificated staff credentials, and will use this information when designing the master schedule each spring.

Enrollment in most elective classes is low. The district should review all elective offerings and develop a plan to steadily restructure the elective offerings and categorical program courses to increase enrollment.

The master scheduling process needs to be revised to provide greater accountability in terms of staffing ratios, class sizes and established deadlines. The plans, guidelines and timelines for the 2007-08 schedule should be established immediately.

Transportation

The district transports approximately 40% of its students, which is higher than the state-wide average of 14%. The district's current fleet of 14 operational school buses and 11 additional vehicles is adequate, as are staffing levels for regular and substitute school bus drivers. The district does not appear to have a bus replacement schedule and should develop one.

School sites currently develop their own bell schedules. Centralized bell scheduling could reduce route times and the number of buses needed as well as accommodate future enrollment growth.

The district does not have an overtime rate for field trip transportation. This issue should be reviewed.

Most bus drivers work an eight hour day that includes additional assignments in other areas. These positions are paid at the bus drivers' higher rate of pay for the entire work assignment, which is costly. The district should consider adopting a policy that provides for employees working a split job assignment to be paid at the appropriate rate of pay for each assignment.

The district's transportation coordinator position is a four hour per day position; however, the work routinely exceeds four hours per day. The district should consider making this position full time, which may also free the MOT director to be more available to staff.

The department's maintenance shop is clean and organized, and the school bus fleet appears to be well maintained in compliance with state and federal law.

Because the district's ratio of mechanics to school bus drivers is within the statewide average and major repairs are contracted to outside vendors, the mechanic should have adequate time to maintain the district's fleet.

Vehicle maintenance records are maintained manually, as are most records for routing, field trip costs, and parts inventory. A comprehensive software package could save time, improve accuracy and increase efficiency.

Providing for hands-free operation of the Nextel cellular telephones or replacing them with less expensive two-way radios would reduce costs and increase safety.

In 2005-06, the transportation department's cost per mile and percentage of home-to-school transportation costs covered by the state reimbursement compared favorably with other California school districts.

Findings and Recommendations

Purchasing

Organization, Staffing and Requisition Processing

In the 2006-07 fiscal year, the district added a management position with responsibility for overseeing purchasing and facilities; however, the district does not have a traditional purchasing department per industry standards. The district should consider assigning an additional employee to perform routine purchasing and paperwork. If the funding cannot be found currently, the position could be added as the district grows.

Regardless of when the position is added, the current director of facilities and purchasing should take a more active role in purchasing operations. The director should manage the public works bidding process and develop specifications and bids as needed. Interviews revealed that the director spends all of his time managing facilities and no time managing the purchase of equipment and services. Rather, sites and departments routinely select products and vendors for purchases themselves. There is little or no standardization of products or consolidation of orders, from which the district would benefit.

The duties of a purchasing department should include the following:

- Establishing a centralized purchasing process to ensure selection of the best pricing and vendors.
- Standardizing bid documents.
- Setting up multiyear contracts for commodities such as custodial supplies, paper and office products.
- Communicating clearly with departments and school sites regarding the reasons purchase orders and requisitions are returned, such as insufficient budget or incorrect coding.
- Ensuring that the processing of purchase orders and the processing of payments are carried out by separate individuals.
- Standardizing products and purchasing in quantity to reduce costs and save time.
- Processing purchase orders rapidly because if processing is slow the amount of money in the site budget has often changed by the time the purchase order is processed.
- Ensuring that each purchase order contains a clause to prevent vendors from making changes in unit costs or shipping charges without prior approval from the district.
- Ensuring that accounts payable is allowed to pay no more than the industry standard of 10% more than the approved purchase order amount.
- Implementing an online purchase order system to save time and increase efficiency and accuracy.

The district's accounts payable technician processes the purchase orders and the invoices for purchase order payments. Having the same person perform both of these duties creates an internal control weakness and a potential conflict of interest.

The district's requisition approval process is inefficient in several areas. Requisitions are completed manually, then sent to the business office for entry into the Quintessential School Systems (QSS) financial system. Because of the volume of paperwork and the amount of time needed for processing, funds are sometimes no longer available and the account code is sometimes no longer valid by the time the order is processed. To operate effectively and ensure compliance, the department needs the director of facilities and purchasing to be a more active manager and needs additional assistance to input information and coordinate paperwork. A new position would enable the duties of processing purchase orders and creating invoices to be split between two positions, and the cost of a new position could be recovered over time by the savings on purchases of goods and services.

The district lacks guidelines for securing quotes. Guidelines should include information regarding when multiple quotes via telephone are required, when written quotes are necessary, who is authorized to obtain quotes and who is authorized to sign contracts. Although all bids should be processed by the purchasing department, this is not occurring. Instead, departments and sites procure their own items, regardless of the price in many cases. The purchasing department should focus on purchasing goods for the district rather than simply processing paperwork.

The position in the business office that is responsible for paying and entering the requisitions into QSS is also responsible for validating account codes and budget amounts on requisitions to confirm that the correct accounts are being charged and that the appropriate budget amount is available before processing the order. If any information is incorrect, the requisition is returned to the originator. Information from interviews indicated a need for increased communication with departments and sites regarding discrepancies in requisitions and the reasons requisitions are returned to the originator. Better communication would also allow faster order processing.

The QSS online purchasing module has been implemented only in the purchasing department, even though other modules such as budgeting are available at both the school sites and departments. The inability of the sites and departments to access and enter requisitions into the online purchasing system prevents them from tracking requisitions in a timely manner. District staff report that there is a delay between the submission of requisitions and the encumbrance of the purchase order. Although the budget may be sufficient when the school site sends the manual purchase requisition to the district office for processing, that same budget may not be adequate by the time the requisition is processed and entered into the purchasing module as a purchase order. The district should implement the online purchasing module districtwide so that all sites and departments can input purchase requisitions into the system. The director of facilities and purchasing should be responsible for a planned and efficient implementation.

The online purchasing module would save time, ensure that budget information is current when requisitions are entered into the system, and eliminate the return of requisitions without understandable reasons and comments because the system automatically validates information and flags the user if issues are found at the time of entry. The purchasing module has control features to ensure that when requisitions are entered into the system and before the purchase order is issued, review and approval is required by whoever the district assigns. Thus none of the existing internal controls are lost. Currently, all purchase requisitions are reviewed by the department secretaries, signed by department managers and then signed by the superintendent. Those same approvals can be incorporated into the online purchase order module and completed online, providing real time information and tracking from the moment the requisition is processed.

If the online system is implemented, the district would need to conduct mandatory staff training on the system and the accompanying changes in routing and approvals.

