

Newport, Rhode Island

**REPORT OF A MANAGEMENT REVIEW
OF THE NEWPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

July 19, 2005

**MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF THE
NEWPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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I – INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an assessment of the Newport Public Schools. It contains observations and recommendations relating to the school department's management, organization, and operations. In addition, the results of a survey of Newport Public Schools' employees are presented.

This introductory chapter briefly reviews the objectives and scope of the study and the methodology used to conduct it. It also presents the organization of this report.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were to:

- Review school department's budget and financial processes
- Review school department's performance, management and operations
- Evaluate shared services alternatives
- Develop recommendations for increasing organizational efficiency and effectiveness

APPROACH

A range of quantitative and qualitative analytic methods were used to conduct this study. Interviews were held with city council members, school committee members, the city manager, the mayor, selected city department managers, the school department superintendent, school department central office administrators, school department principals and assistant principals and more than 120 department employees. Visits were conducted to all schools with each elementary school visited at least twice, Thompson Middle School visited three times and Rogers High School visited five times. Individual interviews and focus groups with administrators, teachers, parents, students and support service staff were held at each school site. In addition, three focus groups were held with school department administrators to discuss issues relating to staffing, contract provisions and budget development. A survey was also disseminated to all employees and of the approximately 375 surveys distributed, 139 employees (37.2 percent of department employees) responded. In addition, a variety of approaches were used to collect information from Newport citizens – individual interviews were conducted with selected community leaders and parent organization leaders, focus groups discussions were facilitated with the Newport Education Foundation leaders, Newport PTO leadership, parents and community members and one openly advertised drop-in session, with attendance by over 120 individuals, was held at which community members could discuss their perceptions of the school department. Lastly, the study team requested and thoroughly reviewed a range of documents and data covering all areas of the school department's operations.

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ARRANGEMENT OF THE REPORT

This report is arranged into nine chapters and one appendix as follows:

I – Introduction (this chapter)

II – Executive Summary

III – Overview

IV – Educational Services

V – Non-Instructional Operations

VI – Facilities

VII – Shared Services

VIII – Employee Survey Results

IX – Implementation

Appendix A – Employee Survey Instrument

II – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter summarizes the results of a management review of the Newport Public School's central office. The chapter is organized in the same way as the overall report. An overview of the Newport Public School is presented first. The next discuss educational services and non-instructional operations. The fourth section addresses facilities issues and is followed by a discussion of shared services opportunities. A final section summarizes the financial implications of the study recommendation.

A – OVERVIEW

This section presents background information on the Newport Public Schools, lists and categorizes the programs, activities and functions performed by the school department, discusses the performance of the department and its schools and the overall costs of school department operations.

BACKGROUND

Organizational Structure

The Newport Public Schools is led by a superintendent who has five managers reporting to her – assistant superintendent; business manager; property services director; director of teaching, learning and professional development; and director of special education. In addition, each of the department's eight principals report directly to the superintendent. During fiscal year 04-05 the Newport Public Schools employed 372.6 staff of which 287.6 were professional staff and 85 were support staff.

Budget And Finances

Total department operating expenditures during the 2004 school year were \$41,495,304. The bulk of these expenditures (approximately 76 percent) were devoted to personnel related costs (payroll and benefits). In addition, approximately 19 percent of expenditures are devoted to purchased services.¹ Expenditures for general education account for 70.5 percent of total expenditures with special education related expenditures accounting for 20.0 percent of total expenditures.

Audit Findings

Rhode Island General Law (RIFL) Section 16-2-9, which sets forth the general powers and duties of school committees, states that the school committee of each school department is responsible for maintaining a school budget that does not result in debt. According to the City Of Newport's certified audited financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004 "for the year ended June 30, 2004 the City of Newport's (City's) School Committee adopted a budget for the unrestricted fund (School) with a budgeted deficit of \$1,165,810. Actual expenditures and other financing uses exceed revenues and other financing sources that resulted in a deficit of \$1,760,477 and, at June 30, 2004, the School's unrestricted governmental fund has a deficit fund balance of

¹ These estimates are based on information presented in the 2004-2005 budget that included a local operating budget of \$36,014,476.

\$1,100,081.” The School Committee, however, disputes this finding. As outlined in the year end financial statements, the School Committee contends that a revised budget was prepared in fiscal year 2004 that left a potential budget gap of \$1,524,729 and that “the School Committee believed that the City Council had no intention of letting the school department budget gap continue through year-end.” However, from the School Committee’s perspective, “despite ongoing cooperative efforts between the City Council and the School Committee and sincere expectations to resolve the deficit the School Committee did not receive additional appropriations from the City.” The City concurs with the audit finding.

PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS

The Newport Public Schools performs a broad array of programs, activities and functions. Some of these programs, activities and functions are required by state or federal law, others are central to achieving the school department’s mission, while others are not directly related to achieving the school department’s mission but support department operations. To ensure department stakeholders have an understanding of the range of programs, activities and functions performed by the department and, in particular, what functions and activities are required and what functions and activities are optional, a systematic categorization of department functions and activities was performed. This analysis reveals that more than half of the programs, activities and functions (51.5 percent) are categorized as being “primary” or “essential support.” None of these programs, activities and functions is deemed to be unnecessary.

PERFORMANCE

Over the past three years the Newport Public Schools have made significant strides in improving educational performance. While three years ago the department had six schools categorized by the Rhode Island Department of Education as “Low Performing and Not Improving” performance has improved to such an extent that in the 2004 school year no schools were categorized as low performing. In addition, the department was removed from the list of school departments needing progressive support and intervention by the Rhode Island Department of Education. The department was also named as one of three “outperforming” school departments in the State of Rhode Island by Standard & Poor’s.²

² To identify school departments that consistently outperform demographically similar school departments or peers, Standard & Poor’s has developed a statistical method called the Performance Zone. The method uses three fundamental criteria to identify outperforming school departments. First, school departments must achieve higher levels of student proficiency than peers. Outperformers must report higher percentages of students that score at or above state standards on reading and math tests than other schools departments that serve similar proportions of economically disadvantaged students. Second, school departments must perform at a level that significantly exceeds statistical expectation. In other words, outperformers must achieve proficiency levels that fall above the threshold for the expected performance zone – simply beating peers is not sufficient. Finally, school departments must outperform consistently. They must repeat their performance for at least two consecutive years.

The improvement in the performance of the school department's students is also reflected in the increase in the percentage of students who have met or exceeded standards on state proficiency tests. English/language arts test scores have increased in all but two schools during this period and mathematics scores have increased in all but three schools.

COST OF SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

The per pupil cost of educating students in Newport is considerably higher than the statewide average. While the average cost of educating a student in Rhode Island (after adjusting for "other commitments") is \$10,450 the average cost in Newport is 20 percent high (\$12,611). The per pupil cost of educating students in Newport is also considerably higher than for other school departments with a similar demographic profile. Indeed, Newport's cost per pupil exceeds the average cost for these districts by \$1,659. Newport's cost per pupil exceeds the average cost for other area district by even more - \$2,910 per student.

A number of factors contribute to the relatively high cost of serving children in the Newport Public Schools including the level of funds the department receives from external sources, the relatively high number of special education students served by the department, the provision of services that may not be offered by other departments, the fact that department costs have not declined at the same rate as its enrollment, the department's low class sizes and its high benefits costs.

B – EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

This section presents observations and recommendations regarding educational services. The section is divided into seven parts: instructional management; class size; high school operations; middle school operations; textbooks and instructional materials; special education; and services to English language learners.

INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT

The student achievement gains the district has achieved (which are discussed in the previous section) did not result from reducing class size. Indeed, despite the low class sizes the district enjoyed the Newport Public Schools had not performed well in improving student achievement for all students. Rather, the success of the Newport Public Schools in improving student performance has been driven by five primary factors:

- Providing support to help students come to school ready to learn
- Making effective use of data to assess student performance and to develop and implement instructional strategies based on this diagnosis of student needs
- Taking an inclusionary approach to serving students with special needs and providing them full access to the general curriculum

- Implementing a consistent curriculum across all elementary schools
- Providing intensive job embedded professional development to improve instruction with consistent follow-up at the school level

CLASS SIZE

While research shows a strong correlation between class size and student achievement in grades K through 3, research provides little validation about the relationship between class size and student achievement in grades 4 through 12. Nonetheless, Newport class sizes are extremely low not only in grades K through 3 but in the upper elementary, middle school and high school grades as well. Indeed, Newport class sizes are significantly lower than those in other Rhode Island school districts and far lower than those seen nationally. Moreover, because class sizes provided for in the Teachers Association of Newport (TAN) contract are treated as absolute maximums rather than class size averages, as is common in most other districts, class sizes have historically been even lower than those provided for in the contract.

Not only are the maximum class sizes in Newport lower than in other area school districts but actual class sizes are lower than the contract maximums. Indeed, over 70 percent of Newport classes operate below the maximum capacity prescribed by contract. A number of factors contribute to this situation.

Elementary school configuration. Operating six elementary schools when only five are needed to house the district's elementary population makes it extremely difficult to maximize class size. Not surprisingly, given that a student population needed to populate five schools is divided among six schools the class sizes at each elementary grade level are approximately five-sixth or 83.3 percent of the contract maximum.

Elementary class configurations. The school department does not use alternative approaches to class configurations that many other school departments have employed to maximize class size and manage teacher service in the face of declining enrollment and changing demographics. For example, while many school departments configure classes based on desired average class sizes the TAN contract requires that the department consider only maximum class sizes. In addition, many school districts have created elementary multi-grade classrooms but no multi-grade classrooms have been established in Newport.

Middle school cluster model. The TAN contract specifies that class sizes at the middle school cannot exceed 23 students. In addition, however, the contract also specifies that a cluster of students (i.e., a group of students that will be served by the same four teachers) cannot exceed 90 students in grades 6 and 7 and 92 students in grade 8. This additional constraint makes it extremely difficult to configure individual classes that approach the maximum of 23 specified by the contract. Indeed, based on the current contract language, a new cluster must be added if the number of students exceeds the cluster maximum. Therefore the school department must bear the cost of four additional teachers to accommodate just a handful of students.

High school³ scheduling practices. The current TAN contract does not provide for a maximum class size at the high school level although the school department has maintained a historical maximum of 25 students per class. Rather than adhering to this class size guideline, however, a tradition of “exceptions” has been established for a range of classes including America’s Choice classes, AP classes, science lab classes and standards level classes. Consequently, the vast majority of high school classes have fewer than 25 students. Indeed, a review of the master schedule for Rogers High School and the Newport Area Career and Technical Center (NACTC) for the 2004-2005 school year reveals an average class size of 17 students with only 18 percent of classes scheduled to the 25 student level.

The culture of scheduling that currently exists at Rogers High School and at NACTC developed during a time when Rogers High School served a much larger enrollment of students with less diversity in student needs. Part of the reasons class sizes are low, therefore, simply relates to the fact that if the diversity of course offerings does not change class sizes will be smaller in a school that serves 1600 students versus a school that serves 750 students. However, low class sizes at the high school can be only partly explained by the school’s failure to “resize” and restructure its educational program to serve a far smaller student enrollment with a far wider range of student needs. A number of other factors also contribute to class sizes at the high school being low including the following:

- Schedules are altered based on staff preferences
- Science classes meet six rather than five times a week
- Requirements of special programs are misinterpreted
- Class sizes have been set to justify the current complement of teachers
- Insufficient attention is devoted to encouraging students to enroll in advanced courses.

To address these issues the department should restructure contract provisions related to class size. At the elementary level the current maximum class sizes provided for in the TAN contract should be increased and the contract should be modified to reflect class size averages at each elementary grade level rather than class size maximums. The school department should also give principals the option of creating multi-grade classrooms. At the middle school level contract provisions relating to both cluster and class size should be modified. Finally, the leadership team at Rogers High School should take advantage of the flexibility provided in the TAN contract to maximize class size for all courses offerings. In addition, the current practice of scheduling six periods for all lab science classes should be discontinued. Moreover, responsibility for developing the master schedule and assigning teachers to particular classes should be controlled and overseen by the principals and vice principals.

³ All references to high school scheduling refer to scheduling practices at both Rogers High School and Newport Area Career and Technical Center.

HIGH SCHOOL OPERATIONS

This section is divided into eight parts: school performance; programmatic reforms; organization; discipline; guidance services; curriculum; length of the school day; and advanced placement offerings.

Performance

Rogers High School's performance compares favorably with other Rhode Island districts with similar demographics. On both state assessments and SATs Rogers students score higher than students in these peer districts. .

Programmatic Reforms

Rogers High School has not adapted to address the changing needs of the students it serves or to reflect the most current research on high school reform. In particular, school department stakeholders are concerned about the high rate of failure of students at the eighth and ninth grade level. This problem is especially important because in Newport, as in the rest of the country, students who are retained in the ninth grade are the most likely to drop out of high school. In addition, stakeholders expressed concern about the number of students who are not successful in the traditional high school model. These students include those who move from the middle school to the high school because of their age despite their failure at the middle school level, students who are failing at the high school and students who have attendance, truancy and discipline concerns. Adequate programs to serve these students do not currently exist.

The school department should implement two programmatic reforms to address these needs. First, the high school should develop a ninth grade academy. In addition, an alternative "school-within-a-school" model should be developed to provide an alternative route to graduation for students who have not been successful in the traditional program.

Organization

An expensive management and leadership structure is currently in place at Rogers High School and the Newport Area Career and Technical Center (NACTC). For a combined enrollment of just over 750 students the leadership team includes 15 positions: the Rogers High School principal, the NACTC director, two vice-principals, nine department heads and two deans. The resulting ratio of 15 administrators to 750 students (one administrator for every 50 students) is one of the richest the consultants have observed in a public high school.

Rogers High School should modify its organizational structure to improve coordination, clarify responsibilities, facilitate change and reduce costs. In particular, the NACTC director should be reclassified as an assistant director when the current incumbent retires. Taking this step will not only reduce administrative costs but will also allow facilitation efforts to integrate the programs of the two schools more seamlessly. Vice principal responsibilities should also be clarified. Furthermore, the nine department head positions should be eliminated and replaced with one full-time curriculum coordinator position. Eliminating the department head position and returning those veteran teachers to full time teaching positions will not only decrease administrative and

teaching costs but will place some of the school department's most skilled and experienced educators back in the classroom on a full time basis providing rigorous instruction to students. In addition, the recommended coordinator position will play a key role in improving the overall performance of high school teachers. Finally, one dean position should be eliminated. The remaining dean should be able to address discipline issues in a high school with 750 students.

Student Discipline

Deans currently devote excessive time addressing peripheral issues relating to student discipline and insufficient attention on ensuring the district's code of conduct is consistently implemented. At present, deans devote the bulk of their time to mediating student discipline issues that either should be addressed in the classroom or are clear-cut and should not be subject to dispute. For example, as of May 15, 2005 the dean's office had received 3,300 student referrals. Over 70 percent of those referrals were for minor infractions that in most other school districts would be handled by teachers and not be referred to a dean. Conversely, only a handful of referrals, fewer than 20 out of 3,300 (or .6 percent) were for major infractions such as fighting or stealing

At the same time the deans are devoting excessive time to these peripheral issues, insufficient attention is focused on ensuring the district's code of conduct is consistently implemented. Indeed, Rogers High School teachers, parents and students expressed great concern with the dean's office perceived tolerance for unacceptable student behavior and inconsistent implementation of the school department's code of student conduct.

To address these issues, the high school should take a number of steps to strengthen student discipline. First, the high school faculty should receive extensive professional development relating to classroom management. Once this training has been completed the policies and procedures for referring students to the dean's office should be reviewed and revised to prevent teachers from referring students to the dean's office for minor infractions. The high school's administrators should then enforce compliance with these revised procedures. In addition, procedures for addressing student referrals to the dean's office should be revised to ensure teachers' reports are treated with credibility. The principal and vice principals should also review reports to ensure procedures are consistently followed and that students who violate the code of conduct receive consistent consequences.

Guidance Services

Despite having adequate resources the guidance department does not provide students with the services they need to guide their high school program and to prepare them for postsecondary education and/or entry into the workforce. Indeed, in interviews a wide range of stakeholders expressed concerns about the lack of support counselors currently provide students and the lack of a comprehensive guidance curriculum.

The lack of an effective guidance program results in part from the fact that in recent years guidance staff has struggled to define their role in the high school. In addition, counselors have struggled to adjust to the elimination of the department head position and the change to a new student information system (SchoolMax). Shortcomings in the guidance program, however, do not result from the lack of guidance resources. On the

contrary, guidance counselor staff to student ratios is quite rich. At present, four counselors serve the approximately 750 Rogers High School students – a ratio of one counselor to 187.5 students. This ratio is well below the ratios in both neighboring school departments and nationally. Typically high school guidance counselors average caseloads of between 400 and 500 students per counselor.

To address these issues system wide guidance committee should be established and charged with developing a comprehensive guidance curriculum. This guidance curriculum should be organized around three developmental domains: knowledge of self and others, career development and educational development. The curriculum should be delivered through classroom activities (counselors teach, teams teach and assist with guidance activities in the classroom) and group activities (counselors conduct group sessions outside of the classroom to respond to students needs and interests). In addition, the high school's college and career center services should be integrated with the overall guidance programs. At the same time, steps should be taken to clarify guidance assignments.

Curriculum

Rogers High School Does not offer a rigorous curriculum for all of its students. Instead, the current curriculum offers an academic program with multiple tracks of classes. These tracks include classes that have been designed to serve only students with special education needs, “ramp up” or standards classes for students who are performing below grade level, general classes, college preparatory classes, and advanced placement classes. Offering five levels of classes creates a number of problems. In particular, doing so limits course offerings, reduces average class size and limits participation in a rigorous college preparatory curriculum.

To strengthen its curriculum the high should eliminate general level classes for all students. Non-college preparatory courses should only be provided for those students for whom an evaluation indicates the need for special education classes or short-term standards classes. All other students should be enrolled in college preparatory level classes. Taking this step will increase the rigor of the high school's academic program, create the capacity for broader course offerings and facilitate efforts to increase class size.

Length Of The School Day

Rogers High School currently has a short school day and only seven periods of instruction. The current high school day is six hours and fifteen minutes long. Not only is the school day 15 minutes short of the length required by the State of Rhode Island (six hours and thirty minutes) but it is also one of the shortest high school days the consultants have observed.

Operating a high school with a short school day and a limited number of periods of instruction creates a number of problems. First, limiting the number of periods a day makes it difficult for students to complete all courses required for graduation in the periods provided. In addition, the length of the school day limits the course options for students who desire a more challenging curriculum and schedule. For example, the current schedule limits the ability of students to enroll in required classes, take the advanced placement classes they desire and to take courses at NACTC.

The high school should meet this challenge by lengthening the school day. This recommendation can be implemented at no cost to the school. The length of the school day can be extended by one or two periods and teachers' schedules staggered accordingly. Some teachers, for example, might begin their school day during first period, while others may begin the day at third period. Additionally the career-technical center might begin the day either an hour before or an hour after the high school start time.

Advanced Placement Offerings

Rogers High School currently offers only seven advanced placement courses and a limited number of honors English and mathematics classes. For many of the reasons that have already been discussed these classes are typically under-enrolled. For example, extensive criteria have been established for students to be eligible to enroll in these classes. In addition, scheduling practices have created barriers for students wishing to enroll in multiple advanced placement classes. Six period science classes, which have been eliminated for next year, made it very difficult for a student to enroll in more than one advanced placement science class. Additionally many advanced placement science classes required the student to have taken the college preparatory level of some science classes prior to taking the advanced placement class.

In addition, because students can receive Rhode Island College credit for approved advanced placement classes at Rogers High School the school's faculty do not encourage students to take advanced placement exams. In fact, parents and students report that students are actually discouraged from taking advanced placement examinations. There is little rationale for discouraging students from taking advanced placement examinations. For one thing, advanced placement examination scores are nationally recognized and potentially carry more weight at highly competitive colleges and universities than Rhode Island College credits. In addition, advanced placement examinations provide an objective measure of the rigor of the advanced placement class and a comparison to students across the country enrolled in comparable classes.

To address these issues, the high school should take a number of steps to expand its advanced placement course offerings. Implementing some of the recommendations previously discussed (e.g., eliminating unnecessary barriers to enrollment and expanding the high school day) should facilitate these efforts. In addition, creative alternatives that allow students to enroll in a broad range of advanced placement courses should be aggressively pursued. Such options include virtual high schools, on-line courses and dual enrollment at neighboring colleges.

Students enrolled in advanced placement courses should also be encouraged to take advanced placement examinations. In fact, participation in the examination should become a standard culmination to the completion of a course.

MIDDLE SCHOOL OPERATIONS

The school day at Thompson Middle School is currently divided into six periods. Each teacher is provided one period of individual planning time and one period of common planning time per day. After considering their paid lunch period, the four periods a day teachers devote to direct instruction accounts for less than two-thirds of the school day.

This problem results primarily from the fact that middle school teachers devote one period a day to common planning time. While common planning is an essential component of the middle school cluster structure most middle schools in other districts provide cluster teams one or two periods per week of common planning per week. To address this issue, the middle school schedule should be modified to reduce the number of common planning periods per week from five to two.

TEXTBOOKS AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

As the Newport Public Schools has faced budget challenges, funding for textbooks, instructional materials and library books has been compromised. When budget challenges have occurred, among the first line items to be reduced have been those to support the purchase of textbooks, instructional materials and library books. Because of these historical reductions the funds now allocated are not at all sufficient to meet the needs of Newport students. To address this issue the school department should increase budget allocations for textbooks, library books and instructional materials.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Newport Public Schools serves a high number of special education students (23⁴ percent of school department students currently qualify for special education services). Department staff report that the high number of special education students dates back to the mid to late 1990's when special education support was the only alternative available to assist struggling students. At present, two important factors tend to increase the percentage of the student population in Newport that has special needs. First, the very fact that the school department's overall student population is declining tends to increase the percentage of special education students served. Second, the large number of group homes and independent living programs in Newport inflates the number of special education students served.

The services and supports these students receive are, in many ways, exemplary. During a recent review completed by the Rhode Island Department of Education the department received minimal citations and was found to be in compliance with all state and federal special education regulations. Although the perception may exist that services provided to special education students by the Newport Public Schools are excessive or somehow optional, a careful examination of special education services and the special education budget found a model in compliance, but no staffing in excess of state mandated ratios and federal requirements. In addition, current approaches to serving special education students reflect best practice models relating to inclusion, co-teaching and supporting students with paraprofessionals. To successfully implement inclusion models extensive training on differentiated instruction has been provided to all teachers. In addition, over the past four years the school department has expanded its programs to serve students with challenging behavioral needs and students with autism spectrum disorders.

While a major overhaul of special education operations is certainly not warranted, implementing a number of recommendations should help to further strengthen performance and provide additional resources. First, the department should reexamine the assignments of social workers and psychologists to free the resources needed to

⁴ As reported by the State of Rhode Island audited student count for June 2004.

provide greater support to the middle school and the high school. Second, the school department should continue to evaluate program models to prevent out-of-district placements and expand local options for serving students currently placed out-of-district. Finally, the department should determine the true cost of serving students who reside in group homes and lobby the state to pay the full cost of serving these students

SERVICES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The caseloads of teachers who serve English language learners are high. Currently each of the elementary school teachers who serve English language learners carries an active caseload of between 40 and 50 students⁵ and the teacher assigned to the high school and middle school has a total caseload of 21 students.⁶ These caseloads far exceed the levels required by State of Rhode Island regulations and national best practice. Rhode Island, for example, mandates a caseload of between 20 and 25 students based on the needs of the students. If left unaddressed this situation is likely to get much worse because the caseloads for elementary teachers are growing at the same time the level of service required for each student is increasing as well. To comply with state requirements regarding caseloads and service allocations for English language learners, therefore, an additional ELL teacher should be assigned to both the Carey School and the Sullivan School. In addition, professional development services should be provided for administrators, teachers and support service professionals to aid them in serving English language learners.

C – NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

This section presents observations and recommendations relating to non-instructional management. The section is divided into five parts: organization; facilities management; financial management; human resource management; transportation; and labor relations.

ORGANIZATION

The assistant superintendent – one of five central office managers reporting to the superintendent – supports the superintendent on a broad array of initiatives and activities including: parent and community relations; coordination with not-for-profit service providers; student discipline; labor relations; grants and development; and human resources. While these functions are important, for the most part, a senior level manager is not needed to perform them. A lower level professional should therefore, replace the assistant superintendent position. The department should consider rotating staff through this position every two to three years to provide professional development opportunities for school-based administrators with the potential to assume broader responsibilities.

⁵ These caseloads tend to fluctuate during the school year because English language learners can be very mobile.

⁶ 19 students attend Thompson Middle School and two students attend Rogers High School.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

In this subsection observations relating to facilities maintenance and custodial services are made and followed by recommendations to address the opportunities for improvement identified.

Building Maintenance

Department facilities are not well maintained. Observations made by the consulting team when visiting Newport schools suggest that in the older schools especially maintenance needs – ranging from replacing worn tiles to ensuring bathrooms are operational – are not being addressed. Moreover, employee survey results indicate significant dissatisfaction with building maintenance services.

Despite these significant maintenance needs – which are apparent to even a casual observer – department managers do not aggressively manage facilities maintenance activities and ensure staff resources are used effectively. On the contrary, facility maintenance managers and staff lack a sense of urgency about improving maintenance services and take a somewhat casual approach to addressing needs. While the information needed to assess workload and activity is not gathered the perspective of many department employees is that facilities maintenance staff are, in fact, underutilized and that some do not work diligently. In the face of such significant need, at the very least one would expect facilities maintenance staff to feel pressure to address the most obvious maintenance problems but the current culture of the organization creates no accountability for doing so. The specific shortcomings associated with building maintenance activities are numerous: work activities and service levels are not systematically tracked, preventive maintenance systems and schedules have not been established, and no systematic controls on purchasing or the use of materials and supplies have been established.

Custodial Services

The quality of custodial services varies considerably throughout the school department. In some schools the custodial services that are provided are impeccable while in others they are barely adequate.

While the overall number of custodians and plant managers employed by the Newport Public Schools is reasonable these staff are not equitably allocated. Some custodians are responsible for cleaning more than three times as much space as others. Moreover, as with building maintenance services custodial services are not effectively managed. Key shortcomings include the fact that work expectations are not clearly defined, supervisor are not scheduled to work when the bulk of the staff they are responsible for serving are working, utility custodians are underutilized and overtime expenditures for custodial workers appear excessive.

Recommendation

To address the need for significant improvement in the management of facility maintenance and custodial services responsibility for these services should be assigned to the City of Newport. While the shared services analysis (discussed later in this Executive Summary) performed as part of this engagement indicates facility

maintenance and custodial services be assigned to the city it should be noted that even if the shared services analysis did not suggest the city handle these functions significant steps would be needed to improve the management of these functions. As discussed, both facility maintenance and custodial services are not well managed and strong leadership will be needed to turn these operations around. Fortunately, the city has the management infrastructure (e.g., work order systems) and leadership needed to effectively manage these functions. In addition, the city purchasing agent should work with the managers who oversee facility maintenance and custodial services to establish blanket purchase agreements with local suppliers of parts and materials. These managers should also develop a process for evaluating systematic tracking and monitoring expenditures for parts and supplies.

As the city assumes responsibility for providing custodial services for the school department it should adopt a fundamentally new approach to managing custodial resources. First, instead of assigning all custodians (except utility custodians) to individual schools custodial resources should be divided into fixed and roving squads of custodians. Fixed squads of custodians (which in some schools may consist of a single custodian) should be responsible for performing custodial work that recurs on a frequent basis (e.g., daily or weekly). Detailed schedules should be established articulating the specific activities that should be performed on each day and the time typically required to perform each task. Detailed schedules should also be prepared for roving custodial squads but instead of being assigned to individual schools these squads would supplement the work performed by the fixed squads. In other words, they would be responsible for performing the work that the custodial staff assigned to individual school lack the capacity to perform.

In addition, the schedules for the plant engineers should be modified so that their work day overlaps with the shifts of custodians that have the greatest number of employees. The department should also review policies relating to custodial overtime and make changes to reduce unnecessary overtime payments while also ensuring fairness to custodial workers. Additionally, each school should be assigned a budget for custodial overtime and the principals should be charged with ensuring that these budget amounts are not exceeded.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financial Management Of The Newport Public Schools Is Not Strong

Financial management of the Newport public Schools is not strong. Numerous shortcomings relating to the school department's financial management and operations have been identified. In particular, numerous issues relating to financial controls (that reduce the risk of malfeasance), the lack of formal policies and procedures, and operating procedures have been identified. The short-comings that have been identified are divided into six general areas – asset management, risk management, financial management, cash management, purchasing and payment processing. In many of these areas significant improvement needs exist.

The Newport Public Schools currently lacks the financial and purchasing expertise needed to address the myriad issues relating to financial management that have been identified. Addressing these issues would require a total revamping of existing policies and practices. This time consuming and expensive process can be avoided, however,

by assigning responsibility for department financial management and purchasing to the City of Newport. The city already has strong financial leadership and effective policies and practices in place. By assigning responsibility for financial management and purchasing to the city the school department will be able to leverage and benefit from this management expertise and these effective systems.

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A range of opportunities to strengthen human resource management exists. These include administration, personnel management, staff assignments, hiring, retention and human resource practices.

Administration

While numerous improvements to human resource management have been made in recent years, the department's overall human resource system lacks important features needed to support effective operations. For example, department position descriptions are not current. In addition, the department does not have an appropriate methodology for reclassifying positions. The system that is currently used was designed to address issues relating to comparable worth not to classify positions in the department's pay structure. Perhaps most problematic the department lacks an effective performance management process. For support staff existing performance evaluations are not tailored to the job responsibilities of specific positions. For teachers, there is no requirement that all teachers be evaluated on an annual basis. Moreover, the current agreement with the Teachers Association of Newport (TAN) allows tenured teachers to select the areas on which they will be evaluated.

Strengthening the department's human resource infrastructure will take both time and resources – it is not practical for the department to address these issues in a relatively short period of time. Instead, the department should develop a long-term plan for strengthening its human resource infrastructure. One or two improvement initiatives should be undertaken each year.

Personnel Management

Entry requirements for clerical and administrative positions have not been updated to reflect the skills necessary to use current information technology. While short hand is a job requirement for some positions, employment candidates are not required to have the skills needed to use the school department's office software such as Microsoft Office, Powerpoint and Excel and the department's student information system, SchoolMax. Moreover, current requirements do not include the ability to access the Internet or to use on-line computer applications. To address this issue job entry requirements should be reviewed and updated.

Staff Assignments

The department currently uses a "job fair" process to allocate staff to specific schools and school department units each year. Two job fairs are held – one for TAN positions and one for Council 94 positions. All current members of the bargaining unit are eligible to participate in the job fair process. A list of all vacant positions is distributed in advance of the job fair. At the job fair each available position is opened to bidders. All

qualified staff can then bid on any posted position in the individual's job classification for which the individual meets certification requirements. The most senior qualified candidate for the position receives the position.

Problems with this process can be divided into three areas: lack of principal input into school staffing, ability of employees with performance problems to transfer, and the ability of employees to transfer to a position where they may have certification but no current work experience. To address these issues an alternative approach to assigning staff to schools should be negotiated.

Hiring

The racial and ethnic profile of the school department's professional staff does not match the diversity of the school department's student enrollment. While minorities comprise 42 percent of the student enrollment only 6.5 percent of the professional staff are minorities. The school department should take aggressive action to address this issue. In particular, a recruiting plan should be developed and implemented that focuses on recruiting highly competent minorities. This plan should include strategies for attracting novice teachers as well as lateral transfers

Retention

The success the school department has achieved over the past several years is due, in large part, to the leadership and dedication of its central office administrators and principals. Continuity in leadership, however, is needed to maintain improvement momentum and the school department has struggled to retain important administrators. In the past several months six key administrators – superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of teaching, learning and professional development, elementary school principal, middle school principal and high school principal have left the school department. While effective leaders appear to have been selected to fill many of these positions the challenges they face in continuing to improve student achievement are certainly made more difficult by this turnover in leadership positions. The school department should develop and implement a systematic approach to addressing these retention issues.

Human Resource Practices

Two department human resource practices are expensive and provide little or no value to the department. First, the department currently allows 12-month clerical staff to work reduced hours during the summer. In addition, the department currently assigns one clerical employee to each elementary school on a year round basis even though the principal the clerical employee supports works a 10 month contract. These practices are unnecessary and costly and should be discontinued.

TRANSPORTATION

The school department transports over 85 percent of the students who attend the Newport Public Schools. The reason such a high percentage of students are transported can be linked to five key factors: open enrollment at the elementary school level, failure to use appropriate elementary school boundaries to assign children to schools, noncompliance with the transportation criteria that has been established by the

school department, the department's focus on integrating low-income and minority students in all elementary schools and the fact that only one elementary school meets ADA requirements.

Two steps should be taken that will significantly reduce transportation costs. First, elementary school boundaries should be established utilizing geographic information systems that assign students to the elementary school closest to their home address. Second the school department should ensure that current transportation policies are enforced. Laidlaw⁷ managers suggest that taking these steps might enable the school department to reduce the cost of busing students to elementary schools by 50 percent.

LABOR RELATIONS

While good labor and management relations are essential to the effective operations of any school department, relations between the school department and its unions (especially the Teachers' Association of Newport) are out of balance. In an effort to maintain good relations with the labor unions department managers have made concessions that are not in the interest of the department, its students or Newport taxpayers. Labor relations issues may be divided into issues relating to the contracts themselves and issues relating to managing and interpreting the contracts.

