

Initial Response to the Operational Audit



David G. Title, Superintendent of Schools
March 8, 2011

The Operational Audit of the Fairfield Public Schools contains 24 commendations and 74 recommendations and was released to the public on December 14, 2010. Some recommendations have dollar savings (or costs) attached; others have no financial impact but are recommendations on how to improve operations in the school district. For the purposes of this response I am limiting my comments primarily to those recommendations with a dollar impact. We will scrutinize all recommendations in due time but the public interest, at this point, appears to be in the recommendations that suggest savings to the school district.

At her public presentation, Tatia Prieto, lead author of the study, indicated that school districts study these recommendations and implement them over a period of several years. In some cases, there are recommendations for major changes in the organization and operation of our instructional program; these recommendations cannot be thoroughly analyzed in just a few months. Other recommendations can be implemented immediately.

For each item with a cost attached, I have attempted to ascertain whether or not that cost is completely accurate. As the Audit team had a limited amount of time to determine actual costs, we are providing a more accurate figure. In some cases, where the Audit team recommended savings, there may be, in fact, substantially less in savings than the Audit team suggests – or, in some cases, no savings at all.

One item missing from any savings is the impact of unemployment compensation on the town budget. In some cases, dramatic reductions in existing personnel are recommended. It is a virtual certainty that, were we to implement these recommendations in the short term (not through natural attrition), staff members would be laid off and entitled to unemployment compensation. Unemployment compensation is not a line item in the Board of Education budget and would be carried in the Town of Fairfield budget. The estimated costs of unemployment compensation (currently 99 weeks) need to be subtracted from the savings in this study to ascertain the true net savings to the Town.

Some recommendations that save money may have a significant and detrimental impact on our instructional program. Others may have a modest impact. In this response I try to give a sense of the impact on our services to students and families if these recommendations were to be followed. In some cases, a full study or program review needs to be conducted to ascertain whether or not the recommendation should be implemented and on what time line.

The first two chapters of the Audit give background information on the Audit methodology and an overview of the district. In general, the Audit team used two metrics for determining whether or not to recommend a change in practice. The first was a set of “peer districts” that the Audit team believed was similar in size and scope to Fairfield. The second was a standard from a credible professional organization for a particular service (where such a standard exists). In addition, the Audit team presented its interpretation of educational research on a particular issue or practices from districts around the country.

Commendations and recommendations begin with Chapter 3. For each chapter, I list the finding, the specific recommendation, the page number in the Audit Report and the savings (or cost) the Audit proposed. Where we calculate a different figure for savings, it appears as “FPS Savings” on the next line.

Chapter 3: Organization and Management

Finding 3-2

Recommendation – Adopt a new central office organizational structure (Page 3-7)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$399,738

This recommendation is to add 2.55 central office administrators to the school district. Prismatic also introduced a new organizational structure for the central office if these positions were added. While this recommendation points out a number of areas where additional leadership is needed, in this fiscal climate it is not feasible to implement this recommendation in full. Rather, I have proposed to restore the Deputy Superintendent’s position to full-time status (an increase of .55 FTE) in an effort to address the areas of concern noted in the Audit. The new organizational structure in the Audit cannot be implemented as it assumes a 2.55 FTE increase.

Finding 3-9

Recommendation – Improve the organizational structure for curricular leadership (Page 3-19)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$155,730

The Audit recommends adding a Curriculum Leader for Social Studies. The current Curriculum Leader serving that department doubles as the Curriculum Leader for Technology as well as Library-Media. The Audit Team believed that the district needs to separate those two positions and increase the Curriculum Leaders by 1.0 FTE. While I recognize the need, in this fiscal climate, I am not recommending this increase in 2011-2012.

Finding 3-11

Recommendation – Improve district allocation of resource positions to elementary schools (Page 3-23)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$47,968

The Audit recommends eliminating the Instructional Improvement Teachers in each elementary school and increasing the Math Resource Teachers from .4 FTE to 1.0 FTE at each school. Prior to the Audit, we had begun a review of the equity and efficiency of our elementary staffing model. The first phase of our new plan is included in the 2011-2012 budget. The role of the Instructional Improvement Teachers was not well-understood by the Audit Team; they play a key role in providing services to students. A re-write of the Instructional Improvement Teacher’s job description to ensure consistency is underway.

Finding 3-12

Recommendation – Improve paraprofessional deployment (Page 3-24)

Audit Savings: \$551,040

FPS Savings: \$551,040 for reduction of 16 paraprofessionals

FPS Additional Costs: \$544,000 for addition of 8.0 certified staff as outlined in the recommendation

FPS Net Savings: \$7,040

Prismatic's recommendation is to improve paraprofessional deployment by eliminating 16.0 paraprofessionals while increasing certified supports and teacher leader/liaisons at each building. No costs were listed for these additional positions.

