



**CSIS** *California School Information Services*

# Sanger Unified School District

## Transportation Review

April 15, 2011



**Joel D. Montero**  
Chief Executive Officer







## CSIS California School Information Services

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April 15, 2011

Marcus P. Johnson, Superintendent  
Sanger Unified School District  
1905 Seventh Street  
Sanger, CA 93657

Dear Superintendent Johnson:

In January 2011, the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement with the Sanger Unified School District for a review that would perform the following:

1. Review collaboration and communication effectiveness within the Transportation Department and make recommendations for improved effectiveness.
2. Review Operations, Routing, and Scheduling
  - a. Demographic Data
  - b. Vehicle Ownership Summary
  - c. Average Weekly Ridership by School
  - d. Routing Methodologies
  - e. Number of routes
  - f. On time performance and efficiency review
  - g. Vehicle Maintenance and Inspection reports
  - h. Loading and student counts
  - i. School Bus Inventory
  - j. School Bus Replacement Schedule
  - k. Equipment Availability
  - l. Field Trips
  - m. Customer Service or complaint logs
3. Dispatch
  1. Assigned buses per contract
  2. Drivers possess appropriate licenses
4. School Bus Driver Requirements
  - a. Preemployment Screening
  - b. Credential and Related Requirements
  - c. Drug Use Prevention
  - d. In-Service Training
  - e. Retraining
  - f. Safety Programs
  - g. Accident Reports
5. Make recommendations on how to reduce costs to the transportation delivery system.

### FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

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Administrative Agent: Christine L. Frazier - Office of Kern County Superintendent of Schools

This 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 Sanger Unified School District for their cooperation and assistance during fieldwork.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel D. Montero". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "J" and a long, horizontal stroke at the end.

Joel D. Montero  
Chief Executive Officer

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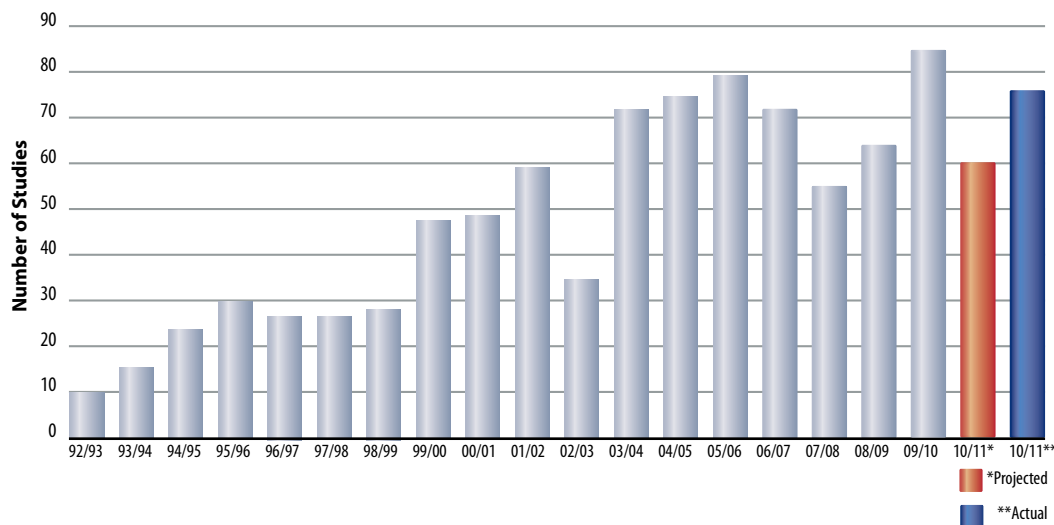
# About FCMAT

FCMAT's primary mission is to assist California's local K-14 educational agencies to identify, prevent, and resolve financial and data management challenges. FCMAT provides fiscal and data management assistance, professional development training, product development and other related school business and data services. FCMAT's fiscal and management assistance services are used not just to help avert fiscal crisis, but to promote sound financial practices and efficient operations. FCMAT's data management services are used to help local educational agencies (LEAs) meet state reporting responsibilities, improve data quality, and share information.

FCMAT may be requested to provide fiscal crisis or management assistance by a school district, charter school, community college, county office of education, the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, or the Legislature.

When a request or assignment is received, FCMAT assembles a study team that works closely with the local education agency to define the scope of work, conduct on-site fieldwork and provide a written report with findings and recommendations to help resolve issues, overcome challenges and plan for the future.

**Studies by Fiscal Year**



FCMAT also develops and provides numerous publications, software tools, workshops and professional development opportunities to help local educational agencies operate more effectively and fulfill their fiscal oversight and data management responsibilities. The California School Information Services (CSIS) arm of FCMAT assists the California Department of Education with the implementation of the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) and also maintains DataGate, the FCMAT/CSIS software LEAs use for CSIS services. FCMAT was created by Assembly Bill 1200 in 1992 to assist LEAs to meet and sustain their financial obligations. Assembly Bill 107 in 1997 charged FCMAT with responsibility for CSIS and its statewide data management work. Assembly Bill 1115 in 1999 codified CSIS' mission.

AB 1200 is also a statewide plan for county office of education and school districts to work together locally to improve fiscal procedures and accountability standards. Assembly Bill 2756 (2004) provides specific responsibilities to FCMAT with regard to districts that have received emergency state loans.



In January 2006, SB 430 (charter schools) and AB 1366 (community colleges) became law and expanded FCMAT's services to those types of LEAs.