- **TAN contract.** The contract between the school department and the Teachers' Association of Newport contains a number of provisions that increase costs and complicate management. These include provisions relating to class size, teacher assignment, middle school cluster size, benefit costs, unneeded positions, length of the school day, lack of preparation period parameters and change in working condition provisions.
- **Council 94 contract.** The Council 94 contract also includes four provisions that increase costs and complicate management. The provisions relate to scheduling, benefit costs, the schedule for elementary school secretaries (previously discussed) and call back pay.
- **Contract interpretation and management.** In the past, the focus of ongoing labor relations efforts appears to have been to avoid conflict and grievances. Indeed, in interviews the assistant superintendent reported that there have been no grievances for the past three years. While the department should be commended for its efforts to maintain strong relationships with its unions, efforts to minimize conflicts have also limited the flexibility of managers in dealing with personnel issues.

While the department should continue to strive to maintain positive relations with its unions it is also imperative that important management prerogatives be regained and that contract requirements that increase costs and hamper effective management be addressed. It is especially important that the department take an aggressive, but fair, stance in its current negotiations with the Teachers' Association of Newport in addressing key issues relating to class and cluster size and health benefits. Because this contract is so important to the department's future financial well being, the

⁷ Laidlaw is the private contractor that currently provides transportation services to Newport students.

department should engage a recognized expert in contract negotiations to represent its interests. In addition, the department must recognize that some conflict is inevitable in any labor management relationship. Rather than seeking to avoid grievances, as has been the practice in the past, the department should take the steps necessary to ensure that it does not relinquish important management prerogatives and that conflicts are resolved in a manner that is fair to employees but that also serves the school department, its students and Newport taxpayers.

D – FACILITIES

This section is divided into five parts: condition of facilities; school configuration; addressing elementary school facility needs; addressing high school facility needs; and financing alternatives.

CONDITION OF FACILITIES

School department facilities, with the exception of Thompson Middle School (which opened in 2002) are not only old but are in poor physical condition. The facilities at each elementary school and at Rogers High School have significant shortcomings.

- **Elementary schools.** The school department's elementary schools have a number of shortcomings including issues relating to the age of the schools, unmet maintenance needs, inadequate operating systems and the inappropriate basic design of the buildings.
- **Rogers High School.** The physical plant at Rogers provides student supervision challenges, is inappropriate for a New England climate, has ineffective heating and insulation and a host of unmet maintenance needs.

The school department is in the process of developing a long-range plan to replace or renovate inadequate facilities. In the best case, however a number of existing facilities will continue to be in service for at least three years. Addressing the condition of some of these facilities cannot be deferred until the buildings are replaced or renovated. In particular, the basements of the Sheffield and Cranston-Calvert schools must be addressed. (In addition, as will be discussed, the Underwood School should be taken off-line immediately). A conservative estimate of the cost of making these capital improvements is \$320,000.

SCHOOL CONFIGURATION

While enrollment has fluctuated somewhat over the past 10 years overall student enrollment has declined by 538 students (or 17.3 percent). The rate of enrollment decline has been most notable over the past five years during which time enrollment fell by 351 students (or 16.7 percent). During this period, the decline in elementary school enrollment has been even more pronounced than for the district as a whole. Over the past five years, elementary enrollment (kindergarten through grade five) has declined by 309 students (from 1490 students for the 2000-2001 school year to 1181 students for the 2004-2005 school year). This decline represents a 20.7 percent reduction in elementary school enrollment.

Although elementary student enrollment has declined by almost 21 percent in the past five years and this decline is projected to continue the school department continues to operate the same number of elementary schools as it did before the enrollment decline. Simple math, however, suggests that six elementary schools are no longer needed. If the number of schools declined at the same rate as enrollment only 4.8 schools would be needed. In fact, the observations and analysis made conducted during this engagement support this preliminary conclusion. Each of the existing schools has significant excess capacity and just five schools could easily accommodate the existing student population.

Moreover, the claim that the six schools should be retained to protect the identity of Newport neighborhoods does not hold water. In fact, most of Newport's elementary students do not attend their local elementary school and are bussed to other schools within Newport. For the 2004-2005 school year the only elementary school that could be considered a neighborhood school is Sullivan School where 88 percent of the students reside in the Sullivan neighborhood. At all other elementary schools only 40 to 50 percent of the current enrollment is made up of "neighborhood" students.

Operating six small elementary schools when only five are needed is neither efficient nor effective. Administrative and overhead costs are increase, inefficient use is made of professional and support staff who must spend unproductive time traveling between buildings, and class sizes are reduced. In addition, operating more schools than are necessary increases intradistrict mobility. Both national research and the experience of the Newport Public Schools, however, clearly suggest that student mobility has an adverse impact on student achievement. Indeed, the school department's own student performance data indicates that students who remain in the same elementary school for more than three years perform better on all assessment measures than students who move from one elementary school to another.

Rather than close an elementary school to address the issues relating to declining enrollment the school department has instead chosen to close classrooms in elementary schools throughout the department. In the upcoming school year, for example, the department is planning to close 10 classrooms. When a similar approach was taken during the 2004-2005 school year however, class sizes were not maximized. Moreover, the savings that result from closing classrooms fall well short of the savings that result from closing a school. Moreover, continuing the practice of closing classrooms would mean students across Newport would continue to be displaced from their current school and moved to another site based on their grade realignment.

Rather than close classrooms throughout all six elementary schools the school department should take the Underwood School offline offline. Operating five elementary schools instead of six will enable the department to reduce costs by \$1.08 million per year. For many reasons, Underwood School is the elementary school which should be taken off-line. Underwood School is in the worst condition of the existing six elementary schools and is not configured to support effective instruction. Additionally Underwood lacks the capacity to accommodate a significant number of students from other schools and does not currently function as a neighborhood school.

ADDRESSING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS

Based on the current age and condition of existing elementary schools it is not feasible to renovate existing buildings to meet the needs of a 21st century education. The design of the Carey, Cranston-Calvert and Sheffield Schools and the small sites on which each of these schools is located make substantial renovations impossible. Moreover, the current condition and inefficient site design of the physical plants at both Sullivan and Underwood Schools would make renovation more costly and less efficient than new construction. Likewise, Coggeshall School would require a large addition in addition to renovations to both meet the requirements of ADA and the educational requirements of Newport students.

Instead, the Newport Public Schools' long-term facility plan should include the construction of three elementary schools. Each elementary school should be designed to serve 400 students in kindergarten to grade five and have an additional enrollment capacity of up to 440 to accommodate preschool/early childhood education. One school should be constructed in the southern portion of the city on the current site of the Underwood School. A second new school should be constructed in the northern portion of the city on the current Sullivan School property. A third new school should be constructed in the central portion of the city at the Coggeshall School site.

ADDRESSING HIGH SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS

The general condition of the Rogers facility is poor. Not only are academic facilities obsolete with antiquated science labs and library facilities and a lack of sufficient electrical capacity to support needed technology but Rogers also suffers from significant problems with major operating systems, with general upkeep and with routine maintenance. In addition, the condition of the gym and student locker rooms impedes the high school athletic and physical education programs. Likewise, the auditorium and performing arts spaces at Rogers should also be updated and redesigned.

The school department should take a systematic approach to determining whether to renovate the existing Rogers facility or to construct a new high school. To make this assessment a ten-year analysis of the cost and educational implications of continuing to operate the current facility should first be performed. The results of this analysis should then be compared with the cost and benefits associated with constructing a new building.

FINANCING ALTERNATIVES

Public-private partnerships provide the Newport Public Schools the opportunity to pursue alternative approaches to financing its long-term facilities plan. Such partnerships have the potential to help the school department leverage its building and land assets to improve the quality of educational facilities. In particular, public-private partnerships might be used to generate additional revenue through disposition of buildings and land, through sale or lease of buildings and property, from lease to buy back arrangements, or from increased property tax revenue generated by the lease and sale of school properties to support the operation and improvement of the public schools.

E – SHARED SERVICES

This section presents the results of an analysis of the ways the City of Newport and the Newport Public Schools might collaborate to reduce the costs and/or improve the quality of services that are currently performed by both entities. This analysis is presented in four parts. First, a framework for evaluating shared service opportunities is presented. Next, the framework is used to determine functions and services for which shared services should be pursued. The third discusses the approach that should be taken to implement recommended shared services arrangements and how the shared services arrangements should be managed. A final section details the implications of implementing the study recommendations.

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Analysis of the functions and activities for which shared services should be considered should proceed in three steps. First, the extent to which the city and the school department perform similar functions and services must be determined. Next, the potential for shared services arrangements to improve service quality and/or reduce costs must be systematically considered. Finally, the risks associated with entering into a shared services arrangement must be assessed. By weighing the potential benefits against the potential costs and risks the functions and services for which shared service arrangements can be pursued can be identified.

ANALYSIS

Interviews were conducted with representatives of each city department to identify the extent to which the City and the school department perform similar functions and provide similar services. A list of these functions and services was then developed and the framework outlined in the previous section was used to assess the potential benefits of entering into a shared services arrangement for each of these functions and services. Ten functions and services were identified as being shared services candidates based on an evaluation of these potential benefits: refuse collection, accounting, payroll, budget development, budget monitoring, accounts payable, benefits administration, purchasing, building maintenance and custodial services. A further analysis of the costs and risks of entering into shared services arrangements for each of these activities and functions was then performed. With one exception, the potential benefits of entering into shared services arrangements with the city for each of the functions or services identified as being a potential shared service candidate exceed the cost. In one area, however – budget development – the analysis suggests that because the function is so central to the effective functioning of the school department it would not be prudent for the city to provide budget development services for the school department on a shared service basis.

IMPLEMENTATION

How shared services arrangements should be implemented will vary somewhat depending on the type of services. Implementing shared services for refuse collection will be extremely straightforward. Since the city currently contracts for this service, the next time this service is bid school department refuse collection services should be incorporated into the contract. The city should manage this contract on behalf of the

school department. Budget transfers should also be established to “reimburse” the city for the school department’s share of the refuse collection contract costs.

The school department should enter into a contract with the City of Newport to provide all financial services with the exception of budget development. This contract should specify the type of services that will be provided and what budget transfers should be made to “reimburse” the city for providing these services. In addition, discussions with appropriate city and school department labor representatives should be entered into to facilitate the transfer of the school department staff who currently performs financial functions to the city payroll. Entering into the shared service arrangement for financial services will enable the school department to discontinue the business manager position and the one bookkeeper position. These savings, however, will be offset by the need for the city to establish a professional accountant position. This position is needed to help the city finance director oversee her broader responsibilities and to provide management back-up in her absence.

The school department should also enter into a contract with the City of Newport to provide purchasing support. The contract should specify the type of services that will be provided and what budget transfers should be made to “reimburse” the city for providing these services. These transfers, however, should be modest because the school department should be able to piggy-back its purchasing onto existing city systems. Since the school department will continue to be responsible for developing specifications for the goods and services it purchases, the increase in workload for the city purchasing agent should be modest.

Finally, the school department should enter into a contract with the City of Newport to provide all property management services (including building maintenance and custodial services). In developing this contract it will be extremely important to clearly specify the level of service expected and to determine what resources the city needs to provide that service. Since the school department currently lacks adequate information on the building maintenance needs of its schools an interim contract may need to be entered into – that specifies the resources that will be provided but not the level of service that will be provided – until the city’s work order system can be used to develop more concrete information on building maintenance needs. After the interim contract expires and information on building maintenance needs has been analyzed – the city should systematically evaluate what portion of building maintenance needs should be provided by in-house staff and what types of building maintenance services should be provided by outside contractors. This contract should specify the type of services that will be provided and what budget transfers should be made to “reimburse” the city for providing these services. Implementing this recommendation will allow the school department to discontinue the property services director position.

F – IMPLICATIONS

Implementing the study recommendations will enable the school department to discontinue 25.5 positions and reduce costs by more than \$1.2 million. Please note that these savings do not reflect \$600,000 in potential savings the school committee proposes to achieve by consolidating classrooms and eliminating 10 teaching positions. If these savings are achieved the net savings associated with implementing these recommendations will be slightly more than \$600,000.)

Recommendation	Position Addition/ (Reduction)	Cost/ (Savings)
Education Services		
■ Restructure high school organization	(4.0)	(\$256,000)
■ Modify high school scheduling practices	(4.0)	(\$160,000)
■ Address instructional material needs	--	\$119,000
■ Increase English language learner staffing	2.0	\$120,000
Non-Instructional Operations		
■ Replace assistant superintendent position with a lower level professional	--	(\$45,000)
■ Replace 12-month elementary secretary positions with 10-month positions	--	(\$30,000)
Facilities		
■ Take Underwood School off-line	(17.5)	(\$1,084,800)
■ Address maintenance needs at the Cranston-Calvert and Sheffield schools	--	\$320,000
Shared Services		
■ Assign responsibility for facility maintenance and custodial services to the City of Newport	(1.0)	(\$90,000)
■ Assign responsibility for finance services to the City of Newport	(1.0)	(\$100,000)
Total	(25.5)	(\$1,206,800)

Please note, however, that many of the savings that will result from implementing study recommendations cannot be accurately estimated at this time. Particularly, the savings associated with recommendations that require labor negotiations cannot be determined. Likewise, the precise savings associated with transportation related recommendations cannot be determined. It is likely, however, that these savings will be significant.

III – OVERVIEW

This chapter presents an overview of the Newport Public Schools, lists and categorizes the programs, activities and functions performed by the school department, discusses the performance of the department and its schools and the overall costs of school department operations.

A – BACKGROUND

This section presents general background information on the Newport Public Schools. The school department's governance structure, organizational structure, mission and vision, student enrollment, school configuration, student demographics, staffing and finances are discussed.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

The Newport Public Schools is governed by an elected seven member school committee. According to state law the school committee is responsible for “the entire care, control, and management of all public school interests.” 23 specific school committee powers and duties are enumerated in the law including:

- Identifying education needs in the community
- Developing education policies to meet the needs of the community
- Providing for and assuring the implementation of federal and state laws, the regulations of the board of regents for elementary and secondary education, and of local school policies, programs and directives
- Providing for the evaluation of the school system
- Having responsibility for the care and control of local schools
- Having overall policy responsibility for the employment and discipline of school department personnel
- Adopting a school budget to submit to the local appropriating authority
- Adopting any changes to the school budget during the course of the year
- Employing a superintendent of schools
- Establishing minimum standards for personnel
- Establishing standards for conduct in the schools and for disciplinary actions

Under state law the Newport Schools does not have independent taxing authority and is dependent on the City of Newport (the local appropriating authority) for local funding. Consequently, the city council must approve the school department budget. If the school committee and the city council cannot agree on a budget the State of Rhode Island has established a process for resolving the disagreement. As a first step in this

process the school committee petitions the commissioner of education to seek alternatives for the school department to comply with state regulations and/or provide waivers to state regulations. If the commissioner does not approve of the alternatives to meet regulations or the waivers from regulations which are sought by the school committee then the school committee may submit a written request to the city council for the council to decide whether to increase the appropriation for schools. In the event of a negative vote by the appropriating agency, the school committee then has the right to seek additional appropriations by bringing action in the superior court for the County of Providence and is required to demonstrate that the school committee lacks the ability to adequately run the schools for that school year with a balanced budget within the previously authorized appropriation.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

As Exhibit III-1 shows, the Newport Public Schools is led by a superintendent who has five managers reporting to her:

- **Assistant superintendent.** The assistant superintendent performs a variety of functions to support the superintendent. In particular, the assistant superintendent oversees human resources and labor relations activities, coordinates community relations, works with community agencies to provide needed services to department students, and coordinates the department's fund raising efforts. In addition, the assistant superintendent directly oversees a number of specific programs including transportation, health services, school lunch and English as a Second Language (ESL). He also directly manages grants relating to Drug Free School, Title I Homeless services and school libraries.
- **Business manager.** The business manager oversees the financial and business operations of the Newport Public Schools. In particular, the business manager is responsible for preparing budgets, managing the payroll process, accounting, benefits administration, purchasing, workers compensation, non-public textbooks, financial reporting, grant reporting, state reporting, and ensuring the department receives its appropriate share of e-rate funding.
- **Property services director.** The property services director is responsible for ensuring that department facilities are clean and appropriately maintained. He oversees the provision of custodial services, manages corrective and preventive maintenance activities (performed by both in-house staff and contractors), coordinates building security, ensures compliance with fire codes, manages the rental of facilities, establishes capital improvement budgets and manages the department's vehicle fleet. In addition, the property services director manages the department's internal mail service.
- **Director of teaching and learning and professional development.** The director of teaching and learning and professional development is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to improve student achievement. Among other activities she ensures department curriculum is aligned with state standards, manages professional development for teachers, writes and implements grant proposals, administers federal programs, coordinates and manages school improvement efforts. She also administers the student teaching and mentoring programs.

- **Director of special education.** The director of special education oversees the department's special education program. In particular, she ensures compliances with all laws, regulations and policies governing special education, provides appropriate placement, support services, transportation, extended school year and transition services for students with disabilities and develops the budget for special education services. In addition, she supports and facilitates school level efforts to improve the achievement of students receiving special education services and to comply with state and federal special education requirements. She also ensures that the department maintains a continuum of services for students with behavior/emotional problems and for preschool students with special needs.

In addition, each of the department's eight principals report directly to the superintendent.

MISSION, GUIDING BELIEFS, VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Newport Public Schools has established a mission statement, a statement of guiding beliefs and vision statement to guide its operations. In addition, the department's strategic plan identifies a number of strategic objectives.

Mission Statement

The school department's mission statement states, "The mission of the Newport Public School System, in partnership with students, families, and the community is to provide a challenging education with appropriate supports so that all students will possess the knowledge, skills, and character essential to productive citizenship, life-long learning, and the ability to adapt successfully in a rapidly changing world."

Guiding Beliefs

The Newport Public Schools believes the following:

- Education is student centered
- Learning is a continuous, life-long process
- High academic standards are the foundation of the school system
- Every child has a right to an education and a responsibility to learn according to their abilities, as well as an obligation to allow others to exercise their same rights and responsibilities
- Everyone shall be treated with dignity and respect
- Students at all levels should be challenged to their ability
- All individuals and groups shall be accountable for their actions
- Quality public education is essential to a free, democratic society

- Everyone can learn
- Motivation, opportunity, expectations and/or curiosity are essential to learning
- Education requires effective leaders committed to excellence
- A safe environment is essential to education
- Education shall be responsive to changing student needs
- Collaboration among all participants best serves the educational interests of Newport
- Parent, family and community involvement is central and critical for the success of all students in Newport Public Schools

Vision Statement

The vision statement for the Newport Public Schools reads as follows: “Newport Public Schools is a student centered community which recognizes the individual abilities of each child and challenges each to reach the highest possible academic standards. Our schools provide an educational experience which fosters creative thinking, family and community involvement, and personal responsibility. With a strong commitment from a diverse and well trained staff, our students recognize the necessity for life-long learning experiences.

Strategic Objectives

The department’s 2005-2008 strategic plan details six strategic objectives. These strategic objectives and the strategies the department has established to achieve these objectives are presented in Exhibit III-2.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

The student enrollment in the Newport Public Schools as of October 1, 2004 was 2,566 students. While enrollment has fluctuated somewhat over the past 10 years overall student enrollment has declined by 538 students (or 17.3 percent).

School Year	Enrollment	Yearly Percentage Increase/(Decrease)	Cumulative Percentage Increase/(Decrease)
1996	3104		
1997	2967	-4.4%	-4.4%
1998	3020	1.8%	-2.7%
1999	2948	-2.4%	-5.0%
2000	3041	3.2%	-2.0%
2001	2917	-4.1%	-6.0%
2002	2890	-0.9%	-6.9%
2003	2821	-2.4%	-9.1%
2004	2647	-6.2%	-14.7%
2005	2566	-3.1%	-17.3%

SCHOOL CONFIGURATION

The Newport Public Schools operates six elementary schools (grades K-5), one middle school (grade 6-8) and one high school (grades 9-12).

School	2004 Enrollment
Henry R.A. Carey Elementary School	204
John Coggeshall Elementary School	182
Cranston-Calvert Elementary School	221
William P. Sheffield Elementary School	208
Michael H. Sullivan Elementary School	197
William J. Underwood Elementary School	169
Frank E. Thompson Middle School	609
Rogers High School	756

In addition, the department operates the Newport Area Career and Technical Center and supports the Aquidneck Island Adult Learning Center.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

This section presents information on the ethnic background of department students, the percent of students who attend public schools, the percent eligible for subsidized meal programs, the percent receiving ESL/bilingual education programs and the percent receiving special education services.

Ethnic Diversity

The students served by the Newport Public Schools have diverse ethnic backgrounds. The two largest ethnic groups – White and African-American – account for 83 percent of the department's students.

Ethnic Group	Percentage Of Students
White	58%
African-American	25%
Hispanic	12%
Native American	3%
Asian	2%

Students Attending Public Schools

More than four out of five Newport students (82 percent) attend public schools. This percentage is somewhat less than the percentage for the state (84 percent). It is also less than five out of six area school departments.

Department	Percentage Of Students Attending Public Schools
Barrington	84%
Bristol Warren	76%
Middletown	86%
<i>Newport</i>	82%
Portsmouth	87%
Tiverton	92%
Westerly	95%
Rhode Island	84%

Students Eligible For Subsidized Meals

A good proxy for determining the extent to which students in a school department are economically disadvantaged is the percent of students in the department that are eligible for federal subsidized meal program. More than two out of five students in Newport (44 percent) are eligible for subsidized meals. This percentage is 11 percent higher than the percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals in the State of Rhode Island (33 percent). In addition, the percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals is more than three times greater in Newport than the average percentage of students eligible for subsidized meals (13.3 percent) in six area school departments.

Department	Percentage Of Students Eligible For Subsidized Meals
Barrington	2%
Bristol Warren	21%
Middletown	16%
<i>Newport</i>	44%
Portsmouth	7%
Tiverton	14%
Westerly	20%
Rhode Island	33%

The percentage of students who are eligible for subsidized meals varies considerably by school with Sullivan Elementary having the highest percentage of eligible students (85 percent) and Underwood Elementary the lowest (28 percent).

School	Percentage Of Students Eligible For Subsidized Meals
Henry R.A. Carey Elementary School	44%
John Coggeshall Elementary School	41%
Cranston-Calvert Elementary School	45%
William P. Sheffield Elementary School	47%
Michael H. Sullivan Elementary School	85%
William J. Underwood Elementary School	28%
Frank E. Thompson Middle School	46%
Rogers High School	35%

Students Receiving ELLL/Bilingual Education Services

A relatively small percentage of Newport students require services as English language learners (ELL) or bilingual education services. The percentage of students receiving these services in Newport (four percent), however, is higher than in other area

departments (three of which have no students receiving ELL or bilingual education services. The percentage of students in the State of Rhode Island receiving ELL or bilingual education services (six percent) is somewhat higher than the percentage served in Newport.

Department	Percentage Of Students Receiving ESL/Bilingual Education Services
Barrington	0%
Bristol Warren	3%
Middletown	2%
<i>Newport</i>	4%
Portsmouth	0%
Tiverton	0%
Westerly	2%
Rhode Island	6%

Students Receiving Special Education Services

Almost of quarter (23 percent⁸) of Newport students receive special education services. This percentage is four percent higher than the percentage of students receiving special education services in the State of Rhode Island. It is also higher than the percentage of students receiving special education services in six area school departments. Indeed, the percentage of students receiving special education services in Newport is five percent higher than the average percentage of students receiving special education services (18 percent) in these six departments.

Department	Percentage Of Students Receiving Special Education Services
Barrington	16%
Bristol Warren	18%
Middletown	20%
<i>Newport</i>	23%
Portsmouth	17%
Tiverton	20%
Westerly	17%
Rhode Island	19%

STAFFING

During fiscal year 04-05 the Newport Public Schools employed 372.6 staff of which 287.6 were professional staff and 85 were support staff. As the following table shows, the preponderance of both support and professional positions are assigned to schools.

Staff Category	School-Based	Non-School Based
Manager(a)	15.0	8.0
Professional Staff	266.6	--
Support Staff	54.0	29.0
TOTAL	335.6	37.0

⁸ As reported by the State of Rhode Island audited student count for June 2004.

BUDGET AND FINANCES

This section presents general information on Newport Public Schools expenditures and budget and discusses issues relating to audit findings identified in the City's year end certified audited financial report for the year end June 30, 2004.

Expenditures

Total department operating expenditures during the 2004 school year were \$41,495,304. The bulk of these expenditures (approximately 76 percent) were devoted to personnel related costs (payroll and benefits). In addition, approximately 19 percent of expenditures are devoted to purchased services.⁹

Expenditures for general education account for 70.5 percent of total expenditures with special education related expenditures accounting for 20.0 percent of total expenditures.

Program	Amount	Percent
General Education	\$29,248,980	70.5%
Special Education	\$ 8,291,313	20.0%
Bilingual/ESL	\$ 211,619	0.5%
Chapter 1/Title 1	\$ 1,307,936	3.2%
Vocational	\$ 1,658,548	4.0%
Other Programs	\$ 767,857	1.9%
TOTAL	\$41,495,304	100.0%

Funding Sources

The Newport Public Schools' operating budget includes a number of funds of which by far the largest is the "local operating budget." Approximately, 85 percent of the total department budget is assigned to this fund which totaled \$34,191,547 in the 2004 school year.¹⁰ Roughly two-thirds of revenues for this fund (66 percent) come from the City of Newport (and other local sources), 30 percent comes from the State of Rhode Island and approximately four percent comes from the federal government.¹¹

In addition to the "local operating" fund the department receives significant revenues from a number of state, federal and local grant funds. Of the \$5,310,265 budgeted for the 2004 fiscal year, Title I account for more than a quarter (27.2 percent) of these funds. Early Reading First and IDEA both account approximately 13 percent of these funds.

⁹ These estimates are based on information presented in the 2004-2005 budget that included a local operating budget of \$36,014,476.

¹⁰ In May of 2003, the Newport School Committee adopted a \$35,716,275 budget for the 2004 fiscal year. This budget was rejected by the City Council and a revised budget of \$34,191,547 was adopted on July 1, 2003.

Fund	Amount	Percent
Title I	\$1,444,431	27.2%
Early Reading First	\$702,419	13.2%
IDEA - Part B	\$694,949	13.1%
Title II	\$433,607	8.2%
Perkins Long Term	\$287,547	5.4%
AIALC – Local	\$226,440	4.3%
Even Start	\$194,499	3.7%
Improvement Of Education	\$192,881	3.6%
Community Learning Center	\$188,326	3.5%
Diploma Plus – Local	\$180,316	3.4%
AIALC – Federal	\$116,531	2.2%
NCLS - Rogers High School	\$100,000	1.9%
NCLB - Thompson Middle School	\$99,739	1.9%
Article 18	\$83,337	1.6%
Title II – Technology	\$66,555	1.3%
Technology Set Aside	\$65,996	1.2%
Title I School Improvement	\$63,942	1.2%
Adult Even Start	\$60,000	1.1%
Vocation Training For Adults	\$55,000	1.0%
Child Opportunity Zone	\$53,750	1.0%
TOTAL	\$5,310,265	100.0%

Audit Findings

Rhode Island General Law (RIFL) Section 16-2-9, which sets forth the general powers and duties of school committees, states that the school committee of each school department is responsible for maintaining a school budget that does not result in debt. According to the City Of Newport's certified audited financial report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004 "for the year ended June 30, 2004 the City of Newport's (City's) School Committee adopted a budget for the unrestricted fund (School) with a budgeted deficit of \$1,165,810. Actual expenditures and other financing uses exceed revenues and other financing sources that resulted in a deficit of \$1,760,477 and, at June 30, 2004, the School's unrestricted governmental fund has a deficit fund balance of \$1,100,081." The School Committee, however, disputes this finding. As outlined in the year end financial statements, the School Committee contends that a revised budget was prepared in fiscal year 2004 that left a potential budget gap of \$1,524,729 and that "the School Committee believed that the City Council had no intention of letting the school department budget gap continue through year-end." However, from the School Committee's perspective, "despite ongoing cooperative efforts between the City Council and the School Committee and sincere expectations to resolve the deficit the School Committee did not receive additional appropriations from the City." The City concurs with the audit finding.

B – PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS

The Newport Public Schools performs a broad array of programs, activities and functions. Some of these programs, activities and functions are required by state or federal law, others are central to achieving the school department's mission, while others

are not directly related to achieving the school department's mission but support department operations. To ensure department stakeholders have an understanding of the range of programs, activities and functions performed by the department and, in particular, what functions and activities are required and what functions and activities are optional, a systematic categorization of department functions and activities was performed. This section describes the framework used to categorize department programs, functions and activities and assigns each program, activity and service to an appropriate category.

CATEGORIZATION FRAMEWORK

Five categories were established to classify the programs, activities and service categories performed by the Newport Public Schools.

- **Primary.** If the program, function, or service were not provided the department would be in violation of the law or not performing its mission.
- **Secondary.** Programs, activities and functions that when offered in combination with other programs, activities and functions ensures compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and that the school department is performing its mission. While any one of these "secondary" activities might be discontinued without compromising the department's ability to meet the expectations set for it, if *all* the related "secondary" activities were discontinued the department would be in violation of the law or would not be performing its mission.
- **Supplemental.** Offering the program or service is consistent with the department's mission, system priorities, or statutory and regulatory requirements but if the program, function, or service were discontinued the department would still be providing essential services.
- **Essential Support.** Support activities (e.g., financial management, administration) that are essential to the department fulfilling its mission and meeting statutory and regulatory requirements.
- **Secondary Support.** Support activities that are not essential but facilitate the department's ability to fulfill its mission and meet statutory and regulatory requirements.
- **Unnecessary.** Programs, activities or functions that could be discontinued without affecting the department's ability to fulfill its mission or comply with statutory and regulatory requirements in a meaningful way.

CATEGORIZATION OF PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES AND FUNCTIONS

The categorization of the programs, activities and functions is presented in Exhibit III-3. As the following table shows, more than half of the programs, activities and functions (51.5 percent) are categorized as being "primary" or "essential support." None of these programs, activities and functions is deemed to be unnecessary.

Category	Number Of Programs, Activities And Functions	Percent
Primary	36	22.6%
Secondary	3	1.9%
Supplemental	13	8.2%
Essential Support	46	28.9%
Secondary Support	61	38.4%
Unnecessary	--	0.0%
TOTAL	159	100.0%

C – PERFORMANCE

This section presents an overview of the performance of the Newport Public Schools and then compares the department’s performance with state averages, departments serving students with a similar profile and with area school departments.

Performance Overview

Over the past three years the Newport Public Schools have made significant strides in improving educational performance. While three years ago the department had six schools categorized by the Rhode Island Department of Education as “Low Performing and Not Improving” performance has improved to such an extent that in the 2004 school year no schools were categorized as low performing. As the following table shows all of the department’s schools are at least “moderately performing” and have met at least 95 percent of their 21 performance targets.

School	Classification	Percent Of Performance Targets Met
Henry R.A. Carey Elementary School	Moderately Performing And Improving	100%
John Coggeshall Elementary School	High Performing With Caution	95%
Cranston-Calvert Elementary School	Moderately Performing And Sustaining	100%
William P. Sheffield Elementary School	Moderately Performing And Sustaining	100%
Michael H. Sullivan Elementary School	Moderately Performing And Improving	100%
William J. Underwood Elementary School	Moderately Performing And Sustaining	100%
Frank E. Thompson Middle School	Moderately Performing And Improving	100%
Rogers High School	Moderately Performing And Improving	100%

In addition, the department was removed from the list of school departments needing progressive support and intervention by the Rhode Island Department of Education. The department was also named as one of three “outperforming” school departments in the State of Rhode Island by Standard & Poor’s.¹²

¹² To identify school departments that consistently outperform demographically similar school departments or peers, Standard & Poor’s has developed a statistical method called the Performance Zone. The method uses three fundamental criteria to identify outperforming school departments. First, school departments must achieve higher levels of student proficiency than peers. Outperformers must report higher percentages of students that score at or above state standards on reading and math tests than other schools departments that serve similar proportions of economically disadvantaged students. Second, school departments must perform at a level that significantly exceeds statistical expectation. In other words, outperformers must achieve proficiency levels that fall above the threshold for the expected performance zone – simply beating peers is not sufficient. Finally, school departments must outperform consistently. They must repeat their performance for at least two consecutive years.

The improvement in the performance of the school department's students is also reflected in the increase in the percentage of students who have met or exceeded standards on state proficiency tests. English/language arts test scores have increased in all but two schools during this period and mathematics scores have increased in all but three schools.

School	Percentage Of Students Who Have Met Or Exceeded Standard			
	English/Language Arts		Mathematics	
	2004	Increase/ (Decrease) Since 2002	2004	Increase/ (Decrease) Since 2002
Henry R.A. Carey Elementary School	60.80%	5.55%	39.20%	(10.80%)
John Coggeshall Elementary School	68.00%	18.00%	51.00%	(3.00%)
Cranston-Calvert Elementary School	62.20%	(6.80%)	60.70%	(6.30%)
William P. Sheffield Elementary School	43.80%	(3.20%)	35.50%	4.40%
Michael H. Sullivan Elementary School	50.70%	2.70%	41.90%	19.90%
William J. Underwood Elementary School	67.50%	11.50%	41.70%	2.70%
Frank E. Thompson Middle School	55.00%	10.00%	38.00%	9.00%
Rogers High School	53.60%	5.60%	45.30%	6.30%

Comparisons

This section compares the performance of the Newport Public Schools with the state of Rhode Island as a whole, with school departments serving students with a similar student profile and with area school departments.

Comparison with statewide averages. The percent of Newport students meeting or exceeding standards on state proficiency tests are higher than statewide averages in some areas and lower in others. At the elementary level the percentage of Newport students meeting or exceeding standards are lower than statewide averages while at the high school level the percentage of Newport students meeting or exceeding standards exceeds the statewide average. For the middle school, the percentage of Newport students meeting or exceeding standards equals the statewide average for English/language arts and is slightly lower for mathematics.