The Prismatic Operational Audit suggests that the paraprofessional staff growth over the past 5 years is not commensurate with overall enrollment growth. During this same time period the nation and the district were experiencing a significant increase in the number of students being identified with Autism. In order to respond to this growth, the district increased its capacity to educate the students most severely impacted by autism by developing the Student Support Centers (ECC, Jennings, Dwight and Osborn Hill). Therefore, the growth of paraprofessional staff is BOTH the result of the growth in overall student enrollment AND the development and growth of our Student Support Centers (SSC) that allow students severely impacted by Autism to attend district schools and not require outplacements.

We began that program in the 2005-2006 school year and have realized both improved instruction and financial savings. In fact, the Prismatic Audit commends the district for this on page 3-54. While the paraprofessional staffing for the SSC is a richer model overall, the capacity to serve this population in district is value added to Fairfield and many of our peer districts rely more heavily on out-of-district, private placements to serve their needs at a higher overall cost. Below please find a growth analysis of special education paraprofessionals with the SSC separated. This is a better representation of the overall growth in this area. Additionally, Prismatic attributes a savings for each student in the SSC (who would otherwise be placed in a private special education school) at approximately \$35,000. Using this figure, a decrease in overall paraprofessionals in this area would, in all likelihood, result in the need for increased tuition to private schools.

Enrollment and Paraprofessional Staffing
2005-2010

Enrollment and Type of Position	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	Number Change	Percent Change
Enrollment	9,195	9,424	9,709	9,880	10,032	837	9%
Paraprofessional Staffing (FTE)	160.5	165.3	166.4	179.6	178.7	18.2	11.3%
SPED Enrollment	958	1013	1048	1,066	1,075	117	12.2%
Special Education Para Staffing (FTE)	90.4	86.9	89.4	101.7	99.9	9.5	11%
SSC Para Staffing	24	27	29	26	28	4	17%

The Prismatic Audit, in its recommendation to reduce paraprofessionals, makes recommendations to increase Special Education Teaching staff (to bring certified staffing into alignment with our peers) and create Special Education Liaisons at each school/house. This would result in a potential increase of \$544,000 based on replacing every two paraprofessionals with one certified staff member. If we were to move in this direction, this recommendation would take approximately three years to implement and would also require additional funding for staff development of approximately \$50,000 per year.

Finding 3-16

Recommendation – Adopt extended day as the only option for all kindergarten students (Page 3-36)

Audit Savings: \$189,840

FPS Savings: \$136,923

The implementation of this recommendation would save an estimated amount of \$136,923 instead of the savings noted above of \$189,840. Prismatic used the average teacher salary and benefits to calculate the savings; the true savings is based on the average of the salaries of the least senior employees in their respective departments. The savings are a result of one less music and art teacher; students would receive less instruction in these subjects in extended-day kindergarten than full-day kindergarten.

In prior years, as budget cuts loomed, the district estimated that implementation of a full day program as the district's only option would save an estimated \$150,000, virtually the same savings as the Audit's recommendation. Therefore, the decision about the kindergarten program does not

depend on, in the final analysis, dollar savings; rather, it depends on which program would be best educationally.

While Prismatic landed on extended day as the best option, full-day kindergarten has some research support behind it as well. In addition, the current model of parent choice has appeal, as this allows the kindergarten program to respond to individual student readiness for a full-day program. The choice model does have its own costs, specifically in the area of transportation.

Considering the high degree of public interest in this topic, the conflicting research, and the costs, the prudent course of action is to undertake a review of some of the practices in the existing kindergarten models, including the use of instructional time, the amount of time devoted to art, music and physical education, and small group instruction. No immediate change would be prudent.

Finding 3-18

Recommendation – Re-configure music schedules in the middle schools (Page 3-39)

Audit Savings: \$279,065

This recommendation calls for reducing the music lessons at the middle school level by 20 percent. This program took a cut in the 2010-2011 budget by increasing the number of students taught in lessons and by reducing the FTE by 1.0. I do not recommend further cuts to this program.

Prismatic refers to Fairfield's small group lessons as "enrichment opportunities" and "a wonderful benefit"; these statements are mischaracterizations. Small group lessons are necessary to provide the instructional time for quality instruction in instrumental music. Small group lessons are an integral part of Fairfield's instrumental music curriculum.

Prismatic states that in other districts, outside tutors are contracted to teach lessons and that aspects of the music program occur after school. This places the responsibility of curriculum implementation on independent contractors who may not meet the "highly qualified" teacher status required for those who teach core academic subjects that include music.

Prismatic also refers to Fairfield's small group lessons as "extensive opportunities for music instruction, beyond any that the Prismatic team has seen before" and as "private lessons." Not only are small group lessons common throughout Connecticut, they are common throughout the country. Fairfield's average lesson size of six students is consistent with the average lesson size of other Fairfield County districts. This is contrary to Prismatic's assertion that these are private lessons.

Where Fairfield is not consistent with other Fairfield County districts is in the length of time for each lesson and total student enrollment in instrumental music, which is considerably higher in our district. The average length of lessons for Fairfield County districts is 43 minutes; Fairfield Public Schools is 30 minutes.

