

Vallejo City Unified School District

ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN
November 2004



**Administrative Agent
Larry E. Reider
Office of Kern County
Superintendent of Schools**

Chief Executive Officer
Thomas E. Henry

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Introduction

Senate Bill 1190 (Chapter 53, Statutes of 2004), which was signed into law on June 21, 2004, required the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to assume all the rights, duties and powers of the Governing Board of the Vallejo City Unified School District (VCUSD) and to appoint, in consultation with the Solano County Superintendent of Schools, an administrator to act on his behalf in exercising authority over the school district. The bill appropriated \$60 million as an emergency loan to the Vallejo City USD, and authorized the school district to sell property owned by the district and use the proceeds from the sale to reduce or retire the emergency loan. The bill, except as specified, requires the school district to bear the costs associated with the implementation of the bill's provisions, and prohibits the district from being eligible for financial hardship assistance under the Leroy F. Greene School Facilities Act of 1998 from June 2004 through June 2006.

The bill further authorized the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) to conduct comprehensive assessments and improvement plans for the Vallejo City Unified School District in five major operational areas: community relations/governance, pupil achievement, personnel management, fiscal management, and facilities management. It was the intent of the Legislature that the Governing Board, staff and community of Vallejo City USD fully participate in this assessment and improvement process.

Assembly Bill 2756 (Chapter 52, Statutes of 2004), which was signed into law on June 21, 2004, made substantive changes to the provisions governing the existing law that provided emergency apportionments for school districts that have become insolvent. As AB 2756 preceded SB 1190, the district is subject to the changed provisions. One of the changes included Section 41328 of the Education Code which was amended to read, "The qualifying district shall bear 100% of all costs associated with implementing this article, including the activities of the County Office Fiscal Crisis and Management Team or regional team."

FCMAT assessment teams conducted on-site fieldwork in the district in August and September 2004, meeting extensively with staff, parents and community members. This report, dated November 1, 2004, provides a comprehensive assessment of the district utilizing 415 professional and legal standards of school district operations, provides baseline data of the district's current status in meeting these standards, and provides recommendations as an improvement plan for successfully addressing these standards.

This report also provides identified criteria and an implementation plan, based upon a smaller subset of standards for the district's recovery. In collaboration with the California Department of Education and the State-appointed Administrator, FCMAT identified a subset of standards in each operational area for the district to address to return to local governance. These standards were selected as having the most probability, if successfully implemented, to assist the district with recovery.

Senate Bill 1190 requires FCMAT to provide six-month reports monitoring the district's progress in implementing the recommendations of the identified subset of standards and calls for the reports to be issued in May 2005, November 2005 and May 2006.

Study Guidelines

FCMAT's approach to implementing the statutory requirements of SB 1190 is based upon a commitment to a standards-based, independent and external review of the Vallejo City Unified School District's operations. FCMAT performed the initial assessment of the district and developed the improvement plan in collaboration with three other external providers selected through a competitive process. Professionals from throughout California contributed their knowledge and applied the identified legal and professional standards to the specific local conditions found in the Vallejo City Unified School District. This initial assessment, entitled Vallejo City Unified School District Assessment and Improvement Plan, November 1, 2004, was presented to the district on November 1, 2004.

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

1. Use of Professional and Legal Standards

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

In order to participate in the process of the Vallejo City Unified School District review, potential providers responded to a Request for Applications (RFA) that identified these standards as the basis of assessment and improvement. Moreover, the providers were required to demonstrate how the FCMAT-identified standards would be incorporated into their work. It is these standards on which the improvement plans for the Vallejo City Unified School District were based. The standards, while identified specifically for the Vallejo City USD, are benchmarks that could be readily utilized as an indication of success for any school district in California.

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

Not Implemented (Scaled Score of 0)

There is no significant evidence that the standard is implemented.

Partially Implemented (Scaled Score of 1 through 7)

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

1. Some design or research regarding the standard is in place that supports preliminary development. (Scaled Score of 1)

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

Fully Implemented (Scaled Score of 8-10)

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

8. All elements of the standard are fully and substantially implemented and are sustainable. (Scaled Score of 8)
9. All elements of the standard are fully and substantially implemented and have been sustained for a full school year. (Scaled Score of 9)
10. All elements of the standard are fully implemented, are being sustained with high quality, are being refined, and have a process for ongoing evaluation. (Scaled Score of 10)

2. Conduct an External and Independent Assessment

FCMAT employed an external and independent assessment process in the development of the Vallejo City Unified School District assessment and improvement plans. FCMAT’s reports represent findings and improvement plans based on the external and independent assessments from various professional agencies. The following agencies assisted in the November 1, 2004 report:

- California School Boards Association (CSBA) – Community Relations/Governance
- Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) – Pupil Achievement
- School Services of California (SSC) – Personnel Management
- School Services of California (SSC) – Facilities Management
- Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) – Financial Management

Collectively, the three professional agencies that assisted FCMAT constitute FCMAT’s providers in the assessment process. Their external and independent assessments serve as the primary basis for the reliability, integrity and credibility of the review.

3. Utilize Multiple Measures of Assessment

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

4. Empower Staff and Community

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

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

5. Engage Local, State and National Agencies

It is critical to involve various local, state and national agencies in the recovery of the district. This was emphasized through the Request for Applications (RFA) process, whereby state-recognized agencies were selected as partners to assist with the assessment and improvement process. The California Department of Education, city and county interests, professional organizations, and community-based organizations all have expressed and shown a desire to assist and participate in the improvement of the Vallejo City Unified School District.

Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

For the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team – Administration and Report Writing

Roberta Mayor
Laura Haywood

For the California School Boards Association – Community Relations/Governance

Scott Plotkin	Paul Richman
Ben Bartos	Davis Campbell
Mark Dyer	Stephanie Farland
Martin Gonzalez	Diane Green
Holly Jacobson	

For the Community Training and Assistance Center – Pupil Achievement

Donald Ingwerson	Maribeth Smith
Sara Accornero	Peggie Brown
Barbara Helms	Teen Makowski

For the School Services of California – Personnel Management

Carol Berg	Sheila Bua
John Gray	Deberie Gomez

For the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team – Financial Management

Michelle Plumbtree	Barbara Dean
Anthony Bridges	Michele McClowry
Phil Scrivano	Linda Grundhoffer

For the School Services of California – Facilities Management

Ron Bennett	Curt Pollock
Paul Woods	Fred Good
Benjamin Dolinka	Teresa Romero

Background

The Vallejo Community

The City of Vallejo, founded in the late 1840s, is situated in Solano County at the northern end of San Francisco Bay, near Interstate 80 and north of Oakland, approximately 60 miles west of Sacramento. The city, which at one time served as the state capital, today boasts a diverse population of approximately 120,000; approximately 30% of the population consists of individuals under the age of 18 and 11% are age 65 or older. Approximately 10% of the population and 8% of all families fall below the poverty line.