The district lacks a master schedule for purchases and requisitions. It is in the district's best interest to develop and maintain a master schedule that includes all multiyear service agreements and contracts for products, services and purchases. This could prevent costly lapses in service.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Ensure that the director of facilities and purchasing allocates time to perform the duties of the job description, takes a more active role in purchasing operations and creates a cohesive purchasing department.
2. Consider adding a full time position in purchasing to process purchases orders, manage the flow of paperwork, secure quotes and bids on routine orders and eliminate the conflict created when the accounts payable technician both processes purchase orders and pays invoices. Until this is implemented, the current director of facilities and purchasing may need to assist in these areas.
3. Create and approve guidelines for securing quotes, including information on when multiple phone quotes or written quotes should be obtained and who is responsible for these tasks.
4. Ensure that the director of facilities and purchasing develops a process to inform departments and sites when additional information is needed or when there is a budget issue with their order.
5. Expand implementation of the QSS online purchasing module to school sites and provide training in its use. Assign The director of facilities and purchasing to expanded its implementation and oversee staff training.
6. Conduct mandatory staff training so that staff can learn the online purchase order system and accompanying changes in routing and approvals.

7. Develop a master bid schedule that includes all multiyear service agreements and purchase contracts to prevent lapses in service.

Outside Contracts and Agreements

Several of the district's departments and sites currently act as their own purchasing agents, processing their own bids and quotes and maintaining those documents at their own site or department. This practice should be discontinued. The purchasing department should secure the best prices for products and should complete and send all contracts and purchasing agreements. This approach is the industry standard for purchasing and accounting. The job description for the director of facilities and purchasing states that the position should be processing bids and quotes.

The purpose of a purchasing department is to ensure that all district goods and services are obtained through a uniform and unbiased process in accordance with applicable law and appropriate business practices. Allowing separate departments to issue their own contracts compromises control and the integrity of the process and precludes the use of appropriate documents with the correct sections and requirements. Because these are legal documents, the risks of this arrangement outweigh the benefits.

Signature authority is typically designated annually at the discretion of the governing board. The superintendent and assistant superintendents are usually granted full signature authority for all documents. Other department heads are often granted signature authority for specific amounts and/or purposes. Recommendations for granting signature authority are developed by the administration and provided to the governing board for approval, modification or rejection.

The district does not have bid documents, quote documents, standard contracts or service agreements on file. Standard contracts and service agreements should be developed with the assistance of legal counsel and should be kept in the purchasing department for use as needed.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Ensure that only the purchasing department completes and sends all contracts and purchasing agreements.
2. Ensure that purchases are approved only by those who are authorized by the board.
3. Develop standard contracts and service agreements with the assistance of legal counsel. Keep these forms in the purchasing department for use as needed.

Bid Limits

Based on information in the district's vendor history report, the district is not in compliance with Public Contract Code (PCC) 20111, which covers bid limits. In 2005-06, the district spent more than \$72,000 on furniture from Desks Chairs & More and paid more than \$146,664.38 to Los Angeles Freightliner in object code 6400 (equipment). In both cases the total amount indicates that a bid was required, but it appears that a bid was not processed in either case. Interviews conducted and documents reviewed by FCMAT did not provide information regarding board approval for a bid prior to these large purchases. No employee was assigned to bid purchases at the time because the director of facilities and purchasing position did not exist until 2006-07. In addition, FCMAT found that equipment bids have not been processed in 2006-07. The statutory bid threshold was \$65,100 for the 2005-06 school year. Effective January 1, 2007, this amount was raised by 6.05% to \$69,000.

In accordance with requirements of the PCC, the state Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) annually adjusts the bid limit that governs competitive bid contracts as of January 1. This higher bid limit applies only to the following:

- 1) The purchase of equipment, materials, and supplies;
- 2) Services, except construction services; and
- 3) Repairs, including maintenance as defined in PCC Section 20115, that are not public projects as defined in Section 22002(c).

The \$15,000 threshold for construction contracts under Section 20111(b) has remained unchanged for several years.

The purchasing department, specifically the director of facilities and purchasing, should consolidate orders, develop standard specifications and process annual bids for furniture and all other products that will exceed the bid limit, as well as one-time purchases as they arise. The director of facilities and purchasing should set up multiyear bids or quotes for products such as office supplies and custodial supplies as the anticipated expenditure amount dictates. This will help ensure selection of the best pricing and vendors. All bids should be maintained in the purchasing department, with copies sent to the business office.

The director of facilities and purchasing or a designee must process bids correctly. Records should be kept in the purchasing department to show that the bid process was followed, including appropriate board approval.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Stay apprised of the annual bid limits.
2. Instruct departments and sites to forward their requisitions and specifications to the director of facilities and purchasing for quotes and bids.
3. Ensure that the district's legal services provider develops standard language to be used by the director of facilities and purchasing in equipment and service bids and quotes.
4. Ensure that bids are provided if there is a chance that annual purchases from that vendor may exceed the bid threshold.
5. Maintain appropriate records in the purchasing department to show that the bid process was followed.
6. Ensure that board approval is received for all bids.

Price Modifications

District staff reported that a significant number of vendors are currently invoicing at a higher price than the purchase order indicates. The purchase order is then changed to match the invoice at time of payment. Because a purchase order is a contract for goods and services, vendors may not change the prices without the district's authorization. Doing so is illegal and the district is under no obligation to pay unauthorized price increases. Staff reported that when invoices are received at higher prices than the purchase order shows, they must often contact sites and departments because the additional amount may exceed the available budget, causing a delay in payment. Requiring vendors to secure approval for price increases prior to shipment would provide sites and department heads with the opportunity to cancel an order if prices are too high or sufficient funds are not available.

District staff reported that they are permitted to pay up to 20% more than the approved purchase order amount when paying an invoice. A 10% overage is the industry standard. The only price increases that should appear on invoices at the time of payment are small changes in shipping costs. All other price increases should be approved in advance by the district and the purchase order adjusted prior to shipment and invoicing.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Add to each purchase order the statement, "no change in unit cost or shipping is permitted without approval from Golden Valley Unified School District prior to shipping."
2. Notify vendors that invoices submitted with unauthorized increases will be paid at the face value of the purchase order.
3. Change the amount of overpayment allowed on a purchase order from 20% to 10%.

Maintenance and Operations

Organizational Structure

A governing board's goals and objectives should be clearly defined and embedded in the district's organizational chart. The organizational structure should establish the framework that the district uses to demonstrate leadership and delegate duties and responsibilities. As a district's enrollment increases or declines, the organizational structure needs to adapt so that duties and responsibilities can be carried out effectively.

A district should be staffed according to basic theories of organizational structure and standards used in other school agencies of similar size and type. In addition, the district's existing organizational structure should be modified to reflect the most common generally accepted theories of organizational structure: span of control, chain of command and line and staff authority.

Span of control refers to the number of subordinates reporting directly to a supervisor. While there is no ideal number of subordinates for span of control, it is generally agreed that the span can be larger at lower levels of an organization because subordinates at lower levels typically perform more routine duties, making supervision easier.

Chain of command refers to the flow of authority within an organization and is characterized by two principles: unity of command, where a subordinate is only accountable to one supervisor; and the scalar principle, which suggests that authority and responsibility should flow in a direct line vertically from top management to the lowest level. Chain of command establishes a hierarchical division of labor.