Implementation of Prismatic's recommendation to re-configure the middle school music schedules by reducing the middle school instrumental music program by 20% would result in a dramatic loss of student-to-teacher contact time, making full implementation of our music curriculum impossible. Because the music curriculum is sequential, beginning in elementary school, any changes to the foundational programs, particularly middle school instrumental music, would have detrimental impact on the high school instrumental music program and student achievement.

Finding 3-19

Recommendation – Reorganize both FPS high schools to eliminate the House Plan (Page 3-44)

Audit Savings: \$1,666,280

FPS Savings: \$1,497,293

The report overstates the savings. The actual estimated savings would be \$1,497,293 rather than the amount of \$1,666,280 as referenced in the Audit Report. The details are as follows:

The elimination of the six Housemaster positions would be replaced with four Assistant Principals and two Deans of Instruction positions; thus there would be no savings for this change.

The elimination of six Deans of Students would result in an estimated savings of \$421,326 rather than the \$569,520 figure in the Audit Report. The six Deans would be transferred to a teaching position within the bargaining unit, replacing six less senior teachers. The reduction of six less senior teachers would save an estimated \$421,326.

The elimination of six house secretaries would result in an estimated savings of \$347,076 rather than the \$339,360 figure in the audit report. The six house secretaries would be transferred to a position within their same grade in the bargaining unit, replacing six less senior secretaries.

The elimination of five Guidance Counselors at the high school level would result in an estimated savings of \$394,215 rather than the \$474,600 figure in the Audit. Prismatic used the average teacher salary and benefits to calculate the savings; the true savings is based on the average of the salaries of the least senior employees in their respective departments.

The elimination of six guidance secretaries would result in an estimated savings of \$334,767 rather than the \$282,800 figure in the Audit Report. The six guidance secretaries would be transferred to a position within their same grade in the bargaining unit, replacing six less senior secretaries.

This recommendation would eliminate the House Plan and replace it with a traditional high school structure. The House Plan has been part of the Fairfield schools since the 1950's. A shift of this magnitude could not be undertaken without a full study of all of the implications.

Implementing this recommendation would have a significant impact on the learning environment and on the schools' ability to maintain the standards of excellence in teaching and student services that our students deserve and our community has come to expect. The Audit contains significant inaccurate information and numerous statements that indicated that the authors did not fully understand the roles and responsibilities of the high schools' staff and administrative teams.

- The Audit Report stated that the content area departments are not represented or organized in the house system. At Fairfield Warde the departments are grouped by house and supervised and supported by the Housemaster.
- Student disciplinary and attendance issues are not initially addressed by the Housemaster; this is one of the responsibilities of the Dean.
- The Audit quoted a survey respondent who stated that funds that support The Battle of the Houses during Homecoming and similar school spirit events could be better used elsewhere. Homecoming, The Battle of the Houses, and other spirit generating events are not funded through the school budget and clearly promote a positive spirit among our students, for their school, and for the Houses to which they belong.
- The Audit reported that the work of the Housemasters was essentially the same as assistant or vice-principals, that their work is primarily monitoring student behavior and determining student discipline. The Housemasters' responsibilities differ greatly from Prismatic's view of the "traditional" assistant principal and are far more comprehensive in Fairfield's two high schools. The Audit Report stated that the Curriculum Leaders and the Deans make it unnecessary for Housemasters to become involved in curriculum implementation and teacher supervision and evaluation. This is inaccurate.
- Housemasters are responsible for coordinating the overall educational program for each student in their Houses. They initiate and guide the collaboration of the House Teams which respond to struggling students. Members of the House Support Teams are the Housemaster, Dean, school counselors, school psychologist, social worker, student assistance counselor, and several teachers. House support teams headed by Housemasters provide early intervention through weekly staffing and SRBI teaming, create proactive behavioral strategies in collaboration with special education, school counseling, and the counseling center, and closely monitor attendance, discipline and student performance for the students in their Houses. Housemasters provide the leadership and instructional supervision needed to develop individualized programs to promote student success.
- Each Housemaster is responsible for the direct supervision and evaluation of over 50 teachers and staff members. This includes multiple formal and informal observations, goal conferences, and all end of year evaluation meetings with individual teachers and staff members. The Housemaster is also the PPT chairperson for each special education student assigned to the House and 8th graders transitioning to the high school.
- The day-to-day management of student behavior and attendance in each house is the responsibility of the Deans. They initiate contact with parents regarding student discipline. The Deans also maintain attendance records and disseminate information on

attendance to staff and parents. In the area of student attendance, they chair the Attendance Appeals Board in each House and maintain records of those student appeals hearings. They work closely with the Housemasters and the House Teams to develop plans for individual student success at the high school. Teachers often consult with the Deans to create intervention strategies to guide appropriate student behavior. They work closely with the security staff and with the SRO assigned by the Fairfield Police Department. Deans do not provide teacher supervision or curriculum leadership as reported by Prismatic.

- The Administrator for Guidance and Pupil Services oversees the guidance and counseling services offered and supervises and evaluates all the personnel associated with those programs. He is responsible for all student records, the Program of Studies, CAPT and AP Testing, coordination of the UCONN ECE program, many parent outreach programs and, in collaboration with the Headmaster, and the development of the master schedule.

