



CSIS California School Information Services

Plumas Unified School District

Maintenance, Operations and Transportation Services Review

September 9, 2016

Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer





CSIS California School Information Services

September 9, 2016

Terry Oestreich, Superintendent
Plumas Unified School District
1446 E. Main Street
Quincy, California 95971

Dear Superintendent Oestreich:

In March 2016, the Plumas Unified School District and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) entered into an agreement for a review of the district's maintenance, operations and transportation programs and services. Specifically, the agreement states that FCMAT will perform the following:

1. Conduct an organizational and staffing review of the following district departments and make recommendations for staffing improvements or reductions, if any.
 - a. Maintenance and Operations
 - b. Transportation
2. Evaluate the current work flow and distribution of functions in each of the above departments and make recommendations for improved efficiency, if any.
3. Review the operational processes and procedures for each of the above departments and make recommendations for improved efficiency, if any.

This report contains the study team's findings and recommendations.

We appreciate the opportunity to serve you, and we extend thanks to all the staff of the Plumas Unified School District for their cooperation and assistance during fieldwork.

Sincerely,

Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer

FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

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Table of Contents

About FCMAT	iii
Introduction	I
Executive Summary	3
Findings and Recommendations	7
<i>Maintenance Services</i>	7
<i>Custodial Services</i>	13
<i>Grounds Services</i>	19
<i>Transportation Support Organizational Model</i>	23
<i>Vehicle Maintenance and Fleet</i>	27
<i>Driver Training, Safety and Compliance</i>	29
<i>Routing Methodology and Efficiency</i>	31
Appendices	33

About FCMAT

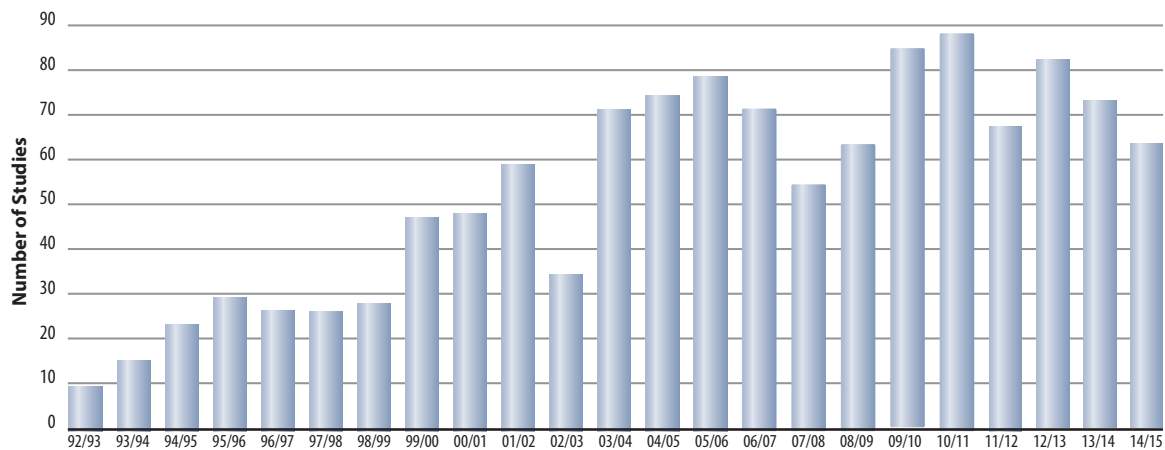
FCMAT’s primary mission is to assist California’s local K-14 educational agencies to identify, prevent, and resolve financial, human resources and data management challenges. FCMAT provides fiscal and data management assistance, professional development training, product development and other related 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, support the training and development of chief business officials and help to create efficient organizational operations. FCMAT’s data management services are used to help local educational agencies (LEAs) meet state reporting responsibilities, improve data quality, and inform instructional program decisions.

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 LEA 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.

FCMAT has continued to make adjustments in the types of support provided based on the changing dynamics of K-14 LEAs and the implementation of major educational reforms.

Studies by Fiscal Year



FCMAT also develops and provides numerous publications, software tools, workshops and professional development opportunities to help LEAs operate more effectively and fulfill their fiscal oversight and data management responsibilities. The California School Information Services (CSIS) division 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 (AB) 1200 in 1992 to assist LEAs to meet and sustain their financial obligations. AB 107 in 1997 charged FCMAT with responsibility for CSIS and its statewide data management work. AB 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. AB 2756 (2004) provides specific responsibilities to FCMAT with regard to districts that have received emergency state loans.

In January 2006, Senate Bill 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 Plumas Unified School District is a single-county school district with joint offices and some shared staffing with the Plumas County Office of Education, located in the city of Quincy, also the county seat. A single superintendent and five-member governing board govern both the district and county office.

Student enrollment is approximately 1,700 and has declined for the past three years, but is expected to stabilize and possibly remain steady for 2016-17. The district consists of four elementary schools and four junior/senior high schools located, one each in the cities of Quincy and Portola and communities of Chester and Greenville. Plumas Unified and the county encompass approximately 2,500 square miles, with a population slightly more than 21,600.

In March 2016 the district requested that FCMAT review the district's maintenance, operations and transportation programs and services. The study agreement specifies that FCMAT will perform the following:

1. Conduct an organizational and staffing review of the following district departments and make recommendations for staffing improvements or reductions, if any.
 - a. Maintenance and Operations
 - b. Transportation
2. Evaluate the current workflow and distribution of functions in each of the above departments and make recommendations for improved efficiency, if any.
3. Review the operational processes and procedures for each of the above departments and make recommendations for improved efficiency, if any.

Study and Report Guidelines

FCMAT visited the district on May 23-27, 2016 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. Maintenance Services
- III. Custodial Services
- IV. Grounds Services
- V. Transportation Organizational Model
- VI. Vehicle Maintenance and Fleet
- VII. Driver Training, Safety and Compliance
- VIII. Routing Methodology and Efficiency
- IX. 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.

Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

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FCMAT Intervention Specialist
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FCMAT Technical Writer
Bakersfield, CA

Harold “Rip” Courter, Ph.D.
FCMAT Consultant
Bonita, 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.

Executive Summary

A director of MOT who has been with the district for 21 years manages the Maintenance Operation and Transportation (MOT) Department. The director was originally hired as a mechanic in transportation. Since then, he has been promoted to transportation supervisor, transportation and maintenance supervisor and assumed the position of director MOT in 2015. With his background, he has a thorough knowledge of transportation, but learned the maintenance, grounds, and custodial aspects of this assignment primarily through on-the-job training. The director has demonstrated a basic knowledge of the maintenance trades as well as the grounds and custodial operations.

The MOT Department organizational structure is decentralized with two maintenance foremen, one facility foreman, a warehouse manager, and transportation division reporting to the director. In 2012, in the absence of a superintendent, a leadership team composed of the assistant superintendent, chief business official, director of SELPA/pupil services, and the director of human resources developed this organizational structure. The district was divided into the east side (Portola and Quincy) and west side (Greenville and Chester), with one maintenance foreman assigned to provide direct support to each location. A third foreman position was created to address all of the district's health and safety issues.

The Maintenance Department has an adequate number of skilled maintenance workers with skills to perform most of the district maintenance and repairs in-house.

The MOT Department does not have a written deferred maintenance plan, a preventive maintenance plan, or a comprehensive master plan for districtwide maintenance repair and replacement. Overall, the department practices are reactive rather than preventive, with no planning for future projects.

The district uses ESCAPE software for the maintenance work order system. ESCAPE works well as a stand-alone work order system, but cannot interact with capital planning or interface with a deferred maintenance plan, inventory control, and modernization. The software does not meet the needs of the director of MOT.

The State of California Office of Public School Construction requires a yearly inspection of school facilities. The district's facility foreman conducted these inspections, ranking all eight sites as "good" with a rating from 96% to 100% with three sites receiving the 100% rating. FCMAT observations found multiple items that require maintenance and repair at each site. The district needs to reinspect these facilities and provide a more accurate description of facility needs.

A review of the MOT budget and fiscal procedures found that all are in order, including all of the open accounting, bidding processes, and consumption of custodial supplies. The Custodial Department's organizational structure is site-based. The principals supervise the custodial staff during the school year, and the director of MOT does so during summer recess. This is a common approach, but it has resulted in confusion between the director of MOT and site principals about who is supposed to carry out this responsibility and among custodial staff members about who they are responsible to. Another disadvantage to this supervisory structure is that the district lacks standardized cleaning methods and expectations at all sites.

