

Ministry of Education

**Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic
District School Board
Follow-up Report to the Operational
Review**

August 2009

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1. Introduction

The Ministry is in the process of conducting Operational Reviews of the 72 district school boards across the province. The Ministry's goal is to enhance management capacity within school boards by encouraging good stewardship of public resources and by the leveraging and sharing of best practices. By identifying opportunities for continual improvement, school board administration and operations will be aligned to support the government's highest priority: student achievement.

In accordance with the stated objectives of the Operational Reviews, the Ministry has also engaged school boards to participate in a status and implementation update as part of the Operational Review cycle. Occurring approximately 8 to 12 months after the issuance of the final operational review report, the purpose of the update is to discuss with each school board the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in the final report. It will also provide school boards with an opportunity to communicate to the Ministry their thoughts on the process, benefits that have been derived, and areas where some adjustments to the process would be beneficial.

As the recommendations vary between school boards, both in terms of quantity and scope, the following criteria were developed to help focus the review team, and the school board, on specific recommendations:

- Is the recommendation linked to the 7 Areas of Opportunity identified in the August 2007 Sector Summary Report?
- Does the recommendation represent a move toward more Strategic Planning on the part of Boards?
 - The departments that are responsible for the business functions perform significant activities in support of Student Success. The update should profile whether or not the school board is establishing links between the academic and non-academic functions through its strategic goals and priorities.
- Does the recommendation represent an area of potential risk to the board?
 - As an example, financial systems that are antiquated and require staff with very specialized knowledge could potentially disrupt the operations of the school board should those business skills be lost.
- Is the recommendation deemed to have positive Return on Investment?

- For example, implementation of an attendance management system may have greater potential for savings to the school board than introducing an electronic funds transfer system.
- Does the recommendation reflect updates to the Leading Practices?

For each of the selected recommendations, the school board was asked to provide the following information to the Operational Review team:

- Description of action(s) taken/not taken by the board to address recommendation(s).
- Supporting documentation
- If implemented, describe benefits derived, if possible, and date of implementation.

Details of the prioritization of the recommendations can be found in Appendix A of this report.

The scope of the follow up review also includes high-level consideration of whether the school board demonstrates adoption of those leading practices that were added to the second edition of the Operational Review Guide, released to the sector in September 2008. These were not part of the original review process.

2. Status and Implementation Update

Introduction

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board Operational Review follow-up review took place on June 24th 2009 which was approximately twelve months after the release of the original Operational Review report. The Operational Review team conducted a teleconference with the Director of Education and the Associate Director, Corporate Services and Treasurer.

Summary of Recommendation Status

Following receipt of the Operational Review report, the report was shared with principals and managers and a copy of the report was posted on the school board's website.

The school board has taken a number of positive steps since the completion of its review in March 2008.

Of particular note is the work done on the development of a multi-year maintenance and renewal plan, which was approved by the Board in June 2009. This plan includes a high level of detail, including targets, timelines and assigned responsibilities. As part of the plan, senior staff are not to exceed cost estimates and are required to provide updates to the facilities committee annually regarding projects completed and any changes to the forecasted expenditures. A benefit related to the plan's implementation is the ability to ensure that all of the schools' critical needs are addressed in a timely fashion, as staff can now plan and obtain tenders on projects without waiting for the Board to approve specific project detail.

There were 23 recommendations made in the original report. The operational review team focused on 16 of the recommendations in the follow-up review. Eight of the recommendations relate to the seven areas of opportunity identified across the sector in the 2007-08 Summary Report, four are in the area of strategic planning, four are areas of potential risk and two are areas with potential for material return on investment.

Three of the recommendations also represent new leading practices introduced in Wave 3 through the Second Edition of the Operational Review Guide. The selected recommendations and the corresponding criteria are listed in Appendix A.

Generally, senior administration has acted upon the 16 recommendations by fully implementing the recommendation, advancing some part of a recommendation or in the case of two recommendations placing them on hold. One recommendation on hold is the expansion of the board improvement plan which is dependent on the development of the school boards new multi-year strategic plan which will be complete in August 2009. The other recommendation on hold is related to the audit function and the

establishment of an audit committee, and the addition of external members to the audit committee, both of which are pending forthcoming guidance from the Ministry.