The House Plan in the high schools of Fairfield supports the important work of teachers in numerous ways. Among the most important responsibilities of the Housemasters is to insure there is high quality instruction taking place in every classroom in their Houses. They establish high performance standards, implementing the Fairfield Plan for Teacher Evaluation, and by maintaining an active and visible presence in the classrooms. Being able to maintain this focus on instruction and student learning without primary responsibility for student behavior and related matters enables the high schools to create and sustain an atmosphere that emphasizes instruction and academic performance above all else. We may not be able to directly tie the consistently steady record of achievement by the students of Fairfield to the House Plan, but there is no refuting the fact that the priority on instruction in the current iteration of the House Plan demonstrates our commitment to sound instruction and student learning and makes a positive difference.

Regardless of whether the House system is in place, reducing the staff positions at the levels that would achieve these savings would result in a dramatic reduction in services to students and their families. Unwinding the House system based solely on this Audit, without a full study, is not a wise course of action.

Finding 3-20

Recommendation – Require high school English teachers to teacher five periods a day, which is the same as other core teachers (Page 3-48)

Audit Savings: \$569,520

FPS Savings: \$0

High school English teachers, by contract, have a maximum student load of 105, whether or not these students are taught in four periods per day or five. English teachers currently teach four periods and have an individual conference with students as their fifth assignment. Under the current

contract, if English teachers taught five periods per day, they would be dividing their 105 students into five sections instead of four. There are no cost savings associated with this recommendation.

Consider a high school teacher with a student load of 100. That teacher can teach 5 classes of 20 students and no conference period (Prismatic proposal). Alternatively, the teacher can teach 4 classes of 25 students with a conference period (current practice). Either approach costs the same. The choice is an educational one (smaller class size vs. individual conferences); it is not a financial one.

The English department teaches writing based on research-based best practice. One element of this best practice is the writing conference, NOT “tutoring.” The practice should not be labeled as “tutoring sessions” (page 3-48). Conferencing is individualized writing instruction. It is individualized writing instruction for all high school students, not just those who “need help.” Referring to writing conferences as tutoring demonstrates a lack of understanding about Fairfield’s writing conferences.

All students are required to meet with their English teachers. It is required that students meet at last 3 times in the year. That number was calculated based on the following formula. We calculated the average length of the writing conference and the average number of students to arrive at a number equivalent to one class meeting for 45 minutes for 182 days. Students may and often do come in every marking period or many times in a marking period. It is not uncommon for a student to come once in a marking period and another to come 5 times. Therefore, it is most likely that the amount of time spent in writing conferences exceeds the time required by an additional 45-minute period of instruction. Therefore, currently, each English teacher spends more time with students than the additional 45-minute class would require. Hence, the district is “getting more out of” English teachers.

Other successful districts in our area that have writing conferences: Staples HS in Westport has a four class teacher load and writing conferences. Also, Ridgefield HS English teachers have a four class and writing conferences teacher load. In New Canaan, English teachers also have time for writing conferences (four classes one semester, five another).

Finding 3-22

Recommendation – Charge non-handicapped students a fair tuition for preschool (Page 3-51)

Audit Savings: \$55,000

FPS Savings: to be determined

As part of the revision to the pre-kindergarten programs that will take place in 2011-2012, we are implementing this recommendation for the Early Childhood Center at Fairfield Warde High School. Because we do not know the number of slots available to non-disabled students, we cannot estimate revenue at this time. After one year of implementation we can get a clearer picture as to whether Prismatic’s estimate is accurate.

Finding 3-25

Recommendation – Bring FPS psychologist and social worker staffing ratios closer to those recommended by ASHA (Page 3-57)

Audit Savings: \$455,616

FPS Savings: \$429,600

The elimination of five school psychologists would result in an estimated salary and benefits savings of \$448,584 rather than the \$474,600 figure in the audit report. We concur with the estimate of \$18,984 for the increase of a .2 FTE Social Worker position.

The recommendation to reduce staffing in the area of student support services based solely on the ASHA staffing ratios fails to take into account the staffing ratios of other Fairfield County Districts and the community expectations for services. In a review of our neighboring districts, staffing ratios for Fairfield are consistent with Fairfield County. A reduction of staff of this magnitude would result in an unacceptable decrease in services to students, families, and teachers. These services include (but are not limited to): individual/group/parent/and family counseling, positive behavioral interventions, learning strategies instruction, teacher consultation, etc. While not mandated by state or federal law/regulation, these services have come to be expected in Fairfield. These prevention services assist students in developing the necessary social/emotional/coping skills to allow for improved student learning.

Should we choose to implement this recommendation the district would need to reassign school psychologists to mandated services only (evaluations, PPT meetings, direct services to students with IEPs and 504 plans only). The ability of these professionals to address primary prevention services (positive behavioral supports, crisis management, teacher consultation, SRBI) would be limited. The unintended consequences of such a decrease in services include an increase in students being identified with disabilities, increased fees for private evaluations and increased legal fees to defend our programs.