Level	All Students			
	English/Language Arts		Mathematics	
	Newport	State Of Rhode Island	Newport	State Of Rhode Island
Elementary Schools	82.2%	86.1%	75.6%	77.5%
Middle Schools	80.3%	80.3%	64.7%	66.5%
High Schools	82.8%	79.2%	70.8%	66.0%

It should be noted, however, that Newport serves a student population that is much more economically disadvantaged than average. Whereas 44 percent of Newport students are eligible for subsidized meals only 33 percent of students statewide qualify.

Not only does Newport serve a higher percentage of disadvantaged students than average but it does a better job of serving these students than the statewide average. At each school level the percentage of disadvantaged students in Newport meeting or

exceeding performance expectations exceeds the average percentage of disadvantaged students meeting or exceeding expectations for the state as a whole.

Level	Disadvantaged Students			
	English/Language Arts		Mathematics	
	Newport	State Of Rhode Island	Newport	State Of Rhode Island
Elementary Schools	78.1%	77.8%	70.6%	68.4%
Middle Schools	72.5%	70.8%	51.9%	50.9%
High Schools	75.1%	68.5%	58.7%	50.1%

Comparisons with departments that have a similar demographic profile. Three Rhode Island school departments – Central Falls, East Providence and West Warwick – serve students with a somewhat similar demographic profile to Newport.¹³ However, even these departments lack the ethnic diversity of the Newport Public Schools.

Ethnic Group	Newport	Central Falls	East Providence	West Warwick
White	58%	21%	82%	87%
African-American	25%	11%	13%	3%
Hispanic	12%	68%	3%	7%
Native American	3%	--	1%	2%
Asian	2%	--	1%	1%

Moreover, with the exception of Central Falls, the percentage of disadvantaged students served in these departments is much lower than the percentage of disadvantaged students served in Newport.

Department	Percentage Of Students Eligible For Subsidized Meals
Central Falls	83%
East Providence	30%
<i>Newport</i>	<i>44%</i>
West Warwick	30%

For all areas but elementary English/language arts the percentage of Newport students meeting or exceeding performance expectations exceeds that of the comparable departments. (For elementary English/language art Newport’s performance lags the average for the comparable departments by just 0.5 percent). However, except at the high school level – where Newport’s performance is significantly higher than the comparable departments - Newport’s performance lags two of the three comparable school departments in most areas.¹⁴ In all areas, Newport’s performance exceeds that of the Central Falls Public Schools.

¹³ School departments that are considerably larger than Newport were not considered comparable for the purposes of this analysis.

¹⁴ The percentage of Newport elementary students meeting or exceeding state proficiency standards for mathematics exceeds the percentage of West Warwick elementary students meeting or exceeding proficiency standards by .8 percent.

Department	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools	
	English/ Language Arts	Mathematics	English/ Language Arts	Mathematics	English/ Language Arts	Mathematics
	Central Falls	78.6%	65.7%	69.0%	51.2%	63.1%
East Providence	86.0%	79.2%	80.5%	65.7%	72.6%	59.1%
Newport	82.2%	75.6%	80.3%	64.7%	82.8%	70.8%
West Warwick	83.6%	74.8%	81.5%	69.7%	77.5%	62.2%
Average (Excluding Newport)	82.7%	73.2%	77.0%	62.2%	71.1%	55.6%

Comparisons with other area school departments. Newport's performance lags that of other area school departments by a significant margin. The greatest gap between Newport's performance and the average performance of the other departments is in middle school mathematics (a gap of 12.9 percent) while the smallest gap is for high school English/language arts (a gap of 3.4 percent).

Department	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools	
	English/ Language Arts	Mathematics	English/ Language Arts	Mathematics	English/ Language Arts	Mathematics
	Barrington	92.5%	88.8%	92.5%	90.5%	92.4%
Bristol Warren	89.1%	79.0%	82.7%	70.7%	83.1%	66.0%
Middletown	90.4%	83.1%	86.2%	73.6%	83.9%	70.9%
Newport	82.2%	75.6%	80.3%	64.7%	82.8%	70.8%
Portsmouth	92.4%	86.1%	87.8%	77.2%	86.2%	80.1%
Tiverton	87.7%	82.4%	88.8%	80.0%	85.8%	75.3%
Westerly	91.2%	84.7%	86.3%	73.4%	85.7%	72.9%
Average (Excluding Newport)	90.6%	84.0%	87.4%	77.6%	86.2%	75.1%

While it may be appropriate to use comparisons with other area school departments to establish overall goals for Newport's performance – the department should hold high expectations for all students regardless of whether they have a disadvantaged background or not – it should be remembered that these school departments serve a very small percentage of disadvantaged students. Indeed, the percentage of disadvantaged students in the six area school departments averages 13 percent or less than one-third the level in Newport (44 percent). Not surprisingly, the Barrington Public Schools – which has the highest performance of all the area school departments – serves the lowest percentage of disadvantaged students (two percent or 20 times fewer than Newport). Moreover, the Portsmouth Public Schools – which has the second highest performance among the area school departments¹⁵ - serves the second lowest percentage of disadvantaged students (seven percent or more than five times fewer than Newport).

D – COST OF SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

This section compares the cost of educating students in Newport with other departments and details reasons why Newport's costs are comparatively high.

¹⁵The performance of the Portsmouth Public Schools exceeds the performance of all school departments (except Barrington) in all areas except English/language arts at the middle school level.

Comparisons

The State of Rhode Island divides the cost of educating students into five categories – instruction, instructional support, operations, leadership and other commitments. The costs assigned to the “other commitment” categories refer to required expenditures for textbooks, transportation and other services the department is required to provide to students who do not attend the public schools. When comparing the costs of the students educated by the department, therefore, it is important to exclude costs associated with “other commitments” from these comparisons. The comparisons of the cost of Newport Public School operations with the state of Rhode Island as a whole, with departments serving students with a similar student profile and with area school departments presented in this section, therefore, exclude costs associated with “other commitments” as well as costs associated with out-of-district (non-public school) students.

Comparison with statewide averages. The per pupil cost of educating students in Newport is considerably higher than the statewide average. While the average cost of educating a student in Rhode Island (after adjusting for “other commitments”) is \$10,450 the average cost in Newport is 20 percent high (\$12,611).

Comparisons with departments that have a similar demographic profile. The per pupil cost of educating students in Newport is also considerably higher than for other school departments with a similar demographic profile. Indeed, Newport’s cost per pupil exceeds the average cost for these districts by \$1,659

Department	Per Pupil Expenditures
Central Falls	\$11,163
East Providence	\$10,014
<i>Newport</i>	<i>\$12,611</i>
West Warwick	\$11,681
Average (Excluding Newport)	\$10,952

Comparisons with other area school departments. Newport’s per pupil cost are much higher than the per pupil costs in other area school departments. Newport’s cost per pupil exceeds the average costs for these districts by \$2,910.

Department	Per Pupil Expenditures
Barrington	\$ 9,046
Bristol Warren	\$12,143
Middletown	\$10,640
<i>Newport</i>	<i>\$12,611</i>
Portsmouth	\$ 8,093
Tiverton	\$ 8,705
Westerly	\$10,782
Average (Excluding Newport)	\$ 9,901

Factors That Increase Costs In Newport

A number of factors contribute to the relatively high cost of serving children in the Newport Public Schools including the level of funds the department receives from external sources, the relatively high number of special education students served by the department, the provision of services that may not be offered by other departments, the fact that department costs have not declined at the same rate as its enrollment, the department's low class sizes and its high benefits costs.

Funding from external sources. One of the reasons the department has higher costs than many other Rhode Island departments is that it receives more funding from external sources than many other departments. In particular, because the department has a higher percentage of disadvantaged students than other Rhode Island school departments, it receives more federal and state aid that is targeted to provide supplemental services for these students (e.g., Title I) than other departments. In 2004, \$3.2 million in funds targeted to disadvantaged students (or \$1,227 per student) was budgeted by the department. In addition, the department's aggressive pursuit of other sources of external funds may also increase its total expenditures (at least has compared to other departments that have been less aggressive in pursuing external funds).

Special education students. Department expenditures for special education are also significantly higher than for many other Rhode Island school departments both because the percentage of special education students served by the department is higher than in many other departments and because the needs of many of these students require expensive placement in out-of-district programs. As previously discussed, special education students account for 23 percent of the student population as compared to an average of 18 percent in six local departments and 19 percent for the state as a whole. Moreover, the City of Newport has more non-profit group homes than any other community in the state. Many of residents of these group homes have intensive needs that cannot be accommodated by in-house programs, supports and services so these students must be served in expensive out-of-district placements. (Although the state provides some reimbursement for serving these students it in no way covers the cost of serving these students. During the 2004 school year, for example, the department paid for on average 54 students (students move in and out of these placements during the school year) to be served in out-of-district placements at cost of \$1.9 million (or an average cost of \$35,185,per student). The state, however, only reimburses the department \$15,000 for serving these students.

Department services. The Newport Public Schools provides some services that are not offered by all Rhode Island school departments. In particular, the department offers full-day kindergarten while the state requires that only half-day kindergarten be offered. (The additional cost of providing a full-day kindergarten program as opposed to a half-day program is approximately \$360,000.) Providing full-day kindergarten, therefore, increases the department's overall cost per student served by approximately \$150.¹⁶

¹⁶ Please note that many area school departments do provide full-day kindergarten. Indeed, of the districts used for comparison in this study only two districts – Portsmouth and Tiverton do not offer full day kindergarten or a combination full-day/half-day program.

Enrollment decline. Over the past 10 years as the school department's enrollment has declined the department staffing has not declined at the same rate.¹⁷ Indeed, between 1995 and 2004 the department's enrollment has declined by 468 students or 15.0 percent. During this same period, however, department staffing declined by only 26.3 employees or 6.6 percent. While it is not surprising that the reduction in department employees does not match precisely the decline in enrollment given that many central office jobs have to be performed regardless of the size of the department, one would expect that the number of school-based managers and staff would decline at roughly the same rate as enrollment. Between 1995 and 2004 school based staffing declined by only 9.0 percent.

Class size. The contract between the Newport School Committee and the Teachers' Association of Newport provides for class sizes that are lower than other area school departments. An analysis completed by Mark Colborn on January 6, 2005 shows that average contractual class sizes are, on average, 3.0 students per class lower (or 11.8 percent) than in other area school departments.

Department	Average Contractual Class Size(a)
Bristol/Warren	25.0
Middletown	23.8
Newport	22.3
Portsmouth	26.3
West Warwick	26.2
Average (excluding Newport)	25.3

(a) Calculated by averaging maximum contractual class sizes for each grade level.

Not only is the contractual class size lower in Newport than in other departments but the actual number of students per class is much lower than the number prescribed by the contract. As the following table shows, kindergarten class sizes are 13.4 percent lower than the maximum, class sizes in grades one and two are 17.0 percent lower than the maximum, class sizes for grades three four and five are 13.2 percent lower than the maximum, class sizes in grades 6, 7 and 8 are 19.6 percent lower than the maximum and class sizes in grades 9 through 12 are 32.4 percent lower..

Grade	Maximum Class Size	2004-2005 Average Class Size	Difference
Kindergarten	15 student maximum (16 to 19 with a full-time aide)	16.4	2.6
1 and 2	20	16.6	3.4
3, 4 and 5	22	19.1	2.9
6, 7 and 8	23	18.5	4.5
9 through 12	25	16.9	8.1

¹⁷ Payroll and benefits account for approximately 76 percent of department expenditures.

Health insurance costs. Health insurance costs are also higher for the Newport Public Schools than for other area school departments. While the health insurance premiums for individual and family coverage are comparable to those paid by other departments¹⁸Newport does not require teachers to share the cost of health care premiums while the comparable departments (e.g., Middletown, Bristol/Warren, West Warrick and Portsmouth) require premium sharing of between 5.0 and 7.2 percent of premium costs.

¹⁸ According to the analysis performed by Mark Colburn and presented on January 7, 2005 premium rates for individual coverage in Newport (\$4,975) are slightly higher than the rate paid in four comparable departments (\$4,805) while the rate paid for family coverage (\$12,015) is slightly lower than the premium paid in the four comparable departments (\$12,315).

IV – EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

This section presents observations and recommendations regarding educational services. The section is divided into eight parts: instructional management; class size; high school operations; middle school operations; textbooks and instructional materials; special education; services to English language learners; and implications.

A – INSTRUCTIONAL MANAGEMENT

The Newport Public Schools Has Made Tremendous Strides In Improving Student Performance At All Grade Levels

Over the past four years, the Newport Public Schools has made tremendous strides in improving student performance at all grade levels. In November 2004, the State of Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) ranked all the department's schools either moderately performing or high performing. Six schools moved from the low performing category to moderately performing during the 2003 school year and one – the Thompson Middle School – not only moved from low performing to moderately performing but was also recognized as a Regents Commended School.

The significant performance improvement the school department has achieved appears to result from the effective instructional strategies that were initiated and implemented under the leadership of the former superintendent, the former teaching, learning and professional development director, and the special education director.

Prior To The Implementation Of New Instructional Strategies Six Of The Department's Eight Schools Had Been Classified As Low Performing Despite Low Class Sizes

The student achievement gains the district has achieved did not result from reducing class size. Indeed, despite the low class sizes the district enjoyed the Newport Public Schools had not performed well in improving student achievement for all students. Prior to the implementation of new instructional strategies six of eight Newport Public Schools had been identified by the State of Rhode Island as low performing based on student achievement in English/language arts and mathematics. Moreover, by all standardized measures the Newport Public Schools were not addressing the needs of Newport students, most notably those who were economically disadvantaged, African American, Hispanic and/or those who required special education services.

A Systematic Approach To Improving Student Performance Has Been Implemented Over the Past Four Years

The success of the Newport Public Schools in improving student performance has been driven by five primary factors:

- Providing support to help students come to school ready to learn
- Making effective use of data to assess student performance and to develop and implement instructional strategies based on this diagnosis of student needs

- Taking an inclusionary approach to serving students with special needs and providing them full access to the general curriculum
- Implementing a consistent curriculum across all elementary schools
- Providing intensive job embedded professional development to improve instruction with consistent follow-up at the school level

A discussion of each of these factors follows:

Providing support to help students come to school ready to learn. Children from economically disadvantaged families and children with special needs often enter school educationally deprived and performing below the skill level of their peers. Because they are not adequately prepared to learn they are put in the position of having to “catch up” before they have even started their education. The school department offers a range of programs and services to help students narrow this achievement gap. In particular, the department has implemented mandated programs such as child find, early intervention and the special needs preschool.¹⁹ In addition, the department has made a significant financial investment in operating a full day kindergarten program. Recent research clearly indicates that by the time children enter kindergarten there are substantial cognitive differences among students of different races, ethnicities and socio-economic statuses. Research also suggests that there are enormous benefits – most notably stronger academic gains during the kindergarten year and demonstrations of reading proficiency by grade three - for all students who are enrolled in full-day versus half- day kindergarten programs. These benefits are most significant for students who come from low socio-economic and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Making effective use of data to assess student performance. The school department uses data from quarterly assessments in the areas of reading, English/language arts and mathematics to drive the instructional program. Schools are provided disaggregated performance data on groups of students and teachers are provided specific data on both groups of students and individual students. Principals, school improvement teams and department professional development staff then use this data to modify instructional strategies, develop supplemental instructional materials and to develop supplemental professional development for teachers. Teachers and instructional support teams also make effective use of data to develop individual student interventions, personal literacy plans and to drive instructional change.

Employee survey results also suggest that school based teachers and administrators receive the data on student performance they need to improve instruction. More than seven in ten survey respondents agree or strongly agree that they receive needed feedback on the performance of individual students (70.9 percent), receive needed feedback on the performance of groups of students (68.5 percent), and receive needed feedback on school performance (82.8 percent). In addition, high percentages of survey respondents agree that the feedback on student performance they receive is accurate (73.6 percent), timely (58.9 percent), and adequately measure student performance (59.8 percent). Most importantly, 71.4 percent of the survey respondents agree or

¹⁹ The special needs preschool utilizes a research-based integrated model providing students with non-disabled model peers to support their social, emotional and cognitive development.

strongly agree that the information they receive is useful in diagnosing student needs and 87.0 percent agree or strongly agree that they use assessment results to improve instruction.

Taking an inclusionary approach to serving students with special needs.

Improving the performance of students with special needs requires that those students have access to the general curriculum. Not only is providing special needs students access to the general curriculum educationally sound but doing so is required by provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and the Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) – the 2004 reauthorization of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Both pieces of federal legislation mandate instruction and evaluation of special education students based on the general education curriculum. Additionally the mandates of IDEA and IDEIA require students with special needs be provided free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

To comply with these requirements and improve educational performance, the Newport Public Schools has implemented a strong inclusionary approach to serving students with special needs. The school department's "all kids" agenda ensures not only that all students are placed in regular education classrooms but also that they receive the necessary supports to ensure their academic and social/emotional success. Regular education classroom teachers and special education teachers currently share responsibility for providing the instructional program for special education students. The department has developed an exemplary "workshop" model of delivering instruction in English/language arts and mathematics that provides differentiated inclusionary instruction for all students, including those performing below, at and above grade level. By taking this approach, therefore, the school department ensures that all students – not just students with special needs – receive tailored instruction that corresponds with their needs. The workshop model is just as effective in serving gifted students as it is in serving students with special needs.

Employee survey results suggest strong employee support for the approaches the school department is taking to serving students with special needs. Indeed, two thirds or more of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that they receive needed support in integrating special education students into regular education classrooms (71.6 percent) and receive needed support in ensuring compliance with state and federal special education rules and regulations (72.2 percent). A similar percentage of survey respondents also agree or strongly agree that the Newport Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of special education students (71.0 percent), of developing appropriate individual education plans to address the needs of special education children (79.2 percent) and of providing appropriate instruction and services to special education students (80.3 percent). In addition, more than six in ten survey respondents agree or strongly agree that central office staff is knowledgeable about issues related to special education (66.1 percent) and are responsive to requests for assistance relating to special education (60.6 percent).

Implementing a consistent curriculum across elementary schools. Elementary students in the Newport Public Schools are extremely mobile. Because students move from school to school with such frequency the school department has focused considerable attention on developing and implementing a consistent curriculum across all elementary schools. A uniform curriculum has been adopted across all elementary

schools in the core academic areas - English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. This curriculum is aligned with State of Rhode Island grade level expectations (GLEs) and pacing charts have been developed to ensure that the curriculum is implemented consistently across all schools. In addition, a comprehensive system of professional development, with follow-up coaching, has been designed to support implementation of the curriculum.

Providing intensive job embedded professional development. Teachers, school-based administrators and central office leaders have been provided intensive job embedded professional development. Initially the school department joined with the Principals of Learning Network of the University of Pittsburgh to provide intensive training to principals and central office leaders. In addition, the department focused on providing professional development at the elementary level in the areas of reading and literacy, writing and language arts. Later, these efforts were expanded to include mathematics. All teachers have also received extensive training in providing instruction to students with special needs. More recently, the focus of professional development efforts has been expanded. In particular, over the past year significant effort has been focused on helping teachers address student literacy needs across all curricular areas at the middle school and high school.

Results of the employee survey verify the effectiveness of the department's professional development effort. More than 60 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that "overall staff development program offerings address my staff development needs" (62.6 percent), "overall staff development program offerings address the needs of my co-workers (71.4 percent), "participation in staff development programs has made me more effective" (63.0 percent) and "what I learn in staff development programs is reinforced by my administrators and supervisors" (61.6 percent).

For The Most Part, The Cost Of Implementing These Strategies Has Been Relatively Small

The additional cost to the school department of implementing these strategies has been relatively small. Professional development and reading and mathematics coaches have been funded primarily through Title I, Title II, Comprehensive School Reform and other grants. The cost of implementing full-day kindergarten, while larger, is still relatively small. Because state law does not mandate full day kindergarten the school department must pay the difference between a full-day kindergarten program and a half-day program. Based on the average teacher cost of \$60,000 (salary and benefits) and a fulltime aide at \$12,000, the cost associated with providing full day versus half-day kindergarten is \$360,000.²⁰

As compared to the cost of implementing the other instructional improvement strategies, the cost of serving special education students is quite high. The cost to the school department to service special education students exceeds \$8.2 million per year. However, these costs are mandated by state and federal law and are driven by the individual education plans for each student. It should be noted, however, that the workshop model the school department has established to implement required

²⁰ Based on current enrollment projections ten classrooms will be required for full-day kindergarten at a cost of \$720,000. Half-day kindergarten would require five classrooms at a cost of approximately \$360,000.

inclusionary services for special education also supports the department's efforts to serve non-special needs students. By encouraging teachers to tailor instruction for all students – not just students with special needs – the school department is able to leverage required expenditures for special education to benefit all students.

The School Department Must Protect The Resources Needed To Maintain Its Momentum In Improving Student Performance

Although the performance of the Newport Public Schools has improved substantially over the past three years, the school department is not in a position to rest on its laurels. Standards for academic performance mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act will continue to increase each year. Most notably, all students will be required to demonstrate proficiency in literacy and mathematics and additionally student proficiency in science will be used in determining each school's overall rating. Moreover, while many of the initiatives that have improved performance at the elementary level (e.g., differentiated instruction, the professional development model and inclusion) have been embraced by teachers, principals and parents, improvement initiatives are in their infancy at the middle and high school levels and need further development.

To maintain and continue to improve performance it is essential that the school department prioritize funding to protect the initiatives that have enabled the department to achieve such significant gains in student performance. Doing so will become increasingly difficult as grant funding for some initiatives expires. (The grant for the Early Reading First, for example, will soon end.) Additionally changes in federal funding formulas may adversely affect Title I funding. Nonetheless, the importance of protecting the resources that have been shown to yield such significant gains in student achievement cannot be underestimated. As discussed in more detail in the next section, given the school department's limited resources it may be necessary to fund needed initiatives by negotiating higher class sizes and using the resulting savings to support improvement initiatives that have been demonstrated to be effective.

B – CLASS SIZE

This section begins with a discussion of the fact that despite Newport's low class sizes, these class sizes have not been central to the school department's success in improving student performance. The next two subsections provide comparative information on just how low Newport class sizes are as compared to other area districts and on reasons that actual class sizes are much lower than contract minimums. A final subsection presents recommendations to increase class size.

Newport's Low Class Sizes Are Costly And Have Not Been Central To The School Department's Success In Improving Performance

While research shows a strong correlation between class size and student achievement in grades K through 3, research provides little validation about the relationship between class size and student achievement in grades 4 through 12. Nonetheless, Newport class sizes are extremely low not only in grades K through 3 but in the upper elementary, middle school and high school grades as well. Indeed, Newport class sizes are significantly lower than those in other Rhode Island school districts and far lower than those seen nationally. Moreover, because class sizes provided for in the Teachers Association of Newport (TAN) contract are treated as absolute maximums rather than

class size averages, as is common in most other districts, class sizes have historically been even lower than those provided for in the contract.

The school department's investment in low class sizes, however, has not yielded significant gains in student achievement. While the school department has had low class sizes since 1999 significant gains in student achievement have only been achieved over the past three years as the instructional strategies described in the previous section were implemented. Indeed, the greatest gains in student achievement have been achieved in just the past year.

Newport's Contractual Class Sizes Are Considerably Lower Than Neighboring Districts

The class size maximums included in Newport's contract with the Teachers' Association of Newport are significantly lower than in neighboring school districts. This difference is particularly large for grade 3 and kindergarten. On average the maximum class size in Newport is three students higher than the average maximum class size in Middletown, Bristol-Warren, West Warwick and Portsmouth.

Grade	Newport	Middletown	Bristol-Warren	West Warwick	Portsmouth	Difference Between Newport Class Size And The Average Class Size In Neighboring Districts
K	15 ²¹	20	25	23	21	7.25
1	20	20	25	23	22	2.50
2	20	20	25	25	23	3.25
3	22	25	25	25	26	3.25
4	22	25	25	26	26	3.50
5	22	25	25	26	26	3.50
6	23	25	25	27	26	2.75
7	23	25	25	27	26	2.75
8	23	25	25	27	26	2.75
9	25 ²²	25	25	28	30	2.00
10	25 ³	25	25	28	30	2.00
11	25 ³	25	25	28	30	2.00
12	25 ³	25	25	28	30	2.00

Additionally the teacher contracts in Middletown and Bristol-Warren have provisions that allow their school departments to exceed classroom guidelines. The Newport TAN contract does not contain similar provisions.

²¹ The maximum of 15 students per class can be increased to 19 students if a full-time aide is assigned to the school.

²² Although the department and Rogers High School reports a class size maximum of 25 students, the TAN contract contains no specific class size maximum but instead states "all foundation and advanced placement classes shall be at a class size which reflects accommodations to provide optimum learning opportunities."

The Preponderance Of Classes In Newport Have Fewer Students Than The Maximum Number Prescribed By The TAN Contract

Not only are the maximum class sizes in Newport lower than in other area school districts but actual class sizes are lower than the contract maximums. Indeed, over 70 percent of Newport classes operate below the maximum capacity prescribed by contract. A number of factors contribute to this situation:

- Configuration of the elementary schools
- Elementary class configurations
- Middle school cluster model
- High school scheduling practices

A discussion of each of these issues follows.

Elementary school configuration. Operating six elementary schools when only five are needed to house the district's elementary population makes it extremely difficult to maximize class size. Not surprisingly, given that a student population needed to populate five schools is divided among six schools the class sizes at each elementary grade level are approximately five-sixth or 83.3 percent of the contract maximum.

Grade	Maximum Class Size	2004-2005 Average Class Size	Average Class Size As A Percentage Of The Maximum Class Size
Kindergarten	15 student maximum (16 to 19 with a full-time aide)	16.4	86.3%
1 and 2	20	16.6	83.0%
3, 4 and 5	22	19.1	86.8%

Elementary class configurations. The school department does not use alternative approaches to class configurations that many other school departments have employed to maximize class size and manage teacher service in the face of declining enrollment and changing demographics. For example, while many school departments configure classes based on desired average class sizes the TAN contract requires that the department consider only maximum class sizes. Consequently, the addition of even a small number of students in a particular grade level can result in the need for an additional teacher. In addition, many school districts have created elementary multi-grade classrooms. Not only do such classrooms give districts needed flexibility in configuring classes to ensure that actual class sizes approach contract maximums but research has shown that multi-grade classes can facilitate efforts to effectively serve the needs of students with skills both below and above grade level. Given the workshop model of instruction currently employed in Newport's elementary schools, multi-grade classrooms could be implemented with little, if any, change to the educational program.

Middle school cluster model. The TAN contract specifies that class sizes at the middle school cannot exceed 23 students. In addition, however, the contract also specifies that a cluster of students (i.e., a group of students that will be served by the same four teachers) cannot exceed 90 students in grades 6 and 7 and 92 students in grade 8. This additional constraint makes it extremely difficult to configure individual classes that approach the maximum of 23 specified by the contract. Indeed, based on the current contract language, a new cluster must be added if the number of students exceeds the cluster maximum. Therefore the school department must bear the cost of four additional teachers to accommodate just a handful of students.

This situation has resulted in extremely small class sizes at the middle school. Historically, middle school cluster sizes have ranged from 65 to 73 students and the corresponding class sizes have ranged from 16 to 18 students – or five to seven students fewer than the contract maximum.

It should be noted that Newport is by no means the only school department that has struggled to establish appropriate cluster and class size restrictions. To address this problem, other districts have established cluster size ranges from 100 to 120 students and have modified cluster models to include teams of two or three teachers (rather than the four teacher teams employed in Newport). In addition, at the sixth grade level many schools employ cluster teams composed of two teachers – one of whom teaches mathematics and science and one of whom teaches English/language arts and social studies. Reducing the number of teachers who work with students to two not only reduces costs but also facilitates the transition of students from the elementary school – where they have been taught primarily by one teacher – to the middle school – where they will be taught by multiple teachers. At the seventh and eighth grade level many school districts cluster for only two or three subjects or have established modified cluster schedules to accommodate a fifth group of students with four teachers using a modified class schedule.

High school²³ scheduling practices. The current TAN contract does not provide for a maximum class size at the high school level although the school department has maintained a historical maximum of 25 students per class. Rather than adhering to this class size guideline, however, a tradition of “exceptions” has been established for a range of classes including America’s Choice classes, AP classes, science lab classes and standards level classes. Consequently, the vast majority of high school classes have fewer than 25 students. Indeed, a review of the master schedule for Rogers High School and the Newport Area Career and Technical Center (NACTC) for the 2004-2005 school year reveals an average class size of 17 students with only 18 percent of classes scheduled to the 25 student level.

The culture of scheduling that currently exists at Rogers High School and at NACTC developed during a time when Rogers High School served a much larger enrollment of students with less diversity in student needs. Part of the reasons class sizes are low, therefore, simply relates to the fact that if the diversity of course offerings does not change class sizes will be smaller in a school that serves 1600 students versus a school that serves 750 students. However, low class sizes at the high school can be only partly

²³ All references to high school scheduling refer to scheduling practices at both Rogers High School and Newport Area Career and Technical Center.

explained by the school's failure to "resize" and restructure its educational program to serve a far smaller student enrollment with a far wider range of student needs. A number of other factors also contribute to class sizes at the high school being low.

- **Schedules are altered based on staff preferences.** At present, after the high school master schedule has been created staff "vote" on the schedule and modifications may be made to reflect staff preferences. Such a process is unlikely to result in higher class sizes for teachers that do not carry a full student load.
- **Science classes meet six rather than five times a week.** Historically, science classes have met six times per week (five class periods and a lab period) which results in science teachers teaching four (or fewer sections) rather than the five sections assigned to most teachers. This practice is highly unusual. The consultants are not aware of other districts that require science classes to meet six times a week. Certainly other area schools – many of which have well regarded science programs – do not employ this scheduling practice.
- **Requirements of special programs are misinterpreted.** High school teaching staff indicate that classes of no more than 20 students are required to implement the "America's Choice" ramp up program in English/language arts and mathematics. However, the "America's Choice" program recommends a class size of 25 and reports this program is successfully operated across the country with classes of this size.
- **Class sizes have been set to justify the current complement of teachers.** Historically, department heads have also been allowed to develop schedules for their teachers.²⁴ Rather than developing schedules that maximize class sizes, many department heads have instead focused on maintaining the maximum number of teachers irrespective of the decline in student enrollment. As a result, multiple levels of courses are offered which, in turn results in more sections of a class being offered than are needed and classes not being filled.
- **Insufficient attention devoted to encouraging students to enroll in advanced courses.** Teachers, counselors and administrators have not aggressively encouraged students to enroll in advanced placement courses and college preparatory courses. On the contrary, staff has created such stringent criteria for enrolling in these classes²⁵ that class sizes for many advanced courses are extremely small.

²⁴ For the 2005-2006 school year the Rogers High School leadership team has worked to gain control of the school's schedule. Rather than allowing department heads to control class assignments and schedules for subject area teachers, the leadership team has accepted recommendations from department heads regarding schedule and teacher assignments but has made adjustments to these recommendations based on an assessment of the overall needs of the school and the students it serves.

²⁵ For example middle school teachers report that their recommendations for students moving to the high school to enroll as ninth grade students in college preparatory biology are often ignored. Instead, unrelated criteria are used – such as the requirement that the student have completed Algebra I at the eighth grade level.

The Department Should Restructure TAN Contract Provisions Related To Class Size

Changes in contract provisions relating to class size should be negotiated for all grade levels. A discussion of specific changes relating to elementary middle and high school class sizes follows.

Elementary school. The current maximum class sizes provided for in the TAN contract should be increased and the contract should be modified to reflect class size averages at each elementary grade level rather than class size maximums. The school department should also give principals the option of creating multi-grade classrooms. Doing so will make it easier to assign students to their home school while also making it easier to establish class sizes at or near the contract limit.

Middle school. Contract provisions relating to both cluster and class size should be modified. Class size should be increased to 25. In addition, alternative scheduling options for sixth grade students should be considered that team two teachers for groups of 50 students. Furthermore, cluster sizes should be increased to 100 and flexibility in cluster structure should be allowed when enrollment exceeds cluster size by a small group of students.

High school. The leadership team at Rogers High School should take advantage of the flexibility provided in the TAN contract to maximize class size for all courses offerings. In addition, the current practice of scheduling six periods for all lab science classes should be discontinued. Lab science classes, like all other classes at the high school, should be offered for the equivalent of five periods per week. Implementing this recommendation will not only increase class size and make more efficient use of all staff but will also provide the teaching capacity to offer a wider range of classes, including increased college preparatory, electives²⁶ and advanced placement classes for all students. Moreover, responsibility for developing the master schedule and assigning teachers to particular classes should be controlled and overseen by the principals and vice principals. These administrators should be accountable to the superintendent for ensuring the teacher service assigned to the school is maximized and that course offerings and course assignment reflect the best interest of all students attending Rogers High School.

C – HIGH SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Rogers High School currently serves approximately 750 students. A principal who is supported by two vice-principals leads the school. One vice-principal position was added prior to the 2004-2005 school year and was funded based on the reduction of two other positions (the guidance department head and a data specialist). The department head and dean structure in place at Rogers dates back to a time when the student enrollment was 1600 students. This structure includes nine department heads and two full-time deans.

²⁶ To comply with changes in State of Rhode Island high school graduation requirements Rogers High School will be required to expand its elective offerings.

Over the past two and one-half years the high school has been led by an interim principal. This interim principal focused on three main tasks during his tenure at Rogers – improving the performance of the school (the State of Rhode Island had classified Rogers as low-performing), addressing the probationary status of Rogers with the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and stabilizing the school community. The school received a Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) grant to address a number of systemic issues and problems.

A new principal has been hired for the 2005-2006 school year and started at Rogers on July 1, 2005.

This section is divided into eight parts: school performance; programmatic reforms; organization; discipline; guidance services; curriculum; length of the school day; and advanced placement offerings.

PERFORMANCE

The Overall Performance Of Rogers High School Is Good

Rogers High School’s performance compares favorably with other Rhode Island districts with similar demographics. On both state assessments and SATs Rogers students score higher than students in these peer districts. .

