



# Efficiency Study: Teaching and Learning Division

## Moss Adams Final Report

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The objective of this study is to determine opportunities for improvement in management, organization, and operations of the Seattle Public Schools (the District) Teaching & Learning Division (T&L). The organizational structure and management of T&L functions were assessed for effectiveness and alignment with best practices. This study was conducted between December 2017 and August 2018. The project consisted of six major phases: 1) Project Initiation and Ongoing Management, 2) Fact Finding, 3) Benchmarking, 4) Evaluation of Organization Structure, 5) Analysis, and 6) Reporting.



MOSSADAMS

FINAL REPORT

FOR

# SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Efficiency Study: Teaching & Learning Division

**August 31, 2018**

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# I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to determine opportunities for improvement in management, organization, and operations of the Seattle Public Schools (the District) Teaching & Learning Division (T&L). The organizational structure and management of T&L functions were assessed for effectiveness and alignment with best practices.

This study was conducted between December 2017 and August 2018. The project consisted of six major phases: 1) Project Initiation and Ongoing Management, 2) Fact Finding, 3) Benchmarking, 4) Evaluation of Organization Structure, 5) Analysis, and 6) Reporting.

## B. THEMES

This study was sponsored by the School Board, with an interest in assessing the efficiency of the wide variety of work performed within T&L. T&L is large, with 121 staff and more than 60 programs and services delivered to students, teachers, and principals. The work of T&L requires engagement of multiple, diverse stakeholders, including community organizations, institutional funders, state and federal agencies, families, teachers, principals, and other District functions.

Efficiency studies are typically structured around three themes, and assess efficiency and effectiveness through the following questions:

1. **Organization:** What are workloads and related staff capacity? Are we organized in the right way? Do we have the right skills, knowledge, and abilities in the organization?
2. **Processes:** What could we do more efficiently and effectively, and why? Are any processes manual or paper-based?
3. **Systems:** How effective are the systems that support our work—including human resources, technology, finance, legal, and governance? How do they impact our efficiency?

### ORGANIZATION: ALIGN

District staff and leadership are highly dedicated and mission-driven, with a strong commitment to serving students. By design, the District is decentralized, with most decision-making occurring at the building level. As a result, the District has a wide variety of schools, educational approaches, programs, and services. The District has taken steps in recent years to align staff, using annual SMART goals to encourage collaboration across departments. The most significant organizational issue is governance, a Board role that leads District strategy and policy. Alignment between the Board and staff is critical to the District's success and impacts the entire organization's culture.

The District has a “culture of yes,” with staff juggling multiple priorities and struggling to balance workloads. While the District has successfully used SMART goals in recent years, the strategic plan is expiring and there is a new Superintendent, presenting an ideal opportunity to engage in strategic planning. Once a high-level, outcomes-focused strategic plan is in place, department operating plans, a



prioritization framework, and performance reporting should follow. Realigning the District's culture to focus on outcomes and data-driven accountability will significantly improve efficiency at all levels.

As in most public organizations, following the recession, T&L staffing is limited due to budget constraints. Because of staffing limitations, many managers, directors, and executive directors work at the staff level, and are not being engaged at their highest and best use. Within T&L, there are a number of managers with a high number of direct reports or unique functions, while other programs are staffed by only one employee. The District should engage in a facilitated organizational modeling exercise to determine how T&L should best be structured based on strategic goals.

## PROCESSES: STREAMLINE AND EXECUTE

Across the District, processes include superintendent procedures, department and division practices, and standard operating procedures. Like many other public organizations, many T&L processes are not up to date, and some are not defined. Informal processes that have not been standardized impact efficiency. When processes are not formalized, the District performs the same types of practices in different ways, sometimes with unnecessary steps. For example, performance management, reporting, and communications practices are significant areas with fragmented or undocumented processes that impact T&L's efficiency. A lack of documentation also impacts the District's efficiency when onboarding new staff, ensuring compliance, and responding to stakeholder requests for information.

The District should invest in a Project Management Office (PMO) and developing T&L's continuous improvement function to support workflow definition and process documentation. These functions have existed in the past, and cutting them has impacted the District's ability to operate efficiently. In addition, stronger document management and data utilization will support better process efficiency. With project management tools and training and a focus on continuous improvement, the District can equip T&L staff to efficiently execute their program goals and strategic objectives.

