FCMAT
FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM
CSIS California School Information Services

Pioneer Union Elementary School District

Maintenance, Grounds, Operations, Facilities Planning and Transportation Review

May 19, 2014

Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer

May 14, 2014

Paul van Loon, Superintendent

Pioneer Union Elementary School District

1888 N. Mustang Drive

Hanford, CA 93230

Dear Superintendent van Loon:

The Pioneer Union Elementary School District and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement on January 23, 2014 to conduct a review of the district's maintenance, grounds, custodial (operations), facilities planning and transportation functions. Specifically, the agreement states that FCMAT will perform the following:

Conduct an organizational, staffing and efficiency review of the district's facilities, maintenance, grounds, transportation and custodial operations.

a. Review job descriptions for all department positions; evaluate capacity, scheduling, efficiency and functions; and make recommendations for staffing and operational improvements. All recommendations will include estimated savings or costs for any proposed position reductions or additions. Interview district and site employees regarding the level of service the department provides.

b. Evaluate the operational work flow of each function for the facilities, maintenance, grounds, transportation and custodial operations and make recommendations for improved efficiency and standard industry practices. This component will include the following:

i. Evaluate the district's comprehensive maintenance and deferred maintenance plans to support and provide preventive maintenance for all facilities, grounds, and major systems (HVAC, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and structural).

ii. Review the district's maintenance work order system for repairs of facilities and equipment to ensure that all maintenance and repairs are completed in a timely fashion, and that work order status reports are provided regularly.

iii. Review the district's long-range facilities plan, and make recommendations for staffing, if any.

iv. Evaluate the grounds and custodial service plans for each site to ensure that the tasks and expectations for custodial and grounds employees are clearly outlined and indicate a detailed daily and periodic schedule for cleaning and simple repairs of the facilities. This will include the evaluation of the summer and non-school-day programs for specialized cleaning and repairs.

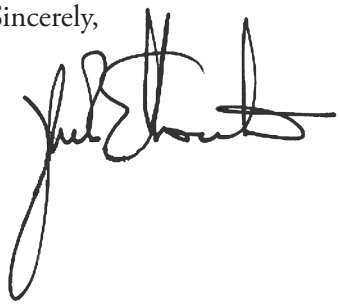
v. Review the transportation department to include :

- Routing, including the option of combining bus routes
- Walking distances
- Bell times
- Staffing
- Field trip (scheduling & charges)
- Analyze the fiscal impact of provisions contained in the current bargaining contracts

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 Pioneer Union Elementary School District for their cooperation and assistance during fieldwork.

Sincerely,



Joel D. Montero

Chief Executive Officer

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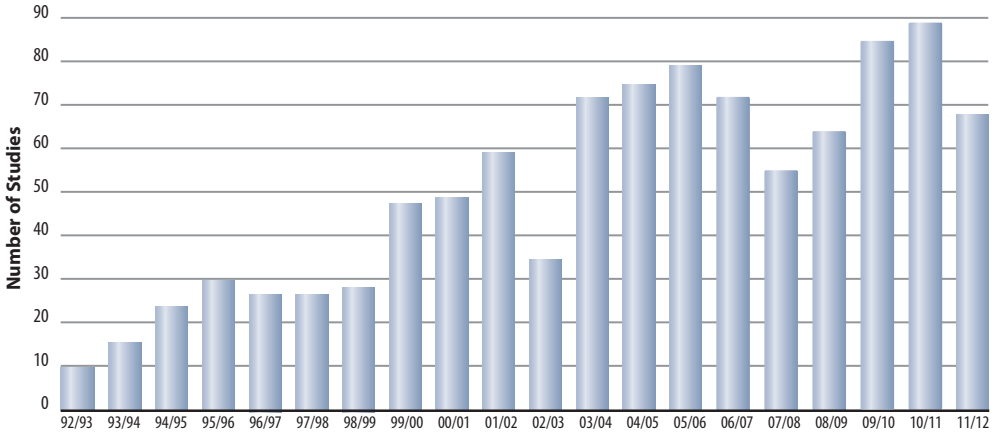
About FCMAT

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 offices 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 more than 1,000 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 Pioneer Union Elementary School District encompasses approximately 17.67 square miles in the city of Hanford and some of the surrounding unincorporated area. The district operates two K-5 elementary schools and one 6-8 middle school that feeds into the Hanford Union High School District. The district's enrollment is 1,607 and has been flat through the most recent period of state economic downturn. Enrollment growth is expected to resume because of proposed residential development.

Pioneer Middle School was constructed in 2002. Frontier Elementary School and the district office were constructed in 2008. The district transports approximately 630 students on five primary bus routes to and from the schools.

On January 23, 2014 the district entered into an agreement with the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) to conduct a review of maintenance, grounds, custodial (operations), facilities planning and transportation functions.

Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

Eric D. Smith
FCMAT Fiscal Intervention Specialist
Templeton, CA

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

Leonel Martínez
FCMAT Technical Writer
Bakersfield, CA

*As a member of this study team, this consultant was not representing his respective employer, but was working solely as an independent contractor for FCMAT. Each team member reviewed the draft report to confirm its accuracy and to achieve consensus on the final recommendations.

Study Guidelines

FCMAT visited the district on March 13 and 14, 2014 to conduct interviews, collect data and review documents. This report is the result of those activities and is divided into the following sections:

I. Executive Summary
II. Organizational Structure and Job Descriptions
III. Maintenance

IV. Grounds

V. Custodial (Operations)

VI. Facilities Planning

VII. Transportation

VIII. Appendices

In writing its reports, FCMAT uses the Associated Press Stylebook, a comprehensive guide to usage and accepted style that emphasizes conciseness and clarity. In addition, this guide emphasizes plain language, discourages the use of jargon and capitalizes relatively few terms.

Executive Summary

Director of Maintenance, Operations and Transportation

Five different people have occupied the director of maintenance, operations and transportation position at the Pioneer Union Elementary School District in the past 12 years. The current director has been with the district since April 2002, starting as a bus driver, then serving as a custodian/maintenance worker/bus driver, a lead maintenance worker, and eventually becoming the director in 2011. Because of the shortage of qualified school bus drivers, the director of maintenance, operations and transportation also serves as a substitute bus driver as needed.

Maintenance and Grounds

The district is understaffed in the Maintenance Department compared to districts of similar size based on the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) standard of one maintenance worker for each school site. Further, there are no standard operating procedures for the two maintenance workers' daily duties. Most of the training received by the maintenance staff has been accomplished verbally by the employees who previously occupied these positions.

The department schedules services using e-mail and an electronic calendar system. A significant disadvantage of this system is that there is no way to view how many work orders have been initiated, completed, and remain outstanding without scrolling through the calendar by month and manually tabulating the results. The district uses a trial version of School Dude to schedule preventive maintenance tasks such as inspections related to wheelchair lifts, playground safety, and emergency lighting inspections as well as heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) maintenance. However, it lacks an overarching plan that identifies how resources will be allocated and in what year.

The Maintenance Department has little trade workspace and storage space. Most of the facility is occupied by the Transportation Department and used to house buses. One of the bus bays could be converted to a maintenance shop and storage location since some of the district's buses are housed outside.

The Grounds Department is understaffed based on industry standards. One groundskeeper works as a substitute bus driver 50% of the time, and another spends 20% of his time as a substitute custodian. Therefore, the district effectively operates with 2.25 full-time equivalent (FTE) groundskeepers. The district's reliance on split positions has resulted in a service delivery model that is disjointed and led to frustration among staff members, who indicated they have insufficient time to complete their primary tasks.

The equipment for each groundskeeper, such as blowers, hedgers, tree trimmers and weed whips, are in good repair. However, two of the district's three large riding mowers are nearing their age expectancy. Moreover, some groundskeepers do not have access to equipment that could increase the efficiency of their operations. Each school site receives a purchase order of $100 per month ($300 per month for all three school sites) to purchase sprinkler heads and miscellaneous supplies for repairs, but this amount has not been adjusted since 2008 and is inadequate to fund the amount of supplies needed monthly.