Chapter 4: Technology

Finding 4-1

Recommendation – Recommit the district to technology (Page 4-7)

Although no costs or savings are associated with this recommendation, the reorganization of the central office (recommendation 3-1) relates to this area. I have increased the focus on technology by assigning the overall responsibility in this area to the Deputy Superintendent of Schools. With the increase of this position from .45 FTE to 1.0 FTE in the 2011-2012 school year, a major responsibility will be the recommitment of the district to the instructional use of technology to improve student learning. An additional focus will be the improved use of technology for the overall functionality of the schools and district, including Human Resources, Instruction, and Business and Operations. Some

specific areas include student information systems, data collection systems, building reservations, MUNIS®, Protraxx®, and AppliTrack®.

Finding 4-8

Recommendation – Include in planning and budgeting the purchase of integrated student management data collection and reporting systems and require universal use (Page 4-16)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$298,830

While we agree with this need, the fiscal climate indicates that we should use 2011-2012 as a year to research the best student management system for Fairfield and include its purchase in the 2012-2013 budget. We are presently exploring student management systems, e.g., Aspen®, Infinite Campus®, PowerSchool®, Chancery SMS®, as a replacement for our present system, Antares®.

Finding 4-9

Recommendation – Develop a formula-driven technician staffing ratio (Page 4-19)

Audit Savings: \$177,265

FPS Savings: \$135,225

The elimination of the five least senior IT Field Technician positions would result in an estimated salary savings of \$145,225 rather than the figure of \$187,265 in the audit report.

The District attempted to begin consolidation of technical staff at the elementary level in the fall of 2010. It was attempted as recommended with insufficient support from the school and administrative staff since the Help Desk staff was not adequately prepared to supplement building based services on an “as need” basis. Recently, we have developed a formula-based system for the staffing of specialists at the elementary level. A formula-driven technician staffing ratio will be reintroduced through a long-term plan. The plan will be developed in consultation with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and other administrators following a review of the responsibilities of media technicians, possibly with the elimination of all non-technology related activities. Concurrently, a process will be developed with the district Help Desk to ensure that there will be no reduction in required services at the building level. Additional training will be required for end users for minor tech issues, e.g., paper jams.

Chapter 5: Financial Management

Finding 5-2

Recommendation – Create separate finance and operations departments organized under a Chief Operations Officer, as noted in Chapter 3 (Page 5-4)

This item was discussed in Finding 3-2. It cannot be implemented at this time due to fiscal constraints.

Finding 5-10

Recommendation – Eliminate weekly payrolls for all employees not required to be paid weekly per union contracts and attempt to eliminate the requirement in future negotiations when contracts are renewed (Page 5-12)

Audit Savings: staff time

I agree with this recommendation; no dollar savings are projected.

Finding 5-15

Recommendation – Improve the district's budget document and submit it for review to the Association of School Business Officials and the Government Finance Officers Association for continued improvement (Page 5-20)

Audit Savings: none

We implemented a new budget format for the 2011-2012 budget document. We will submit it to CABE for its Excellence in Educational Communication award as a first step.

Finding 5-16

Recommendation – Reduce funding for Principals' Account (Page 5-23)

Audit Savings: \$297,773

The savings is predicated on reducing the “principals’ accounts” by ten percent. With the reconfiguring of what is in the principals’ budgets for the 2011-2012 school year, it is unclear whether this figure would still be accurate. There is no data in the report indicating that principals’ accounts are above the peer group average or a national standard.

Finding 5-17

Recommendation – Work with the Town of Fairfield to develop purchasing procedures that allow principals and department heads to purchase small dollar items without preapproval (Page 5-26)

While the audit team did not identify savings, we believe that a revision of the Town’s purchasing guidelines would, in fact, save money. Current practice prohibits the Board from using consortiums (other than the State’s bid list) and “reverse auction” to obtain the best price for goods and services. We would estimate savings of at least \$50,000 annually from participating in purchasing consortiums (such as CREC) and reverse auction (through LEARN).

Chapter 6: Human Resources

Finding 6-2

Recommendation – Discontinue the funding and participation in the Intern Program after the current year (Page 6-8)

Audit Savings: \$198,980

FPS Savings: \$159,000

After a review, we made some significant changes to the intern program for the upcoming year that will yield savings of approximately \$159,000. Interns must serve as substitute teachers for a minimum of 150 days per year. Interns cannot student teach during their internship. Permanent substitutes will be hired in lieu of interns as recommended in the Audit. We have reduced the number of interns from 42 to 21. Further reductions in interns would not produce additional savings.

Chapter 7: Facilities Use and Management

Finding 7-2

Recommendation – Implement a computerized maintenance management system (Page 7-8)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$7,943

FPS Savings: an added cost of \$10,000

The district's Maintenance Department has an existing Computerized Maintenance Management System that was developed in 2002 by our internal Information Technology Department. We have made it work well over the past 8 years. However, there are many pieces of the program that do not work and make it difficult to produce accurate reporting. The system does not have the capability to incorporate our new Preventative Maintenance Programs. The advancement of technology has improved computerized maintenance management systems that can improve efficiency, productivity, and profits as well as provide better documentation for tracking staff time for repairs and replacements to improve budget requests.