The organizational structure of local school agencies contains both line and staff authority. Line authority is the relationship between supervisors and subordinates and refers to the direct line in the chain of command. For example, the district superintendent has direct line authority over the chief business official (CBO) and the CBO has direct line authority over the business office. Staff authority, on the other hand, is advisory in nature. Staff personnel do not have authority to make and implement decisions; rather, they support line personnel.

The purpose of any organizational structure is to help a district's management make decisions to facilitate student learning while balancing financial resources. The organizational design should outline the management process and its links to the formal system of communication, authority and responsibility needed to achieve the district's goals and objectives.

Staffing

The workload of the director of maintenance, operations and transportation (MOT) appears to be excessive and there are too many employees reporting directly to this position. Additional support may be needed. Because of the department's workload and staffing levels, the director spends a significant amount of time dealing with issues in

the field and is not able to function fully as an administrator of these operational areas. The district might consider adding a mid-level management position, such as a working maintenance and operations supervisor, to set priorities and oversee daily assignments for maintenance, operations and grounds staff. This change would provide the director with additional time to focus on other assigned duties, including compliance and evaluation issues.

The district's maintenance and operations department consists of a director, 3.0 full time equivalent (FTE) groundskeepers/landscapers, 2.0 FTE maintenance workers and a secretary who works 0.5 FTE assisting with maintenance, operations and transportation duties and 0.5 FTE assisting the director responsible for facilities and purchasing. Although there is a backlog of maintenance work orders, the recent addition of the second maintenance position and the use of outside contractors have allowed the department to keep pace with the district's needs better than in the past.

Although the district's groundskeepers/landscapers are capable and hard working, the district's growing need for mowing and landscape maintenance of 77 acres at five facilities is greater than current staff can meet. Establishing an additional groundskeeper/mowing position would resolve this issue.

Staff who are customers of the maintenance and operations department were supportive of the district and the department but expressed a desire for the department to be able to do more. All maintenance and operations staff interviewed felt the department was understaffed. FCMAT agrees with this assessment and feels that the district will be affected negatively without the support of additional positions in this department.

It appears that the custodial staff functions well. FCMAT visited all campuses and found them to be well maintained with clean restrooms, kitchens and cafeterias. A good way to judge custodial staffing adequacy is by using the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) statewide custodial formula, which factors in square footage of sites and the number of students, staff, classrooms, offices and general purpose areas. This formula for custodial staffing is as follows:

Add together the total for each of the following:

- One custodian for every 13 teachers.
- One custodian for every 325 students.
- One custodian for every 13 classrooms.
- One custodian for every 18,000 square feet.

Total the above and divide by four to find the number of custodians needed to clean and maintain a building, according to the established timelines and cleaning standards found in the CASBO custodial handbook. These guidelines are based on industry time-driven standards.

Table 1 provides an example of this formula as applied to the district.

Table 1: Custodial Staffing Formula – Sample Calculation

	Total Number	Formula	Recommended Custodial Staff
Teachers/13	45	<i>divided by 13</i>	=3.46
Students/325	47	<i>divided by 325</i>	=0.14
Classrooms/13	20	<i>divided by 13</i>	=1.54
Sq. Ft./18,000	24,747	<i>divided by 18,000</i>	=1.37
Total			=6.52
Total divided by 4			1.63

It appears that the district is adequately staffed in this area. As the district continues to grow, it should continue to use either the formula above, or other guidelines it develops, to evaluate the adequacy of custodial staffing.

The district does not hire extra summer help for tasks such as pruning, aerating, weeding and light tree trimming. This is a common practice in school districts and an effective way to help manage the high demands of a grounds department.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider establishing the following additional staff positions in the maintenance and operations department to increase the level of service to the school sites and to address health and safety issues in an effective and efficient manner:
 - a. One FTE maintenance and operations supervisor position.
 - b. One FTE groundskeeper/landscaper position
2. Review and revise all maintenance and operations job descriptions as the department reorganizes.
3. Explore the option of hiring extra summer help to assist with groundskeeping and landscaping tasks.

Training and Safety

The district lacks a districtwide training program for maintenance and operations staff and is currently out of compliance in a number of areas related to health and safety training. FCMAT found no current written policies or procedures regarding training, safety issues, or department protocols.

The MOT director should immediately develop a thorough, standard program of consistent and ongoing training to bring all district procedures, departments, and sites into compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.

The MOT director does not appear to have expertise in current maintenance and operations safety standards, mandated staff training, and training documentation requirements. The director will need to acquire expertise in this area to administer the program and develop the necessary training.

The maintenance and operations department does not hold monthly safety meetings. Meetings for all maintenance and operations staff would improve communication and education, helping to resolve issues as they arise.

The district needs to establish policies and employee training to comply with all federal, state and local regulatory statutes. All mandated training must be scheduled, and monitored. Topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hazardous communication plan.
- Asbestos management plan (AHERA).
- Lead.
- Anti-microbial.
- Blood-borne pathogens.
- Material safety data sheets (MSDS).
- Emergency spill response.
- Respiratory protection.
- Written department safety program.
- Forklift training/scissor lift training (if applicable).
- Hand and power tool safety.
- Ladder safety.
- Back safety.
- Electrical safety.
- Driver safety.

An existing employee should be assigned to maintain all employee records related to mandated health and safety training. Software programs are available that can simplify this record keeping.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Develop a thorough, standardized training program to bring all district procedures, departments, and sites into compliance with federal, state, and local regulations.
2. Ensure that monthly safety meetings are scheduled and held.
3. Establish and monitor policies and employee training regarding all federal, state and local regulatory statutes.
4. Assign one existing employee the responsibility of maintaining all records related to mandated safety and health training. Consider obtaining and using software to simplify this task.

Manual of Policies and Procedures

The maintenance and operations department does not have a policies and procedures manual. Without a manual, employees lack clear and consistent policies and procedures to follow, and the district is not able to hold employees accountable. Legal and procedural mandates should be communicated to help department employees stay in compliance and work effectively.

Before approving a manual, the district should request that the California State Employees' Association (CSEA) representative review the document and provide suggestions.

Areas that should be included in a manual include the following:

- a. Use of district vehicles.
- b. Use of district tools and equipment.
- c. Safety training.
- d. Key control.
- e. New employee orientation.
- f. Employee conduct.
- g. Employee discipline.
- h. Employee evaluation.
- i. Dress code/uniforms.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Ensure that the MOT director develops a policies and procedures manual for the maintenance and operations department.
2. Hold the maintenance and operations department staff accountable to follow policies and procedures provided in the manual.
3. Request that the CSEA representative review the manual before it is approved and implemented.

Electronic Work Order System

The district uses an electronic work order system called School Dude for many jobs and activities. The system allows the district and sites to easily check on the status of work orders. The system can also schedule and track preventive maintenance, safety meetings, asbestos inspections and other activities, but is not currently used for these purposes. The district should take full advantage of the system's abilities and should provide in-service training to staff that will enable them to use these additional features.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Ensure that the maintenance and operations director and staff are trained to fully implement the School Dude electronic work order system.