For nearly 150 years, the primary economic engine of the community was the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, where hundreds of U.S. naval ships and nuclear submarines were built. Many residents (and generations of residents) were employed at Mare Island, and the city was generally characterized as a vibrant “blue collar, middle class” area. In 1996, however, the Mare Island shipyard closed. The effects of this closure are still being felt in terms of the city’s identity, as well as its economy. Since that time, Vallejo is frequently characterized as a community in “transition.” New industries and employment opportunities are a priority since the closure of the shipyard. While the area offers affordable housing compared with some other Bay Area locations, home prices in Vallejo have escalated in recent years.

In addition to economic matters, concerns about safety are prominent in Vallejo, especially over the past decade. This has been fueled in part by a highly publicized incident involving the abduction of a child. The community's concerns extend to the safety of children and staff at school sites.

The Vallejo City Unified School District

Vallejo’s public schools date back to the 1850s. The district estimates that for the 2004-05 school year, total enrollment will be approximately 18,100 students, not including adult education and preschool enrollments. The California Department of Education shows the student ethnicity for 2003-04 as 34.7% African American, 23.5% Hispanic, 19.6% Filipino, 15.1% white, 3.4% Asian, 2.2% Pacific Islander, 0.6% Native American and 0.9% multiple or no response. According to the district, 3,500 students (or approximately 19%) are classified as English learners (EL), and another 2,500 students (approximately 14%) are non-native English speakers who have been classified as Fluent English Proficient (FEP). Approximately 8,000 students (or 44%) are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, an indicator often used as a gauge to assess the socioeconomic level of the student population.

The district consists of 16 elementary schools (K-5), four middle schools (6-8) and four high schools, one of which serves as an alternative school. There is one charter school within the district, four childcare/preschool sites and an adult school. All the district’s schools serve a diverse student population.

According to the district, there are approximately 900 full-time equivalent teaching or administrative positions in Vallejo City USD, and 900 classified staff full- and part-time positions. These totals may have fluctuated significantly due to budget cuts and reorganization during the past year.

The Vallejo City USD is one of the largest employers in the city. Many individuals who work in the district were born and/or raised in Vallejo and attended district schools, although it is estimated that as many as half of all current teachers do not reside in the city of Vallejo.

School Board Elections

The Vallejo City USD Governing Board consists of five members, each elected at-large by the entire community. Members serve four-year terms. Two of the current members are serving their first terms; two are in their third terms; and one is in the fourth term (though not consecutively). Two incumbent members were re-elected in November 2003. The current five members of the board have served together since December 2001.

In terms of elections, the local community is not regarded as particularly activist. Some community groups and individuals do get involved in supporting campaigns by endorsing candidates, contributing money, making phone calls, walking precincts and/or displaying signs. The local Chamber of Commerce and Realtors Association support campaigns. The Vallejo Education Association (VEA), which represents all teachers and certificated staff in the district (with the exception of certificated managers and supervisors), is regarded as one of the most influential political organizations in the district, although several members of the current board were not endorsed by the VEA. The district's classified employees union also engages in campaigns, as does the administrators association. The local newspaper, the *Vallejo Times-Herald*, also endorses candidates. Some board members report having raised \$12,000-\$15,000 for past campaigns. In the November 2001 election, the highest vote-getter received 7,954 votes. In the November 2003 election, the highest vote-getter received 9,833 votes, or 40% of the total votes cast. By comparison, in the same November 2003 election, the city's mayor won with 7,259 votes, representing 48% of the total votes cast.

School District Leadership and the Fiscal Crisis

Many people interviewed as part of this study believe that the Vallejo City USD enjoyed a relatively smooth-functioning period as recently as the early 1990s. They describe a system that had a foundation of dedicated and innovative educators both at the district office and at school sites. The district operated its own well-regarded staff development center, and partnerships between the district and community were described as numerous. At that same time, however, others felt that the needs of African American students were not being adequately raised or addressed.

The teacher strike of 1993 is regarded by many as a watershed event in the district's recent history. The strike caused damage to relationships and an erosion of trust that is still felt to this day in many corners of the district and in the community.

After the strike, a recall effort and board elections led to changes in the composition of the board. In 1995, a new superintendent was hired to replace Dr. Dale Welsh, who had served in the position since 1987. Following an interim superintendent, Superintendent Steve Goldstone was hired and served from 1995 to 2000. His term is regarded by many as a time when the district moved forward with a strategic plan and attempted to focus on closing the achievement gap. During his tenure, the community also mobilized to pass a \$133 million school facilities bond (Measure A in 1997), with 72% support.

Feelings run equally strong among others on staff and in the community who believe the mid to late 1990s marked the beginning of serious fiscal difficulties in the district. In particular, the administration at that time is perceived by many as having given the teachers union whatever it wanted. The administration and employee organizations had participated in an interest-based bargaining process in an attempt to heal the wounds from the strike and board recall election. A contract that is characterized by outside school management officials as excessively restrictive was negotiated and approved during this post-strike period. This contract and subsequent ones included formulas that require large portions of new state revenues to go directly to compensation. In addition, per the contract, 100 percent of medical benefits are covered by the district, and managers report many other provisions that limit the amount of time teachers may commit outside of the actual classroom for things such as staff meetings, professional development and participation in evening-time school activities.

During Superintendent Goldstone's tenure, FCMAT was twice commissioned to provide management assistance to the district. In late 1997, FCMAT was asked to review the operations and functions of the district's facilities and maintenance/operations department. The district, having passed its general obligation bond Measure A, wanted to ensure that the facilities department could effectively manage its building and modernization program. The findings, issued in June 1998, indicated that the department suffered from a lack of qualified leadership, low morale, a lack of appropriate levels of custodial and customer service, and a history, perceived by staff, of questionable hiring practices. FCMAT made a number of recommendations, including a reorganization of the maintenance and operations management staff.

In late 1998, FCMAT was asked to review the district's Personnel Department and its operational efficiency and level of services. The FCMAT report issued in March 1999 indicated that the personnel department organization and staffing were not appropriate to provide the level of services necessary for the district, that there was a general lack of teamwork, and that the technology software system was not fully operational, resulting in the maintenance of manual systems and redundancy of staff effort. Recommendations were made in the report to address these findings.

Following another board election, however, the board terminated Superintendent Goldstone in 2000 in an action that several people in the community and within the district felt was not adequately explained to the public; deep divisions both in support and opposition to the former district leader persist to this day. A second interim superintendent, Dr. Peter Corona, was employed for a time during 2000-01, until the board hired Dr. Gladys Philips-Evans, who began in January 2001.