Custodial duties and schedules varied by site with no consistency districtwide. Although the district has a formal one-day mandatory training for custodians each spring, it lacks a formalized training program for site-level duties and responsibilities. As a result, custodians receive their

training on the job from the site head custodian or principal, including schedules, methods, and expectations. This results in inconsistent standards and expectations. Custodial staff reported they do not have a problem obtaining cleaning products and disposal items.

Custodians are primarily responsible for all district-cleaning tasks; however, the more progressive school districts throughout the state realize that everyone is responsible for helping create a positive, clean, safe, and comfortable environment for students and staff. Therefore, the responsibility for classroom cleanliness is shared among the students, teachers, and custodians. For example, each student is responsible for his or her own personal space; the teacher is responsible for locking the room; and the custodian for basic cleaning. Adopting shared cleaning responsibilities can improve cleaning standards and foster positive relationships.

A rare district practice is that custodians and head custodians have blended job descriptions, also performing maintenance and grounds functions. FCMAT interviews indicate this arrangement functions efficiently; however, custodians stated they perform maintenance work for 25 percent to 50 percent of their time. The custodial staff's capability to perform maintenance work depends on their maintenance skills and the tools available.

Custodial grounds and gardening responsibilities include mowing and weed whacking the interior yards. The district maintenance groundskeeper is responsible for all the playing fields and open areas.

A comparison of the district's staffing with the custodial staffing formula from the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) indicates that staffing is above the recommended level. However, given the fact that the custodial staff also performs maintenance and grounds duties, the overall combined total appears acceptable. Chester Junior/Senior High School, Greenville Junior/Senior High School, Quincy Junior/Senior High School and Portola Junior/Senior High School have a greater amount of custodial staffing than other schools. These four schools should be evaluated to determine equitability between the sites.

The district has one groundskeeper who is responsible for 112 acres, 1.9 million square feet of fields, and open areas. The CASBO staffing formula indicates that adequate staffing is 7.76 FTE. Because grounds gardening is seasonal and the custodial staff also perform grounds work; it is nearly impossible to accurately quantify this data and correlate it to the CASBO formula. It would be helpful if the district hired one additional FTE and 2 FTE as extra help during the summer months. This would enable the district to assign one groundskeeper to the east side (Portola and Quincy) and one to the west side (Greenville and Chester). The extra help would be responsible for increased seasonal grounds maintenance. The district should expedite repair of the Jacobsen riding mower and replacement of the 1985 Ford F-250 truck utilized to pull the trailer for the mower.

Some employees interviewed feel underappreciated, and the MOT Department lacks an employee recognition program. Implementing a program can help boost morale.

School transportation is one of the most poorly funded programs in California's education budget. Until 1977, school districts reported their operational costs and were fully reimbursed in the subsequent year. However, Proposition 13 passed, California gradually reduced the percentage of reimbursement. In the 1982-83 school year the state capped the funding for each school district based on 80% of the reported costs at that time. Over the years, cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) were occasionally granted. However, the static funding covered ever-smaller percentages of the need as costs increased over time. In the 2007-08 school year, the funding covered approximately 45% of the statewide-approved costs, but the amount at

individual districts varied greatly depending on the historical size and scope of individual transportation programs and their approved expenses. During the Great Recession, California reduced all categorical programs funding by approximately 20%, and the decrease to pupil transportation funding has never been restored. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was introduced in 2013-14 school year. Most categorical programs were folded into this formula; however, pupil transportation funding remained outside and was frozen at the 2012-13 level, with a requirement for maintenance of effort (MOE), meaning that districts needed to spend at least as much as they received.

The district has a relatively high amount of state revenue related to its program and district size because of its long history of providing transportation before the revenue reduction. The district receives \$768,800 state transportation apportionment as an add-on to the LCFF base grant. Additionally, the district received a \$147,996 Small District Bus Grant, which was rolled into its LCFF base grant in the last year the grants were offered and became a permanent add-on to the base grant. In the last year the State TRAN Report was required, (2011-12) the district had home-to-school approved costs of \$2,064,486 with a cost per mile of \$4.67 and a cost per pupil of \$1,993.64. The district did not report or receive transportation revenue for severely disabled/orthopedically impaired (SD/OI) students. The district presumably combined both its prior SD/OI and home-to-school expenses and therefore received the state apportionment combined.

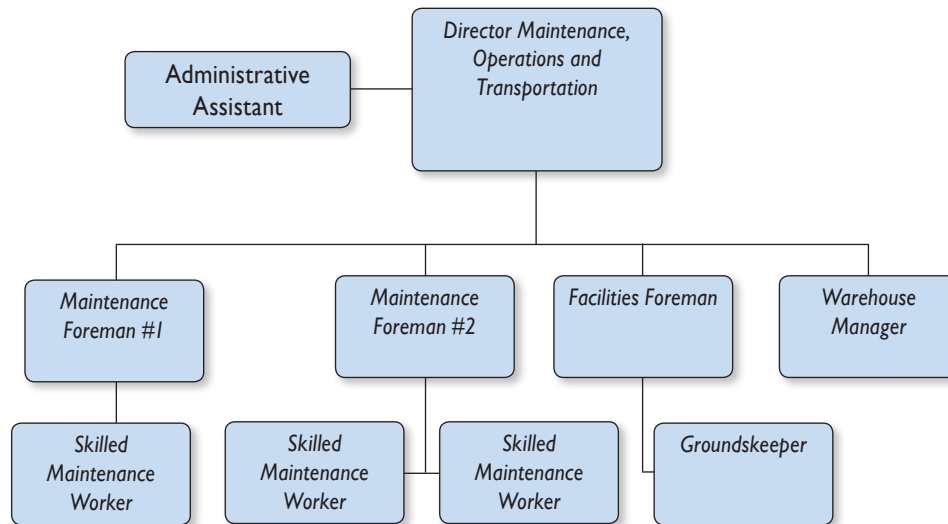
Findings and Recommendations

Maintenance Services

Organization

The Maintenance Department is responsible for approximately 132 acres of land and over 500,000 square feet of facilities throughout Plumas County. This area spans from Portola in the east to Chester in the northwest, a distance of more than 80 miles, with Greenville and Quincy between. Each community has an elementary school and a junior-senior high school, and various locations in the county have satellite facilities. The distance between the maintenance office/shops and the outlying sites presents a huge obstacle in efficiency and productivity.

In June 2012, in the absence of a superintendent, the leadership team composed of the assistant superintendent, chief business official, director of SELPA/pupil services, and director of HR addressed this issue. The following and current organizational structure was adopted in June 2013:



Maintenance foreman #1 is responsible for the district’s west side (Greenville and Chester). Maintenance foreman #2 is responsible for the district’s east side (Portola and Quincy). One foreman has specialized trade skills in HVAC, and one foreman has electrical trade skills. The three skilled maintenance workers who work directly for the maintenance foremen have specialized skills in plumbing, locksmithing, and general support services.

The facilities foreman is assigned responsibility for the following items:

- Asbestos plans, sampling and training
- Lead
- Mold
- Hazmat
- Irrigation/start up and shut down
- Irrigation maps
- Aerating
- A site safety plan
- ALICE training
- Facilities inspections
- Wheelchair lift inspections
- Crisis intervention and response
- NCSIG site walk through
- Fire and safety drills

- Mowing schedule
- Gopher abatement
- Pest management
- Pesticide reporting
- Roof evaluations for winter
- Trimming and pruning of trees and bushes
- NEJPA regional safety committee
- Safety and health committee for PUSD
- Monthly safety reports for each site
- Safety meetings/ICS training
- Weekly maintenance safety meeting
- Site safety meetings
- Planning of formal spring training for custodial & maintenance
- Indoor air quality
- Radon
- Spill prevention plan
- Personal protective equipment evaluation
- Maintain Safety Data Sheets binder
- Fork lift training
- Heating system training
- OSHA regulations
- Fire extinguisher training for staff
- Water sampling

Director of MOT

The district hired the director of MOT as a mechanic in transportation in 1995, and in 2006, he was promoted to transportation supervisor. In 2012, he became the transportation and maintenance supervisor, and he assumed the position of director of MOT in 2015. That background gives him a thorough knowledge of transportation, but he learned the maintenance, grounds, and custodial aspects of this assignment primarily through on-the-job training. To perform the assignment, the director must have a working knowledge of the basic trades: heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC); plumbing; electrical work; carpentry; painting; locksmithing, alarm skills, hazmat issues, custodial tasks, and grounds maintenance functions. In these areas, the director's knowledge is adequate; however, the district has made little effort to send him to classes and seminars to improve his professional knowledge, and the director has not taken initiative to address this issue.