Vehicle and Equipment Replacement

The district recently purchased two new maintenance vehicles and plans to continue replacing vehicles and equipment as funding becomes available. However, the maintenance and operations department remains in need of additional vehicles and specialized equipment. A formal vehicle replacement program would include replacement criteria such as mileage, age and vehicle condition, which would be evaluated annually. This would help the district obtain the additional vehicles it needs.

The district could also benefit from the purchase of some specialized equipment, such as a scissor lift and a boom lift, which could be used in various areas to increase efficiency.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Establish and fully implement a vehicle and equipment replacement program.
2. Evaluate the possible purchase of specialized equipment to increase efficiency.

Preventive Maintenance

The district lacks a formal preventive maintenance plan. As a result, the maintenance and operations department has found itself in the role of an emergency responder, with little or no time for scheduled preventive maintenance.

A preventive maintenance plan should include a database of district buildings and equipment that may require ongoing preventive maintenance and repair. Purchase prices, anticipated life expectancies, replacement schedules and budget information are also typically included.

A preventive maintenance program should be regarded as an investment rather than an expense. An effective program includes regular inspection and maintenance before facilities deteriorate or equipment breaks down, which is preferable to a remedial maintenance program in which repair and restoration take place after a breakdown has occurred.

Probable and desired outcomes of a scheduled preventative maintenance program include the following:

- Increased life of buildings and equipment.
- Improved operating efficiency of equipment.
- Fewer breakdowns.
- Lower operating costs.
- Increased revenue as a result of fewer expenditures from the district's general fund.
- Improved safety.
- Improved customer satisfaction.
- Decreased disruptions resulting from remedial maintenance activities.

Steps for implementing a preventive maintenance program include the following:

- Create a department policy regarding preventive maintenance and include funding sources.
- Create a database of all facilities and equipment that require regular preventive care and maintenance.
- Develop an organizational chart showing the scheduled preventive maintenance program.
- Establish a computer database of priorities for preventive maintenance.
- Establish a computer database that is organized by site and that catalogs information about all equipment and buildings including, but not limited to, name, location, description, age, part number, date of purchase and identification number.
- Create a computer database that stores and displays in chronological order the dates when equipment should be serviced or replaced.
- Establish a financial plan, funding sources and budget codes to track preventive maintenance expenditures.

- Develop a calendar for projects that may need to be contracted out. This may be tied to the five year deferred maintenance plan.
- Develop a program that will update the district's facilities and equipment inventory each year and show the changes that have occurred during the current year as a result of maintenance, new equipment or facilities, demolition of facilities, sale of equipment, or any other activities that changes the status of facilities or equipment.

Using this data to establish a five year financial plan that shows the possible impact of the preventive maintenance program.

- Develop a budget for scheduled maintenance that is separate from the budget for routine maintenance.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Implement a comprehensive, scheduled preventive maintenance program to maintain facilities and equipment in acceptable operating condition.

Facilities Program

The district has several construction projects scheduled to begin in 2007-08, including the modernization of Webster Elementary School, the construction of a new middle school and several other smaller projects. Because the upcoming projects are not sufficient to warrant a full time focus on facilities, FCMAT believes that a greater portion of the director of facilities and purchasing's time should be focused on purchasing duties and assisting the MOT director.

There appears to be little or no communication or working relationship between the MOT director and the facilities and purchasing director. It is vital that these positions work collaboratively to facilitate a successful building program and support one another's department.

The facilities and purchasing director has a secretary who works 0.50 FTE in facilities and purchasing and 0.50 FTE assisting the director of MOT. Although there are ongoing and upcoming projects in the facilities area, more of the secretary's time could be spent in the MOT area. A possible split of 0.75 FTE in MOT and 0.25 FTE in facilities may result in a better use of the secretary's time.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Review the current projects assigned to the facilities and purchasing director and ensure that focus is also placed on purchasing responsibilities. This position should also be assisting the MOT director.
2. Ensure that the MOT director and the facilities and purchasing director establish open communication. These positions must work together and form a successful partnership to complete the district's building and modernization projects.
3. Review whether the secretary's split responsibilities could be changed from 0.50 FTE in facilities and purchasing and 0.50 FTE in MOT to 0.25 FTE in facilities and purchasing and 0.75 FTE in MOT.

Employee Morale

FCMAT found that employee morale in the maintenance and operations department is low for a variety of reasons. The overwhelming response of staff was that they feel overworked and unappreciated. Most employees indicated that they feel micromanaged and that they cannot approach the MOT director with concerns or suggestions. Most employees felt that they were consistently responding to emergencies, without consistent schedules or direction.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Ensure that open communication is established between the MOT director and staff.
2. Implement monthly staff meetings in the MOT department to improve communication and to resolve department issues as they arise.

Maintenance and Operations Purchasing Practices

Maintenance employees spend much of their time traveling to obtain parts and materials for their projects. This includes traveling to sites to determine the problem, getting approval to make a purchase, traveling to businesses to procure the items to complete the project, and going back to the site to complete the work. The result is an ineffective use of employee time.

The district should review the current policy regarding the purchase of materials as it relates to the maintenance and operations department. Opening commercial accounts at stores like Home Depot and Lowes for employees who make daily or weekly material purchases could increase efficiency and benefit the district. The use of procurement cards could help streamline procurement procedures and eliminate paperwork and approval time.

It does not appear that the maintenance department stocks many materials at the warehouse, although this practice could save time and money. Some districts choose not to stock the warehouse to reduce theft from the shop areas.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Develop an equipment and materials procurement manual that outlines the school district's policies and procedures for purchasing equipment and supplies.
2. Consider using procurement cards for purchases of less than \$1,000. These cards can have purchase limits and can be limited to certain vendors and/or types of materials and supplies.
3. Link each purchase to the job or project on a work order. Ensure that the department clerk and the supervisor or director review this information to determine efficiency and accountability.

Deferred Maintenance Program and Five Year Plan

The deferred maintenance program (DMP) provides state matching funds to help school districts with major repairs or replacement of existing school facilities. The program typically provides for repair or replacement of roofing, plumbing, heating, air conditioning, electrical systems, wall systems, floor systems and other components. An annual basic grant is provided to districts for major repair or replacement work listed on the district's five year plan (Form SAB 40-20). An extreme hardship grant is provided in addition to the basic grant if the district's five year plan contains a critical project that must be completed within one year for health and safety or structural reasons.

The intent of the five year plan is to forecast deferred maintenance projects. Because it is not intended to be an expenditure report, the project costs reported in the plan should be estimates. The district is not required to perform all the work listed in the plan. New or revised plans for the current fiscal year shall be submitted to the Office of Public School Construction (OPSC) by the last working day in June of that fiscal year.

The five year plan allows a district to designate an individual approved by the governing board to act on behalf of the district as the contact person for the OPSC regarding the deferred maintenance program. If part one of the five year plan is not completed, the district superintendent must act as the district's contact person for the OPSC.