3. Governance and School Board Administration

#1 Establishment of Strategic Direction and Development and Reporting of Annual Improvement Plans

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The Board should develop a multi-year strategic planning document that defines key objectives, timelines and performance metrics for the entire system. This would provide an over-arching framework for the Board to which all annual plans should align.	Partially Implemented

#2 Establishment of a Board Improvement Plan

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
On an annual basis, the Board should develop an operating plan that expands the scope of the Board Improvement Plan to cover all aspects of Board operations. This plan should define in-year initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the longer term goals and demonstrate the alignment of non- academic departments.	Not Implemented

#1 Establishment of Strategic Direction and Development and Reporting of Annual Improvement Plans

A format for the development of a multi-year strategic plan was approved by the Board and a consultant was hired to guide the school board through the process.

Representatives of stakeholder groups (employees, parents, trustees, students) were invited to a two-day workshop to help develop the mission and strategic directions. The consultant has since met with trustees, principals and other staff to refine the strategic directions and the final strategic plan is expected by the end of August 2009.

The school board is encouraged to follow through on this recommendation in order to provide the foundation for the planning and reporting of annual objectives across all parts of academic and non-academic operations.

#2 Establishment of a Board Improvement Plan

Once the multi-year strategic plan is complete, the school board will begin to develop the 2009-2010 board improvement plan which will include all aspects of the school board's academic and operational functions. The school board plans on incorporating feedback from managers, principals, superintendents and other staff into the board

improvement plan to have both the academic and non-academic side of the school board understand the impact of their work on student achievement.

The school board is encouraged to follow through on this recommendation in order to track and report progress of its defined priorities and goals throughout the year.

4. Human Resource Management and School Staffing/Allocations

#1 Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The HR department should produce an annual report that demonstrates accomplishments relative to its annual plan.	Partially Implemented

#2 Attendance Management

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The Board should investigate an automated solution that allows schools to enter attendance information directly into iSYS on at least a weekly basis. With more timely and accurate information, the Board should then develop an attendance management strategy for all staff groups. This would define measurable objectives with the required policy, process and procedures.	Implemented

#1 Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The HR annual report is currently in progress and will be finalized after the end of the fiscal school year. A copy of the draft report was not available at the time of the follow-up review.

#2 Attendance Management

The school board has begun work on an attendance management plan, including the hiring of an attendance support coordinator for September 2009. The school board will implement the SBCI Attendance Management Program in 2009-2010. In the meantime, remote attendance data entry has been rolled out to pilot schools. Once HR staff have reviewed and approved the data, information updates are sent to personnel records.

Through the HR system, absence patterns and flags can be identified through set criteria. Feedback from the pilot program was reported to be positive.

5. Financial Management

#1 Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The finance department should adopt a more structured approach to annual departmental planning, including targets, timelines and assigned responsibilities. The plan should link to the Board's strategic direction and priorities.	Implemented

#2 Interim Financial Reporting

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
Finance staff should consider providing an expanded level of interim reporting, as in the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report. This would improve understanding of the financial reporting of the year-to-date results.	Partially Implemented

#3 Internal Audit Function

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
Management and the Board should consider establishing an internal audit function. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated annual cost for each option. Management's proactive assessment of need and cost would be a useful first step.	Partially Implemented

#4 Establishment of an Audit Committee

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
Management and the Board should establish an audit committee. The Board and management should consider including at least two external members to act as advisors and contribute to the committee's accountability.	Not Implemented

#5 Develop and Implement an Investment Policy

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
Management should establish an investment policy for approval by the Board. A formal cash management plan and appropriate procedures to manage surplus cash to optimize investment income should be developed.	Partially Implemented

#6 Formal Cash Flow Model

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The finance department should develop a formal cash flow model to forecast and monitor the Board's cash flow activities. The model will allow the Board to identify opportunities to optimize investment income and/or minimize interest costs.	Partially Implemented