Some aspects of leadership and organization in the department are questionable. In response to a FCMAT question, for example, the MOT Department indicated it had no record of a summer custodial deep-cleaning plan. The next day, the director sent an e-mail directing the head custodian at each site to submit the summer cleaning plan.

Staff reported that the director of MOT struggles with public speaking when required to present to the school board or community. District administration is offering guidance and support in this area.

However, staff indicated the director follows through when presented with maintenance, grounds, or custodial issues. Principals went out of their way to inform FCMAT that they appreciate the director's work. He also appears to have strong communication skills in this environment.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Continue to provide support for director of MOT on necessary leadership skills such as public speaking. This could be accomplished through assignment of a mentor and/or involvement in a structured program.

Maintenance Plans

The district does not have a deferred maintenance plan, a preventive maintenance plan, or a comprehensive master plan for districtwide maintenance, repair and replacement. At the time of the FCMAT visit, which was the month before summer recess, the district did not have a written plan for summer projects and school cleaning. Overall maintenance practices are reactive rather than preventive, with no planning for future projects.

Work Order System

Maintenance services are administered by means of the ESCAPE software work order system. Under this system, the school head custodian or the secretary types the request on a computer-generated work order form and electronically submits it to the Maintenance Department. The document contains the work order number, date, requestor’s name, school location, craft, and a description of the work requested. The requestor assigns a priority of low, medium, or high to the maintenance work order, but a clear definition of these priority levels has not been defined. Once Maintenance receives the request, one of the two maintenance foremen address it. Upon receipt, the foreman may change the requestor’s priority as he feels appropriate. A printed copy of the work order is then delivered to a tradesman. Once the work order is completed, the tradesman records his name, date, narrative description of work performed, hours, and material costs. This closeout is delivered to the administrative assistant, who inputs the data into ESCAPE.

The director of MOT reports that ESCAPE is a stand-alone work order system that does not facilitate capital planning (e.g., preparation of a deferred maintenance plan, vehicle replacement plan, etc.). FCMAT and the director concur that if it lacks this capability, the software should be replaced.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Evaluate the work order system, and if it does not meet district needs, replace it with an integrated system that helps facilitate capital planning, implement preventive maintenance, vehicle maintenance, inventory control, and documentation of all work orders.

Completed Work Orders

The following is an overview of the work orders completed in fiscal year 2014-15.

Craft	Number of Work Orders
Plumbing	108
Electrical	90
Locks	84
General	77
HVAC	42
All other trades	106

A comparison of this data with in-house trade skills indicate the district has skilled maintenance workers specializing in plumbing, electrical work, locks, general maintenance issues, and HVAC. These are all the major areas necessary to meet district needs.

The district has eight maintenance workers including the director of MOT and the groundskeeper and eight sites to service. Based on industry standards, this staffing is sufficient and no additional personnel are required.

Public Perception

The Maintenance Department has a poor perception in the community in part because employee accountability is more visible in other departments (e.g., the bus drivers drive, teachers work in their classrooms). Most community members do not know where the maintenance staff is and what they are involved in. The maintenance staff does in fact sign in with the site upon arrival and checks out from the site upon departure. Maintenance staff members indicate they have a schedule, but are often interrupted because of weather, school staff requests, equipment breakdown, emergencies, etc. that prevents completion of their plan for the day. In addition, school staff reported observing more maintenance personnel on site than a job may require, which Maintenance attributes to cross-training and safety requirements. Maintenance is aware of the perception and has increased communications with school site personnel. As a check and balance measure, maintenance has developed a sheet to record employee hours and activity. The document includes information such as the employee's name, signature, date, and weekly activity and is submitted to the supervisor for his signature monthly. This concept provides for hands-on supervision and documentation of work; however, it is not timely enough for the supervisor to evaluate and take any necessary corrective action. This form should be replaced with a daily time sheet that is submitted to the supervisor at the end of the workday.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Replace the monthly sheet for employee hours and activity with a daily time sheet submitted to the supervisor at the end of the workday.

Facilities Inspection

The State of California Office of Public School Construction requires a yearly inspection of school facilities. The facility inspection tool (FIT) is titled "School Facility Conditions Evaluation." This form identifies all the major components of a school site and categorizes them as follows: systems (HVAC/sewer), interior, cleanliness, electrical, restrooms/fountains, safety (fire/hazardous materials), structural (roofs) and exterior (playground/doors/gates/fences).

Every site room/area is evaluated, and the inspector assigns a numerical ranking as follows: Good – 90% to 100%, Fair – 75% to 89.99%, and Poor – 0% to 74.99. In December 2015, the facilities foreman inspected the district sites. The following is a summary of this inspection.

SCHOOL SITE	RATING %	EVALUATION	COMMENTS
C. Roy Carmichael Elementary	100%	Good	Campus overall is neat and in good repair.
Chester Elementary	98.1%	Good	Exterior needs paint; leaking portable.
Chester Jr/Sr. High	98.8%	Good	Wrestling room holes in wall. Exterior needs paint.
Greenville Jr/Sr High	96.0%	Good	Exterior needs paint.
Indian Valley Elementary	99.3%	Good	Exterior needs paint.
Portola Jr/Sr High	98.5%	Good	Roof work in classroom #G. Exterior needs paint.
Quincy Elementary	100%	Good	Exterior needs paint; 3rd wing roof repair & replacement.
Quincy Jr/Sr High	98%	Good	Exterior needs paint.
Plumas County Office of Education	100%	Good	Building and grounds in good shape.

FCMAT met with the principals and head custodian at each site and toured facilities and grounds. The site visits found multiple maintenance and repair items at each site; a list would be too long to include in this report. In just the category of safety, FCMAT found gravel on the surface of the elementary playground and tripping hazards that were two inches high on children’s breezeways. FCMAT cannot support the district’s facilities inspection evaluation as reported to the State of California – State Allocation Board.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Reinspect all school sites to determine accurate descriptions of facility needs.

Safety

Each Wednesday, the director holds a meeting with his staff where safety training is provided and recorded. This is an opportunity for the director to update the maintenance, grounds, and transportation staff on weekly activities and receive direct input from the staff. Staff indicated these meetings are helpful for both communication and morale.

Funding and Fiscal Procedures

According to the 2014-15 fiscal year adopted budget, the general fund maintenance and operations budget was \$982,414.27 and was revised to \$722,273.89 as noted below.

For the 2015-16 fiscal year, the general fund maintenance and operations adopted budget was \$1,015,626.87 and was revised to \$949,706.05 as noted below.

OBJECT	2014-15 ADOPTED	2014-15 REVISED	2015-16 ADOPTED	2015-16 REVISED
2000 Salaries	\$497,694.48	\$457,611.04	\$493,405.65	\$426,828.04
3000 Benefits for Salaries	\$226,793.79	\$220,049.13	\$234,355.30	\$207,295.38
4000 Materials and Supplies	\$181,051.00	\$143,501.95	\$143,501.95	\$137,383.65
5000 Services Performed	\$71,875.00	(\$136,849.88)	\$144,363.97	\$160,678.98
6000 Construction/Facilities Improvement	\$5,000.00	\$37,961.65		\$17,520.00
TOTAL	\$982,414.27	\$722,273.89	\$1,015,626.87	\$949,706.05**

The department has 52 open accounts ranging from a low of \$100 to a high of \$95,500. A review of each account found nothing out of order.

The district fiscal procedures include a requirement to obtain three quotes for any material purchase or service contract of more than \$5,000. The district complies with this requirement, but it is often impossible to obtain three quotes because the desired service is not available locally, and some outside vendors are reluctant to drive to Quincy.

Employee Recognition

MOT does not have an employee recognition program, and employees interviewed feel underappreciated. Most maintenance, grounds, and custodial staff perform well, with some outstanding efforts communicated to the FCMAT team during interviews with principals, custodians, coaches, and the MOT staff. An employee recognition program would give the director of MOT an opportunity to recognize employee performance and improve morale.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Introduce an employee recognition program.