Beginning with the 2005–06 fiscal year, school districts and county offices of education are required to establish a facilities inspection system (FIS) as a condition of participation in the deferred maintenance program, pursuant to Senate Bill 550, which modified Education Code (EC) Section 17070.75(e). The law does not specify requirements for the FIS other than stating that the system should ensure that each school in the district or county is maintained in good repair. The design of the FIS should be determined at the local level. The only exception is for school sites newly constructed before January 1, 2000 and identified by the California Department of Education (CDE) as ranked in deciles one to three based on the 2003 Academic Performance Index (API).

Before a district submits a new or revised five year plan, the proposals and plans for expenditure of funds for the deferred maintenance of school district facilities must be discussed in a public hearing at a regularly scheduled school board meeting. The district is required to record the date this occurred in the certification section of form SAB 40-20. The requirement for a public hearing must be met each time a revised plan is submitted to the OPSC.

A district may amend its approved five year plan as needed for the current and future fiscal years. Plan revisions are not required for estimated cost changes or for moving a project already listed on the plan into a different fiscal year. However, a revised plan should be submitted to the OPSC if any one of the following circumstances exists:

- The plan has expired.
- Deferred maintenance work will be performed that is not currently listed in the plan, or at a school that is not in the plan.

- If the same project was entirely paid for with funds from the School Facility Program (SFP) Modernization or Federal Renovation Program, the plan must be resubmitted without the project.

The fiscal year in which a district revises the five year plan will become the starting year for the plan. The OPSC will not accept revisions to the five year plan for prior fiscal years.

Any project to be placed on the five year plan must meet all of the following criteria:

- It must be either a repair or replacement project for one of the school facility components which have approached or exceeded their normal life expectancy and which are listed in the law or approved by the State Allocation Board (SAB).
- It must be located within district-owned facilities that are used for school purposes.

Components with a history of continued repairs indicating a shortened life expectancy may be included as eligible items.

The district's five year maintenance plan is outdated and needs to be revised. Annual assessments should be completed to set priorities for areas of concern such as paving, flooring, painting and roofing. These priorities should then be included in the five year plan.

It does not appear that anyone in the district is completely familiar with the state of California's five year deferred maintenance program. Administering the program for the district is not complicated and the current director of MOT could be provided with in-service training regarding how to submit the five year plan to the governing board and then to the state. The OPSC has developed helpful information to assist in this area, including an online handbook available at http://www.documents.dgs.ca.gov/opsc/Publications/Handbooks/DMP_Hdbk.pdf.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Immediately provide the director of MOT and the business and purchasing managers with training regarding the management of a deferred maintenance program.
2. Assign the director of MOT to have assessments done on roofs, paving, painting, asbestos, HVAC systems and other building components.
3. Assign the director of MOT to set priorities for projects and build a five year plan to correct system deficiencies. This plan can be modified each year as requirements change.

High School Staffing and Master Schedule

Administrative, Counseling and Teacher Ratios

FCMAT's findings indicate that the current administrative and counseling staffing ratio for Liberty High School is sufficient, is not related to understaffing and is actually higher than industry standards.

If any administrative or counseling salaries are increased with long term categorical support to better reflect their increased duties and experience, site and district input should be included. In addition, any such decision must take into account long term considerations.

Table 2 compares class sizes and counseling, administrative and teacher-to-pupil ratios for Liberty High School with those of several high schools of similar size and with state-wide averages.

Table 2: Comparison of Counseling, Administrative and Teacher-to-Pupil Ratios

County	High School	Enrollment	Average Class Size
Madera	Liberty	583	28.3
Merced	Gustine	593	26.5
Mendocino	Willits	612	26.1
San Luis Obispo	Templeton	794	22.6
Subject	Statewide Average High School Class Sizes by Subject	Liberty High School Average Class Sizes by Subject	
English	26.1	30.1	
Math	27.8	26.1	
Social Science	29.7	24.7	
Science	29.8	26.2	
	Pupils Per Teacher	Pupils per Administrator	Pupils per Counselor
Statewide Average for HS	23.4	260:1	270
Liberty HS	22.2	194	292
Gustine	21.8	269	296
Willits	23.1	306	165
Templeton	19.7	317	238

Source: Ed-Data 8/06 and Liberty High School Master Schedule Data

A pupil-to-teacher ratio is different from average class size because it is the number of pupils per full time equivalent (FTE) teacher. The ratio is usually smaller than the average class size because some teachers are not in regular classrooms full time.

Master Schedule

Vision and Philosophy

School districts often establish their own practices and methods for developing master course schedules because each district is unique in its educational philosophy, available facilities and local educational culture. In-depth planning is essential to the proper development of master schedules. Budget factors and districtwide uniformity must be the primary considerations in master schedule development. Optimum class sizes and staffing ratios should be established, monitored and reviewed regularly.

Because approximately 85% of a school district's budget is typically expended on salaries and benefits, it is reasonable for a district to monitor the master schedule and staffing of its schools. Because of the large expenditures involved, there is the possibility for cost savings to be realized, or for expenses to increase if there is a lack of accountability for monitoring the schedule.

Before designing and implementing the 2007-08 master schedule for Liberty High School, the district and the high school administration should firmly establish a mutual vision of expectations, philosophies, directions and minimum class size parameters. A methodical, well-conceived system must be established that includes input from the district and the high school so that the schedule reflects the district's overall vision. This process has begun and should continue to be developed.

Steps for review and avenues for communication need to be identified with regular check-points as the master schedule is being designed. Both the site and the district should be aware of the personnel and fiscal factors before the schedule is implemented.

Class Size and Elective Offerings

High schools with an average daily attendance (ADA) of approximately 600, like the district's Liberty High School, typically struggle with the number and variety of electives offered. The concerns FCMAT noted from site administrators about the inability to meet all of the requests and needs of the educational community are common for high schools of this size. This continues to be the case until enrollment reaches approximately 1,000 students. Higher enrollment allows for a larger teaching staff that can provide more flexibility in building a master schedule.

The district needs to establish clear parameters for the master schedule and regularly communicate these to the high school. The district office should take the leadership role in scheduling by disseminating data such as projected enrollment and number of FTEs, setting deadlines and holding the high school accountable for staying within the established parameters. The high school and the district must communicate regularly to ensure that the needs of students, staff and the local educational community are met.

The class size and district staffing allotments contained in the district's certificated bargaining agreement appear to support the development of an efficient master schedule at a small comprehensive high school such as Liberty and within a district the size of Golden Valley. The district has negotiated student-to-teacher ratios of 20:1 for kindergarten through grade 3; 31:1 with a limit of 34 for grades 4-6; 32:1 with a limit of 35 for grades 7-8; and 34:1 with a limit of 36 for grades 9-12. Maintaining class sizes closer to these ratios and limits would allow the district to staff all areas of need at more realistic and reasonable levels.

