



# **San Mateo Union High School District**

## **Human Resources Review**

May 30, 2008





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Dr. David Miller, Superintendent  
San Mateo Union High School District  
650 North Delaware  
San Mateo, CA 94401

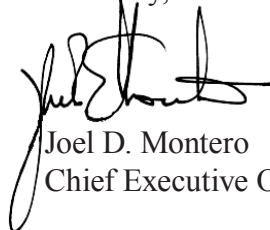
Dear Superintendent Miller:

In November 2007 the San Mateo Union High School District and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement to provide a review of the district's human resources department. Specifically, the agreement states that FCMAT will perform the following:

1. Conduct a review of the district's Human Resources Department and provide recommendations that, when implemented, will enable the department to sustain Best Practices in the following areas:
  - Department staffing level and distribution of workloads
  - Efficiency and effectiveness of customer service to school sites and other departments
  - Automation of data collection and retention systems
  - Status of up to date job descriptions and personnel board policies
  - Use of position control
  - Employee evaluations

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 San Mateo Union High School District.

Sincerely,



Joel D. Montero  
Chief Executive Officer

FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

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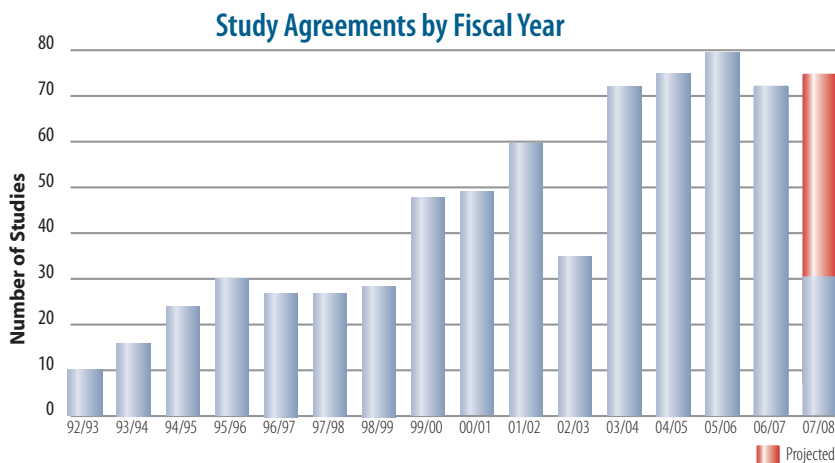
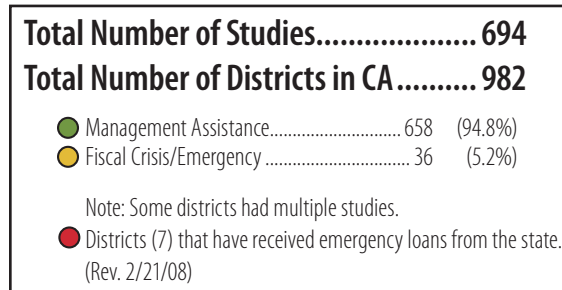
# Foreword

## 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 nearly 700 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.







# Introduction

## *Background*

Located in San Mateo County, the San Mateo Union High School District is a basic aid district which serves approximately 8,600 students at six comprehensive high schools and one continuation high school. The district also operates an adult education program. The district's enrollment increased annually from 2002-03 through 2005-06 but has declined slightly in the last two years.

In October 2007 the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) received a request for management assistance from the district. The study agreement specifies that FCMAT will perform the following:

1. Conduct a review of the district's Human Resources Department and provide recommendations that, when implemented, will enable the department to sustain Best Practices in the following areas:
  - Department staffing level and distribution of workloads
  - Efficiency and effectiveness of customer service to school sites and other departments
  - Automation of data collection and retention systems
  - Status of up to date job descriptions and personnel board policies
  - Use of position control
  - Employee evaluations

## *Study Guidelines*

FCMAT visited the district on March 10 and 11, 2008 to conduct interviews, collect data and review documentation. This report is the result of those activities and is divided into the following sections.

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Organization and Staffing
- III. Human Resources Operations
- IV. Customer Service
- V. Automation and Position Control
- VI. Board Policies and Job Descriptions
- VII. Personnel Actions and Recruitment
- VIII. Employee Evaluations
- IX. Negotiations
- X. Appendix

## *Study Team*

The FCMAT study team was composed of the following members:

Diane Branham  
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\*As a member of this study team, this consultant was not representing her employer but was working solely as an independent contractor for FCMAT.

## Executive Summary

### *Organization and Staffing*

The district's human resources department consists of three units: human resources, student attendance and welfare, and district health services. The department includes three administrative positions, the district nurse and a variety of support personnel.

The district's level of human resources (HR) staffing per district employee and per enrolled student are both slightly higher than that of similar sized districts selected for comparison. However, the district's level of HR staffing is consistent with the overall district staffing level.

The district should maintain the current level of staffing in the HR department but reassign some duties among the HR staff. Including the student attendance and welfare unit and the district health services unit within the HR department is not consistent with the organizational structure adopted by other California school districts. The district should consider placing the nurse and the student attendance and welfare staff under the direction of the instruction department to allow the associate superintendent of HR to focus on HR duties.