Maintenance Vehicles

An analysis was conducted of the maintenance vehicles in service. The district lacks a plan to replace maintenance vehicles beyond their useful life. In priority order, the following vehicles should be replaced:

PRIORITY	YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	VEHICLE LICENSE	MILEAGE	JUSTIFICATION
1	1997	Ford	F-350	E051491	221,956	Transmission gone Out of service
2	1985	Ford	F-250	E476777	293,866	Vehicle tows mower Unsafe on the road
3	1995	Ford	F-350	1099481	261,653	Engine and transmission failing
4	1995	Ford	F-350	1099480	243,998	Transmission failing
5	1994	Ford	F-250 XL	1065753	231,993	Beyond useful life (mileage)

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Implement a vehicle replacement plan, as outlined above and budget permits.

Custodial Services

Background

Because of the district's rural nature, the maintenance staff must often travel a long distance from the maintenance operations center to outlying school sites. As a result, sites do not use the Maintenance Department for minor maintenance items that the custodian can perform. Custodians also help with grounds and gardening since the district has one groundskeeper to provide service to all eight schools. Excerpts from the district position descriptions for head custodian and custodian, which address the maintenance and grounds responsibilities in addition to custodial work, are attached as Appendix B to this report. FCMAT interviews indicate that this has been an accepted practice.

FCMAT interviews with site principals and the day/night custodial staff as well as on-site inspection of each school site indicate that the operation mostly functions well. The major disadvantage is that custodians report they perform maintenance work 25 percent to 50 percent of their time.

The ability of the custodial staff to perform maintenance work is directly related to their maintenance skills, and the tools available. This obviously varies among sites. The district has initiated a cross training program to improve skills.

Organization

The Custodial Department's organizational structure is site-based. The principal directly supervises the custodial staff during the school year, and this responsibility is transferred to the director of MOT during the summer recess.

This is a common approach, but it has resulted in confusion between the director of MOT and site principals about who is supposed to carry out this responsibility. Site principals indicate they are satisfied with having the custodians report to them, but most agree that the cleaning practices at their site could be improved. The disadvantage to this supervision structure is that the district lacks standardized cleaning methods and expectations for all sites.

FCMAT visited each campus and interviewed the day and night custodians. Custodial duties and schedules varied by site, with no consistency districtwide. The condition and cleanliness of the district's campuses varied because of the lack of work plans and cleaning standards.

Custodial staff members report that the district has no formalized training program for site-level duties and responsibilities. They received on-the-job training from the head custodian or principal at their site, including learning schedules, methods, and expectations. The night custodians at each site work mostly unsupervised because their shift starts towards the end of the school day. Someone should periodically check their work the next day.

Custodial staff members report that they have no problem obtaining cleaning products, and disposable items such as paper towels and toilet paper, although some report problems with the quality of some of the items purchased. These items are delivered to the site by the warehouse. Most custodial staff report receiving the equipment that would make their job easier. The custodial staff has no input into the purchase of custodial supplies or equipment because this process is handled through the warehouse. Joint participation in the decision-making process between the warehouse and custodial staff would help improve efficiency.

District cleanliness is based on the knowledge, experience, and motivation of the custodial staff. As a result, cleanliness levels are inconsistent. No formal written goals and objectives, cleaning schedules, purchasing standards, evaluation standards, or standards are provided through training. Establishing districtwide cleaning standards is the first step in implementing an effective clean school policy.

Custodians are primarily responsible for all district-cleaning tasks; however, the more progressive school districts throughout the state realize that everyone is responsible for helping create a positive, clean, safe, and comfortable environment for students and staff. Therefore, the responsibility for classroom cleanliness is shared among the students, teachers, and custodians. For example, each student is responsible for his or her own personal space; the teacher is responsible for locking the room; and the custodian for basic cleaning. Adopting shared cleaning responsibilities can improve cleaning standards and foster positive relationships.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Publish a custodial handbook, which could include cleaning standards and expectations, to be implemented and consistently followed at each site.
2. Prepare a formalized written deep-cleaning plan for each school during recess periods. Formally inspect each site prior to students returning.
3. Develop written standards for purchasing chemicals, cleaning supplies, and custodial equipment; provide training for its use.
4. Assign the director and assistant superintendent business services to develop a plan to centralize the purchasing of all custodial supplies and equipment to standardize and obtain the best prices.
5. Conduct an inventory of all custodial supplies and develop a budget to acquire equipment and tools to effectively clean district sites.
6. Institute a team approach to school cleaning that assigns responsibility to students, teachers, and custodial staff for keeping the school site clean and safe.

Cleanliness Standards

Although there is no nationwide standard for facilities' cleanliness, the U. S. Department of Education has established five levels of cleaning. Each level presumes that an eight-hour shift includes two 15-minute breaks and one 30-minute lunch break, and that the custodian has been given proper supplies and equipment.

- Level 1 cleaning results in a spotless and germ-free facility as might normally be found in a hospital or corporate suite. A custodian can clean approximately 10,000 to 11,000 square feet to a Level 1 standard 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 level of service for classrooms includes vacuuming or mopping floors daily and sanitizing all surfaces. A custodian can clean approximately 18,000 to 20,000 square feet to a Level 2 standard in eight hours.

- Level 3 cleaning is the norm for most school facilities. It is acceptable to most parties and does not pose any health concerns. Classrooms are cleaned daily, which includes dumping trash, emptying pencil sharpeners, and cleaning sinks, if applicable. Floors are vacuumed and frequent contact surfaces such as door handles are sanitized every other day. A custodian can clean approximately 28,000 to 31,000 square feet to a Level 3 standard in eight hours.
- 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. At this level, a custodian can clean approximately 45,000 to 50,000 square feet in eight hours.
- Level 5 can very rapidly lead to an unhealthy situation. Trash cans may be emptied and carpets vacuumed weekly. At this level, one custodian can clean 85,000 to 90,000 square feet in eight hours.

The figures above are estimates; the actual number of square feet that a custodian can clean per shift will depend on variables such as type of facility, flooring, wall coverings, the number of windows, restroom layout, and the nature and extent of gym and athletic facilities, offices, and community use.

The district should develop and adopt cleaning standards and expectations for custodial work. A best practice is to develop these standards using a collaborative process that includes a range of employees from cabinet level leaders to site-based custodians. Once these standards are created, the school board should formally adopt them. After standards are developed and adopted, detailed work schedules can be created to ensure that adequate time is allotted to complete the required tasks.

FCMAT's observations during school site visits, as well as information provided during interviews, indicate that the district cleans to a level of between 2 and 3.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Develop and adopt cleaning standards and expectations for custodial work.

Staffing

The California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO) has developed a formula to identify appropriate custodian staffing levels according to the established industry time-driven standards and cleaning standards found in the CASBO Custodian Handbook. This formula is widely accepted in the industry. The formula recognizes factors in four areas: the number of teachers; number of students; number of classrooms; and the square footage in classrooms, offices, and general-purpose areas.

Steps for completing the CASBO formula include:

Step 1 - Determine the number of custodians for each category based on the factor.

- 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

Step 2 – Combine the results for each of the four areas and divide by four to determine the number of custodians needed to clean and maintain the building.

The following chart applies the CASBO staffing formula to each district site and compares recommended staffing data with the actual time the district assigned staff to that school site.

SCHOOL	TEACHER FACTOR	PUPIL FACTOR	ROOM FACTOR	SQUARE FOOTAGE FACTOR	TOTAL OF FACTORS	CASBO FORMULA TOTAL/4	CURRENT DISTRICT STAFFING
C Roy Carmichael Elementary	15/1.15	368/1.13	27/2.08	25,550/1.42	5.78	1.45	2.00
Chester Elementary	10/0.77	210/0.65	12/0.92	11,525/0.64	2.98	0.75	1.44
Chester Jr/Sr High	13/1.00	155/0.48	15/1.15	12,769/0.71	3.34	0.84	2.25
Greenville Jr/Sr High	9/0.69	100/0.31	9/0.69	7,726/0.43	2.12	0.53	1.56
Indian Valley Elementary	7/0.54	116/0.36	10/0.77	9,493/0.53	2.20	0.55	0.94
Portola Jr/Sr High	15/1.15	266/0.82	10/0.77	7,952/0.44	3.18	0.80	2.50
Quincy Elementary	18/1.38	314/0.97	13/1.00	12,584/0.70	4.05	1.01	1.94
Quincy Jr/Sr High	22/1.69	300/0.92	20/1.54	17,952/1.00	5.15	1.29	3.00
Warehouse				12,500/0.69	.69	0.69	0.03
District Office				2,880/0.16	.16	0.16	0.06
TOTAL				120,931	29.65	8.07	15.72

A comparison by school site shows that the CASBO formula recommends 8.07 FTE and the district has 15.72 FTE. Given the fact that the Custodial Department also performs maintenance and grounds duties, the combined total appears acceptable. Custodial staff members report that 25 percent to 50 percent of their time entails performing maintenance duties. Accordingly, it is impossible to accurately quantify this data and correlate with the CASBO formula.