The district must clearly communicate to the board and the community that a decision to provide small classes will involve additional costs and result in less district money for other areas. For example, FCMAT is recommending that additional financial resources be committed to areas such as purchasing, maintenance and operations. To do this, the district would need to either reduce the ending fund balance or cut expenditures in other areas. Because salaries and benefits are the largest expenditure categories in any school district's budget, the district may need to consider reducing expenditures for smaller classes that require higher staffing levels.

The district currently surveys students and the community regarding the electives they would like the high school to offer. However, it is unrealistic to expect that many of the offerings will occur soon because facilities and/or staff are limited. When conducting the survey, the district should make clear to participants that the district cannot offer all recommended or desired classes.

The high school schedule includes a number of electives and advanced level courses with small class sizes. Enrollment projections show increases each year, so the district should decide which of the following will be the board's priority:

- a. Meeting the needs of students and the community by offering smaller classes for now and retaining the teaching staff until the enrollment grows, or
- b. Reducing the staff for the 2007-08 school year prior to the March 15 deadline and offering fewer small classes in the elective and advanced subject areas.
The district would then need to find additional teachers in the future to meet the demands of increased enrollment.

It is critical that a small school district have a good working relationship with the county office regarding teacher credentialing requirements. It requires a great deal of time on the part of a designated district employee to ensure compliance, monitor the master schedule and provide guidance to school sites when needed. The designated employee must be provided with ongoing training from the county office of education and from the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). The new mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation and the rapidly changing credentialing laws make it difficult for smaller districts to be aware of all of the requirements for a highly qualified and fully credentialed teacher.

The district needs to conduct an internal review of certificated staff credentials. This information should be considered as the master schedule is designed each spring.

Even in smaller school districts, adjusting some secondary teachers' schedules at the second semester is a reasonable practice. Classes can be combined, or teachers can be moved to an alternative program or to the middle school for a period or two if their credential permits. These adjustments can often align with the normal decline in enrollment that occurs in comprehensive high schools over the course of the school year.

Before a significant change or reduction in staffing at the high school, a number of factors should be considered, including the following:

- **Enrollment projections**

If enrollment is steady or growth is pending, it may be more effective to maintain the existing staff and increase class sizes each year until they reach the level the district desires, as long as the district's budget is able to support this approach. This is less disruptive than letting staff go and having to replace them one or two years later.

- **Credentialing and NCLB issues**

It is difficult for a high school of less than 1,000 students to have enough staff available to provide the range of courses that a comprehensive high school is expected to offer. Existing credentials should be carefully analyzed before any reductions so that proper certifications are in place to meet course requirements and expectations.

- **The culture of the school and community.**

Each local high school has its own unique identity within its community that includes the types of courses it offers and the educational vision it portrays. A high school master schedule is one way that a school and district actively demonstrate their educational philosophy to the community.

Enrollment numbers in most elective classes are extremely low, including those funded by categorical programs such as the regional occupational program (ROP). This is partly a result of increased statewide graduation requirements and post-secondary aspirations. A lack of flexibility resulting from the credentialing constraints of NCLB legislation may also be a factor.

Because of the tenure and permanency of the current high school teaching staff, it may not be possible to resolve this issue quickly for the 2007-08 school year. What is needed is a methodical and well thought out plan that is understood and supported districtwide and that steadily restructures the elective offerings and categorical program courses to increase enrollment.

Some elective courses may no longer be viable because of credential requirements for staff and graduation requirements for students. The district should review all elective offerings to determine their appropriateness for a contemporary high school that faces today's state and federal mandates and graduation requirements.

The district could consider alternative approaches to meet the demand for additional electives. For example, increasing offerings during the zero period has worked for several high schools of similar size. In addition, the community college resources located nearby

offer a number of possibilities to be explored. Combining courses, combining staffing and mutually building facilities offer possibilities for both entities to consider.

Master Scheduling Organization

The master scheduling process needs to be reviewed and revised to provide greater accountability. The district should develop checkpoints and controls to monitor the master schedule before it is implemented. The master schedule development process should become more standardized in terms of staffing ratios, class sizes and credentialing clearances. Standard forms and practices, clear lines of communication and established deadlines should also be in place.

The high school administration and counselors have organized the master scheduling practices and procedures at the site. The district is involved in critical aspects of master schedule development and implementation. Communication with school staff and students is consistent throughout the process, which is a positive reflection on the district's organizational efforts.

The district does not have a timeline for the high school to follow when planning and preparing the master schedule and needs to establish one. The plans, guidelines and timelines for the 2007-08 schedule should be established immediately. Student requests for classes, which assist in the initial development of the master schedule, should be submitted no later than March of each school year.

Following is a suggested timeline for the development of a high school master schedule:

- January – Provide enrollment projections and initial staffing allotments to the site. Hold districtwide training for all site personnel involved in master schedule development.
- February – Finalize registration materials for students and parents.
- March – Conduct student registration and hold meetings with departments regarding teacher requests for the following year. Issue a first draft of the schedule before March 15 so that nonpermanent teachers can be notified of their status for next school year.
- April – Finalize schedules at the site and provide them to the district for review.
- May – Notify teachers of their tentative assignments for the next school year.
- August – Adjust schedules to account for enrollment and staffing changes and/or additional funding that affects course offerings or size.
- September – Finalize scheduling to account for changes in enrollment and make necessary staffing adjustments. This should be done no later than the second week of school.

As the district goes through a leadership transition this spring it is imperative that communications remain open and that clear expectations be established between the high school and the district office regarding the 2007-2008 master schedule and staffing levels.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Plan and develop a master schedule before the start of the 2007-08 school year. Budget factors, minimum class sizes and teacher credentials should be the primary considerations in any master schedule decisions.
2. Determine optimum class sizes for core academic classes and elective subjects, and adhere to these numbers as closely as possible when developing the high school master schedule.
3. Establish and monitor staffing ratios throughout the master scheduling process.
4. Designate a district employee to be responsible for overseeing the master scheduling process, including credential monitoring, class size issues and the impact of categorical programs such as ROP. Provide this employee with ongoing training from the county office of education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).
5. Immediately establish a timeline for the high school to follow when planning and preparing the master schedule. Student requests for class offerings should be submitted no later than March of each school year.
6. Establish and implement a plan for classes that fall below allowable enrollment minimums. The class may be allowed to continue but both the site and the district should be aware of the enrollment and its effect on finances and scheduling.
7. Review all elective classes to determine their appropriateness in light of today's state and federal mandates and requirements for high schools.
8. Ensure that open communication regarding the master schedule continues as the district goes through a leadership transition this spring.
9. Consider new approaches to meeting the demand for additional electives, such as increasing the offerings during zero period and working with the nearby community college.

Transportation

The Golden Valley Unified School District began its transportation operations on July 1, 1999. The district started its operations with Webster Elementary School, which is a K-8 school. In August 2002 the district opened Liberty High School and on July 1, 2005 the district acquired Sierra View Elementary School from Chawanakee Unified School District. Finally, in August 2005, the district opened Ranchos Middle School. The district covers 77 square miles.

From August 1999 to January 2004, the district's student transportation was provided by Clovis Unified School District under a joint powers agreement. Since that time the district has established its own transportation program.