Concerns about the district's financial health persisted. In particular, the district continued to fluctuate between positive and qualified fiscal certification, in part because the district routinely did not achieve a 3% budget reserve as required by law. In summer 2001, a review commissioned by the Solano County Office of Education and conducted by School Services of California, Inc., identified serious weaknesses in the district's fiscal practices and operations, including inadequate systems controls and a need to be aware of a downward trend in enrollment.

District and Solano County Office staff attempted to work together to resolve these fiscal concerns, and the Vallejo City USD board began making some difficult decisions in an effort to reduce expenditures and maintain the district's solvency. Unfortunately, by the summer and fall of 2003, despite the district's staff reporting that the district would show a balanced budget and the 3% reserve, the Solano County Superintendent of Schools disapproved the district's 2003-04 adopted budget.

Subsequently, another series of meetings between Solano County Office and school district staff was held to try to address the latest fiscal issues raised by the county office. In mid-September, with the issues still unresolved, the Solano County Superintendent of Schools formally disapproved the district's fiscal recovery plan and identified steps the district must take to remedy its situation. A fiscal advisor to the district was appointed at that time. Throughout the fall and winter the district again attempted to work with the Solano County Office of Education and the fiscal advisor. A number of additional budget cuts were approved by the board; however, by that time the total annual deficit was projected to be in excess of \$20 million, necessitating that the district seek a loan from the state and submit to state takeover provisions as part of the requirements of receiving the loan. When confronted with the magnitude of the crisis, the Vallejo City USD board also took personnel actions at the highest levels.

Many staff and community members expressed a high level of anger and distrust toward the board and district leadership, especially when it was publicly revealed that the district's financial situation had become so dire that a state takeover would be necessary. A view expressed by some is that the board was not providing appropriate oversight of the district's finances. Others, however, express a viewpoint that while it was well known the district had been in financial difficulty for years, the board was not properly kept informed of the severity of the situation by top staff, including the chief financial officer and superintendent. There are strong indications that key financial information was misrepresented or withheld from the board, which prevented the board from fulfilling its oversight role.

School District Culture

Many individuals within the district were repeatedly acknowledged by interviewees for their dedication and for their important contributions to students. However, in the past decade or so, the Vallejo City USD as an organization seems to have struggled mightily not only with fiscal matters, but with communications, with districtwide systems of accountability, and with efforts to actively involve a wide cross-section of parents and community members.

Individuals interviewed for this study often made comments such as: the district leadership has not consistently invited or valued community participation; there has historically been a poor flow of communication; there is still a network in Vallejo where certain individuals and campuses receive preferential treatment because of personal or familial relationships; there is not enough accountability; many active parents choose to send their children to private schools or other public schools outside of Vallejo; and the teachers' union has too much influence on district decisions.

Individual staff interviewed for this study also frequently described a culture where people or departments often tried to handle things on their own, or where individual site leaders were left to themselves to interpret and enforce policies and pursue instructional and outreach efforts,

often with little support or coordination from the central office. Many individuals on staff felt that in recent years district priorities shifted or were not followed up on by the leadership. There were also feelings that people who were expected to have answers didn't have them or the answers weren't accurate.

Results of surveys conducted for this study confirmed some concerns regarding parent and community support. Support by the community-at-large is perceived as decreasing, and it is felt that the board has encountered increased public criticism and hostility during the past few years. Teachers and classified staff are split in their opinions regarding the level of parent and community support for the district and for their own school, although both groups perceive a higher level of support for their school site. The level of support is generally not viewed as having increased in the past few years.

These concerns affect employee morale. When asked in a survey what grade most staff would assign to indicate their overall satisfaction with teaching/working in the district, teachers gave an average grade of D+, and classified staff and district office staff gave an average grade of C-. Satisfaction with their particular school/department was higher at about a C+ for teachers and C for both classified staff and district office staff. In addition, the majority of teachers and classified staff disagreed or strongly disagreed that they feel safe at their school.

Despite these negative characterizations, FCMAT also observed a great deal of optimism. The majority of teachers (52.3%), classified staff (52.9%) and district office staff (59.5%) surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that they are optimistic about the future of the district. 23.5% of teachers, 19.0% of classified staff and 19.2% of district office staff disagreed or strongly disagreed; the rest were neutral or had no opinion. It is evident that there are many dedicated individuals within the community, on the staff and in leadership positions who are genuinely committed to moving forward in an effort to better serve students and strengthen the Vallejo City USD.

Summary of Principal Findings and Recommendations

Section Two of this report provides an in-depth review of the current operational status of the Vallejo City Unified School District on the 415 professional and legal standards used to assess the district. The following is a summary of the general findings and recommendations that are presented in greater detail by operational area in Section Two of this report.

Additionally, this section of the comprehensive review attempts to provide a real-time view of the current fiscal status of the district under state administration. There are significant issues which, if left unchecked, will further exacerbate the fiscal status and recovery of the organization. A brief analysis of those issues follows.

Status Analysis

Cash Flow

The purpose of a state emergency apportionment is to provide a school district with enough cash to maintain its essential expenditures during the period of budget recovery. Budget recovery, or the cessation of deficit spending, the rebuilding of reserves, and the creation of a positive fund balance, may take multiple years. Cash flow, however, must be actively and effectively managed on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. The management of cash flow requires an analysis of available cash in all funds, a cash flow analysis by month for the entire fiscal year, and the management of the timing of all district expenditures. Common among districts receiving emergency appropriations is the freezing of all non-essential expenditures, direct management of payables, and the implementation of interfund borrowing to assist in cash flow. FCMAT is concerned that there is not a sufficient focus on cash flow issues related to the district.

Average Daily Attendance and Enrollment

Student enrollment translates to revenue for the district. During the completion of this initial review, the Vallejo district suffered a significant loss in enrollment as measured at the end of the first school month. The loss in subsequent year ADA will mean a loss in revenue for the district of approximately \$5 million. The district may build its current year budget on current or prior year ADA, whichever is greater. However, in fiscal year 2005-06 more expenditures must be reduced to compensate for the current loss in enrollment. The district must do a more complete and accurate job of projecting enrollment. In addition, the district's attendance-to-enrollment ratio is quite low. The administration should immediately develop plans to mitigate this issue. A reasonable target for the district would be a 95 percent ADA-to-enrollment ratio.

Sale of Property

Senate Bill 1190 provides the district the latitude to sell unused property and utilize the proceeds from the sale to retire the emergency apportionment. The administration should expedite the sale of excess property in order to assist the cash flow needs of the district during the period of fiscal recovery.

Collective Bargaining

The current bargaining agreement, inherited by the State Administrator, includes a salary increase for staff that the district cannot currently afford without an immediate cut in other expenses. Administration should immediately enter into negotiations with the various bargaining units

in order to reach common agreements on the current fiscal status of the district and the impact of collective bargaining on that fiscal status.