### *Human Resources Operations*

Human resources staff members work hard, appear competent in their ability to complete job duties and are articulate about their areas of responsibility. It appears that some staff members need additional training. Staff should also be cross trained in key job functions to ensure that coverage is provided when employees are absent and when the work load is heaviest.

There do not appear to be desk manuals for staff assignments or written annual goals and objectives for developing the district's HR operations. These should be created and implemented.

The district should encourage the incoming associate superintendent and staff to attend human resources professional development opportunities and to build relationships with other HR professionals.

### *Customer Service*

There appears to be a significant difference between how the HR department and its customers perceive the department's customer service. The HR department staff members feel that they are providing exceptional service, but this is not the opinion of staff throughout the district.

There is a lack of communication both within the HR department and between the HR and business departments. This is a significant concern and leadership from the highest levels may be required to intervene to facilitate better communication among staff members.

Communication with customers is also lacking. The HR department needs to make every effort to provide clear, concise and timely communication to their customers.

The director of human resources needs to delegate more duties and ensure that staff members under her supervision are properly trained in their areas of responsibility and in the technical skills needed to carry out their duties.

The HR department does not have a standard calendar of human resource responsibilities or a detailed organizational chart. The department should develop these resources. The chart should be updated as needed and distributed to district personnel.

The incoming associate superintendent of human resources should meet with each site and department administrator and develop a needs assessment for best serving school sites and departments.

The HR department should also ensure that administrative and supervisory staff receive training in personnel-related issues, including certificated and classified collective bargaining agreements, the evaluation processes and mandatory compliance issues.

The HR staff collectively show a positive attitude and should be commended for their willingness to work together to improve the department's efficiency and customer service. Through a collaborative effort, the department can change the perceptions of others and achieve positive customer service relationships.

### ***Automation and Position Control***

There is inconsistent use of automation in the HR department. The lack of technology support, training and HR software for record keeping has also contributed to some workload redundancy. The employee health and welfare benefits program appears to have the greatest potential for increased use of technology. Employees should be provided with, trained on and required to use the proper equipment and software to complete necessary tasks.

It appears that some of the department's computer hardware is obsolete. The district should establish a repair and replacement schedule for computer hardware and software to ensure that staff members have the equipment they need to complete required tasks.

The district implemented a new position control system approximately two years ago. The HR and business departments should also continue to meet and determine the direction and steps needed to fully implement the system.

Staff need additional training on the CECC position control system so that they can use the system to the fullest extent and help keep track of items such as TB testing, employee performance evaluations and credential status. The district should also consider using its director of technology as a liaison with the technology department at the county office to help mitigate some of the issues with the position control system. For example, the technology department may be able to devise an automated system to track and account for health and welfare benefits between human resources, payroll and budget to eliminate duplicate entries of benefit information.

### ***Board Policies and Job Descriptions***

Many of the district's board policies and administrative regulations regarding human resources are out of date. The policies and regulations should be brought up to date with the aid of a system such as GAMUT, which is a subscription service available through the California School Boards Association (CSBA).

The district's job descriptions are not kept in a uniform manner. The format and content need to be reviewed, standardized and brought up to date. Resources permitting, the district should consider assigning this task to an employee or hiring a consultant who specializes in this area.

### ***Personnel Actions and Recruitment***

FCMAT received examples of specific situations which indicate that the HR department is being bypassed for key personnel actions such as creating job descriptions, reclassifying positions and placement of new positions on the salary schedule. Industry standards and best practices require that the HR department be involved in these processes and review each case before it is taken to the governing board for approval.

No HR positions have responsibility for ensuring that the selection processes for certificated and classified positions are conducted consistently. District sites are currently able to develop their own interview questions and are not required to submit application screening criteria. This situation creates the potential for litigation if there is noncompliance with state and federal standards. The HR department needs to provide sites with more training and oversight to standardize practices in this area.

### ***Employee Evaluations***

Employee evaluations were not monitored for many years; however, reminder notices were recently sent to all departments and administrators. There is a lack of training regarding the evaluation process. The HR department should provide administrators and managers with ongoing training, and the district should require the timely completion of annual employee evaluations.

### ***Negotiations***

The associate superintendent of HR has focused on certificated negotiations and the director of HR has focused on classified negotiations. Industry standards and best practices indicate that the associate superintendent of HR should be included in negotiations for all bargaining units. In addition, the director of HR should continue to participate in classified negotiations. The district's decision to use the services of an attorney at the negotiating table is prudent.

Administrators and managers should be provided with training in collective bargaining contract administration and should be asked for input when the district is determining items to be negotiated.



## Findings and Recommendations

### *Organization and Staffing*

The district's human resources (HR) department consists of three units: human resources, student attendance and welfare, and district health services. Two administrative positions, the district nurse and a variety of support personnel are included in the department and report to the associate superintendent of human resources and administrative services, who heads the department and directly oversees certificated personnel issues.