Transportation Facility

The district's transportation facility is located on the same property as the district office and consists of one office for the MOT department, an employee lounge and one service bay for vehicle repairs. The shop building also serves as storage for vehicle parts and school supplies. The buses are kept on the same property, parked on asphalt under a metal canopy.

Bus Use, Routes and Schedules

The district has 16 school buses and 11 additional district vehicles. Two of the buses were acquired during unification and are out of service. The district operates nine formal bus routes with a.m. and p.m. pick-up and delivery times, leaving a total of five spare buses, which is more than adequate to cover buses that are out of service for maintenance or on field trips during route times. One of the nine bus routes operates twice a week to transport one special needs student. Bus route sheets lack right turn and left turn directions. This may make it more difficult for substitute drivers, increasing route times and decreasing efficiency.

The average age of the 14 buses in service is 11 years. The two out-of-service school buses are 1980 and 1986 model year buses. It does not appear that the district has a bus replacement schedule.

The following life spans for the different types of school buses are consistent with industry standards and reflect the reasonable, cost-effective life span of school buses used in daily service:

Type 1 Conventional: 15 years

Type 1 Transit: 20 years

The district transports approximately 40% of its students, which is higher than the state-wide average of 14%. Policies are in place as follows regarding non-transportation zones, commonly referred to as "walking distances," for students:

- ½ mile for students in grades K-3.

- 1 mile for students in grades 4-8.
- 2 miles for students in grades 9-12.

The district's school sites appear to have complete autonomy in developing their bell schedules. Centralizing bell schedule development and staggering bell schedules might allow the district to stagger school start and end times sufficiently to reduce route times and the number of buses needed. This practice might also help the district accommodate future growth without adding more school buses and routes.

In 2005-06, the district provided 201 field trips, charging schools an hourly rate of \$21. The district does not have an overtime rate in place, so the transportation department currently absorbs the additional payroll costs incurred when a field trip results in overtime pay. Schools are billed only for a driver's normal hourly pay.

Although the district transports one special needs student twice a week, this was not recorded on the district's Annual State Transportation Report.

Staffing and Maintenance

The transportation department staff is comprised of one MOT director, one 0.5 FTE transportation coordinator, one 0.50 FTE MOT department secretary, one mechanic, nine school bus drivers and six substitute school bus drivers. The current staffing level for regular and substitute school bus drivers is adequate.

Most bus drivers work an eight hour day that includes additional assignments in areas such as grounds maintenance, custodial, vehicle maintenance, transportation and cafeteria. These positions are paid at the bus drivers' rate of pay for the entire work assignment. Because the rate of pay for school bus drivers is considerably higher than the rate of pay for grounds, custodial or cafeteria assistants, this practice is costly.

The industry standard is to offer split contracts depending on the job assignment. For example, a bus driver/cafeteria assistant would be given a split contract and paid at the bus driver rate of pay for the time assigned to work in that capacity and at the cafeteria assistant rate of pay for the time worked in that capacity. The employees benefit from retaining full time status and receiving health and welfare benefits. The district benefits from paying employees at the negotiated rate for the job to which they are assigned rather than paying some personnel more than others for the same type of work.

The district's transportation coordinator position is a four hour per day position; however, the work routinely exceeds four hours per day, and the help that the transportation coordinator position provides to the department is critical to the department's success.

The MOT director has a variety of duties and is often not available to staff. Making the transportation coordinator position full time could provide increased supervision of daily operations and free the MOT director to be more available to staff.

The vehicle maintenance staff consists of one full time mechanic and one school bus driver who assists the mechanic two and one quarter hours per day. The statewide average ratio of mechanics to school buses is between 1:20 and 1:25. Because the district's

current operating fleet has a total of 14 buses and 11 other district vehicles, the mechanic should have adequate time to maintain the buses and to perform routine maintenance such as lubes, oil and filter changes and inspections on the district's 11 other vehicles. Major repairs are contracted to outside vendors, which FCMAT concurs is efficient and the best practice based on the district's current size.

It appears that the mechanic sometimes delivers buses and other vehicles to vendors for repairs and picks up parts from other vendors. Having other employees or vendors perform these tasks would allow the mechanic to focus more on vehicle maintenance.

The department's maintenance shop is clean and organized. The school bus fleet appears to be well maintained. Bus drivers indicated that the mechanic is responsive to their repair requests.

A review of the California Highway Patrol's motor carrier inspection records reveals that the district's buses are being maintained in a satisfactory condition and in compliance with state and federal law.

Vehicle maintenance records are maintained manually, as are most records for routing, field trip costs, and parts inventory. A comprehensive software package could assist with these tasks, saving time, improving accuracy and increasing efficiency. Information on a variety of transportation software vendors and systems is listed under the "sustaining members" link on the California Association of School Transportation Officials Web site at www.castoways.org.

Communication

The district uses Nextel cellular telephones for all of its communication needs. The Nextel system provides maximum flexibility because the cellular telephones can be used as two-way radios or telephones. District policy requires that a bus driver park the bus in a safe location before using their cellular telephone. However, using Nextel cell phones raises cost and safety issues.

Drivers use the cellular telephones regularly while on their routes. However, there is concern about the safety of cell phone use while operating a school bus. School bus drivers should not be distracted from their driving. As of January 2005, a new law, Vehicle Code 23125, states that a person may not drive a school bus while using a wireless telephone. This law does allow the use of a wireless phone for work-related purposes or emergencies. The intent of the law is to prevent bus drivers from being distracted while operating a school bus. The Nextel system is a potential distraction and only allows the two people who are talking to each other to hear the conversation. Using a two-way radio enables drivers to talk while driving without being distracted and allows all drivers to hear conversations and work better as a team.

Replacing the Nextel cellular telephones with less expensive two-way radios, or providing hands-free operation of the Nextel system would benefit the district. Two-way radios may not require an expensive repeater because the district's terrain is flat and covers only 77 square miles.

Morale

Some employees expressed concern regarding low morale among the school bus drivers. The two main concerns appear to be that the MOT director is often difficult to approach because of the workload of the position, and that field trips are being assigned to school bus drivers regardless of whether they are substitute or regular drivers. Some employees felt that the latter practice was unfair to regular school bus drivers, but most bus drivers thought it to be a fair system. FCMAT found that field trip assignments appear to be assigned fairly to all regular and substitute school bus drivers on a rotating basis.

Fiscal Status

In the 2005-06 school year, the transportation department had a general fund contribution of approximately 31% of the transportation budget, which is significantly lower than the statewide average of 54%. The state reimbursement for pupil transportation covered 69% of the district's home-to-school transportation program costs, and the district's cost per mile for the year was \$3.19. This compares favorably with other California school districts.