A site review indicates that there is an imbalance in custodial hours assigned to some of the schools as noted below.

SCHOOL	FORMULA	DISTRICT STAFFING
Greenville Jr/Sr High	.53	1.56
Chester Jr/Sr High	.84	2.25
Quincy Jr/Sr High	1.29	3.00
Portola Jr/Sr High	.80	2.5

Further analysis is warranted to determine the reason for the excessive custodian assignments.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Evaluate custodial coverage at Chester Junior/Senior High School, Greenville Junior/Senior High School, Quincy Junior/Senior School and Portola Junior/Senior High School to ensure custodial coverage is equitable among school sites.

Custodial Supplies

An analysis was conducted of the consumption of custodial supplies at each school site during the fiscal year 2014-15.

SCHOOL	WAREHOUSE ORDER TOTAL	NUMBER OF STUDENTS	COST PER STUDENT
C Roy Carmichael Elementary	\$2,478.47	368	\$6.73
Quincy Elementary	\$2,644.13	314	\$8.42
Chester Elementary	\$1,834.84	210	\$8.74
Portola Jr/Sr High	\$2,613.92	266	\$9.83
Greenville Jr/Sr High	\$1,450.57	100	\$14.51
Chester Jr/Sr High	\$3,311.56	155	\$21.36
Quincy Jr/Sr High	\$6,661.79	300	\$22.21
Indian Valley Elementary	\$2,664.56	116	\$22.97

It appears that the consumption of supplies at C. Roy Carmichael Elementary School, Quincy Elementary School, Chester Elementary School, Portola Jr/Sr High School and Greenville Jr/Sr High School are within the accepted norm, with an average cost of \$8.76 per student. Further investigation is necessary of expenditures at Indian Valley Elementary, Quincy Jr/Sr High School and Chester Jr/Sr High School where expenditures have an average cost of \$22.13 per student.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Conduct an analysis of the purchase and distribution of custodial supplies at each site.

Custodial Vehicles

FCMAT analyzed the custodial vehicles at the high school sites. The district has no plan for replacement of these vehicles. The following custodial trucks are beyond useful life and should be replaced.

PRIORITY	YEAR	AGE	MAKE	MODEL	VEHICLE LICENSE	DEPT	MILEAGE
1	1976	40	Chevrolet	C-20	E679141	Quincy High	124,818
2	1976	40	Chevrolet	C-20	E679144	Greenville High	90,606
3	1984	32	Ford	Ranger	E477242	Chester High	99,960

Age, rusted fenders, a floorboard that is rusted through, engine and transmission issues justify replacement. An estimated replacement cost is \$8,000 per used light vehicle.

Recommendation

The district should:

1. Replace the vehicles identified above for health and safety reasons.

Grounds Services

Staffing

In many school districts throughout the state of California, school custodians perform general grounds functions, and the district grounds crew maintains athletic fields. This is the division of responsibility at Plumas Unified. The custodial staff is responsible for the mowing, gardening and trimming of the areas between the buildings of the school site and the groundskeeper is responsible for the athletic fields and other specialized open space areas. The district has 1 FTE groundskeeper for the entire district.

CASBO does not have a formula for grounds maintenance; however, the Florida Department of Education has performed extensive research in this area and includes its findings in a document titled, "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 ground maintenance personnel.

The recommended formula for determining the number of groundskeepers is:

- The total acreage of the school facility divided by 40.
- Plus 1.0 FTE groundskeeper.
- Plus 1.0 FTE groundskeeper per 500,000 square feet of athletic fields.

Using Google Earth, FCMAT determined the measurement for each school site's total acreage and square feet of playing fields. By applying the Florida Department of Education formula, it is calculated that the district should have at least 7.76 FTE groundskeepers to be adequately staffed.

DISTRICT TOTALS	DIVISOR	FTE
111.69 Acres	40	2.79
Plus 1.0 FTE Groundskeeper		1.0
1,986,763 Square Feet	500,000	3.97
Groundskeeper Needed		7.76
District Groundskeeper		1
	Deficiency	6.76

The district system of having custodians perform grounds functions such as weed whacking and mowing the inner yards is functioning well. The remaining ground requirement according to the formula is 3.97 FTE. The district has 1 FTE to augment this force, but an additional 1 FTE is recommended. This would permit the Grounds Department to divide responsibility similarly to the Maintenance Department, assigning 1 FTE to be responsible for the east side of the district, and 1 FTE responsible for the west side. In addition, 2 FTE should be hired as extra help during the summer months to address the increased seasonal grounds maintenance.

Satellite & Unused Facilities/Work Orders

One groundskeeper is responsible for the district's 112 acres and 1.98 million square feet of field as well as five other district satellite or unused sites.

SITE	MOWING/WEED-WHACKING PER WEEK
Feather River Middle School	40 minutes
Taylorville Elementary	45 minutes
Old District Office	45 minutes
Tech Building	45 minutes
New District Office	60 minutes

During the year, the groundskeeper also completed 42 work orders issued by the maintenance office on multiple ground maintenance and repair items. This was not considered when determining FTE staffing.

Equipment

The custodial grounds maintenance equipment on site such as blowers, hedgers, tree trimmers, and weed whackers was adequate and in good repair. The groundskeeper who operates out of the maintenance operation center in Quincy has two large Jacobsen riding mowers. One mower is operational, and one is in the shop for repair, but it is unknown when this second mower will become operational.

The district does not have a replacement program for grounds equipment. It should evaluate the existing equipment and establish a grounds equipment replacement budget based on the life cycle of grounds equipment, especially the large riding mowers. The district should also stagger the purchase of grounds equipment so that it can budget for equipment replacement over several years, and various pieces of equipment do not reach the end of their life cycle at the same time. The district should address vehicle and equipment replacement as a total package. For example, the vehicle that pulls the lawn mower trailer is a 1985 Ford F-250 with 293,866 miles that has been evaluated as beyond useful and unsafe on the road. The replacement plan and budget should consider the replacement of the lawn mower and truck that pulls it to various sites.

Training

The district has no formal training program for on-site custodians who perform grounds work. All of the custodial training for grounds is provided through on-the-job experience. The district provides limited safety training in the safe use of chemicals, irrigation start up/shut down, aerating, etc.; however, it is provided intermittently, and not all employees receive it. This is an opportunity to instruct custodians in the latest topics of grounds maintenance, water conservation, drought-resistant vegetation, turf management, and irrigation repair.

Recommendations

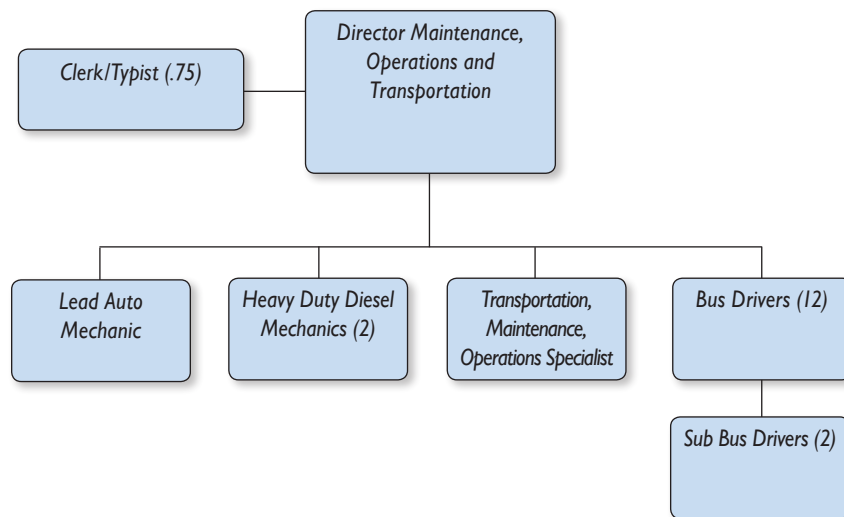
The district should:

1. Add 1 FTE groundskeeper to the district staff.
2. Consider adding 2 FTE as extra help to the Grounds Department during the summer recess period.
3. Establish a grounds equipment replacement budget based on the expected life of grounds equipment. Address the use of Jacobsen riding mowers.