#7 Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The Board should perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine the feasibility of adding more automated functions to its existing financial system.	Partially Implemented

#8 Policies and Procedures for Purchase Card/Corporate Card Use

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The Board should perform a transaction/spend analysis of PCard usage relative to issued purchase orders. This would identify opportunities to increase purchase order threshold limits and promote increased use of PCards through an expansion of the existing program.	Implemented

#1 Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

A copy of the 2008-2009 finance department annual plan was provided during the follow up. This plan includes targets, timelines and assigned responsibilities. The school board reported that managers within the finance department review annual goals and objectives on a monthly basis. It was also reported that managers share the goals with departmental staff and updates are provided at monthly department meetings. The school board reported that benefits from developing an annual plan include keeping the department focused and serving as a guideline for measurement of achievement.

Once the new multi-year strategic plan and board improvement plan for 2009-2010 have been developed, the annual finance departmental plan will be refreshed to reflect new priority areas.

#2 Interim Financial Reporting

As part of the annual departmental plan for 2009/2010, interim financial reporting will be reviewed and revised.

The school board is encouraged to look at the additional recommendations in section 4.3 of the original operational review report (listed below) as well as the forthcoming report from the Interim Financial Reporting Committee. This was established by the ministry in response to this topic being identified as one of the sector-wide opportunities in September 2008.

1. Comparison of the annual approved budget with the actual spending to date and the spending to date, expressed as a percentage of the budget.
2. A comparative percentage for each expenditure/revenue category to reflect what the "expected spending to date" should be, relative to either historical averages, prior year's experience or, in the case of salaries and benefits, the number of staff and pays processed to date.
3. Written explanations to explain any significant variations from the normally expected percentage spent to date. Management must define what is "significant" for the reporting of variances.

#3 Internal Audit Function

The school board has had informal discussions with two other school boards in its area about sharing an internal auditor. Further work on this recommendation is pending the Ministry's direction on internal auditing in school boards. The school board is encouraged to further enhance its internal audit capabilities once there is a clear boundary on the scope of the function and the associated delivery / funding model.

#4 Establishment of an Audit Committee

The school board recognizes the importance of establishing an audit committee, and is waiting for direction from the Ministry before moving forward. It was reported that the school board feels it will be difficult to recruit external members in small towns, particularly given the required skill set.

The school board is encouraged to follow through on this recommendation once further direction is provided from the Ministry.

#5 Develop and Implement an Investment Policy

The school board reported that they do not have large investments, but agree a policy should be in place. A template to monitor cash flow has been set up in the interim. The school board is encouraged to follow through on this recommendation to ensure it does not remain an area of risk.

#6 Formal Cash Flow Model

The finance manager has reviewed this recommendation and included it in the annual goals for 2009-1010. A review found that surplus funds are not usually significant. Past discussions with the bank have ensured that the school board earns interest on surplus funds in the operating account. It was found that the incremental earnings from transferring to an investment account would not be significant but the finance department is nevertheless developing a process to monitor cash flow. This will ensure that funds are transferred when the balance warrants it.

#7 Integrated System for Variance Analysis and Financial Reporting

This recommendation is currently under review, with the school board looking at the possibility of incorporating three way matching through BAS 2000.

#8 Policies and Procedures for Purchase Card/Corporate Card Use

The finance department has limited the use of Pcards. The school board does not intend to expand beyond the current usage due to a concern about lack of controls. A limited number of staff have PCards for specific purposes.