FCMAT found that the transportation department provides effective service to the district's pupils. This would not be possible without the high level of expertise and professionalism demonstrated by the entire staff in the performance of the daily operations. It is possible that applying this same level of expertise and professionalism to its internal operations could enable the department to address its current morale concerns.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Establish a policy which states that any new employees hired by the transportation department who also works in another job assignment for a portion of the day should be paid at the rate of pay for the other assignment during the hours worked in that assignment. For example, based on the district's current salary schedule, an eight hour per day bus driver should be paid at range 47 for five hours of bus driving and at range 6 for three hours as a cafeteria assistant.

Health and welfare benefits should also be divided according to the number of hours worked in each department. This practice will ensure that all departments account for the true labor and benefit costs of their employees.

2. Consider increasing the transportation coordinator position to full time to ensure adequate supervision of the transportation department and to provide the MOT director with more time to address employee concerns.
3. Continue to contract with outside providers for major vehicle repairs so that the mechanic can continue to maintain the district's equipment. Ensure that vehicles are delivered to vendors for repairs and that parts are delivered to the district by other employees or by vendors.
4. Assign minor maintenance and repair tasks to the bus driver who is assigned to assist the mechanic for three hours per day.
5. Review bell schedules to determine whether central bell scheduling and greater staggering of school start and end times could provide for more efficient use of the district's school buses.
6. Evaluate rates for field trips and consider raising fees to cover the actual cost of the drivers' salaries. An after-hours rate should be established to pay for overtime. School sites should be made aware of these costs in advance.
7. Consider purchasing a transportation software system to provide assistance with the routing, record-keeping, tracking and accounting for field trips, vehicle maintenance, and parts inventory. Consider assigning the MOT secretary the task of maintaining these records.
8. Research available school bus replacement grant programs and replace the two out-of-service buses if possible. If none of the programs apply to these buses, the district should dispose of the buses.
9. Consider replacing the Nextel cellular telephones with less expensive two-way radios. If the Nextel system is retained, the district should purchase equipment for hands-free cellular telephone operation. The district should also continue to enforce its existing cellular telephone policy requiring drivers to park the bus in a safe location before using a cellular telephone.

10. Continue assigning field trips to regular and substitute bus drivers in a fair and equitable manner on a rotating basis.
11. Ensure that the transportation of the one special needs student is reported on the Annual State Transportation Report.
12. Add “right turn” and “left turn” directions to bus route sheets to assist substitute school bus drivers and help improve efficiency.

Appendix A: Study Agreement

FISCAL CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM
STUDY AGREEMENT

January 8, 2007

The FISCAL CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the Team, and the Golden Valley Unified School District, hereinafter referred to as the District, mutually agree as follows:

1. BASIS OF AGREEMENT

The Team provides a variety of services to school districts and county offices of education upon request. The District has requested that the Team provide for the assignment of professionals to study specific aspects of the Golden Valley Unified School District operations. These professionals may include staff of the Team, County Offices of Education, the California State Department of Education, school districts, or private contractors. All work shall be performed in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

2. SCOPE OF THE WORK

A. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The scope and objectives of this study are to:

1. Review the District's Maintenance and Operations department's efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of staffing, productivity, organizational structure and policies and procedures and provide recommendations for changes, if needed.
2. Review the Purchasing department's efficiency and effectiveness in current processes and procedures and provide recommendations for changes, if any.
3. Review the district's current high school staffing formulas/ratios and master schedules and provide recommendations, if any, to ensure there is a tool in place to ensure adequate funding is in place for elective classes offered (i.e. class sizes not too small).
4. Review the District's Transportation department staffing, procedures, and budget and provide recommendations to minimize the encroachment on general fund, particularly in view of eventual growth of the district.

B. Services and Products to be Provided

- 1) Orientation Meeting - The Team will conduct an orientation session at the District to brief District management and supervisory personnel on the procedures of the Team and on the purpose and schedule of the study.
- 2) On-site Review - The Team will conduct an on-site review at the District office and at school sites if necessary.
- 3) Progress Reports - The Team will hold an exit meeting at the conclusion

of the on-site review to inform the District of significant findings and recommendations to that point.

- 4) Exit Letter - The Team will issue an exit letter approximately 10 days after the exit meeting detailing significant findings and recommendations to date and memorializing the topics discussed in the exit meeting.
- 5) Draft Reports - Sufficient copies of a preliminary draft report will be delivered to the District administration for review and comment.
- 6) Final Report - Sufficient copies of the final study report will be delivered to the District following completion of the review.

3. PROJECT PERSONNEL

The study team will be supervised by Anthony L. Bridges, Deputy Executive Officer, Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office. The study team may also include:

- A. Michelle Plumbtree, FCMAT Fiscal Intervention Specialist
- B. FCMAT Maintenance and Operations Consultant
- C. FCMAT Purchasing Consultant
- D. FCMAT Staffing/Master Scheduling Consultant
- E. FCMAT Transportation Consultant

Other equally qualified consultants will be substituted in the event one of the above noted individuals is unable to participate in the study.

4. PROJECT COSTS

The cost for studies requested pursuant to E.C. 42127.8(d)(1) shall be:

- A. \$500.00 per day for each Team Member while on site, conducting fieldwork at other locations, preparing and presenting reports, or participating in meetings.
- B. All out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, meals, lodging, etc. Based on the elements noted in section 2 A, the total cost of the study is estimated at \$13,000. The District will be invoiced at actual costs, with 50% of the estimated cost due following the completion of the on-site review and the remaining amount due upon acceptance of the final report by the District
- C. Any change to the scope will affect the estimate of total cost.

Payments for FCMAT services are payable to Kern County Superintendent of Schools-Administrative Agent.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISTRICT

- A. The District will provide office and conference room space while on-site reviews are in progress.

B. The District will provide the following (if requested):

- 1) A map of the local area
- 2) Existing policies, regulations and prior reports addressing the study request
- 3) Current organizational charts
- 4) Current and four (4) prior year's audit reports
- 5) Any documents requested on a supplemental listing

C. The District Administration will review a preliminary draft copy of the study. Any comments regarding the accuracy of the data presented in the report or the practicability of the recommendations will be reviewed with the Team prior to completion of the final report.

Pursuant to EC 45125.1(c), representatives of FCMAT will have limited contact with District pupils. The District shall take appropriate steps to comply with EC 45125.1(c).

6. PROJECT SCHEDULE

The following schedule outlines the planned completion dates for key study milestones:

Orientation:	Estimated February 2007
Staff Interviews:	Estimated February 2007
Exit Interviews:	Estimated February 2007
Preliminary Report Submitted:	Six weeks following the exit interview
Final Report Submitted:	To be determined
Board Presentation:	To be determined

7. CONTACT PERSON

Please print name of contact person: Dr. Marilyn Shepherd, Superintendent

Telephone (559) 645-7500 FAX _____

Internet Address mshepherd@gvuds.k12.ca.us

Marilyn K Shepherd 1-19-07
Dr. Marilyn Shepherd, Superintendent Date
Golden Valley Unified School District

Barbara Dean
Barbara Dean, Deputy Administrative Officer Date
Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

In keeping with the provisions of AB1200, the County Superintendent will be notified of this agreement between the District and FCMAT and will receive a copy of the final report.