Multiyear Budget Projection

The multiyear financial projections for the district, developed by the fiscal advisor and the county office of education, should be constantly updated, reviewed for accuracy and augmented to reflect changes in budget assumptions. The district's multiyear projections should not include budget reductions, in the projected years, that have not been implemented. FCMAT will provide the district with an independent, externally developed multiyear projection that will be based on the audited actuals from the 2003-04 fiscal year. This multiyear projection will be included as a part of the first six-month report of the comprehensive review.

Budget Development for Fiscal Year 2005-06

Budget development for fiscal year 2005-06 should commence as soon as is possible. It is essential that the administration develop a budget development timeline that is well in advance of the typical district process. This timeline should also include the development and completion of the Multiyear Financial Recovery Plan in advance of July 1, 2005. The primary budget development criteria should include a plan to eliminate deficit spending, balance all other funds of the district, rebuild reserves, and retire long-term debt.

Principal Findings and Recommendations

This November 1, 2004 Assessment and Improvement Plan represents data collection and analysis at a specific point in time. FCMAT review teams visited the district in August and September 2004. This report was presented to the Vallejo City Unified School District and Superintendent of Public Instruction on November 1, 2004 and will be formally presented to the district advisory board at its board meeting on November 4, 2004.

Several serious issues that affect all five operational areas concern the FCMAT review teams.

- The district has drawn down \$50 million of the \$60 million authorized by Senate Bill 1190. The district's fiscal condition remains very precarious, and little of the loan amount remains available to address future cash flow needs. Only minor change has occurred since the state takeover, and organizationally the district appears to be operating in a "business as usual" fashion.
- The district does not have a set procedure that outlines the budget development process. The process has not included input from site or department administrators. An accurate student enrollment projection process is not being utilized. The district is experiencing declining enrollment, with more than 1,500 fewer students this year than last year.
- Communication is poor across the district. Departments do not communicate with each other, staff members are not routinely informed, and parents and community members are not generally made to feel welcome in the district and its schools. There is little demonstration of a customer service understanding among staff.
- Administrative and student information systems within the district are outdated or not functional. A new student attendance accounting system was hastily implemented in August 2004 in an effort to obtain more accurate attendance data. The district implemented the California Education Computer Consortium (CECC) financial system used by the Solano COE in July 2003 and the payroll system in May 2004. A number of work func-

tions however, are still being done manually, and data is not readily available to support informed decision-making.

- Employee contract language restricts management’s ability to conduct the district’s business. District administration and employee organizations need to consider ways to eliminate the barriers to efficient district operations.
- Safety at school sites is not recognized as a priority, and a number of safety hazards were observed that need to be corrected, e.g., lack of fire extinguishers, impeded exit doors, fire doors propped open against fire code. The review teams informed the site administrators about these hazards prior to leaving the site.
- There is little written documentation to guide student learning, and assessment and accountability processes for monitoring student performance are not adequate. There are, in fact, few established procedures that are supported by written documentation in any of the five operational areas.
- Evaluation of staff does not appear to be occurring on a regular basis. Expectations for satisfactory staff performance are not communicated and there are no apparent consequences for poor job performance. Developing and maintaining a skilled work force is critical to the district’s recovery, and staff development training opportunities must be regularly provided.

Community Relations and Governance

Communications

The flow of information in the school district is generally poor, both internally among staff and externally between the district and the community. The district does not have a strategic communications plan, and utilizes few avenues to communicate consistently to parents and the community about district operations and issues. The district’s Web site is out of date and underutilized. The district has not effectively initiated efforts to generate positive news coverage about its schools, programs, students and staff.

Several school sites regularly send information about local campus events to parents through newsletters and through the district’s broadcast phone message system. However, these efforts are uneven across the district, and there is little coordination or support from the central office.

Many individuals expressed the perception that past district leadership did not always communicate in an open and straightforward manner, especially regarding budget matters. Many staff and community members perceived that their input on districtwide matters was not welcomed.

Parent/Community Relations

While the district has complied with many of the legal standards in this area, such as those related to sending out annual parent notices, issuing school accountability report cards, and disseminating uniform complaint procedures, overall the Vallejo City USD has had major difficulties engaging parents and volunteers. Widespread parent/community involvement does not appear to have been a consistent priority.

Many parents and community members believe they are not made to feel as if they ultimately have ownership in the district's schools and programs. Some teachers initiate and place a great emphasis on parent outreach. However, other teachers appear to make few or no efforts to interact with parents, nor have they been encouraged to do so.

A common theme among interviewees was that parents don't know how to navigate the school system; also that school or district staff could be nonresponsive to parents' inquiries or requests and it was tolerated in the past. Site staff need to make parent/community relations a higher priority, and should receive greater assistance from the district in their efforts to do so.

Community Collaboratives, District Advisory Committees, School Site Councils

The district has at times worked closely with the City of Vallejo and other public agencies. An Interagency Commission exists that enables leadership from the district, city, library district and recreation district to meet and discuss collaborative efforts. Relations between the previous district administration and the city police were strained, partly because the district cut school resource officers during the fiscal crisis. The state administrator has since restored these officers. Communication between the district and the Solano County Office of Education was often inadequate, and this relationship was a factor in the escalating fiscal crisis. The district does not appear to have particularly strong collaborative relations with the Vallejo business community.

Within the district, there have been a number of advisory councils and committees involving parents, community members and staff. One of the most successful examples appears to be the School Bond Oversight Commission established as a result of the school bond measure passed in 1997; its members appear to receive adequate information, fulfill their stated responsibilities and regularly report to the board. A district Budget Advisory Committee that includes board members, employee organization representatives and community members was seen as functioning less effectively in the past year, due in part to concerns about staff support and clarity of role.

Policies exist for the establishment of school site councils, and these councils are established at each site as appropriate. Participation varies on councils throughout the district.

Policy

The district has a fairly well-maintained and organized policy manual. In addition, the district has adopted nearly all of the policies mandated by state or federal law. However, nearly half of the district's policies have not been updated since 1994.

Staff are generally kept informed of changes to policies after they are made. All principals and district managers are made aware of policy changes through a system that requires them to sign off upon receipt of new policies. Policy manuals are kept at the district office and at each school site, and the executive secretary has access to the manual through CD-ROM. However, technology could be more effectively used to increase access for the board, all staff and the public.

The major issue relative to policies in the Vallejo City USD is an apparent lack of consistent and uniform adherence. Sometimes the board's policies are not widely known, or they have been interpreted or enforced differently by district staff or by site staff. The policy-related documents that most consistently seem to drive activities in the district are the contracts with employee groups.

Board Roles/Boardsmanship

The board has placed an emphasis on working effectively as a team in addressing important district matters. Board members appear to have generally understood their policy-setting role, and there were no indications that they acted inappropriately by attempting to exercise individual authority or interfering with administrative or operational matters.