Custodial

The Custodial Department has a conventional organizational structure, common in districts of similar size throughout the state, in which custodial crews are assigned to individual school sites but evaluated by the director of maintenance, operations and transportation with input from site principals. The district has no custodial procedures manual, and most of the practices

used by these employees were simply taught verbally by one custodian to another. The district has begun to standardize the use of custodial products, but more can be done to improve the operational efficiency of the custodial function. The majority of custodians indicated that their schedules include insufficient time for them to adequately clean their schools. However, most perform more duties than those listed on their schedules. For example, they vacuum classrooms and perform low dusting daily, even though their schedules call for them to complete these duties only every two days.

Facilities Planning

Because of anticipated residential development, the district's student enrollment is expected to increase in the near future.

The district lacks a facilities master plan. It should develop such a plan using conservative assumptions about funding and growth and identifying funding mechanisms to meet the need for new facilities. The new plan should consider the continued volatility of the housing market using a low and high range of projected development. It should recalculate classroom loading standards, considering the changes in the state's class-size reduction program as well as bargaining unit agreements, and the student generation factor for current and new estimated future developments. The plan's assumptions should also discuss the status and likelihood of receiving state funding for facilities given the governor's negative outlook on the future of the state funding program.

Transportation

Because the district converted to an all-charter district, school transportation revenue became part of the charter categorical block grant many years ago. If it became a separate source once more, transportation revenue would cover approximately 53% of the cost of the service. Statewide, California's school transportation revenue now only covers 35% of the approved cost of providing pupil transportation. Pioneer Union has a relatively low cost per mile and per student to provide pupil transportation. The district does not charge fees for providing school transportation service.

Transportation Department staffing is minimal. The maintenance, operations and transportation (MOT) secretary works only five hours per day and 11 months per year. The lead maintenance II worker performs bus maintenance and drives as a substitute. The maintenance I worker performs bus maintenance, and the MOT director also drives a bus as a substitute. One grounds maintenance II position regularly drives a bus. The Transportation Department has no lead position to make daily scheduling decisions and no school bus driver instructor on staff. Bus, vehicle and equipment maintenance are provided by maintenance workers and outside contractors. These split duties reduce the productivity of the grounds and maintenance workers. As the district has grown, staffing did not increase proportionately to accommodate the need. The district should increase the MOT secretary II to a full-time position, hire a full-time mechanic, and employ a lead bus driver who is also certified as a school bus driver instructor. This position would also drive a bus route and work an extra hour per day, providing driver training as needed.

District bus routes appear efficient, but efficiency could be increased by providing additional supervision time at schools or realigning bell times. The collective bargaining agreement with the California School Employees' Association (CSEA) does not include specific transportation work rules, and the department has no handbook. Such a handbook should be developed. Most field trips are handled by the department with only a few chartered. The district should consider developing a field trip rate that more appropriately charges for the actual trip cost. Some staff

drive small student groups in a district vehicle that is not a school bus. The district should consider adopting practices to enhance the safety of this activity.

The state requires school buses to be inspected every 45 days or 3,000 miles. The California Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Inspection Division inspects buses and maintenance records as well as other information and annually provides the district with a terminal grade. In 2012, Pioneer Union received a warning that inspections were sometimes not carried out at the appropriate interval. Overall, the district has consistently received the CHP's highest grade of "satisfactory," indicating compliance with laws and regulations. The department does not utilize work orders to track vehicle and equipment maintenance costs or histories. Any maintenance/transportation staff member can purchase parts and equipment. Reasonable controls should be instituted for purchasing.

During FCMAT's fieldwork, the MOT facility was left open and unstaffed. The facility should be closed and locked when not occupied.

The county and state water resources boards generally permit bus washing (industrial waste) and storm water runoff. The district should obtain the permits necessary for the bus-washing operation and mitigate the flow of industrial waste into local waterways. Three buses are parked inside the garage, and the others buses are parked outside with no perimeter fencing. A secure area for bus parking should be developed.

The state requires school bus driver training to be provided by a state-certified school bus driver instructor. The district utilizes an instructor at Hanford Union High School District. The district is not charged for classroom training, but Hanford Union is considering implementing a fee for this service. Driver training records are generally up to date. District bus drivers have few opportunities for useful in-service training. The district should work towards having a school bus driver instructor on staff.

Findings and Recommendations

Organizational Structure and Job Descriptions

Organizational Structure

A school district's organizational structure should establish the framework for leadership and the delegation of specific duties and responsibilities for all staff members. This structure should be managed to maximize resources and reach identified goals and should adapt as the district's enrollment increases or declines. The district should be staffed according to basic, generally accepted theories of organizational structure and the standards used in other school agencies of similar size and type. The most common theories of organizational structure are span of control, chain of command, and line and staff authority.

Span of Control

Span of control refers to the number of subordinates reporting directly to a supervisor. While there is no agreed-upon ideal number of subordinates for span of control, it is generally agreed that the span can be larger at lower levels than the higher levels of an organization because subordinates at the lower levels typically perform more routine duties, and therefore can be more effectively supervised, according to Principles of School Business Management by Craig R. Wood, David C. Thompson and Lawrence O. Picus.

Chain of Command

Chain of command refers to the flow of authority in an organization and is characterized by two significant principles. Unity of command suggests that a subordinate is accountable to only one supervisor, and the scalar principle suggests that authority and responsibility should flow in a direct vertical line from top management to the lowest level. The result is a hierarchical division of labor as described in Principles of School Business Management. For example, the district has maintenance, grounds, transportation and custodial personnel who report directly to the district's director of maintenance, operations and transportation, who in turn reports directly to the superintendent, who is accountable to the governing board.

Line and Staff Authority

Line authority is the relationship between supervisors and subordinates. It refers to the direct line in the chain of command. For example the director of maintenance, operations and transportation has direct line authority over the maintenance, grounds, operations and transportation staff. Conversely, staff authority is advisory in nature. Staff personnel do not have the authority to make and implement decisions, but act in support roles to line personnel. The organizational structure of local educational agencies contains both line and staff authority.

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

The district does not possess an organizational chart for the Maintenance, Operations and Transportation Department that delineates the director's span of control and chain of command.

During fieldwork, the district utilized split positions across many functions. Maintenance workers serve as part-time bus drivers. One groundskeeper spends 50% of his time as a substitute bus driver and another 20 % as substitute custodian. Even the director of maintenance, operations and transportation serves as a substitute bus driver. The district's reliance on split positions has resulted in a service delivery model that is disjointed and leads to frustration among staff, who believe they have insufficient time to complete their primary tasks. The district should re-evaluate the use of split positions and refrain from creating additional ones in the future.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Establish an organizational chart for the Maintenance, Operations and Transportation Department that delineates the director's span of control and chain of command as it relates to subordinates that occupy line and staff positions.
2. Regularly review and update the maintenance, operations and transportation organizational chart
3. Re-evaluate the use of split positions and refrain from creating more in the future.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions should clearly identify supervisory relationships as well as the job's essential functions and requirements. To remain current and relevant, they should be regularly reviewed and updated as needed. Properly written and updated job descriptions help the district maintain employee accountability and eligibility for employment, and can mitigate workers' compensation, disability, and discrimination claim risks.

FCMAT reviewed the job descriptions for the Maintenance, Operations, Grounds and Transportation departments and found that many are for split positions, such as custodian/bus driver, bus driver/clerk and utility worker and bus driver/transportation clerk. Job descriptions were not uniform in format, several did not contain the essential functions of the job as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, and some have not been updated since 2002.

Jobs descriptions for all the positions above should be regularly reviewed. Even if no changes are needed, a more current date will indicate that the descriptions have been reviewed for accuracy.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Regularly review and update job descriptions to ensure they are current with law and relevant to district expectations.
2. Standardize the format of all job descriptions.

Maintenance

With only two general maintenance workers, the district Maintenance Department is understaffed compared to districts of similar size based on the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) standard of one maintenance worker for each school site. One maintenance worker is used as a substitute bus driver 50% of the time, and the other drives a bus 20% of his time, so the district effectively operates with 1.30 FTE maintenance workers.

Because neither maintenance worker has journeyman experience in the trades, most electrical plumbing, and locksmith work is contracted. However maintenance provides a wide range of routine maintenance services, including replacing HVAC unit belts and filters, plumbing gaskets and couplings, light bulbs, ballasts, and circuit breakers, as well as providing light carpentry throughout the district.