4. Replace the 1985 Ford F-250 truck used to pull the trailer and rider mower.
5. Stagger the purchase of grounds equipment to enable budgeting for equipment replacement over several years.
6. Provide training to the custodial staff who performs groundskeeper duties in maintenance, operations and repair of the site sprinkler systems.

Transportation Organizational Model

The district's transportation program is coordinated under a Maintenance, Operations and Transportation (MOT) model. The program coordinates transportation services for general education, special education and extracurricular activity and co-curricular trips (field trips). At the time of FCMAT's visit, district staff coordinated transportation for 573 students with 12 bus routes. Specifically, approximately 531 general education students are transported on eight home-to-school larger buses, and 42 special education students are transported on four dedicated routes. Using similarly sized transportation programs that FCMAT has studied, the district's MOT model is appropriate. Generally, once transportation programs exceed 15-20 bus routes, districts create a stand-alone transportation department. Essentially, the district's director of MOT and dedicated staff in the MOT Department are directly responsible for coordinating student transportation routing and field trips. The district MOT supervision of transportation coordination is as follows:



The director of MOT supervises transportation with the administrative oversight of the full MOT Department.

Through past budget reductions resulting in staffing reductions, the MOT Department has several staff members sharing duties between all three major functions of the MOT program. This practice is reasonable in clerical support areas; however, district efficiency is decreasing substantially in vehicle maintenance, dispatching and substitute school bus driver coverage. Some district staff members work outside their primary duties for substantial periods of time.

The district's transportation program is small, but almost moderate in size. The director of MOT is essentially the first point of contact and immediate supervisor for dedicated transportation personnel. The MOT specialist position is the office point person between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., and the lead mechanic handles the early morning coordination and route coverage assignments until the transportation specialist arrives at 8:30 a.m. Early morning hours of a pupil transportation program are busy, sometimes hectic, because of the necessity to ensure appropriate driver staffing. Problems must be solved without delay. Examples include the following:

- Substitute drivers must be quickly assigned to route vacancies to ensure routes run on time and prevent students from being late.
- If units were identified for maintenance or mechanical breakdown, morning support staff must confirm that buses are appropriately assigned to cover all routes.

- Support staff must also determine if weather concerns will cause possible route or school start adjustments.
- They must also handle parent phone traffic, which is typically heavy during the morning and afternoon transportation periods.

It is crucial for the transportation offices to have key dispatch type personnel in position during the early morning and afternoon heavy transportation periods. In smaller programs, a transportation dispatcher-scheduler position can often work a split shift with a longer mid-day break to ensure appropriate coverage during heavier periods. A transportation dispatcher position is common in small, moderate and large districts, and as a transportation program increases in scope and size, transportation dispatcher-scheduler positions will increase in number. Smaller programs often have only one transportation dispatcher-scheduler that is assigned a split shift. Additionally, a dispatcher-scheduler would coordinate the district's extracurricular and co-curricular activity trip (field trip) needs, work that is often performed mid-morning or early afternoon before or after the heavier daily home-to-school transportation traffic. Transportation routing for general education is typically more static after the start of the school year; however, the transportation routing for special education students is fluid, with students added, deleted or receiving adjustments as identified by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan. A transportation dispatcher-scheduler will often have assigned routing duties as well. Smaller programs such as the district's would presumably have only one transportation dispatcher-scheduler position working a split shift, with the routing duties shared with a transportation manager position. The district should consider either reclassifying the transportation specialist position to transportation dispatcher-scheduler or adding a transportation dispatcher-scheduler position, either option working a mid-day position split to secure coverage during periods of morning and afternoon transportation service

Years ago, the district supervisory structure included a transportation supervisor who coordinated transportation needs and supervised the program, transportation specialist, driver trainer/bus driver, driving staff and vehicle maintenance staff. A district transportation supervisor position, under the district's MOT model would perform the following duties:

- Coordinate the district's transportation needs, overseeing efficient routing and on-time service, attending IEPs and disseminating confidential student information to the appropriate transportation special education drivers.
- Communicate with the district's special education staff to implement instructions for behavior support plans and work with the district driver instructor to coordinate training lessons.
- Perform route and field study assessments reviewing numerous service items.
- Act as the district's first responder to transportation service and student disciplinary concerns and routing school bus stop questions.
- Review the transportation budget, expenses, and invoices, recommend necessary adjustments and plan accordingly for pupil transportation needs through the district's director of MOT and administration structure.
- Assume primary duty as a liaison between the district's transportation interests and communication with parents/guardians, school site staff and the special education office staff.

At present, the district's MOT director must be the routine contact for parents and district staff for matters of concern, coordination and supervisory contact.

The district should consider adding a transportation manager position. The added support of a transportation manager would free the director of MOT to perform greater administrative oversight and planning for the entire MOT Department. Because of the district's size, it would be beneficial to have a transportation dispatcher-scheduler work a split shift to perform the morning and afternoon duties described above. During this time, this position would partner with the transportation manager to address necessary routing and special education student transportation. The transportation manager would cover the dispatcher-scheduler duties during the mid-day break, as needed, ensuring that there is continual coverage of those duties. The district should immediately explore the advantages of adding a transportation manager position to manage district transportation

Reclassifying the transportation specialist to transportation dispatcher-scheduler and adding the transportation manager position will substantially enhance management of the transportation program in the MOT model and allow for greater oversight by the director for overall MOT and related facility needs. More concentrated leadership will allow the director of MOT to devote more time working with the M&O program foremen and transportation manager allowing time for better planning, communication and team-directed work goals. The adjusted leadership model will allow the district to better coordinate full coverage of the student day by having staff assigned to work shifts from early morning during heavy route operation through late afternoon/early evening heavy route operation. Additionally, leadership and support personnel will be available during the business day to address special education IEP team needs, coordinate field trips and respond timely to staff and parents.

The recommended transportation support staffing under the MOT model should have the following positions:

- 1 FTE transportation manager position
- 1 FTE transportation dispatcher-scheduler

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Consider reclassifying transportation specialist position to transportation dispatcher-scheduler position or adding a transportation dispatcher-scheduler position, either option working a split shift to ensure coverage during periods of morning and afternoon transportation support.
2. Immediately explore the advantages of adding a transportation manager position.

Vehicle Maintenance and Fleet

The department has the following staffing:

- One FTE lead mechanic
- Two FTE heavy-duty mechanics

Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations (13CCR) includes many school transportation vehicle and operational-related regulations. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) has control and oversight of these regulations, and those applying to school buses are included in 13CCR1232. This regulation requires school buses to be inspected every 45 days or 3,000 miles, whichever comes first, creating the highest regulated level of vehicle maintenance for any vehicle on California roads. In addition to local inspections, the CHP Motor Carrier Inspector Unit must annually inspect each bus in the state, performing an annual terminal inspection that includes review of records related to vehicle maintenance, drivers and federal drug and alcohol testing. FCMAT reviewed the district's past two inspections and found that the district received a satisfactory rating, the highest grade issued, for their annual terminal inspection, which includes vehicles (school bus), vehicle maintenance and driver records, as well as both their preemployment and random drug and alcohol testing program. A Motor Carrier inspection of satisfactory indicates compliance with laws and regulations governing pupil transportation and indicates a reasonable level of safety of the pupil transportation operation.

The district owns 30 school buses, 29 district support service vehicles and 78 pieces of varying types of site support and turf equipment (district fleet source documentation). The average age of the district school bus fleet is 11 years. The district has done remarkably well, achieving school bus replacement and fueling infrastructure funding through Proposition 1-B (Prop 1-B), Assembly Bill 2566 (AB 2566) and Assembly Bill 2920 (AB 2920). Most of the district's recently acquired school bus fleet is fueled alternatively with propane. Approximately 23 school buses have been replaced or purchased within the last 10 years. The district has secured approximately \$2 million in fleet and fueling infrastructure funding by aggressively pursuing grant opportunities. As a result, the district realized reduced vehicle maintenance operational expense. FCMAT was not provided any evidence of a documented district support vehicle replacement plan. Although the district has done remarkably well with school bus purchases through grant opportunities, FCMAT was not provided with a documented bus replacement schedule for district planning.

