Fiscal & Crisis Management Assistance Team

Oakland Unified School District

Governance and Community Relations

Comprehensive Review
March 2004

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COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND GOVERNANCE
Summary of Findings and Recommendations

In the area of Community Relations and Governance, the Oakland Unified School District has demonstrated solid progress in its communications efforts, and modest progress in some standards related to parent-community relations. In the area of policy, the district appears to have made no progress in the last six months, and little to no progress was observed with respect to collaboratives and councils. While several positive steps have been demonstrated in the area of boardsmanship and board meetings, it is too soon to effectively assess progress on all of the standards due to the board's current advisory status.

Communications

Strengthening communications has been a high priority for the district during the past six months. In addition to continuing many of its previous communications activities (e.g., a weekly e-mail bulletin), the district has developed and is implementing new activities to provide information to staff and the community, and the state administrator has conducted extensive site visits and outreach efforts. The district has worked toward organizing, formalizing and institutionalizing many of the operations by updating and adopting a comprehensive district communications plan that contains strategies for both internal and external communications. This plan is now in the implementation stage. It will be important for the district to actively monitor the effectiveness of its communications efforts.

Parent-Community Relations

In the past six months, the district has widely distributed its complaint procedures and has provided principals with staff development on those procedures. The district also has maintained its high level of parent/community outreach, such as developing a coordinated outreach strategy around its school attendance campaign and meeting with student groups on a regular basis to solicit their input on district activities. The greatest challenge continues to be increasing the involvement of underrepresented and disenfranchised parents and community members. The district has made some efforts in this area, but further efforts are needed to produce desired results. The district should move ahead to implement and monitor the additional outreach strategies identified in its communications plan that are designed to better inform and involve non-English-speaking groups.

Collaboratives/District Advisory Councils/School Site Councils

Little improvement is evident on some of the priority standards pertaining to district and school site councils. Some efforts have been made to provide more information about council roles and responsibilities, but confusion still appears to exist among some site councils regarding their roles. District policies and other documents describing these roles have not been recently updated. The district has made some efforts to help recruit underrepresented groups of parents to participate on the councils but, in general, these efforts have not yet been successful and different recruitment strategies may be needed. The overall effectiveness of district and site councils varies, with site council effectiveness largely determined by the strength of the principal at each site. The

effectiveness of district and site councils may be improved through additional training to council participants, feedback to site councils regarding implementation of school plans, and greater accountability of site councils relative to the progress of those plans.

Policy

Only two board policies were adopted during the past six months, although it is reported that other draft policies continue to be under review. As time passes, the district's policies become more outdated in reflecting current laws and district practices. Even those policies mandated by state or federal law have not been updated in recent years. While the district has adequate access to policy resources, a staff person designated to coordinate efforts, and an electronic clearinghouse of past and current policies now in place, there is no clearly defined policy development process that includes specific time lines and objectives. The district needs to formally establish and implement this process and establish accountability measures to ensure continual review and updating of the policy manual. Further, the district should carry out its plans to place all of its policies online and to make them accessible in the lobby and various offices via public access computers.

Board Roles/Boardsmanship

The state administrator has involved the board through regular meetings, as well as special meetings and study sessions, and the administrator has been recognized for his accessibility. Many board members continue to be actively and constructively engaged in district matters, and relations among board members seem to have improved somewhat since September 2003. The board and administration have had some discussions to define effective processes, and a governance training program is scheduled to commence in late February. Modest progress has been demonstrated in about half of the boardsmanship priority standards. However, due to the board's current advisory status, it is still too soon to effectively assess progress in all of the boardsmanship standards, and thus in several instances, the district's rating remains the same as in the September 2003 report.

Board Meetings

Board meetings appear to be running efficiently. Conduct at meetings among board members and among board members and staff is generally characterized as respectful. Board meetings also are beginning to focus more on issues related to student achievement, in part due to the more direct role the State Administrator has in the agenda-setting and agenda-management processes. However, preparation for board meetings continues to vary among board members, and some board members feel that more timely information and analysis are needed prior to meetings.