Many staff members and community members believe the board placed too much trust in the previous superintendent and senior district administrators, and that the board allowed the superintendent and senior staff to “drive” the direction of the district. At the same time, many believe the administration did not provide accurate information to the board or to the public.

Board Meetings

School board meetings generally follow processes described in board bylaws and are consistent with legal requirements. Agendas are posted in accordance with law, and opportunities for public input are provided at meetings. The board also appears to be respectful of the staff and public at meetings.

In Summary

The review of Community Relations and Governance included the assessment of 51 selected professional and legal standards of performance. Of the 51 standards, 40 were partially implemented, with ratings between one and seven, and 11 standards were fully implemented with a rating of 8 or better. The average rating of all 51 standards assessed is 5.25.

A subset of 17 standards was identified in this operational area for the district to address for the return of local governance. The average rating for this subset of standards in this operational area is 3.35 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 the highest score possible. Eleven of these standards have ratings below a 4.

Personnel Management

The Human Resources Services Department is performing at a level far below that needed to support the objectives and missions of the district.

Leadership and Staffing

The Human Resources Services Department has lacked continuity of purpose and leadership during a long period of time when the department was led by short-term assistant superintendents. Capable leadership will be needed to improve the department’s operations.

The department utilizes outdated procedures and systems to hire, train, retain and evaluate the people critical to the organization. Routine work functions are not automated, leading to inefficient operations and poor utilization of staff within the department. The department has a sufficient number of positions; however, until systems are automated, people will continue to feel overwhelmed. The department lacks productive relationships with bargaining units and the communications necessary to make a productive relationship work.

Use of Technology and Systems

Several of the systems used within the Human Resources Department are outmoded, ineffective, and inefficient, or are not being fully utilized. The district is in the process of implementing a new payroll/personnel system called CECC. The basic personnel and payroll functions have just been implemented, but employee benefits and leave accounting functions have not. There are other systems being used in the department that are not being fully utilized or do not interface with any other systems.

The district should consider acquiring document imaging technology. Untold labor hours are invested in finding and massaging the massive amounts of data buried in paper personnel records. Document imaging systems are being used successfully in a number of large school districts. These systems pay for themselves quickly and improve customer service dramatically.

Simple changes can be made to improve document flow, timing, approval processes, and quality control in all department functional areas. For example, employees are processed individually to set up the personnel and payroll records, and they receive benefits information in a one-on-one interview format. This is time consuming and delays the enrollment process. Employees and the district would be better served with small group processing or explanatory videos.

Employee/Employer Relations

The district does not appear to have had a bargaining strategy. As a result, the bargaining contracts that have been negotiated do not reflect the interests of the public or the students, and do not address the quality of education provided. Existing contract language makes it extremely difficult for site managers to effectively direct their operations.

The teachers' contract, for example, is one of the most restrictive that the review team has seen in school districts visited, and encroaches on almost every administrative, financial, or educational decision that management makes.

Operational Procedures

Board policies and administrative regulations address almost all of the operational and legal compliance areas of Human Resources. However, there is little connection between what the staff in Human Resources does operationally and what the board policies and administrative regulations suggest should be done. For each board policy and administrative regulation, there should be a human resources operational procedure that details the steps taken and the persons responsible for implementing the regulations.

Communications: Internal and External

Communication within the department, especially when coupled with the lack of technology, is ineffective. People cannot get information when they need it.

A frequent complaint heard from the customers interviewed was that phone calls and e-mails to Human Resources personnel were not responded to in a timely manner. This is a major source of irritation for other departments and school site personnel.

In Summary

The review of Personnel Management included the assessment of 91 selected professional and legal standards of performance. Of the total of 95 standards, 21 were not implemented, 52 were partially implemented, with ratings between one and seven, and 18 standards were fully implemented with a rating of 8 or better. Four standards were not applicable to the district. The average rating of all 91 standards assessed is 3.16.

A subset of 35 standards was identified in this operational area for the district to address for the return of local governance. The average rating for this subset of standards in this operational area is 1.34 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 the highest score possible. Thirty-three of these standards have ratings below a 4.

Pupil Achievement

Vallejo City Unified served about 20,000 students in 2004. Approximately 45% of the district's students qualify for free and reduced lunch and 25% receive English language learner services. More than 90% of the students are composed of four ethnic groups: African American, 30%; white, 23%; Hispanic/Latino, 20%; and Filipino, 18%.

There is a persistent performance gap between the proficiency level of African Americans and Hispanics, and Filipinos and whites. Over the last four years, the percentage of K-5 students achieving a Proficient or Advanced rating on the *California Standards Test* English Language Arts component in K-5 has ranged from 17% to 33%, while the percentage of students scoring Below Basic has ranged from 31% to 48%. The proficiency level on this state assessment decreases at the middle and high school levels. Middle and high school students scoring Below Basic and Far Below Basic in Algebra I comprise 54% of the students taking the assessment. This is a startling statistic considering that beginning in 2005, students will have to pass an algebra course to graduate.

These demographics and proficiency levels provide evidence of the serious learning issues in Vallejo and also point to a critical lack of leadership and academic focus at the district level. Uneven and inconsistent implementation of state standards may have impeded student achievement. Many students have not had access to standards-based teaching. This is significant because the assessment figures mentioned above measure student proficiency on the state standards.

The assessment of Pupil Achievement in the Vallejo City Unified School District is based upon 64 standards developed by FCMAT in the following instructional areas: (1) planning processes, (2) curriculum, (3) instructional strategies, (4) assessment and accountability and (5) professional development. The principal findings and the recommendations for the pupil achievement improvement plan are based on school visits, principal and teacher interviews, and class observations in 15 elementary schools, four middle schools, two comprehensive high schools, and a continuation/alternative school. Added to these data are interviews of Solano County Office and district staff, analysis of student achievement results, parent comments, high school course enrollments, school plans and other available program descriptions and student data. Finally, the review team studied many pages of policies, documents, workshop materials, and special project plans.

The findings indicate that 1) there is minimal central office direction; (2) there is little accountability and follow through; and (3) there is an insufficient data system to track students or the work of the adults.

The Governing Board and district administration need to commit to:

1. making the attainment of high levels of student learning for all students in the core academic subjects a primary goal;
2. developing a comprehensive, aligned and articulated curriculum that links to goals and standards adopted by the district;
3. implementing an assessment system that provides multiple measures of student achievement and progress; and
4. maintaining a high level of accountability process beginning with measurable goals for students and regular assessments that lets students, parents, and teachers know where each student stands. Good accountability runs on a willingness to scrutinize oneself and the availability of data that helps answer probing questions. Fortunately, with new direction and expertise in the central office, these important commitments are being put in place.