The district vehicle mechanic ratio per vehicle is approximately 20 units per mechanic. This ratio does not include district site support and turf support equipment, only school buses and support vehicles. Based on the mechanic-to-fleet ratio most commonly observed by FCMAT and general industry best practices, the district operates at a suggested maximum ratio of vehicle maintenance staff based on the fleet size. In addition, the district's three vehicle maintenance personnel maintain the district's site and turf support equipment. The staffing level of district vehicle mechanics is appropriate.

The mechanic shifts are arranged so that a vehicle mechanic is scheduled to be on site during the primary operation hours of the district's transportation program. However, all three of the district's vehicle maintenance staff are also licensed school bus drivers. Staff reported that along with one M&O staff member who is also a licensed school bus driver, the three vehicle mechanics regularly drive as substitute school bus drivers. One vehicle mechanic drives regularly because of a vacant driver position. In addition, three other individuals drive at least once weekly and often several times a week because staffing shortages and the high volume of day field trips from spring until the end of the school year. As stated above, the district operates with the appropriate shop staff ratio based on the number of fleet vehicles. However, it is at the maximum, if not slightly over, the recommended

number of vehicles per mechanic. A review of the district's preventive maintenance program and records found that the staff meets the required 45-day/3,000 mile school bus safety check requirement, but the district does not have a preventive maintenance program for the bus fleet. The district staff tries to address oil and lube intervals during the regularly scheduled school bus safety check routine. A review of the vehicle maintenance records found that intervals are sometimes extended between oil changes, and noted repairs are addressed during the scheduled school bus safety checks. It is not unusual for buses to be nonoperational waiting for repair. District support fleet vehicles are not on a preventive maintenance schedule, and long intervals of time and mileage are evident between oil and lube servicing. Because of the number of district spare buses and the modernization of the district school bus fleet, the district has had few major vehicle repairs, but this will change over time. Without a robust preventive maintenance program, the district school bus fleet will prematurely wear.

Of major concern is the lack of a routine maintenance program for the district's non-school bus support fleet. Vehicle maintenance staff members are used as substitute bus drivers too often, forcing them to postpone vehicle maintenance work. The number of working mechanics is not adequate for a fleet of this size if the district continues this practice. The shop mechanic-to-fleet-number ratio is among the highest FCMAT has seen in California. Based on this ratio and the workflow practices discussed above, the district should add a fourth mechanic. The district should aggressively review its school bus driver recruitment efforts to ensure all permanent school route positions are filled. In addition, the district should consider the benefit of having one permanent back-up school bus driver in addition to on-call substitute drivers.

The district recently ceased utilizing a widely accepted and versatile industry standard vehicle maintenance software system to reduce annual software expense. It purchased TransTracs, another industry standard pupil transportation software package, that includes a vehicle maintenance software module, but problems arose during the transition. The conversion process reportedly resulted in substantial vehicle data loss. Although staff has worked to enter inventory parts data into the inventory system, the process appears problematic. Staff has not had the sufficient time to address the issues surrounding the transition of the software. It is unclear whether the new software will address the district's needs. The district should dedicate the necessary resources through its technology staff and district vehicle maintenance staff to ensure the success of the new TransTracs software.

The district leases four buses to the Sierra-Plumas Joint Unified School District and provides maintenance to those buses as needed. Staff interviews indicate this arrangement has minimal impact on day-to-day duties, and staff can provide this service to the neighboring district.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Aggressively review school bus driver recruitment efforts to ensure all permanent school bus driver positions are filled.
2. Consider the benefit of having one permanent back-up school bus driver in addition to on-call substitute drivers.
3. Dedicate the necessary resources through the technology staff and district vehicle maintenance staff to ensure the success of the new TransTracs software.
4. Institute a bus and support vehicle replacement program and establish a budget to support those efforts.

Driver Training, Safety and Compliance

The California requirements for school bus driver training are contained in Education Code Section 40080-40089. School bus drivers must receive a minimum of 20 hours of classroom training in all units of the Instructor's Manual for California's Bus Driver's Training Course. A minimum of 20 hours of behind-the-wheel training is required from the Instructor's Behind-the-Wheel Guide for California's Bus Driver's Training Course. School bus drivers must also complete a minimum of 10 hours of in-service training each year to maintain their special certificate validity. Special classroom training is required in the last year of certificate validity to renew. All testing is performed through a specialized officer (or trained civilian) at each California Highway Patrol Office. The license and special certificate are issued by the DMV. Both classroom and behind-the-wheel training require many more hours to teach all of the units in the referenced manuals. Most school districts teach a minimum of 35 hours in the classroom and spend at least that number or more hours behind the wheel. All driver-training records must be kept in compliance with laws and regulations. A state-certified school bus driver instructor performs driver training, but behind the wheel training can also be provided by a state-certified delegated behind the wheel instructor. The latter position cannot perform classroom training and cannot document instruction.

FCMAT performed a sample audit of the district safety and training records and found no discrepancies. Driver records were in good order, appropriately documented and maintained in a secured locked area.

Years ago, the California Department of Education, Office of School Transportation established and authorized the use of behind-the-wheel driver instructors. These instructors cannot instruct original drivers, renewal drivers or perform in-service training for California school bus drivers. They work under the supervision of a state-certified school bus driver instructor and can only perform behind-the-wheel-type instruction. A state-certified instructor must sign the official T-01 training certificate.

A transportation operation the size of Plumas Unified should have 1 FTE state-certified school bus driver instructor with a dual position of bus driver. The district has a shared position for a district clerk/typist, school bus driver and driver instructor; however, the position commits only 1.5 hours daily to bus driver instruction, in-service and records maintenance. Additionally, the position is only assigned a 10-month contract extending one week after the dismissal of schools and starting one before the beginning of the annual school year. It is difficult for this staff member to manage the separation of duties and dedicate the necessary time to the tasks of school bus instruction. The district's certified school bus instructor supports training needs, records maintenance and in-service training requirements for the 17 staff members who hold school bus certificates as well as an additional five drivers for the district. To ensure that all staff receives the minimum 10 hours of annual in-service training, the district instructor targets the back-to-school meetings where training time is dedicated to appropriate in-service topics. In addition, the district instructor attempts to facilitate at least one renewal course annually for staff members who need to renew their school bus certificate. The instructor does not have sufficient time to perform effective annual driver ride checks and cannot perform suggested monthly or quarterly in-service programs as to provide staff with ongoing regular in-service time. In addition, the instructor maintains and monitors the DMV Employer Driver Pull Notice records, ensuring they are annually reviewed and noting critical or serious driving issues of record and maintaining the records in accordance with the CHP terminal inspection guidelines.

Sufficient time is not provided for the district instructor to perform ride-along check rides of the district staff, pre- and post-accident retraining and monthly or quarterly in-service programs. The district does not require a full-time dedicated school bus driver instructor; however, creating an 11 to 12 month 50-50 split for a position titled driver-instructor/school bus driver would allow the district to meet its driver instruction needs more thoroughly. The district should evaluate its position of clerk/typist/school bus driver/driver instructor and consider creating a driver instructor/school bus driver classification.

The ability to have multiple staff capable or prepared to advance into a driver instructor position is often crucial in a small district. Many school districts have successfully implemented the behind-the-wheel position discussed above on an as-needed basis. State-certified school bus instructors spend a tremendous amount of time performing behind-the-wheel, one-on-one instruction. To achieve greater staffing efficiency yet have the necessary instructional staff for behind-the-wheel instruction, districts have permitted bus drivers to work in a behind-the-wheel-instructor capacity *only when needed*. The district could provide a slight pay differential to be used only when the staff person works as a behind-the-wheel instructor. Additionally, the district benefits from providing staff with some additional training and responsibility for the important duties of school bus instructor and always has a possible candidate prepared to fill the position of school bus instructor by supporting participation and certification by the Department of Education, Office of Transportation Instructors Academy program.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Evaluate the position of clerk/typist/school bus driver/driver instructor and consider the benefits of creating a driver instructor/school bus driver classification.
2. Establish and support one school bus driver position as a combination driver/behind-the-wheel instructor to be utilized only as necessary for the latter part of the position.