Since 1992, FCMAT has been engaged to perform nearly 850 reviews for LEAs, including school districts, county offices of education, charter schools and community colleges. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools is the administrative agent for FCMAT. The team is led by 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

The Sanger Unified School District is located in south east Fresno County. The district has an enrollment of approximately 10,500 students and serves the city of Sanger and the surrounding communities of Centerville, Del Rey, Fairmont, Lone Star, Tivy Valley and portions of the Sunnyside area of metropolitan Fresno. Encompassing about 180 square miles, the district has 19 schools including three charter schools, a community day school, and an adult school.

In December 2010, the district entered into a study agreement with the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) that requested FCMAT to perform the following:

1. Review collaboration and communication effectiveness within the Transportation Department and make recommendations for improved effectiveness.
2. Review Operations, Routing, and Scheduling
  - a. Demographic Data
  - b. Vehicle Ownership Summary
  - c. Average Weekly Ridership by School
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  - c. Drug Use Prevention
  - d. In-Service Training
  - e. Retraining
  - f. Safety Programs
  - g. Accident Reports
5. Make recommendations on how to reduce costs to the transportation delivery system.

## Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

William P. Gillaspie, Ed.D.  
FCMAT Chief Management Analyst  
Sacramento, CA

Leonel Martinez  
FCMAT Public Information Specialist  
Bakersfield, CA

Tim Purvis\*  
Director of Transportation  
Poway Unified School District  
Poway, CA

Michael Rea\*  
Executive Director  
West County Transportation Agency  
Santa Rosa, CA

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

## Study Guidelines

FCMAT visited the district on February 28 and March 1-2, 2011 to conduct interviews, collect data, review documents, and visit facilities. This report is the result of those activities and is divided into the following sections:

- I. Finances
- II. Bus Routing and Efficiency
- III. Vehicle Maintenance and Bus Fleet
- IV. Driver Training, Safety and Legal Compliance
- V. Facilities
- VI. Staffing
- VII. Communications and Collaboration

# Executive Summary

## Finances

School transportation throughout the state has been inadequately funded for many years. The state's ongoing fiscal crisis resulted in a further reduction of 20% for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 fiscal years. The Sanger Unified School District's school transportation funding is consistent with the statewide average of approximately 35 percent.

School districts report their pupil transportation costs to the state on the Annual Report of Pupil Transportation (Form TRAN), which is also part of the district's unaudited actual financial report. FCMAT reviewed the district's 2009-10 TRAN report and found that the entire school bus fleet was reported instead of the number of buses utilized to transport students. In addition, the number of students reported as receiving transportation is substantially inflated. The district may have counted these students twice, confusing the total number transported with those transported one way. The district's mileage is also overstated. As a result of these errors, the cost per pupil and annual miles appear artificially lower.

The district aggressively utilizes the Cal Card to purchase most parts and other items in the vehicle maintenance shop. Aggressive use of this card instead of the standard purchasing practice of utilizing open purchase orders and preapproved quotes could make the district vulnerable to the inappropriate purchase of goods and services.

## Bus Routing and Efficiency

The district has routing and optimization software called Edulog, but does not fully use the application. Most of the district's 27 routes are routed and printed with the software; however, FCMAT found that several routes were handwritten without Edulog. The district does not assign students to stops with the software, which would be a substantial benefit to help ensure students ride the correct bus, facilitating appropriate bus load counts and safety. The district also does not take advantage of the software's ability to optimize bus routing to ensure maximum efficiency.

The district transports approximately 2,400 home-to-school students on 27 routes/school buses, equating to an average load of 88 students per bus, which is efficient compared to the averages for rural districts throughout the state. In addition, the district transports approximately 107 severely disabled and orthopedically impaired (SH/OI) students on eight routes/school buses, equating to an average of 13.7 students per bus, which is also efficient.

The district could probably consolidate two or three routes easily and still maintain some flexibility for consolidation when necessary. During times of high staff absenteeism, up to five school bus routes can be consolidated.

## Vehicle Maintenance and Bus Fleet

The district's vehicle maintenance facility is separately located from the bus parking and transportation operations area. The shop facility is large and can accommodate the district's vehicle repair requirements. The shop area is in need of housekeeping such as organization and general cleaning. The building is also old with a roof that leaks. The parts inventory is housed in three outside sea-land cargo containers. These containers are well organized; however the district maintains a substantial parts inventory with many outdated or overstocked replacement parts for older

units. The vehicle maintenance personnel utilize an effective vehicle maintenance and inventory software program called “Trapeze;” however, they do not use the software’s parts inventory module. The considerable inventory is not accounted for in any type of spreadsheet for reporting purposes. The district should reduce its parts inventory and utilize the vehicle maintenance software’s inventory control module or implement inventory accounting with an Excel-type spreadsheet.

The district has 44 school buses of various types and ages as well as approximately 137 support vehicles, grounds equipment, utility carts etc. The vehicle maintenance program supports the maintenance requirements of the school bus fleet, ensuring that the required 45-day/3,000 mile safety inspections and needed minor repairs are completed, but performs little repair on the other support fleet vehicles and equipment. Shop personnel generally do not perform heavy vehicle maintenance repairs. There is no indication that the district has a standard preventative maintenance schedule for school buses other than the required 45-day/3,000 mile safety checks. The district should implement a preventative maintenance program for school bus and other district vehicle and grounds equipment to ensure maximum longevity and safety.

The shop is well staffed having one shop supervisor, three mechanics and one substitute mechanic. The vacant shop mechanic position could remain unfilled for a cost savings.