State assessments. On the state assessment of English/language arts students at Rogers High School exceeded state averages and the performance of school departments serving students with similar demographics.²⁷ In addition, with one exception (East Providence Hispanic students) scores for each demographic subgroup (and for special education) are higher for Rogers High School students than for students in the peer districts.

	ELA- All	ELA- African American	ELA- Hispanic	ELA- Economically Disadvantaged	ELA- Special Education
State	79.2	70.1	66.9	68.5	61.5
<i>Newport</i>	82.8	77.4	70.6	75.1	67.9
East Providence	72.6	70.5	74.8	61.2	55.3
Central Falls	63.1	68.6	62.2	63.1	49.2
Westerly	85.7	(a)	(a)	76.6	69.7

(a) Reporting for this demographic subgroup is not required because too few students belonging to the subgroup attend the school.

On the state assessment of mathematics Rogers High School students also scored above state averages and higher than other school departments serving similar student populations. In addition, for each demographic subgroup and for special education students Rogers High School students scored higher than students in the peer districts.

²⁷ Although the high school's performance was lower than that of neighboring school departments those districts serve such a limited number of students who are African American, Hispanic and economically disadvantaged that “head to head” comparisons are misleading.

	Math-All	Math-African American	Math-Hispanic	Math-Economically Disadvantaged	Math-Special Education
State	66.0	48.1	48.3	50.1	43.9
<i>Newport</i>	70.8	57.8	60.8	58.7	49.0
East Providence	59.1	50.9	56.9	48.6	38.0
West Warwick	62.2	(a)	(a)	48.6	34.4
Central Falls	45.5	47.3	46.0	47.0	30.9

(a) Reporting for this demographic subgroup is not required because too few students belonging to the subgroup attend the school.

SATs. Although Rogers High School students score below State of Rhode Island averages on both the verbal and mathematics portions of the SATs, the scores of these students exceeds the scores of students in districts serving similar student populations.

	Verbal	Mathematics
State	505	500
<i>Newport</i>	497	496
Central Falls	399	407
East Providence	475	480
West Warwick	499	478

PROGRAMMATIC REFORMS

The Needs Of Some Students Are Not Currently Being Met By The High School

Rogers High School has not adapted to address the changing needs of the students it serves or to reflect the most current research on high school reform. According to central office and high school administrative staff, teachers and parents the needs of some students are not currently being met. In particular, school department stakeholders are concerned about the high rate of failure of students at the eighth and ninth grade level.²⁸ This problem is especially important because in Newport, as in the rest of the country, students who are retained in the ninth grade are the most likely to drop out of high school.

In addition, central office administrators, Rogers High School administrators, teachers, parents and school committee members all expressed concern about the number of students who are not successful in the traditional high school model. These students include those who move from the middle school to the high school because of their age despite their failure at the middle school level, students who are failing at the high school and students who have attendance, truancy and discipline concerns. Adequate programs to serve these students do not currently exist. In the past, the Newport Public Schools operated an alternative school program but this program was phased out over a number of years. Moreover, while a small number of Newport students are served by a collaborative program located in Middletown a significant number of additional students would benefit from an alternative program.

²⁸ High school leaders have identified this issue and a team has been established to explore alternative approaches to supporting ninth grade students as they transition into the high school.

A Ninth Grade Academy And Alternative School-Within-A-School Model Should Be Developed At Rogers High School

The school department should implement two programmatic reforms to address the needs of students that are not currently being met by the high school. First, the high school should develop a ninth grade academy. In addition, an alternative “school-within-a-school” model should be developed to provide an alternative route to graduation for students who have not been successful in the traditional program.

Ninth grade academy. Urban high schools across the country have had very positive success implementing ninth grade academies. By helping students who have experienced academic or social difficulty in the eighth grade adjust to the high school these academies help to increase promotion rates and reduce dropout rates. Rogers High School is especially well positioned to implement a ninth grade academy model because its rich ratio of vice principals and guidance counselors affords it the opportunity to assign primary responsibility for the academy to one vice principal and to assign one guidance counselor to support the program.

Critical to the development of the ninth grade academy will be the assignment of experienced teachers across core academic areas to serve as the ninth grade team. A schedule should be developed that provides the ninth grade team with a minimum of two common prep periods per week. The vice principal who oversees the ninth grade academy should be responsible for the evaluation and supervision of all teachers in the academy.

Alternative school-within-a-school model. Many urban and suburban high schools, serving a student population similar to that of Rogers High School, have developed on-site alternative programs within their high school setting. Such “Second Chance” programs or “Twilight Schools” have been successful in supporting students needing an alternative program, reducing dropout rates and increasing graduation rates. These school-within-a-school models²⁹ provide students access to a wider range of courses and allow for easier reintegration into the regular high school community when appropriate.

Newport is well situated to support an alternative program at the Rogers High School site. Given the declining enrollment at Rogers High School and the spacious physical plant an alternative program could easily be developed in one wing. The close proximity to Newport Area Career and Technical Program provides easy access to vocational program options that are critical to the success of any alternative program. Additionally this program could be implemented at a minimal cost as most alternative programs within urban schools strive to lower class size to the 25, which is the maximum in place in Newport.

²⁹ Although most individuals interviewed advocated for the development of an alternative school at another site, given the declining enrollment of the Newport Public Schools the school department should instead be focusing on ways to maintain and increase the enrollments at Thompson Middle School and Rogers High School.

ORGANIZATION

The Organization Structure At Rogers High School Increases Costs And Poses A Barrier To Improving Performance

An expensive management and leadership structure is currently in place at Rogers High School and the Newport Area Career and Technical Center (NACTC). For a combined enrollment of just over 750³⁰ students the leadership team includes 15 positions: the Rogers High School principal, the NACTC director, two vice-principals, nine department heads and two deans. The resulting ratio of 15 administrators to 750 students (one administrator for every 50 students) is one of the richest the consultants have observed in a public high school. A discussion of the roles and responsibilities of each of these administrators follows.

High school principal. The high school principal is responsible for overseeing and managing Rogers High School. The principal has primary responsibility for overseeing both the instructional program and facility operations. As the instructional leader of Rogers High School the new principal's main focus will be on managing the reorganization of the high school's administrative structure and reshaping the high school's instructional program while remaining focused on ensuring the achievement of all students.

NACTC director³¹. NACTC is a regional career and technical center that serves Newport and its surrounding community. Because the vast majority of students who attend classes at NACTC are students at Rogers High School the NACTC program is completely integrated into the schedule of Rogers High School. Its teachers and staff are all employees of the Newport Public Schools. However NACTC operates under separate leadership and with a separate operating budget from Rogers High School. While this relationship is a bit cumbersome the Rogers High School principal and the NACTC director work together effectively on issues relating to scheduling and enrollment.

Vice principals. Prior to the 2004-2005 school year the number of vice-principals at Rogers High School was increased from one to two. Based on the student enrollment at Rogers High School two assistant principals is, without question, a generous allocation. However the second vice principal position was created to support comprehensive school reform at the high school and given the many administrative challenges that result from true reform this level of staffing seems appropriate. Certainly non-bargaining unit positions provide the school greater flexibility in organization and facilitating the curricular and programming changes that need to occur at Rogers High School.

Creating the second vice principal position has created some problems however because how responsibilities are divided among the two vice principals and the high school principal has not been clearly defined. For example, none of these three positions are responsible for teacher performance and evaluation or department head

³⁰ It is reported that over 85 percent of the students who attend Newport Area Career and Technical Center are fulltime students at Rogers High School.

³¹ State of Rhode Island regulations require career-technical centers to be led by an administrator with career-technical center certification.

performance and evaluation. Not only is there confusion among these three administrators with regard to who is responsible for what, the high school's staff, students and parents are unclear about how responsibilities have been allocated.

Department heads. Department heads in the high school structure are responsible for the supervision and evaluation of teachers in their respective departments and for selecting, ordering and distributing instructional materials for department staff. In addition, they are responsible for developing subject area curriculum that aligns with state standards and grade level expectations. This activity is often done in coordination with other East Bay Collaborative school departments.

The department head structure at Rogers High School was designed at a time when the high school's student enrollment was substantially higher. At present, however, the workload of department heads is insufficient to justify the time they are allocated to perform this work. (Department heads teach either two or three sections of students as compared to the five sections taught by other instructional staff.)

Not only are the department head positions expensive but they also present a barrier to improving student performance. Department heads take a narrow view of the curriculum based on their own area of specialty. Interviews with teachers, central administrators and school administrators also indicate that curriculum is largely developed, and new texts selected, by the department head with the assistance of one or two teachers rather than by an inclusive process that includes teachers, administrators and the broader school community. Budgets for textbooks and instructional materials are controlled by department heads who individually set priorities without a holistic view of the school's overall needs.

To drive necessary change at the high school, a broader, more holistic view of the curriculum must be taken. The high school curriculum needs to be evaluated on two important dimensions, academic rigor and the extent to which it sets low expectations for students. It also needs to be revised to ensure it meets the state grade level expectations (GLEs). The systemic change that is needed will be hampered if the department head position – which, by definition, focuses on only a small piece of the high school operation – is retained.

Deans. Two full-time dean positions are currently assigned to Rogers High School – the same number that was assigned when the high school enrolled 1,600 students. These deans spend the preponderance of their time handling issues relating to student discipline. In a high school of only 750 students one dean should be more than sufficient to perform these responsibilities.

The High School Should Modify And Streamline Its Organizational Structure

Rogers High School should modify its organizational structure to improve coordination, clarify responsibilities, facilitate change and reduce costs. A discussion of the specific organizational recommendations follows.

The NACTC director should be reclassified as an assistant director when the current incumbent retires. The current director of NACTC is retiring at the end of the school year. Upon his retirement the director position should be reclassified as an assistant director who should report to the principal of Rogers High School. Taking this

step will not only reduce administrative costs but also allow facilitation efforts to integrate the programs of the two schools more seamlessly. As part of this effort a careful analysis of the course offerings, enrollment in career-technical programs and electives required for students at Rogers High School to meet the new state graduation requirements, should be conducted by the new assistant director.

Vice principal responsibilities should be clarified. With the appointment of the new principal at Rogers High School it is essential that the role and responsibilities of the vice principals be clarified and comprehensive job descriptions be developed for each position. One vice principal should be assigned responsibility for the ninth grade academy program. The other vice principal should be assigned responsibility for the school's alternative education programs, including whatever new school-within-a-school model that may be developed, the student activities center, the in-school suspension program and the self-contained behavioral support programs. In addition, responsibility for other day-to-day activities, which are outlined in Exhibit IV-1, should be equitably allocated among the two vice principals.

The nine department head positions should be eliminated and replaced with one full-time curriculum coordinator position. Eliminating the department head position and returning those veteran teachers to full time teaching positions will not only decrease administrative and teaching costs but will place some of the school department's most skilled and experienced educators back in the classroom on a full time basis providing rigorous instruction to students. In addition, the recommended coordinator position³² will play a key role in improving the overall performance of high school teachers. This position will be charged with:

- Reviewing course offerings in concert with the faculty and administrators to increase the rigor of the curriculum
- Aligning the curriculum with state grade level expectations
- Working with administrators to evaluate and supervise teaching staff
- Coordinating the process of selecting, purchasing and distributing instructional materials and texts (including developing a formal textbook adoption process)
- Working with administrators to coordinate a rigorous learning walk program and coordinating professional development for all instructional staff.

One dean position should be eliminated. One dean position should be adequate to address discipline issues in a high school with 750 students.

³² This position should be a promotional position within TAN.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Deans Currently Devote Excessive Time Addressing Peripheral Issues Relating To Student Discipline And Insufficient Attention On Ensuring The District's Code Of Conduct Is Consistently Implemented

The deans who, as discussed, are responsible for addressing discipline issues at the high school currently devote the bulk of their time to mediating student discipline issues that either should be addressed in the classroom or are clear-cut and should not be subject to dispute. For example, as of May 15, 2005 the dean's office had received 3,300 student referrals. Over 70 percent of those referrals were for minor infractions that in most other school districts would be handled by teachers and not be referred to a dean. For example, Rogers High School students are sent to the dean's office for such infractions as coming to class unprepared, not submitting homework, coming without a pencil and coming to class late. Conversely, only a handful of referrals, fewer than 20 out of 3,300 (or .6 percent) were for major infractions such as fighting or stealing

At the same time the deans are devoting excessive time to these peripheral issues, insufficient attention is focused on ensuring the district's code of conduct is consistently implemented. Indeed, Rogers High School teachers, parents and students expressed great concern with the dean's office perceived tolerance for unacceptable student behavior and inconsistent implementation of the school department's code of student conduct. The vast majority of legitimate referrals to the dean's office, almost 30 percent, were for indisputable violations of the code of conduct (e.g., swearing at a teacher, cutting class, insubordination). Instead of accepting the teacher report of the incident current practice at Rogers High School has been for the student to first meet with the dean so he can write up the student's version of the events. The dean then meets with the student and determines what course of action may occur. This process creates significant frustration for teachers when students who have acted out return to class with no consequences resulting from their inappropriate behavior. Indeed, the student discipline system is viewed by most high school teachers as being inconsistent and operated using favoritism. This finding is supported by the results of the employee survey. Of high school teachers who responded to the employee survey 87.0 percent strongly disagree or disagree that the student code of conduct is consistently implemented (only 13 percent agree or strongly agree).

The High School Should Take A Number Of Steps To Strengthen Student Discipline

The high school's approach to addressing issues relating to student discipline should be substantially modified. First, the high school faculty should receive extensive professional development relating to classroom management. Once this training has been completed the policies and procedures for referring students to the dean's office should be reviewed and revised to prevent teachers from referring students to the dean's office for minor infractions. The high school's administrators should then enforce compliance with these revised procedures. In addition, procedures for addressing student referrals to the dean's office should be revised to ensure teachers' reports are treated with credibility. The principal and vice principals should also review reports to ensure procedures are consistently followed and that students who violate the code of conduct receive consistent consequences.

GUIDANCE SERVICES

Despite Having Adequate Resources The Guidance Department Does Not Provide Students With The Services They Need To Guide Their High School Program And To Prepare Them For Postsecondary Education And/Or Entry Into The Workforce

Administrators, teachers, students and parents are dissatisfied with the current guidance program. In interviews a wide range of stakeholders expressed concerns about the lack of support counselors currently provide students and the lack of a comprehensive guidance curriculum.³³ For example, students and teachers report that guidance counselors only focus on the top 25 percent of students in relation to the college selection and application process. Given the lack of support high school students receive from guidance counselors they have come to completely rely on grant funded career center staff to work with students on researching post-secondary options. These grant funded staff take the lead in supporting students in not only researching college and career options but also registering for SATs and ACTs and completing the application process.

The lack of an effective guidance program results in part from the fact that in recent years guidance staff has struggled to define their role in the high school. In addition, counselors have struggled to adjust to the elimination of the department head position and the change to a new student information system (SchoolMax).

Shortcomings in the guidance program, however, do not result from the lack of guidance resources. On the contrary, guidance counselor staff to student ratios is quite rich. Of the four guidance counselors assigned to serve Rogers High School one is assigned to the Newport Area Career and Technical Center (NACTC)³⁴ and three are assigned to the high school. However, given that over 85 percent of the students attending NACTC are Rogers' students in effect all four counselors serve the approximately 750 Rogers High School students – a ratio of one counselor to 187.5 students. This ratio is well below the ratios in both neighboring school departments and nationally. Typically high school guidance counselors average caseloads of between 400 and 500 students per counselor.

A Comprehensive Guidance Program Should Be Developed

Guidance and counseling should be an integral part of a school's total educational program. An effective program should be both developmental and comprehensive and should include sequential activities organized and implemented by certified guidance counselors with the support of administrators, teachers, students, parents and support personnel.

³³ The level of dissatisfaction with counseling services is reflected in the results of the employee survey. 61.9 percent of high school teachers who responded to the survey disagree or strongly disagreed that counselors provide needed assistance in addressing the needs of students.

³⁴ The counselor assigned to the NACTC is not only responsible for recruiting students from Rogers High School but is also responsible for recruiting students from the other towns served by the NACTC.

Although the Newport Public Schools has supported a rich ratio of guidance counselors to students it has not developed a comprehensive guidance program and curriculum to give these counselors the necessary tools to be effective. Nationally recognized guidelines for developing a guidance program include:

- Developing a guidance program that reaches 100 percent of the population
- Using a programmatic approach to guidance
- Scheduling counselors for full time guidance tasks
- Expecting the guidance program to support student achievement

A discussion of the key features of the recommended guidance program and the recommended approach to implementing the program follows.

The guidance curriculum should be organized around three developmental domains. The guidance curriculum should be organized around three developmental domains: knowledge of self and others, career development and educational development. This curriculum should be delivered through classroom activities (counselors teach, teams teach and assist with guidance activities in the classroom) and group activities (counselors conduct group sessions outside of the classroom to respond to students needs and interests). Examples of topics to be discussed in such sessions may include conflict resolution, self-concept, substance abuse prevention, decision making skills, peer relationships, cross cultural understanding, anger management, career awareness, pre-employment, career planning, career exploration, job preparation, study skills, planning programs of study, and post-high school decision making. Another critical component of the guidance curriculum is individual planning. Individual planning consists of the activities that help students plan, monitor and manage learning as well as activities that support personal and career development. This planning can be implemented through individual appraisal, individual assessment and educational development plan.

The college and career center's role in supporting students should be coordinated with guidance services. College and career center services should be integrated with the overall guidance programs. Services provided by the center should not be offered in lieu of guidance services but should be coordinated with the guidance program and provided under the oversight of a guidance counselor. Students should be referred to the center by their guidance counselors for career and college exploration and research and for assistance with enrollment in test preparation programs, registration for SATs and ACTs and for assistance in developing particular components of their student portfolio. However, since this center is funded by grant funds that are short-term and subject to review it is critical that guidance counselors be the main point persons for assisting students and helping them develop their plans for the future.

A department guidance committee should be established and charged with developing a comprehensive guidance curriculum. This guidance committee should include counselors, parents, administrators, a school committee member, an elected official and representatives from business and industry, law enforcement, post-secondary education, the courts and the community.

A school-based guidance committee should also be established. Rogers High School and NACTC should establish a school-based guidance committee (this could be the school improvement team). This committee should identify student guidance needs, review activities, evaluate the school's comprehensive guidance program, serve as a channel through which information can be processed by both counselors and teachers, and represent all guidance program stakeholders.

Guidance assignments should be clarified. Good communication and coordination between the guidance staff and school administration is essential to ensuring guidance services meet the needs of students. Principals and guidance counselors should, therefore, meet prior to the start of the school year to discuss the guidance program. During these meetings the roles of individuals critical to student guidance should be defined and discussed including the roles that should be played by the guidance team, the principal, vice principals, teachers,³⁵ school psychologists, school social workers, and career/college center staff.

In addition, these meetings should be used to make staff assignments. Three and one-half guidance positions should be assigned to Rogers High School and one-half guidance position should be assigned to NACTC. The counselor who is split between NACTC and Rogers should continue to be responsible for recruiting and placing students at NACTC. In addition, this counselor should carry a half-time student caseload at the high school. Students who enroll in classes at NACTC should, however, remain on the caseload of their high school guidance counselor to maintain continuity and to ensure a focus on the student's total educational program.

CURRICULUM

Rogers High School Does Not Offer A Rigorous Curriculum For All Of Its Students

Rogers High School's current curriculum offers an academic program with multiple tracks of classes. These tracks include classes that have been designed to serve only students with special education needs, "ramp up" or standards classes for students who are performing below grade level, general classes, college preparatory classes, and advanced placement classes. Offering five levels of classes creates a number of problems. In particular, doing so:

- Limits course offerings
- Reduces average class size
- Limits student participation in a rigorous college preparatory curriculum.

A discussion of these issues follows.

³⁵ In their roles as advisors to counselors, teachers will play an important role in helping counselors deliver programs that facilitate the educational, career and personal-social development of students.

Limited course offerings. Offering five levels of classes in a school serving 750 students hinders efforts to offer a broad curriculum with a wide range of program offerings. Instead teaching resources must be deployed to cover many levels of the same core subject areas. This limits the school's ability to add more rigorous honors and advanced placement courses to the curriculum.

Small class size. Offering five levels of courses in a small school setting not only limits the variety of courses that can be offered but also contributes to an inefficient deployment of teaching staff. The many tracks of core academic courses offered results in small class sizes which, as previously discussed, increases costs.

Limited participation in a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. The five levels of classes that are offered in core subject areas are currently used by high school staff to track students. This practice discourages some students from taking rigorous college preparatory courses. Indeed, rather than encouraging students to take a challenging schedule of classes, students are discouraged from enrolling in challenging classes. Barriers to taking rigorous course loads have been established by each department. For example, an entering ninth grade student who wants to take College Preparatory Biology must not only be recommended by their eighth grade science teacher but must also have taken Algebra I in the eighth grade. Similar barriers and prerequisites have also been established for students who wish to enroll in Advanced Placement Chemistry and Physics.

There is, however, often very little difference in the general level of a course and the college preparatory level of a course. For example, the only difference between General American History and College Preparatory American History is a five-page term paper. Students are certainly aware of these differences and, according to students, teachers and parents, may choose a general versus college preparatory courses because of the lighter workload. Offering different versions of what is essentially the same course, therefore, may encourage students to take the easiest rather than the most challenging route to completing their high school program.

Rogers High School Should Eliminate All General Level Classes

General level classes should be eliminated for all students. Non-college preparatory courses should only be provided for those students for whom an evaluation indicates the need for special education classes or short-term standards classes. All other students should be enrolled in college preparatory level classes. Taking this step will increase the rigor of the high school's academic program, create the capacity for broader course offerings and facilitate efforts to increase class size.

Please note, however, that while special education and standards (ramp up) level courses may be needed to meet the needs of students who may not be ready for a full college preparatory curriculum, the focus of special education and standards classes should be to prepare students to move to a rigorous college preparatory curriculum. Both the requirements of No Child Left Behind and the Rhode Island Regents High School Graduation Requirements establish high expectations for all high school students and support a rigorous curriculum for all.

LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Rogers High School And NACTC Should Extend The Length Of The School Day By At Least One Period

Rogers High School currently has a short school day and only seven periods of instruction. The current high school day is six hours and fifteen minutes long. Not only is the school day 15 minutes short of the length required by the State of Rhode Island (six hours and thirty minutes) but it is also one of the shortest high school days the consultants have observed.

Operating a high school with a short school day and a limited number of periods of instruction creates a number of problems. First, limiting the number of periods a day makes it difficult for students to complete all courses required for graduation in the periods provided. In particular, because ramp-up classes in English and mathematics are scheduled for two periods for ninth and tenth grade students but students only receive one credit for these courses, the most challenged students start their high school career at a disadvantage in meeting graduation requirements. The problems have become even more so as state requirements for graduation have increased. In addition, the length of the school day limits the course options for students who desire a more challenging curriculum and schedule. For example, the current schedule limits the ability of students to enroll in required classes, take the advanced placement classes they desire and to take courses at NACTC.

The high school should meet this challenge by lengthening the school day. This recommendation can be implemented at no cost to the school. The length of the school day can be extended by one or two periods and teachers' schedules staggered accordingly. Some teachers, for example, might begin their school day during first period, while others may begin the day at third period. Additionally the career-technical center might begin the day either an hour before or an hour after the high school start time.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT OFFERINGS

Rogers High School Offers A Limited Number Of Honors And Advanced Placement Classes

Rogers High School currently offers only seven advanced placement courses and a limited number of honors English and mathematics classes. For the 2005-2006 school year expanded honors classes have been added by the English department including honors English for tenth and eleventh grade students and pre-advanced placement English for eleventh grade students.

For many of the reasons that have already been discussed these classes are typically under-enrolled. For example, extensive criteria have been established for students to be eligible to enroll in these classes. In addition, scheduling practices have created barriers for students wishing to enroll in multiple advanced placement classes. Six period science classes, which have been eliminated for next year, made it very difficult for a student to enroll in more than one advanced placement science class. Additionally

many advanced placement science classes required the student to have taken the college preparatory level of some science classes prior to taking the advanced placement class.

Rogers High School Does Not Encourage Students Who Are Enrolled In Advanced Placement Classes To Take National Advanced Placement Exams

Because students can receive Rhode Island College credit for approved advanced placement classes at Rogers High School the school's faculty do not encourage students to take advanced placement exams. In fact, parents and students report that students are actually discouraged from taking advanced placement examinations. Not surprisingly, therefore, Rogers High School has one of the lowest percentages of students who have taken advanced placement classes participating in advanced placement examinations. In addition, the high school has one of the lowest percentages of students taking the advanced placement exams scoring at the college mastery level.

School Name and District	Percent Of Seniors Taking AP Exam	Percent Of Exams Scored At College Mastery
Tiverton High School, Tiverton	53%	49%
Barrington High School, Barrington	35%	92%
Portsmouth High School, Portsmouth	33%	76%
Middletown High School, Middletown	27%	57%
Westerly High School, Westerly	19%	35%
State of Rhode Island	17%	60%
East Providence High School, East Providence	10%	39%
Mt. Hope High School, Bristol-Warren	8%	85%
<i>Rogers High School, Newport</i>	4%	0%
West Warwick High School, West Warwick	2%	NA
Central Falls High School, Central Falls	0%	0%

There is little rationale for discouraging students from taking advanced placement examinations. For one thing, advanced placement examination scores are nationally recognized and potentially carry more weight at highly competitive colleges and universities than Rhode Island College credits. In addition, advanced placement examinations provide an objective measure of the rigor of the advanced placement class and a comparison to students across the country enrolled in comparable classes.

Rogers High School Needs To Expand Its Advanced Placement Course Offerings And Support Students In Taking Advanced Placement Examinations

If Rogers High School is to provide a rigorous curriculum for all its students it is extremely important that it expand its advanced placement course offerings. Implementing some of the recommendations previously discussed (e.g., eliminating unnecessary barriers to enrollment and expanding the high school day) should facilitate these efforts. In addition, creative alternatives that allow students to enroll in a broad range of advanced placement courses should be aggressively pursued. Such options include virtual high schools, on-line courses and dual enrollment at neighboring colleges. Other high schools have found such approaches extremely beneficial. In many schools advanced placement courses are offered in the school computer lab where students

participate in a variety of courses on-line with students from across their state and across the country. Students can enroll in almost any type of advanced placement course using this technology. Many high schools allow students to take these classes in the career-college center during designated periods of the day where Internet access and supervision is readily available.

Students enrolled in advanced placement courses should also be encouraged to take advanced placement examinations. In fact, participation in the examination should become a standard culmination to the completion of a course.

Roger's ability to expand advanced placement, honors and college preparatory classes will assist the school in stemming the tide of declining enrollment and will serve to improve community perception of the programs available at the high school. Participation of students in a more rigorous curriculum will also support improved SAT scores and will strengthen students' preparation for post-secondary education.

D – MIDDLE SCHOOL OPERATIONS

Middle School Scheduling Practices Unnecessarily Limit The Time Teachers Provide Direct Instruction To Students

The school day at Thompson Middle School is currently divided into six periods. Each teacher is provided one period of individual planning time and one period of common planning time per day. After considering their paid lunch period, the four periods a day teachers devote to direct instruction accounts for less than two-thirds of the school day. Moreover, despite the fact that the length of the school day for middle and high school students is the same (six hours and 15 minutes) the four 55 minute periods taught by middle school teachers (220 minutes) accounts for less instruction time than the five 47 minute periods (235 minutes) taught by high school teachers.

This problem results primarily from the fact that middle school teachers devote one period a day to common planning time. While common planning is an essential component of the middle school cluster structure most middle schools in other districts provide cluster teams one or two periods per week of common planning per week.

The Department Should Modify The Class Schedule At Thompson Middle School To Maximize Teacher Contact Time With Students.

The class schedule at Thompson Middle School should be modified to increase both the number of periods of instruction per day and the numbers of minutes of direct instruction students receive per day. To implement this recommendation the middle school schedule should be modified to reduce the number of common planning periods per week from five to two.

E- TEXTBOOKS AND INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The Department Has Not Budgeted Sufficient Resources For Textbooks, Instructional Materials And Library Books

As the Newport Public Schools has faced budget challenges, funding for textbooks, instructional materials and library books has been compromised. When budget

challenges have occurred, among the first line items to be reduced have been those to support the purchase of textbooks, instructional materials and library books. Because of these historical reductions the funds now allocated are not at all sufficient to meet the needs of Newport students. A discussion of the impact these decisions have had on district textbooks, instructional materials and library books follows.

Textbooks. Prior to 1995 the school department had a formal textbook adoption cycle and process. This process called for a five-year adoption cycle. Although this cycle was not always followed, especially at the high school, it provided some structure for examining textbooks and evaluating the need for replacements. Since 1995, however, no formal textbook adoption cycle has existed. Currently if it is determined a textbook needs to be replaced school administrators and teachers must either seek grant funds or barter and bargain with textbook publishers and central office administrators to find the funds to support purchase of new books.

The lack of a sufficient textbook budget and textbook adoption cycle currently most greatly impacts Rogers High School. At the elementary level the purchase of necessary textbooks has been supported through Title I funds and textbook needs at the elementary level are more limited than those at the high school. At the middle school, new textbooks were received when the new building was moved into. At Rogers High School, by contrast, only small infusions of funding for textbooks have been received and this funding was only provided as a response to citations by NEASC. These infusions, however, have not even begun to address the textbook deficiencies. Indeed, administrators, teachers, students and parents report there are not enough texts for all students to have a textbook for each class – in many cases only a classroom set of books exist. Moreover, many of the textbooks are up to 25 years old with some of the “newer” books being ten years old.

While currently spared Thompson Middle School will soon face the same textbook challenges experienced at the high school. Changes in grade level expectations (GLEs) will require new science books yet no replacement cycle has been established. Middle school teachers also report that there are already shortages of some textbooks and in some subject areas too few textbooks exist to assign one to each student in each subject area.

Instructional materials. As with textbooks, the lack of sufficient funds for instructional materials also affects the high school more than other schools because the high school curriculum is most dependent on costly science lab kits and computer software. At the elementary level, by contrast, current budget allocations have been combined with grant funds to support the acquisition of science curriculum kits and expendable materials and the manipulatives needed to support the mathematics curriculum.

Library books. The school department depends almost entirely on grant funds to purchase books and resource materials for its libraries. With the exception of Thompson Middle School, which has an up-to-date collection purchased for the new building, the age and size of the collections are poor.

The School Department Should Increase Budget Allocations For Textbooks, Library Books And Instructional Materials

The school department's 2004-2005 budget provided approximately \$51 per student for instructional materials. However this allocation was reduced by the budget set-asides ordered by the former superintendent in reaction to the department budget deficit (approximately \$13,000 was frozen). The cost of providing textbooks for students enrolled in parochial and private schools³⁶ further reduced the amount available for instructional materials. Although the State of Rhode Island allocated \$6,000 to the district to fund textbooks for parochial and private school students who reside in Newport the cost of these textbooks was \$18,000. By law the school department was required to make up the difference, which meant 12,000 fewer dollars were available to support Newport Public Schools.

Over time, the amount budgeted for instructional materials should be increased to \$175 per student at the high school level, \$110 at the middle school level and \$125 at the elementary school level. With this level of funding a five-year textbook adoption cycle could be funded for all academic disciplines. In addition, this level of funding would provide \$25 per student at the high school and elementary schools to replace out of date materials in school media centers and \$10 per student at the middle school to keep the current excellent collection up-to-date. This increase would result in a total budget for textbooks and instructional materials of \$376,250 (including the \$18,000 spent for parochial and private school students) or an increase of \$268,000 over what was expended for textbooks and instructional materials for 2004-2005.

During the current fiscal year, however, an addition of only \$119,000 should be budgeted. This level of funding is adequate to increase spending to \$100 per student at the high school level and \$75 at the middle and elementary school levels. Budgeting more resources during the 2005-2005 fiscal year would not be prudent because the department has not had the opportunity to do the planning and analysis needed to determine how best to spend more resources.

F – SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Newport Public Schools maintains a strong system of support for students with special education needs. A director of special education who is supported by a special education coordinator, two full-time clerical staff and one part-time clerical staff leads the school department's special education department. The director and coordinator work closely with the school department's principals to ensure schools comply with all state and federal mandates and provide support to all teachers and professionals serving students with special education needs. The current level of central office administration is needed to support the large number of special education students served in Newport. Serving these students is especially challenging because many special education students in Newport are mobile due to the fact that they live in group homes, in independent living placements or move in and out of out-of-district placements.

³⁶ Rhode Island law requires public school departments to pay for textbooks for local residents enrolled in private and parochial schools if the textbooks are on the state approved textbook list.

A Number Of Factors Contribute To The High Percentage Of Special Education Students Served By The Department

The Newport Public Schools serves a high number of special education students (23³⁷ percent of school department students currently qualify for special education services). Although the number of special education students served has decreased slightly over the past two years, because the department's enrollment has declined the percentage of special education students has not decreased. In fact, the percentage of students identified as needing special education supports is higher than the state average of 18 percent (which is the highest in the country). Although the department serves over 600 students with special education needs this translates to a full-time equivalent of 261 students as the vast majority of students do not receive special education services on a full-time basis and are served primarily in general education classrooms.

Department staff report that the high number of special education students dates back to the mid to late 1990's when special education support was the only alternative available to assist struggling students. At present, two important factors tend to increase the percentage of the student population in Newport that has special needs. First, the very fact that the school department's overall student population is declining tends to increase the percentage of special education students served. Second, the large number of group homes and independent living programs in Newport inflates the number of special education students served.

Impact of declining enrollment on the overall percentage of district students with special needs. Urban school districts faced with declining enrollment resulting from students leaving the district to attend private, parochial or charter schools typically find the percentage of special education students served by the district increases. This results because while general education students have the option of moving to private and parochial schools, most often the support needs of special education students can only be met in a public school setting. In fact, during focus groups several Newport Public School parents indicated their children with no special needs were enrolled in private/parochial schools while their children with special education needs were served by the Newport Public Schools.