Instruction

The instructional program has suffered from a lack of consistent direction, monitoring, and support. Many aspects of the instructional program indicate a well-intentioned start but have been followed by periods of inattention and “piecemeal” implementation, and a lack of a systems approach. As fiscal and personnel changes have occurred, individual special project coordinators and principals have assumed a major role in the implementation of the instructional programs. This has resulted in a district operating without the system or cohesion to address the needs of seriously under-performing students. There can be no accountability when there is no system to track the progress of individual students or monitor the actions of the adults.

Accountability

Accountability must be addressed through clear and concise board policies and administrative regulations that express the what, who and how of the district’s priorities; a data system that tracks students, teachers and programs; a professional development program that prepares teachers to expect more of students and support them in reaching high expectations; and an ongoing evaluation and improvement cycle for all students, teachers, administrators, and the system itself.

Professional Development

An effective school system directs and prioritizes the resources and programs for the district. Structured planning establishes the mission and vision for all district efforts, brings all district operations under one umbrella, and affords the district the opportunity to assess and re-assess its beliefs and values. Little evidence could be found in the material reviewed that there had been a well-thought-out plan for building the capacity of the staff to plan for the improvement of student achievement in a systematic manner. Resources provided by the state in AB 75 and AB 466 did not appear to be utilized. Use of publisher training for the materials adopted was inconsistent. Although there were individuals who made outstanding efforts to build the capacity of staff at local sites, there has not been a K-12 plan for the development and implementation of academic student programs.

In Summary

The review of Pupil Achievement included the assessment of 64 selected professional and legal standards of performance. Of the 64 standards, 5 were not implemented, 55 were partially implemented, with ratings between one and seven, and 4 standards were fully implemented with a rating of 8 or better. The average rating of all 64 standards assessed is 3.58.

A subset of 23 standards was identified in this operational area for the district to address for the return of local governance. The average rating for this subset of standards in this operational area is 2.39 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 the highest score possible. Twenty-three of these standards have ratings below a 4.

Financial Management

The Financial Management review focused on the consistent, accurate and effective management of the district's many resources to overcome the current fiscal crisis, eliminate deficit spending, and reinstate the district's required state reserve for economic uncertainty.

The district's current and future fiscal status is unstable. Senate Bill 1190 provided a \$60 million loan to the district. \$50 million was drawn down by the district on June 23, 2004, two days after SB 1190 was signed into law. The size of the emergency appropriation for Vallejo was predicated on the district making significant and substantial changes in the expenditure side of the budget beginning immediately with state administration. To date, the cash management strategy of the district has not been sufficient to leverage the emergency appropriation while the budget recovery steps are put in place. Although state funding for the 2004-05 year is based on previous year's average daily attendance (ADA), the district is experiencing declining enrollment with more than 1,500 fewer students this year than last. Language in employee bargaining agreements grants salary increases even though the district is in fiscal crisis. The district's previous administrators entered into costly contracts for technology and legal services that the district may not be able to renegotiate or terminate.

Senate Bill 1190 also provided authorization to the district to sell district property to use to repay the emergency loan. The district is considering this, and other possible resources, as it works to develop its fiscal recovery plan. A review of all district property and assets is being conducted.

Staff in top management positions are new to the district, and many of the top positions are filled by consultants rather than permanent staff. Many staff members are not fully familiar with or understand the events leading up to the district's present condition. Building staff competence and capacity is critical, requiring strong staff development programs.

The district lacks formal written policies and procedures to direct district operations. Systems and controls to ensure accurate, accountable and understandable data are not in place. The staff appears to understand that more structure is needed, and welcomes the changes anticipated through the assessment and improvement plan process.

The fiscal areas affected by the lack of formal policies, procedures, systems and controls include:

- Budget development and monitoring
- Attendance accounting
- Collective bargaining implications
- Categorical programs
- Controls on cash and accounting

County Office Oversight

The Solano County Office of Education (SCOE) worked with the Vallejo City USD throughout the 2003-04 fiscal year to assist the district in managing its finances. In August 2003, the Solano COE notified Vallejo City USD that the county was unable to approve the district's 2003-04 budget and suggested a work plan for a revised budget to be submitted by September 8, 2003. The county provided an analysis of its areas of concern. On September 15, 2003, the SCOE sent a budget disapproval letter to the district and requested a revised budget.

On October 8, 2003, the SCOE disapproved the district's submitted revised budget and appointed School Services of California (SSC) as the Fiscal Advisor to the district. In December 2003, the district Governing Board approved its first interim report as qualified. SSC recommended a negative first interim report, and the SCOE certified the report as negative. Joint meetings between the district, the SCOE, SSC, and the district's auditors began in January 2004. On February 18, 2004, the SCOE imposed a 2003-04 budget upon the district based on the line item budget developed by the joint committee. The Fiscal Advisor had stay and rescind power over any expenditures not in alignment with this revised budget. The Vallejo City USD, the SCOE, and the Fiscal Advisor created a plan to address impending cash shortages during 2003-04 which included a request for a \$60 million state loan.

The district's chief business officer resigned from his position at the end of January 2004. On March 25, 2004, the district Governing Board placed the superintendent on administrative leave.

Communications

The Governing Board indicated that they believed they were asking the appropriate fiscal questions of the district administration and receiving the appropriate answers in response to their fiscal questions and concerns. They learned later that important financial information and specific issues concerning the district's negative fiscal position were not shared with them. Specifically, it was reported to the review team that the letter sent to the district administration and board in October by the SCOE, was not transmitted to the Governing Board. By the time the board became aware of all the fiscal information, there was no recourse but to ask the State of California for a loan in order to maintain a positive cash balance to meet the district's current obligations. Along with the loan, a state administrator was assigned to administer the district and the Governing Board became advisory in nature.

Under the prior administration, communication on the budget shared at the board level was not complete. In addition, there was no sharing of budget information into or out of the business office to ensure that budget expectations were understood and followed. There has been little or no budget and fiscal training for district staff, and no beginning of the school year informational

meeting to outline policies, procedures, responsibilities and expectations for business functions. Written communication from the budget department is rare, and when information is provided, it is often late and/or confusing.

Budget Development

The district does not have a set procedure, either verbal or written, that outlines steps occurring during budget development, what is to be included in the budget and/or what is to occur in budget maintenance during the fiscal year. The approved budget has been basically a rollover version from past years with new budget cuts and some additions based on updated data. The board's goals, priorities and strategic plan do not appear with the adopted budget narrative, making it difficult for stakeholders to understand the connection between the two.

The prior administration did not accurately project revenues and expenditures. Enrollment numbers were overstated in the proposed 2003-04 budget, as an ADA-to-enrollment percentage of 94% was used for estimating the revenue limit funding amounts. Data comparing this ratio over the past five years reflects a consistent percentage from 90% to 91.6%, not the 94% figure used to build the budget.