Many school districts use skilled maintenance specialists to perform work such as locksmithing, plumbing, HVAC maintenance and electrical jobs. Although skilled maintenance workers should be expected to perform general maintenance tasks as a primary responsibility, recognizing the individual skills and providing appropriate compensation are necessary to attract qualified candidates to these types of positions.

The district's two maintenance workers also perform light vehicle maintenance on the district's school buses and fleet vehicles. This includes, but is not limited to, performing oil changes, replacing air filters, replacing head and tail lights, and repairing broken latches and turn signals. Requiring maintenance staff to perform such tasks takes time that could be used for general building maintenance.

Industry standards indicate that the district should have at least three FTEs dedicated to maintenance based on the norm of one maintenance worker per school site. The district effectively has 1.30 FTEs allocated to maintenance, and these maintenance workers are also expected to perform vehicle maintenance, a task that is not normally assigned to maintenance workers in other California school districts.

In order for the district to be adequately staffed, it should have at least two general maintenance workers dedicated to building maintenance, and one skilled maintenance worker dedicated to HVAC maintenance and repair, based on the average temperature of the Hanford area. FCMAT estimates that the total compensation cost to add 1.75 FTEs in maintenance at mid-range on the salary schedule is $93,084.25. Alternately, the district could add a 1.0 FTE HVAC technician and a .75 school bus driver to eliminate the use of split positions in maintenance.

The department schedules services using e-mail and an electronic calendar system. Work orders are e-mailed to the administrative assistant who forwards them the director of maintenance, operations, and transportation and the maintenance worker assigned the work order. The administrative assistant then posts the work order to an electronic calendar. When the work order is completed, the maintenance worker posts this information on the electronic calendar. A significant disadvantage of this system is that there is no way to view how many work orders have been initiated, completed and remain outstanding without scrolling through the calendar by month and manually tabulating the results. The district's purchase of an automated work order system would improve efficiency by providing management with real-time data on the status of maintenance work orders.

The Maintenance Department has little trade workspace and storage space. The maintenance, operation and transportation facility has four bays; three house buses at night and the fourth

was converted to storage space and administrative offices. The remainder of the school bus fleet is parked outside. The district should consider converting one of the bus bays to a maintenance shop to store inventory and provide workspace for maintenance workers.

The district has no standard operating procedures for the two maintenance workers' daily duties. Most of the maintenance staff's training was verbal from employees who previously occupied these positions. The district should establish standard operating procedures for each maintenance position.

The district uses a trial version of School Dude to schedule preventive maintenance tasks such as wheel chair lift inspections, playground safety inspections, emergency lighting inspections and HVAC maintenance; however, no overarching plan identifies how resources are allocated and in what year. The district should develop a preventive maintenance plan that allocates resources to specific tasks on a multiyear basis, and School Dude's preventive maintenance scheduling function should be aligned with the plan to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to carry out preventive maintenance tasks during that time.

During fieldwork, maintenance workers had the tools and equipment needed to perform their daily duties. However, some vehicles used by the maintenance and grounds staff are aging and in need of regular repair. An inventory of the Maintenance Department vehicles shows vehicles range from one to 27 years in age, with mileage ranging from 3,758 to 114,152 miles. Since the district does not maintain or fund a capital vehicle replacement program, the life cycles of some vehicles have been overextended.

The United States General Services Administration recommends the replacement of medium-sized trucks that are 10 years in age or have an odometer reading of 100,000 miles for those that are nondiesel, and at 10 years in age or have an odometer reading of 150,000 miles for those that use diesel fuel. Placing a fleet vehicle in service beyond its life expectancy results in increased vehicle maintenance, which adversely affects service levels. The district should develop and fund a vehicle replacement plan.

The district fully funds the routine restricted maintenance account at 3% of adopted budget expenditures and makes the full matching share contribution to the deferred maintenance fund. However, it does not measure how these resources are allocated to effectively respond to maintenance issues over a multiyear period. Although the district has a 5-year deferred maintenance plan, the projects included are not completed in the year that they are specified, and in some cases, not completed at all.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Implement one of the following two changes:
    - Add 1.75 FTEs in building maintenance, including one full-time HVAC technician.
    - Add one full time HVAC technician and one .75 school bus driver and discontinue the practice of using split positions in maintenance.
2. Purchase and implement an automated work order system that enables management to access real time data on the status of open, completed, and outstanding work orders.

3. Consider converting one of the bus bays in the maintenance shop to house inventory and provide work space for maintenance workers.
4. Establish written standard operating procedures for all maintenance workers.
5. Develop a preventive maintenance plan and use it to allocate resources to preventive maintenance on a multiyear basis.
6. Implement and fund a vehicle replacement plan.
7. Continue to make the full matching share contribution to the deferred maintenance fund.
8. Ensure that deferred maintenance projects are completed within the time frame specified on the 5-year plan.
9. Develop a plan to integrate the use of routine restricted maintenance account funds and deferred maintenance funds to meet preventive maintenance and deferred maintenance needs.

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Grounds

Success in grounds management depends on well-trained personnel with skills in a variety of areas. Like other maintenance and operations functions, staffing for grounds-related services tends to vary among school districts throughout the state. The most common factors affecting staffing levels for grounds crews at individual schools include the following:

- The school size in acreage
- The number and types of outdoor spaces to be maintained
- The type and extent of natural and hardscape features
- The extent to which grounds crews perform unrelated tasks

As of March 2014, the district Grounds Department was staffed with three groundskeepers; each one is site-based and works as a team with the school's day custodian. The groundskeepers mow lawns, whip weeds, blow leaves, edge, and spray at their respective school sites. They also perform irrigation repairs and perform maintenance on their equipment, including riding lawn mowers. One groundskeeper is used as a substitute bus driver 50% of the time, and another spends 20% of his work time as a substitute custodian, so the district effectively operates with 2.30 FTE groundskeepers.

CASBO does not have a formula for grounds maintenance staffing; however, the Florida Department of Education has performed extensive research in this area and included its findings in a document entitled "Maintenance and Operations Administrative Guidelines for School Districts and Community Colleges." Among other things, the document establishes a formula for the staffing of school district grounds maintenance personnel.

This formula is based on two types of grounds personnel: those who perform general grounds functions such as mowing, gardening, and trimming, and those who care for athletic fields or other specialized open space areas. In many school districts, general grounds functions are performed by school custodians while large open areas and athletic fields are maintained by district grounds crews.

The recommended formula for determining the number of specialized groundskeepers and athletic field groundskeepers is the total acreage of the school facility divided by 40, plus 1 FTE groundskeeper, plus 1 FTE groundskeeper per 500,000 square feet of athletic fields.

FCMAT obtained from the district precise measurements of the amount of grounds allocated to playfields at each school site in square feet. By applying the Florida formula, FCMAT calculates that the district should have at least 4.335 FTEs to be adequately staffed. The calculation is as follows:

Grounds Staffing Formula

District Totals	Divisor	Grounds Staffing - FTE
55 acres	40	1.375
980,100 square feet	500,000	1.960
----	---	1.000
Groundskeepers needed		4.335
District groundskeepers		2.250
Difference		2.00 (rounded down)

FCMAT estimates the total compensation cost to add 2.00 FTE groundskeepers as $99,206. Alternately, the district could add a .50 FTE school bus driver and .25 FTE to an existing custodial position to eliminate the use of split positions and add a 1.335 FTE groundskeeper.

The equipment for each groundskeeper, such as blowers, hedgers, tree trimmers and weed whips, were in good repair. However, two of the district's three large riding mowers are nearing their age expectancy. The district should establish a grounds equipment replacement budget based on the life cycle of grounds equipment, especially large riding mowers. The district should also stagger the purchases of grounds equipment so that it can budget for equipment replacement over several years, and various pieces of grounds equipment do not reach the end of their life cycles at the same time.

During fieldwork, some groundskeepers did not have access to equipment that could increase the efficiency of their operations. In one instance, a groundskeeper had to borrow a pole saw from another school site to prune a tree, and in another, was forced to hand-dig trenches to repair broken irrigation lines, something that commonly occurs at this school site. The district should ensure that groundkeepers have access to the hand tools needed to perform their jobs. The district should also determine whether it would be cost-effective to purchase a small backhoe to dig trenches.