Group home and independent living program students. The City of Newport has more group homes than any other jurisdiction of its size in Rhode Island. The large number of students from these group homes that are educated by the Newport Public Schools not only inflates the number of special education students served but also increases the cost of providing special education services. The students who reside in these homes typically have intensive needs. Many are children and teenagers with mental health needs who have been removed from their home due to abuse and neglect (and have failed in foster care) or students who have been adjudicated (and are often transitioning from incarceration). Since these students typically come to Newport from a hospital, another group home or the juvenile justice or mental health systems they usually have an individual education plan (IEP) requiring a high level of service and support. In fact, many of these students require costly out-of-school department

³⁷ As reported by the State of Rhode Island audited student count for June 2004.

placements. Moreover, several individual students may rotate in and out of one group home bed during the course of the school year. Often, once a student is stabilized and doing well in their educational program, they are transferred and replaced by another individual with a high level of need.

Additionally several independent living programs for students served by local mental health and children's services agencies are housed in Newport. Similar to students residing in group homes, students in these independent living programs typically have a high level of special education needs. No additional state support is provided to Newport for students in these programs and the full cost of their educational services, including special education supports are borne by the Newport Public Schools budget.

The Services and Supports For Students With Special Education Needs Are In Many Ways Exemplary

The Newport Public Schools has developed a strong program for serving students with special education needs. During a recent review completed by the Rhode Island Department of Education the department received minimal citations and was found to be in compliance with all state and federal special education regulations. Although the perception may exist that services provided to special education students by the Newport Public Schools are excessive or somehow optional, a careful examination of special education services and the special education budget found a model in compliance, but no staffing in excess of state mandated ratios and federal requirements. While the cost of meeting these requirements is high, the school department provides services and supports to students served within the ratios mandated by the State of Rhode Island and in accordance with Individual Education Plans.

Current approaches to serving special education students reflect best practice models relating to inclusion, co-teaching and supporting students with paraprofessionals. To successfully implement inclusion models extensive training on differentiated instruction has been provided to all teachers.

The results of the employee survey underscore the success of this training and the effectiveness of the system in providing services to students with special education services. Two thirds or more of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that they receive needed support in integrating special education students into regular education classrooms (71.6 percent) and receive needed support in ensuring compliance with state and federal special education rules and regulations (72.2 percent). A similar percentage of survey respondents also agree or strongly agree that the Newport Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of special education students (71.0 percent), of developing appropriate individual education plans to address the needs of special education children (79.2 percent) and of providing appropriate instruction and services to special education students (80.3 percent).

In addition, over the past four years the school department has expanded its programs to serve students with challenging behavioral needs and students with autism spectrum disorders. Strong programs exist at the elementary and high school to support students who would have historically been placed in costly out-of-district placements. (A new program has also been established at the middle school that needs to be strengthened.) These programs have not only allowed students to return to Newport Public Schools who had been placed out-of-district but have also prevented placements out-of-district

for other students. To support these programs the department has developed strong partnerships with local mental health agencies and has also contracted with Bradley Hospital to provide two-day treatment programs on-site to serve students with severe mental health needs in a general education setting.

The department has also made a strong investment in developing supports for students with autism spectrum disorders. Extensive professional development has been provided to central administrators, principals, teachers and support service staff to support these students, using an inclusionary model, in general education classrooms.

The Department Should Reexamine The Assignments Of Social Workers And Psychologists To Free The Resources Needed To Provide Greater Support At The Middle School And High School

Effective utilization of clinical staff is hampered because these staff must spread themselves across six small elementary schools. Spreading staff among so many sites not only affects the level and quality of services that are provided at elementary schools but actually has a more significantly impact on the level and quality of services offered at the middle and high schools. Because social workers, psychologists and speech therapists must serve multiple sites and provide coverage for team meetings at all schools the middle and high schools do not receive the proportion of services they require based on enrollment. This problem affects social work and psychologist services the most because the needs for these disciplines are especially great at both the middle school and the high school.

To address this issue, additional service by psychologists and social workers should be provided to the high school and middle school. Increasing clinical services at the high school will be especially important to supporting the recommended on-site alternative program and would help reduce the need for expensive out-of-district placements for high school students. To fund these additional services for the middle and high schools the department should both examine its IDEA budget and pursue other funding sources.

The School Department Should Continue To Evaluate Program Models To Prevent Out-Of-District Placements And Expand Local Options For Serving Students Currently Placed Out-Of-District

The school department continues to face the challenge of serving a very complicated caseload of students with a high degree of need. Central office administrators carefully review all out-of-district placements on a monthly basis and determine if the needs of these students can be met within a local setting. A review of all students currently served out-of-district was completed as part of this study. The vast majority of students currently placed out-of-district are dangerous to themselves or others and require the security of their current settings.

A small number of students currently placed out-of-district, however, could return to local schools but fit into no current program model where capacity exists (the program at Rogers High School can only be expanded with additional staff and resources). To bring more of these students back to local schools, additional supports including psychiatric consultation, on-site therapeutic services and crisis service contracts will be required. The department should consider making the investment by expanding current programs

and adding new services. The cost of adding new services and expanding existing programs will still be less than the cost of tuition and transportation to out-of-district placements and will assist in preventing future placements.

The Department Should Determine The True Cost Of Serving Students Who Reside In Group Homes And Lobby The State To Pay The Full Cost Of Serving These Students

The State of Rhode Island currently reimburses the Newport Public Schools \$15,000 for each group home bed located in Newport. Given the high cost of intensive services provided in-house and the even higher cost of out-of-district placement (often \$35,000 to \$50,000 per student per year) it is unlikely this reimbursement covers the full cost of serving these students. The school department should therefore determine true costs associated with educating students placed in Newport group homes and use this information to advocate at the state level for sufficient reimbursement to cover the cost of serving these students.

G – SERVICES TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

As the demographics of the City of Newport have changed the percent of students who are English language learners has increased. The school department, however, has not developed a strong program to serve these students. In contrast to the special education program, the bilingual education program has not been effectively managed.

The School Department Serves Two Unique Populations Of English Language Learners

The Newport Public Schools serve two unique populations of English language learners – immigrants who have moved to the United States and children of students at the Naval War College who are at the college for one or two years. The needs of these students are very different. Naval War College students are fluent and literate in their home language but have had little to no exposure to English. By contrast, children from immigrant families are generally not literate in their home language but may have lived in the United States for several years.

The department provides services to English language learners in two elementary schools, Sullivan School and Carey School, and at Thompson Middle School and Rogers High School. Three teachers currently serve these students – one teacher is assigned to Sullivan, one teacher is assigned to Carey and one teacher is assigned to serve the students at both the middle school and the high school.

Additional Teaching Positions Should Be Established To Ensure Compliance With State Of Rhode Island Mandates Regarding English Language Learners

The caseloads of teachers who serve English language learners are high. Currently each of the elementary school teachers who serve English language learners carries an active caseload of between 40 and 50 students³⁸ and the teacher assigned to the high

³⁸ These caseloads tend to fluctuate during the school year because English language learners can be very mobile.

school and middle school has a total caseload of 21 students.³⁹ These caseloads far exceed the levels required by State of Rhode Island regulations and national best practice. Rhode Island, for example, mandates a caseload of between 20 and 25 students based on the needs of the students. If left unaddressed this situation is likely to get much worse because the caseloads for elementary teachers are growing at the same time the level of service required for each student is increasing as well.

To comply with state requirements regarding caseloads and service allocations for English language learners an additional ELL teacher should be assigned to both the Carey School and the Sullivan School. These teaching positions are needed to provide direct services to students and, as discussed in the next section, to consult and collaborate with general education teachers.

Professional Development Services Should Be Provided For Administrators, Teachers And Support Service Professionals To Aid Them In Serving English Language Learners

The school department currently provides no professional development for administrators, teachers and support service professionals who work with English language learners. In focus groups and interviews teachers and administrators expressed concern about the lack of attention that is currently focused on meeting the needs of these students. These findings are strongly supported by the results of the employee survey. Fewer than half of the survey respondents (46.0 percent) agree or strongly agree that the district complies with state and federal mandates relating to language minority students. In addition, almost half the survey respondents (49.1 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that students who are not proficient in English are appropriately served, 40.7 percent disagree or strongly disagree that the Newport Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of these students and more than half (54.2 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the Newport Public Schools does an effective job of providing appropriate instruction for students who are not proficient in English. Furthermore, more than half (57.9 percent) of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that they receive needed support in integrating language minority students into the education classroom.

Although the three teachers who currently serve ELL are also responsible for providing support to general education teachers in each of their school sites, their large caseloads currently make consultation and collaboration quite difficult. At the middle and high school level, by contrast, while the ELL teacher's caseload is considerably smaller, students are spread across so many clusters (at the middle school) and classes (at the high school) that working with the teachers of individual ELL students is extremely difficult.

To address this issue the department should develop a comprehensive plan for providing professional development to support teachers and administrators in serving English language learners. (This professional development plan should be modeled on the district's excellent special education professional development program.) This

³⁹ 19 students attend Thompson Middle School and two students attend Rogers High School.

training should be initially focused on the school teams that serve the greatest number of English language learners – Carey School, Sullivan School and Thompson Middle School

H – IMPLICATIONS

Implementing The Recommendations Presented In This Section Will Both Reduce Costs And Improve The Quality of Educational Services Provided To Newport Students

As summarized below, implementing the recommendations presented in this section will allow the school department to reduce costs by 177,000 for the 2005-2006 school year while improving the quality of educational services offered by the school department.

Area	Addition/ (Reduction)	Cost/ (Savings)
Restructuring High School Organization	(4.0)	(\$256,000)
High School Scheduling	(4.0)	(\$160,000)
Textbooks, Instructional Materials and Library Books	-	\$119,000
Service to English Language Learners	2.0	\$120,000
Total	(6.0)	(\$177,000)

Far greater savings will be possible in subsequent school years if the recommendations related to class size and cluster structure are addressed through the collective bargaining process. Additionally an increase in expenditures for textbooks, instructional materials and library books to \$268,000 is recommended for the 2006-2007 school year.

V – NON-INSTRUCTIONAL OPERATIONS

This chapter presents observations and recommendations relating to non-instructional management. The chapter is divided into six sections: organization; facilities management, financial management; human resource management; transportation; labor relations and implications.

A – ORGANIZATION

The Assistant Superintendent Position Should Be Replaced By A Less Costly Professional Position

The assistant superintendent – one of five central office managers reporting to the superintendent – supports the superintendent on a broad array of initiatives and activities including: parent and community relations; coordination with not-for-profit service providers; student discipline; labor relations; grants and development; and human resources. While these functions are important, for the most part, a senior level manager is not needed to perform them. A lower level professional should therefore, replace the assistant superintendent position.⁴⁰ The department should consider rotating staff through this position every two to three years to provide professional development opportunities for school-based administrators with the potential to assume broader responsibilities.

Implementing this recommendation will require reallocating many of the functions currently performed by the assistant superintendent. The following table summarizes recommendations relating to where various functions and activities should be reassigned.

Function Or Activity	Recommended Assignment
Parent complaints	Assistant to the Superintendent
Media relations	Assistant to the Superintendent
Liaison with community agencies	Assistant to the Superintendent
English language learner (ELL) program	Director – Teaching, Learning and Professional Development
Drug Free Schools program	Director – Special Education
Title I Homeless program	Director – Special Education
Student discipline – code of conduct/out of school suspensions	Assistant to the Superintendent
Impact aid	Assistant to the Superintendent
Labor relations	Superintendent (with assistance from the Assistant to the Superintendent)

⁴⁰ Under no circumstances should a clerical employee be assigned to perform these duties.

Function Or Activity	Recommended Assignment
Human resources	Assistant to the Superintendent
Guidance	Director – Special Education
Human services mall at Thompson Middle School	Director – Special Education
Elementary after-school programs	Director – Teaching, Learning and Professional Development
Health services	Director – Special Education
Residency	Assistant to the Superintendent
Food Services	Assistant to the Superintendent
Transportation	Assistant to the Superintendent
Emergency response manual	Assistant to the Superintendent
Libraries	Director – Teaching, Learning and Professional Development
Home schooling	Director – Teaching, Learning and Professional Development

B – FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Observations relating to facility maintenance and custodial services are presented in this section followed by recommendations to address these opportunities for improvement.

OBSERVATIONS - FACILITIES

Facilities Maintenance Activities Are Under Managed

Department facilities are not well maintained. Observations made by the consulting team when visiting Newport schools suggest that in the older schools especially maintenance needs – ranging from replacing worn tiles to ensuring bathrooms are operational – are not being addressed. Moreover, employee survey results indicate significant dissatisfaction with building maintenance services. Roughly half of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that school department facilities are adequately maintained (53.8 percent) and that non-emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner (49.1 percent). Perspectives are somewhat more positive with regard to response to emergency maintenance requests. While more than a third of the survey respondents (34.2 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner more than half (51.0 percent) agree or strongly agree.

Despite these significant maintenance needs – which are apparent to even a casual observer – department managers do not aggressively manage facilities maintenance activities and ensure staff resources are used effectively. On the contrary, facility maintenance managers and staff lack a sense of urgency about improving maintenance services and take a somewhat casual approach to addressing needs. While the information needed to assess workload and activity is not gathered the perspective of many department employees is that facilities maintenance staff are, in fact, underutilized

and that some do not work diligently. In the face of such significant need, at the very least one would expect facilities maintenance staff to feel pressure to address the most obvious maintenance problems but the current culture of the organization creates no accountability for doing so.

The specific shortcomings associated with building maintenance activities are numerous:

- **Work activities and service levels are not systematically tracked.** The department has not established a work order system that can be used to track maintenance service requests, assign them to individual workers, determine the amount of labor and materials that are required to perform a job, ensure jobs are completed, and track the time required to complete a service request. Instead, an informal process has been established through which school based staff will call in a service request and it will be assigned to workers by the Property Services Director (or the electrician who serves as a part-time foreman) to facility maintenance staff. A work order may or may not be prepared but at least until recently, doing so has not been a requirement.

Without an effective work order system it is extremely difficult to actively manage a maintenance operations – even an operation as small as that of the Newport Public Schools. Managers lack the ability to assess the time taken to respond to maintenance requests or even to verify that the request has been addressed. In addition, without the information that is created by a work order system it is extremely difficult to have discussions with maintenance staff about how effectively they are using their time and to encourage them to be more productive. Moreover, budgeting based on historical experience becomes almost impossible as does determining the optimal mix of in-house versus contract resources that should be employed by the school department.

- **Preventive maintenance systems and schedules have not been established.** The school department has not developed a systematic preventive maintenance plan and schedule to ensure that the preventive maintenance that is needed to prolong the life of department facilities is conducted. Even in older buildings systematically determining what preventive maintenance is needed, scheduling that maintenance, and ensuring maintenance staff adheres to the schedule is important and this will become even more important as the department brings new buildings on-line.
- **No systematic controls on purchasing or the use of materials and supplies have been established.** At present, when maintenance staff need parts or materials to perform a needed job they go to a local supplier to acquire the material. In an organization as small as the Newport Public Schools that does not have the scale of operations to justify maintaining an internal parts functions this approach seems reasonable. Nonetheless, the department should at a minimum identify preferred vendors with which it has negotiated blanket purchasing agreements (to ensure costs for supplies and materials are kept as low as possible) and systematic audits should be performed to ensure expenditures are warranted. While there is no reason to suspect malfeasance among the maintenance staff, under the current system it would be relatively easy for staff to purchase more of an item than is needed and to use the excess on personal projects. Please note that the property services director will review expenditures with staff from time to time but this process is informal and insufficiently systematic.

OBSERVATIONS – CUSTODIAL SERVICES

The Quality Of Custodial Services Is Inconsistent

The quality of custodial services varies considerably throughout the school department. In some schools the custodial services that are provided are impeccable while in others they are barely adequate. These observations, made when visiting department schools and other facilities, are also reflected in the results of the employee survey. While 44.0 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that school department facilities are clean 37.9 percent disagree or strongly disagree. Similarly, while 45.3 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that cleaning needs are promptly addressed 37.6 percent disagree or strongly disagree.

The Allocation Of Custodial Staff Across District Facilities Is Not Equitable

Overall, the number of custodians and plant managers employed by the Newport Public Schools is reasonable. The department currently employs two plant managers (one each is assigned to the high school and the middle school), four utility custodians, and 21 custodians⁴¹ and matrons. Of these staff roughly 24.9 full-time equivalent employees are available to perform custodial work.⁴² Given that the department's schools total 450,959 square feet, each "full-time equivalent" custodian is responsible for approximately 18,110 square feet. While this square footage is somewhat lower than the 19,000 to 21,000 square feet of space observed in other departments, given the age and condition of school department buildings the overall number of custodial staff employed seems reasonable.

While the overall number of custodial staff employed is appropriate, the allocation of these staff across department facilities is not equitable. As the following table shows some custodians are responsible for cleaning more than three times as much space as others.

⁴¹ This number does not include the maintenance worker who is assigned to the high school.

⁴² This assumes that plant engineers devote at least half their time to custodial work, that one utility custodian spends roughly a third of his time delivering mail and that the other three utility custodians devote about three-fourths of their time to custodial work with the remainder devoted to supporting building maintenance projects.

School	Square Feet	Available Custodial Staff	Square Feet Per Available Custodian
Sheffield Elementary School	33,380	1.00	33,380
Coggeshall Elementary School	33,093	1.00	33,093
Carey Elementary School	26,988	1.00	26,988
Cranston-Calvert Elementary School	40,545	2.00	20,273
Sullivan Elementary School	38,750	2.00	19,375
Rogers High School	160,000	8.50(a)	18,824
Thompson Middle	103,000	5.50(a)	18,727
Underwood Elementary School	15,203	1.65(b)	9,214

(a) Assumes plant engineers devote approximately half their time to custodial work.

(b) Assumes the utility custodian that delivers mail devotes 65 percent of his time to custodial work at the Underwood Elementary School.

Custodial Services Are Not Effectively Managed

As with facility maintenance services custodial services are not effectively managed. Key shortcomings with regard to the management of custodial services may be divided into four areas.

- **Work expectations are not clearly defined.** Although custodians have a clear understanding of the basic cleaning they are expected to perform each day (e.g., emptying trash, cleaning bathrooms and sweeping floors in a particular area) in all schools but one (Carey Elementary School⁴³) schedules have not been established detailing what work should be done and how long that work is expected to take. In particular no expectations have been established for cleaning that should be performed, on a weekly or monthly basis, in addition to the basic cleaning duties that are currently performed.
- **Supervisors are not scheduled to work when the bulk of the staff they are responsible for supervising are working.** Plant engineers are employed at both the high school and middle school and are charged, in addition to other duties, with overseeing the custodians assigned to the school. At each school the plant engineer is assigned to work the day shift. However, at the high school, seven of the nine staff assigned to the building (including a maintenance person who works in the afternoon and early evening) work during the evening or at night. Obviously, supervising staff who work a different shift is difficult. (At the middle school three custodial staff are assigned to the day shift and two work the evening shift).
- **Utility custodians are underutilized.** Utility custodian positions have been established primarily to fill in for custodial staff who are absent. In addition, when not performing custodial duties these staff support building maintenance activities. Because these workers have no set work schedule and location, however, it is difficult to hold them accountable for the quality of their work and to ensure productive use is made of their time when they are not needed to support custodial

⁴³ The schedule in place at the Carey Elementary School was developed by the custodian assigned to the school on his own initiative.

efforts. Moreover, in interviews, school-based staff suggested that the custodial work performed by some of these utility custodians is substandard.

- **Overtime expenditures for custodial workers appear excessive.** As discussed in the section on financial management custodians currently receive overtime when they support a school event after normal school hours and when they are called out to turn off an alarm. Some of these overtime expenditures may not be necessary. For example, at the high school and middle school custodians who are already working in the evening may be able to support some events.

RECOMMENDATION

Responsibility For Facility Maintenance And Custodial Services Should Be Assigned To The City Of Newport

Chapter VII presents a systematic assessment of what functions and services currently performed by school district personnel might be performed by the City of Newport on a shared service basis. This analysis suggests that facility maintenance and custodial services be assigned to the city. It should be noted, however, that even if the shared services analysis did not suggest the city handle these functions significant steps would be needed to improve the management of these functions. As discussed, both facility maintenance and custodial services are not well managed and strong leadership will be needed to turn these operations around. Fortunately, the city has the management infrastructure (e.g., work order systems) and leadership needed to effectively manage these functions. In addition, the city purchasing agent should work with the managers who oversee facility maintenance and custodial services to establish blanket purchase agreements with local suppliers of parts and materials. These managers should also develop a process for evaluating systematic tracking and monitoring expenditures for parts and supplies.

Information Needed To Evaluate Facility Maintenance Needs Should Be Developed

At present, facility maintenance staffing is very difficult to evaluate because little to no systematic information on workload exists. The city managers who assume responsibility for this function should therefore gather and analyze information on building maintenance workload and needs. In addition, as new facilities are brought on-line the preventive maintenance needs associated with the new facilities should be articulated. Once sufficient information has been collected an analysis should be performed to determine how many building maintenance employees are needed, what skills these staff should have, and what functions and services should be assigned to contractors rather than in-house staff.

The City Should Adopt A New Approach To Managing Custodial Resources

As the city assumes responsibility for providing custodial services for the school department it should adopt a fundamentally new approach to managing custodial resources. First, instead of assigning all custodians (except utility custodians) to individual schools custodial resources should be divided into fixed and roving squads of custodians. Fixed squads of custodians (which in some schools may consist of a single custodian) should be responsible for performing custodial work that recurs on a frequent basis (e.g., daily or weekly). Detailed schedules should be established articulating the

specific activities that should be performed on each day and the time typically required to perform each task. Detailed schedules should also be prepared for roving custodial squads but instead of being assigned to individual schools these squads would supplement the work performed by the fixed squads. In other words, they would be responsible for performing the work that the custodial staff assigned to individual school lack the capacity to perform.

In addition, the schedules for the plant engineers should be modified so that their work day overlaps with the shifts of custodians that have the greatest number of employees. The department should also review policies relating to custodial overtime and make changes to reduce unnecessary overtime payments while also ensuring fairness to custodial workers. In addition, each school should be assigned a budget for custodial overtime and the principals should be charged with ensuring that these budget amounts are not exceeded.

C – FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financial Management Of The Newport Public Schools Is Not Strong

Numerous shortcomings relating to the school department's financial management and operations have been identified. In particular, numerous issues relating to financial controls (that reduce the risk of malfeasance), the lack of formal policies and procedures, and operating procedures have been identified. The short-comings that have been identified may be divided into six general areas – asset management, risk management, financial management, cash management, purchasing and payment processing.

Asset management. The school department lacks formal policies and procedures relating to asset management and does not ensure accurate inventories of capital assets are maintained.

- **Policies and procedures.** At present, written policies and procedures covering the accounting for and safeguarding of capital assets have not been established. As a result, capital assets have not been reconciled to the department's general ledger or subsidiary accounts. In addition, no formal or informal procedures for authorizing, approving and documenting the sale or other disposition of capital assets have been prepared. Likewise, no formal procedures for obtaining grantor approval (if required) for using grant funds for capital asset acquisitions have been developed.⁴⁴
- **Inventory.** Effective procedures for maintaining a physical inventory of capital assets has not been developed. While the technology director conducts a periodic physical inventory of items such as computers, printers, cameras and monitors, maintains an inventory list⁴⁵ and affixes a property sticker to each item that is purchased, responsibility for tagging non-technical items (e.g., desks, tables, janitorial equipment and telephones) as the property of the school committee has not

⁴⁴ If approval is obtained it is obtained by the program director for the grant. The business office plays no role in reviewing or approving the funding source.

⁴⁵ This inventory does not, however, indicate the rooms in which the items are located.

been defined.⁴⁶ In addition, when technology related items are purchased with federal or grant funds but the technology director is not informed of these purchases, these items are neither tagged nor included in the physical inventory. Moreover, no procedures exist for accounting for and including in inventory self-constructed, donated or leased assets.

Risk management. The school department has not established adequate safeguards to ensure that only qualified recipients are being provided insurance. In particular, periodic comparisons are not made of employees receiving benefits from the school department's group insurance benefit program with current payroll records and listings of retirees. In part because adequate safeguards are not in place four errors were recently identified in which retirees were mistakenly reimbursed for the Medicare part B deduction from their social security check despite the fact they did not qualify for school department health coverage. In at least one instance the amount of overpayment exceeded \$10,000.

Financial Management. Shortcomings pertaining to financial management relate to the need for improved documentation of policies and procedures, the process for reviewing journal entries and budget practices.

- **Documentation.** The Newport Public Schools has not developed an infrastructure of well-documented policies and procedures relating to financial management. This is true despite the fact that the school committee has established basic principles that state the school department will formulate written policies and those policies will be reviewed regularly and revised as necessary. Moreover, the department has not developed an ethics policy for school department employees or a process for reporting suspected improprieties. While a policy has been established that documents rules relating to conflicts of interest for school committee members no similar policy has been established to govern conflicts of interest and other ethical issues for department staff.
- **Journal entries.** At present, journal entries are made by the accounts payable clerk or the office coordinator and approved by the business manager. The process for reviewing and approving journal entries, however, does not vary depending on the type of journal entry (for example, whether it is recurring or non-recurring, routine or unusual, accumulations of routine transactions or adjustments of balances requiring estimates) – the business manager reviews all these transactions. For example, the superintendent or school committee are not informed of or required to review significant adjustments despite the fact that a review of high level journal entries (like those related to prior period adjustments or changes in accounting principles) or journal entries of a specific programmatic nature would be beneficial to ensure the integrity of the accounting process.
- **Budget practices.** The department has not established effective practices to ensure that budget line items are adhered to. In particular, issues relating to overtime and severance are particularly troublesome. The school department has had significant problems relating to the overtime paid to custodians. At present custodians incur

⁴⁶ The business manager has indicated, however, that in the future any item costing more than \$500 would be capitalized, tagged and included in inventory.

overtime for events held at schools because one additional custodial staff is required to be on duty for the event (such as a basketball game) in addition to the custodial staff already assigned to the shift. Moreover, if a burglar alarm goes off after a school is closed a custodian is paid a minimum of two hours overtime. (Often the alarm is triggered by a school employee with keys to the building who does not know how to turn off the burglar alarm). Because, until this year, this overtime was not included in the overall department overtime budget significant overruns resulted.

Severance is a second significant factor that contributes to budget overruns. Existing policies ask staff to notify the school department in February if they plan to leave school department employment at the end of the school year. The severance payments relating to these separations are determined and accrued at year end for payment in July. However, staff are allowed to request and receive approval for separation at any time. Amounts paid outside of the timeframe defined by school department policy are not budgeted and created budget overruns.

In addition, the department experienced a large budget overrun in fiscal year 2003 related to special education out-of-district placement. In April 2004 the business manager learned that 22 more out-of-district special education students were served than had been budgeted for. Because the money to serve students in out-of-district placements was paid on a month to month basis rather than encumbered for the entire year managers had been unaware that insufficient funds had been budgeted until the resources in the account began to run out. The failure to anticipate this contingency – despite the fact that there is often a seasonal migration to Newport in the spring through the summer related to the fishing industry that creates an influx of children late in the school year – created significant problems.

Budget management has also been complicated by the fact that the school department does not use a position control system (the current financial software does not support position control) and until this year (fiscal year 2004-2005) an encumbrance system was not used. It should be noted, however, that even though the business manager currently verifies that unobligated funds are remaining under an appropriation or funding source that does not, in itself, ensure that sufficient funds are available to cover the proposed expenditure. If there are insufficient funds to cover a purchase requisition, the business manager will normally indicate a negative balance on the requisition and pass the document on to the superintendent for review and signature. If the document is signed by the superintendent the business manager considers the requisition approved and authorizes the purchase even though a negative budget balance will result.

Cash management. Shortcomings related to cash management increase the risk of malfeasance and reduce school department interest earnings. In particular, problems relating to financial controls and deposits have been identified.

- **Financial controls.** The school department lacks adequate internal controls relating to the handling of funds and ensuring that all funds have been recorded.⁴⁷ In particular, the deposit information prepared by the cash receipt/accounts payable

⁴⁷ The City of Newport is currently responsible for recording these cash receipts and making general ledger entries related to cash in the accounting system.

clerk is not reviewed or approved by another individual (i.e., a supervisor or the business manager). Additionally, the fact that the person responsible for cash receipt is also responsible for cash disbursements creates an obvious financial control problem. Potential problems relating to financial control are exacerbated by the fact that receipts are not controlled by cash register, pre-numbered receipts or another equivalent means when payments are made in person.⁴⁸ In addition, adequate facilities do not exist for protecting undeposited cash. While there is a key/combination safe located in the business office for undeposited cash receipts the location of the key is known by all staff members and the safe combination is affixed to the back of the key.

- **Deposits.** The school department does not make timely deposits of receipts to maximize interest earning. Bank deposits are generally not made more frequently than monthly and no effort is made to verify the timeliness of deposits by reviewing bank receipts. (Occasionally, however, the cash receipt clerk will review the general ledger detail for individual grants to ensure that the amounts indicated in her records with regard to cash received or disbursed have been records.)

Purchasing. The existing purchasing process is cumbersome, does not incorporate appropriate procedures for receiving purchased goods, and is not well documented.

- **Purchasing process.** There are a number of problems with the purchasing process. First, the level of approval for even routine low value purchases is excessive. At present, many purchase orders must be approved by the superintendent, assistant superintendent, supervisors, coordinators and building principals. At a minimum all purchase order requisitions must be signed by the superintendent⁴⁹, the business manager and the individual preparing the requisition. This excessive level of review does little to improve control – indeed, one can argue that because so many requisitions must be approved little attention is focused on any individual requisition – and significantly increases the time and administrative cost associated with purchasing.⁵⁰

In addition, shortcomings associated with existing financial systems increase the time and effort required to process requisitions. At present, requisitions are prepared using “shell” documents that have been prepared using spreadsheet (Excel) software and provided to persons responsible for preparing purchase requisitions. These documents are submitted to the business office for review and approval. However, because the spreadsheet software does not interface with the school department’s financial system (GEMS), purchasing clerks must manually enter information from

⁴⁸ From time to time the property services unit will issue receipts for rental payments but this practice is not typical.

⁴⁹ The Newport Public Schools 2004 Policy Manual section on procurement requisitions (Section 2.3.2.1) states that only the superintendent may commit the school department for a purchase and that the superintendent shall approve all requests for purchase.

⁵⁰ These factors contribute to employee dissatisfaction with the purchasing process. In the employee survey conducted as part of this engagement, slightly less than a third of the survey respondents (31.4 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the purchasing process is not unduly time consuming (36.3 percent agree or strongly agree).

the Excel requisitions into the GEMS system. Once the information has been entered into GEMS the business manager must approve the transaction electronically for a second time before the purchase can be encumbered. This process is time consuming, cumbersome and expensive.⁵¹

In addition, the school department does not currently have a process for ensuring that price quotations are obtained before placing orders not subject to competitive. Current policy requires that any purchase of or contract for supplies, materials and equipment over \$1,000 (but not over \$4,000) shall be made by the purchasing agent with the approval of the superintendent only after informal quotations have been received.⁵² This policy does not stipulate the appropriate number of quotations that must be received, does not indicate who must obtain the quotation, what type of quotations are acceptable (verbal or written) and who is responsible for reviewing and retaining the quotations. While the requisitioner is currently responsible for obtaining the quotations, the school department does not require the requisitioner to forward the quotations along with the purchase requisition to the business office and no effort is made to confirm that quotations were, in fact, received.

In addition, no business office employee is responsible for ensuring that all cash discounts are taken and, if applicable, that exemptions from sales, federal excise, and other taxes are claimed.

- **Receiving procedures.** Although school department personnel are informally assigned responsibility for following up with vendors regarding shortages or damaged good that are received from vendors, no formal policy or procedure relating to filing claims against carriers or vendors has been established. Likewise, while the requisitioner is responsible for accurately counting and examining goods to ensure they meet quality standards, no procedure documenting this requirement has been established. Moreover, accounts payable is not always promptly notified of returns which can create problems when reconciling vendor invoices and credit memos.
- **Documentation.** A comprehensive procedures manual to govern the purchasing process does not exist and would be beneficial.

Payment processing. Inadequate controls over the processing of payments have been established. At present, no knowledgeable employee independent of the accounts payable function is required to review invoices and supporting data prior to signing checks. In addition, no limit has been set on the amount that can be paid (by check or warrant) using facsimile signatures (all signatures are currently made by facsimile). Moreover, instead of requiring two signatures on checks, only one signature is required regardless of the dollar amount of the check. Finally, because the accounts payable clerk is also the backup for the purchasing clerk, it is possible for the same person to

⁵¹ The City of Newport is currently researching software packages that would provide efficiencies in the purchase requisition/purchase order process such as enabling the requisitioner to enter the purchase requisition into the software, obtain electronic approval at the required levels and verify fund availability. Upon approval, the purchase requisition would transform to a purchase order which would be submitted to all applicable parties.

⁵² Contracts of more than \$4,000 are awarded based on competitive sealed bidding, competitive negotiations, or non-competitive negotiations.

enter and authorize a purchase, process the payment of the purchase, and have access to vendor checks. The fact that the accounts payable clerk is authorized to make changes to the financial system's master vendor file also reduces financial control.

Responsibility For School Department Financial Management And Purchasing Should Be Assigned To The City Of Newport

The Newport Public Schools currently lacks the financial and purchasing expertise needed to address the myriad issues relating to financial management that have been identified. Addressing these issues would require a total revamping of existing policies and practices. This time consuming and expensive process can be avoided, however, by assigning responsibility for department financial management and purchasing to the City of Newport. The city already has strong financial leadership and effective policies and practices in place. By assigning responsibility for financial management and purchasing to the city the school department will be able to leverage and benefit from this management expertise and these effective systems.