6. School Operations and Facilities Management

#1 Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The facilities department should expand its strategic planning objectives into an annual departmental plan that details its annual goals and priorities and incorporates performance measures and accountabilities. The annual plan should become part of the Board's annual plan and be aligned to the Board's overall strategic directions.	Implemented

#2 Multi-Year Maintenance and Renewal Plan

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
Management should consider establishing a multi-year maintenance and renewal plan, including the funding available to support it. This would provide a clear forecast of the Board's critical needs over the next several years.	Implemented

#3 Energy Management

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The Board should continue to expand its existing energy management initiatives and develop a system-wide, multi-year energy management plan with appropriate consumption reduction targets. In addition, the Board should ensure that it has tracking and reporting mechanisms to monitor consumption and energy costs for reporting to the individual schools, senior administration and the Board of Trustees.	Partially Implemented

#4 Multi-Year Capital Plan

Operational Review Recommendation	Implementation Update
The Board should continue to develop a more comprehensive 10-year capital plan to provide a better understanding of short and long term facility requirements and a related funding plan. The ReCAPP database should also be updated, as it will contribute to the analysis of the renewal requirements over the 10-year period. The plan would also incorporate the impact of declining enrolment, and present options to address ongoing facility needs.	Implemented

#1 Development and Reporting of Annual Goals and Priorities

The facility services department developed its new departmental plan which built in timelines and designated accountabilities. This plan was implemented in September 2008, and feedback from the school board was positive in that it helps to keep the department focused and serves as a guideline for measurement of achievement. The annual departmental plan will be refreshed for 2009-2010 to reflect the new multi-year strategic plan and board improvement plan.

#2 Multi-Year Maintenance and Renewal Plan

The Facilities Services Department has developed a long term renewal plan which was approved by the Board in June 2009. A copy of the plan was submitted during the follow-up review. A benefit related to the plan's implementation is the ability to ensure that all of the schools' critical needs are addressed in a timely fashion, as staff can now plan and obtain tenders on projects without waiting for the Board to approve specific project detail. As part of the plan, staff are not to exceed the cost estimates and required to provide updates the facilities committee annually regarding projects completed and any changes to the forecasted expenditures.

#3 Energy Management

Implementation of this recommendation is currently in progress. The school board is currently updating the long-term Energy Strategy which was developed in 2005, and will provide a strategy to complete the retrofits of schools for fall 2009.

Components of the energy plan, including a strategy to upgrade and retrofit schools which will help reduce future maintenance costs and energy costs, have already been incorporated as part of the larger multi-year maintenance and renewal plan.

Benefits reported by the school board for moving forward with this recommendation include reducing energy costs and ensuring an environment conducive to learning.

#4 Multi-Year Capital Plan

A long term Capital Plan was presented to the Board in 2008. The plan was part of a draft report on Options to Address Accommodation Issues 2008-2022 which was developed by an external consultant. The report made several recommendations regarding consolidations, additions, new schools and other issues for the Board to consider. The Accommodations Committee has asked staff to review the report and provide recommendations to the committee.

The ReCAPP database was updated as of June 2008.

7. School Board Adoption of New Leading Practices

The following leading practices were added to the Second Edition of the Operational Review Guide that was released to the sector in September 2008. Some of these leading practices are a result of the observations and learning's during Wave 1 & 2 reviews.

School boards that were reviewed prior to September 2008 were not assessed against the new leading practices identified below. During this follow-up review process, the Operational Review team asked those school boards to comment on the extent to which they demonstrate adoption of these practices.

Governance and School Board Administration

New Leading Practice	Adopted?
The school board's governance model clearly delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees and the director of education. The board has established clearly defined duties and responsibilities to support an effective working relationship.	In progress
The board of trustees develops and communicates a multi-year strategic plan that provides a framework for annual planning.	In progress
The board of trustees and management have appropriate processes for the establishment and regular maintenance of policies for the efficient and effective operation of the board. Policies are posted on the board's web site.	Yes
The director has established a formal succession plan to manage retirements and resignations of key managers/ administrators.	In progress

The school board reported that it has already adopted many of these leading practices, or is making progress on them in the upcoming school year. For example, the school board reviews policies periodically and all policies are posted on the school board's website. The board is also developing a new strategic plan which will be ready for the end of August 2009.

The school board does not currently have a governance document that delineates the division of duties between the board of trustees and the director of education. It is currently waiting for direction from the Ministry on this leading practice. In the interim, the school board has started discussions on governance with the trustees.