Lastly, each school site receives a purchase order of $100 per month ($300 per month for all three school sites) to purchase sprinkler heads and miscellaneous supplies for repairs. This amount has not been adjusted since 2008 and is inadequate to fund the amount of supplies needed monthly. The district should increase this amount to $500 per month.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Make one of the following changes:
   - Add 2.00 FTEs in grounds.
   - Add a .50 FTE school bus driver, add a .25 FTE to an existing custodial position, eliminate the use of split positions, and add a 1.335 FTE groundskeeper.
2. Establish a grounds equipment replacement budget based on the life cycle of grounds equipment.
3. Stagger the purchases of grounds equipment so that it can budget for equipment replacement over several years, and various pieces of grounds equipment do not reach the end of their life cycles at the same time.
4. Ensure that groundkeepers have access to the hand tools needed to perform their jobs.
5. Determine whether it would be cost-effective to purchase a small backhoe to dig trenches instead of having groundskeepers digging them by hand.
6. Increase the monthly purchase order amount from $300 per month to $500 per month to buy sprinkler heads and miscellaneous supplies.

Custodial (Operations)

The custodial group is overseen by the maintenance, operations and transportation director. The director is responsible for acquiring cleaning products and ensuring safety compliance and training requirements are met. This position also works to promote consistency in general scheduling and priority routines and serves as a resource for special needs including situations requiring extra help, special tools or equipment, or outsourcing.

Because custodians work at different locations, the director cannot always oversee all of them adequately. As a result, the school principals provide most of the supervision and oversight of the custodial staff assigned to their sites. Principals meet frequently with custodians to inform them of priorities, specific needs, and unique requests. However, the director of maintenance, operations and transportation evaluates all custodians.

The district works with Ernest Packaging Solutions as its sole supplier of custodial products, and the business also trains the custodial staff to use its products.

Although the district purchases custodial supplies from a single vendor, the application of custodial products is not uniform across all school sites. The district has begun to standardize the use of some custodial products such as paper towel dispensers and hand soap dispensers, but more can be done to improve the operational efficiency of the custodial function.

The district has no custodial procedures manual and most of the practices adopted by district custodians have been taught by one custodian to another. The district should establish a custodial manual that contains a policy statement, an orientation checklist that includes classroom and restroom cleaning lists, power equipment care procedures, uniforms/appearance regulations, security procedures, a list of approved cleaning products and uses, and emergency contacts.

No formal training program is established for custodial staff. A formal program should include training for new custodians in cleaning to the district's standards as well as annual certification and training in the use of chemicals, back injury prevention, safety, use of fire extinguishers and other relevant topics.

The monthly purchase orders issued to each school site for the purchase of custodial supplies did not appear to be equitable. Pioneer Elementary School receives $830 per month, but Frontier Elementary School and Pioneer Middle School receive $350 per, month, even though the latter school has approximately the same number of students, staff and building square footage as Pioneer Elementary.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Develop and maintain comprehensive custodial procedures manual.
2. Continue to standardize the use of custodial products.
3. Create a formal training program for custodians that includes cleaning standards, annual certifications, use of chemicals, safety and other relevant topics.
4. Reevaluate the dollar amount for monthly purchase orders allocated to each school site for custodial supplies based on equity.

Custodial Scheduling

Schedules ensure that site custodial needs are efficiently met, serve as a guide to new and substitute employees, and help management ensure employees are productive. Schedules should allot sufficient and appropriate time to address essential and priority tasks such as opening and closing procedures. Opening procedures should include unlocking doors and gates, turning off alarms, overall site checking, turning on lights, and any other site-specific setup. Closing procedures should ensure that the site is vacated, nonessential utilities are turned off, and facilities are appropriately secured.

FCMAT reviewed custodial scheduling from all three school sites. These schedules have been developed uniquely for each site, but are consistent in content and structure. They include start and end, lunch and break times, and are specific to within 5- to 10-minute increments in listing the duties to be performed from opening to closing school grounds each day. The schedules list the areas that should be cleaned each day and reference building numbers indicating areas that are cleaned. In all cases, the day custodian is responsible for cleaning a set number of classrooms and auxiliary spaces, and the night custodian is responsible for the classrooms and auxiliary spaces that are not cleaned during the day.

All the schedules reviewed contained common items such as security, safety, and priority/daily cleaning tasks, but were adjusted to each site's specific needs. The sites' opening and closing procedures; number of restrooms, classrooms, etc.; and sites' age, layout, and construction all contributed to differences in site custodial needs and influenced schedules.

Interviews indicated that the maintenance, operations and transportation director oversees the custodial schedules to ensure that they are reasonable and meet facility needs and district priorities. However, each site principal sets the expectations of custodial staff regarding the level of cleaning to be performed at the school site. As a result, the level of cleanliness varies from site to site.

During FCMAT's interviews, most custodians indicated that their schedules included insufficient time to adequately clean their schools. However, most custodians have more duties than those listed in their schedules. For example, they vacuum classrooms and perform low dusting daily, even though their schedules call for them to perform these duties every other day.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Continue to ensure detailed custodial schedules are developed for each site and for each custodial position.
2. Align site and district custodial expectations.
3. Regularly review and update schedules.
4. Develop a master custodial template for use throughout the district to help sites develop, edit, and archive their schedules.

Custodial Staffing

The Custodial Department has a conventional organizational structure, common in districts of similar size throughout the state, in which custodial crews are assigned to individual school sites, but evaluated by the director of maintenance, operations and transportation with input from site principals. For this model to be viable, school site and district administrators must have a clear

understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities and communicate effectively with each other regarding their expectations of custodial staff. These expectations should include the following:

- Ensuring that facilities are safe, clean, orderly, and attractive.
- Creating educational environments that are well maintained, enhance learning, reflect the value of public education, and preserve capital investments.
- Ensuring that general housekeeping and other support functions are performed as needed.
- Fostering a sense of professionalism and pride among the custodial staff.

Determining the number of necessary custodial staff positions is difficult since custodial performance often depends on the caliber of equipment and personnel; however, the industry standard is to staff based on square footage or cleanable area. As custodial responsibilities and the total amount of cleanable space increase or decrease, an appropriate number of positions should be added or reduced. Although the district may ultimately use a single staffing method or combination, the approach selected should include variables that determine the workforce necessary for an expected level of service.

The CASBO staffing formula was developed to calculate the number of custodians required to maintain individual school buildings. This formula allocates an employee-to-hour ratio for custodial tasks. More commonly used in larger school districts, it is probably the most detailed and comprehensive measure used by school district operations administrators. The formula requires an initial estimate of custodial staff requirements based on area in different building categories (e.g., permanent school buildings, portables, lockers/showers, etc.) and the estimated amount of building square footage that a custodian can clean in a one-hour time period. The total hourly requirements are multiplied by eight, reflecting an eight hour work day.

To assess the time needed for a day custodian (who works at a school site while students are present), the analysis should consider the school site's needs and available cleaning time. These standards allot sufficient time to clean all areas at the school site and follow the cleaning standards of the CASBO Custodial Handbook. Assigning the custodial staff to tasks not included in the CASBO formula will result in the postponement or neglect of necessary cleaning.

Based on district information, the district's custodial staffing is 7.1 FTE positions (excluding vacant positions), which is 105% of the CASBO custodial staffing formula. (This formula considers the square footage of sites and the number of students, staff, classrooms, offices and general purpose areas). The CASBO formula for custodial staffing is as follows:

Each of the following numbers is added to obtain the total:

- One custodian for every 13 teachers
- One custodian for every 325 students
- One custodian for every 13 classrooms
- One custodian for every 18,000 square feet of facility
- Plus .0625 FTE for community use
- Plus .30 if the school site has less than 400 students

The results are divided by four to indicate the number of custodians needed to clean a facility.

Although there are no nationwide standards of cleanliness, the United States Department of Education (DOE) has established five levels of cleaning, including how many square feet can reasonably be expected to be completed at each level by a building custodian working an 8-hour shift:

Level 1 cleaning results in a "spotless" and germ-free facility as might normally be found in a hospital or corporate suite. At this level, a custodian with proper supplies and tools can clean approximately 10,000 to 11,000 square feet in eight hours.