The primary functions of the positions in each of the HR department's units are as follows:

#### **Human Resources (HR)**

##### **Administrative Assistant II to the Associate Superintendent of HR**

- Provide direct support to the associate superintendent in certificated personnel functions.
- Coordinate administrative functions and details of the office.
- Type certificated collective bargaining agreements.
- Prepare board agenda items.
- Assist attendance and welfare staff during open enrollment and as necessary.

##### **Credential Analyst**

- Monitor assignments of certificated staff.
- Provide a variety of credentialing services to certificated personnel.
- Monitor compliance with credentialing laws.
- Coordinate the recruitment and selection process for certificated personnel.

##### **Office Assistant II/Receptionist**

- Receptionist for the district office.
- Greet the public in person and via telephone.
- Assist the HR office and the attendance and welfare office with a variety of projects and activities.

##### **Director, Human Resources**

- Management position under the associate superintendent of HR.
- Train and supervise subordinate staff.
- Manage classified personnel programs, including recruitment and selection.
- Supervise the district's workers' compensation program.
- Supervise the district's health and welfare benefits program.
- Supervise the district's substitute placement system.

- Manage administrative functions for classified personnel, such as the human resources information system, negotiations, investigations and discipline.

#### HR Generalist

- Provide direct support to the HR director in the area of classified personnel functions, including recruitment, selection and negotiations.
- Process workers' compensation claims and the return to work program.

#### Substitute Assignment Clerk

- Obtain and place substitute teachers.
- Process student tutors.
- Back up the district receptionist.
- Process COBRA (Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act) and retiree health and welfare benefits.

#### Benefits Technician

- Reconcile and arrange for payment of health and welfare insurance billings.
- Communicate with new employees about all health benefit options.
- Coordinate open enrollment for health and welfare program.

### **Student Attendance and Welfare**

#### Director, Attendance and Welfare

- Management position under the associate superintendent, HR.
- Administer student attendance and welfare programs, including enrollment, expulsions and emergency preparedness.
- Confer with principals and others about student attendance procedures.

#### Executive Secretary

- Provide direct support to the director, attendance and welfare.
- Coordinate the open enrollment process for students.
- Prepare paperwork for student discipline cases.
- Responsible for a variety of support duties for the student attendance and welfare program (also bilingual).

#### Staff Secretary

- Provide direct support to the director, attendance and welfare.
- Coordinate centralized daily student enrollment process.



## **District Health Services**

### District Nurse

- Coordinate district health services.
- Provide support for special education students.

Including the student attendance and welfare unit and the district health services unit within the HR department is not consistent with the typical organizational structure in other California school districts. Those functions are most often associated with instruction and special education, respectively. The HR unit's organizational structure is consistent with prevailing professional practices in other California school districts.

The staffing level and distribution of workloads within the student attendance office are appropriate as long as staff from other units can be used as needed during peak periods. This is accomplished now by using the administrative assistant II and the office assistant II/receptionist to provide occasional clerical support to the student attendance office during periods of peak work load.

The HR department staff feel that it is almost impossible to complete work within the standard work day and that additional positions are needed to perform required functions. Some staff outside of the HR office also observed that there have been staff reductions in the HR department and indicated that this may contribute to the department's reduced responsiveness and effectiveness.

With appropriate training and technical support, some positions in the HR office could be assigned to work with greater independence (for example, the HR generalist) and/or take on a broader range of responsibility (for example, the benefits technician).

The department's support personnel are articulate and appear to be knowledgeable about their assigned responsibilities.

## ***District Staffing Comparisons***

Data for a comparison of HR staffing levels was obtained from five California high school districts with student enrollment levels similar to that of San Mateo Union High School District. The comparison high school districts surveyed were Escondido, Perris, Roseville, Sequoia and Campbell.

Table 1 lists the student enrollment and numbers of certificated and classified staff in each of the comparison districts as reflected in the October 2006 California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS). In addition, data was obtained regarding the number and type of administrative and support staff positions in each district's human resources department.

*Table 1: Comparison of HR staffing in selected California high school districts*

District	San Mateo	Escondido	Perris	Roseville	Sequoia	Campbell
Enrollment *	8,605	9,257	9,189	8,918	8,190	7,779
Certificated Employees*	520	443	419	487	516	436
Classified Employees*	358	330	256	236	348	196
Total Employees	878	773	675	723	864	632
Chief HR Officer	Assoc. Supt. HR	Asst. Supt. HR	Chief HR Officer	Asst. Supt. HR	Asst. Supt. HR	Asst. Supt. HR
Additional HR Manager(s)	Director of HR	None	Director of HR Director Classified HR	Director of Classified Personnel	None	None
HR Support Staff	Admin Assistant II HR Generalist Credential Analyst Benefits Tech. Sub Assignment Clerk Assistant II/ Reception	Admin Assistant District Receptionist Benefits/Payroll Tech. Personnel Tech Personnel Tech Employee Attendance Tech	Asst Supt's Secretary Asst to the HR Dept Certificated Personnel Tech. Classified Personnel Tech Personnel Assistant Receptionist/Telephone Operator Office Assistant <Benefits in Business>	Staff Secretary Personnel Technician Receptionist Absence Tracking Tech/Sub Caller	Sr. Admin Secretary Personnel Office Asst Personnel Office Asst Personnel Tech Sub Staffing Tech	Certificated Technician Classified Technician Sub/Abs Reporting Clerk <Benefits in Business>
Support Staff FTE	6.0	6.0**	8.0***	4.0	5.5 ****	4.0 *****
Total Staff FTE	8.0	7.0	11.0	6.0	6.5	5.0
District Employees per student	.1020	.0835	.0735	.0811	.1055	.0812
HR Staffing per student	.00093	.00076	.00120	.00067	.00079	.00064
HR Staffing per district em- ployee	.0091	.0091	.0163	.0083	.0075	.0079