It should be noted that even if school department financial and purchasing processes were exemplary a strong management case can be made for providing these services on a shared services basis. Chapter VII presents a systematic analysis of shared service alternatives which suggests that responsibility for financial and purchasing functions (with the exception of the budget development function) be assigned to the city.

D – HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

A range of opportunities to strengthen human resource management exists. These include administration, personnel management, staff assignments, hiring, retention and human resource practices.

ADMINISTRATION

The School Department Should Develop A Plan To Strengthen Its Human Resource Infrastructure

While numerous improvements to human resource management have been made in recent years, the department's overall human resource system lacks important features needed to support effective operations. For example, department position descriptions are not current. In addition, the department does not have an appropriate methodology for reclassifying positions. The system that is currently used was designed to address issues relating to comparable worth not to classify positions in the department's pay structure. Perhaps most problematic the department lacks an effective performance management process. For support staff existing performance evaluations are not tailored to the job responsibilities of specific positions. For teachers, there is no requirement that all teachers be evaluated on an annual basis. Moreover, the current agreement with the Teachers Association of Newport (TAN) allows tenured teachers to select the areas on which they will be evaluated.

Strengthening the department's human resource infrastructure will take both time and resources – it is not practical for the department to address these issues in a relatively short period of time. Instead, the department should develop a long-term plan for

strengthening its human resource infrastructure. One or two improvement initiatives should be undertaken each year. To the extent the department lacks the expertise to establish an appropriate performance evaluation or classification system it should first consult with human resource professionals in the City of Newport Human Resources Department. As necessary, however, funds should be budgeted for outside experts to work with the school department to develop key components of an improved human resource system.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

The School Department Should Modify Entry Requirements For Clerical And Administrative Positions To Reflect The Skills Needed To Make Effective Use Of Information Technology

Entry requirements for clerical and administrative positions have not been updated to reflect the skills necessary to use current information technology. While short hand is a job requirement for some positions, employment candidates are not required to have the skills needed to use the school department's office software such as Microsoft Office, Powerpoint and Excel and the department's student information system, SchoolMax. Moreover, current requirements do not include the ability to access the Internet or to use on-line computer applications.

To address this issue job entry requirements should be reviewed and updated. At a minimum new employees should be expected to be able to use current department software, the Internet and on-line computer applications.

STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

The Annual Process For Assigning Staff To Schools Is Cumbersome And Should Be Changed

The department currently uses a "job fair" process to allocate staff to specific schools and school department units each year. Two job fairs are held – one for TAN positions and one for Council 94 positions. All current members of the bargaining unit are eligible to participate in the job fair process. A list of all vacant positions is distributed in advance of the job fair. At the job fair each available position is opened to bidders. All qualified staff can then bid on any posted position in the individual's job classification for which the individual meets certification requirements. The most senior qualified candidate for the position receives the position.

Problems with this process can be divided into three areas: lack of principal input into school staffing, ability of employees with performance problems to transfer, and the ability of employees to transfer to a position where they may have certification but no current work experience

Lack of principal input into school staff. The job fair process gives principals no input into who fills positions in the schools they manage. Because the job fair disproportionately affects schools with the greatest number of vacant positions due to layoffs, non-renewals and retirements, it is possible for the majority of a school's staff to be assigned through the job fair process. Consequently, the ability of a principal to build a school team is severely compromised. Not only is the principal unable to select the

members of his or her team but the entire team can be disrupted from one school year to the next.

Ability of employees with performance problems to transfer. The job fair process allows employees with documented performance problems in one work location to transfer to another work location. Even employees who are part of the “intensive supervision” process are able to transfer. This practice not only often allows employees to avoid or delay the consequences of their poor performance but also passes one manager’s problem to another manager.

Ability of employees to transfer into a position where they have no current work experience. The job fair process allows employees to transfer into positions for which the employee was not hired and has no current work experience. For example a teacher hired as a fourth grade general education teacher who has been teaching fourth grade for a number of years may bid to be assigned to a middle school special education position if the teacher possesses the appropriate certificate. Under the current system, this teacher would receive the position over a current special education teacher with active special education experience.

The School Department Should Negotiate With Its Labor Unions To Establish An Alternative Approach To Assigning Staff To Schools.

An alternative approach to assigning staff to schools should be negotiated. A list of available positions could be distributed based to all bargaining unit employees. Employees could then submit written bids for available positions. Principals would then have the opportunity to interview internal candidates for open positions and select the best candidate for the position. Seniority would be utilized if two or more candidates were viewed as equal. Employees who have documented current performance problems (within the previous two school years) and employees who are part of the formal “intensive supervision” process should not be allowed to bid into a new work location.

HIRING

The Department Should Work Aggressively To Increase Minority Hiring

The racial and ethnic profile of the school department’s professional staff⁵³ does not match the diversity of the school department’s student enrollment. While minorities comprise 42 percent of the student enrollment only 6.5 percent of the professional staff are minorities.

⁵³ For the purposes of this analysis professional staff includes the following staff categories: office administrators and managers; principals; assistant principals – teaching; assistant principals – non-teaching; elementary classroom teachers; secondary classroom teachers; other classroom teachers; guidance; psychological; librarians/audio-visual staff; consultants supervisors instruction; and other professional staff.

Ethnic Group	Percentage Of Students	Percentage Of Professional Staff
White	58%	93.5%
African-American	25%	5.1%
Hispanic	12%	0.7%
Native American	3%	0.3%
Asian	2%	0.3%

The school department should take aggressive action to address this issue. In particular, a recruiting plan should be developed and implemented that focuses on recruiting highly competent minorities. This plan should include strategies for attracting novice teachers as well as lateral transfers

RETENTION

The Department Should Develop And Implement Strategies To Improve Retention Of Senior Administrators And Other Key Staff

The success the school department has achieved over the past several years is due, in large part, to the leadership and dedication of its central office administrators and principals. Continuity in leadership, however, is needed to maintain improvement momentum and the school department has struggled to retain important administrators. In the past several months six key administrators – superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of teaching, learning and professional development, elementary school principal, middle school principal and high school principal have left the school department. While effective leaders appear to have been selected to fill many of these positions⁵⁴ the challenges they face in continuing to improve student achievement are certainly made more difficult by this turnover in leadership positions.

Concerns about retention are reinforced by the results of the employee survey. More than half of the survey respondents (53.9 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the school department does an effective job of retaining its most skilled administrators.

The school department should take a systematic approach to addressing these retention issues. As a first step, exit interviews should be conducted with all senior managers who have left the school department's employment over the past five years (to the extent these managers can be located and are willing to be interviewed) as well as a sample of teachers. Based on the results of these interviews a list of potential issues that have contributed to turnover should be identified. Strategies should then be developed to address the factors that are within the school department's control and a plan developed to implement these strategies.

⁵⁴ Please note that this report recommends that the assistant superintendent be replaced with a lower level professional.

HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES

The School Department Should Discontinue Two Human Resource Practices That Are Expensive And Provide Little To No Value

Two department human resource practices are expensive and provide little or no value to the department. First, the department currently allows 12-month clerical staff to work reduced hours during the summer. In addition, because clerical staff are allowed to work “summer hours” this opportunity is afforded to other support personnel as well. While historically there may have been some rationale for reducing work hours for employees during the summer that time is long past. Instead of reducing employee work hours during the summer support employees should focus on performing tasks during the summer that it is impractical to perform during the school year.

In addition, the department currently assigns one clerical employee to each elementary school on a year round basis even though the principal the clerical employee supports works a 10 month contract. One rationale for having these clerical employees working during the summer is so that someone will be available to receive shipments of supplies. However, undoubtedly an alternative approach to receiving supplies could be established. For example, the custodian assigned to the school could be charged with receiving shipments. Clearly, assigning clerical staff to work when the persons they support are not working is wasteful and this practice should be discontinued.

E – TRANSPORTATION

The Newport Public Schools provides transportation to 2800 students who reside in the City of Newport. This number includes over 400 students who reside in Newport but who attend non-public schools. The school department contracts with Laidlaw Transportation to provide 17 buses each school day which operate on a three-tier system.

A Number Of Factors Result In A High Percentage Of Newport Public School Students Being Provided Transportation

The school department transports over 85 percent of the students who attend the Newport Public Schools. The reason such a high percentage of students are transported can be linked to five key factors: open enrollment at the elementary school level, failure to use appropriate elementary school boundaries to assign children to schools, noncompliance with the transportation criteria that has been established by the school department, the department’s focus on integrating low-income and minority students in all elementary schools and the fact that only one elementary school meets ADA requirements.

Open enrollment. Although boundaries have been established for each of Newport’s six elementary schools parents can choose to enroll their children in any elementary school in Newport. Current school department policy provides transportation to students who are not enrolled in their local elementary school if a bus route is in close proximity to the student’s home. Since Laidlaw Transportation provides service throughout the City of Newport to so many public school and non-public school students their managers report

there are no areas of the city that are not served by an elementary school bus. Laidlaw managers also report that they have been instructed by school department administrators to adjust routes to accommodate any students requesting transportation.

Elementary school boundaries. Although boundaries have been established by the Newport Public School these boundaries are not used to assign children to schools. In fact, the school department does not use any mapping software to determine the most feasible boundaries for its elementary schools based on addresses of students enrolled, population distribution or geographic configuration of the city. In 2003 and 2004 Laidlaw Transportation provided the school department with proposed boundaries for elementary schools based on current addresses of enrolled students. These boundaries were developed using geographic information systems and resulted in 90 percent of elementary students being assigned to schools within walking distance of their home addresses. Implementing the proposed boundary changes would have resulted in a significant reduction in elementary school bussing but were rejected by the school department.

Noncompliance with transportation criteria. The Newport School Department's transportation policy indicates that transportation will be provided to any elementary student who lives more than one mile from their assigned school, to any middle school student who lives more than two miles from Thompson Middle School and to any high school student who lives more than three miles from Rogers High School. This policy also incorporates exceptions so the school department can provide transportation to elementary and middle school students who live with the stated mileage but would need to cross major highways or state roads to get to their school. At present, however, many students who live within the walking parameters established by school department policy do not walk to school but rather walk to a bus stop outside the walking parameters and receive bus transportation to school. For example an elementary school student who lives three quarters of a mile from their assigned school may walk one half mile away from the school and then board a bus. Although Laidlaw provides a list of the authorized students on a route to its drivers, the firm has been directed by school department administrators to provide transportation to any student who waits at a bus stop. Laidlaw also reports that, in many cases, parents whose children live within walking distance of their school drive their child to a bus stop to receive transportation to school rather than driving the child directly to school (or having the child walk to school).

Integration of low-income and minority students in all elementary schools. Rather than serve low-income and minority students in their local elementary school the school department has adjusted student assignments to distribute low income and minority students across all elementary schools. This has resulted in students being transported across the city when seats are available at a local elementary school which is within walking distance on the student's home.

ADA requirements. Sullivan School is the school department's only elementary school that meets ADA requirements. Therefore all students who require ADA access must be transported to the school. The cost of this transportation is not significant, however, since many of these students would be transported to whatever school they attend. What is more consequential, however, is the impact Sullivan's unique status as the school department's only ADA compatible elementary school has on school enrollment based on the needs of family members. If, for example, a parent is disabled the parent can request their child be enrolled at Sullivan School so that the parent can visit their

child's school and participate in their child's educational program. Likewise if a child who requires a school environment that meets ADA requirements has a sibling department policy indicates that the child's sibling can also be enrolled in that school. Thus the siblings must be provided transportation to the school.

The School Department Should Take Steps To Significantly Reduce Its Transportation Costs

Two steps should be taken that will significantly reduce transportation costs. First, elementary school boundaries should be established utilizing geographic information systems that assign students to the elementary school closest to their home address. Second the school department should ensure that current transportation policies are enforced. Parents of Newport Public School students should be informed if their child meets criteria for transportation and if so to what bus stop the child is assigned. Laidlaw drivers should then be instructed to only provide transportation to students who are assigned to their specific route at their assigned bus stop. Laidlaw managers suggest that taking these steps might enable the school department to reduce the cost of busing students to elementary schools by 50 percent.

F – LABOR RELATIONS

The School Department Has Not Been Sufficiently Aggressive In Its Relations With Employee Unions

While good labor and management relations are essential to the effective operations of any school department, relations between the school department and its unions (especially the Teachers' Association of Newport) are out of balance. In an effort to maintain good relations with the labor unions department managers have made concessions that are not in the interest of the department, its students or Newport taxpayers. Labor relations issues may be divided into issues relating to the contracts themselves and issues relating to managing and interpreting the contracts.

TAN contract. The contract between the school department and the Teachers' Association of Newport contains a number of provisions that increase costs and complicate management. A brief discussion of these contract provisions follows:

- **Class size.** As discussed, school department costs are significantly increased because the class sizes required by the TAN contract are quite low, especially at the kindergarten and middle school levels. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the class sizes established in the contract are maximums for the various grade levels rather than averages. Consequently, an increase in just a few students in a school can potentially significantly increase costs because more teachers must be added to the payroll to serve these students.
- **Teacher assignment.** Elementary and middle school teaching positions are classified in terms of the grade they teach (e.g., kindergarten teacher or eighth grade teacher). Classifying teachers in this way limits the flexibility principals and central office administrators have in changing teachers from one grade level to another or assigning them to a multi-grade classroom based on school needs.

- **Middle school cluster size.** The TAN contract specifies that each cluster of students in the middle school cannot exceed a maximum of 90 students for grades 6 and cannot exceed a maximum of 92 students for grades 7 and 8. Since each cluster is served by four teachers an increase of just one student above the contract maximum can require the department to employ four additional teachers.
- **Benefit costs.** Although most public and private organizations that provide health insurance benefits typically require premium costs to be shared by employees, the TAN contract requires no co-payment.
- **Unneeded positions.** The TAN contract currently identifies specific positions at the high school – deans and department heads – that are not needed. As discussed, these positions are unnecessary given the size of the high school but, in the case of the department head positions, may actually present a barrier to improving school performance.
- **Length of school day.** The TAN contract indicates the length of the teachers' school day shall not exceed six hours and 15 minutes. Not only is this school day shorter than peer districts, it is also shorter than the length required by the State of Rhode Island for high school students. A review of the TAN contract completed by Mark Colborn in January 2005 compared the daily and annual work hours of Newport teachers with those of four peer departments. The chart below summarizes that analysis and illustrates that Newport teachers have the lowest daily work hours and the second lowest annual work hours of the comparison departments.

School Department	Daily Work Hours ⁵⁵	Annual Work Hours
<i>Newport</i>	6.0	1104
Bristol-Warren	6.4	1157
Middletown	6.7	1211
Portsmouth	6.2	1128
West Warwick	6.1	1099

- **Lack of preparation period parameters.** The current contract provides elementary teachers 200 minutes of preparation time per week (to be provided in blocks of at least 25 minutes and spread over at least four days per week) and middle and high school teachers one period of preparation time per day. However the contract provides no parameters on how this preparation time should be used and in fact permits teachers to leave the building whenever they have no direct instruction responsibilities as long as they first give verbal notice to the principal that they are leaving the school premises. Many teachers take advantage of this situation and use the time set aside in the contract for preparation as personal time. Under the provisions of the existing contract there is little principals can do to prevent this. They are not authorized to require that teachers use this preparation time for review of student work, teacher coaching or other activities to improve student performance.

⁵⁵ Daily work hours were calculated by taking the normal work-day hours, subtracting lunch time and adding required meeting hours.

- **Change in working condition provisions.** The current interpretation of change in working condition provisions in the TAN contract indicate that any job duties currently assigned to TAN members cannot be reassigned to non-TAN employees. This requirement limits the ability of school department managers to restructure job duties and responsibilities in ways that will best support student instruction. Under the current contract, non-bargaining unit positions cannot be created without the consent of TAN if those positions assume any responsibilities that were previously assigned to TAN employees.

Council 94 contract. The Council 94 contract also includes four provisions that increase costs and complicate management. A brief discussion of these contract provisions follows.

- **Scheduling.** The Council 94 contract requires the department to consult with the union prior to making any changes in previously established working hours. This limits the ability of department managers to adjust work hours to reflect changing needs and/or to improve operational efficiency.
- **Benefit costs.** As with the TAN contract the Council 94 contract does not require employees to share the cost of health care premiums.
- **Schedule for elementary school secretaries.** The current contract states, "Upon approval of the superintendent elementary school secretaries will remain in their respective school during summer months. In any event, all secretaries will be required to work in their respective schools up to five days after the closing of school and 10 days prior to the opening of schools." Since a change in the contract year for elementary school principals no longer requires them to work during the summer it makes little sense for the secretaries who support them to continue to work a 12-month schedule.
- **Call back pay.** The current contract provides for four hours of call back pay for employees who are called back to work after their shift ends or called into work prior to their work day. If employees are called into work less than four hours prior to the start of their work day the contract should be modified so that their work schedule includes the four extra hours for which they are being compensated.

Contract interpretation and management. In the past, the focus of ongoing labor relations efforts appears to have been to avoid conflict and grievances. Indeed, in interviews the assistant superintendent reported that there have been no grievances for the past three years. While the department should be commended for its efforts to maintain strong relationships with its unions, efforts to minimize conflicts have also

limited the flexibility of managers in dealing with personnel issues. Among the problems that have been created by this desire to reduce conflicts and avoid grievances include the following:

- **Agreement not to terminate a teacher who has been on intensive supervision for two school years.** Without input from the principal an agreement between TAN and central administration was reached whereby a teacher who had received intensive supervision was not terminated but instead returned to the school for a third year of intensive supervision.
- **Concessions to eighth grade teachers due to cluster size above contract maximum.** An agreement was developed by central office administrators to exempt eighth grade teachers from regular responsibilities at the Thompson Middle School because the cluster size exceeded the 92 maximum in the contract. The two eighth grade clusters served a total of 188 students, four students above the current contractual cluster maximums. For these additional two students per cluster teachers were provided two additional individual planning periods per week. Additionally an agreement was signed that indicated that eighth grade teachers did not have to consult or collaborate with the school's reading coach for the entire school year. This agreement, which was signed with no input from the middle school principal or the department's literacy coordinator, negatively affected the school's ability to address the needs of eighth grade students requiring literacy support.
- **Agreements not to address work performance issues with particular staff.** To avoid grievances and reduce conflict central office administrators agreed with Council 94 to not address substandard performance with some veteran employees who are eligible for retirement.

While these decisions are, in themselves, quite problematic what is even more troubling is that these decisions were made without involving the principals and other managers who are directly responsible for implementing them.

The School Department Should Regain An Appropriate Balance In Its Relationship With Its Unions

While the department should continue to strive to maintain positive relations with its unions it is also imperative that important management prerogatives be regained and that contract requirements that increase costs and hamper effective management be addressed. It is especially important that the department take an aggressive, but fair, stance in its current negotiations with the Teachers' Association of Newport in addressing key issues relating to class and cluster size and health benefits. Because this contract is so important to the department's future financial well being, the department should engage a recognized expert in contract negotiations to represent its interests. While some investment may be needed to engage such an expert, the benefits to the department – and the risks if a balanced contract is not negotiated – are sufficiently great that this investment is worthwhile.

In addition, the department must recognize that some conflict is inevitable in any labor management relationship. Rather than seeking to avoid grievances, as has been the practice in the past, the department should take the steps necessary to ensure that it does not relinquish important management prerogatives and that conflicts are resolved

in a manner that is fair to employees but that also serves the school department, its students and Newport taxpayers. Moreover, when decisions about contract interpretation and grievances are made that will affect the operations of an individual school and unit, the decisions should be discussed with the managers who will be affected by the decisions.

G - IMPLICATIONS

Implementing These Recommendations Will Improve The Quality Of Non-Instructional Operations In The Newport Public Schools Department And Reduce Costs

Implementing these recommendations relating to organization, facilities management, financial management, human resource management, transportation and labor relations will improve the quality of school department non-instructional operations and reduce costs by \$75,000.

Position	Addition/ (Reduction)	Costs/ (Savings)
Assistant Superintendent	(1)	(\$145,000)
Assistant to the Superintendent	1	\$100,000
12 mo. Elementary Secretary	(6)	(\$270,000)
10 mo. Elementary Secretary	6	\$240,000
TOTAL	0	(\$75,000)

Significant additional savings will result from negotiating a more balanced labor contract.

VI – FACILITIES

The Newport Public Schools operates six elementary schools (grades K-5), one middle school (grade 6-8) and one high school (grades 9-12). In addition, the department operates the Newport Area Career and Technical Center and supports the Aquidneck Island Adult Learning Center. The school department faces many challenges in addressing the needs of its facilities as all but one of its schools are old and in poor condition and the school department's enrollment has been in steady decline. While the school department has been reluctant to close schools to address the decline in enrollment, the department has been faced with significant budget challenges. These budget challenges have also hampered any efforts to provide for the ongoing maintenance and capital improvement needs of school facilities.

This chapter is divided into six sections: condition of facilities; school configuration; addressing elementary school facility needs; addressing high school facility needs; financing alternatives; and implications.

A – CONDITION OF FACILITIES

With The Exception Of The Middle School, School Department Facilities Are Old And In Poor Physical Condition

School department facilities, with the exception of Thompson Middle School (which opened in 2002) are not only old but are in poor physical condition. The facilities at each elementary school and at Rogers High School have significant shortcomings.

Elementary schools. The school department's elementary schools have a number of shortcomings including issues relating to the age of the schools, unmet maintenance needs, inadequate operating systems and the inappropriate basic design of the buildings.

- **Age of schools.** The department's elementary schools range in age from 43 to 129 years old. The average age of the schools is 87 years.

School	Year Built	Age
Henry R.A. Carey Elementary School	1896	109
John Coggeshall Elementary School	1897	108
Cranston-Calvert Elementary School	1876	129
William P. Sheffield Elementary School	1922	83
Michael H. Sullivan Elementary School	1955	50
William J. Underwood Elementary School	1962	43

None of these elementary schools have had renovations and/or significant capital improvements in the past ten years other than those needed to address emergency situations such as boiler replacement.

- **Unmet maintenance needs.** Unmet preventive and corrective maintenance needs are extremely numerous in all elementary schools. These problems include missing floor tiles, ceiling leaks, moldy and damaged ceiling tiles, cracked plaster on walls, foundation leaks, peeling paint, and missing stair treads. Moisture, particularly in

basements, which are intensely used by the older elementary schools, is a major problem and creates both a serious health risk for students and teachers and a potential liability for the school department.

- **Inadequate operating systems.** Elementary school electrical systems are inadequate – they are unable to support the equipment used in a standard classroom of today. Plumbing systems are beyond their life expectancy – in one elementary school two of the bathroom stalls are permanently closed because the maintenance department claims it cannot find a toilet fixture to install on the old plumbing fittings. Most schools reported an inability to control temperature in the buildings, with some areas over heated in the winter and others under heated.
- **Inappropriate basic design of buildings.** Beyond the poor condition of the physical plants there are problems with the appropriateness of the basic design of the buildings. The buildings have not been configured and designed to support effective implementation of the educational program and to ensure students receive necessary support services. In particular, the elementary schools are not well designed to support cafeteria functions, elementary libraries, or early childhood, music, art, and student support programs or services. Indeed, basement spaces that were designed as storage spaces have been converted for use as cafeterias, libraries and for use by specialists for art and music. At Coggeshall School, for example, the gymnasium is located on the third floor and cannot be used by kindergarten and first grade students. At Cranston-Calvert School there is no gymnasium and the auditorium is used for physical education classes. In addition, only one elementary school, Sullivan School, is fully ADA compliant. Beside the program related problems, there are some basic problems relating to the suitability of the design of the Underwood School for a New England climate. Underwood has separate buildings, connected with exterior walkways, as though the design were for a school located in Southern California or Florida, not New England.

Rogers High School. Rogers High School was built in 1957 and is located on a sprawling 40 acre campus overlooking the ocean. The current school structure provides 160,000 square feet of space connected by a network of interior heated corridors and exterior walkways – some of which are covered, some of which are open. In 1962 an additional wing of six classrooms was added to the campus. The Rogers High School campus includes several unique facilities including a 1300 seat auditorium located in a geodome and a rifle range utilized by the JROTC program.

When the original Rogers facility opened in 1957 it was designed to serve a student enrollment of just over 1250 students. After the 1962 addition the school's capacity increased to over 1600. The large Rogers campus dwarfs the current enrollment of only 750 students. The physical plant at Rogers provides student supervision challenges, is inappropriate for a New England climate, has ineffective heating and insulation and a host of unmet maintenance needs.

- **Student supervision challenges.** The design of the facility makes student supervision an ongoing challenge. Over seventy exterior doors make it easy for students to leave and enter the building. In addition, in such a large building it is easy for students to find hideaways where they will not be detected. Not surprisingly, therefore, on-campus truancy is a persistent problem. In interviews, faculty, administrators, parents and students all noted how easy it is to leave the building to

cut classes, smoke or drink. The layout of the facility also presents challenges for student transitions between classes, as there is often a long distance between classrooms. Moreover, in inclement weather students must either go outdoors to change classes or travel a much longer internal route.

- **Inappropriate design for a New England climate.** The network of exterior walkways that connect the campus might be appropriate for a school situated in Texas or California but are definitely not appropriate for a school located in New England. Understandably, students avoid using these walkways during the winter. In addition, ensuring these walkways are clear of snow and ice creates a burden for the school's custodial staff.
- **Ineffective heating and insulation.** The heating system at Rogers is both inefficient and difficult to operate and maintain. During winter months the system burns up to 1000 gallons of heating oil per day yet many areas of the facility remain cold. Temperatures from one room to the next are reported to vary by as much as 30 degrees. In addition, because the steam pipes for the system are buried in concrete and underground tunnels floors must be jack-hammered to locate leaks and make repairs – a frequent problem. The building also lacks adequate insulation. Just over ten years ago, in 1994, the “exterior skin” of the entire Rogers facility was replaced due to corrosion. However when this skin was replaced insulation problems in the corridors and connecting walkways were not addressed. As a consequence these corridors currently have no insulation, which results in major heat loss. Moreover, when the exterior skin was replaced new windows were installed in many of the walkways and corridors. However because these windows are neither weather tight nor tinted they create temperature control problems in the corridors and hallways in both cold and warm weather.
- **Unmet maintenance needs.** Ceiling and floors throughout the building are in need of repair and replacement. Floor tiles are missing throughout the building⁵⁶ and where spot repairs have been done little effort has been made to match titles. As a consequence mismatched tiles of different design and color are prevalent throughout the facility. Ceilings in many classrooms and corridors are discolored with water stains and mold from roof leaks. In some areas ceilings are caving in from damage from leaks. Sections of roof have been replaced in many areas of the facility.⁵⁷ In addition, most student bathrooms in the school are in poor condition and in need of major renovation.

Immediate Steps Should Be Taken To Improve The Condition of Selected Facilities

The school department is in the process of developing a long-range plan to replace or renovate inadequate facilities. In the best case, however a number of existing facilities will continue to be in service for at least three years. Addressing the condition of some of these facilities cannot be deferred until the buildings are replaced or renovated. In particular, the basements of the Sheffield and Cranston-Calvert schools must be addressed. (In addition, as will be discussed, the Underwood School should be taken

⁵⁶ In some cases staff report these tiles have been missing for over ten years.

⁵⁷ It is reported that there are currently ten different roofs at the facility. An additional roof replacement is planned as part of the department's capital improvement program.

off-line immediately). A conservative estimate of the cost of making these capital improvements is \$320,000.

B – SCHOOL CONFIGURATION

Over The Past Ten Years The Newport Public Schools’ Student Enrollment Has Declined By 17.3 Percent

While enrollment has fluctuated somewhat over the past 10 years overall student enrollment has declined by 538 students (or 17.3 percent). The rate of enrollment decline has been most notable over the past five years during which time enrollment fell by 351 students (or 16.7 percent).

School Year	Enrollment	Yearly Percentage Increase/(Decrease)	Cumulative Percentage Increase/(Decrease)
1996	3104		
1997	2967	-4.4%	-4.4%
1998	3020	1.8%	-2.7%
1999	2948	-2.4%	-5.0%
2000	3041	3.2%	-2.0%
2001	2917	-4.1%	-6.0%
2002	2890	-0.9%	-6.9%
2003	2821	-2.4%	-9.1%
2004	2647	-6.2%	-14.7%
2005	2566	-3.1%	-17.3%

During this period, the decline in elementary school enrollment has been even more pronounced than for the district as a whole. Over the past five years, elementary enrollment (kindergarten through grade five) has declined by 309 students (from 1490 students for the 2000-2001 school year to 1181 students for the 2004-2005 school year). This decline represents a 20.7 percent reduction in elementary school enrollment.

Operating Small Elementary Schools Is Neither Effective Nor Efficient

Although elementary student enrollment has declined by almost 21 percent in the past five years and this decline is projected to continue the school department continues to operate the same number of elementary schools as it did before the enrollment decline. Simple math, however, suggests that six elementary schools are no longer needed. If the number of schools declined at the same rate as enrollment only 4.8 schools would be needed. In fact, the observations and analysis made conducted during this engagement support this preliminary conclusion. Each of the existing schools has significant excess capacity and just five schools could easily accommodate the existing student population.

Moreover, the claim that the six schools should be retained to protect the identity of Newport neighborhoods does not hold water. In fact, most of Newport’s elementary students do not attend their local elementary school and are bussed to other schools

within Newport.⁵⁸ For the 2004-2005 school year the only elementary school that could be considered a neighborhood school is Sullivan School where 88 percent of the students reside in the Sullivan neighborhood. At all other elementary schools only 40 to 50 percent of the current enrollment is made up of “neighborhood” students.

Operating six small elementary schools when only five are needed is neither efficient nor effective. Costs are increased and problems associated with addressing intradistrict mobility are exacerbated.

Operating more elementary schools than are needed increases costs. Operating more elementary schools than are needed increases administrative and support overhead costs, reduces the efficiency of professional and support personnel and complicates efforts to maximize class sizes.

- **Administrative and overhead costs.** The school department incurs administrative and overhead costs for each school that it operates – regardless of its size. These costs include the salary and benefits of a principal, clerk, custodian, a half-time nurse and a half-time librarian. Additionally utility, routine maintenance and grounds costs are incurred for each building that is operated.
- **Inefficient use of professional and support staff.** The more schools the school department operates the more time professional staff (e.g., social workers, speech therapists and psychologists) must spend time traveling between schools and attending team and school meetings. This reduces the time they have available to serve students. Likewise, the services specialty teachers for art, music, library and physical education provide are disjointed because these staff must divide their time between at least two schools.
- **Inability to maximize class sizes.** Most importantly, operating six schools when only five are needed makes it extremely difficult to achieve class sizes close to the contract maximums. For the 2004-2005 school year across the six elementary schools, fewer than 20 percent of the classes were within two students of the contract maximum for the grade level. In fact, 68 percent of the classrooms were four or more students below the contract maximum.

Operating more schools than are necessary increases intradistrict mobility. To reduce the costs associated with operating schools with excess capacity the school department has adopted a practice of closing classrooms in individual schools that are under-enrolled. Indeed, each elementary school had at least one classroom closed in the 2004-2005 school year. This practice, while reducing costs, also increases student mobility because the students who would have attended the closed classroom are reassigned to another school.

Both national research and the experience of the Newport Public Schools, however, clearly suggest that student mobility has an adverse impact on student achievement. Indeed, the school department’s own student performance data indicates that students who remain in the same elementary school for more than three years perform better on

⁵⁸ The school department allows open enrollment so parents within Newport can select the school of their choice.

all assessment measures than students who move from one elementary school to another. In fact, the recent SALT evaluation completed for Sullivan School raises concern about intradistrict mobility and includes a recommendation for the Newport Public Schools to “reexamine the district policy regarding ‘intradistrict transiency’, and stabilize teacher and student mobility for optimal teaching and learning”.

Closing Classrooms Is Not A Viable Alternative To Closing Schools

Rather than close an elementary school to address the issues relating to declining enrollment the school department has instead chosen to close classrooms in elementary schools throughout the department. In the upcoming school year, for example, the department is planning to close 10 classrooms. When a similar approach was taken during the 2004-2005 school year however, class sizes were not maximized. In fact 79.8 percent of elementary classrooms operated below the class size maximums provided in the teacher contract. By contrast, if one school is taken offline 47 of 61 classrooms will operate at the class size maximum or 77.0 percent. Moreover, the savings that result from closing classrooms fall well short of the savings that result from closing a school. Projected savings associated with closing 10 classrooms in the upcoming school year total \$600,000 (based on a reduction of 10 teachers). Closing a school, as discussed in the following section, will reduce costs by \$1.08 million.

Moreover, continuing the practice of closing classrooms would mean students across Newport would continue to be displaced from their current school and moved to another site based on their grade realignment. Since each elementary school identifies students for realignment based on their length of time in that particular school using a “last one in, first one out” system many students will be moving for the second or third time in as many years. This approach to addressing the decline in student enrollment, while “sharing the pain” among all elementary schools, does little to address the ongoing needs of Newport students and provides children, families and school communities little stability from one school year to another. Moreover, as discussed, the school department’s own analysis clearly shows that increasing mobility reduces student achievement.

The School Department Should Immediately Take The Underwood Elementary School Offline

Rather than close classrooms throughout all six elementary schools the school department should take one elementary school offline. Operating five elementary schools instead of six will enable the department to reduce costs by \$1.08 million⁵⁹ per year. These savings will be achieved by reducing 10 teacher positions (the same number that the school department plans to eliminate by closing classrooms) and by discontinuing a 0.5 school nurse, 0.5 librarian, 0.5 music teacher, 0.5 art teacher, 0.5 physical education teacher and one family service coordinator. (The savings associated with discontinuing these 14 positions totals \$840,000). Additional savings in operating/overhead costs totaling \$244,800 will be achieved by discontinuing three additional positions – one principal, one clerk and one custodian – and reducing costs associated with utilities, food services, transportation and grounds support.