The district office does not generate monthly budget and expenditure reports for each site and department. The sites and departments are not held responsible for managing or monitoring their own budgets.

Internal Controls

Internal control is the series of processes that are implemented in organizations with sound business practices to provide reasonable assurance that the accounting and financial operations are effective, efficient and reliable. The internal control structure includes the policies and procedures implemented and followed by the district staff, the accounting and other information systems being used, the work environment, and the attitude and culture of those who work in the district, especially the administration, management, and the Governing Board.

A school district with strong effective internal controls will have staff who understand and support board policies and maintain a high level of integrity in the accuracy and reliability of their work.

The district currently does not have strong internal control practices or policies in place. There is a lack of internal control understanding by staff. Data is unreliable and not available to make timely, accurate decisions. Department and site personnel do not receive the level of service needed to adequately support the educational programs districtwide.

Board policies do not properly address the misuse of funds and fraud prevention. Internal accounting controls and separation of duties are weak. The controls that are in place are not always followed or enforced. There is no process in place for employees to report wrongdoing.

Collective Bargaining

The disclosure of the district's collective bargaining agreements at regular Governing Board meetings in the past have lacked detailed information regarding the agreement's impact to the

current operating budget, total cost including statutory benefits, and the impact on a multiyear basis. Any district with a qualified or negative certification under Education Code 42131 needs to allow the county office of education at least six working days to review and comment on any proposed collective bargaining agreement prior to ratification. The recent passage of AB 2756 has increased the number of days for COE review from six to ten. In 2002-03, the district paid out over \$1.8 million in contractually obligated salary increases equating to 1.84% for all employees, without proper notification to the COE.

The district has not developed parameters and guidelines for collective bargaining that ensure that the collective bargaining agreements are not an impediment to the financial solvency of the district. Approximately 90% of the district's proposed 2004-05 budget will be expended for contractually obligated salaries and benefits. A similar trend and ratio of expenditures for salaries and benefits have occurred in 2002-03 and 2003-04.

In Summary

The review of Financial Management included the assessment of 108 professional and legal standards of performance. Of the 108 standards, 23 were not implemented, 84 were partially implemented, with ratings between one and seven, and one standard was fully implemented with a rating of 8. The average rating of the 108 standards assessed is 2.31.

A subset of 39 standards was identified in this operational area for the district to address for the return of local governance. The average rating for this subset of standards in this operational area is 1.31 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 the highest score possible. Thirty-seven of these standards have ratings below a 4.

Facilities Management

The district is in need of improved communication, written processes and procedures, and cooperation between school sites and the central office. A large number of standards were rated "not implemented" or "partially implemented."

Many of the lower-rated standards shared the following characteristics:

- Inconsistent handling of work orders and other documentation
- Lack of documentation of processes
- Lack of communication between central office departments
- Lack of communication between schools and the central office
- Lack of emphasis on preventive maintenance
- Absence of a planned program maintenance program for building systems

Additionally, school safety issues existed in the majority of schools visited. Typical areas of concern included:

- Obstructions in hallways and walkways
- Blocking of fire doors and fire barriers

- Fire hazards
- Lack of first aid training among staff
- Use of non-conforming portable buildings without State Allocation Board waivers

The most frequent negative comments received from employees related to the work order system, the Maintenance Department, and the lack of communication relating to the performance of the work. Site administrators and some of the support staff reported disappointment with the lack of response by the Facilities Services Department. The disappointment stems from a computerized work order system that is not user friendly and is very slow in processing requests.

There is also dissatisfaction by some regarding the final product of Measure A modernization. The most often cited reasons for dissatisfaction were the scheduling of when projects will be completed and the lengthy punch lists with numerous deficiencies that never seem to be corrected. If the district accepts incomplete work, correction of that work will eventually become the responsibility of the Facilities Services Department and will become a district cost.

Lack of Documentation of Processes

The majority of district policies relating to facilities and maintenance were last adopted or revised in 1994 or 1995. The need for the Governing Board to update these policies is critical. The district needs direction from the board so that written, detailed administrative regulations and procedures can be developed.

The district needs to develop written processes for all phases of facilities and maintenance. There is little written documentation for employees to follow. In order to hold employees accountable for their performance and to provide adequate tracking of inventories and equipment, written procedures and documentation must be adopted and enforced.

Lack of Communication between Central Office Departments

The two offices that should be working together consistently rarely communicate. The Facilities Services Department, more commonly referred to as the Maintenance Department, and the Student Housing Department, more commonly referred to as the Facilities Department, do not communicate well with each other. The result is poor coordination of modernization work and work orders that must be issued to fix the items that were completed incorrectly or not included in the original bid.

The different offices that are responsible for facilities, maintenance, and operations are not coordinated under one single administrator. This has resulted in untimely communication between the offices as to the progress of the projects and occasional conflicting priorities between construction/modernization and maintenance.

Lack of Communication between Schools and Central Office

Numerous comments and complaints were received from site personnel about voice mails, e-mails, and work orders that go unanswered.

The current computerized work order system is not perceived as a viable tool for providing work orders to the Facilities Services Department. The program is slow, and some employees choose

to skip the program completely and either phone in the work order or fax in the written work order. Site administrators are never sure when and if a work order has been completed and cannot rely on the work order program to tell them its status.

Use of the work order system is not consistent and workers are often asked to do work without the printed work order, which makes it difficult to know the specific work to be performed. Lack of a work order also eliminates the normal documentation of the issuance of supplies and equipment used on the project, as well as the tracking of hours for maintenance workers.

Fire Hazards at School Sites

At a majority of the sites visited, obstructions were observed in front of major hallway exits, making it difficult for students to enter and exit the schools easily. In case of a fire or other emergency, the students would not be able to exit the building in an orderly fashion.

The majority of the campuses visited had fire doors and fire barrier doors in the middle of large hallways kept open. This is a violation of the fire code and must be corrected immediately. Administrators were informed of this requirement before the team departed.

The absence or inaccessibility of fire extinguishers was a problem at many of the school sites visited. Open, exposed, and blocked electrical boxes also presented fire hazards at some sites.

Staffing and Personnel

Most of the people interviewed or with whom the team interacted were committed to Vallejo City USD and to the children and the community it serves. However, the effects of staffing and budget reductions made necessary by the district's current financial crisis were apparent. Staffing in support areas, including Student Housing and Facilities Services, appeared lower than in comparable districts. Full implementation of the Improvement Plan will be dependent on the amount of staff time the district will be able to devote to implementing the recommendations.

In Summary

The review of Facilities Management included the assessment of 97 professional and legal standards of performance. Of the 97 standards, 8 were not implemented, 68 were partially implemented, with ratings between one and seven, and 20 standards were fully implemented with a rating of 8 or better. One standard was not rated as it is no longer applicable. The average rating of the 96 standards assessed is 5.44.