Level 2 cleaning is the uppermost standard for most school cleaning and is generally reserved for restrooms, special education areas, kindergarten areas, or food service areas. This service level for classrooms includes vacuuming or mopping floors daily, and sanitizing all surfaces. A custodian can clean approximately 18,000 to 20,000 square feet in an eight-hour shift at this level.

Level 3 cleaning is the norm for most school facilities. It is acceptable to most interested parties and does not pose any health issues. Classrooms are cleaned daily, which includes dumping trash and cleaning common area surfaces such as sinks and door handles. Carpets are vacuumed and surfaces used by students are sanitized every other day. A custodian can clean approximately 28,000 to 31,000 square feet in eight hours at this level.

Level 4 cleaning is not normally acceptable in a school environment. Classrooms would be cleaned every other day, carpets would be vacuumed every third day, and dusting would occur once a month. A custodian can clean 45,000 to 50,000 square feet in eight hours at this level.

Level 5 cleaning can very rapidly lead to an unhealthy situation. Trash cans might be emptied and carpets vacuumed only weekly. One custodian can clean 85,000 to 90,000 square feet in eight hours at this level.

The figures above are estimates. The actual number of square feet per shift that can be cleaned by a custodian will also depend on variables such as the type of facilities, flooring, wall covers, number of windows, restroom layouts, gym and athletic facilities, and offices. The district should develop and formally adopt cleaning standards and expectations for custodial work. The standards should include daily, weekly and monthly duties and should be developed with the participation of executive management and be approved by the school board.

The district has a total staffing of 7.1 FTE positions, and CASBO ratios indicated it needs 6.73 FTEs; therefore, the district is marginally overstaffed by .362 FTEs. The CASBO standard assumes a level 3 cleaning. Despite the district's custodial schedules, which indicate that frequency of cleaning should be at level 3, most schools are cleaned at a frequency of level 2, with floors vacuumed and classroom trash dumped every day.

Using the CASBO ratio analysis and considering a cleaning level of 3 using Department of Education standards, FCMAT concludes that the district has sufficient custodial staffing at its school sites. However, most of the district's custodians perform services at level 2, which is in excess of district expectations.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Establish districtwide standards and expectations for custodial functions considering available funding and the desired level of cleaning.
2. Continue to staff the Custodial Department to meet level 3 cleaning expectations.
3. Routinely reevaluate the standards and expectations, and staff accordingly.

Facilities Planning

Like many school districts in the Central Valley during the late 1990s and early 2000s, Pioneer Union Elementary experienced a period of rapid growth in student enrollment. As a result, Pioneer Middle School was constructed in 2002, and Frontier Elementary School and the district office were constructed in 2008. During the economic downturn of 2008 through 2013, new residential development was halted and the district's student enrollment began to decline and flatten.

Because of anticipated residential development, the district's student enrollment is expected to increase in the near future.

The district lacks a facilities master plan. It should develop a plan that uses conservative assumptions about funding and growth, and identifies funding mechanisms to meet the need for new school facilities. The new plan should consider the continued volatility of the housing market using a low and high range of projected development. It should recalculate the classroom loading standards considering the changes in the state's class-size reduction program as well as bargaining unit agreements, and the student generation factor for current and new estimated future developments. The plan's assumptions should also discuss the status and likelihood of future state facilities funding given the governor's negative outlook on the future of the state funding program.

A facilities master plan should also incorporate discussions of more recent issues such as any new facility needs based on Common Core curriculum programming, new energy conservation and efficiency goals, and technology needs. A more detailed review and analysis of the modernization needs of existing facilities, including the required upgrades for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), should also be incorporated.

The plan should project facilities needs using updated residential development plans from the city, new student generation factors, new board and community priorities, and educational programming. This should be accomplished through a new process that involves a committee of stake holders and the community and that prioritizes recommendations for facilities goals, needs and future projects and submits them to the governing board.

It is important that the basic infrastructure of existing facilities be brought up to equitable standards for 21st century schools. Any modernization projects should include a scope of work that at a minimum consists of the requirements of the Division of the State Architect (DSA), including fire/life safety, seismic safety, and accessibility.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Initiate a new long-range facilities master plan process, including a committee of those affected and community input.
2. Quantify the costs of the needs identified in the facilities master plan.
3. Develop a long-term funding strategy for the needs included in the plan.
4. Regularly update the plan based on projected enrollment and educational programming.

Transportation

School Transportation Finance

School transportation is one of the most inequitably funded programs in California's education budget. Before 1978, school districts reported their operational costs and were fully reimbursed in the subsequent year. However, after Proposition 13, the state gradually reduced the percentage of reimbursement. In the 1982-83 school year, the funding was capped at 80% of the approved costs for each district that provided school transportation at that time, and has only occasionally received a cost of living adjustment (COLA).

In 1999, the district converted to an all-charter district and elected to have its transportation apportionment rolled into the charter categorical block grant. The district's entitlement at that time was approximately $142,736. Beginning with the 2009-10 fiscal year, the state reduced all categorical apportionments by approximately 20%. With the onset of the local control funding formula (LCFF) in 2013-14, this has been rolled into the base grant funding and is no longer separately identified for the district. While other state school districts' transportation programs still receive a separate, identifiable, restricted apportionment that is not expected to receive a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) in the future, Pioneer Union's funding will include a COLA as it is part of its base grant.

TRAN Data

	2011-12	2012-13
# Buses	5	5
#Students	534	630
# Miles	50,939	51,291
Approved Cost	$253,197.00	$250,131.00
Cost/Mile	$4.97	$4.87
Cost/Student	$474.15	$397.03

Although the district does not receive specific transportation revenue, it submits transportation data to the California Department of Education (CDE), and a summary of this information is shown in the table above. Because transportation revenue was included in the district's former categorical block grant, the specific amount of this revenue is unknown. However, the amount would likely have been approximately $132,913 in the 2012-13 fiscal year, sufficient to pay for approximately 53% of the district's approved transportation costs as reported for 2012-13. In fiscal year 2006-07, the district received a separate transportation apportionment of $132,913 from an approved entitlement of $142,376. In subsequent years, the district's transportation apportionment was rolled into the chart block grant entitlement. Had the district chosen to receive its transportation apportionment outside the chart block grant entitlement, it would have been reduced by 20%. Statewide, school transportation funding only covers approximately 35% of approved transportation costs; therefore, Pioneer Union's estimated transportation revenue covers more than the average state school district's transportation costs.

The district does not charge fees for school transportation. School districts have been legally allowed to charge fees for this purpose since a 1992 California Supreme Court decision. Fees cannot be charged for special education students or "indigent students," and most districts utilize the criteria for free or reduced price lunches to determine students who are indigent. However, many Central Valley districts do not charge a fee because their percentage of students who qualify

for free or reduced price lunches is high. FCMAT has found that school districts with more than 40% indigent students do not typically charge fees for pupil transportation because the added funding would barely cover their cost of administering the program. Pioneer Union has a free or reduced price lunch count of approximately 34% of its enrollment.

The above data shows that the district's transportation service is relatively efficient, indicating full buses and a comparatively low cost per mile and per student compared to other districts that FCMAT has studied.

Fuel cost is distributed to each department user. All parts and tires appear to be charged to the appropriate department.

The area has two school transportation cooperative entities, one in Lemoore and the other in Caruthers. The district had explored the possibility of having transportation provided cooperatively by either of these organizations. While this may have resulted in minimal savings, the district decided not to outsource to avoid displacing employees and maintain the high level of service the community expects provided by drivers who know the students. For these reasons and because of the relatively low program cost, it is logical for the district to continue to provide transportation. Further, Education Code Section 45103.1 would make it difficult for any school district to contract for its transportation work.

District employees do not qualify for health and welfare benefits until they achieve seven hours of contract time per day. This condition further minimizes the cost of the Transportation Department.

Maintenance staff indicated that generating a new purchase order often takes as much as two weeks. Some critical, expensive purchases or repairs that are not covered by an open purchase order might be delayed because of this practice. However, the department has been able to function in spite of this obstacle by purchasing the equipment or service and instructing the vendor to future date the invoice.

Staffing

The transportation department is staffed as follows:

- 1.0 FTE MOT director
- 0.625 FTE MOT secretary II (11 months)
- 4-0.5 FTE bus drivers (10 months)
- 1-0.531 FTE bus driver (10 months)

Assisting with transportation duties is one lead maintenance II position that is a substitute school bus driver and also performs bus inspections and light vehicle maintenance. A maintenance I position also performs the latter two duties.