## SYSTEMS: IMPLEMENT, AUTOMATE, AND INTEGRATE

The internal services and systems that support T&L are critical to efficient operations. These include the Finance, IT (DOTS), Human Resources (HR), and Legal departments, as well as the governance and management of the organization. In recent years, the District has improved both finance and personnel processes, and DOTS has begun implementing a number of systems as a result of the 2016 Buildings, Technology, and Academics (BTA) IV levy. T&L has a number of system needs, including workforce development planning, data utilization, and professional development.

The ability to partner with other District departments to automate workflows is a significant opportunity to improve District and T&L efficiency. Many cross-departmental functions rely on data, documents, and meetings with other District functions. Automating these functions could save time across the District. Effective change management and implementation of plans and systems will be key to achieving operational goals.



## C. SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observations and recommendations were grouped into three tiers as defined below: 1) Enterprise Solutions, 2) Strategic Solutions, and 3) Tactical Solutions.

TIER	DEFINITION	RESPONSIBILITY
1	<b>Enterprise Solutions</b> > Policy and structural improvement areas that impact all departments and fall under the purview of the School Board and/or Superintendent.	Board and Superintendent
2	<b>Strategic Solutions</b> > Common improvement areas across all or most T&L or central office divisions.	Superintendent and T&L Leadership
3	<b>Tactical Solutions</b> > Specific, day-to-day improvement areas within one or more T&L divisions or programs.	T&L Leadership and Managers

Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 observations and recommendations are summarized below. Observations and recommendations for all three tiers are provided in Section IV of this report.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
Tier 1: Enterprise Solutions		
1	<b>Observation</b>	The District's governing environment impacts T&L efficiency.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Adopt a policy governance model, focusing the Board on policy and strategy with delegation of operations and monitoring to staff, and reassess communications protocols.
2	<b>Observation</b>	Challenges exist with balancing priorities, since the District lacks a comprehensive strategic plan that clearly defines priority activities and an implementation plan for accomplishing them.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Develop a long-range, high-level, outcome-based District-wide strategic plan and supporting department plans to focus District efforts and provide the basis for decision-making.
3	<b>Observation</b>	Although the District has established many SMART goals for individual departments and functions, these goals do not unify departments or measure outcomes. Board reporting could be strengthened to provide more visibility and guide decisions.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Establish a consistent outcome-based performance reporting framework to keep the Board and community informed on progress toward goals.
4	<b>Observation</b>	The District's operating environment is reactive with inadequate prioritization practices.
	<b>Recommendations</b>	Develop an organization-wide prioritization and decision-making framework centered around the District's strategic goals.
5	<b>Observation</b>	The District's siloed, reactive operating environment impedes efficient operations.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Take measures to break down operating silos by leveraging cross-departmental collaboration, establishing clear and aligned collaboration strategies, and cascading messaging.



OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS		
6	<b>Observation</b>	The District struggles to sustain changes effectively and inspire staff to adopt new systems, processes, and programs.
	<b>Recommendations</b>	Dedicate adequate resources to implement and maintain new programs and initiatives to help ensure changes are fully adopted.
7	<b>Observation</b>	No overall formal budget policy exists to guide spending at the central office related to overhead and administration, including sub-functions such as T&L. Many T&L positions are partially or wholly funded by grants, levies, and non-baseline funding sources.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Establish a budget policy related to central office spending levels and baseline funding.
<b>Tier 2: Strategic Solutions</b>		
8	<b>Observation</b>	T&L's organization structure does not enable effective management reporting relationships.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Assess T&L's organization structure for alignment with goals and objectives. Establish guidelines for supervisory positions including reporting ranges for functions and people. Establish appropriate organizational hierarchies to enable effective management.
9	<b>Observation</b>	The T&L Division has a limited number of program support and analytical staff.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Establish a shared services team to support T&L management positions and enable productive use of manager resources.
10	<b>Observation</b>	Special Education and ELL programs are primarily supported by local levy funding, which will not be allowable under the new state education funding law in 2019-2020. This presents a significant risk to the District's progress in meeting critical student needs.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Conduct program reviews, including scenario analysis, to plan for future service delivery and funding options.
11	<b>Observation</b>	The District has made progress in implementing the MTSS framework, but further progress toward meeting student needs is contingent upon comprehensive support collaboration.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	To further advance MTSS, elevate MTSS leadership and consolidate supporting functions together under a comprehensive support program.
12	<b>Observation</b>	The District is characterized by high turnover, resulting in a systematic loss of talent and organization investment.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Develop a long-term workforce plan for T&L, including an ongoing emphasis on streamlining the hiring process and staff development opportunities.
13	<b>Observation</b>	The District has made limited investments in central office professional development.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Invest in adequate professional development to ensure staff are equipped, help reduce turnover, and increase morale.



## OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

14	<b>Observation</b>	The District utilizes an industry standard process for executive compensation setting, but has not yet published the procedures.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Formalize the processes related to senior and executive-level position hiring and compensation setting as a Superintendent procedure, and acquire education-sector specific compensation data to support data-driven decisions.
15	<b>Observation</b>	Performance evaluations are inconsistent, cumbersome, and could be better leveraged to develop District employees.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Implement processes to ensure performance evaluations are beneficial for the District and employees, including integrating the review process with a growth and development plan and continuing efforts to streamline the evaluation process.
16	<b>Observation</b>	The District relies on in-person meetings to communicate throughout the organization, which impacts productivity.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Revise meeting practices to ensure meetings are productive, meaningful, and relevant.
17	<b>Observation</b>	Customer service requests flow continuously into the District via multiple channels.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Establish a central office intake capability to record, track, and manage customer service requests and corresponding information, and consider leveraging a shared services team within T&L to manage customer communications.
18	<b>Observation</b>	While T&L staff are dedicated and hardworking, most employees have not been provided project management training or tools.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Reestablish a streamlined PMO to strengthen and support assigned project managers across the District.
19	<b>Observation</b>	While the District has made progress implementing technology in recent years, there are opportunities for the District to better leverage data to promote school success.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Better utilize data to more efficiently and effectively deliver T&L's core mission.
20	<b>Observation</b>	Document storage, tracking, and retrieval systems and processes are disconnected and not fully up-to-date.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Further expand the District's document management program to implement available system capabilities.
21	<b>Observation</b>	Many T&L Division practices are not documented or maintained as current, resulting in challenges for consistent and efficient service delivery, especially for incoming staff.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Document policies and procedures for key roles and functions throughout the T&L Division.
<b>Tier 3: Tactical Solutions</b>		
22	<b>Observation</b>	District professional development is fragmented, manually tracked, and spread across multiple functions, including T&L and HR.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Relocate the professional development program management function to the District's HR Department and ensure it is aligned, sustainable, and adequately supported with authority, staff, and systems.





## OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

23	<b>Observation</b>	The Operations group is not optimized to adequately support the Associate Superintendent.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Review and optimize the scope of the T&L Operations group, with a focus on continuous improvement.
24	<b>Observation</b>	The District employs a central Ombudsperson position reporting directly to the Deputy Superintendent who operates with minimal support.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Increase the level of support provided to the Ombudsperson function, including systems and processes, and consider moving the function under the District's Legal Department.
25	<b>Observation</b>	The District manages regulatory compliance on a program-by-program basis, increasing the risk of non-compliance and potential loss of funding.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Establish a centralized regulatory compliance function for the District.
26	<b>Observation</b>	Grant administration largely operates in a decentralized environment and is primarily oriented towards compliance and reporting functions, with limited strategic ability.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Move the T&L Grants group to the Finance Department and broaden its role to include more oversight responsibilities.
27	<b>Observation</b>	The District has historically under-resourced instructional materials investment, resulting in a backlog of curricula that require updating.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Develop an instructional materials management plan to provide structure and ensure quality control of designed, selected, and implemented curriculum including internal consistency and required resources.
28	<b>Observation</b>	The Advanced Learning group has historically focused on assessment with minimal central guidance on curriculum, program management, or school support.
	<b>Recommendation</b>	Continue expanding the focus of the Advanced Learning Program from assessment to program delivery by providing professional development and corresponding materials to support learning opportunities for highly capable students.



## II. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The District has prepared a plan to guide implementation of the recommendations provided in the T&L Efficiency Study. The implementation plan includes:

- Suggested priority (high, medium, or low)
- Level of effort required to implement (high, medium, or low)
- Responsible departments
- Suggested timing

This implementation plan is dependent on the District allocating adequate resources, particularly human capital, to addressing recommendations. As the District currently projects a significant budget deficit beginning in school year 2019-2020, it will be particularly important for high-priority recommendations, such as strategic planning, decision framework development, and organizational assessment to occur with a focus on achieving the District's goals with fewer resources.