We will recommend for the 2012-2013 fiscal budget an increase in funds to support the purchase of a new Computerized Maintenance Management System software for our Maintenance Department.

Finding 7-3

Recommendation – Implement a technology solution for event management (Page 7-10)

Audit Savings: \$25,507

FPS Savings: \$50,000

This recommendation is to purchase a software program, such as School Dude, and reduce the scheduling clerk's position to half-time. The district's Business Services reservation division continues to be a labor intensive paper process for all event management bookings.

All requests are handled on an as-needed basis. Although the program has been reviewed and revised in the past 5 years it continues to be handled as the requests come into the office. There are too many organizational exemptions and therefore a majority of costs incurred for utilities and the wear and tear of furniture, fixtures, and equipment are not captured.

We recommend for the 2012-2013 fiscal budget an investment of \$5,000 to support the purchase of a new Event Management Software System for our Business Services reservation division. Furthermore, we recommend a change in policy for all event management bookings be considered to eliminate the need for a full-time staff member and to charge organizations for utility usage as well as for furniture, fixtures, and equipment usage.

With the new software program and a change in policy language we can cut the full time position to half- time and therefore save the district approximately \$25,000. We can also capture costs related to utilities used and the wear and tear of furniture, fixtures, and equipment which should show a return of at least \$25,000.

Finding 7-5

Recommendation – Conduct a thorough review of policy and procedures as they are actually employed in the time and attendance program for custodians, with a view toward eliminating all "summer cleaning" overtime (Page 7-16)

Audit Savings: \$83,314

FPS Savings: no savings

This is currently not possible with the amount of school building reservations logged into the Business Services Office. There are too many uses, rentals, athletic programs, summer school programs, Town of Fairfield "park and recreation" programs, and other instructional programs provided at many of the school buildings over the summer months.

However, the issue of custodial overtime bears some further review. We are reviewing our practices with respect to filling day-to-day custodial vacancies and are in conversations with the bargaining unit about ways of reducing overtime costs. No specific savings can be estimated at this time; however, we are keeping the line item for custodial overtime the same in 2011-2012 as it is in 2010-2011 despite the fact that we will over expend that account during the current year. We believe that changes in our practices with custodial overtime will allow us to keep our expenditures within the currently budgeted amount.

Finding 7-6

Recommendation – Improve the day-to-day supervision of custodians (Page 7-17)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$24,345

A change of this magnitude will require some “up – front” costs before it will yield any savings in future budgets. There is a long term plan for staffing the Maintenance/Custodian Department that was developed in 2008 that identified better supervision, especially for evening work and processes, however, the past budgets and the proposed budget is not set up to accept any “up – front” costs at this time.

Finding 7-7

Recommendation – Seek reimbursement from the food service fund for the cost of providing custodial services in the dining rooms (Page 7-19)

Audit Savings: \$118,440

FPS Savings: \$100,000

The custodial services for the kitchens were broken out via square footage occupied and the total number was a maximum of \$100,000 in savings. The dining rooms are difficult to assign to the Food Service Department when they really only provide the food. The dining rooms are called APR's (all purpose rooms) because they are used for all kinds of instructional program reasons throughout the day. Because the financial position of the Food Service Program is not well known, we are conservatively taking \$50,000 in savings from this charge. The change to the Healthy Food Certification program and the initiatives from the Wellness Committee will result in additional costs to the program. The Food Service Program needs to be self-sustaining and incurred an operating loss in 2009-2010 as pointed out in the audit. In future budgets it may be possible to transfer another \$50,000 in costs to the Food Service Program.

Finding 7-8

Recommendation – Seek reimbursement from the food service fund for the cost of kitchen and dining room utilities (Page 7-20)

Audit Savings: \$160,761

FPS Savings: \$60,000

We calculated the utility costs for each school and allocated those costs to the kitchen areas which yields a maximum allowable savings of \$60,000. This figure has been incorporated into the 2011-2012 operating budget.

Finding 7-9

Recommendation – Ensure specifications are appropriate and enforced (Page 7-21)

Audit Savings: \$4,050

FPS Savings: no savings

Town of Fairfield building committees are given the charge for all large school building projects, and the only document the BOE is allowed to provide is an educational specification which does not allow specific product specifications. As we meet with project teams, we identify and strongly recommend products in use that are standards for Fairfield school buildings, however, the building committees are not required to follow these standards. In most cases the standards are incorporated, however, there are times when they deviate.

Chapter 8: Food Services

Finding 8-5

Recommendation – Increase regular student meal prices (Page 8-13)

Audit Savings: \$58,000

FPS Savings: already factored into custodial and utilities from Chapter 7

The Food Services Department will be working on this recommendation during the months of March and April of 2011 as we identify and provide a list of all the things that will involve an increase in student meal prices. There are a lot of changes coming up that will affect 2011 and future years. We are working with the Food Services Department to develop a long term plan for their program, equipment, and staffing. The new Federal School Lunch bill may mandate an increase in lunch prices. However, the increase may be needed to cover the costs of moving the custodial and utility charges to the Food Services Program.