## **Driver Training, Safety and Legal Compliance**

The district has two state-certified bus driver trainers. Driver training records comply with all laws and regulations. The district has not met the collective bargaining unit agreement provision that requires a minimum of 10 paid in-service hours before the start of school. Few bus accidents have occurred compared to the number of school bus routes and total miles travelled annually.

Students are occasionally transported on district or rented vans; however, the driving records of the coaching and teaching staff are not monitored with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Driver Pull Notice System. Although formal defensive driver training is not required for these personnel, it is strongly recommended that the district institute this type of program for everyone that transports district students and monitor the driving histories of all district staff members transporting students. The district should consider adding all staff members that transport students to the random drug and alcohol random testing program.

The district’s terminal grade rating from the California Highway Patrol Motor Carrier Safety Unit is satisfactory, the highest that can be earned. This evaluation includes inspection of the school bus, vehicle maintenance records, driver training record inspection and a review of the district’s DOT required preemployment and random drug and alcohol testing program. Although the October 2010 inspection found that 14 drivers were inadvertently excluded from the district’s random pull list, a reinspection indicated that the deficiency was corrected. To avoid unintentional omissions and ensure it adds and maintains the appropriate driving positions in the random pool for testing, the district should consider implementing a personnel procedure in the hiring process to ensure all appropriate staff members are included.

The district has a required transportation safety plan, but it should be updated. School bus evacuations are organized and administered as required under Education Code Section 39831.3

## Facility

The transportation bus parking and operations office and staff are physically separate from the district's vehicle maintenance shop facility. It is a challenge for the two main components of the district's transportation operations program to be in different locations. This arrangement also incurs a cost because buses have to shuttle back and forth between the two sites to receive vehicle maintenance and be washed and detailed by the driving staff. The bus parking and transportation office location is sufficiently large to house the district's full vehicle maintenance and transportation office, the school bus program, and possibly the maintenance and operations offices and support vehicle parking. The district should consider merging the vehicle maintenance shop facility and maintenance and operations program at the site where the transportation offices and bus parking are located.

The transportation offices and driver's lounge/safety and training classroom are located in two aging trailers. Although the offices are neat and orderly, the facilities are old and cramped. The district pays for a rented restroom building at the transportation bus lot. The district should consider purchasing the building.

Because the district does not have its own liquid refueling infrastructure, it pays a premium cost for unleaded and diesel fuel. The district should consider building an unleaded and diesel fueling facility on its property.

## Communications and Collaboration

The district administration has made a substantial effort to enhance communications and trust among all levels of the transportation program. A past transportation advisory committee helped foster open communication and provided the staff with the opportunity to voice its concerns and make suggestions. The recent implementation of a transportation staff meeting resulted from the previous committee process. This meeting has a formal agenda, recorded minutes, and allows any transportation employee to attend. The information is also posted on the district's website for easy access. Effective communication is a challenge partly because of the separation of facilities, which does not allow the vehicle maintenance supervisor and mechanics to be housed with the transportation director, drivers and transportation operations staff. There is a clear and distinct communication issue between the transportation staff and management. Many staff members cited a lack of leadership and low morale.

The Transportation Department staff is committed to adhering to the district's goals and mission, providing safe student transportation and timely service, and being responsive to the schools and staff, but internal discord within the department leadership is evident. Parents and students generally consider the district's school transportation system safe, timely and responsive to their needs. There is no indication that the school administrative staff is dissatisfied with the district's transportation delivery system. The district should immediately address this communication and organizational concern.

## Staffing

Transportation program staffing is high in operations and vehicle maintenance. Personnel are sufficient to accomplish the operations function of a transportation program of the district's size. Shop personnel are not overcommitted and do not maintain the district's entire vehicle and equipment fleet. The district should consider leaving the mechanic position vacant, reducing the operations clerk position, and changing one of the instructors to the position of driver and instructor.



# Findings and Recommendations

## Finances

The Sanger Unified School District transports approximately 2,507 students on 35 bus routes. Eight of these are special education routes, transporting approximately 107 students. The Fresno County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) transports approximately 42 special education students under a contract with First Student.

School pupil transportation is severely underfunded in California. Until 1977, the state fully reimbursed school districts for reported operational costs (not capital costs) in the subsequent school year. From 1977 to 1982, the state began reducing the percentage of school pupil transportation reimbursement. In the 1982-83 school years, funding was capped at the amount received that year (80% of costs), and districts only occasionally received a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in ensuing years. The state consequently funds approximately 35% of the reported school pupil transportation costs of school districts. In the 2009-10 and 2010-11 school years, the state further reduced the apportionment by 19.84% and 19.81%, respectively.

School pupil transportation costs are captured on the Annual Report of Pupil Transportation (form TRAN), which is also part of the district's unaudited actual financial report. The TRAN is generated with the unaudited actual report in September of the following fiscal year. The report is automatically generated by the electronic accounting system, but districts manually enter some data such as the number of buses, students and miles.

FCMAT's review of Sanger Unified's 2009-10 TRAN found that the district may have erroneously reported its entire school bus fleet instead of the number of buses utilized to transport students. The district also double-counted the students transported by confusing the total number transported with those transported one-way. The TRAN report also includes the total district mileage without separating home-to-school from field trip and community service mileage. As a result of misreporting this data, the district's cost per pupil and cost per mile appear lower than they actually are.