A subset of 15 standards was identified in this operational area for the district to address for the return of local governance. The average rating for this subset of standards in this operational area is 2.46 on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 the highest score possible. Eleven of these standards have ratings below a 4.

Returning the District to Local Governance

Several conditions need to be met for the district's eventual return to local governance. Senate Bill 1190, Chapter 53, Statutes of 2004, provides clarity, conditions and intent regarding the return of the designated legal rights, duties and powers to the Governing Board. The authority of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and his administrator designee shall continue until the SPI determines that the conditions of Section 5, subdivision (e) of SB 1190 are satisfied. The Superintendent of Public Instruction has sole authority to decide when the return of legal rights, duties and powers to the Governing Board occurs.

Section 5, (e) requires the following:

- 1) Two complete fiscal years have elapsed following the appointment of the administrator or, at any time after one complete fiscal year has elapsed following that appointment, if the administrator determines, and so notifies the SPI, that future compliance by the district with the improvement plan is probable.
- 2) FCMAT completes the improvement plan specified in the Act.
- 3) FCMAT, after consultation with the administrator, determines that for at least the immediately previous six months the school district made substantial and sustained progress in implementation of the plans in the major functional area.
- 4) The administrator certifies that all necessary collective bargaining agreements have been negotiated and ratified and that the agreements are consistent with the terms of the improvement plan specified in the Act.
- 5) The district completes all reports required by the SPI and the administrator.
- 6) The administrator certifies that the members of the school board and district personnel, as appropriate, have successfully completed the training specified in subdivision (b) of Section 7 of the Act.
- 7) The SPI concurs with the assessment of the administrator and FCMAT that future compliance by the Vallejo City USD with the improvement plan and the multiyear financial recovery plan is probable.

SB 1190, Section 7, provides specific and direct responsibilities to FCMAT in assisting the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Vallejo City Unified School District with recovery. These duties include the following:

1. On or before November 1, 2004, FCMAT shall conduct a comprehensive assessment and prepare an improvement plan for the Vallejo City Unified School District incorporating the following five operational areas:
 - Financial Management
 - Pupil Achievement
 - Personnel Management
 - Facilities Management
 - Community Relations

The improvement plan for personnel management shall include training for members of the Governing Board, the superintendent and district staff.

2. Based upon the progress reports, FCMAT shall recommend to the Superintendent of Public Instruction those designated functional areas of school district operation that it determines are appropriate for the Governing Board of the school district to assume.
3. FCMAT shall file written status reports that reflect the progress the district is making in meeting the recommendations of the improvement plans.

As required by SB 1190, this November 1, 2004 Assessment and Improvement Plan constitutes the comprehensive assessment and improvement plan for the Vallejo City Unified School District. This report assessed the district using 415 professional and legal standards in five areas of school district operations. The scaled scores for all of the standards in each operational area provide an accurate measure of the district's status regarding recovery at this time. Each standard was measured for completeness and a relative scaled score from zero (not met) to ten (fully met) was applied. An average of the scores for each operational area was determined. The averages of these scaled scores become the baseline of data against which the district's progress can be measured over time.

For the subsequent six-month progress reviews, a smaller subset of these standards was selected by FCMAT in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE) and the appointed State Administrator. The standards were selected as having the most probability, if addressed successfully, to assist the district with recovery. The selected standards are identified in the Tables of Standards in Section Two of this report, and they will be the focus of each six-month review.

The Vallejo City Unified School District is not required to reach a scaled score of 10 in every selected standard, but the district is expected to make steady progress that can be sustained, as substantial and sustained progress is a requirement of SB 1190. It is reasonable to expect that the district can reach an average rating of at least a six in each of the five operational areas identified in SB 1190. In collaboration with the California Department of Education, FCMAT established the following criteria to measure the district's progress. When the average score of the subset of standards in a functional area reaches a level of six, and it is considered to be substantial and sustainable, and no individual standard in the subset is below a four, FCMAT will recommend to the Superintendent of Public Instruction that this particular condition of SB 1190 has been met and that this operational area could be returned to the Vallejo City USD Governing Board. The final authority to return governance authority to the district board lies with the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Senate Bill 1190 suggests an incremental return of powers to the district. Subject to progress, recommendations every six months will address the functional areas of school district operations that could be returned to the Governing Board of the school district by the SPI. The ultimate return of legal rights, duties and powers is based upon the SPI's concurrence with the assessment of his administrator designee and FCMAT that the future compliance by the district with the improvement plans and the multiyear financial recovery plan is probable.

Implementation Plan

FCMAT assessed the district using 415 professional and legal standards for the November 1, 2004 Assessment and Improvement Plan, providing an in-depth review of these standards in the five operational areas. A subset of standards in each operational area was identified to assist the district in successfully achieving recovery and return to local governance. This subset of standards will become the focus of the ongoing six-month progress reviews conducted in the district. Although all professional and legal standards utilized in the comprehensive assessment process are important to any district's success, focusing on this identified subset of standards will enable the Vallejo City Unified School District to more quickly achieve a return to local governance.

FCMAT, in collaboration with the California Department of Education and the State Administrator, identified the following subset of 129 standards in the five operational areas that will be reviewed during each six-month progress review.

- 17 standards in Community Relations and Governance
- 35 standards in Personnel Management
- 23 standards in Pupil Achievement
- 39 standards in Financial Management
- 15 standards in Facilities Management

These standards are identified in bold print in the Table of Standards displayed at the end of each operational area section.

In collaboration with the California Department of Education, FCMAT established the following criteria to measure the district's progress. When the average score of the subset of standards in an operational area reaches a level of six and it is considered to be substantial and sustainable, and no individual standard in the subset is below a four, FCMAT will recommend to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) that this particular condition of SB 1190 has been met and that this operational area could be returned to the Governing Board.

Subject to progress, recommendations every six months will address the functional areas of school district operations that could be returned to the Governing Board of the school district on an incremental basis. The ultimate return of legal rights, duties and powers will be based upon the SPI's concurrence with the assessment of his administrator designee and FCMAT that the future compliance by the district with the improvement plans and the multiyear financial recovery plan is probable.

The average of the subset of standards in each operational area is indicated below. These ratings provide a baseline of data against which the district's progress can be measured over each six-month period of review.

- Community Relations/Governance: average rating **3.35**, with **11** standards under a 4.
- Personnel Management: average rating **1.34**, with **33** standards under a 4.
- Pupil Achievement: average rating **2.39**, with **23** standards under a 4.
- Financial Management: average rating **1.31**, with **37** standards under a 4.
- Facilities Management: average rating **2.46**, with **11** standards under a 4.