1.1 Communications

Professional Standard
Information is communicated to staff at all levels in an effective and timely manner.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1. The district is placing a high priority on internal communications and has identified internal communications strategies in its updated district communications plan adopted in February 2004 (see Standard 1.3). One of the communications plan's strategic goals is to "improve two-way communication among all internal audiences, departments and school sites regarding school district policies, services, strategic plans, program priorities and activities." There appears to be sincere acceptance among the executive and communications staff, and the central office staff reports that its internal system of meetings has enabled the district to more effectively communicate with a unified voice.

Many communications strategies are the same as six months ago such as the Friday e-mail that is sent to principals, administrators, board members, city council members and reporters to provide updates on district happenings. Additional activities and resources have been developed and implemented to provide the staff with timely information on a variety of issues. Examples include the state administrator's site visits (more than 50 to date) and coffee klatches, which provide principals with the opportunity to interact with the State Administrator. The district also includes with staff paychecks a written internal communication titled "Staff Connections." This monthly newsletter includes information such as budget updates, keys to success, and other district news.

As the district continues to implement the communications plan, it also should establish mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of its efforts.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 2
September 2003 Rating: 3
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5-6
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

1.2 Communications

Professional Standard
Staff input into school and district operations is encouraged.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The central office appears to be focusing more on creating opportunities for the staff to provide comment on district operations and issues. The updated district communications plan (see Standard 1.3) includes several strategies to enhance opportunities for staff members to communicate their opinions. These strategies include transmitting site feedback to the senior staff (through the executive directors), eliciting staff comment during the state administrator's visits to school sites, and using outreach activities such as the coffee klatches (see Standard 1.1) to enhance communication between the district administration and the school site staff. Communications among some district departments also show some improvement, such as greater collaboration between the communications office and the executive staff. The district should periodically seek feedback from staff members at all levels to ensure that they are satisfied with the opportunities available to them.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 3
September 2003 Rating: 3
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5-6
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

1.3 Communications

Professional Standard
The district has developed and implemented a comprehensive plan for internal and external communications, including media relations.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.	Until recently, the district's Public Information Officer had been working from a draft 2000-2003 strategic communications plan. This plan was created after the initial FCMAT report in 2000, but had never been approved by the Superintendent or the board. In February 2004, the advisory board was presented with an updated "Strategic Communication and Marketing Plan 2003-2005." The comprehensive plan addresses both internal and external goals, strategies and action steps. More specifically, the plan includes:

- Numerous action steps to enhance communications with internal audiences
- Methods to expand community outreach and involvement
- Strategies to foster a working relationship with local media

Strategies for two-way internal communications are discussed in Standard 1.1 and 1.2. Examples of external communication strategies include expansion of community outreach and involvement through the creation of a Community Partnership Marketing Taskforce designed to support the district's "Attend and Achieve" campaign. This supports the emphasis of the district's current public relations work on the importance of student attendance. In addition, the district has developed strategies to enhance the district Web site and has installed computers in the district office lobby for use by parents and community members who may not otherwise have access to the Internet. Twice a year, the district sends a newsletter, "Transformations," to every household. The newsletter is published in four languages. The State Administrator has begun to meet with the All City Council, which is composed of students from throughout the district, to discuss a wide range of issues that affect them. These issues include school closures, attendance and food courts.

The communications plan also includes strategies addressing media relations. Many of the plan's action steps describe current, ongoing activities such as issuing press releases, arranging interviews and using the public information office, but many important operational steps have been formalized. Examples include "respond quickly and efficiently to reporter requests," "focus on providing information and stories to non-English speaking media," and "ensure that media is kept informed about the programs, strategies, critical needs and accomplishments of the district." The district intends to hold regular briefings for reporters as one way to accomplish this.

Since the communications plan has been updated, the next step should be to communicate the plan throughout the district so that it will become a guiding force for the district's communications efforts.