### TRAN Data

|               | 2008-09 HTS    | 2009-10 HTS    |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| # BUSES       | 34.0           | 44.0           |
| # PUPILS      | 4,607.9        | 5,129.0        |
| IEP PUPILS    | 183.9          | 224.4          |
| MILES         | 724,672.0      | 740,074.0      |
| COST/MILE     | \$3.84         | \$3.52         |
| COST/PUPIL    | \$591.77       | \$508.67       |
| APPROVED COST | \$2,785,437.00 | \$2,668,684.00 |
| REVENUE       | \$1,250,967.00 | \$1,003,139.00 |
| ENCROACHMENT  | \$1,534,470.00 | \$1,665,545.00 |
| %ENCROACHMENT | 55.08%         | 62.41%         |

Notes:

*IEP Pupils refers to the number of students riding on home to school buses with an IEP requirement for transportation as a related service.*

*% Encroachment refers to the encroachment as a percentage of the approved cost.*



The number of buses, students, and miles on the TRAN are entered by the staff while financial information is automatically generated by the Standard Account Code Structure (SACS) software. Home-to-school transportation costs are reported as a part of Program 7230 and severely handicapped/orthopedically impaired (SD/OI) costs are reported as a part of Program 7240.

The district aggressively utilizes the Cal Card, a purchasing card, for most purchases in the vehicle maintenance shop such as parts and various other transportation items. Frequent use of these cards may be a general practice throughout the district. There is no indication that the Cal Card is used inappropriately; however, aggressive use of these cards instead of the more common practice of using open purchase orders and preapproved quotes could make the district vulnerable to the inappropriate purchase of goods and services.

## Recommendations

*The district should:*

1. Separate and report home-to-school and SD/OI students transported and mileage traveled, and deduct field trip and community service mileage on the state TRAN report.
2. Institute standard purchasing practices using the purchase order and open purchase order system for vehicle maintenance parts, supplies and services and reduce usage of the district's Cal Card.

## Bus Routing and Efficiency

The district operates 27 home-to-school bus routes transporting approximately 2,400 students. The average load factor for these routes is 88 students per bus, which is high compared to similar rural districts throughout the state. In addition, the district operates eight special education bus routes transporting 107 SD/OI students who attend programs in the district and have individual education programs (IEP) that require transportation as a related service. The average load factor for these special education bus routes is 13.7, which is efficient for a rural school district. Special education bus routes typically serve students door-to-door while home-to-school routing generally utilizes central bus stops to collect students. Parents and students generally consider the district's school transportation system safe, timely and responsive to their needs. There is no indication that the school administrative staff is dissatisfied with the district's transportation delivery system.

Because of reduced school transportation funding, school districts throughout the state have reduced or eliminated home-to-school, regular education transportation. Strategies to reduce pupil transportation costs include extending nonservice zones to decrease the number of students who qualify for transportation, aligning bell times so one bus can be used for more than one run or eliminating service to certain geographical areas.

The district's Board Policy 3541 includes the following maximum walking distances for students:

| Grades | Distance in miles |
|--------|-------------------|
| K      | .5                |
| 1-3    | .75               |
| 4-8    | 1.5               |
| 9-12   | 2                 |

In practice, the transportation staff applies a common measurement to determine eligibility, utilizing radius circles around each school. However, a review of Board Policy (BP 3541) found that it does not mention radius measurements. The policy instead states that the numbers in the above table represent the maximum distances students can walk from their residence to school or to or from their assigned bus stop. Therefore, the language could be misleading to parents who interpret the policy to mean actual walking distance. The nonservice area is a radius measured from a central point or school rather than a distance walked or travelled along regular surface streets.

Parents are responsible for ensuring the safety of their children as they travel to and from school if they walk or ride a bicycle. They should also accompany their children to the bus stop and remain with them until the students board the bus. However, because the district is rural, extending the nonservice area to three or four miles is unlikely to result in the potential to reduce a bus route or significantly decrease cost.

During times of high staff absenteeism, up to five school bus routes can be consolidated. Best practices will allow for some route consolidation when needed for absenteeism; however, the district's ability to consolidate up to five of its 27 routes suggests that two or three can be permanently consolidated. Based on a conservative route operation and driver salary and benefit expense of \$55,000, the district could save \$110,000 to \$165,000 annually by implementing this change.

The district has routing software called “Edulog” that can assign eligible students to bus stops and bus stops to routes to maintain efficient bus load capacities and ensure student safety. In addition, the Edulog software optimizes routes to ensure greatest efficiency. A review of district bus route sheets found that several were manually typed with a word-processing program without using Edulog. The staff does not assign students to specific stops and therefore cannot optimize routes.

When a special education student requires transportation as a related service on the IEP, the Special Education Department telephones or e-mails the details to the Transportation Department. However, a form could facilitate this process by indicating the start date, program location, home address, and disability or medical condition of the student and whether specialized equipment is required. A sample form is attached to the appendix section of this report.

## Recommendations

*The district should:*

1. Determine the preferred practice of assessing student eligibility for home-to-school transportation service and consistently apply the formula with the routing software system. The district should also ensure that school board policy and administrative procedures reflect this practice.
2. Consider permanently consolidating two or three bus routes to achieve an approximate savings of \$110,000 to \$165,000 per year.
3. Fully implement the capabilities of the routing software, ensuring all students are assigned to bus stops and routes to allow for full routing optimization. All district route sheets should be routed through the software to ensure accuracy and accountability of students and stops.
4. Ensure all school bus routing is implemented through the routing software.
5. Create a special education transportation form that is generated from a student’s IEP when transportation is identified as a needed related service.