Routing Methodology and Efficiency

The last several years of the Great Recession drastically affected school districts, and at Plumas Unified, this was complicated by declining enrollment. However, business support services have done a remarkable job of reducing transportation support expense. Although general education transportation is not mandated as a related student service under the Education Code, the district's rural topography, with students spread across large distances, necessitates general education transportation.

The district is spread across the entire county with schools generally located in four geographical areas with very large identified attendance areas for each school. By school board direction described in district Board Policy 3540 Business and Non-instructional Operations (BP 3540), the district has authorized general education transportation as necessary to ensure student access to their schools of attendance. However, the board also directed this service only to the extent that the district provides for transportation services based on the continuing assessment of financial resources. The district has steadily reduced general education transportation by eliminating transportation in remote areas with a low student participation level. The district provides minimal transportation for general education, with only two school buses serving each of the general geographic areas. The distance between the west side and east side of the district is greater than 80 miles, and considerably higher without using the main highway from east to west. The eight general education routes are scheduled according to total route time, allowing each to traverse into the four geographic areas of Greenville and Chester to the west side of the county, Quincy and surrounding areas in the middle of the county and Portola to the east side. FCMAT believes that short of fully eliminating general education transportation, the district operates at a minimal and optimal level of transportation for a rural mountainous single-county district.

Additionally, the district operates only four special education school bus routes, with each unit essentially serving the four geographic areas noted above. At the time of this study, the district transported approximately 42 special education students with transportation identified in their IEPs as a necessary related service. The district is obligated to provide transportation for these students. Based on the reported number of district special education students of approximately 280, the district is transporting a ratio of 15%, slightly more than the average based on prior FCMAT assessments. Based on the district's rural topography and the distance between district schools/programs, the slightly elevated percentage of district special education students receiving transportation support does not appear unreasonable.

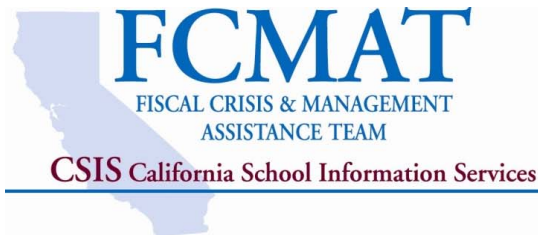
The district is attempting to curtail fleet operational expense by permitting bus park-outs at specific school parking areas in the Greenville, Chester and Portola communities. School bus park-outs are common in large geographic communities and allow for a district to save operational expense by eliminating daily mileage traveling between a bus terminal and an assigned route location, reducing fuel cost, labor cost and ensure that district buses are kept close to the assigned route for student transportation. This model allows for labor and operational savings and most likely benefits the district's timely routing for students during poor weather.

FCMAT does not recommend any further efficiency for the district's routing model based on the directed board policy. It is also important for the district to maintain MOE with respect to state revenue. Although the state transportation revenue has been folded into the district LCFF, pupil transportation revenue is provided to the district based on its ability to substantiate that it spends at least the amount provided by the state on pupil transportation. Ultimately, the district can easily substantiate this with only the mandated special education transportation program expense.

Appendices

Appendix A

Study Agreement



**FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM
STUDY AGREEMENT
March 3, 2016**

The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the team, and the Plumas Unified School District, hereinafter referred to as the district, mutually agree as follows:

1. BASIS OF AGREEMENT

The team provides a variety of services to local educational agencies 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

Plumas Unified School District is requesting FCMAT to:

1. Conduct an organizational and staffing review of the following district departments and make recommendations for staffing improvements or reductions, if any.
 - a. Maintenance and Operations
 - b. Transportation
2. Evaluate the current work flow and distribution of functions in each of the above departments and make recommendations for improved efficiency, if any.
3. Review the operational processes and procedures for each of the above departments and make recommendations for improved efficiency, if any.

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.
3. Exit Meeting - The team will hold an exit meeting at the conclusion of the on-site review to inform the district of significant findings and recommendations to that point.
4. Exit Letter – Approximately 10 days after the exit meeting, the team will issue an exit letter briefly memorializing the topics discussed in the exit meeting.
5. Draft Report - Electronic copies of a preliminary draft report will be delivered to the district's administration for review and comment.
6. 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.
7. Follow-Up Support – If requested, FCMAT will return to the district at no cost six to 12 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. FCMAT will work with the district on a mutually convenient time to return for follow-up support that is no sooner than eight months and no longer than 18 months after completion of the study.

3. PROJECT PERSONNEL

The study team will be supervised by Michael H. Fine, Chief Administrative Officer, Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office. The study team may also include:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>A. To be determined</i> | <i>FCMAT Staff</i> |
| <i>B. To be determined</i> | <i>FCMAT Consultant</i> |
| <i>C. To be determined</i> | <i>FCMAT Consultant</i> |

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 Education Code (EC) 42127.8(d)(1) shall be as follows:

- A. \$500 per day for each staff member while on site, conducting fieldwork at other locations, presenting reports, and participating in meetings. The cost of independent FCMAT consultants will be billed at their actual daily rate for all work performed.
- 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 2A, the total cost of the study will not exceed \$20,000.

- 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. Policies, regulations and prior reports that address the study scope.
 - 2. Current or proposed organizational charts.
 - 3. Current and two prior years' audit reports.
 - 4. 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.
 - 5. Documents should be provided in advance of field work; any delay in the receipt of the requested documents may affect the start date and/or completion 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 and will be established upon the receipt of a signed study agreement:

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

7. **COMMENCEMENT, TERMINATION AND COMPLETION OF WORK**

FCMAT will begin work as soon as it has assembled an available and appropriate study team consisting of FCMAT staff and independent consultants, taking into consideration other jobs FCMAT has previously undertaken and assignments from the state. The team will work expeditiously to complete its work and deliver its report, subject to the cooperation of the district and any other parties from which, in the team's judgment, it must obtain information. Once the team has completed its fieldwork, it will proceed to prepare a preliminary draft report and a final report. Prior to completion of field work, the district may terminate its request for service and will be responsible for all costs incurred by FCMAT to the date of termination under Section 4 (Project Costs). If the district does not provide written notice of termination prior to completion of fieldwork, the team will complete its work and deliver its report and the district will be responsible for the full costs. The district understands and agrees that FCMAT is a state agency and all FCMAT reports are published on the FCMAT website and made available to interested parties in state government. In the absence of extraordinary circumstances, FCMAT will not withhold preparation, publication and distribution of a report once fieldwork has been completed, and the district shall not request that it do so.

8. **INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR**

FCMAT is an independent contractor and is not an employee or engaged in any manner with the district. The manner in which FCMAT's services are rendered shall be within its sole control and discretion.

Appendix B

Job Description for Head Custodian and Custodian

HEAD CUSTODIAN

Definition:

“Performs semi-skilled work in maintaining, repairing, and improving school facilities; operates the heating system of the plant.”

Essential Functions:

- Plant, fertilize, and irrigate shrubs, trees and lawn; mow and trim the lawn
- Install sprinkler systems and perform semi-skilled plumbing; free drains or pipes
- Perform semi-skilled work in maintaining, repairing and improving school facilities
- Paint or direct the painting of interiors and some exterior portions of buildings
- Perform rough carpentry
- Repair concrete walks
- Patch roof
- Replace broken glass
- Perform semi-skilled electrical repair
- Inspect buildings and report dangerous, unsightly, or inefficient conditions; or see that such conditions are corrected
- Operate the heating system of the plant, including breakdown maintenance on the boilers; replace refractory on Cyclotherm boilers; adjust heating system to provide maximum efficiency
- Seek the assistance of the supervisor of buildings and grounds when needed
- Maintain computerized heating system

CUSTODIAN

Definition:

“Performs routine grounds maintenance and minor maintenance work for an assigned school building or group of buildings, office space, or grounds area; may act as a helper to a skilled maintenance worker.”

Essential Functions:

- Plant, fertilize and irrigate shrubs, trees, and lawn; mow and trim the lawn.
- Make minor repairs or assist a skilled worker and/or head custodian in maintaining, repairing, and improving school facilities.
- Perform incidental painting of interiors and some exterior portions of buildings.
- Replace lights.