Notes:

\* 2006-07 CBEDS

\*\* Escondido: HR does payroll. Of 2.0 payroll/benefits technicians, 1.0 is dedicated to the benefits function.

\*\*\* Perris: The benefits function is in the business services department. For survey purposes 1.0 support position is added to HR.

\*\*\*\* Sequoia: The payroll technician performs benefits billing. The superintendent's secretary performs workers' compensation and absence reporting. Aggregate 0.50 FTE support position is added to HR.

\*\*\*\*\* Campbell: The benefits function is in the business services department. For survey purposes, 1.0 support position is added to HR.

The San Mateo Union High School District has 0.0091 HR staff per district employee, which is lower than the average of 0.0098 in the comparison districts. However, the average is skewed by an exceptionally high HR staffing level of 0.0163 in the Perris Union High School District.

The San Mateo Union High School District's HR staff per district employee is equal to that of Escondido and exceeds each of the other three comparison districts. The median HR staffing level among the comparison districts is 0.0083, which provides a more accurate comparison in this case.

The number of San Mateo Union High School District HR staff per enrolled student is 0.00093, which is 14.80% greater than the average of 0.00081 in the comparison districts. The comparison districts' average is again skewed by the high staffing level in the Perris Union High School District. The median staffing among comparison districts is 0.00076 staff per enrolled student.

The San Mateo Union High School District also has a greater total number of employees districtwide per enrolled student than the average for the comparison districts. San Mateo's number of total employees per enrolled student is 0.1020, which is 20% higher than the average of 0.0850 in the comparison districts.

Three of the comparison districts had only one administrator (an assistant superintendent) in the HR unit, while one district had a director of classified personnel and another had both a director of HR and a director of classified personnel in addition to the primary HR administrator. Based on the size of a district, the allocation of two administrators in the HR office is sometimes justified. Both administrators are required to have a large body of technical knowledge to deal with human resources issues.

The San Mateo Union High School District's HR staffing level is generally higher than that of the comparison districts, based on HR staffing per district employee and HR staffing per enrolled student. However, the level of HR staffing at San Mateo is consistent with the district's overall staffing, which is also significantly higher than in the comparison districts.

The district's current associate superintendent of HR is scheduled to retire in June 2008; the district has selected one of the current principals to fill the position at that time.

**Recommendations**

*The district should:*

1. Maintain the current level of HR department staffing.
2. Maintain the existing organizational and administrative/supervisory structure within the HR unit of the department.
3. Consider moving the student attendance and welfare unit and the district health services unit to the instruction department.
4. Assign the responsibility for COBRA and retiree benefits administration to the benefits technician position. The substitute assignment clerk could serve as the backup position for these duties and be responsible for tracking customer payments.
5. Ensure that health and welfare benefit invoices are balanced to payroll reports monthly.
6. Send workers' compensation payment information to the payroll office monthly to help ensure accurate and timely reporting.
7. Assign specific ongoing additional duties to the office assistant II/receptionist position to relieve the workload of other staff.
8. Assign the duty of classified substitute calling to the substitute assignment clerk position.
9. Assign classified clerical support responsibilities to the administrative assistant II.
10. Review the adequacy of HR staffing after the new associate superintendent is in place and after implementing the anticipated improvements in efficiency and technology.
11. Hold regular staff meetings of the entire HR department to discuss the workload and duties of all staff members during peak workload periods.
12. Hold regular meetings of the HR administrative team, the associate superintendent of business and the superintendent to discuss work flow and the needs of each department.

## *Human Resources Operations*

Human resources staff report that they are all very busy and work hard. It appears that the HR staff are competent in their ability to complete job duties. FCMAT concurs with the statements of some of the employees interviewed that the HR staff members are dedicated to their jobs and are doing the best they can under difficult circumstances. When a department loses staff members due to retirements or layoffs, it takes time to reallocate the duties and prioritize the most important functions.

Cross training of staff to enable them to perform HR functions when other employees are absent does not appear to be occurring in all areas, nor is there a clear organizational structure indicating who should assist in performing HR tasks when a staff member is absent. Cross training is occurring in the classified area so that individuals can help each other in some areas in case of an absence. The administrative assistant II and office assistant II/ receptionist help with a variety of projects for other staff members. However, there appears to be a lack of integration between staff responsible for the classified and certificated areas.