## Vehicle Maintenance and Bus Fleet

The California Highway Patrol (CHP) Motor Carrier Inspector Unit performs annual inspections of school buses, vehicle maintenance records, school bus driver training records and the Department of Transportation (DOT) federal drug and alcohol preemployment and random testing. The inspection results and findings are reported on the terminal grade report. A satisfactory rating indicates compliance with all laws and regulations relative to school transportation operations and is an objective measure of a pupil transportation operations' safety. The district has achieved a satisfactory rating which is the highest grade given. However, a terminal inspection dated October 19, 2010 found that 14 drivers were not included in the district pool for random substance and alcohol testing.

FCMAT found that the district failed to ensure personnel were added to the random alcohol and substance testing pool upon beginning employment and removed when employment was terminated. The testing lab depends on receiving instructions from the district regarding who should be added and deleted from this pool. Periodic comparisons would help ensure the list includes all appropriate personnel and excludes those who have terminated employment.

The district owns 44 school buses of various types and age, approximately 137 other support vehicles for grounds and operations, delivery vehicles for food service, utility carts, and various types of grounds equipment.

Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 1232 (13 CCR 1232), requires buses to be inspected every 45 days or 3,000 miles, whichever occurs first. The district has an effective vehicle maintenance software system (Trapeze) that allows staff members to monitor and record school bus safety checks, preventative maintenance schedules, vehicle repairs and inventory control. A review of sample of several school bus vehicle history files found that the district ensures school bus safety checks are completed. Most vehicles are generally on a 30-day rotation since most routes do not exceed the 3,000 mile limit within a 45-day period. Close monitoring of the 45-day/3,000 mile rule may allow the district to delay the safety check interval by a few days or miles, resulting in some savings. However, scheduling safety checks in close proximity to the day and mile limit may cause vehicles to exceed these limitations and be placed out of service until the required inspections are performed.

All school bus inspections are appropriately recorded, any repairs are listed electronically in the vehicle maintenance software, and hard copy reports (work orders) are filed in vehicle history folders for easy access and review. Parts associated with the work order are included along with the labor hours spent performing the inspection or repair. The district does not have additional preventative maintenance schedules, and outside contract repairs are sometimes not included in the file. Vehicle maintenance data is used to create useful management information, and the staff produces useful vehicle performance data to evaluate cost per mile and cost per vehicle. Scheduling more extensive preventative maintenance at major mileage intervals would help ensure engines and body equipment are inspected, serviced or replaced, preventing failure on the road.

All other district vehicles including maintenance, operations and grounds trucks, passenger vans, and food service delivery vehicles are on no identifiable preventive maintenance program. Mechanics indicated they are generally sent out to perform contract repair and occasionally are brought to the vehicle maintenance garage for this purpose. This practice can be costly since these vehicles are not regularly inspected, and minor maintenance issues can develop into

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**Scheduling more extensive preventative maintenance at major mileage intervals would help ensure engines and body equipment are inspected, serviced or replaced, preventing failure on the road.**

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expensive repairs or dangerous safety issues. Passenger vans that transport students would benefit from being on a preventive maintenance program similar to school buses. The district's vehicle maintenance program is staffed by one operations supervisor for the shop, three mechanics, and one substitute mechanic. The district is sufficiently staffed in the shop and can easily assume full vehicle maintenance support for all district fleet vehicles and grounds equipment without the substitute mechanic.

District parts are stored in one of three outside sea-land cargo containers that are located outside the shop bay areas. The parts cargo containers are generally well organized, but they hold a significant amount of inventory, including body parts and other items for older vehicles. This inventory has not been incorporated into the vehicle maintenance software and is not accounted for through any type of accounting or reporting practice.

The vehicle maintenance shop is large enough to meet the district's current vehicle repair needs. However, the facility is old with many repair bays that were constructed as bus parking garages and are not high enough for a bus to be lifted on a hoist for repair. The facility has two larger repair bay areas with hoists inside. The shop is in need of general maintenance housekeeping.

The shop facility has an outside water runoff separator that meets the local Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements for bus washing and steam cleaning. Bus exteriors are clean, but the engines are not routinely steam cleaned. Steam-cleaned engines can more easily be inspected for fluid leaks and lubricant seepage.

## Recommendations

*The district should:*

1. Establish and implement an HR procedure to ensure all new and current district employees that are in safety-sensitive driving positions receive preemployment drug and alcohol testing and are entered into the district's random testing pool upon employment.
2. Ensure all previous district employees are purged from the district random drug and alcohol testing pool.
3. Design and implement more extensive preventative vehicle maintenance schedules to ensure long vehicle life.
4. Implement a preventative maintenance service schedule for the district's entire support fleet of maintenance, grounds, passenger vans and school campus golf carts.
5. Fully utilize its vehicle maintenance software, including the inventory control module. The district should also decrease the number of older obsolete parts in its inventory.
6. Encourage efficient general housekeeping practices in their vehicle maintenance shop and surrounding facility area.
7. Regularly steam clean all district vehicle engine compartments.

## Driver Training, Safety and Legal Compliance

School bus driver training and licensing is regulated by the Education Code (EC) Sections 40081 and 40089, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and Vehicle Code Section 34501. Prospective school bus drivers are required to receive a minimum of 20 hours of classroom training and 20 hours of behind-the-wheel training (EC 40082). Each year, school bus drivers are required to receive a minimum of 10 hours of in-service training time, which can only be conducted by or under the supervision of a state-certified school bus driver instructor (EC 40084.5). Behind the wheel training may be provided by a delegated behind-the-wheel instructor. The law requires training to be meticulously recorded and bus drivers to undergo a background check (fingerprinting) for licensing and employment and receive drug and alcohol testing in compliance with Federal Department of Transportation (rules (49CFR382).