The school board does not currently have a formal staff succession plan but the Director is currently working on a plan. It was reported that the succession plan will be completed in conjunction with the leadership steering committee after the school board reviews best practices across the province.

HR Management and School Staffing/Allocation

New Leading Practice	Adopted?
Management periodically reports on the effectiveness of the attendance management process/ programs to senior management and the board.	In Progress
Management has established policies and procedures for staff/professional development and monitors staff take-up, budget, and outcomes.	No
Systems are in place and accessible by both HR and Finance staff to establish and track an approved level of staff.	Yes

The development of the school board's attendance management program is currently in progress, with implementation in 2009-2010. Once this is in place, reporting on the effectiveness of the program can begin.

The school board does not currently have established policies and procedures for staff/professional development. It was reported that this is largely an informal process. For example the facilities department holds a variety of workshops for its custodial staff to ensure ongoing learning.

Financial Management

New Leading Practice	Adopted?
Management completes and files all financial reports in accordance with established timelines.	Yes
The board has an audit committee with external members as advisors.	No
The external auditor's planning and annual reports are presented to the board's audit committee, and any recommendations are acted upon by management.	Yes
Management performs regular cash/funding forecasting to ensure the board's debt service can be met to maturity.	Yes
Management ensures adequate controls are in place to safeguard non-school board funds and coordinate the annual reporting of revenues and expenditures from schools and school councils.	Yes
Purchasing Managers monitor and ensure compliance with the board's procurement policies and procedures.	Yes

The school board reported it has already adopted many of these leading practices. For example, the school board completes and files all financial reports in accordance with established timelines. Compliance with the school board's procurement policies and procedures is monitored by the manager and is documented in the purchasing policy.

One leading practice that has not been adopted is the addition of external members as part of the audit committee. This is dependent on the establishment of an audit

committee, which the school board recognizes is important and is waiting for direction from the Ministry before moving forward. It was reported that the school board feels it will be difficult to recruit external members in small towns, particularly given the required skill set of external members.

The school board is encouraged to follow through on this recommendation once further direction is provided from the Ministry.

Operations and Facilities Management

New Leading Practice	Adopted?
Process exists to monitor new legislation and regulations and implement necessary changes.	Yes
Operations management follows Ministry guidelines, policy and legislation on healthy schools.	Yes

The school board reported that it has already adopted both these leading practices. The Director monitors new policies sent by the Ministry and forwards to the appropriate superintendent for action and follow-up. The school board also follows Ministry guidelines, policy and legislation on healthy schools, and has adopted initiatives that incorporate student involvement.

Appendix A – Selection of Recommendations

- **SP** - Strategic Planning
- **AR** - Areas of Risk Categories
 - AR 1 - Undue reliance on specific human and / or non-human resources
 - AR 2 - Reputational risk in the community from not acting on the recommendation
 - AR 3 - Financial risk impacting school board’s financial position
- **ROI** - Potential for material Return on Investment
- **SAO** - Seven Areas of Opportunity from 2008 sector report
- **NLP** – New leading practices introduced in Wave 3 through the Second Edition of the Operational Review Guide.

Governance and School Board Administration

Ref.	Recommendation	Follow-up Yes/No	Criteria
1	The Board should develop a multi-year strategic planning document that defines key objectives, timelines and performance metrics for the entire system. This would provide an over-arching framework for the Board to which all annual plans should align.	Yes	SP
2.	On an annual basis, the Board should develop an operating plan that expands the scope of the Board Improvement Plan to cover all aspects of Board operations. This plan should define in-year initiatives that contribute to the achievement of the longer term goals and demonstrate the alignment of non-academic departments.	Yes	SP SAO

HR Management and School Staffing/Allocation

Ref.	Recommendation	Follow-up Yes/No	Criteria
3.	The HR department should produce an annual report that demonstrates accomplishments relative to its annual plan.	Yes	SP