#	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	EFFORT LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITY	CY 2019-20				CY 2020-21				PRIOR TASKS
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
<b>TIER 1: ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS</b>													
1	Adopt a policy governance model, focusing the Board on policy and strategy with delegation of operations and monitoring to staff, and reassess communications protocols.	High	Moderate	Board members									ongoing
2	Develop a long-range, high-level, outcome-based District-wide strategic plan and supporting department plans to focus District efforts and provide the basis for decision-making.	High	High	Board members and Superintendent									-
3	Establish a consistent outcome-based performance reporting framework to keep the Board and community informed on progress toward goals.	High	High	Board members, Superintendent, Evaluation & data teams									2
4	Develop an organization-wide prioritization and decision-making framework centered around the District's strategic goals.	High	Moderate	Board members and Superintendent									2



#	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	EFFORT LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITY	CY 2019-20				CY 2020-21				PRIOR TASKS	
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
5	Take measures to break down operating silos by leveraging cross-departmental collaboration, establishing clear and aligned collaboration strategies, and cascading messaging.	High	Moderate	Board members, Superintendent, and small cabinet										ongoing
6	Dedicate adequate resources to implement and maintain new programs and initiatives to help ensure changes are fully adopted.	High	Moderate	Board members										ongoing
7	Establish a budget policy related to central office spending levels and baseline funding.	Medium	Moderate	Board members										-
<b>TIER 2: STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS</b>														
8	Assess T&L's organization structure for alignment with goals and objectives. Establish guidelines for supervisory positions including reporting ranges for functions and people. Establish appropriate organizational hierarchies to enable effective management.	High	High	Superintendent and T&L Associate Superintendent										2
9	Establish a shared services team to support T&L management positions and enable productive use of manager resources.	High	Moderate	Superintendent, small cabinet, HR										6, 8



#	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	EFFORT LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITY	CY 2019-20				CY 2020-21				PRIOR TASKS
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
10	Conduct program reviews, including scenario analysis, to plan for future service delivery and funding options.	Medium	Moderate	Superintendent, small cabinet									ongoing
11	To further advance MTSS, elevate MTSS leadership and consolidate supporting functions together under a comprehensive support program.	Medium	Moderate	T&L Associate Superintendent, Chief of Student Supports									8
12	Develop a long-term workforce plan for T&L, including an ongoing emphasis on streamlining the hiring process and staff development opportunities.	Medium	Moderate	T&L Associate Superintendent, T&L Chiefs, HR									2, 8
13	Invest in adequate professional development to ensure staff are equipped, help reduce turnover, and increase morale.	Medium	Moderate	Superintendent, T&L Associate Superintendent, T&L Chiefs, HR									2, 6, 8
14	Formalize the processes related to senior and executive-level position hiring and compensation setting as a Superintendent procedure, and acquire education-sector specific compensation data to support data-driven decisions.	Medium	Low	HR									-



#	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	EFFORT LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITY	CY 2019-20				CY 2020-21				PRIOR TASKS
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
15	Implement processes to ensure performance evaluations are beneficial for the District and employees, including integrating the review process with a growth and development plan and continuing efforts to streamline the evaluation process.	Medium	Moderate	Superintendent, T&L Associate Superintendent, T&L Chiefs, HR									2, 3
16	Revise meeting practices to ensure meetings are productive, meaningful, and relevant.	High	Low	Superintendent, T&L Associate Superintendent, T&L Chiefs, Executive Directors, Managers									ongoing
17	Establish a central office intake capability to record, track, and manage customer service requests and corresponding information, and consider leveraging a shared services team within T&L to manage customer communications.	Medium	Moderate	Superintendent, T&L Associate Superintendent									-
18	Reestablish a streamlined PMO to strengthen and support assigned project managers across the District.	High	Moderate	Superintendent, HR									-
19	Better utilize data to more efficiently and effectively deliver T&L's core mission.	Medium	Moderate	Superintendent, T&L Associate Superintendent, T&L Chiefs, Executive Directors, Managers									ongoing



#	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	EFFORT LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITY	CY 2019-20				CY 2020-21				PRIOR TASKS	
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
20	Further expand the District's document management program to implement available system capabilities.	Medium	Low	Superintendent, DOTS										-
21	Document policies and procedures for key roles and functions throughout the T&L Division.	High	High	Superintendent, T&L Associate Superintendent, T&L Chiefs, Executive Directors, Managers, HR										2, 8
<b>TIER 3: TACTICAL SOLUTIONS</b>														
22	Relocate the professional development program management function to the District's HR Department and ensure it is aligned, sustainable, and adequately supported with authority, staff, and systems.	Medium	Low	T&L Associate Superintendent, HR										-
23	Review and optimize the scope of the T&L Operations group, with a focus on continuous improvement.	Medium	Moderate	T&L Associate Superintendent, Director of Operations										-
24	Increase the level of support provided to the Ombudsperson function, including systems and processes, and consider moving the function under the District's Legal Department.	High	Moderate	T&L Associate Superintendent, Legal										2