The district has one 10-month and one 12-month state-certified school bus driver instructor. The director of transportation is also a state-certified school bus driver instructor. The district could reduce one full-time driver instructor position to that of a part-time driver instructor and part-time driver. Both regular instructors are knowledgeable of all laws and regulations. Driver training records are maintained in compliance with all laws and regulations and are in excellent order.

The district has historically provided its driving staff with an in-service and training program when school begins as well as regularly scheduled in-service training opportunities throughout the school year. The amount of in-service time provided to the staff was recently reduced substantially for budgetary reasons. As a result, some drivers find it difficult to achieve their minimum of 10 hours of training through district provided programs. The collective bargaining unit agreement requires the district to provide drivers with a minimum of 10 hours of in-service training before the opening of school (Agreement Between Sanger Unified School District And California School Employees Association July 1, 2007-June 30, 2010, Chapter 153, Article 19.1, a&b). This requirement had not been fully met at the time of fieldwork for this report.

The district has few reported accidents for the total number of annual miles driven by district staff. This indicates that a strong defensive driver training program is provided by the district's driver training instructors.

The district has a transportation safety plan that complies with EC 39831.3; however, the plan is old and should be updated to reflect the current district administrative leadership. A plan is required to be available at each school for inspection by a CHP officer.

EC 39831.5 requires school bus emergency evacuation drills to be performed and specific records maintained for K-6 students. Specific safety information also has to be announced prior to every field trip. The Transportation Department is aware of and complies with these regulations.

Students are occasionally transported on district or rented passenger vans; however, coaching and teaching staff members are not monitored with the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) Driver Pull Notice System. While formal defensive driver training for nonschool bus drivers is not required, these employees would greatly benefit from such a program. The DMV Driver Pull Notice System sends the district annual reports of each driver's record and also provides notification of activity such as an accident, moving violation, drunken-driving conviction or a license suspension or revocation. The district could add all personnel who transport students to the random drug and alcohol testing program.

## Recommendations

*The district should:*

1. Consider changing one of the two full-time driver training instructors to a part-time driver, part-time driver instructor.
2. Immediately provide all appropriate personnel with the minimum of 10 hours of driver in-service training that is required by the collective bargaining agreement.
3. Add all personnel who transport district students to the DMV Driver Pull Notice program.
4. Consider creating a nonschool bus driver defensive driver training program for the coaching and instructional staff that transport students.
5. Consider adding to the random drug and alcohol testing program all district personnel who transport students.



## Facility

The district's transportation operation is divided into two separate geographic locations. The bus parking lot and operations offices are located on a large parcel in a business section of town. The vehicle maintenance functions are located at the district's middle school and the old high school site, which dates to the 1930s. The shop facility is large, with several vehicle maintenance garages that were once bus garages. It also includes two vehicle maintenance shop bays large enough for hoists to raise vehicles for repair. The older portion of the building is not sufficiently high and does not meet the depth requirements to install vehicle hoists for the maintenance of large school buses. The building is old, and the roof is in need of repair. Inventory parts are located in three outside sea-land containers.

Having a divided transportation program with separate facilities causes the district to incur additional expense and makes management oversight more difficult. Additional time and expense are necessary to shuttle vehicles back and forth between the two sites for vehicle maintenance needs, bus washing and supervision. Because drivers cannot wash and detail their buses at the parking site, they must be allotted time to drive to the shop facility. That facility is located in an older residential area, and the district is restricted from utilizing air impact tools after 6 p.m. because of neighbor complaints.

The district does not have a liquid fuel (diesel and unleaded gasoline) infrastructure on either property. As a result, the district pays commercial premium prices to obtain liquid fuel from a local vendor located near the bus parking facility. School districts are exempt from federal excise tax on diesel and gasoline, and state excise tax on diesel; however, a review of fuel vendor invoices found that the full tax credit is not readily identifiable. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the district receives all of its tax credit. The district owns and maintains a compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling facility on rented property adjacent to the vendor fuel provider. Building a liquid fuel infrastructure at the bus parking and office area would result in labor and product savings.

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**Building a liquid fuel infrastructure at the bus parking and office area would result in labor and product savings.**

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The bus parking and office facility is partially paved, but additional pavement is needed. The transportation administrative offices and the staff lounge/training classroom are located in two aged trailers. Heat and air conditioning is a challenge and the facilities are cramped. The restroom is a rented facility costing the district approximately \$7,500 annually. The facility is large enough to house the district's full transportation program as well as the maintenance and operations program.

## Recommendations

*The district should:*

1. Consider constructing liquid fuel (unleaded & diesel) infrastructure on district property at the transportation parking and office facility. The district should develop a cost estimate and projected payback for this type of project due to the higher cost of fuel and potential labor savings.
2. Create a master plan to locate their full transportation program, as well as their maintenance and operations program, at the bus parking and transportation office site.