2.   The board has received and reviewed the updated communications plan, but the district reported no other effort over the past six months to enhance the skills of board members and administrators in working with the news media, the public and community groups. Formal or informal educational opportunities designed to facilitate effective implementation of the communications plan are recommended.

3.   Awareness of the role of the Public Information Officer and of the district's expectations regarding media inquiries has been addressed through distribution of guidelines for press calls and a memorandum to principals, department heads and managers regarding the functions of the public information office.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 3
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5-6
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

1.5 Communications

Professional Standard
The district has established and adheres to procedures for communications with the media, including identification of district contacts and spokespersons.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The district has addressed this standard by distributing guidelines for press calls and a memorandum to principals, department heads and managers regarding the functions of the public information office. The topic has also been addressed in meetings with the Executive Cabinet and principals. Progress has yet to be demonstrated on this standard relative to the district's board members.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 0
September 2003 Rating: 0
March 2004 Self-Rating: 4-6
March 2004 Rating: 3

Implementation Scale:

2.4 Parent-Community Relations

Professional Standard
Parents' and community members' complaints are addressed in a fair and timely manner.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The district's uniform complaint procedures, adopted in August 2003, remain consistent with state law since there have been no related changes in law during the past seven months. The district has access to policy resources that can be used to continually monitor law in this area.

2.   According to interviews with the district staff and board members, board members appear to adhere to the uniform complaint procedures and have referred complaints to the staff as appropriate.

3.   A variety of methods have been used to distribute the new uniform complaint procedures, including a flyer, District Advisory Council (DAC) and District English Language Advisory Council (DELAC) meetings, and the district's parent guide. To make the procedures more accessible and useful to parents and community members, the procedures are available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cambodian. Additionally, the district has held training sessions for all principals (more 90 attended) and various school sites on the uniform complaint procedures.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 1
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: 6-7
March 2004 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

2.7 Parent-Community Relations

Professional Standard
Parents and community members are encouraged to be involved in school activities and their children's education.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1. The district maintains extensive outreach to parents and the community. In addition to general outreach throughout the community, the district has developed a coordinated outreach strategy centered on the Attend and Achieve campaign. This includes the creation of a Community Partnership Marketing Taskforce to target outreach towards a specific district objective. The state administrator also meets regularly with student groups to solicit their comments on district activities. The district is currently implementing results-based budgeting, and considerable outreach will need to occur to ensure that parents and the community fully understand the implications of this shift and understand how they can support schools in being successful with this new direction.

    No specific information was provided to indicate that the district has been successful in increasing the involvement of underrepresented and disenfranchised groups of parents and community members. For example, site councils and English-language advisory councils still do not reflect the district's ethnic diversity (see Standard 3.3). The district has made efforts to reach out to such groups, but further work appears to be needed. The district's newly adopted communications plan (see Standard 1.3) does include several strategies for enhancing involvement of non-English-speaking groups. These include strategies to "enhance district connections to non-English speaking communities," "ensure that district publications and letters are translated and distributed," "ensure that parent and agency requests for information are handled as quickly as possible, in the appropriate languages," and "focus on providing information and stories to non-English speaking media." The district should continue implementing these strategies and monitor their effectiveness.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 6
September 2003 Rating: 6
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Available
March 2004 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

3.2 Collaboratives/District Advisory Councils/School Site Councils

Professional Standard
Community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils all have identified specific outcome goals that are understood by all members.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   To more clearly delineate the roles, responsibilities and outcome goals of district and site councils, the district's action plan calls for the staffs in the Department of Accountability, Student, Family and Community Services and Migrant Education to meet to identify outcome goals, obtain comment from parents, and develop and implement strategies to meet goals. However district documents detailing the roles, responsibilities or outcome goals for these groups have not been updated. For example, the district has not updated its policy or regulation on school site councils (see Standard 3.7). The district should have clear statements on the roles and responsibilities of these groups, reflecting current law and supplemented by any additional district expectations, to ensure the groups' usefulness.