A Grounds Maintenance II position is assigned as a driver to an afternoon shuttle bus run (known as the latchkey program route) and is also a substitute bus driver. The MOT director also serves as a substitute bus driver.

Several job descriptions include transportation responsibilities as follows:

- MOT director
- MOT secretary II

- Bus driver/clerk & utility worker (not filled) - Previously utilized by the district and paid at the bus driver rate
- Bus driver/transportation clerk (not filled) - Previously utilized by the district and paid at the bus driver rate
- Bus Driver I
- Custodian/bus driver (not filled) – This position would be paid at the bus driver rate
- Transportation coordinator/bus trainer (not filled)
- Grounds maintenance II - Paid at the bus driver rate, and bus driving duties are specifically included in the job description
- Lead maintenance II - Paid at a higher rate than bus driver and includes bus maintenance and bus driving in the job description
- Maintenance II (not filled) - Includes bus maintenance and bus driving in the job description
- Maintenance I – The job description does not include bus maintenance or bus driving, but the incumbent performs bus maintenance

Transportation requires a certified school bus driver on every route or scheduled trip every day. Maintaining classifications with split duties reduces productivity in the Grounds and Maintenance Department to satisfy the need for bus drivers. In addition, those classifications are paid at a higher rate for all duties instead of only for bus driving.

It would be functionally more efficient to recruit and train other part-time workers to become substitute bus drivers. Food service workers, classroom and campus aides who work in the middle of the day may be ideal substitute bus drivers who could work in the morning and late afternoon taking students to and from school. They should also be paid at the appropriate rate for the duties of each separate classification.

The MOT secretary II works only five hours per day, 11 months per year. The position should be full-time and year-round to provide adequate clerical support to the director of maintenance, operations and transportation in the areas of maintenance, operations, grounds and transportation. FCMAT estimates the total compensation cost for this increase is $16,785.

Because the district has no dedicated vehicle mechanic position, duties related to maintaining vehicles and grounds equipment are distributed to a variety of individuals and entities.

The lead maintenance II and maintenance I positions perform some bus and vehicle maintenance. Grounds maintenance positions maintain mowers and hand-held equipment such as string trimmers and edgers. Some bus maintenance is contracted to a mobile mechanic, and tire work is contracted to a local tire shop. Major maintenance or warranty work on vehicles is sent to dealers or truck shops.

In addition to nine buses, the district operates 16 other wheeled vehicles (cars, trucks, vans, golf carts, utility vehicles), four trailers and 18 mowers, trimmers and other motorized equipment. Building and grounds maintenance productivity is lost when the above individuals are maintaining equipment or driving buses. Both maintenance positions spend approximately 20% of every day on bus and vehicle maintenance, and none are professional, skilled mechanics. A review of the district nonbus equipment maintenance records indicates that there is no scheduled preventive maintenance program for vehicles and equipment, potentially reducing the useful

life and increasing costs when preventable failures occur. As of March 13, 2014, the district had spent approximately $19,000 on outside repairs for buses only for the 2013-14 fiscal year and another $5,000 for other MOT vehicles. Considering the number of vehicle maintenance tasks performed by employees who are not mechanics, the district has enough work to hire and retain a full-time mechanic for all of the district's vehicles. The approximate cost of this position would depend on the appropriate salary level of mechanics in the local area. The district should research the appropriate salary level for a bus and equipment mechanic. Other local school districts could provide sample job descriptions and salary schedules. The Visalia Unified School District lists two mechanic positions, with step I for a Mechanic II at $16.39 per hour, and Step I for a Mechanic III at $18.11. The district pays $75 per hour for the mobile mechanic to work on buses.

Another section of this report discusses the importance of retaining a state-certified school bus driver instructor. An operation of the district's size should have a lead driver who is also an instructor, driving a regular bus route and helping to direct the drivers' work to relieve some of the MOT director's duties. A small amount of extra time would be necessary for the lead duties, perhaps as little as an hour a day. Driver training would occur as needed and not as part of a contractual obligation. The district should research similar positions and salary levels in the district, but lead positions are typically paid at a percentage over the bus driver position. The MOT director receives sick calls from drivers, makes decisions about field trip assignments, and deals with daily scheduling issues.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider eliminating unused job descriptions.
2. Re-evaluate split duties within a single job description.
3. Increase the MOT secretary II position to full time and year-round, employ a full-time mechanic, and create a lead bus driver position that includes bus driver training as a qualification.
4. Recruit and train substitute bus drivers from other district part-time classifications such as a food-service worker, classroom aide or campus aide.
5. Develop a preventative maintenance program for vehicles and equipment.

Bus Routing/Field Trips

Regular education home-to-school transportation is not mandated in California, but provided at the will of the district, with service levels articulated in board policy or administrative regulation. Administrative Regulation 3540 stipulates eligibility for transportation as follows:

> Students who reside beyond the minimum transportation distances listed below shall be eligible for transportation service to the school of their attendance area:
> Grades K-5: One (1) mile
>
> Grades 6-8: Two (2) miles
>
> Distances are measured as radii from the portion of the school grounds nearest the residence. Students living west of the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe railroad tracks will receive bus service.

Exceptions:

Exceptions may be made due to safety issues as room is available on the buses and costs are considered. Eligible student riders shall not be impacted as a result of an exception. Notification of approval or denial of an exception shall be done in writing and mailed to the requesting party. Exceptions may also be revoked with a timely notification of two weeks should space no longer be available or the student's behavior is not acceptable.

Appeals may be brought to the transportation supervisor and will be checked by the Superintendent and the California Highway Patrol school bus safety officer.

The Superintendent or designee may authorize transportation within the walking distance when safety problems or hazards exist.

Students who attend a school outside their attendance area may be eligible for transportation services only when the district has to displace the student from their home school of attendance and the student is qualified for bussing.

Bus routes have been substantially the same for many years. Over the years, the district has provided service for locations that are closer than the policy-stated limits based on safety conditions and the administration's request, and no one has reported buses being overloaded because of these exceptions. There is no indication that bus routes could be consolidated or reduced if these exceptions were eliminated.

In developing bus routes, the Transportation Department has worked closely with the city of Hanford, which takes a step beyond most cities. It evaluates and publishes safe walking paths to and from schools for areas that are not served by bus routes and the routes students take to established bus stops. Utilizing that published data, the city applies for and completes "Safe Routes to School" projects to enhance safety on those routes. That federal program provides funding to local public works departments for sidewalks, crosswalks, and signs to enhance student safety.

The district has five bus routes that operate morning and afternoon. One short afternoon route transports the latchkey program students from one campus to another. Most routes are efficient because they are designed to perform two or more runs (a route is composed of several runs), picking up and dropping off students in the morning and afternoon. The five morning bus routes for example, are scheduled to transport 711 students on buses with a capacity of approximately 420. Students are required to register for bus service, and staff estimated that approximately 75-80% of registered riders are on the bus routes on most days.

Pioneer Union owns Bus Boss, routing software that is powerful and capable of developing bus routes. However, the district has established routes and uses the program to enhance its local route knowledge, integrating student names at each stop and generating professional route sheets. The program could also be used to evaluate different bell time options to enhance efficiency.

Some opportunities exist to enhance bus-route efficiency. Several years ago, employee supervision of the school sites began at 7:30 a.m., but that time was changed to 7:45 a.m. Bus routes could be more efficient if the earlier time was reinstated. Efficiency could also be increased by shifting bell times at one or more schools by as little as one half hour. The district should discuss this possibility with the Transportation Department to determine if this is desirable and achievable. Increasing enough efficiency to consolidate one route with the others would save the district approximately $40,000 per year in salary and operating costs. Maintaining five routes, but minimally reducing time or miles would not yield significant savings.