Although the HR staff reported that they work together to assist one another, there were indications of a lack of effective communication throughout the office. Many of those interviewed commented on a marked lack of effective communication between the HR office staff and district sites and departments.

There do not appear to be written annual goals and objectives for developing the district's HR operations. FCMAT has developed an extensive list of standards for use in reviewing personnel management functions in public school districts. These standards cover the general functions of the department such as policies, legal compliance with state and federal laws, participation at the cabinet level, selection procedures, orientation system, staff in-services, personnel files, job descriptions, staffing formulas, anti-discrimination policies and staff development activities. Although these standards were not specifically within the original scope of this study, a preliminary review indicates that the district is meeting some of the standards. The district should review all of the standards to ensure they are being met and to help the district develop best practices for its HR operations. The standards may be accessed and downloaded at the following web address: <http://wwwstatic.kern.org/gems/fcmat/stds.pdf>.

Individuals both within and outside the HR department support an analysis which indicates that the department is not efficient and needs to make better use of technology to organize and speed up the services so that current staff can handle the workload.

With the appointment of a new associate superintendent of HR, the district should encourage department managers and staff to attend human resources professional development training activities. Training is offered by the San Mateo County Office of Education, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) Personnel Institute and Personnel Academy, the Cooperative Organization for the Development of Personnel Selection Procedures (CODESP), the Educational Jobs Opportunities and Information Network (EDJOIN) and

the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA). Increased communication and relationships with other HR professionals would also benefit the department and the district.

The HR department lacks individual desk manuals for various staff assignments. Manuals can provide valuable guidance and organizational continuity in case of employee turnover.

### **Recommendations**

*The district should:*

1. Draft written annual goals and objectives for guiding and directing the district's HR operations. Consider using the FCMAT personnel management standards as a resource to guide the development of best practices in the HR department.
2. Develop specific performance objectives for administering HR systems and procedures in conformance with accepted professional practices and in compliance with all statutory requirements. The associate superintendent, human resources and the director of human resources should be accountable through the evaluation process for achieving these objectives.
3. Develop specific strategies for cross training HR department staff members, and implement other methods to ensure continuity of service during periods of peak work load or when staff members are absent.
4. Direct the incoming associate superintendent to conduct an assessment of the HR department staff's professional development and training needs and develop a plan to address them in order of priority.
5. Direct the incoming associate superintendent and the director of HR to develop a team-building plan for the entire HR department. The goal should be to strengthen the department's unity and commitment to common purposes.
6. Continue to review HR department work flow and the department's interaction with other district departments and school sites to identify opportunities to improve efficiency, effectiveness, communication and cooperation.
7. Allow and encourage HR department managers and staff members to attend human resources professional development activities. In addition, staff should seek and increase relationships with other HR professionals to serve as mentors and consider attending training conducted by law firms regarding HR issues and employee-related developments.  
  
Training topics should include recruitment, selection, credentialing, testing, benefits, employee-employer relations, leadership, workers' compensation, unemployment and other topics pertaining to personnel administration.
8. Develop individual desk manuals for HR department staff assignments.

## Customer Service

The staff in the HR office believe that they have excellent relationships with their customers. They report that administrators receive many thank you notes from principals describing HR as dedicated and hard working. Several HR staff members mentioned that “people first, paper later” is the HR office’s philosophy.

It is apparent the HR staff members are generally dedicated and hard working. They communicate a caring attitude about what they do and are very concerned about giving accurate and excellent service. The desire to work as a team is strong. Some staff members reported voluntarily working extra time to complete work on time.

Positive comments from internal and external customers include the following:

- The new superintendent is bringing a level of trust back.
- The HR staff members are all very nice people.
- The credentials area is functioning well.
- The use of the Ed-Join system for the certificated selection process is excellent.
- The response to questions about workers’ compensation is quick and reliable.
- The director of HR is an excellent problem solver.
- Service has been improving lately.

School site and department clients reported a lack of timely response from the HR department. The most common concerns expressed were as follows:

- Phone calls are not returned promptly by the director of HR.
- Multiple messages were left on voice mail with no response.
- Papers seem to get lost.
- HR staff cannot answer questions until they check with the director.
- The HR staff seem overwhelmed most of the time.
- Changes in policies or information are not communicated; changes to the health benefits are not communicated to employees.
- Many details seem to get lost, like the TB and evaluation requirements.
- Inaccurate data is sent out from HR.
- The staffing seems too thin.
- Clients must ask for the same information multiple times.
- Trust levels are low regarding the accuracy of information coming from the HR office.

There is a significant difference between how the HR department and its customers perceive the department’s customer service. Clients perceive that the organization and delivery of HR services is not as effective as it should be. It is apparent that the HR department’s reputation for service to sites and other departments has been diminished because of a lack of responsiveness and myriad instances of lost paperwork, errors and poor communication, which affect all areas under review and should be addressed immediately.