2.   There has been no systematic effort in the past six months to better communicate outcome goals to members of district or site councils, nor is there evidence that the council members better understand their roles. The district does provide school sites with information relative to the roles and responsibilities of site councils, and the designated central office staff is available for consultation throughout the year. The chair of the DAC has made efforts to attend a variety of site council meetings and provide feedback on the function of site councils. However, there is some confusion among site councils as to their roles and responsibilities, and it is clear that a more systemic approach is needed to provide both principals and site councils with a deeper understanding. Site councils need to be provided with more detailed information about their specific responsibilities and the legal requirements of the dollars for which they are responsible. Of particular note is the need to provide site councils with a greater understanding of their role in monitoring the success of site plans and making revisions as needed to ensure students succeed in the desired goals.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5-6
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

3.3 Collaboratives/District Advisory Councils/School Site Councils

Professional Standard
The membership of community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils reflects the full cultural, ethnic, gender and socioeconomic diversity of the student population.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   Although the district has provided some outreach to encourage greater and more representative parental involvement in site councils, there is no evidence that these efforts have been successful. Site councils and ELACs still do not reflect the district's ethnic diversity. Additionally, efforts to blend the meetings of the DAC and DELAC, and some site councils with site ELACs, may have had the unintended consequence of further limiting parent participation, and translation services are not consistently available for all site council meetings. The district should consider implementing other tactics to recruit membership. A coordinated, multifront outreach effort is needed to recruit parents who would not otherwise consider joining a district or site council. The district has begun to identify these strategies in its comprehensive communications plan (see Standards 1.3 and 2.7) and in its action plan, e.g., phone calls, visits to site meetings, surveys, presentations at classes sponsored by the Adult Education Department, and specially mailed invitations to parents in primary languages. These strategies will need to be consistently implemented, monitored and refined to meet the challenge of increasing the membership's diversity.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 1
September 2003 Rating: 1
March 2004 Self-Rating: 4-5
March 2004 Rating: 2

Implementation Scale:

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3.5 Collaboratives/District Advisory Councils/School Site Councils

Professional Standard
Collaborative and advisory council processes are structured in such a way that there is a clear, meaningful role for all participants with appropriate input from parents, members of the community and agency policymakers.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The extent to which school site council members perform meaningful roles continues to be predicated on the strength of the individual principal. As a result, progress on this standard is inconsistent throughout the district. The district provides the requisite training, handbooks and brochures for advisory councils although those efforts do not always translate into a meaningful role at the school sites. The district also reports that it continues to meet with the DAC/DELAC executive boards and the Parent Advisory Council to build parent leadership. It may be useful to provide all council chairs with additional training in leadership skills so that they include all individual members in council discussions.

2.   Nonmembers are encouraged to attend advisory council meetings, and flyers are provided to announce upcoming meetings. However, most meetings are attended only by the council members themselves.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 6
September 2003 Rating: 6
March 2004 Self-Rating: 6
March 2004 Rating: 6

Implementation Scale:

3.6 Collaboratives/District Advisory Councils/School Site Councils

Professional Standard
Community collaboratives and district and school advisory councils effectively fulfill their responsibilities (e.g., research issues, develop recommendations, etc.).

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   More efforts are needed to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the district and school site councils in order to help focus and prioritize their work (see Standard 3.2).

2.   Consistent with the findings in the last evaluation, the effectiveness of site councils is determined largely by the strength of the principals at those school sites. Some site councils operate effectively while others feel that they act only as a "rubber stamp" for the principal, and still others feel that the relationship between the site council and the principal has become adversarial. Additional training may be needed to increase principals' leadership skills. Feedback also should be increased among site councils, so that there is an ongoing discussion on the extent to which site plans have been implemented and so that there is accountability concerning the progress of those plans.