The collective bargaining agreement has no specific work rules on transportation. The district also has no department handbook or other written document that includes these rules. Some articulated practices have evolved over time such as rotationally assigning field trips; however, they do not appear to increase operational costs. The district has the flexibility to schedule certain drivers for field trips to maximize use and possibly reduce overtime. Drivers sometimes drive a regular route, wash buses, and work a field trip on the same day, potentially incurring overtime. Management should direct drivers to wash buses on days that are less busy to avoid overtime charges. Although drivers are responsible for washing their own buses, some do not, and other drivers sometimes perform this task. Management should control those assignments so bus washing is distributed on days without field trips to minimize overtime. To March 13, 2014 the total amount of overtime pay for 2013-14 was $775.82, and extra time pay was $3,974.43. Neither of these is excessive, and are most likely related to field trip costs.

Four drivers work four hours per day, and one works 4.25 hours per day. Actual route times, including bus pretrip inspection, cleaning/paperwork time, and bus fueling are included in this time. In some cases, driver contract times exceed the actual route time; however, school districts typically contract with drivers for a minimum of four hours per day. Finding someone to work fewer hours would be difficult since the work is performed on a split shift and for only 10 months per year.

The district provides a few field trips to district schools, and for the 2012-13 school year these totaled 103. Trips are requested by the school site, approved by the principal and superintendent, and scheduled for service. The department can provide only a small number of trips per year, and these totaled approximately nine in 2012-13 school year. For the remaining trips, the school books a charter bus. The department has a short list of approved charter companies and inspects the charter bus and driver certification to ensure they conform to law. California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 546 requires all charter buses and drivers used for schools to be "School Pupil Activity Bus" (SPAB) certified. The department should book the charter buses to protect the district's exposure in this area.

Bus Boss has a field trip booking component that the district does not use. The software enables users to store information on field trips, including driver assignment history, any driver refusal of trips, and miles travelled, which can be used for invoicing. The department completes all these tasks manually. The district should explore maximizing the use of this software.

The district annually establishes the rate that schools are charged for field trips. The rate is the articulated cost per mile as established on the TRAN report. For this year, the district is using the most recent cost of $4.87 per mile. The district should consider establishing a rate that more closely approximates the cost to operate a bus and use a driver. The TRAN rate per mile is a fully loaded cost that includes all aspects of the operation. The variable cost of operating a bus (the cost of fuel and wear and tear related to the trip) for a field trip would not include all the fixed costs of the operation. Using the TRAN cost per mile could undercharge on a trip of few miles and many hours and overcharge on those of many miles but few hours, increasing the possibility that some costs will not be recovered, particularly when a driver works overtime on a field trip.

One example of a rate that more accurately reflects the cost of the trip comes from the Visalia Unified School District. It charges $2.15 per mile and $28.50 per hour for up to three hours with additional hours charged at $42.75 per hour.

Staff occasionally uses one district vehicle to drive small groups of students on field trips. CVC 545 covers school buses used for transporting students to and from school and school activities

with some exceptions. One allows a school to use a vehicle that is designed for and carries no more than nine passengers and the driver. Drivers should be included in the DMV's pull-notice program that immediately notifies the district of any negative driver record activity. These drivers should also receive rudimentary training to familiarize themselves with the vehicle and understand the principles of defensive driving. The district should also consider that any staff member who drives students in a vehicle that is designed for and carries no more than nine passengers and the driver would submit to the same drug and alcohol testing as a school bus driver. The vehicle used to transport students should be maintained as rigorously as a school bus. The school or the program is not charged when that vehicle is driven by an employee other than a bus driver; however, a mileage rate should be developed to recoup the cost of fuel and maintenance.

The department does not have a dedicated dispatcher position. Instead, school secretaries and the MOT director monitor the two-way radio. The secretaries also handle student-related questions, and the director deals with operational issues or breakdowns, with drivers often solving their problems among themselves. This communication arrangement is typical of a small transportation department and appears to work well.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider increasing supervision time at schools or separating bell times to improve bus route efficiency and reduce transportation costs.
2. Develop a department handbook that includes rules and procedures.
3. Establish a field trip rate that more closely aligns with the actual cost of providing the service.
4. Utilize the transportation software program for field trip bookings.
5. Ensure that the Transportation Department books all charter buses.
6. Require staff members who drive students in district vehicles to be included in the district's DMV pull notice program and receive training in defensive driving. Consider enrolling them in a drug and alcohol testing program.
7. Maintain any district vehicle that transports students using the same standard as a school bus. Develop a mileage charge for programs that utilize this vehicle.
8. Schedule buses to be washed on days that are less affected to avoid overtime charges.

Vehicle Maintenance/Fleet/Facility

The state requires every school bus in California to be annually inspected by the California Highway Patrol's Motor Carrier Inspection Division. In addition, the carrier (in this case, the school district) submits to an inspection of various records. This annual inspection is documented on the "Safety Compliance Report/Terminal Record Update," otherwise known as the "terminal grade". As a part of this inspection, the CHP inspects a sample of buses, the preventive maintenance program, maintenance records, driver time-keeping records and compliance with

the federal drug and alcohol testing program for commercial drivers. The district has consistently received CHP's highest grade of "satisfactory." However, a review of the September 6, 2012 and September 19, 2013 inspection reports found that the 2012 document issues a stern warning concerning the required systematic school bus maintenance. Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations, Section 1232 (13CCR1232) requires school buses to be inspected every 45 days or 3,000 miles, whichever comes first. The CHP found that several of the district's buses exceeded these intervals. District staff indicated they were unaware of this warning despite their signature on the form. However, these violations were not mentioned in the 2013 inspection, indicating that the CHP did not observe these issues again. Overall, a satisfactory rating indicates a safe program and compliance with these specific laws and regulations.

Because district buses only travel low mileages, they generally do not exceed 3,000 miles before the 45-day interval. The lead maintenance II and maintenance I technicians perform these inspections and work to schedule them monthly. A random audit of vehicle maintenance records indicates that inspections are conducted approximately every 30 days, which is in excess of what is necessary. This costs the district staff time. Instead of performing a maximum of eight inspections a year, the district performs as many as 12 inspections, each taking approximately two hours and requiring both individuals work together. For a fleet of nine buses, this exceeds the need by as much as 72 additional labor hours per year. The district should more accurately log mileage and schedule inspections closer to their mandatory due dates.

The district owns some tools and equipment for performing vehicle maintenance. The air compressor is old and not appropriately sized for this work. The maintenance workers perform the inspection using creepers to go under the bus, not an optimal way to detect problems and mechanical issues. Wheel lifts are relatively inexpensive and portable and allow mechanics to lift the bus for maintenance and inspection. The district should consider purchasing a set these lifts.

The department utilizes a form for the 45-day inspections. If a driver detects a defect or problem during the daily pretrip inspection, a notation is made on the form, which is delivered to the maintenance workers. Any repairs are included on that document. If an outside service is utilized, that repair is noted on that organization's invoice. The district does not use a work order form to log labor hours, parts or fluids, and therefore there is no way to track repair costs for any vehicle. It should develop a standard work order form and log cost history data.

Maintenance workers order parts, and those for grounds vehicles are ordered by any of the grounds maintenance workers. They generally drive to the parts stores for parts, using productive time. The garage's shelves and boxes for some of the parts stored there are covered in dust and appear not to have been handled in years. Some parts are from vehicles that the district surplussed years ago.

Fuel is stored in two aboveground, approved tanks next to the MOT facility, one holding 500 gallons of gasoline and the other the same amount of diesel fuel. The maintenance workers monitor the fuel level and reorder when necessary. The district receives the federal and state excise tax exemption as appropriate. When a district vehicle requires fuel, the operator goes to the shop, takes the key from the clipboard kept there, unlocks the fuel pump, and begins fueling. The operator logs the beginning and ending meter reading and the quantity of fuel along with the odometer reading and vehicle number. A shutoff switch inside the shop is turned off at night and on weekends. During fieldwork, the shop sometimes remained open and unstaffed, potentially allowing theft of fuel or any equipment maintained there. However, no fuel has been reported stolen over the years.

The MOT shop has four bays. MOT offices were constructed in half of one bay, and the other three are used for bus and equipment maintenance. Buses park in the bays at night, and the shop is used to store parts, some tires, fluids and tools. Nothing else in the MOT shop indicates that it is anything other than a transportation shop. There is no wood shop or metal shop area, nor is there storage for materials or equipment. Each school has cargo containers that store mowers and grounds equipment. The remaining six buses park outside in an area that is not secured by perimeter fencing; however, the vehicle doors are locked.

