

Operational Audit of the Fairfield Public Schools: An Update
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Prismatic Services, Inc., conducted an Operational Audit of the Fairfield Public Schools in the fall of 2010 and published the results on December 14, 2010. I published an "Initial Response to the Operational Audit" on March 8, 2011. Both documents were shared at public meetings and are on the district website.

This is an update that shows which recommendations have already been implemented and which recommendations are included in the 2012-2013 proposed operating budget. I also describe which recommendations continue to require further study and which ones we do not believe are educationally or fiscally wise and, therefore, do not plan to implement. As this document is a summary update, please refer to the two documents noted above for further details about the Audit recommendations themselves and our response to them.

While most Audit recommendations propose to save the district money, there are some that do require additional funds. Some recommendations do not save or cost money. The following Audit recommendations are being implemented this year or in the 2012-2013 proposed budget. They are listed in the order in which they appear in the Audit.

Finding 3-11

Recommendation – Improve district allocation of resource positions to elementary schools

The new elementary staffing model for Language Arts and Mathematics/Science is being implemented this year.

Finding 3-12

Recommendation – Improve paraprofessional deployment

This recommendation is addressed through the new elementary special education staffing model proposed for 2012-2013.

Finding 3-22

Recommendation – Charge non-handicapped students a fair tuition for preschool

We are implementing tuition on a "sliding scale" as approved by the Board of Education and is expected to yield approximately \$100,000 annually.

Finding 4-1

Recommendation – Recommit the district to technology

This is a major focus of the Deputy Superintendent of Schools.

Finding 4-4

Recommendation – Improve customer service levels through the Help Desk

We are implementing this recommendation with a reconfiguration of the elementary media technician positions. (See Finding 4-9.) In addition, a new computerized work ticket software program is being implemented this year for the first time for tracking and resolution of technology issues.

Finding 4-7

Recommendation – Prioritize paper-based processes for review, reengineering and elimination

This year we have implemented an electronic requisition system, replacing a paper-based system. Others are under review.

Finding 4-8

Recommendation – Include in planning and budgeting the purchase an integrated student management data collection and reporting systems and require universal use

This item is proposed in the 2012-2013 budget.

Finding 4-9

Recommendation – Develop a formula-driven technician staffing ratio.

We are implementing this recommendation this year, along with the five position reductions recommended in the Audit.

Finding 5-14

Recommendation – Annually analyze historical expenditures early in the budget process and establish budget targets to increase the funding percentage for instruction

The proposed 2012-2013 budget increases the funding for resources to implement instructional initiatives by approximately \$200,000.

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

The 2011-2012 budget document was submitted to the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education and received Honorable Mention (2nd place) in Excellence in Educational Communications. Further enhancements were made to the document for 2012-2013.

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

Working in conjunction with the Board of Finance, we recommended new purchasing guidelines that would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Town's purchasing procedures that had not been changed since 1998. In November 2011 the Board of Finance adopted these new guidelines.

Finding 6-2

Recommendation – Discontinue the funding and participation in the Intern Program

In the 2011-2012 budget we sharply reduced the intern program and restructured it so that the costs of interns were offset by savings in substitute teachers.

Finding 7-2

Recommendation – Implement a computerized maintenance management system

We currently use such a system, but it is in need of an upgrade.

Finding 7-7

Recommendation – Seek reimbursement from the food service fund for the cost of providing custodial services

We are implementing this recommendation this year.

Finding 7-8

Recommendation – Seek reimbursement from the food service fund for the cost of kitchen and dining room utilities

We are implementing this recommendation this year.

Finding 8-5

Recommendation – Increase regular student meal prices

We implemented a 10-cent across-the-board increase in lunch prices this year.

Finding 8-10

Recommendation – Implement menu planning software

This was implemented in September 2010.

Finding 9-5

Recommendation – Require high school students to opt out to obtain a parking spot

Legally, we are not able to implement this recommendation; however, in 2011-2012 we are charging students \$100 per year for a parking spot that is estimated to yield revenue of \$40,000.

Finding 9-7

Recommendation – Review bell times

We implemented a revised bell schedule for high school students this year at an estimated savings of \$500,000.

Finding 9-8

Recommendation – Seek legal counsel regarding reduction of nonpublic student transportation

We were advised by legal counsel that this is a legal requirement of the State of Connecticut whose cost is borne by the Town of Fairfield.

Finding 10-1

Recommendation – Implement OSHA required training for maintenance and custodial staff to ensure worker and workplace safety

We are implementing this recommendation this year.

Finding 10-2

Recommendation – Develop a database of all fire safety equipment

We are implementing this recommendation this year.

Finding 10-4

Recommendation – Request that the Town Public Works Department maintain the two storm water retention ponds as previously agreed

This was completed this year.

Finding 10-5

Recommendation – Require separation of traffic circulation around every FPS school

A proposal to alleviate the most pressing need in this area is in the Capital Improvement Projects budget for 2012-2013 at Tomlinson Middle School.

The following recommendations in the Audit require further study and will be under consideration for future budget years:

- 3-9 Add a curriculum leader for Technology
- 3-16 Standardize kindergarten program (full day vs. extended day)
- 5-10 Eliminate weekly payrolls
- 7-3 Implement a technology solution for event management
- 7-5 Curtail custodial overtime where possible
- 8-6 Address secondary lunch access issues
- 9-3 Provide additional training in Edulog (bus software)

The following recommendations in the Audit are not recommended for implementation due to the adverse impact on the educational program and services in relationship to the proposed savings:

- 3-2 Add 2.0 additional central office administrative positions and reorganize (also included in 5-2)
- 3-18 Re-configure music schedules in the middle schools
- 3-19 Eliminate the House Plan at both high schools
- 3-20 Require high school English teachers to teach five periods per day
- 3-25 Reduce five psychologist positions in the district
- 5-16 Reduce funding for principals' accounts
- 9-4 Implement a "use it or lose it" policy regarding bus transportation (not legal)

The school system has made a good faith effort to implement many of the recommendations contained in the Operational Audit. There are additional recommendations in the Audit that do not purport to save the district money, and therefore were not addressed in my "Initial Response" document or in this document. In addition, we continue to look for cost efficiencies in areas not mentioned in the Audit. We have carefully considered each recommendation and will continue to implement those that are both fiscally prudent and educationally wise.