        At the district level, accomplishments have included a partnership with Project SOAR to provide parent education/involvement training and information. On the other hand, concern has emerged that, in the blending of the DAC and DELAC meetings, the focus for DELAC issues may have been diminished and the voice for DELAC concerns may have been inadvertently muted.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5-6
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

3.7 Collaboratives/District Advisory Councils/School Site Councils

Legal Standard
Policies exist for the establishment of school site councils for schools that participate in School-Based Program Coordination. (EC 52852.5)

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The district continues to have a draft policy on the establishment of school site councils, but it has not been adopted. The draft is based on sample materials provided by the California School Boards Association several years ago, and does not reflect current law. The district should adopt policy on the establishment of school site councils, ensuring that the policy and regulation reflect current law.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 6
September 2003 Rating: 6
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5-6
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

4.1 Policy

Professional Standard
Policies are written, organized and readily available to all members of the staff and to the public.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   No discernable change has occurred in the past six months regarding the organization or completeness of the district's policy manual. Very few policies have been adopted during this time period (see Standard 4.2). The improved coding system that appears in the draft policies has yet to be formally adopted.

2.   The staff has online access to current district policies, revised drafts, and sample policies issued from the California School Boards Association, but the staff and public still lack easy access to a single, updated set of district policies. The district has plans to place all its policies online as they are adopted, providing access in the lobby and in various offices via public access computers. As the district continues to adopt policies, it should ensure that these distribution procedures are used consistently and that all stakeholders have sufficient notice, access and understanding of policies that affect them. The district's efforts to disseminate and communicate its uniform complaint procedures show promise.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 5
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

4.2 Policy

Professional Standard
Policies and administrative regulations are up to date and reflect current law and local needs.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan

1.   Only two policies are reported to have been adopted in the past six months, one regarding elementary and middle school retention and the other on integrated pest management. Other draft policies and administrative regulations are reported to be under review for updating by the Executive Cabinet and ultimately, the board and State Administrator. The district should revise its draft policies to reflect continuing changes in law and district practice, and should adopt the policies in order to provide consistency in district operations and expectations.

        In addition, the district has developed or updated other policy documents such as a staff development plan. To be effective, however, policy documents must be incorporated into or referenced in a single, unified policy manual to ensure standard and uniform implementation.

2.   The district has adequate access to policy resources, a staff person designated to coordinate efforts, and an electronic clearinghouse of past and current policies, but it lacks a clearly defined policy development process that includes specific time lines and objectives. The district needs to formally establish this process and establish accountability measures to ensure that the policy manual is continually reviewed and updated.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 2
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: 4
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

4.3 Policy

Professional Standard
The board has adopted all policies mandated by state and federal law.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   Over the past six months, the district has not adopted any of the policies mandated by law that had been identified as missing or incomplete. The district must update its draft policies to reflect continuing changes in law, and adopt the policies in order to comply with state and/or federal law.

2.   The district has access to policy resources that identify new policy mandates. As it works toward more consistent and timely implementation of its policy development process, it should place a higher priority on monitoring and responding to new policy mandates.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: 4
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

4.5 Policy

Professional Standard
Existing board policies are reviewed regularly with the involvement of the staff.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The district intends for the policy development process to include opportunities for comment from the staff, but the process has not been clearly defined (see Standard 4.2). The district staff has been made aware of the location of current policies, draft policies and policy resources, but it is not apparent whether the staff is actively involved in reviewing and revising district policies.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 5
March 2004 Self-Rating: 5
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

5.4 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
Functional working relations are maintained among board members.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1. Interviews with administrators and board members indicate an overall strengthening of working relations among individual board members during the past six months. Most board members continue to be actively involved in attending board meetings, and several actively conduct other board-related business such as meeting with parents and community groups. Overall, board member relationships appear to be respectful. While individual members may disagree on issues, and there are perceived divisions on the board as a whole concerning certain issues, members report a greater willingness to listen to one another and to respect and seek to understand each other's viewpoints. Relations between the board's elected and appointed members, which were a source of significant tension at the time of the September 2003 report, appear to have improved significantly.