Finding 8-6

Recommendation – Address secondary access issues (Page 8-17)

Audit Savings: \$128,898

FPS Savings: no savings

This issue revolves around changing the high school schedule to allow students to take 8 courses at one time without sacrificing lunch. Renovating and/or increasing the size of the cafeterias at each high school will be necessary to accomplish this recommendation, and funds are included in the district's Long Range Facilities Plan for this purpose. In addition, because of the increased number of students who would opt for the 8-course option, additional teaching staff would be required. This increase in teaching staff would more than offset the savings noted in the Audit. In any event, this recommendation would take several years to implement.

Finding 8-10

Recommendation – Implement menu planning software (Page 8-23)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$2,500

FPS Savings: already completed at an added cost of \$7,000

The district's Food and Nutritional Services Department has purchased a computerized menu planning software application through our Information Technology support company Network Synergies in 2010. The company has been working with (and training) the Food and Nutritional Services Department staff to incorporate this new program into all the Fairfield Schools menu data, planning, and more importantly the nutritional facts integration into the menu's for the public.

Chapter 9: Transportation

Finding 9-3

Recommendation – Provide additional training in Edulog (Page 9-6)

Audit Savings: an added cost of \$10,000

FPS Savings: an added cost of \$10,000

This is a worthwhile idea but is cost-prohibitive at this time.

Finding 9-4

Recommendation – Implement a “use it or lose it” policy regarding bus transportation (Page 9-6)

Audit Savings: \$36,956

FPS Savings: Cannot be determined at this time

The school district will begin a process regarding this recommendation. Step one will be to communicate to all bus drivers to monitor and identify stops throughout their routes and runs where no students (or very few students) are waiting on a regular basis in order to identify if we can eliminate any of these stops. Step two will be to identify the cost savings for any eliminated stops. Typically, parents are reluctant to “give up” their child's seat on a permanent basis.

Finding 9-5

Recommendation – Require high school students to opt out in order to obtain a parking spot (Page 9-9)

Audit Savings: \$174,963

FPS Savings: to be determined

The school district will begin a process regarding this recommendation. Step one will be to communicate to the headmasters of both high schools that all juniors and seniors that apply for

and are given a parking spot/permit will forfeit their place on a bus. The savings will be identified as we review the list for this step and identify if the quantity of students actually eliminates a bus. Then our transportation department will need to monitor these students that may call in for a spot/seat on a bus for reassignment. The audit report hedges its dollar value of this recommendation: "Depending on which specific seats can be eliminated and how the reduced need for seats impacts routes overall, the district may experience a different level of savings." We would need to implement this practice to determine the actual savings – making 2012-2013 the earliest budget that could be impacted.

Finding 9-7

Recommendation – Review bell times (Page 9-11)

Audit Savings: to be determined

FPS Savings: \$500,000

Prior to the Audit, the District had begun the process of reviewing the impact of moving the high school bell schedule back to 7:30 a.m. at each high school. We determined that this change would result in the savings of 10 buses for a net savings of an estimated \$500,000. This was not a specific recommendation of the Audit. We will continue to look for other savings in this area.

Finding 9-8

Recommendation – Seek legal counsel regarding reduction of nonpublic student transportation (Page 9-14)

Audit Savings: \$408,559

FPS Savings: no savings

Non-public transportation is currently budgeted in the Town of Fairfield's budget, not the school system's. Any savings in this area would accrue to the Town's budget, not the Board of Education. However, we analyze non-public transportation for efficiencies on a regular basis and do not see any savings in this area.

Chapter 10: Safety and Security

While none of the recommendations in this chapter has savings attached, I believe it is important to show that we are planning to implement most of these immediately.

Finding 10-1

Recommendation – Implement OSHA required training for maintenance and custodial staff to ensure worker and workplace safety (Page 10-3)

This recommendation will be incorporated immediately. Most of our training seminars have been through our CIRMA Insurance Company and our licensed consultants through the State of Connecticut. We will contact OSHA for incorporation to our existing program.

Finding 10-2

Recommendation – Develop a database of all fire safety equipment (Page 10-4)

This recommendation will be incorporated immediately. The Maintenance Supervisor is working with the current contractor/vendor to provide appropriate drawings of all our schools specifically identifying each and every fire extinguisher throughout the district. The savings will be identified as we monitor all fire extinguishers being tagged yearly for use in an emergency. We need to make sure that they have been tested for good working condition.

Finding 10-4

Recommendation – Request that the Town Public Works Department maintain the two storm water retention ponds as previously agreed (Page 10-6)

For three years now the town has not maintained these ponds with repeated attempts to DPW to make time to do so. We will formally draft and write a letter to the First Selectman regarding this to seek compliance so we are not fined by the State and/or local Conservation Department.

The chart on the next page summarizes Prismatic's estimated savings/added cost and the FPS estimated savings/added costs.