It appears that information regarding changes in policies, procedures and personnel issues is not being consistently communicated to district departments and school sites. Increasing communication with departments and sites could build confidence and trust in the district's handling of certificated and classified employee functions.

The district lacks specific performance objectives for the HR department regarding customer service and client satisfaction. Developing and communicating such objectives would benefit the district by raising the priority of these functions and increasing awareness of the department's efforts in this area.

It is universally perceived that there is a long-standing and critical lack of effective communication between HR staff and business services staff at all levels. Reports of bickering and territorialism were frequent. Many of those interviewed believe that a lack of effective communication and cooperation between these two departments has been significantly detrimental to the welfare of the district. Increased cooperation would benefit the district.

Some of those interviewed commented that staff members reporting to the director of HR seem reluctant to act independently within the scope of their assigned responsibilities. Some felt that HR staff are unable to respond to questions and issues in a timely manner because of perceived micro-management and a lack of delegated authority by the director.

It appears that the director of HR is a hands-on manager who does not delegate enough duties to the staff. The director has technical competence and knows many of the laws. She has successfully investigated many cases and provided guidance to principals and others regarding due process. Many site respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction with the assistance eventually provided by the director in addressing their HR issues.

Most new employees receive information about a number of issues during an orientation meeting when they are hired, including information and enrollment materials for benefit options. However, some of the information may be difficult for new employees to understand. A standard orientation program for all new employees is a best practice and would benefit the district. Such a program could incorporate some existing new employee processing procedures as well as the use of the internet to publish or webcast information on topics such as health and welfare benefits. The information would then be available to employees if they have routine questions following the orientation.

Professional development workshops for district staff that normally should be provided by the HR department, including training regarding mandatory compliance issues, are not provided consistently and regularly.

The HR department does not have a standard calendar of human resource responsibilities with time lines for specific duties and the staff member responsible for each duty. The department also lacks an organizational chart listing all of its employees, their job titles, main areas of responsibility and contact information. These items need to be developed and updated. Distributing the organizational chart to district personnel can help employees know whom to contact if they have questions.



## **Recommendations**

### *The district should:*

1. Ensure that both the associate superintendent and the HR director actively seek to identify emerging personnel issues and challenges and assertively provide leadership, counsel and training to district staff in dealing effectively with these issues.
2. Develop specific performance objectives to maintain a high level of satisfaction among the HR department's clients and to provide clear and timely communication to school sites and departments regarding this objective. The superintendent should communicate this objective districtwide as a core value of the district. The HR department staff and the entire organization should be made aware of the high priority being placed on client satisfaction and customer service.
3. Review options, including external intervention, to address the lack of communication and cooperation between the HR and business services departments. The superintendent should solicit constructive suggestions from the associate superintendents of the departments, approve and monitor progress and hold the associate superintendents accountable for satisfactory progress through the evaluation process.
4. Initiate a review of department and school site needs and expectations, and develop a specific action plan to improve HR service delivery in the areas of greatest need.
5. Hold regular meetings of HR department staff to discuss current issues and plan for the effective delivery of HR services.
6. Communicate with district department and school site staff in writing and orally regarding any changes in current practices and requirements for compliance, such as policy changes, organizational changes and personnel actions.
7. Make it a priority to provide timely and accurate responses to phone calls and requests for information from sites and departments.
8. Ensure that staff members under the supervision of the HR director are properly trained in their areas of responsibility and in the technical skills needed to carry out their duties. Ensure that the director delegates authority to subordinate staff to act independently within the scope of their assignments.
9. Develop a standard orientation program for all new employees, and ensure that all new employees receive an orientation.
10. Prepare a brief summary of benefit options and include it as a cover sheet to the comprehensive benefit enrollment material now provided to new hires to reduce the complexity of this information and help them make appropriate choices.
11. Provide professional development workshops for district staff, including training regarding mandatory compliance issues.

12. Develop standard annual and monthly calendars and accompanying lists for recurring personnel and employee relations activities and responsibilities. These should include time lines for specific duties and the staff member responsible for each duty.
13. Develop and distribute to district staff a HR organizational chart which includes staff names and positions, activities performed and contact information. The chart should be updated as needed and distributed to district personnel.

## *Automation and Position Control*

Each workstation in the HR and attendance area has access to computers. Some of the computers and software are old and do not have the most recent updates needed for speed and efficiency. There is also inconsistent use of automation. The lack of technology support, training and HR software for record keeping has also contributed to some duplication of work. Some positions rely heavily on the standard word processing and office automation software and others do not. The employee health and welfare benefits program appears to have the greatest potential for increased use of technology.

The California Educational Computer Consortium (CECC) personnel/position control system is broad in scope and provides a reasonably efficient automation tool to increase the use of technology and the efficiency of data collection, dissemination and analysis. The district began implementing the CECC personnel/position control system approximately two years ago and is still in the implementation stage. The system contains many fields for general HR use, such as demographic data, dates for a variety of transactions, emergency information, credential information and TB testing dates.