2. During the past six months, in addition to regular meetings, the board has met with the State Administrator and other central office staff members in retreats and study sessions. While these sessions have focused on specific topics such as the district's recovery plan, they also have served as a starting point for discussion about strengthening functional relations on the board. In late February, the board and State Administrator will begin working with outside consultants to develop a specific, ongoing governance training program that helps members understand the effect of board behaviors on its credibility and effectiveness.

3. Participation by nearly all members of the board in the FCMAT six-month progress report constitutes one form of regular board assessment in this area. Part of the ongoing governance training program also should include mechanisms for the board and administrator to regularly assess progress in this area.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 5
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

5.5 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
Individual board members respect the decisions of the board majority and do not undermine the board's actions in public.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   In their current capacity, board members do not typically vote on matters before them, but instead provide comment and opinion as well as ask questions of the administration. The State Administrator has clear authority to make decisions and take actions. Given this current circumstance, it is difficult to effectively assess the commitment of board members to respect majority decisions.

Some individual board members continue to directly contact the media (or other state or local officials) on matters related to the district. It is perceived that sometimes, these members present their personal viewpoints, which may not necessarily represent the consensus of the board.

In the past six months, one high-profile incident occurred in which board members were generally united in opposing the administrator's decision to close a number of district schools. Some individual board members attempted to actively engage the public and media to join in their opposition to the decision. State guidelines and/or governance standards are not sufficiently defined to determine the appropriateness of these behaviors for advisory boards. On one hand, individual board members may consider it necessary and appropriate to represent their communities and voice their concerns about decisions made by the State Administrator. On the other hand, open opposition and friction between board members and the administration often erodes the community's trust in all parties, making it more difficult for the district to function effectively.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

5.6 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
Functional working relations are maintained between the board and administrative team.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The role of the advisory board is primarily determined by the State Administrator, who is continuing to work out the most constructive ways of engaging the board. Members of the board appear to understand their new role and are adjusting to it.

2.   Some training on appropriate board-administration communications and processes has occurred during past retreats and workshops. In late February, the board and State Administrator will begin working with outside consultants to develop a specific, ongoing governance training program. This is scheduled to include a discussion about effective processes and protocols specifically related to budget development and monitoring.

3.   The State Administrator has made a strong effort to involve the board in its advisory capacity. Regular board meetings have been held, as well as special meetings, retreats and working sessions. The administrator meets regularly with the board president and often with individual members. He also attends community events and school-site events with members. Most individual board members report positive, professional working relations with the State Administrator, emphasizing especially his accessibility. However, a few members indicate that some strain or antagonism exists between the board and administrator, and this is generally attributed either to the administrator's assertive leadership style and/or to individual members' lingering resentment about the state's presence in the district and subsequent loss of local control. While acknowledging their current advisory role, a few board members have expressed a desire to receive more frequent and detailed information from the administration, and a few have raised concerns about whether their opinions on important district matters are meaningful and are seriously considered by the administration. As noted in Standard 5.5, one high-profile incident has occurred in which individual board members actively worked to arouse community opposition to one of the state administrator's decisions.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 6
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

5.7 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
The board publicly demonstrates respect for and support for district and school site staff.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   Board members generally demonstrate an awareness of the way in which their statements and demeanor influence staff morale and the public's perception of the district. Board members demonstrate respect for the staff members making presentations at meetings. Staff members such as nationally certified teachers have been honored at recent board meetings, although a routine of regular staff recognition at meetings has not been established. Additionally, the administrator and several board members often visit school sites.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

5.9 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
Board members respect confidentiality of information.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   Since the state assumed authority in the district, less information of a confidential nature has been shared with the board. This includes, for example, information related to negotiations or personnel. However, there is a perception that one or more board members still do not maintain confidentiality on some matters even though this is expressly advised by the administration.