⁵⁹ This savings is based on the 2005-2006 proposed budget provided to the consultants in April 2005 and is not in addition to the savings that have resulted from the classroom reductions that are now projected for September 2005.

For many reasons, Underwood School is the elementary school which should be taken off-line. Underwood School is in the worst condition of the existing six elementary schools and is not configured to support effective instruction. Additionally Underwood lacks the capacity to accommodate a significant number of students from other schools and does not currently function as a neighborhood school.

- **Facility condition.** The Underwood School is in the worst condition of the existing six elementary schools. Based on a review of the facility and interviews with staff a number of significant physical plant issues exist. The roofs leak – buckets are retained in the front lobby of the main building for catching water when it rains. Ceiling tiles are in poor condition. Gutters have been removed from one building and were never reinstalled. Erosion has resulted from poorly maintained or missing downspouts. Temperature control is inadequate – some rooms are too hot while others are too cold. Buildings are infested with mice (staff reported hearing mice run through the ceiling and finding dead mice in trash cans and openings for mice with mouse droppings were seen around the exterior of two buildings). Exterior bricks are broken and mortar is failing. Walkways between buildings are in poor condition and unsafe, especially for students requiring a barrier free setting.
- **Facility configuration.** The Underwood School is not configured to support effective instruction. Storage areas are insufficient and the buildings are all very cluttered. The school has a very small cafeteria and no other multipurpose space. Students must go outside to get from one building to the cafeteria or to another building. One classroom in each of the buildings is undersized (only 576 square feet) and does not support a full class enrollment. Additionally limited space is available for individual or small group instruction.
- **Capacity to accommodate students from other schools.** Underwood School lacks the capacity to accommodate a significant number of students from other schools. Due to the fact that many of its classrooms are undersized the Underwood School has the capacity to absorb only 14 students from other schools.
- **Impact on local neighborhood.** Of the six elementary schools, Underwood School has the highest number of students bused from other locations. Only 79 (14 of whom will be moving to Thompson Middle School) of the current Underwood students live within the local boundaries for the school.

C – ADDRESSING ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS

Renovating Existing Elementary Schools To Meet The Current Educational Needs Of Newport's Students And To Comply With ADA Regulations Is Not Feasible

Based on the current age and condition of existing elementary schools it is not feasible to renovate existing buildings to meet the needs of a 21st century education. The design of the Carey, Cranston-Calvert and Sheffield Schools and the small sites on which each of these schools is located make substantial renovations impossible. Moreover, the current condition and inefficient site design of the physical plants at both Sullivan and Underwood Schools would make renovation more costly and less efficient than new

construction. Likewise, Coggeshall School would require a large addition in addition to renovations to both meet the requirements of ADA and the educational requirements of Newport students.

The Newport Public Schools' Long-Term Facility Plan Should Include The Construction Of Three Elementary Schools

The Newport Public Schools' long-term facility plan should include the construction of three elementary schools. Each elementary school should be designed to serve 400 students in kindergarten to grade five and have an additional enrollment capacity of up to 440 to accommodate preschool/early childhood education. One school should be constructed in the southern portion of the city on the current site of the Underwood School. A second new school should be constructed in the northern portion of the city on the current Sullivan School property. A third new school should be constructed in the central portion of the city at the Coggeshall School site.

During the facilities construction process the current Underwood School facility will need to be demolished as the entire site will need to be used to support the new building's footprint. The recommendation to take this school off-line therefore represents merely the first step in the overall plan to improve school department facilities. Taking the school off-line now will reduce the time required to replace the school. Sullivan School should remain open during construction but should then be demolished to make room for parking when the new building is completed. Coggeshall construction could be completed in two phases. First an addition could be completed and then, in a second phase of construction, the current facility could be gutted and reconstructed. Another alternative would be to relocate the students who attend the school while construction is taking place.

As part of the construction of these new schools a plan for phasing out and closing other elementary school buildings should be developed. Once boundaries for these new sites have been developed it will be important to involve the new school community in the planning and design of the new school building. This process will also facilitate efforts to merge the existing two school communities together.

D – ADDRESSING HIGH SCHOOL FACILITY NEEDS

The Rogers High School Facility Is Inadequate To Support The 21st Century Learning Needs of Newport Students

The general condition of the Rogers facility is poor. Not only are academic facilities obsolete with antiquated science labs and library facilities and a lack of sufficient electrical capacity to support needed technology but Rogers also suffers from significant problems with major operating systems, with general upkeep and with routine maintenance. Instructional programs (academic support center and student activities center) for those Rogers' students most in need are located in instructional spaces designed for vocational programs with high ceiling, noisy ventilation systems and large, noisy spaces never meant for quiet instruction. Moreover, behavioral support programs and day treatment programs are located in rooms adjacent to storage spaces where ceilings are caving in and flooring is ripped up. These locations are isolated from the rest of the school community.

The condition of the gym and student locker rooms impedes the high school athletic and physical education programs. The gymnasium floor presents ongoing safety issues with areas of the floor buckling despite regular repair. The locker rooms are also in disrepair. Showers and changing facilities – especially in the men's area – are in need of replacement. Indeed, the locker rooms and gym floor are in such poor condition that other high schools have refused to play away games at Rogers. Prior to the start of sporting events referees are required to point out defects in the gym floor and offer the visiting team the option of canceling the game if the visitors have safety concerns. These same problems afflict Rogers' students during practices and physical education classes.

A major renovation of all academic facilities is necessary. The four current science laboratories need to be renovated and all science classrooms and laboratories need to be equipped with appropriate technology at each lab or workstation. The library/media center also needs to be expanded and provided with increased computer and media capacity, additional student work areas and room for expansion of the library collection. Moreover, renovated instructional spaces are needed for the academic support center, the behavioral support program and the day treatment program. All academic classrooms should also be updated to support the infusion of technology into the curriculum.

The auditorium and performing arts spaces at Rogers should also be updated and redesigned. Major safety hazards relating to the location and design of dressing rooms and back stage spaces need to be addressed if these spaces are to be used to support the school's performing arts programs.

The School Department Should Determine The Feasibility Of Either Massive Renovations At Rogers Or Construction Of A New Rogers High School

The school department should take a systematic approach to determining whether to renovate the existing Rogers facility or to construct a new high school. To make this assessment a ten-year analysis of the cost and educational implications of continuing to operate the current facility should first be performed. The results of this analysis should then be compared with the cost and benefits associated with constructing a new building.

Ten-year analysis of implications associated with continuing to operate the current facility. As a first step, the costs associated with operating the existing space in terms of custodial staffing, maintenance and making improvements needed to meet NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation standards, ADA and OSHA requirements, and utilities should be performed. Next the department should project enrollment for grades nine through twelve over the next ten years based on the current elementary and middle school enrollments and Newport demographics. Then, based on these enrollment projections, the department should project the amount of space that will be needed to support the instructional program during the next ten years taking into account the State of Rhode Island High School Graduation requirements. The costs of ensuring adequate space is available should then be evaluated. Finally the department should assess the educational factors associated with using the existing building especially factors that relate to student supervision, teacher planning and program delivery.

Cost and benefits associated with new construction. A number of factors must be considered to create a true comparison of the cost and benefits of constructing a new facility versus renovating the existing facility. First the department should determine the cost of constructing a new high school that is appropriately sized to support the current and projected enrollment over the next 10 years. The cost to operate this “right-sized” high school, including custodians, maintenance, and utilities, should then be determined. The department should also complete a detailed analysis of the educational benefits that will result from operating a high school designed to support exemplary programs and services. This analysis might consider, for example, the impact of improved integration of the career-technical education with the academic program or the benefits associated with designing a school that supports a school-within-a-school model. This assessment should include an analysis of land utilization for the entire Rogers property and a real estate overlay that explores the potential for public-private partnership development.

E – FINANCING ALTERNATIVES

The Newport Public Schools Department Should Consider Public-Private Partnerships As A Means Of Financing Its Long-Term Facilities Plan

Public-private partnerships provide the Newport Public Schools the opportunity to pursue alternative approaches to financing its long-term facilities plan. Such partnerships have the potential to help the school department leverage its building and land assets to improve the quality of educational facilities. In particular, public-private partnerships might be used to generate additional revenue through disposition of buildings and land, through sale or lease of buildings and property, from lease to buy back arrangements, or from increased property tax revenue generated by the lease and sale of school properties to support the operation and improvement of the public schools.

Other cities and school departments have successfully used public-private partnerships to implement their long-term facilities plans. One example of a successful public-private partnership is currently occurring in Manchester, New Hampshire. The City of Manchester issued a request for proposals to plan, finance, design, manage, procure and construct or execute major building improvements to 21 public schools – basically every school in the district. They awarded the contract to Gilbane Building Company, which has assisted Manchester in implementing a ten-year plan in just over a three year period.

The Newport Public Schools would benefit from exploring with Manchester, New Hampshire and Gilbane Building Company their experience with public-private partnerships. Likewise, other alternatives to capital bond financing should be explored.

F– IMPLICATIONS

Implementing These Recommendations Will Both Reduce Costs And Position The Department To Implement A Long Term Facility Plan

Implementing the recommendations presented in this chapter will allow the school department to reduce costs by over \$760,000 for the 2005-2006 school year while improving the quality of educational services offered by the school department. (Please note that these savings do not reflect \$600,000 in potential savings the school committee proposes to achieve by consolidating classrooms and eliminating 10 teaching

positions. If these savings are achieved the net savings associated with implementing these recommendations will be \$160,000).

Recommendation	Position Increase/ (Reduction)	Costs/ (Savings)
Close Underwood School		
Overhead/Operating Costs	(3.5)	(\$244,800)
Direct Service Staff	(14.0)	(\$840,000)
Address maintenance needs in the Cranston-Calvert and Sheffield schools		\$320,000
Total	(17.5)	(\$764,800)

VII – SHARED SERVICES

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of the ways the City of Newport and the Newport Public Schools might collaborate to reduce the costs and/or improve the quality of services that are currently performed by both entities. This analysis is presented in four sections. First, a framework for evaluating shared service opportunities is presented. Next, the framework is used to determine functions and services for which shared services should be pursued. The third discusses the approach that should be taken to implement recommended shared services arrangements and how the shared services arrangements should be managed.⁶⁰ A final section details the implications of implementing the study recommendations.

A – ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

Analysis of the functions and activities for which shared services should be considered should proceed in three steps. First, the extent to which the city and the school department perform similar functions and services must be determined. Next, the potential for shared services arrangements to improve service quality and/or reduce costs must be systematically considered. Finally, the risks associated with entering into a shared services arrangement must be assessed. By weighing the potential benefits against the potential costs and risks the functions and services for which shared service arrangements can be pursued can be identified.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

There are a number of reasons why entering into a shared services arrangement has the potential to be beneficial. These benefits include:

- Taking advantage of economies of scale where capital costs are high
- Taking advantage of economies of scale to spread fixed costs (including management capacity) over a broader base of work
- Making use of available operating capacity that is currently underutilized
- Taking advantage of operating synergies
- Lowering the costs of goods and services by taking advantage of volume purchase discounts
- Reducing overall exposure and liability by pooling risks
- Leveraging expertise across the city and the school system

⁶⁰ Please note that the discussion in this chapter supports the recommendation to have the City of Newport provide financial and purchasing services on behalf of the Newport Public Schools presented in Chapter V. The analysis presented in this chapter, however, does not depend on that discussion. On the contrary, this chapter presents an analysis of the potential benefits of providing services on a shared service basis irrespective of the quality of service currently provided by the school department.

- Reducing the costs of addressing intermittent and seasonal service needs by coordinating service delivery efforts

The extent to which one or more of these potential benefits will result from entering into a shared services arrangement must be systematically considered to determine the potential benefits that may result from entering into a shared services arrangement.

COSTS AND RISKS

The potential benefits of entering into a shared services arrangement must be weighted against the potential costs and risks. These include the following:

- Non-performance risks – risks that the function will not be adequately performed after the shared services arrangement has been entered into
- Loss of control risks – if managers are to be held accountable for the performance of their departments they should directly control the core functions and services that affect department performance; shared services arrangements should generally not be entered into to provide such services
- Administrative costs – the costs associated with managing and administering a shared service arrangement should not exceed its benefits

B – ANALYSIS

This section presents the results of the analysis of the functions and activities for which the City of Newport and the Newport Public Schools should consider shared services arrangements. Consistent with the analytic framework presented in the previous section this analysis is presented in two parts. First, specific functions and services for which shared services should be considered are identified. An analysis of whether shared services arrangements might be beneficial for each of these specific services then follows.

Identification Of Functions And Services For Which Shared Services Should Be Considered

Interviews were conducted with representatives of each city department to identify the extent to which the City and the school department perform similar functions and provide similar services. A list of these functions and services⁶¹, for each city department, is presented in the following table.

⁶¹ The city already provides vehicles and equipment maintenance services for the school department. The functions and activities are excluded from this analysis.

City Department	Function Or Service
Public Works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Refuse collection ■ Snow removal
Parks and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Grounds maintenance
Planning, Zoning, Development and Inspections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accounting ■ Payroll ■ Budget development ■ Budget monitoring ■ Position control ■ Accounts payable ■ Information system support
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recruiting ■ Job description updates ■ Position reclassification and upgrades ■ Workers' compensation management ■ Labor relations ■ Benefits administration ■ Employee evaluations ■ Personnel records
Administrative Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Purchasing ■ Building maintenance ■ Custodial services ■ Capital projects management

Assessing The Potential Benefits Of Shared Services Arrangements

Using the framework developed in the previous section, the potential benefits of entering into a shared services arrangement for each function and service identified as being a shared services candidate were systematically assessed. As the assessment summarized in Exhibit VI-1 indicates, ten functions and services were identified as being shared services candidates based on an evaluation of the potential benefits of entering into a shared services arrangements:

- Refuse collection
- Accounting
- Payroll
- Budget development
- Budget monitoring

- Accounts payable
- Benefits administration
- Purchasing
- Building maintenance
- Custodial services

Assessing The Potential Costs And Risks Of Shared Services Arrangements

With one exception, the potential benefits of entering into shared services arrangements with the city for each of the functions or services identified as being a potential shared service candidate exceed the cost. In one area, however – budget development – the analysis suggests that because the function is so central to the effective functioning of the school department it would not be prudent for the city to provide budget development services for the school department on a shared service basis.

Function Or Service	Non-Performance Risks	Loss Of Control Risks	Administrative Costs	Overall Assessment
Refuse collection	Low – Service is currently performed by outside contractor	Low – Service is not a core service	Low – Service is currently performed by outside contractor	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Accounting	Low – City financial operations are well managed	Low – Service is not a core service	Low – City already provides some financial assistance	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Payroll	Low – City financial operations are well managed	Low – Service is not a core service	Low – City already provides some financial assistance to the school department	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Budget development	Low – City financial operations are well managed	High – Budget development and the allocation of resources is central to effective school department operations	Low – City already provides some financial assistance to the school department	Do Not Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Budget monitoring	Low – City financial operations are well managed	Low – Assuming budget monitoring is accurate and timely	Low – City already provides some financial assistance to the school department	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Accounts payable	Low – City financial operations are well managed	Low – Service is not a core service	Low – City already provides some financial assistance to the school department	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Benefits administration	Low – City financial operations are well managed	Low – Service is not a core service	Low – City already provides some financial assistance to the school department	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement

Function Or Service	Non-Performance Risks	Loss Of Control Risks	Administrative Costs	Overall Assessment
Purchasing	Low – City purchasing operations are well managed	Low – While purchasing is important it is not a core function	Low – School department can use city systems	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Building maintenance	Low – Quality of service currently provided is not high	Low – Service is not a core service	Medium – Level of service expectations must be clearly defined	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement
Custodial Services	Low – Quality of service currently provided is not high	Low – Service is not a core service	Medium – Level of service expectations must be clearly defined	Pursue Shared Service Arrangement

C – IMPLEMENTATION

How shared services arrangements should be implemented will vary somewhat depending on the type of services. This section discusses implementation approaches for refuse collection, financial functions (including benefits administration), purchasing, and property related services and the staffing implications of implementing the recommendations.

Refuse collection. Implementing shared services for refuse collection will be extremely straightforward. Since the city currently contracts for this service, the next time this service is bid school department refuse collection services should be incorporated into the contract. The city should manage this contract on behalf of the school department. Budget transfers should also be established to “reimburse” the city for the school department’s share of the refuse collection contract costs.

Financial functions. The school department should enter into a contract with the City of Newport to provide all financial services with the exception of budget development.⁶² This contract should specify the type of services that will be provided and what budget transfers should be made to “reimburse” the city for providing these services. In addition, discussions with appropriate city and school department labor representatives should be entered into to facilitate the transfer of the school department staff who currently performs financial functions to the city payroll. Although it should not be difficult to facilitate this transfer if an agreement proves difficult to reach the school department should discontinue its positions and the city should create the additional positions needed to assume responsibility for the financial functions that will be transferred to the city.

Entering into the shared service arrangement for financial services will enable the school department to discontinue the business manager position and the one bookkeeper position. These savings, however, will be offset by the need for the city to establish a professional accountant position. This position is needed to help the city finance director oversee her broader responsibilities and to provide management back-up in her absence.

⁶² This recommendation is consistent with the recommendation presented in Chapter V.

Purchasing. The school department should enter into a contract with the City of Newport to provide purchasing support. The contract should specify the type of services that will be provided and what budget transfers should be made to “reimburse” the city for providing these services. These transfers, however, should be modest because the school department should be able to piggy-back its purchasing onto existing city systems. Since the school department will continue to be responsible for developing specifications for the goods and services it purchases, the increase in workload for the city purchasing agent should be modest.

Property services. The school department should enter into a contract with the City of Newport to provide all property management services (including building maintenance and custodial services). In developing this contract it will be extremely important to clearly specify the level of service expected and to determine what resources the city needs to provide that service. Since the school department currently lacks adequate information on the building maintenance needs of its schools an interim contract may need to be entered into – that specifies the resources that will be provided but not the level of service that will be provided – until the city’s work order system can be used to develop more concrete information on building maintenance needs. After the interim contract expires and information on building maintenance needs has been analyzed – the city should systematically evaluate what portion of building maintenance needs should be provided by in-house staff and what types of building maintenance services should be provided by outside contractors. This contract should specify the type of services that will be provided and what budget transfers should be made to “reimburse” the city for providing these services.

As with financial operations, discussions with appropriate city and school department labor representatives should be entered into to facilitate the transfer of the school department staff who currently performs property management functions to the city payroll. Although it should not be difficult to facilitate this transfer if an agreement proves difficult to reach the school department should discontinue its positions and the city should create the additional position needed to assume responsibility for the property management functions that will be transferred to the city.

Implementing this recommendation will allow the school department to discontinue the property services director position.

D – IMPLICATIONS

Selectively Entering Into Shared Services Arrangements With The City Will Improve The Quality Of Selected Support Services And Reduce Costs

The primary reason for the school department to enter into shared services arrangements with the City of Newport is to improve service quality. However, implementing these recommendations will also enable the department to reduce staffing by two positions, which will reduce annual expenditures by \$190,000.

Position	Addition/ (Reduction)	Costs/ (Savings)
Property Services Director	(1)	(\$90,000)
Business Manager	(1)	(\$110,000)
Accountant ⁶³	1	\$70,000
Bookkeeper	(1)	(\$60,000)
TOTAL	(2)	(\$190,000)

⁶³ This position will be assigned to the city finance department.

VIII – EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of a survey that was distributed to all employees in June 2005. The chapter begins by presenting information on the survey process and on the employees who responded to the survey. Survey results are presented in the remainder of the chapter.

A – SURVEY PROCESS

The survey was distributed in two ways. The survey was disseminated by e-mail to department employees with e-mail addresses while hard copies of the survey instrument were distributed to employees without e-mail addresses.⁶⁴ In addition, hard copies of the survey were made available at each school. Employees to whom the survey was disseminated by e-mail completed the survey on-line while employees who received hard copies of the survey returned them to the consultants. 139 employees participated in the survey process (roughly 37.2 percent of all department employees). With this level of response it can be assumed that the survey results generally reflect the opinions of all employees.

B – SURVEY RESPONDENTS

This section presents information on the 139 school department employees who completed the survey. Information on their position, the level of school at which they work (for teachers) and the length of time these employees have worked for the Newport Public Schools is presented.

Position. Somewhat less than two-thirds of the survey responses (64.0 percent) were received from line employees. Instructional paraprofessionals, administrators, and support staff account for 15.8 percent, 7.9 percent and 10.8 percent of the survey respondents respectively.

Position	Percent
Teacher or student services professional	64.0%
Instructional paraprofessional	15.8%
Principal/vice principal/district administrator	7.9%
Support staff	10.8%
Other	1.4%

School level. Half of the teachers responding to the survey teach at the elementary school level. About a third of the teachers (30 percent) are high school teachers and 16 percent are middle school teachers.

⁶⁴ Four different versions of the survey were prepared – one each for administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and support staff – to ensure that employees were not asked to respond to survey items about which it is unlikely they would have an opinion. For example, custodians were not asked to respond to survey items relating to the special education program.

School Level	Percent
Elementary School	50.0%
Middle School	16.0%
High School	30.0%
Other	4.0%

Tenure. Most survey respondents have significant experience working for the school department. More than two-thirds of the survey respondents (66.7 percent) have worked for the department at least four years.

Tenure	Percent
Less than one year	5.8%
One to three years	27.5%
Four to nine years	25.4%
10 years or more	41.3%

C – SURVEY RESULTS

The survey instrument (which is presented in Appendix A) is divided into 26 sections: organizational climate and leadership; internal communications; external communications; community relations; collaboration; staff development; instruction; student evaluation and assessment; special education; services to English language learners; student discipline; student services; instructional technology; athletics; human resources; purchasing, budget; payroll, administrative information systems; building maintenance; custodial services; grounds maintenance; transportation; security; food services; equipment (other than computers); and vehicles.

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND LEADERSHIP

Survey items relating to organizational climate cover a range of issues including: whether employees are proud that they work for the Newport Public Schools, how their work is valued, whether department leaders and the school committee share a common vision and whether department leaders work effectively together.

Pride

Department employees are generally proud that they work for the Newport Public Schools. More than four out of five survey respondents (83.9 percent) agree or strongly agree with the statement, “I am proud to say I work for the Newport Public Schools.” Only about one in twenty (5.1 percent) disagree or strongly disagree.

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2.9%
Disagree	2.2%
Neutral	10.9%
Agree	48.9%
Strongly Agree	35.0%

How Work Is Valued

Department employees generally feel that their work is valued by fellow employees, their immediate supervisors and the school department's leaders, however, many feel their work is not valued by the school committee. More than 70 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that their work is valued by fellow school department employees (83.9 percent), their immediate supervisor (85.9 percent) and by the school department's leadership (71.4 percent). However, fewer than one in five (17.1 percent) agree or strongly agree that their work is valued by the school committee. 42.6 percent of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My work is valued by my fellow school department employees.	2.3%	6.8%	14.4%	47.7%	28.8%
My immediate supervisor values my work.	3.9%	6.3%	3.9%	25.0%	60.9%
My work is valued by the school department's leadership (i.e., principals, directors, the assistant superintendent and the superintendent).	4.7%	8.5%	15.5%	48.1%	23.3%
My work is valued by the school committee.	17.2%	25.4%	39.3%	11.5%	6.6%

Shared Vision

Many department employees do not believe that school department leaders and the school committee share a common vision for the Newport Public Schools. While 29.3 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that "school department leaders (i.e., principals, directors, the assistant superintendent and the superintendent) and the school committee share a common vision for the Newport Public Schools almost half (47.7 percent) disagree or strongly disagree.

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	17.5%
Disagree	30.2%
Neutral	23.0%
Agree	23.0%
Strongly Agree	6.3%

Effective Working Relationships

Perspectives are mixed with regard to whether school department leaders work together effectively. While 44.7 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that school department leaders (i.e., principals, directors, the assistant superintendent and the superintendent) work together effectively, 26.5 percent disagree or strongly disagree.

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	7.6%
Disagree	18.9%
Neutral	28.8%
Agree	37.1%
Strongly Agree	7.6%

The leaders themselves, by contrast, unanimously agree that they work together effectively. More than a quarter (27.3 percent) strongly agree while 72.7 percent agree.

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	0.0%
Disagree	0.0%
Neutral	0.0%
Agree	72.7%
Strongly Agree	27.3%

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Employee perspectives with regard to internal communications are mixed. While almost two out of five survey respondents (39.2 percent) agree or strongly agree that “the school department does an effective job of communicating its objectives and priorities to department staff” a third of the survey respondents (33.3 percent) disagree or strongly disagree. Moreover, while 44.2 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that “the school department does an effective job of communicating information on major new initiatives to department staff” roughly a quarter (25.2 percent) agrees or strongly agrees. With regard to whether employees have a sufficient understanding of the school department’s objectives, priorities, and initiatives to effectively perform their jobs however, more than three-fourths (75.9 percent) agree or strongly agree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school department does an effective job of communicating its objectives and priorities to department staff.	4.4%	28.9%	27.4%	34.8%	4.4%
The school department does an effective job of communicating information on major new initiatives to department staff.	3.1%	22.1%	30.5%	38.9%	5.3%
I have a sufficient understanding of the school department's objectives, priorities, and initiatives to effectively perform my job.	2.2%	8.0%	13.9%	60.6%	15.3%

EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The employee survey results suggest that there are significant opportunities to improve external communications efforts. Almost half of the survey respondents (47.2 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that “the school department does an effective job of communicating its objectives and priorities to external stakeholders.” A similar percentage (46.4 percent) disagrees or strongly disagree that “the school department does an effective job of communicating information on major new initiatives to external stakeholders.” While the percentage of employees disagreeing that “the school department does an effective job of communicating to external stakeholders about positive activities that are taking place in Newport” (33.1 percent) and “the school department does an effective job of managing news about events that have the potential to reflect poorly on the Newport Public Schools” (33.1 percent) is somewhat lower, the fact that roughly a third of the survey respondents disagree with these statements is noteworthy.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school department does an effective job of communicating its objectives and priorities to external stakeholders.	5.7%	41.5%	34.1%	16.3%	2.4%
The school department does an effective job of communicating information on major new initiatives to external stakeholders.	4.0%	42.4%	31.2%	19.2%	3.2%
The school department does an effective job of communicating to external stakeholders about positive activities that are taking place in the Newport Public Schools.	6.9%	28.2%	21.4%	37.4%	6.1%
The school department does an effective job of managing news about events that have the potential to reflect poorly on the Newport Public Schools.	2.4%	30.7%	31.5%	32.3%	3.1%

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

A high percentage of survey respondents agree that local schools do a good job of ensuring parental and community involvement. Almost three-fourths (74.0 percent) agree or strongly agree that “the local school with which I am most familiar does an effective job of ensuring parents are involved in the education of their children” and almost three in five (59.2 percent) agree or strongly agree that “the local school with which I am most familiar does an effective job of ensuring the local community is involved with and supports the school.” However, the percentage of survey respondents who agree or strongly agree that “the school department as a whole does an effective job of ensuring community support” (44.5 percent) is much lower. Two in five survey respondents (40.5 percent) disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The local school with which I am most familiar does an effective job of ensuring parents are involved in the education of their children.	2.1%	16.7%	7.3%	39.6%	34.4%
The local school with which I am most familiar does an effective job of ensuring the local community is involved with and supports the school.	0.0%	27.6%	13.3%	42.9%	16.3%
The school department as a whole does an effective job of ensuring community support	5.1%	35.4%	15.2%	38.4%	6.1%

COLLABORATION

Perceptions with regard to the effectiveness with which various entities collaborate declines as the distance from individual schools increases. More than three-fourths of the survey respondents (75.1 percent) agree or strongly agree that “staff within my school, work location, or work unit work together effectively on issues of common concern.” However only 61.4 percent agree or strongly agree that staff work effectively with staff from other schools, work locations or units and 50.7 percent agree or strongly agree that “central office and school-based staff work together effectively on issues of common concern.” Moreover, only 13.2 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that “the City of Newport and the Newport Public Schools work together effectively on issues of common concern. 68.2 percent disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Staff within my school, work location, or unit work together effectively on issues of common concern.	5.1%	8.8%	10.9%	40.1%	35.0%
Staff within my school, work location, or unit work effectively with staff from other schools, work locations, or units on issues of common concern.	5.3%	15.9%	17.4%	48.5%	12.9%
Central office and school-based staff work together effectively on issues of common concern.	4.5%	21.6%	23.1%	45.5%	5.2%
The City of Newport and the Newport Public Schools work together effectively on issues of common concern	33.3%	34.9%	18.6%	10.1%	3.1%

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Survey respondents are generally quite satisfied with the school department's staff development offerings. More than 60 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that "overall staff development program offerings address my staff development needs" (62.6 percent), "overall staff development program offerings address the needs of my co-workers (71.4 percent), "participation in staff development programs has made me more effective" (63.0 percent) and "what I learn in staff development programs is reinforced by my administrators and supervisors" (61.6 percent).

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall staff development program offerings address my staff development needs.	8.4%	16.0%	13.0%	44.3%	18.3%
Overall staff development program offerings address the needs of my co-workers.	4.7%	10.9%	13.2%	54.3%	17.1%
Participation in staff development programs has made me more effective.	4.7%	16.5%	15.7%	39.4%	23.6%
What I learn in staff development programs is reinforced by my administrators and supervisors.	1.6%	9.6%	27.2%	45.6%	16.0%

INSTRUCTION

Survey respondents are generally confident that effective teaching strategies are employed in the Newport Schools. Close to nine in ten survey respondents (89.7 percent) agree or strongly agree that "overall, effective teaching strategies are employed in the Newport Public Schools." Fewer than one in twenty (4.1 percent) disagree or strongly agree. In addition, roughly two-thirds of the survey respondents (66.3 percent) agree or strongly agree that "instructional support staff is used effectively to enhance student performance."

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Overall, effective teaching strategies are employed in the Newport Public Schools.	1.0%	3.1%	6.2%	50.5%	39.2%
Instructional support staff is used effectively to enhance student performance.	4.2%	9.5%	20.0%	51.6%	14.7%

Perspectives vary, however, with regard to whether instructional support staff receives needed support and guidance on issues related to their subject area (or other area of expertise). A high percentage of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that

English/language arts (80.1 percent), mathematics (73.0 percent) and special education (64.4 percent) staff receives needed support and guidance. However, twenty percent or fewer of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that fine arts (16.7 percent), physical education (20.0 percent) and bilingual education (21.0 percent) staff receive needed support and guidance on issues related to their subject area.

Survey Item	Strongly		Neutral	Agree	Strongly
	Disagree	Disagree			
English/Language Arts	3.8%	11.3%	5.0%	46.3%	33.8%
Fine Arts	3.3%	46.7%	33.3%	16.7%	0.0%
Health	6.6%	37.7%	23.0%	31.1%	1.6%
Physical Education	8.3%	38.3%	33.3%	18.3%	1.7%
Mathematics	0.0%	16.2%	10.8%	47.3%	25.7%
Science	2.9%	25.0%	13.2%	41.2%	17.6%
Social Studies	6.2%	36.9%	15.4%	33.8%	7.7%
Bilingual Education	17.5%	45.6%	15.8%	17.5%	3.5%
Early Childhood Education	6.3%	27.1%	18.8%	27.1%	20.8%
Library/Media	1.6%	34.4%	29.7%	26.6%	7.8%
Technology	1.6%	32.3%	25.8%	29.0%	11.3%
Special Education	4.1%	21.9%	9.6%	45.2%	19.2%

STUDENT EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Survey respondents are, for the most part, satisfied with student evaluation and assessment. More than seven in ten survey respondents agree or strongly agree that they receive needed feedback on the performance of individual students (70.9 percent), receive needed feedback on the performance of groups of students (68.5 percent), and receive needed feedback on school performance (82.8 percent). In addition, high percentages of survey respondents agree that the feedback on student performance they receive is accurate (73.6 percent), timely (58.9 percent), and adequately measure student performance (59.8 percent). Most importantly, 71.4 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the information they receive is useful in diagnosing student needs and 87.0 percent agree or strongly agree that they use assessment results to improve instruction.

Survey Item	Strongly		Neutral	Agree	Strongly
	Disagree	Disagree			
The assessment tools used by the school department adequately measure student performance.	2.4%	23.2%	14.6%	48.8%	11.0%
I receive needed feedback on the performance of individual students.	2.5%	12.7%	13.9%	54.4%	16.5%
I receive needed feedback on the performance of groups of students (e.g., an entire class of students).	0.0%	15.8%	15.8%	55.3%	13.2%
I receive needed feedback on the performance of my school.	1.2%	4.9%	11.1%	59.3%	23.5%

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The feedback I receive on student performance is accurate.	1.4%	6.9%	18.1%	58.3%	15.3%
The feedback I receive on student performance is timely.	4.1%	21.9%	15.1%	43.8%	15.1%
The information I receive is useful in diagnosing student needs.	2.6%	7.8%	18.2%	57.1%	14.3%
I use assessment results to improve instruction.	0.0%	2.6%	10.4%	58.4%	28.6%

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The perspectives of survey respondents with regard to special education services are also quite positive. Two thirds or more of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that they receive needed support in integrating special education students into regular education classrooms (71.6 percent) and receive needed support in ensuring compliance with state and federal special education rules and regulations (72.2 percent). A similar percentage of survey respondents also agree or strongly agree that the Newport Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of special education students (71.5 percent), of developing appropriate individual education plans to address the needs of special education children (79.2 percent) and of providing appropriate instruction and services to special education students (80.3 percent). In addition, more than six in ten survey respondents agree or strongly agree that central office staff is knowledgeable about issues related to special education (67.1 percent) and are responsive to requests for assistance relating to special education (60.6 percent).