The CECC system has many steps which are designed to provide for internal checks and balances between the HR and business departments. The two departments seem to be in conflict regarding some of the specific functions that need to be performed by each department. The previous director of fiscal services handled the majority of the input and organization of the system when it was implemented; however, since her departure most of the employee data entry has been performed by the HR department. Several HR department staff members are able to enter data directly into the system, which is very efficient. FCMAT was provided with a chart which describes the various data entry responsibilities for each department. The chart appears logical and has resolved many issues. Staff need additional support and training on the position control system to help implement the most efficient processes, develop standard reports and easily retrieve a variety of information. Implementation of such a major system change and learning the various components takes time and patience.

One personnel/position control system issue that remains to be resolved is the input of health and welfare benefits information. The business and HR departments need assistance in identifying the information flow and whether the county office and district technology departments can assist in uploading information from the position control module to the budget module to eliminate the duplicate entry of information.

The school sites send the master schedules to the HR department for review after the start of each semester. A more effective practice would be to send master schedules to HR before the start of each semester so that the schedules can be reviewed prior to the start of the semester to help ensure that certificated staff are assigned within their credential area.

### **Recommendations**

*The district should:*

1. Create a small task force comprised of HR staff and district technology staff to review the current CECC personnel/position control system to ensure that it meets the database needs of the HR department and is being used to the fullest extent possible. Implement other software as needed if the CECC system does not include all necessary database components.
2. Use the district's director of technology as a liaison with the county office technology department to help mitigate some of the issues with the conversion to the CECC system. Request that the director of technology assist the HR and business services departments in this role by developing a plan to meet the district's needs.
3. Provide staff with additional support and training regarding the personnel and position control components of the CECC system.

Conduct additional mandatory training for HR staff in the maintenance and use of the position control system so that they can gain a full understanding of the HR and business functions. Training should include orientation to both the HR and business requirements and the need for cooperation between the HR and business departments for the benefit of the district.

4. Conduct a complete review of the use of information technology in the HR department to ensure that staff have been trained and are using the technology provided.
5. Establish a repair and replacement schedule for outdated computer hardware and software applications.
6. Seek the assistance of appropriate resources to increase the use of automated records technology for administering health insurance benefits. The assistance should facilitate the communication of benefits information to employees, improve the open enrollment process and ensure that staff members are able to reconcile invoices for payment of insurance premiums. Ask the county office of education to train staff in the proper use of screens and uploads of information to eliminate the current duplicate entry of employee health benefit information.
7. Evaluate how automation could assist in billing and record keeping for employee health benefits.
8. Create automated solutions to help produce reminders for managers and employees about required actions such as performance evaluations, credential renewals and TB tests.
9. Ensure that school sites send their master schedules to the HR department before the start of each semester so that they can be reviewed to ensure proper teaching assignments.

## ***Board Policies and Job Descriptions***

Board policies, including personnel policies, have been adopted but have not been updated for many years and therefore do not reflect current professional practices and statutory requirements. District staff should review the sample policies from the California School Boards Association (CSBA) and compare them to current district policies, then update the policies as quickly as possible over a one or two year period. Another method of updating all policies more quickly would be to assign an employee or hire a consultant to review and update the policies all at once. The CSBA's GAMUT online policy information subscription service is a resource for maintaining policies once they have been updated.

The district has job descriptions for classified and management positions, but they have not been kept up to date and are formatted in a variety of ways. Both the format and content of the job descriptions need to be reviewed and updated.

### ***Recommendations***

*The district should:*

1. Update the board policies regarding personnel issues and develop a plan to keep them current.
2. Review and update the district's job descriptions. If resources permit, the district should assign an employee or hire an external consultant with expertise in school personnel administration to perform this task.
3. Maintain job descriptions by reviewing the relevant job description whenever there is an opening within a job classification.



## *Personnel Actions and Recruitment*

In the past, the district had the HR department review all proposed job descriptions and salary schedule placements and present them to the governing board for approval. Examples were given which indicate that the HR department is now being bypassed in this process. Industry standards and best practices require that the HR department review all proposed job descriptions and salary schedule placements before taking them to the governing board for approval.

The negotiated contract with the California School Employees' Association (CSEA) defines a thorough process for reclassifications, culminating in mediation, if necessary, by the California State Mediation and Conciliation Service. However, the HR staff report that they have not had sufficient time to process requests for reclassification.

The Ed-Join system provides an efficient way to advertise positions and acquire job candidates, particularly teaching applicants; however, the standard application process on that system is cumbersome for both the applicant and the reviewer. When printed, the standard application is more than 20 pages long. District administrative staff reported that they are sent a large stack of applications to screen, many of which are from candidates who are not qualified or who have already accepted another position. The HR staff perform some screening but do not verify the credentials for each position or whether each applicant is still interested in a position. These tasks would require additional time and training for the HR staff.

No current HR staff positions have the responsibility for ensuring that the selection processes for certificated and classified positions are conducted consistently. The district's sites are able to develop their own questions for interviews and are not required to submit criteria for screening applications for job-related dimensions. A lack of oversight from the HR department exposes the district to possible liability for unlawful hiring practices; there is the potential for litigation if the professional standards set forth by the state Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) and the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) are not met.