Ref.	Recommendation	Follow-up Yes/No	Criteria
4.	The Board should investigate an automated solution that allows schools to enter attendance information directly into iSYS on at least a weekly basis. With more timely and accurate information, the Board should then develop an attendance management strategy for all staff groups. This would define measurable objectives with the required policy, process and procedures.	Yes	SAO / NLP
5.	The HR department should investigate automating the processes that currently synchronize data between finance, HR/payroll and benefit provider systems. This would minimize inefficiencies and the potential for human error.	No	
6.	The Board should consider conducting confidential exit interviews with staff. It should also consider conducting periodic staff satisfaction surveys across all staff groups. These practices can provide management with valuable input for HR professional development and effective employee relations.	No	

Financial Management

Ref.	Recommendation	Follow-up Yes/No	Criteria
7.	The finance department should adopt a more structured approach to annual departmental planning, including targets, timelines and assigned responsibilities. The plan should link to the Board's strategic direction and priorities.	Yes	SP
8.	The Board should add a step the budget planning process to ensure alignment between specific budget goals, the annual Board Improvement Plan and the long term strategic direction of the Board.	No	
9.	Finance staff should consider providing an expanded level of interim reporting, as in the format suggested in section 4.3 of this report. This would improve understanding of the financial reporting of the year-to-date results.	Yes	SAO
10.	Management and the Board should consider establishing an internal audit function. Management could start by identifying options for its mandate and scope and the estimated annual cost for each option. Management's proactive assessment of need and cost would be a useful first step.	Yes	SAO / NLP
11.	Management and the Board should establish an audit committee. The Board and management should consider	Yes	SAO / NLP

Ref.	Recommendation	Follow-up Yes/No	Criteria
	including at least two external members to act as advisors and contribute to the committee's accountability.		
12	Management should establish an investment policy for approval by the Board. A formal cash management plan and appropriate procedures to manage surplus cash to optimize investment income should be developed.	Yes	AR3
13	The finance department should develop a formal cash flow model to forecast and monitor the Board's cash flow activities. The model will allow the Board to identify opportunities to optimize investment income and/or minimize interest costs.	Yes	AR3
14	The Board should continue with the development of the electronic scheduling system for its community use of schools program. This would increase the accessibility and efficiency of the registration process and strengthen the Board's controls over this revenue stream.	No	
15.	The Board should perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine the feasibility of adding more automated functions to its existing financial system.	Yes	AR1
16.	The Board should perform a transaction/spend analysis of PCard usage relative to issued purchase orders. This would identify opportunities to increase purchase order threshold limits and promote increased use of PCards through an expansion of the existing program.	Yes	ROI
17.	Finance staff should implement EFT payments to the majority of their suppliers, to gain greater efficiency and minimize the risk of payments being altered prior to clearing the bank.	No	

School Operations and Facilities Management

Ref.	Recommendation	Follow-up Yes/No	Criteria
18.	The facilities department should adopt a more structured approach to annual departmental planning, including targets, timelines and assigned responsibilities. The plan should link to the Board's strategic direction and priorities.	Yes	SAO
19.	The Board should continue to develop a custodian manual that includes Board-wide cleaning standards.	No	
20.	Management should consider establishing a multi-year maintenance and renewal plan, including the funding available	Yes	SAO

Ref.	Recommendation	Follow-up Yes/No	Criteria
	to support it. This would provide a clear forecast of the Board's critical needs over the next several years.		
21.	The Board should investigate the cost-benefit of enhancing its work order system to streamline the management, dispatch, tracking, costing and reporting of facility renewal and general maintenance work orders.	No	
22	The Board should continue to expand its existing energy management initiatives and develop a system-wide, multi-year energy management plan with appropriate consumption reduction targets. In addition, the Board should ensure that it has tracking and reporting mechanisms to monitor consumption and energy costs for reporting to the individual schools, senior administration and the Board of Trustees.	Yes	SAO / ROI
23.	The Board should continue to develop a more comprehensive 10- year capital plan to provide a better understanding of short and long term facility requirements and a related funding plan. The ReCAPP database should also be updated, as it will contribute to the analysis of the renewal requirements over the 10-year period. The plan would also incorporate the impact of declining enrolment, and present options to address ongoing facility needs.	Yes	AR3