Pioneer Union has no approved sump system for washing or steam-cleaning buses. Although the district indicated that it does not steam clean buses, these vehicles are often washed at the transportation facility. The county would typically grant a permit for the runoff as industrial waste. The district should research the appropriate requirements for legal operation. In addition, industrial facilities in California must comply with the State Water Resources Board's requirement for a storm water pollution prevention plan to ensure that contaminated water from industrial parking areas does not flow into storm drains and local water ways. District staff indicated they are not aware of such a requirement. The district should research the appropriate requirements for permitting and testing storm water and industrial waste.

The district's fleet of school buses is relatively new, with an average age of 14 years; a 1986 and a 1989 vehicle are the oldest in the fleet. These buses qualify for bus replacement grants with the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District, and the district recently submitted applications to this program. Over the years, the district has benefitted from bus replacement grants such as these. These are the last two buses that would qualify for grants under the current program rules.

Older diesel buses also are required to comply with the California Air Resources Board's truck and bus rules for diesel particulate emissions, requiring them to be retrofitted with a diesel particulate filter. The district has not made efforts to comply with these rules and hopes to replace the two oldest buses in the near future.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Schedule 45-day bus inspections closer to the 45-day interval date.
2. Utilize a formal work order to document labor hours, parts and fluids to create histories as well as charge work to the appropriate departments.
3. Establish reasonable controls for parts ordering and inventory. Return unused parts for credit.
4. Close and secure the MOT facility when no one is there.
5. Secure buses with perimeter fencing.
6. Research and implement best practices for industrial waste water and storm water runoff.
7. Consider purchasing wheel lifts and replacing the air compressor.
8. Retrofit older diesel buses with diesel particulate filters to comply with the California Air Resources Board truck and bus rules for diesel particulate emissions.

Driver Training and Safety

School bus driver training and certification requirements are the most stringent of any commercial driver in California. Education Code Sections 40080-40089 specify the requirements for the training of school bus drivers, bus driver instructors and certification and delegated behind the wheel instructors. Bus drivers must receive a minimum of 20 hours of classroom training and 20 hours of behind-the-wheel training in all units of the classroom and behind the wheel training manuals developed by the California Department of Education. They are also required to complete a minimum of 10 hours of training annually. Documentation of driver training is very specific, and a random audit of the district's training records indicated that the training is mostly up to date. At least one driver had not signed the training card at the end of the training period as required.

The district does not have a bus driver instructor and therefore utilizes the services of one from the Hanford Union High School District. All the training occurs in the classroom and is attended by drivers on a schedule provided by the instructor. Behind-the-wheel training is never offered. The MOT director has been unable to ride along with drivers to provide a functional evaluation of their safety and skills. Drivers may go to other school districts to receive training. However, they are not paid for their in-service training, nor does the district pay any fees to the instructor. The Hanford Union High School District will soon implement a fee for this service.

Driver training is the most important part of a school transportation operation. Because it is extremely rare to place an advertisement in the local newspaper and hire a certified driver; it is important to be able to train new drivers. Training a new driver can take three months or more. Because the district has no bus driver instructor on staff, the drivers do not receive the training and information that someone with this amount of training could provide to enhance their safety. Certifying a bus driver instructor after a critical driver deficiency is too late. The district should consider initiating a process to certify a bus driver instructor. The California Department of Education offers a 3-week residential course to train instructors approximately three times a year in Sacramento. The necessary preparation for that class is significant and often takes many months to complete.

Education Code Section 39831.3 requires each school district to adopt a transportation safety plan that is housed at each school and available for inspection by any officer of the California Highway Patrol. The district complies with this requirement.

Education Code Section 39831.5 requires annual school bus safety instruction and evacuation drills that are documented. The district complies with this requirement.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Consider selecting an individual to become a school bus driver instructor.

Appendix

A. Study Agreement

FCMAT
FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM
CSIS California School Information Services

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM
STUDY AGREEMENT
December 16, 2013

The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the team, and the Pioneer Union Elementary 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 assign professionals to study specific aspects of the district's 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 Assembly Bill 1200, 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 also 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. Conduct an organizational, staffing and efficiency review of the district's facilities, maintenance, grounds, transportation and custodial operations.

    a. Review job descriptions for all department positions; evaluate capacity, scheduling, efficiency and functions; and make recommendations for staffing and operational improvements. All recommendations will include estimated savings or costs for any proposed position reductions or additions. Interview district and site employees regarding the level of service the department provides.

b. Evaluate the operational work flow of each function for the facilities, maintenance, grounds, transportation and custodial operations and make recommendations for improved efficiency and standard industry practices. This component will include the following:

i. Evaluate the district's comprehensive maintenance and deferred maintenance plans to support and provide preventive maintenance for all facilities, grounds, and major systems (HVAC, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, and structural).

ii. Review the district's maintenance work order system for repairs of facilities and equipment to ensure that all maintenance and repairs are completed in a timely fashion, and that work order status reports are provided regularly.

iii. Review the district's long-range facilities plan, and make recommendations for staffing, if any.

iv. Evaluate the grounds and custodial service plans for each site to ensure that the tasks and expectations for custodial and grounds employees are clearly outlined and indicate a detailed daily and periodic schedule for cleaning and simple repairs of the facilities. This will include the evaluation of the summer and non-school-day programs for specialized cleaning and repairs.

v. Review the transportation department to include :
- Routing, including the option of combining bus routes
- Walking distances
- Bell times
- Staffing
- Field trip (scheduling & charges)
- Analyze the fiscal impact of provisions contained in the current bargaining contracts

- Vehicle maintenance practices, procedures and cost, parts/fuel purchases
- Vehicle replacement schedule

B. Services and Products to be Provided

1. Orientation Meeting - The team will conduct an orientation session at the district to brief district management and supervisory personnel on the team's procedures and 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.
   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.
3. Exit Letter – Approximately 10 days after the exit meeting, the team will issue an exit letter briefly summarizing significant findings and recommendations to date and memorializing the topics discussed in the exit meeting.
4. Draft Reports - Electronic copies of a preliminary draft report will be delivered to the district's administration for review and comment.
5. Final Report - Electronic copies of the final report will be delivered to the district's administration and to the county superintendent following completion of the review. Printed copies are available from FCMAT upon request.
6. Follow-Up Support – If requested, FCMAT will return to the district at no cost six months after completion of the study to assess the district's progress in implementing the recommendations included in the report. Progress in implementing 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, CICA, Deputy Executive Officer, Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office. The study team may also include:

A. Eric D. Smith	FCMAT Fiscal Intervention Specialist, Project Lead
B. To be determined	FCMAT Consultant

Other equally qualified staff or consultants will be substituted in the event one of the above 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 as follows:

A. $500 per day for each staff member while on site, conducting fieldwork at other locations, preparing and presenting reports, or participating in meetings. The cost of independent FCMAT consultants will be billed at their actual daily rate.

B. All out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, meals and lodging.

C. 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 the district's acceptance of the final report.

Based on the elements noted in section 2 A, the total estimated cost of the study will be $12,500.

D. Any change to the scope will affect the estimate of total cost.

Payments for FCMAT's 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 during on-site reviews.

B. The district will provide the following if requested:

1. A map of the local area.
2. Existing policies, regulations and prior reports that address the study scope.
3. Current or proposed organizational charts.
4. Current and two prior years' audit reports.
5. Any documents requested on a supplemental list. Documents requested on the supplemental list should be provided to FCMAT only in electronic format; if only hard copies are available, they should be scanned by the district and sent to FCMAT in electronic format.
6. Documents should be provided in advance of field work; any delay in the receipt of the requested documents may affect the start date of the project. Upon approval of the signed study agreement, access will be provided to FCMAT's online SharePoint document repository, where the district will upload all requested documents.

C. The district's administration will review a preliminary draft copy of the report resulting from 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 different phases of the study:

Orientation:	December/January
Staff Interviews:	to be determined
Exit Meeting:	to be determined
Preliminary Report Submitted:	to be determined
Final Report Submitted:	to be determined
Board Presentation:	to be determined, if requested
Follow-Up Support:	if requested

7. CONTACT PERSON

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Paul van Loon, Superintendent — Date
Pioneer Union Elementary School District

Anthony L. Bridges, CFE, CICA — December 16, 2013
Deputy Executive Officer
Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team