The district has some sound testing procedures in place for clerical positions using commercially developed test material. Some rating instruments have also been developed along with sample interview questions for some job classes.

**Recommendations**

*The district should:*

1. Ensure that actions and recommendations that affect personnel—such as job descriptions, reclassifications and salary range placement—originate with the HR Department.
2. Address the need for additional oversight, expertise and staff time for employee selection and reclassification procedures to ensure that proper procedures are being followed at all sites.
3. Provide more training and oversight to sites to standardize the recruitment and selection of personnel.



## *Employee Evaluations*

The evaluation of employees was not monitored for many years; however, notices recently went out to all departments and administrators about the need to complete this task. The HR department reports that this has now been completed. The district will need to ensure that this becomes a standard, ongoing procedure, including follow-up on late evaluations.

The district uses the FRISK (facts, rule, impact, suggestions, knowledge) model for due process issues, which is a sound approach. Additional activities and training in this area would also be of benefit.

Principals indicated a desire to have more training in personnel-related issues, including collective bargaining agreements and the evaluation process for both certificated and classified employees.

## *Recommendations*

*The district should:*

1. Communicate to the cabinet officers the superintendent's expectation that they follow district procedures and negotiated agreements regarding employee performance evaluations without exception.
2. Establish a standard procedure for notifying school site and department administrators of evaluation due dates.
3. Implement a standard follow-up process for past due performance evaluations, including steps to notify the appropriate administrative or supervisory staff and ultimately the superintendent.
4. Hold administrative and supervisory staff accountable for observing district policy and contract provisions regarding the evaluation process.
5. Offer due process training for managers and supervisors. Continue using the FRISK model, but build management and supervisors' expertise using other activities and training also.
6. Offer training for all management team members regarding the evaluation process. Use both internal experts and the district's law firm to conduct these sessions.



## Negotiations

Relationships with the employee organizations are cautiously positive, though there is an issue pending with the classified bargaining unit regarding grievance resolution language. The unions representing both the certificated and classified bargaining units expressed appreciation for the district's open communication style. It appears that relationships with union leadership are improving, and confidence was expressed regarding the superintendent's management style.

Historically, the associate superintendent of HR has focused on certificated negotiations, and the director of HR has focused on classified negotiations. Industry standards and best practices indicate that the associate superintendent of HR should be included in negotiations for all bargaining units. In addition, the director of HR should continue to participate in classified negotiations. The district's decision to use the services of an attorney at the negotiating table is prudent and provides technical strength and experience for the process.

It appears that little input is sought from principals and department managers when determining items for negotiations.

## Recommendations

*The district should:*

1. Assign the associate superintendent as the district's representative on all the negotiating teams. It is appropriate for the HR director to also be part of the team for classified negotiations.
2. Ask for input from site principals and department managers when determining items for negotiations.
3. Provide training for managers and supervisors in the area of collective bargaining contract administration. Ensure consistency of preparation for all members of the management team in this area.



# Appendix

## *Appendix A* *Study Agreement*



# FCMAT

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT  
ASSISTANCE TEAM

CSIS California School Information Services

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## FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM STUDY AGREEMENT October 26, 2007

The FISCAL CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the Team, and the San Mateo Union High 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 San Mateo Union High 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) Conduct a review of the District's Human Resources Department and provide recommendations that, when implemented, will enable the department to sustain Best Practices in the following areas:
  - Department staffing level and distribution of workloads
  - Efficiency and effectiveness of customer service to school sites and other departments
  - Automation of data collection and retention systems
  - Status of up to date job descriptions and personnel board policies
  - Use of position control
  - Employee evaluations

#### 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.
- 7) Follow-Up Support – Six months after the completion of the study, FCMAT will return to the District, if requested, to confirm the District's progress in implementing the recommendations included in the report, at no costs. Status of the recommendations will be documented to the District in a FCMAT Management Letter.

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. FCMAT Fiscal Intervention Specialist
- B. Two FCMAT Human Resources Consultants

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. The District will be billed for the daily rate and expenses of the independent consultant, only. Based on the elements noted in section 2 A, the total cost of the study is estimated at \$8,000. 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 December 2007
Staff Interviews:	Estimated December 2007
Exit Interviews:	to be determined
Preliminary Report Submitted:	Estimated end of January 2008
Final Report Submitted:	to be determined
Board Presentation:	to be determined
Follow-Up Support:	If requested

7. CONTACT PERSON

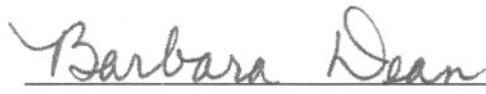
Please print name of contact person: Dr. David Miller, Superintendent

Telephone 650-558-2299 FAX 650-762-0249

Internet Address david\_miller@smuhdsd.org

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. David Miller, Superintendent  
San Mateo Union High School District

11/09/07  
Date

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

11/07/07  
Date

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.