2.   Board members have not received recent training and/or information directly related to confidentiality.

3.   The board should continue to consult legal counsel as needed with questions regarding the appropriate disclosure of information.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 6
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

5.11 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   There have been few or no indications that individual board members attempted to exercise administrative responsibilities in the past six months. Board members and staff members indicated that this may be because the staff understands the state administrator's current authority in the district. As stated in the September 2003 review, it is still recommended that the district agree on and adhere to specific board policies or protocols for handling matters such as solicitations from vendors, as well as protocols for requesting information from the district staff and reporting concerns.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 1
September 2003 Rating: 3
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

5.13 Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Professional Standard
The board acts for the community and in the interests of all students in the district.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The board consists of individuals who bring broad individual experience and expertise, and who reflect the district's cultural and ethnic diversity. Several board members continue to be active in their trustee areas by conducting regular meetings and forums to solicit comment and opinion and share information with parents and community members. Overall, there appears to be a greater awareness among most individual board members of the need to base decisions on the needs and interests of students, and not on any narrower interests.

   However, there continue to be perceptions that the board often lacks cohesiveness, and that some board members are too easily influenced by specific community-interest groups or are driven primarily by parochial or political interests. These perceptions were not as pronounced as during the September 2003 study. Some individuals believe the influence of community and/or political pressures on individual members has decreased because the board is currently not the final decision-making body and is "lobbied" less. As a practical matter, several board members still seem resigned to the fact that political influences will always play a role and that political interests beyond the immediate scope of the board, such as city and state political interests, continue to exert a powerful influence on district matters.

2.   The board has not been actively engaged in updating the district's strategic plan to ensure a continuing focus on enhancing the achievement of all district students.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 4
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 4

Implementation Scale:

6.3 Board Meetings

Professional Standard
Board members are prepared for board meetings by becoming familiar with the agenda and support materials prior to the meeting.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   Despite the fact that their role has changed, many board members continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to participating in meetings and other board-related activities. The level of preparation seems to vary widely among board members. The amount and scope of material provided to members in advance of meetings also seem to vary. At least some members feel that the staff continues to bring some topics to the board without sufficient analysis. The administration appears to be working out a system that balances the board's desire for more information with the need for the administrator to effectively and efficiently carry out his legal responsibilities.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: 7
September 2003 Rating: 5
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale:

6.4 Board Meetings

Professional Standard
Board meetings are conducted in a businesslike manner while allowing opportunity for full discussion.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.　The district has bylaws governing meeting conduct, although revisions reported in September 2003 have yet to be adopted. Under the leadership of the State Administrator, rules for board meeting operations have been interpreted to ensure appropriate public participation, but also to allow for more focused attention to the board's business.

2.　It is generally felt that meetings are functioning more effectively and fairly. Conduct at meetings among board members and among members and the staff is generally characterized as respectful. The district should make every effort to announce and start the public portion of its meetings at a consistent time (instead of simply at the conclusion of closed session) so that public members who wish to attend may do so.

3.　The board president and vice president have not yet participated in formal training or ongoing education in running effective board meetings, although it is generally acknowledged that meetings are running well.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating:	6
September 2003 Rating:	4
March 2004 Self-Rating:	Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating:	5

Implementation Scale:

6.8 Board Meetings

Professional Standard
Board meetings focus on matters related to student achievement.

Progress on Implementing the Recommendations of the Recovery Plan
1.   The State Administrator plays a much more direct and significant role in setting and managing agendas, and this appears to be helping achieve a stronger connection between meeting topics and district priorities. The board does not discuss topics such as contract approvals, which occasionally took up considerable time at meetings. In recent months, the board has received detailed presentations on issues such as staff development, student attendance, and results-based management. During the past six months, the district's fiscal issues and recently, the issue of school site utilization/closure also have been focal points of regular board meetings. At least some board members feel that the board does not spend enough time deliberating key issues, and that these deliberations are not based on enough meaningful data.

Standard Implemented:

January 2000 Rating: Not Assessed
September 2003 Rating: 4
March 2004 Self-Rating: Not Applicable
March 2004 Rating: 5

Implementation Scale: