

WEST FRESNO ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Introduction

This report is the second of two six-month progress reports required through June 2004 by Assembly Bill 38 (Reyes, 2003). The report indicates the progress made by the West Fresno Elementary School District state-appointed administrator, advisory board of trustees, district administrators and staff to address the recommendations for improvement made in the West Fresno Elementary School District Assessment and Improvement Plan that was first presented to the district by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) in July 2003. A first six-month progress report was provided to the district in January 2004.

This report dated July 2004 provides data to the district, community and legislators to assist in facilitating more effective collaboration and in building capacity within the district to promote student learning. It reports on the progress made by the district over the last six months in implementing the recommendations of the improvement plan, and provides a process for the eventual return of the district to local governance.

This progress report continues the use of legal and professional standards in the assessment process in the five operational areas of Community Relations and Governance, Personnel Management, Pupil Achievement, Financial Management and Facilities Management. The initial Assessment and Improvement Plan of July 2003 assessed all aspects of school district operations using 357 legal and professional standards. The number of standards was reduced by FCMAT, in consultation with the California Department of Education, to a subset of 114 standards, which, if addressed successfully, would provide the greatest probability for the district to achieve the necessary improvement and return to local governance. The same 114 standards were assessed in both six-month progress reviews conducted in the district. Reducing the number of standards allows the district to focus its improvement efforts in key areas.

The findings presented in this report represent a snapshot of the district at a specific point in time. The recommendations are intended to assist the district with the improvement of student learning. In the time since the data-gathering fieldwork for this report, the district has continued to address certain areas of concern, making progress that may not be reflected in this report.

FCMAT would like to acknowledge the cooperation of the state-appointed administrator and the district's community and staff during the review process.

Background

On March 6, 2003, Assembly Bill 38 (Reyes) was signed into law. The bill authorized the appointment of a State Administrator and provided an emergency state loan of \$2 million to the West Fresno Elementary School District. The legislation required the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) to conduct assessments of the West Fresno Elementary School District in five major operational areas. The bill further required the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) to file status reports for two six-month periods through June 2004 with various entities, including the Legislature, on the school district's progress in meeting the recommendations of the various improvement plans.

In March 2003 the Superintendent of Public Instruction, in consultation with the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, appointed a State Administrator to the West Fresno Elementary School District to serve as his designee.

Also in March 2003, FCMAT organized a team of independent and external professional experts from both the private and public sectors to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the district and to develop a plan of improvement in five school district operational areas: Community Relations and Governance, Pupil Achievement, Personnel Management, Financial Management, and Facilities Management. Fieldwork in the district was conducted in April and May, 2003.

In July 2003, FCMAT distributed the West Fresno Elementary School District Assessment and Improvement Plan to the district and various entities, including the California Department of Education and specific members of the Legislature. The July 2003 report assessed the district utilizing 357 professional and legal standards applicable to all California school districts. The first six-month progress report was issued in January 2004 and provided an assessment of the district's progress in addressing the recommendations of an identified subset of 114 standards. This second six-month progress report continues to report on the district's progress in addressing the subset of 114 identified standards. The use of a standards-based assessment process provided a baseline of information concerning district operations, against which improvements made by the district could be measured over time.

In December 2003, the district accessed \$1.3 million of the \$2 million emergency apportionment made available by Assembly Bill 38. The funds were mainly required for three reasons. The district was required to repay the state \$430,000 for a 2001-02 audit finding relating to categorical program non-compliance issues. The district needed \$667,000 to offset its negative beginning balance for the 2003-04 fiscal year. The remaining amount was needed for lawsuits that were projected to be settled by the end of the fiscal year.

At the time of this report the district had not accessed any additional funds from the balance of the state funds available. However, state audit findings may require an additional draw on the funds.

Returning the District to Local Governance

Certain conditions must be met before the West Fresno Elementary School District is returned to local governance. Assembly Bill 38, Reyes, Statutes of 2003, provides specifics regarding the return of the designated legal rights, duties and powers to the district's Governing Board. The authority of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and his administrator designee shall continue in the district until the conditions are met. The return of legal rights, duties and powers to the Governing Board occurs when the Superintendent of Public Instruction determines that the conditions of AB 38, subdivision (e) have been satisfied.

AB 38 provides specific and direct responsibilities to FCMAT in assisting the SPI with the district's recovery. These duties include the following:

1. FCMAT shall complete the assessment and improvement plans for the district in five designated functional areas: Community Relations and Governance, Pupil Achievement, Personnel Management, Financial Management and Facilities Management.
2. Based upon its progress reports, FCMAT shall recommend to the Superintendent of Public Instruction those designated functional areas of school district operation that are appropriate for the Governing Board of the school district to assume.
3. FCMAT shall file written status reports that reflect the progress the district is making in meeting the recommendations of the improvement plans.
4. FCMAT, after consultation with the administrator, determines that for at least the immediately previous six months the district made substantial and sustained progress in the following functional areas:
 1. Community Relations and Governance
 2. Pupil Achievement
 3. Financial Management
 4. Personnel Procedures
 5. Facilities Management

As required by AB 38, FCMAT developed the West Fresno Elementary School District Assessment and Improvement Plan for the district in July 2003. In consultation with the California Department of Education, FCMAT selected a subset of certain standards to target for ongoing progress reports. These standards were selected as having the most probability to assist the district with the eventual return to local governance if addressed successfully. The selected standards are listed at the end of Section One of this report and are also identified in the Table of Standards for each operational area in Section Two.

The results of this six-month progress report and the relative scaled scores applied to the standards assessed provide a current measure of the district's progress toward recovery. Within the five major functional areas, 114 standards were assessed in-depth. Each standard was measured for completeness and a relative scaled score from zero (not met) to a 10 (fully met) was applied.

The West Fresno Elementary School District is not required to reach a scaled score of 10 in every standard, but it is expected to make steady progress that can be sustained, as this is a requirement

of AB 38. It is reasonable to expect the district can reach an average rating of at least six. As the average score of the subset of standards in a functional area reaches a level of six and it is considered to be sustainable, and no individual standard in the subset is below a four, FCMAT will recommend to the Superintendent of Public Instruction that this particular condition of AB 38 has been met and that the operational area could be returned to the Governing Board. Assembly Bill 38 suggests an incremental return of powers to the district. Subject to progress, recommendations every six months will address the functional areas of school district operation that could be returned to the Governing Board of the school district.

Additional conditions specified in AB 38 that need to occur for the return of all legal rights, duties and powers to the district's Governing Board include the following:

- The state administrator certifies that all necessary collective bargaining agreements have been negotiated and ratified, and that the agreements are consistent with the terms of the recovery and improvement plans.
- The district completes all reports required by the SPI and the state administrator.

The ultimate return of legal rights, duties and powers is based upon the Superintendent of Public Instruction's concurrence with the assessment of his administrator designee and FCMAT that the future compliance by the West Fresno Elementary School District with the improvement plans and the multiyear financial recovery plan is probable.

Study Guidelines

FCMAT's approach to implementing the statutory requirements of Assembly Bill 38 is based upon a commitment to a standards-based, independent and external review of the West Fresno Elementary School District's operations. FCMAT performed the assessment and developed the improvement plan in collaboration with four other external providers selected through a competitive process. Professionals from throughout California contributed their knowledge and applied the identified legal and professional standards to the specific local conditions found in the West Fresno Elementary School District.

Prior to beginning work in the district, FCMAT adopted five basic tenets to be incorporated in the assessment and improvement plans. These tenets were based on previous assessments conducted by FCMAT in school districts throughout California and a review of data from other states implementing external reviews of troubled school districts. The five basic tenets are:

1. Use of Professional and Legal Standards

FCMAT's experience indicates that for schools and school districts to be successful in program improvement, the evaluation, design and implementation of improvement plans must be standards-driven. FCMAT has noted positive differences between an objective standards-based approach versus a non-standards-based approach. When standards are clearly defined, reachable, and communicated, there is a greater likelihood they will be measured and met.

Every standard is measured on a consistent rating format, and each standard is given a scaled score from zero to 10 as to its relative status of completeness. The following represents a definition of terms and scaled scores. The single purpose of the scaled score is to establish a baseline of information by which the district's future gains and achievements in each of the standard areas can be measured.

Not Implemented (Scaled Score of 0)

There is no significant evidence that the standard is implemented.

Partially Implemented (Scaled Score of 1 through 7)

A partially implemented standard lacks completeness, and it is met in a limited degree. The degree of completeness varies as defined:

- 1) Some design or research regarding the standard is in place that supports preliminary development. (Scaled Score of 1)
- 2) Implementation of the standard is well into the development stage. Appropriate staff is engaged and there is a plan for implementation. (Scaled Score of 2)
- 3) A plan to address the standard is fully developed, and the standard is in the beginning phase of implementation. (Scaled Score of 3)
- 4) Staff is engaged in the implementation of most elements of the standard. (Scaled Score of 4)
- 5) Staff is engaged in the implementation of the standard. All standard elements are developed and are in the implementation phase. (Scaled Score of 5)
- 6) Elements of the standard are implemented, monitored and becoming systematic. (Scaled Score of 6)
- 7) All elements of the standard are fully implemented, are being monitored, and appropriate adjustments are taking place. (Scaled Score of 7)

Fully Implemented (Scaled Score of 8-10)

A fully implemented standard is complete relative to the following criteria:

8) All elements of the standard are fully and substantially implemented and are sustainable. (Scaled Score of 8)

9) All elements of the standard are fully and substantially implemented and have been sustained for a full school year. (Scaled Score of 9)

10) All elements of the standard are fully implemented, are being sustained with high quality, are being refined, and have a process for ongoing evaluation. (Scaled Score of 10)

2. Conduct an External and Independent Assessment

FCMAT employs an external and independent assessment process in the development of school district assessment and improvement plans. FCMAT assessment reports present findings and improvement plans based on the external and independent assessment from professional experts and agencies recruited to assist FCMAT in the assessment process. Collectively, these professional experts and agencies constitute FCMAT's providers in the assessment process. Their external and independent assessments serve as the primary basis for the reliability, integrity and credibility of the review.

3. Utilize Multiple Measures of Assessment

For a finding to be considered legitimate, multiple sources need to be utilized to provide the same or consistent information. The assessment and improvement plans are based on multiple measures. Testing, personal interviews, group meetings, public hearings, observations, review and analysis of data all provide added value to the assessment process. The providers are required to utilize multiple measurements as they assess the standards. This process allows for a variety of ways of determining whether the standards are met. All school district operations with an impact on student achievement, including governance, fiscal, personnel, and facilities are reviewed and included in the improvement plan.

4. Empower Staff and Community

The development of a strong professional development plan for the board and staff is a critical component of an effective school district. The assessment reports include the importance of a comprehensive professional development plan. The success of the improvement plans and their implementation are dependent upon an effective professional and community development process. For this reason, the empowerment of staff and community is one of the highest priorities, and emphasizing this priority with each of the providers is critical. As a result, a strong training component for board, staff and administration is called for consistently throughout FCMAT's assessment reports.

Of paramount importance is the community's role in local governance. The absence of parental involvement in education is a growing concern nationally. A key to success in any school district is the re-engagement of parents, teachers, and support staff. Parents generally care deeply about their children's future and most are willing to participate in improving their school district and enhancing student learning. The community relations section of FCMAT's assessment reports provides necessary recommendations for the community to have a more active and meaningful role in the education of its children.

5. Engage Local, State and National Agencies

It is critical to involve various local, state and national agencies in the recovery of a school district. This is emphasized by engaging state-recognized agencies as partners to assist with the assessment and improvement process. The city and county interests, professional organizations, and community-based organizations all have expressed and shown a desire to assist and participate in the improvement of the West Fresno Elementary School District.

Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

For FCMAT:

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For California School Boards Association – Community Relations and Governance:

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For School Services of California – Financial Management:

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For School Services of California – Facilities Management:

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Summary of Principal Findings and Recommendations

Except in the area of Pupil Achievement, the district has made minimal progress in the last 12 months in addressing the recommendations made in the initial West Fresno Elementary School Assessment and Improvement Plan, July 2003. The district is very small, with limited staff to implement the necessary improvements in the district, and progress toward recovery in most district operational areas has been slow.

District staff morale is positive and improvement has been noted in instructional areas and in staff development. The numerous lawsuits against the district have largely been resolved or settled. However, the review teams expected more notable progress to have been made during the second six-month review period to address the recommendations in the improvement plan. Staff has demonstrated little desire for a return of powers to a governing board viewed as dysfunctional, and therefore feels little impetus to aggressively implement the recommendations in the Assessment and Improvement Plan. No plan has been developed to systematically address the issues or to develop or sustain operational systems.

The district must develop responsible self-sufficiency by more proactively addressing the recommendations in all of the operational areas. Staff capacity must be built and written policies and procedures must be developed to provide clear guidance for district operations in the future. Specific assignments should be made to staff to address the recommendations made in the 114 identified standards.

A summary of the findings and recommendations for this second six-month progress review period is presented in the five operational areas of Community Relations and Governance, Pupil Achievement, Personnel Management, Financial Management, and Facilities Management. Section Two of this report provides further detail for each of the individual standards reviewed.

Community Relations and Governance

With the exception of some ongoing, positive activities related to building parent relations, including development and adoption of single school site plans, progress in the West Fresno Elementary School District toward meeting most Community Relations and Governance priority standards during the past six months has not occurred.

Communications

No progress has been made toward developing a comprehensive communications plan, nor has the district implemented any proactive media relations strategies in the past six months. As noted in the January 2003 progress report, the district is doing a better job of keeping staff informed through more direct means, such as regular meetings, e-mails and informal communications. Strategies to communicate directly with parents and the community include notices and phone calls, primarily to encourage participation in meetings and school events. The district recently initiated a contract to provide parent education and outreach with the Hmong community. However, there is an ongoing need for the district to refine and extend outreach strategies, especially to strengthen communications with non-English-speaking and traditionally less-involved parents.

Parent/Community Relations

The district continues to implement positive strategies to bring parents and community members to the school sites, primarily by hosting annual events such as Open House and monthly “meet and greets,” and through the outreach efforts of three parent advisers employed by the district. The district also held a few modestly attended community forums. The staff indicates that plans are under way to begin working with parents to establish a parent-teacher association. Strategies to involve traditionally disenfranchised parents and to focus parent/community input on school and district priorities are still needed.

Parental notifications and uniform complaint procedures had been distributed in accordance with law earlier in the school year, and no further action was needed on these standards in the past six months. Since January, the district developed 2002-03 school accountability report cards. These report cards contained most, but not all, of the data required by state and federal law, and the district must ensure that all components are addressed in the 2003-04 report cards.

Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees and School Site Councils

Some progress was demonstrated over the past six months in maintaining previous partnerships and forming new collaborative efforts with community groups such as a Community Based English Tutoring program in collaboration with a local community leader, and a GEAR UP partnership with California State University, Fresno, to encourage college students to provide tutoring during the school day at the middle school. It is recommended that such efforts be linked to a coordinated strategy based on identified needs of children and families in the community.

In addition, the district showed substantial progress on the two priority standards related to legal requirements to complete Single Plans for Student Achievement. These school plans were completed with School Site Council involvement, were adopted by the state administrator in March, and contain all the elements required by law. The district should work to sustain this effort by reviewing and updating the school plans in the next school year in accordance with law.

Policy

Little progress has been made on the priority standards in this area over the past six months. Policies should be a guiding force in any effectively operated school district, yet few policies have been developed or updated in the West Fresno ESD, and the organization and maintenance of the policy manual continues to be problematic. The district has made plans to work with a policy consultant to overhaul its entire policy manual and anticipates completing this during the summer. The district must actively pursue this effort in order to ensure that policies are up to date, consistent with current law and meet the needs of the district. A workable index that makes the policies more easily accessible to staff and the public should also be developed. Finally, procedures and plans should be developed for communicating policy changes, maintaining the updated manual so it remains current, and involving the board as appropriate to generate support for policies.

Board Roles/Boardsmanship

Slight progress was evident in the level of individual participation in board training, although no coordinated continuing education agenda has yet been established. Board members appear to generally respect the communication channels established by the state administrator, which has marginally improved the functionality of board-administration relations. A district mission and

goals were included in the district's Local Education Agency Plan (LEAP), although the board was not engaged in the vision-setting process.

Improvement on most of the boardmanship standards is dependent on the state administrator's willingness to embrace the FCMAT process and engage the board in addressing the standards as appropriate. Unless and until the state administrator commits to this engagement, it will not be possible for the board to demonstrate much additional progress in this area. For their part, individual board members must actively attend all scheduled meetings and continue to demonstrate a willingness to work in a collaborative manner with the state administrator.

Board Meetings

The district has shown no progress on the priority standards pertaining to board meetings. It is imperative that the state administrator establish and model best practices in terms of board meetings, including properly noticing and publicizing meetings and ensuring that adequate background materials are provided to the board in advance of meetings, that the public has a formal opportunity to provide input, and that official minutes of all meetings are prepared and made available.

Conclusion

A subset of 28 professional and legal standards was identified in the area of Community Relations and Governance for ongoing assessment. These 28 standards were reviewed in both six-month progress reviews. An average rating of 6.0 in this subset, with no standard rated lower than a 4, will indicate that the district has met the criteria for the return of this operational area to local governance.

The average rating of the identified subset of Community Relations and Governance standards at this review period is **2.82**, with 18 standards rated less than 4. This has increased from the average rating for this identified subset of standards of 2.04 reported in January 2004.

Pupil Achievement

The West Fresno Elementary School District has continued to make student instruction and performance its primary area of focus. As a result, it has made notable gains in the majority of the standards related to pupil achievement. The State 2003-04 Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) test data was not available at the time of this report, so it is not yet known if the district's efforts at improving pupil achievement have resulted in enhanced student performance on these examinations.

Building on the foundation laid by its Local Agency Education (LEA) Plan of June 2003, the district has developed a Single Plan for Student Achievement for each of its two campuses with input from parents, teachers and administrators, and approval by each school's Site Councils. The plans outline specific goals and strategies for improving student achievement, and are intended to serve as the guiding documents for school planning and activities in the 2004-05 school year.

Professional development has been another area of strength for the district. Teachers and administrators report that weekly staff meetings have been focused on improving pupil instruction. The district has been working to build internal capacity by training teachers to serve as facilitators and peer coaches. In addition, several training activities have helped teachers consider assessment data when making instructional decisions. Professional development will continue throughout the summer. Most teachers will receive three weeks of training on how to implement district-adopted textbooks.

The district has also received extensive technical assistance from the CDE School Assistance and Intervention Team (SAIT) to improve student performance and from the CDE Special Education Unit in the area of special education. District staff indicated that this support has helped them develop and document new procedures to better meet students' needs. While many of these procedures have not yet been implemented, the groundwork has been laid for future implementation.

There remain several areas in which the district has not yet made sufficient progress. A major deficiency is the absence of an English Learner Master Plan to address the needs of English Learner (EL) students. Currently, students are identified using the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) and receive some form of English language development (ELD) instruction during the day. However, the consensus among staff is that EL students' needs are not being adequately met. Approximately 55 percent of district students are classified as ELs. There are plans in place for the 2004-05 school year to group students for instruction based on their EL levels, and to instruct students using the *Highpoint* intervention curriculum. In addition to ELD, the district must ensure that students receive appropriate instruction and intervention in all core subjects.

Literacy has been the primary area of focus this year. The district has scheduled daily literacy blocks of two hours at the elementary school and three hours at the middle school to allow for focused reading and language arts instruction. This commitment to literacy is important, but the district must ensure that students also receive properly leveled instruction in mathematics, science, and social studies. Students in kindergarten through grade three do not currently have a standards-based science curriculum, and students at the middle school have been placed in math

classes based on their literacy skills, regardless of their proficiency in mathematics. The after-school program has not been used effectively as an intervention for under-performing students, nor have Student Study Teams met consistently to suggest strategies for meeting students' needs.

Overall, the district has made good progress in implementing the pupil achievement standards in the 12 months since the review team's first visit. New goals and plans have been developed and must now be implemented and sustainable procedures built. Growth cannot be sustained without the system-wide operational changes suggested elsewhere in this report. The site-level implementation of the Single Plans for Student Achievement should result in considerable improvement in pupil achievement.

Conclusion

A subset of 20 professional and legal standards was identified in the area of Pupil Achievement for ongoing assessment. These 20 standards were reviewed in both six-month progress reviews. An average rating of 6.0 in this subset, with no standard rated lower than a 4, will indicate that the district has met the criteria for the return of this operational area to local governance.

The average rating of the identified subset of Pupil Achievement standards at this review period is **3.75**, with 11 standards rated less than 4. This has increased from the average rating for this identified subset of standards of 2.81 reported in January 2004.

Personnel Management

Since the study team's report of January 2004, the position of Administrative Assistant to the State Administrator has been renamed Administrative Assistant/Human Resources Technician, recognizing the many personnel tasks for which the position is responsible. Some efforts have been made to address the need for classified job descriptions, organize personnel files, and develop personnel policies and regulations. District staff reported that procedures for calling substitutes and accounting for employee sick leave have improved. However, the district has given little priority to addressing the personnel standards and therefore has made very little progress on implementing the recommendations.

The district has various documents related to personnel practices. However, all board policies and administrative regulations that govern the areas of recruitment, hiring, evaluation and dismissal of employees need to be updated. Written procedures that describe the overall selection process for certificated personnel need to be developed. Utilizing Ed-Join as a recruitment source will assist the district in its efforts.

The job application form for certificated teaching positions has been revised to include the district's address and telephone number. The candidate now has to respond to a statement that indicates whether he/she has ever been dismissed or asked to resign from any teaching position. District policies and regulations have yet to be developed, revised and implemented for classified employee recruitment and selection. The district has yet to develop a reference checking form and written procedures to document this necessary step in the selection of personnel. Recently, the State Administrator has been checking references of potential hires.

Personnel files are well organized and kept in a locked, fireproof file cabinet. More attention needs to be given to completing the task of removing medical information from the files of employees and placing it in a separate folder.

The Business and Personnel offices have recently completed job descriptions for classified employees. Data has also been collected on each employee's current work year and salary placement. Classified job descriptions are written in a consistent format and meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements by identifying work conditions and physical standards. It is projected that these job descriptions will be in effect for the start of the new school year.

There is no current policy that covers nondiscrimination in employment. Such a policy needs to be established. Also, a district nondiscrimination statement, that can be published across the district and used on employment-related documents, needs to be developed and implemented.

The district relies upon a single person to monitor teaching credentials. The district needs to appoint a backup person and develop a plan for continuing the training of staff in the area of credentialing. The number of emergency permit teachers employed by the district has declined from seven to five, and there are no teachers on waivers.

The district has used different delivery systems to provide employees with information on sexual harassment, bloodborne pathogens, child abuse reporting and other legally mandated areas. There is still a need to standardize the delivery system and monitor it annually.

The district has been working to clean up the employee database and to establish a position control system with position numbers assigned and tied to the budget. Written procedures still need to be implemented to ensure consistent use of the Request for Personnel Requisition (RFP) form. There is still a need to integrate all credential information into the main database.

Training on employee evaluation and due process needs to be provided. The evaluation of all certificated employees is scheduled to be completed this school year. This has been a two-year process. The current teacher evaluation instrument needs to be reviewed and revised as necessary. The evaluation process for classified employees lacks written procedures.

The Business Office has been collecting extensive salary and benefit information from other school districts. The district has begun to use the data to examine the current classification system and district salary schedules. Continued work in this area is planned. The district and employee organizations have begun to explore the formation of a district benefits committee. The Business Office has been active in evaluating the current costs of employee salaries and benefits and looking at alternative models that can be used in the future when meeting with employee organizations.

Conclusion

A subset of 21 professional and legal standards was identified in the area of Personnel Management for ongoing assessment. These 21 standards were reviewed in both six-month progress reviews. An average rating of 6.0 in this subset, with no standard rated lower than a 4, will indicate that the district has met the criteria for the return of this operational area to local governance.

The average rating of the identified subset of Personnel Management standards at this review period is **3.86**, with 11 standards rated less than a 4. This has increased from the average rating for this identified subset of standards of 3.38 reported in January 2004.

Financial Management

The business office environment has changed and administrative operations have become more structured since the team's last visit. The team noted that staff morale appears improved, there is a more businesslike environment in the office, record keeping is improving, and staff is accepting of change and has a general understanding of their individual duties. However, the district still has significant challenges and many recommendations to implement in the area of Financial Management.

The district still has not developed and implemented a formal, comprehensive recovery plan. As a result, some of the essential items needed for fundamental and lasting change in district operations are missing. Board policies, comprehensive procedures and desk manuals have not been developed and implemented. Board policies are needed to establish the district's values, goals, and expectations. Procedures and desk manuals are necessary to implement the board policies and to:

- Standardize how transactions are processed and situations are addressed
- Provide a reference guide to assist staff in properly performing their duties
- Provide a training tool to help improve staff's technical knowledge and capacity
- Improve continuity of operations in the event of staff turnover

The district has hired an additional administrative person in the central office who is responsible for addressing the various Assessment and Improvement Plan recommendations. However, the person assigned to this task also has other responsibilities. The district needs to make implementation of the recommendations a higher priority, and assign tasks to specific individuals, identify resources and goals, establish milestones and completion dates, and then monitor progress on a regular and ongoing basis.

While staff is becoming more familiar with school district and business operations, most of the incumbents have minimal, if any, experience in the industry or their specific jobs. Therefore, having adequate policies and procedures, adequate supervision, and ongoing training is critical.

In the previous six-month progress report, multiple items in the areas of budgeting and accounting were identified as major issues to be addressed. Almost all of these items still need to be addressed:

Budget Development and Monitoring

- Utilizing a detailed budget calendar (the district is in the process of developing this calendar)
- Utilizing budget development worksheets
- Establishing a budget advisory committee
- Correlating budgeted expenditures by site, program, and/or department to specific educational priorities and goals
- Understanding categorical programs, funding, and compliance in order to accurately budget categorical revenues and expenditures
- Implementing position control
- Projecting net ending balance on a monthly basis

Accounting Policies, Procedures, and Controls

- Establishing comprehensive accounting policies and procedures
- Segregating duties and implementing internal controls with regard to purchasing, receiving, and accounts payable
- Segregating duties and implementing internal controls with regard to revenue, cash receipts, and bank reconciliations
- Complying with program requirements for categorical programs
- Fully implementing all pertinent functions of the county's financial and personnel/ position control systems
- Establishing a formal training plan and providing comprehensive training to all Business Office staff
- Establishing policies and procedures to provide adequate oversight and monitoring for charter schools

The greatest challenge for the district is developing sufficient capacity to implement and sustain needed fundamental changes. The issue of sufficiency includes: (1) allocating existing staff and resources to maximize operational efficiency and implement necessary changes, (2) having staff with sufficient technical skill, (3) having documented policies and procedures, and (4) implementing and utilizing management information systems, particularly for position control.

The district should enlist the assistance of the Fresno County Office of Education, the California Department of Education, FCMAT, and possibly even other consultants in the development of policies, procedures, desk manuals, forms, and staff training. All of these entities can provide additional resources and technical knowledge that the district may not possess.

Conclusion

A subset of 24 professional and legal standards was identified in the area of Financial Management for ongoing assessment. These 24 standards were reviewed in both six-month progress reviews. An average rating of 6.0 in this subset, with no standard rated lower than a 4, will indicate that the district has met the criteria for the return of this operational area to local governance.

The average rating of the identified subset of Financial Management standards at this review period is **2.0**, with 21 standards rated less than a 4. This has increased from the average rating for this identified subset of standards of 1.54 reported in January 2004.

Facilities Management

Since the review team's last visit, the West Fresno Elementary School District has made little progress in addressing the facilities needs of the district. Few of the issues addressed in the initial Assessment and Improvement Plan have received any attention at all.

An increase in student enrollment is projected in a few years. Two new 80-unit apartment complexes are planned for construction and are expected to yield nearly 250-275 students when completed. The increase in enrollment will increase the district's future finances with the receipt of developer fees for facilities and with revenue limit increases for additional attendance (ADA).

The district recently purchased a 24-acre parcel next to the existing school site for future expansion. This acquisition will now make it easier for the district to handle the growth of enrollment from the apartment complexes. The district plans to acquire portables for the increase in student enrollment and pay for them with developer fees.

The district also recently received a planning grant from the state of \$155,000 for expanding the middle school campus. This project is funded as a financial hardship project, and therefore accurate financial records will be important. The State Administrator has plans for expanding the current campus to house the enrollment growth at both the elementary and middle schools.

One of the key factors for successfully managing the new facilities projects is updated board policies. The district has made no progress in updating the board policies since the initial review was performed a year ago. The district may need to invest in the temporary hire of an employee to assist in updating the board policies and associated procedures and regulations. Once the policies and related regulations are implemented, many of the standards should have a notable increase in their ratings.

Conclusion

A subset of 21 professional and legal standards was identified in the area of Facilities Management for ongoing assessment. These 21 standards were reviewed in both six-month progress reviews. An average rating of 6.0 in this subset, with no standard rated lower than a 4, will indicate that the district has met the criteria for the return of this operational area to local governance.

The average rating of the identified subset of Facilities Management standards at this review period is **4.43**, with 8 standards rated less than a 4. This has increased from the average rating for this identified subset of standards of 3.81 reported in January 2004.

Implementation Plan

In the West Fresno Elementary School District Assessment and Improvement Plan, July 2003, FCMAT assessed the district using 357 professional and legal standards in five operational areas of school district management. In the six-month follow-up progress reports in January 2004 and July 2004, FCMAT assessed fewer standards to allow the district to focus its improvement efforts in specific areas.

FCMAT, in collaboration with the California Department of Education, identified a subset of 114 standards to be assessed during each six-month review period. The 114 standards selected provide the most probability that the district, if it addresses the standards successfully, will be able to achieve the necessary improvement and return to local governance.

Although all 357 of the professional and legal standards utilized in the initial comprehensive assessment process are important to any district's success, focusing on the identified subset of 114 standards will enable the West Fresno Elementary School District to more quickly achieve a return to local governance.

The subset of 114 standards in the five operational areas include:

- 28 standards in Community Relations and Governance
- 20 standards in Pupil Achievement
- 21 standards in Personnel Management
- 24 standards in Financial Management
- 21 standards in Facilities Management

These standards are identified on the next few pages and in the Table of Standards following each of the five operational areas in Section Two of this report.

As the average score of the subset of standards in an operational area reaches a level of six and is considered to be sustainable, and no individual standard in the subset is below a four, FCMAT will recommend to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) that this particular condition of AB 38 has been met and that this operational area could be returned to the Governing Board. Subject to progress, recommendations every six months will address the functional areas of school district operations that could be returned to the Governing Board of the school district on an incremental basis. The ultimate return of legal rights, duties and powers will be based upon the SPI's concurrence with the assessment of his administrator designee and FCMAT that the future compliance by the West Fresno Elementary School District with the improvement plans and the multiyear financial recovery plan is probable.

The average score in each operational area subset is indicated below. Average ratings for July 2004 in each operational area increased over the ratings in the initial FCMAT report in July 2003 and in the first six-month progress report in January 2004. Subsequent six-month reviews will report the district's progress over time with new ratings.

Average Rating in Each Subset, July 2003:

Community Relations and Governance: average rating 1.36, with 26 standards under a 4.
Pupil Achievement: average rating 1.71, with 20 standards under a 4.
Personnel Management: average rating 2.52, with 13 standards under a 4.
Financial Management: average rating 0.83, with 24 standards under a 4.
Facilities Management: average rating 2.86, with 13 standards under a 4.

Average Rating in Each Subset, January 2004:

Community Relations and Governance: average rating 2.04, with 23 standards under a 4.
Pupil Achievement: average rating 2.81, with 15 standards under a 4.
Personnel Management: average rating 3.38, with 11 standards under a 4.
Financial Management: average rating 1.54, with 24 standards under a 4.
Facilities Management: average rating 3.81, with 12 standards under a 4.

Average Rating in Each Subset, July 2004:

Community Relations and Governance: average rating 2.82, with 18 standards under a 4.
Pupil Achievement: average rating 3.75, with 9 standards under a 4.
Personnel Management: average rating 3.86, with 11 standards under a 4.
Financial Management: average rating 2.00, with 21 standards under a 4.
Facilities Management: average rating 4.43, with 8 standards under a 4.

Operational Area	July 2003 Average	Jan. 2004 Average	July 2004 Average	Standards below a 4
Community Relations/Governance	1.36	2.04	2.82	18
Pupil Achievement	1.71	2.81	3.75	9
Personnel Management	2.52	3.38	3.86	11
Financial Management	0.83	1.54	2.00	21
Facilities Management	2.86	3.81	4.43	8

Identified Subset of 114 Professional and Legal Standards

FCMAT, in collaboration with the California Department of Education, identified a subset of standards that the district must address in each of the five operational areas of Community Relations and Governance, Pupil Achievement, Personnel Management, Financial Management, and Facilities Management. When the average rating of the identified subset of standards within an operational area reaches an average of 6.0, with no standard rated lower than a 4, FCMAT will recommend to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction that the operational area be returned to local governance. The following identified subset of standards is reviewed during each six-month review period.

Community Relations and Governance

- 1.1 The district has developed a comprehensive plan for internal and external communications, including media relations.
- 1.2 Information is communicated to the staff at all levels in an effective and timely manner.
- 1.4 The district effectively implements strategies for communicating with parents, the community and the media.
- 2.1 Annual parental notice of rights and responsibilities is provided at the beginning of the school year. This notice is provided in English and in languages other than English when 15 percent or more speak other languages (EC 48980, 48985).
- 2.2 A school accountability report card is issued annually for each school site (EC 35256).
- 2.3 The district has developed and annually disseminates uniform complaint procedures (Title 5, Section 4621, 4622).
- 2.7 Parents and public input into school and district operations is encouraged.
- 2.10 Board members are actively involved in building community relations.
- 3.8 The school site council develops a Single Plan for Student Achievement at each school applying for categorical programs through the consolidated application (EC 64001).
- 3.9 School plans are comprehensive and have sufficient content to meet the statutory requirements (EC 64001).
- 4.1 Policies are written, organized and readily available to all members of the staff and to the public.
- 4.3 The board has adopted all policies mandated by state and federal law.
- 4.6 The board supports and follows district policies.

- 5.2 Board members participate in orientation sessions, workshops, conventions and special meetings sponsored by board associations.
- 5.3 Pertinent literature, statutes, legal counsel and recognized authorities are available to and utilized by the board to understand duties, functions, authority and responsibilities of members.
- 5.4 The board has identified the needs of the students, staff and educational community through a needs assessment process.
- 5.5 The board has established a district-wide vision/mission and uses that vision/mission as a framework for district action.
- 5.9 Functional working relations are maintained between the board and administrative team.
- 5.10 The board publicly demonstrates respect for and support for the district and school site staff.
- 5.11 The board demonstrates respect for public input at meetings and public hearings.
- 5.14 No individual board member attempts to exercise any administrative responsibility.
- 5.16 Members of the board act for the community and in the interests of all students in the district.
- 6.2 The board agenda is made available to the public in the manner and under the time lines prescribed by law (Government Code 54954.1, 54954.2).
- 6.3 Board members prepare for board meetings by becoming familiar with the agenda and support materials prior to the meeting.
- 6.5 Open and closed sessions are conducted according to the Ralph M. Brown Act (GC 54950 et seq.).
- 6.6 Meetings of the board proceed in a businesslike manner while allowing opportunity for full discussion.
- 6.8 Members of the public have an opportunity to address the board before or during the board's consideration of each item of business to be discussed at regular or special meetings, and to bring before the board matters that are not on the agenda (Education Code 35145.5).
- 6.9 Board meetings focus on matters related to student achievement.

Pupil Achievement

- 1.1 A common vision of what all students should know and be able to do exists and is put into practice.
- 1.3 The district has long-term goals and plans to support student achievement improvements.
- 1.4 The district directs its resources fairly and consistently to accomplish its objectives.
- 1.6 The district's planning process focuses on supporting increased student performance.
- 2.1 The district through its adopted policy provides a clear operational framework for management of the curriculum.
- 2.2 Policies regarding curriculum and instruction are reviewed and approved by the school board.
- 2.3 The district has clear and valid objectives for students, including the core curriculum content.
- 3.2 Challenging learning goals and instructional plans and programs for all students are evident.
- 3.7 Each school has a school site council or leadership team, comprised of teachers, parents, principal, and students, that is actively engaged in school planning.
- 3.10 Clearly defined discipline practices have been established and communicated among the students, staff, board, and community.
- 3.14 The identification and placement of English Learners into appropriate courses are conducted in a timely and effective manner.
- 3.15 Curriculum and instruction for English Learners (EL) prepares EL students to transition to regular class settings and achieve at a high level in all subject matters.
- 3.16 The identification and placement of special education students into appropriate courses is conducted in a timely and effective manner.
- 3.17 Individual education plans (IEPs) are reviewed and updated on time.
- 3.18 Curriculum and instruction for special education students is rigorous and appropriate to meet special education students' learning needs.
- 4.2 Student achievement is measured and assessed through a variety of measurement tools (e.g. standardized tests, portfolios, projects, oral reports, etc.).

- 4.4 The administration and staff utilize assessment information to improve learning opportunities for all students.
- 5.1 Staff development demonstrates a clear understanding of purpose, written goals, and appropriate evaluations.
- 5.2 Staff development provides staff (for example, principals, teachers, and instructional aides) with the knowledge and skills to improve instruction and curriculum.
- 5.8 New teachers and principals are provided with training and support opportunities.

Personnel Management

- 1.1 The district has clearly defined and clarified policies and procedures relative to recruitment, hiring, evaluation and dismissal of employees.
- 3.1 Certificated employment procedures and practices are conducted in a manner that ensures equal employment opportunities. Written hiring procedures are provided.
- 3.2 The job application form requests information that is legal, useful, pertinent, and easily understood.
- 3.4 The district systematically initiates and follows up on reference checking on all certificated applicants being considered for employment. An appropriate reference checking form is completed and filed in the district office.
- 4.1 Classified employment procedures and practices are conducted in a manner that ensures equal employment opportunities. Written hiring procedures are provided.
- 4.3 The district systematically initiates and follows up on reference checking on all classified applicants being considered for employment. An appropriate reference checking form is completed and filed in the district office.
- 6.1 Personnel files are complete, well-organized and up-to-date.
- 6.4 The Personnel Office has a process in place to systematically review and update job descriptions. These job descriptions shall be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- 6.7 Wage and salary determination and ongoing implementation are handled without delays and conflicts (substitutes, temporary employees, stipends, shift differentials, etc.).
- 7.4 A clear implemented policy exists on the prohibition of discrimination.

- 7.5 The district has established policies, procedures and practices to ensure that all certificated employees hold valid certification to teach in each position in the district (EC 44006).
- 7.6 The district has established a process by which all required notices/in-services trainings have been performed and documented, such as child abuse reporting, blood-borne pathogens, sexual harassment, nondiscrimination, etc.
- 7.10 The district is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in application procedures, hiring, advancement or discharge, compensation, job training and other terms, conditions and privileges of employment.
- 8.1 A systematic position control system is utilized and is integrated with payroll/financial systems.
- 8.5 The Personnel Office has computerized its employee database systems including, but not limited to: credentials, seniority lists, evaluations, personnel by funding source, program, location and workers' compensation benefits.
- 9.1 The Personnel Office participates in the training of all management and supervisory staff responsible for employee evaluations and due process.
- 10.1 Clear policies and practices exist for the written evaluation and assessment of certificated employees.
- 10.2 Clear policies and practices exist for the written evaluation and assessment of classified employees.
- 10.3 The Personnel Office provides a process for the monitoring of employee evaluations and the accountability reporting of their completion.
- 12.1 The district has collected data that compare the salaries and benefits of its employees with districts of like size, geographic location and other comparable measures.
- 12.4 The district has a process that provides management and the Governing Board with information on the impact of bargaining proposals (e.g., fiscal, staffing, management flexibility, student outcomes).

Financial Management

- 2.2 The financial departments should communicate regularly with the Governing Board and community on the status of district finances and the financial impact of proposed expenditure decisions. The communication should be written whenever possible, particularly when it affects many community members, is an issue of high importance to the district and board, or reflects a change in policies.
- 2.5 The district should have formal policies and procedures that provide a mechanism for individuals to report illegal acts, establish to whom illegal acts should be reported, and provide a formal investigative process.
- 5.5 The district should have a clear process to analyze resources and allocations to ensure that they are aligned with strategic planning objectives and that the budget reflects the priorities of the district.
- 5.8 The district must have an ability to accurately reflect its net ending balance throughout the budget monitoring process. The first and second interim reports should provide valid updates of the district's net ending balance. The district should have tools and processes that ensure that there is an early warning of any discrepancies between the budget projections and actual revenues or expenditures.
- 6.2 An adopted budget calendar exists that meets legal and management requirements. At a minimum the calendar should identify statutory due dates and major budget development activities.
- 7.3 The district should have procedures that provide for the development and submission of a district budget and interim reports that adhere to criteria and standards and are approved by the County Office of Education.
- 7.9 The district should include in its audit report, but not later than March 15, a corrective action for all findings disclosed as required by Education Code Section 41020.
- 8.1 All purchase orders are properly encumbered against the budget until payment. The district should have a control system in place to ensure that adequate funds are available prior to incurring financial obligations.
- 8.2 There should be budget monitoring controls, such as periodic reports, to alert department and site managers of the potential for overexpenditure of budgeted amounts. Revenue and expenditures should be forecast and verified monthly.
- 8.5 The district uses an effective position control system, which tracks personnel allocations and expenditures. The position control system effectively establishes checks and balances between personnel decisions and budgeted appropriations.
- 11.1 An accurate record of daily enrollment and attendance is maintained at the sites and reconciled monthly.