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I receive needed support in integrating special education students into regular education classrooms.	5.4%	10.8%	12.2%	47.3%	24.3%
I receive needed support in ensuring compliance with state and federal special education rules and regulations.	5.6%	8.3%	13.9%	50.0%	22.2%
The Newport Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of special education students.	7.8%	9.1%	11.7%	46.8%	24.7%
The Newport Public Schools does an effective job of developing appropriate individual education plans to address the needs of special education students.	5.2%	5.2%	10.4%	50.6%	28.6%

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Newport Public Schools does an effective job of providing appropriate instruction and services to special education students.	4.9%	6.2%	8.6%	55.6%	24.7%
Central office staff is knowledgeable about issues related to special education.	4.3%	7.1%	21.4%	31.4%	35.7%
Central office staff is responsive to requests for assistance relating to special education.	4.2%	12.7%	22.5%	31.0%	29.6%

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

In contrast with special education, survey respondents indicate significant concerns about services to English language learners. For example, more than half (57.9 percent) of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that they receive needed support in integrating language minority students into the education classroom (24.5 percent agree or strongly agree). Moreover, fewer than half (46.0 percent) agree or strongly agree that the district complies with state and federal mandates relating to language minority students. In addition, almost half the survey respondents (49.1 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that students who are not proficient in English are appropriately served, 40.7 percent disagree or strongly disagree that the Newport Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of these students and more than half (54.2 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the Newport Public Schools does an effective job of providing appropriate instruction for students who are not proficient in English. Furthermore, close to half the survey respondents do not hold central office staff in high regard in terms of service to language minority students. 47.1 percent of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that central office staff is knowledgeable about issues related to minority students and a roughly equal percentage (48.0 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that central office staff is responsive to requests for assistance relating to minority students.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I receive needed support in integrating language minority students into regular education classrooms.	24.6%	33.3%	17.5%	17.5%	7.0%
The district complies with state and federal mandates relating to language minority students.	16.0%	20.0%	18.0%	38.0%	8.0%
Students who are not proficient in English are appropriately served.	18.6%	30.5%	20.3%	28.8%	1.7%
The Newport Public Schools does an effective job of evaluating the needs of students who are not proficient in English.	14.8%	25.9%	24.1%	29.6%	5.6%

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Newport Public Schools does an effective job of providing appropriate instruction for students who are not proficient in English.	18.6%	35.6%	16.9%	25.4%	3.4%
Central office staff is knowledgeable about issues related to language minority students.	21.6%	25.5%	31.4%	19.6%	2.0%
Central office staff is responsive to requests for assistance relating to language minority students.	18.0%	30.0%	34.0%	16.0%	2.0%

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

Almost all survey respondents (98.9 percent) indicate that they are familiar with the student code of conduct. There are, however, divergent opinions with regard to whether the code of conduct is consistently implemented – 45.7 percent agree or strongly agree that implementation is consistent while a slightly higher percentage 47.8 percent disagree or strongly disagree. Similarly, while 57.7 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that provisions of the student code of conduct are clearly articulated, 29.3 percent disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am familiar with the student code of conduct.	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	57.0%	41.9%
The student code of conduct is consistently implemented.	14.1%	33.7%	6.5%	37.0%	8.7%
Provisions of the student code of conduct are clearly articulated.	4.3%	25.0%	13.0%	37.0%	20.7%

STUDENT SERVICES

Survey respondent perspective with regard to whether specialist staff provides needed assistance in addressing the needs of students are mixed. More than six in ten survey respondents (61.9 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that counselors provide effective services while more than four in ten (41.5 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that psychologists provide effective services. On the other hand, services provided by other specialist staff are much more highly regarded. Survey respondents agree or strongly agree that social workers (58.3 percent), nurses (75.8 percent), speech therapists (87.5 percent), occupational therapists (86.3 percent) and physical therapists (82.5 percent) provide effective services.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Counselors	16.7%	45.2%	14.3%	14.3%	9.5%
Psychologists	15.9%	25.6%	8.5%	26.8%	23.2%
Social Workers	9.5%	22.6%	9.5%	32.1%	26.2%
Nurses	2.3%	9.2%	12.6%	51.7%	24.1%
Speech Therapists	1.3%	2.5%	8.8%	60.0%	27.5%
Occupational Therapists	3.0%	1.5%	9.1%	51.5%	34.8%
Physical Therapists	1.6%	4.8%	11.1%	47.6%	34.9%

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Survey items pertaining to instructional technology relate to whether sufficient hardware and software are currently available, whether effective use is made of this technology and whether staff support is adequate.

Availability Of Hardware And Software

Perspectives are mixed with regard to whether instructional hardware, software and other technology are available. While 40 percent or more of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that sufficient computer hardware (50.5 percent), software (39.6 percent) and other technology (50.0 percent) is available to address the educational needs of Newport students roughly forty percent also disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sufficient computer hardware is currently available in the Newport Public Schools to address the educational needs of students.	5.4%	33.3%	10.8%	38.7%	11.8%
Sufficient computer software is currently available in the Newport Public Schools to address the educational needs of students.	3.3%	39.6%	17.6%	29.7%	9.9%
Other technology (excluding computer hardware and software) is currently available in the Newport Public Schools to address the educational needs of students.	1.1%	40.0%	8.9%	40.0%	10.0%

Use Of Technology

Survey responses are somewhat mixed with regard to whether teachers and administrators make effective use of the instructional technology that is currently available. More than half (54.0 percent) agree or strongly agree that “most teachers and administrators make effective use of the instructional technology currently available” while more than a quarter (26.9 percent) disagree or strongly disagree. With regard to their own use of instructional technology, however, 74.2 percent agree or strongly agree that they make effective use of available instructional technology.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Most teachers and administrators make effective use of the instructional technology currently available.	1.1%	25.8%	19.1%	46.1%	7.9%
I make effective use of the instructional technology currently available.	0.0%	13.5%	12.4%	50.6%	23.6%

Staff Support

Perspectives relating to instructional support services vary considerably. For example, survey respondents agree or strongly agree that both the staff who provide assistance in using technology as an instructional tool (77.6 percent) and the staff who maintain and support instructional technology (89.6 percent) are knowledgeable. On the other hand, perspectives relating to the timeliness of service vary depending on the type of service being provided. Slightly fewer than half the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that “needed assistance in using technology as an instructional tool is provided in a timely manner” (49.4 percent) while 54.5 percent agree or strongly agree that technology maintenance and support services are provided in a timely manner. No consensus exists with regard to whether adequate resources are allocated to instructional technology. More than 40 percent (41.5 percent) of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that “adequate resources are currently available to provide needed assistance in using technology as an instructional tool” while 34.8 percent of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree. Likewise, 33.3 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that adequate resources are available to maintain and support the instructional technology currently available while 47.8 percent of survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Adequate resources are currently available to provide needed assistance in using technology as an instructional tool.	5.6%	29.2%	23.6%	34.8%	6.7%
Needed assistance in using technology as an instructional tool is provided in a timely manner.	4.6%	44.8%	16.1%	31.0%	3.4%
The staff who provide assistance in using technology as an instructional tool are knowledgeable.	0.0%	7.1%	15.3%	57.6%	20.0%
Adequate resources are available to maintain and support the instructional technology currently available.	10.0%	37.8%	18.9%	28.9%	4.4%

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The staff who maintain and support the instructional technology currently available provide assistance in a timely manner.	1.1%	21.1%	23.3%	45.6%	8.9%
The staff who maintain and support the instructional technology currently available are knowledgeable.	1.1%	6.5%	12.9%	66.7%	12.9%

ATHLETICS

The perspectives of survey respondents relating to athletic programs are quite positive. 61.0 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that athletic programs are effectively coordinated. An even higher percentage (64.7 percent) agree or strongly agree that athletic activities are scheduled and coordinated to minimize disruption to student learning.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Athletic programs are effectively coordinated.	4.7%	6.3%	28.1%	39.1%	21.9%
Athletic activities are scheduled and coordinated to minimize disruption to student learning.	5.9%	2.9%	26.5%	35.3%	29.4%

HUMAN RESOURCES

Survey items relating to human resources cover a range of issues including employee evaluation, recruiting, retention, classification, staff assignments, enforcement of personnel rules, personnel records, benefits, and labor relations.

Employee Evaluations

Overall, survey respondents are positive about the employee evaluation process. 61.7 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree the process is fair and 66.6 percent agree or strongly agree the process is timely. A somewhat smaller percentage (50.4 percent) agree or strongly agree that employee evaluations provide beneficial feedback aimed at improving performance while more than a third of respondents (35.2 percent) disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The employee evaluation process is fair.	11.7%	11.7%	14.8%	53.9%	7.8%
Employee evaluations are completed in a timely manner.	6.5%	9.8%	17.1%	59.3%	7.3%
Employee evaluations provide beneficial feedback aimed at improving performance.	10.4%	24.8%	14.4%	43.2%	7.2%

It should be noted, however, that support staff is much less satisfied with the evaluation process than other employees. Only slightly more than a third of the support staff responding to the survey agree or strongly agree that the process is fair (as compared to 71.1 percent and 64.0 percent for teachers and paraprofessionals). Likewise, fewer than half of the support staff responding to the survey agree or strongly agree that employee evaluations are completed in a timely manner (as compared to 71.6 percent and 62.5 percent for teachers and paraprofessionals.)

Survey Items	Teachers		Paraprofessionals		Support Staff	
	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree
The employee evaluation process is fair.	13.3%	71.1%	20.0%	65.0%	50.0%	35.7%
Employee evaluations are completed in a timely manner.	16.0%	71.6%	18.8%	62.5%	20.0%	46.7%
Employee evaluations provide beneficial feedback aimed at improving performance.	30.0%	51.3%	26.3%	63.2%	46.7%	46.7%

Recruiting

Most survey respondents agree that the school department does an effective job of recruiting highly competent teaching staff. Almost two thirds (65.3 percent) agree or strongly agree and only 12.9 percent disagree or strongly disagree. With regard to recruiting of competent administrative staff and non-instructional staff perspectives are much more mixed. While about half of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the department does an effective job of recruiting highly competent administrative staff (50.4 percent) more than a quarter 27.3 percent disagree or strongly agree. Likewise, while 62.2 percent agree or strongly agree that the school department does an effective job of recruiting highly competent non-instructional staff more than a third (33.6 percent) disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school department does an effective job of recruiting highly competent administrative staff.	9.9%	17.4%	22.3%	43.8%	6.6%
The school department does an effective job of recruiting highly competent teaching staff.	4.0%	8.9%	21.8%	53.2%	12.1%
The school department does an effective job of recruiting highly competent non-instructional staff.	8.4%	25.2%	4.2%	1.9%	60.3%

Retention

Survey findings strongly suggest that the school department does not do an effective job of retaining its most skilled staff. Indeed, more than half of the survey respondents (53.9 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the school department does an effective job of retaining its most skilled administrators. While concerns about the retention of teachers and non-instructional staff are not as pronounced levels of disagreement are nonetheless high. 35.9 percent of the survey respondents disagree that the school department does an effective job of retaining its most skilled teaching staff and 37.4 percent disagree that the school department does an effective job of retaining its most skilled non-instructional staff.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school department does an effective job of retaining its most skilled administrative staff.	21.4%	32.5%	23.9%	21.4%	0.9%
The school department does an effective job of retaining its most skilled teaching staff.	6.7%	29.2%	27.5%	30.0%	6.7%
The school department does an effective job of retaining its most skilled non-instructional staff.	6.1%	31.3%	29.6%	29.6%	3.5%

Classification

Employee perspectives are divided with regard to whether the process for changing the classification and compensation of selected positions to reflect changes in work responsibilities is equitable. 42.1 percent of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree while 32.6 percent agree or strongly agree.

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	13.7%
Disagree	28.4%
Neutral	25.3%
Agree	30.5%
Strongly Agree	2.1%

Assignments

Employee perspectives with regard to the process for assigning staff to schools are also mixed. For example, while 43.8 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the process for assigning staff to schools (or other locations) is fair more than a third (33.4 percent) disagree or strongly disagree. Likewise, while roughly a third of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree the assigning process is timely (33.6 percent) more than four in ten survey respondents (40.7 percent) disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The process for assigning staff to schools (or other locations) is fair.	12.3%	21.1%	22.8%	34.2%	9.6%
The process for assigning staff to schools (or other locations) is timely.	12.4%	28.3%	25.7%	30.1%	3.5%

Enforcement Of Personnel Rules

Perspectives relating to whether personnel rules are consistently enforced are also divided. More than a third of the survey respondents (36.8 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the enforcement of personnel rules and regulations is consistent. However, 41.9 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree.

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	12.0%
Disagree	24.8%
Neutral	21.4%
Agree	38.5%
Strongly Agree	3.4%

Personnel Records

There is little consensus among employees with regard to whether personnel records are updated in a timely manner. 44.7 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree, 17.6 percent disagree or strongly disagree and 37.6 percent are neutral.

	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3.5%
Disagree	14.1%
Neutral	37.6%
Agree	41.2%
Strongly Agree	3.5%

Benefits

Employees are quite positive about the benefits administration services they receive. 84.0 percent agree or strongly agree that the information they receive regarding benefits is accurate and 82.2 percent agree or strongly agree that this information is timely.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I receive accurate information regarding my benefits.	1.6%	6.4%	8.0%	68.0%	16.0%
I receive timely information regarding my benefits.	1.6%	7.3%	8.9%	68.5%	13.7%

Labor Relations

While most employees are satisfied with the process for handling grievances and other contract related matters a not insignificant percentage are dissatisfied. Well over half the respondents to the employee survey agree or strongly agree that the process for handling grievance and other labor contract related issues is fair (57.4 percent) and timely (54.6 percent). However, more than one in five survey respondents strongly disagree or disagree that the process is fair (25.8 percent) and timely (21.6 percent).

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The process for handing grievances and other labor contract related issues is fair.	10.9%	14.9%	16.8%	47.5%	9.9%
The process for handling grievances and other labor contract related issues is timely.	10.3%	11.3%	23.7%	44.3%	10.3%

PURCHASING

Survey respondents are generally but not overwhelmingly satisfied with purchasing services. More than half of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the quality of goods (53.8 percent) and services (54.5 percent) purchased by the school department is satisfactory. Roughly the same percentage agrees that the costs of goods (56.5 percent) and services (56.7 percent) are reasonable relative to their value. On the other hand, there is significant dissatisfaction with the purchasing process itself. Slightly less than a third of the survey respondents (31.4 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the purchasing process is not unduly time consuming (36.3 percent agree or

strongly agree). Respondents are, however, generally more positive about the timeliness of assistance provided by purchasing staff. More than half (52.5 percent) of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that purchasing staff provide timely assistance with only 12.6 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The quality of goods purchased by the school department is satisfactory	2.5%	24.8%	19.0%	48.8%	5.0%
The quality of services purchased by the school department is satisfactory	1.8%	16.1%	27.7%	50.9%	3.6%
The cost of goods purchased is reasonable relative to their value	2.2%	14.1%	27.2%	51.1%	5.4%
The cost of services purchased is reasonable relative to their value	3.3%	12.2%	27.8%	51.1%	5.6%
The purchasing process is not unduly time consuming	3.9%	27.5%	32.4%	32.4%	3.9%
Purchasing staff provide timely assistance	1.1%	11.5%	34.5%	42.5%	10.3%

BUDGET

Survey items relating to the department’s budget may be divided into items that relate to the budget process itself and items that address how information on expenditures is provided.

Budget Process

While the perspectives of survey respondents are mixed as they relate to the department’s budget for no survey items are levels of dissatisfaction low. Half the survey respondents (50.0 percent) agree or strongly agree the budget process is helpful in determining how department resources should be allocated but 30.0 percent disagree or strongly disagree. These percentages are reversed with regard to whether personnel resources are appropriately allocated among schools – 50.0 percent of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree while 30.0 percent disagree. (Survey respondents are, for the most part neutral with regard to whether non-personnel resources are appropriately allocated among schools.) With regard to the budget process itself, more than half of the survey respondents (55.5 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that the process is not unduly time-consuming while a third (33.3 percent) do not find it unnecessarily time consuming.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The budget process is helpful in determining how district resources should be allocated.	0.0%	30.0%	20.0%	40.0%	10.0%
Personnel resources are appropriately allocated among schools.	0.0%	50.0%	20.0%	30.0%	0.0%
Non-personnel resources are appropriately allocated among schools.	0.0%	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%	0.0%
The budget process is not unduly time-consuming.	44.4%	11.1%	11.1%	33.3%	0.0%

Budget Information

Perspectives are also mixed on whether timely and accurate information is provided on expenditures. Fifty percent of the survey respondents agree that information on expenditures against budget (and other relevant financial information) is provided in a timely manner while 40.0 percent disagree. Moreover, 60.0 percent agree that this information is accurate while 30.0 percent disagree. There is, however, a strong consensus with regard to whether financial reports are easy to read and understand. 70.0 percent of the survey respondents agree financial reports are easy to read and understand.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Information on expenditures against budget (and other relevant financial information) is provided in a timely manner.	0.0%	40.0%	10.0%	40.0%	10.0%
Information on expenditures against budget (and other relevant financial information) is accurate.	0.0%	30.0%	10.0%	60.0%	0.0%
Financial reports are easy to read and understand.	10.0%	20.0%	0.0%	70.0%	0.0%

PAYROLL

Survey respondents are quite satisfied with the payroll services they receive. 97.4 percent agree or strongly agree that their payroll checks are accurate and an even higher percentage (98.4 percent) agree or strongly agree that payroll checks are received on time.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Payroll checks are accurate.	0.0%	0.8%	1.7%	57.1%	40.3%
Payroll checks are received on time.	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	45.9%	52.5%

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Although perspectives are mixed with regard to the department 's administrative information systems survey respondents are generally quite positive about the staff who support these systems. With regard to whether existing information systems facilitate effective management of the school department perspectives are evenly divided – 44.4 percent of the survey respondents agree these systems facilitate effective management and an identical percentage disagree. Perspectives with regard to whether existing systems are easy to use are more negative, however. More than half (55.5 percent) of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that existing information systems are easy to use and a third (33.3 percent) agree. On the other hand, a high percentage of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the staff who maintain and support information systems provide assistance in a timely manner (88.9 percent) and are knowledgeable (77.8 percent).

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Existing information systems facilitate effective management of the school department.	0.0%	44.4%	11.1%	44.4%	0.0%
Existing information systems are easy to use.	11.1%	44.4%	11.1%	33.3%	0.0%
The staff who maintain and support information systems provide assistance in a timely manner.	0.0%	11.1%	0.0%	66.7%	22.2%
The staff who maintain and support information systems are knowledgeable.	11.1%	0.0%	11.1%	55.6%	22.2%

BUILDING MAINTENANCE

Survey respondents indicate significant dissatisfaction with building maintenance services. Roughly half of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that school department facilities are adequately maintained (53.9 percent) and that non-emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner (49.1 percent). Perspectives are somewhat more positive with regard to response to emergency maintenance requests. While more than a third of the survey respondents (34.2 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner more than half (51.0 percent) agree or strongly agree. On a positive note maintenance staff is generally considered knowledgeable (57.6 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree) and helpful and cordial (60.9 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree).

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
School department facilities are adequately maintained.	21.4%	32.5%	15.4%	20.5%	10.3%
Emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner.	8.3%	25.9%	14.8%	38.0%	13.0%
Non-emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner.	21.9%	27.2%	16.7%	26.3%	7.9%
Maintenance staff is knowledgeable.	2.7%	12.6%	27.0%	47.7%	9.9%
Maintenance staff is helpful and cordial.	6.4%	9.1%	23.6%	42.7%	18.2%

It should be noted that administrators and teachers are much more dissatisfied with the quality of building maintenance than the average survey respondent.

Survey Items	Administrators		Teachers		Average	
	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree
School department facilities are adequately maintained.	77.8%	0.0%	60.8%	31.1%	53.9%	30.8%
Emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner.	37.5%	50.0%	37.9%	48.5%	34.2%	51.0%
Non-emergency maintenance requests are addressed in a timely manner.	55.6%	33.3%	54.9%	29.6%	49.1%	34.2%

CUSTODIAL SERVICES

The perspectives of survey respondents are mixed with regard to whether school department facilities are clean and cleaning needs are promptly addressed. While 44.0 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that school department facilities are clean 37.9 percent disagree or strongly disagree. Similarly, while 45.3 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that cleaning needs are promptly addressed 37.6 percent disagree or strongly disagree. There is, however, much more consensus about the custodial staff. More than two-thirds of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that custodial staff is knowledgeable (68.7 percent) and helpful and cordial (70.1 percent).

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
School department facilities are clean.	13.8%	24.1%	18.1%	31.9%	12.1%
Cleaning needs are promptly addressed.	13.7%	23.9%	17.1%	31.6%	13.7%
Custodial staff is knowledgeable.	2.6%	9.6%	19.1%	53.9%	14.8%
Custodial staff is helpful and cordial.	5.1%	7.7%	17.1%	47.9%	22.2%

As with building maintenance services administrators and teachers are much more dissatisfied with the quality of building maintenance than the average survey respondent.

Survey Items	Administrators		Teachers		Average	
	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree	Disagree Or Strongly Disagree	Agree Or Strongly Agree
School department facilities are clean.	55.6%	11.1%	40.0%	44.0%	37.9%	44.0%
Cleaning needs are promptly addressed.	55.6%	33.3%	38.7%	42.7%	37.6%	45.3%

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Survey respondents are generally satisfied with the quality of grounds maintenance services. Roughly 60 percent or more of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that grounds are adequately maintained (64.1 percent), snow is removed promptly (68.9 percent) and emergency requests for assistance relating to grounds maintenance are addressed in a timely manner (58.8 percent). A smaller percentage of survey respondents (47.4 percent), however, agree or strongly agree that non-emergency requests for assistance relating to grounds maintenance are addressed in a timely manner.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Grounds are adequately maintained.	4.3%	10.3%	21.4%	51.3%	12.8%
Snow is removed promptly.	5.9%	13.4%	11.8%	52.1%	16.8%
Emergency requests for assistance relating to grounds maintenance are addressed in a timely manner.	6.3%	8.8%	26.3%	46.3%	12.5%
Non-emergency requests for assistance relating to grounds maintenance are addressed in a timely manner.	7.9%	9.2%	35.5%	34.2%	13.2%

TRANSPORTATION

With one exception, survey respondents are quite positive about department transportation services. High percentages of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that buses arrive on time (57.2 percent), students who travel on buses are safe and secure (71.4 percent), the transportation needs of special education students are met (100.0 percent), transportation for extracurricular activities is timely (100.0 percent), arranging transportation for extracurricular activities is not unduly cumbersome (100 percent), that transportation staff address requests for assistance and/or concerns in a timely manner (100.0 percent) and that transportation staff is helpful and cordial (66.7 percent). The one area of concern suggested by the survey responses relates to whether transportation schedules have been set to reflect educational needs. More than six in ten survey respondents (62.5 percent) disagree or strongly disagree that transportation schedules have been set to reflect educational needs while only a quarter (25.0 percent) agree or strongly agree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Transportation schedules have been set to reflect educational needs.	25.0%	37.5%	12.5%	12.5%	12.5%
Buses arrive on time.	0.0%	0.0%	42.9%	42.9%	14.3%
Students who travel on buses are safe and secure.	0.0%	14.3%	14.3%	57.1%	14.3%
The transportation needs of special education students are met.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	85.7%	14.3%
Transportation for extracurricular activities is timely.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	57.1%	42.9%
Arranging transportation for extracurricular activities is not unduly cumbersome.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	80.0%	20.0%
Transportation staff addresses requests for assistance and/or concerns in a timely manner.	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	85.7%	14.3%
Transportation staff is helpful and cordial.	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	50.0%	16.7%

SECURITY

The perspective of survey respondents with regard to whether buildings are safe and secure are somewhat mixed. While more than half of the survey respondents (52.4 percent) agree or strongly agree that buildings are secure during the day roughly a third (32.9 percent disagree or strongly disagree). Similarly, 55.7 percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree that buildings are secure during after school programs while 36.8 percent disagree or strongly disagree. There is somewhat more consensus about whether building security is adequate when schools are closed (71.7

percent of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree) and whether security concerns are addressed in a timely manner (62.6 percent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree).

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Buildings are secure during the school day.	13.4%	19.5%	14.6%	43.9%	8.5%
Buildings are secure during after-school programs.	12.7%	24.1%	7.6%	49.4%	6.3%
Building security is adequate when schools are closed.	2.7%	9.5%	16.2%	59.5%	12.2%
Security concerns are addressed in a timely manner.	11.9%	10.4%	14.9%	50.7%	11.9%

FOOD SERVICES

The perspectives of survey respondents relating to the quality of food services varies considerably by survey item. For example, a high percentage of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that meals are fairly priced (71.0 percent), that meals are served on time (84.6 percent) and that food services staff is helpful and cordial (72.9 percent). On the other hand, roughly four in ten survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that the food served is generally tasty (42.6 percent) and that sufficient menu choices are offered (41.3 percent). Moreover, 57.6 percent of the survey respondents disagree or strongly disagree that meals are healthful.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The food served is generally tasty.	13.0%	29.6%	20.4%	31.5%	5.6%
Meals are fairly priced.	3.2%	8.1%	17.7%	62.9%	8.1%
Menus provide sufficient choices.	14.3%	27.0%	14.3%	39.7%	4.8%
Meals are healthful.	27.3%	30.3%	16.7%	22.7%	3.0%
Meals are served on time.	1.5%	4.6%	9.2%	72.3%	12.3%
Food services staff is helpful and cordial.	5.7%	2.9%	18.6%	48.6%	24.3%

EQUIPMENT (OTHER THAN COMPUTERS)

Survey respondents are generally satisfied with their equipment. Close to three-fourths of the survey respondents (73.3 percent) agree or strongly agree that they have access to the equipment they need to safely and effectively perform their jobs and that that equipment is well maintained.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have access to the equipment I need to effectively perform my job responsibilities.	0.0%	13.3%	13.3%	53.3%	20.0%
I have access to the equipment I need to safely perform my job responsibilities.	0.0%	0.0%	26.7%	53.3%	20.0%
The equipment I use is well maintained.	0.0%	0.0%	26.7%	53.3%	20.0%

VEHICLES

For the most part employees are neutral about the quality of their vehicles. 83.3 percent of the survey respondents are neutral about whether they have access to the vehicles they need to effectively perform their jobs and more than two-thirds (66.7 percent) are neutral about whether they have access to the vehicles they need to safely perform their jobs. Moreover, the same percentage of employees (40.0 percent) agree or strongly agree that the vehicles they use are well maintained as disagree or strongly disagree.

Survey Item	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have access to the vehicles I need to effectively perform my job responsibilities.	0.0%	0.0%	83.3%	16.7%	0.0%
I have access to the vehicles I need to safely perform my job responsibilities.	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
The vehicles I use are well maintained.	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%

IX – IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents a framework for change that should guide the school department's overall implementation efforts. The second section highlights the key features of the recommended implementation plan. The third section presents the results of an analysis that provides a framework for setting implementation priorities. The final section presents the recommended implementation plan.

FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

In addition to recommendations to streamline and improve the efficiency of the Newport Public Schools, the study report includes recommendations that have the potential to change the way the school department manages itself. Implementing change is difficult for any organization. Change efforts that have been successful typically include the following seven components:

- Achieving an appropriate balance between the need for urgency and the need for quality and focus
- Forming a powerful guiding coalition
- Creating a vision
- Communicating the vision
- Removing obstacles to change
- Planning for and creating short-term wins
- Consolidating improvement and institutionalizing new approaches.

Each of these components is briefly described in the following paragraphs.

Achieving an appropriate balance between the need for urgency and the need for quality and focus. Needed change will not take place in an organization unless staff at all levels recognizes that change is needed. At the same time, however, the sense of urgency needed to bring about change cannot be allowed to get in the way of providing quality services that are focused on achieving the school department's overall objectives. An appropriate balance, therefore, must be struck between the need to maintain a sense of urgency – without which the *status quo* will likely prevail – and the need to maintain a focus on the department's overall objectives.

Forming a powerful guiding coalition. Opposition to change in any organization can be considerable. The leadership team that guides the change effort, therefore, must be powerful and influential enough to withstand the forces supporting the *status quo*.

Creating a vision. One of the leadership team’s first tasks should be to develop a picture of the future that is easy to understand and that communicates how performance will be enhanced if the vision is realized. Without a sensible vision, an improvement effort can easily dissolve into a list of confusing and incompatible programs, plans, and directives that can take the organization in the wrong direction or nowhere at all.

Communicating the vision. To make an organization’s vision a reality, managers and employees from throughout the organization must understand the vision and believe that things will work better once the vision has been implemented. Without credible communications, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of “the troops” will never be captured.

Removing obstacles to change. A variety of obstacles can stand in the way of change. The school department’s leadership must anticipate these obstacles and develop strategies to overcome them.

Planning for and creating short-term wins. Success breeds success. By creating opportunities for success, and effectively communicating those success stories throughout the organization, momentum for the improvement effort will begin to “snowball.”

Consolidating improvement and institutionalizing new approaches. In addition to removing institutional obstacles to change, institutional incentives that reinforce the change effort must be established. What the leaders of the Newport Public Schools “say” is important must be consistent with how employees are held accountable for performance. In addition, management systems must provide managers with the tools they need to bring about needed change.

KEY IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

This section discusses the key steps the school department should take to implement the study recommendations.

Adopt The Study Recommendations

Both the city council and the school committee must be committed to implementing the study recommendations if implementation is to be successful. Initially, the city council should review the report and adopt its recommendations in principle.⁶⁵ The report should then be referred to the school committee for its review and consideration. The school committee should then assign the report to the school department for implementation.

⁶⁵ Please note that adopting recommendations “in principle” does not mean the city council and school committee commit to implementing each and every recommendation in detail. Instead, this means that the city council and school committee generally agree with the recommendations in the report and will make a good faith effort to evaluate and implement the study recommendations.

Establish Implementation Task Forces

The superintendent (working in collaboration with the city manager on shared services issues) should establish a task force to guide the implementation of study recommendations. This task force should be charged by the superintendent with driving the implementation process. It should develop an overall implementation plan (which should be submitted to the school committee for approval) and should be held accountable by the superintendent for ensuring that plan timelines are met. The task force should meet approximately every two weeks during the implementation process.

In addition to guiding the implementation of the study recommendations, the task force should be specifically charged with identifying obstacles to change and creating strategies for overcoming them. Overcoming obstacles to change will be critical to the success of the implementation effort and therefore task force members should view one of their primary functions as identifying and eliminating these obstacles. The personal power, influence, and relationships of individual task force members should, as appropriate, be brought to bear on eliminating these obstacles.

Clarify The Personnel And Labor Implications Of The Study Recommendations

Uncertainty is associated with any change of the magnitude outlined in this report. Of primary concern to many employees will be how the change will affect them directly. Clarifying the status of employees that will be affected by the recommendations will remove much of the uncertainty associated with recommended organizational changes and will allow the school department to move forward with the implementation process. If employees are waiting for the “other shoe to drop” they will not be able to focus on supporting the recommended program for change.

The recommended assistant to the superintendent should work with the implementation task force to develop a list of all positions that may be affected by the study recommendations. The impact the study recommendations will have on these employees – and the time frame in which expected change would be implemented – should be articulated and shared with these employees.

Establish An Internal And External Communications Strategy

The success or failure of the implementation effort will depend in large part on the quality of internal and external communications. To successfully implement the improvement recommendations, managers and employees from throughout the school department must believe that things will work better once the improvement recommendations have been implemented. As noted, establishing a sense of urgency, creating a vision for change, and communicating that vision are key components to the success of organizational improvement efforts. Likewise, the importance of communicating short-term successes is critical for building the momentum for change.

From an internal perspective, therefore, effective communication is needed to:

- Ensure understanding of the study recommendations and their implications
- Set reasonable expectations that can be achieved

- Build understanding of the overall improvement process
- Publicize successes
- Build employee commitment to change.

From an external perspective, effective communication is needed to create community support for the improvement initiatives.

It should be stressed that responsibility for communications relating to the proposed management framework should not be the sole purview of the superintendent. On the contrary, this responsibility should be shared by all school department leaders. Each member of the implementation task force should also be charged with helping to support the communications efforts.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Success in implementing the recommendations presented in this report will depend in large part on the ability of the superintendent (and the implementation task force) to establish implementation priorities and to focus attention initially on the study recommendations that will have the greatest impact on the school department's overall performance. To support this effort an assessment of implementation priorities was performed. To identify priorities the consultants used the list of functions and activities performed by the school department and rated each function and activity on two dimensions: the criticality of the function or activity to the school department's ability to achieve its objectives and the school department's performance with regard to the capability. A five-point scale was used to rate each organization capability on each dimension. For criticality a rating of "1" indicates that the organization capability is "not critical" while a rating of "5" indicates the organizational capability is "extremely critical."⁶⁶ Likewise, with regard to the department's performance *vis a vis* each organization capability, a rating of "1" indicates that, in the consultant's view, the department's performance is "deficient" while a rating of "5" indicates the department's performance is outstanding. The results of this analysis are presented in Exhibit IX-1.

This analysis was then used to set priorities for implementing the recommendations presented in this report. Each study recommendation was related to a specific function or activity and a suggested implementation priority was established based on the "gap" identified through the performance/criticality analysis. The results of this analysis, and the implementation priority for each study recommendation, are presented in Exhibit IX-2.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

An implementation plan to guide the school department in implementing the improvements recommended in this report is presented in Exhibit IX-3. This plan proposes priorities for implementation, suggests who should assume responsibility for

⁶⁶ It should be noted that rating an organizational capability as not being "critical" does not mean that it is unimportant. Presumably, all functions performed by the department are "important" or they would not be performed. Rather, a rating of "not critical" merely means that success in performing this function is not critical to the department's overall success.

each implementation activity, and offers a timetable for executing the plan. In addition to serving as a guide, the implementation plan can be used as a “score card” for measuring implementation progress at periodic city council reviews. Once the implementation task force has been assembled, one of its first tasks should be to develop action plans – in coordination with the managers of the affected units – to flesh out implementation details.