## Staffing

Transportation staffing is high in the operations and vehicle maintenance areas compared to districts of similar size and operational requirements. The district operates 35 daily bus routes transporting approximately 2,400 home-to-school students and 107 SD/OI special education students. The district's bus driver positions are filled except for two vacancies that were being filled at the time of fieldwork, and four substitute staff members are available. In addition, the district supports transportation service for approximately 1,111 field trips annually. This is generally accomplished with the existing staff by assigning extra or overtime hours to drivers. The district has six staff members and one administrator to support the transportation operations function. This includes one dispatcher position, one router position, one clerical support position and two driver instructor positions. The district could achieve the necessary operational support with the elimination of the clerk position and the reduction of one full-time driver instructor. The driver instructor position could be reclassified as a part-time instructor/part-time driver to allow for additional driver training support during original driver or renewal driver training.

The district performs routine vehicle inspection and general repairs on 44 school buses. Additional vehicle maintenance is performed on other support vehicles; however, regularly scheduled maintenance is not performed on fleet vehicles that are not buses. One operations supervisor works at the shop and performs physical vehicle maintenance functions. In addition, the district has four mechanic positions, three of which are filled with permanent staff members. The mechanic ratio to district vehicles is high compared to many vehicle maintenance programs at similar districts. The district could expand the vehicle maintenance responsibility to include the district nonschool bus support fleet vehicles with one shop supervisor and three mechanics.

The following chart shows current district transportation program positions and recommended positions.

### Staffing

| Current                | Proposed                  |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Director             | 1 Director                |
| 1 Clerk                | 0 Clerk                   |
| 2 Driver Instructor    | 1 Driver Instructor 1-1/2 |
| 1 Dispatcher           | 1 Dispatcher              |
| 1 Router/Scheduler     | 1 Router/Scheduler        |
| 1 Ops. Supervisor-Shop | 1 Ops. Supervisor-Shop    |
| 3 Mechanics            | 3 Mechanics               |
| 1 Substitute Mechanic  | 0 Substitute Mechanics    |

## Recommendations

*The district should:*

1. Consider reducing one operations clerk and 1 1/2 instructors from the operations area.
2. Reduce one substitute mechanic by leaving the current vacancy unfilled.



# Communications and Collaboration

Although the Transportation Department staff is committed to adhering to the district's goals and mission, providing safe student transportation and timely service, and being responsive to the schools and staff, internal discord with leadership is evident and should be addressed.

The district administration has made a substantial effort to enhance communications and trust among all levels of the transportation program. A past transportation advisory committee helped foster open communication and provided the staff with the opportunity to voice its concerns and make suggestions. The recent implementation of a transportation staff meeting resulted from the previous committee process. This meeting allows any transportation employee to attend, with an opportunity to speak at the conclusion. The meetings have a formal agenda and are recorded, with the information posted on the district's website for easy access. Effective communication is a challenge partly because of the separation of facilities, which does not allow the vehicle maintenance supervisor and mechanics to be housed with the transportation director, drivers and transportation operations staff. There is a clear and distinct lack of trust between the transportation staff and management. Many staff members cited a lack of leadership and low morale. The staff perceives that the leadership has strong technical ability, but desires more demonstrated interpersonal communications.

## Recommendation

*The district should:*

1. Continue its proactive communication practices.



# Appendices

- A. Sample Transportation Request Form
- B. Study Agreement





- ☐ Special Education  
☐ 504  
☐ No Child Left Behind

- ☐ Start \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Change \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Continue \_\_\_\_\_

## TRANSPORTATION REQUEST

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

|                         |         |   |                     |  |            |            |
|-------------------------|---------|---|---------------------|--|------------|------------|
| Student Name            |         | Parents Name  |                     | Home Phone   | Work Phone | Cell Phone |
| Address                 |         | Apartment Name and number   |                     | <b>TRANSPORTATION REQUIRED</b><br><br>YES<br>** HOME-SCHOOL-HOME ..... <input type="checkbox"/><br>HOME-SCHOOL-SITTER ..... <input type="checkbox"/><br>SITTER-SCHOOL-HOME ..... <input type="checkbox"/><br>SITTER-SCHOOL-SITTER ..... <input type="checkbox"/><br>HOME TO SCHOOL..... <input type="checkbox"/><br>SITTER TO SCHOOL..... <input type="checkbox"/><br>SCHOOL TO HOME..... <input type="checkbox"/><br>SCHOOL TO SITTER..... <input type="checkbox"/> |            |            |
| City                    | Zip     | SCHOOL HOURS<br>From      To  |                     |  |            |            |
| Name of Special Program |         | Birthdate   | Grade               |  |            |            |
| School                  | Address |   | School Phone Number |  |            |            |
| YES                     | NO      | FACTORS AFFECTING TRANSPORTATION  |                     | EXPLANATIONS   |            |            |
|                         |         | CAN WALK TO/FROM A DESIGNATED BUS STOP<br><input type="checkbox"/> Gated Community/Apartment Complex may not be accessible. |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Wheelchair dependent  |                     | Name of Sitter   |            |            |
|                         |         | Walker dependent  |                     | Address  |            |            |
|                         |         | Requires assistance loading/unloading   |                     | City   |            |            |
|                         |         | Safety Vest   |                     | Name of Responsible Party for Release  |            |            |
|                         |         | Special Aide/Nurse required   |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Must be met at Residence or School  |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Possible Problem with other children  |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Diabetic  |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Subject to Seizures   |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Requires Medication   |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Special Equipment   |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Oxygen  |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Trach/Gast Tube   |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Restraints  |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Suction machine   |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Other   |                     |  |            |            |
|                         |         | Other   |                     |  |            |            |

### REASON OR TRANSPORTATION

- ☐ Placement away from Home School    ☐ Student Disability

Signature (Special Education/Health Services)

Date

### PARENTAL RELEASE SIGNATURE

I AGREE TO HOLD HARMLESS AND INDEMNIFY THE POWAY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, ITS EMPLOYEES, AND ITS AGENTS FROM ANY CLAIM OR DEMAND WHICH MAY BE MADE BY REASON OF MY AUTHORIZATION TO ALLOW MY CHILD TO WAIT FOR AND/OR LEAVE THE SCHOOL BUS AT A PREARRANGED LOCATION.