- 11.2 Policies and regulations exist for independent study, home study, inter/intradistrict agreements and districts of choice, and should address fiscal impact.
- 11.7 School site personnel should receive periodic and timely training on the district's attendance procedures, system procedures and changes in laws and regulations.
- 12.2 The district should timely and accurately record all information regarding financial activity (unrestricted and restricted) for all programs. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) require that in order for financial reporting to serve the needs of the users, it must be reliable and timely. Therefore, the timely and accurate recording of the underlying transactions (revenue and expenditures) is an essential function of the district's financial management.
- 12.3 The district should forecast its revenue and expenditures and verify those projections on a monthly basis in order adequately to manage its cash. In addition, the district should reconcile its cash to bank statements and reports from the County Treasurer on a monthly basis. Standard accounting practice dictates that, in order to ensure that all cash receipts are deposited timely and recorded properly, cash be reconciled to bank statements on a monthly basis.
- 12.4 The district's payroll procedures should be in compliance with the requirements established by the County Office of Education. Standard accounting practice dictates that the district implement procedures to ensure the timely and accurate processing of payroll.
- 12.8 The district should comply with the bidding requirements of Public Contract Code Section 20111. Standard accounting practice dictates that the district have adequate purchasing and warehousing procedures to ensure that only properly authorized purchases are made, that authorized purchases are made consistent with district policies and management direction, that inventories are safeguarded, and that purchases and inventories are timely and accurately recorded.
- 12.9 The district has documented procedures for the receipt, expenditure, and monitoring of all construction-related activities. Included in the procedures are specific requirements for the approval and payment of all construction-related expenditures.
- 12.10 The accounting system should have an appropriate level of controls to prevent and detect errors and irregularities.
- 14.2 The district annually provides a multiyear revenue and expenditure projection for all funds of the district. Projected fund balance reserves should be disclosed. The assumptions for revenues and expenditures should be reasonable and supportable. [EC 42131]

- 15.3 1. For long-term liabilities/debt service, the district should prepare debt service schedules and identify the dedicated funding sources to make those debt service payments.
 2. The district should project cash receipts from the dedicated revenue sources to ensure that it will have sufficient funds to make periodic debt payments.
 3. The cash flow projections should be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that any variances from projected cash flows are identified as early as possible, in order to allow the district sufficient time to take appropriate measures or identify alternative funding sources.
- 16.2 The State Administrator/Governing Board must ensure that any guideline the district develops for collective bargaining is fiscally aligned with the instructional and fiscal goals on a multiyear basis. The State Administrator/Governing Board must ensure that the district has a formal process where collective bargaining multiyear costs are identified and those expenditures changes are identified and implemented as necessary prior to any imposition of new collective bargaining obligations. The State Administrator/Governing Board must ensure that there is a validation of the costs and the projected district revenues and expenditures on a multiyear basis so that the fiscal resources are not strained further due to bargaining settlements. The public should be informed about budget reductions that will be required for a bargaining agreement prior to any contract acceptance by the Governing Board. The public should be given advance notice of the provisions of the final proposed bargaining settlement and be given an opportunity to comment.
- 18.8 Capital equipment and furniture should be tagged as district-owned property and inventoried at least annually.
- 20.1 In the process of reviewing and approving charter schools, the district should identify/establish minimal financial management and reporting standards that the charter school will follow. These standards/procedures will provide some level of assurance that finances will be managed appropriately, and allow the district to monitor the charter. The district should monitor the financial management and performance of the charter schools on an ongoing basis, in order to ensure that the resources are appropriately managed.

Facilities Management

- 1.1 All school administrators should be thoroughly familiar with the California Department of Education, Civil Defense and Disaster Planning Guide for School Officials, 1972. [EC 32000-32004, 32040, 35295-35297, 38132, 46390-46392, 49505, GC 3100, 8607, CCR Title 5 §550, 560, Title 19 §2400]
- 1.3 The district should be able to demonstrate that a plan of security has been developed, which includes adequate measures of safety and protection of people and property. [EC 32020, 32211, 35294-35294.9]
- 1.15 The Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) requires periodic inspections of facilities to identify conditions. [CCR Title 8 §3203]

- 1.18 A comprehensive school safety plan exists for the prevention of campus crime and violence. [EC 35294-35294.9]
- 1.19 Each public agency is required to have on file written plans describing procedures to be employed in case of emergency. [EC 32000-32004, 32040, 35295-35297, 38132, 46390-46392, 49505, GC 3100, 8607] [CCR Title 8, §3220]
- 1.26 The district maintains a comprehensive employee safety program. Employees should be aware of the district safety program and the district should provide in-service training to employees on the requirements of the safety program.
- 2.14 The district should collect statutory school fees. [EC 17620, GC 65995, 66000]
- 3.12 The district actively manages the deferred maintenance projects. The district should review the five-year deferred maintenance plan annually to remove any completed projects and include any newly eligible projects. The district should also verify that the projects performed during the year were included in the state-approved, five-year deferred maintenance plan.
- 4.2 Change orders are processed and receive prior approval from required parties before being implemented within respective construction projects.
- 4.4 Each Inspector of Record (IOR) assignment is properly approved.
- 5.1 The district complies with formal bidding procedures. (GC 54202, 54204, PCC 20111)
- 5.2 The district has a procedure for requests for quotes/proposals. (GC 54202, 54204, PCC 20111)
- 8.1 An Energy Conservation Policy should be approved by the Board of Education and implemented throughout the district
- 8.10 Toilet facilities are adequate and maintained. All buildings and grounds are maintained. [CCR Title 5 § 631]
- 9.1 The district has developed a plan for attractively landscaped facilities.
- 9.2 The goals and objectives of the technology plan should be clearly defined. The plan should include both the administrative and instructional technology systems. There should be a summary of the costs of each objective and a financing plan should be in place.
- 9.3 The Governing Board shall provide a warm, healthful place in which children who bring their own lunches to school may eat their lunch. [EC 17573, CCR Title 5 §14030]
- 9.4 The Governing Board of every school district shall provide clean and operable flush toilets for the use of pupils. [EC 17576, CCR Title 5 §14030]

- 10.1 The district should have a plan to promote community involvement in schools.
- 10.2 Education Code Section 38130 establishes terms and conditions of school facility use by community organizations, in the process requiring establishment of both “direct cost” and “fair market” rental rates, specifying what groups have which priorities and fee schedules.
- 10.3 Districts should maintain comprehensive records and controls on civic center implementation and cash management.