Finding #	Audit - Savings	Audit - Added Cost	FPS - Savings	FPS - Added Cost
3-2		(\$399,738)		(\$399,738)
3-9		(\$155,730)		(\$155,730)
3-11		(\$47,968)		(\$47,968)
3-12	\$551,040		\$551,040	(\$544,000)
3-16	\$189,840		\$136,923	
3-18	\$279,065		\$279,065	
3-19	\$1,666,280		\$1,497,293	
3-20	\$569,520		\$0	
3-22	\$55,000		tbd	
3-25	\$455,616		\$429,600	
4-8		(\$298,830)		(\$298,830)
4-9	\$177,265		\$135,225	
5-16	\$297,773		\$297,773	
6-2	\$198,980		\$159,000	
7-2		(\$7,943)		(\$10,000)
7-3	\$25,507		\$50,000	
7-5	\$83,314		\$0	
7-6		(\$24,345)		(\$24,345)
7-7	\$118,440		\$100,000	
7-8	\$160,761		\$60,000	
7-9	\$4,050		\$0	
8-5	\$58,000		\$0	
8-6	\$128,898		\$0	
8-10		(\$2,500)		(\$7,000)
9-3		(\$10,000)		(\$10,000)
9-4	\$36,956		undetermined	
9-5	\$174,963		tbd	
9-7	\$0		\$500,000	
9-8	\$408,559		\$0	
TOTAL	\$5,639,827	(\$947,054)	\$3,619,081	(\$1,497,611)
NET	\$4,692,773		\$2,121,470 + tbd	

In summary, the differences in savings attributed to the Operational Audit can be summarized as follows:

Prismatic Estimated Savings:	\$4,692,773
FPS Estimated Savings:	\$2,121,470 plus TBD
Savings Already Realized:	\$ 866,500
Savings Not Yet Realized:	\$1,254,970 plus TBD

Conclusion

The Audit thoroughly examined many of the major operational practices in the school system. Several of the recommendations have been implemented immediately; some will take time to study; some are inaccurate and will not yield the savings as specified in the Audit. We will review all of the recommendations in the Audit for implementation even if they do not yield any dollar savings. Some recommendations in the Audit recommend an additional expenditure of funds. In most cases we have not recommended implementation of these items due to the fiscal climate.

On the next page I have included a list of Audit Commendations.

Audit Commendations

- 3-1 The Superintendent has immediately made positive organizational changes.
- 3-6 The Superintendent has streamlined and re-directed the focus of administrative meetings from business topics to administrative development.
- 3-8 FPS has only minimally increased its administrative staff, and at rates that compare favorably to the increase in student enrollment over the past five years.
- 3-13 FPS has opened Advanced Placement classes to all students, resulting in more students taking and passing AP test and earning college credit while still in high school.
- 3-14 FPS is commended for working to ensure that identification procedures more accurately identify students who are truly Gifted and Talented and for developing programs targeted to their needs and interests.
- 3-21 District special education leaders and parents are commended for instituting a strong partnership that benefits both children and educators.
- 3-23 The special education department has increased direct services to students by building capacity in FPS staff while, at the same time, working diligently to contain expenditures.
- 4-6 FPS has begun implementing technology to streamline procedures and begin to reduce paper processes.
- 5-1 FPS is commended for successfully implementing the Munis payroll, purchasing, and accounting modules with little negative impact on operations.
- 5-3 FPS is commended for closely analyzing and monitoring high dollar budgets and authorized full-time equivalent positions.
- 5-4 FPS is commended for development and use of a Payroll Run Sheet for each payroll to ensure completeness and accuracy of payrolls.
- 5-5 FPS is commended for cross-training employees in the critical functions of processing employee payrolls and vendor payments.
- 5-12 FPS is commended for making budget information readily available by distributing widely copies of its annual budget document.
- 6-1 The FPS HR department is commended for its exemplary work in the areas of personnel, employee records, and employee staffing.
- 6-3 FPS is commended for supporting continuing education.
- 6-4 District leaders have begun developing professional development models that are most likely to result in fidelity of implementation of programs, a more uniform approach to instructional programs, and potentially save the district funds.
- 7-1 FPS maintains its facilities in very good condition. All of the schools are attractive, pleasant-looking, and appear to be conducive to learning.
- 7-4 FPS employs a number of custodians that is able to maintain satisfactory levels of cleanliness and sanitation in its facilities, and is in consonance with national standards.
- 7-10 The construction manager was able to put together the required forms for FEMA funding in minimal time. As a result of his knowledge and documentation regarding FPS facilities, the response from FEMA was in minimal time.
- 8-1 FPS is commended for joining the Connecticut Healthy Food Certification program as part of its continuous efforts to improve its meal program.
- 8-2 The FPS food services department is an efficient and effective operation in a number of areas.
- 8-3 The FPS food services department makes an abundance of information available through the district website.
- 8-4 FPS elementary schools are adhering to best practices by providing recess before lunch.
- 9-1 The FPS transportation department is a responsive, effective organization.
- 9-2 The FPS transportation department provides students with short ride times.