Parent Signature

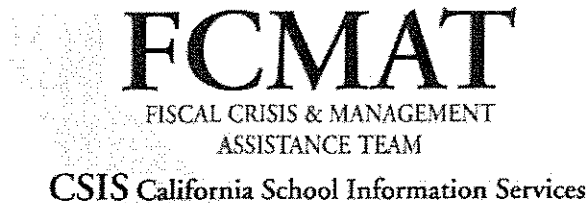
Date

### EMERGENCY POINTS OF CONTACT AND RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY, OR IF WE ARE UNABLE TO DELIVER YOUR CHILD TO YOU WE WILL ATTEMPT TO CONTACT THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE YOU DESIGNATE AS EMERGENCY POINTS OF CONTACT. IF WE ARE STILL UNABLE TO DELIVER YOUR CHILD, WE WILL DELIVER YOUR CHILD TO EITHER THE; SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR SAFE KEEPING.

|                         |              |             |      |              |           |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|------|--------------|-----------|
| Name                    | Relationship | Telephone   | Name | Relationship | Telephone |
| TRANSPORTATION USE ONLY |              |             |      |              |           |
| EDU LOG NO.             |              | AM STOP NO. |      | PM STOP NO.  |           |
|                         |              |             |      |              |           |





**FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM  
STUDY AGREEMENT  
January 19, 2011**

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

**1. BASIS OF AGREEMENT**

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

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. The final report will be published on the FCMAT website.

**2. SCOPE OF THE WORK**

**A. Scope and Objectives of the Study**

The scope and objectives of this study are to:

1. Review collaboration and communication effectiveness within the transportation department and make recommendations for improved effectiveness.
2. Review Operations, Routing, and Scheduling
  - a. Demographic Data
  - b. Vehicle Ownership Summary
  - c. Average Weekly Ridership by School
  - d. Routing Methodologies

- e. Number of routes
    - f. On time performance and efficiency review
    - g. Vehicle Maintenance and Inspection reports
    - h. Loading and student counts
    - I. School Bus Inventory
    - j. School Bus Replacement Schedule
    - k. Equipment Availability
    - l. Field Trips
    - m. Customer Service or complaint logs
  - 3. Dispatch
    - 1. assigned buses per contract
    - 2. drivers possess appropriate licenses
  - 4. School Bus Driver Requirements
    - a. Pre-employment Screening
    - b. Credential and Related Requirements
    - c. Drug Use Prevention
    - d. In-Service Training
    - e. Retraining
    - f. Safety Programs
    - g. Accident Reports
  - 5. Make recommendations on how to reduce costs to the transportation delivery system.
- B. Services and Products to be Provided
- 1) Orientation Meeting - The Team will conduct an orientation session at the School 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) Exit Report - 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 administration 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 cost. 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, CFE, Deputy Executive Officer, Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office. The study team may also include:

|                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>A. Bill Gillaspie</i>    | <i>FCMAT Chief Management Analyst</i> |
| <i>B. Timothy W. Purvis</i> | <i>FCMAT Consultant</i>               |
| <i>C. Michael Rea</i>       | <i>FCMAT Consultant</i>               |

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 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.

**Based on the elements noted in section 2 A, the total cost of the study is estimated at \$11,300.**

- 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 or proposed organizational charts
  - 4) Current and two (2) prior years' audit reports
  - 5) Any documents requested on a supplemental listing
  - 6) Any documents requested on the supplemental listing should be provided to FCMAT in electronic format when possible.
  - 7) Documents that are only available in hard copy should be scanned by the district and sent to FCMAT in an electronic format.
  - 8) All documents should be provided in advance of field work and any delay in the receipt of the requested documentation may affect the start date of the project.
- 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 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:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b><i>Orientation:</i></b>                  | <b><i>February 28-March 2, 2011</i></b> |
| <b><i>Staff Interviews:</i></b>             | <b><i>to be determined</i></b>          |
| <b><i>Exit Interviews:</i></b>              | <b><i>to be determined</i></b>          |
| <b><i>Preliminary Report Submitted:</i></b> | <b><i>to be determined</i></b>          |
| <b><i>Final Report Submitted:</i></b>       | <b><i>to be determined</i></b>          |
| <b><i>Board Presentation:</i></b>           | <b><i>to be determined</i></b>          |
| <b><i>Follow-Up Support:</i></b>            | <b><i>If requested</i></b>              |




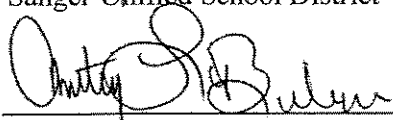
**7. CONTACT PERSON**

Name of contact person: Richard Sepulveda

Telephone: (559) 524-6530 FAX: (559) 875-4071

E-Mail: richard\_sepulveda@sanger.k12.ca.us

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date 1-25-11  
Marcus R. Johnson, Superintendent  
Sanger Unified School District

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date January 19, 2011  
Anthony L. Bridges, CFE  
Deputy Executive Officer  
Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