#	RECOMMENDATION	PRIORITY	EFFORT LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITY	CY 2019-20				CY 2020-21				PRIOR TASKS	
					Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		
25	Establish a centralized regulatory compliance function for the District.	High	Moderate	Superintendent, small cabinet										-
26	Move the T&L Grants group to the Finance Department and broaden its role to include more oversight responsibilities.	Medium	Low	T&L Associate Superintendent, Chief of Curriculum & Instruction, Finance										-
27	Develop an instructional materials management plan to provide structure and ensure quality control of designed, selected, and implemented materials including internal consistency and required resources.	High	Moderate	T&L Associate Superintendent, Chief of Curriculum & Instruction										-
28	Continue expanding the focus of the Advanced Learning Program from assessment to program delivery by providing professional development and corresponding materials to support learning opportunities for highly capable students.	High	Moderate	T&L Associate Superintendent, Chief of Student Supports										-





# III. BACKGROUND, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

## A. BACKGROUND

Seattle Public Schools (the District) is the largest school district in Washington, with more than 54,000 students in 104 schools during the 2017-18 school year. The District is led by a seven-member elected School Board (Board), a Superintendent, a Deputy Superintendent, two associate superintendents, and nine assistant superintendents/chiefs (collectively referred to as District leadership).

The District is characterized by high turnover from the top down. Most Board members are in their first term, the new Superintendent is the fifth in ten years, and central office turnover has averaged 10 percent since school year 2013-14. District systems are large and complex, serving a wide variety of schools and students. District operations are largely decentralized, with many decisions deferred to building staff according to Board policies and collective bargaining agreements. As a result, the organization is siloed and communications can be a challenge, although cross-functional alignment has been a focus in recent years.

The Teaching & Learning Division (T&L) is led by the Associate Superintendent of Teaching & Learning and three chiefs overseeing Schools; Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction; and Student Support Services, respectively. Executive directors, directors, and managers oversee 121 staff and more than 60 programs and services delivered to students, teachers, and principals in partnership with other District functions and external stakeholders. T&L staff also directly and indirectly supervise the activities of principals, nurses, librarians, counselors, and other building staff.

## B. SCOPE OF WORK

The objective of this study is to determine opportunities for improvement in management, organization, and operations of T&L. The organizational structure and management of T&L functions were assessed for effectiveness and alignment with best practices. This study was not a program evaluation, performance audit, or benchmarking study. The study assesses people, processes, and systems with a focus on efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, and risk. Other District functions, including human resources, technology, and District leadership were included in the study within the context of supporting T&L.

## C. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted between December 2017 and June 2018. The project consisted of six major phases:

1. **Project Initiation and Ongoing Management:** This phase concentrated on comprehensive project planning and project management, including determining employees to interview, documents to review, and how results will be shared and providing regular reports on project status.
2. **Fact Finding:** This phase included document review, interviews, and best practice research. We worked with District staff to obtain the most currently available information and insights.



3. **Benchmarking:** Peers included 15 local school districts, including Issaquah, Puyallup, Evergreen, Spokane, Vancouver, Northshore, Edmonds, Bellevue, Mercer Island, Everett, Tacoma, Highline, Federal Way, Kent, and Lake Washington. Nationally, peer districts included Boston, Portland, and Minneapolis.
4. **Evaluation of Organization Structure:** We developed a current organization chart for T&L to develop an understanding of organizational structure, staffing, and hierarchies. Using this chart, we compared the District's structure to peer and best practices as well as to the District's mission to develop recommended changes.
5. **Analysis:** This phase served as the assessment portion of the project where, based on information gathered, we evaluated the importance, impact, and scope of our observations in order to develop recommended economy, efficiency, and effectiveness changes.
6. **Reporting:** This phase concluded the project by communicating observations and recommendations through reports and presentations. The report was reviewed with District leadership and management to validate facts and ensure the practicality of recommendations.



## IV. COMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights gathered through interviews, it is evident that the District has many commendable organizational attributes. Some examples are provided below.

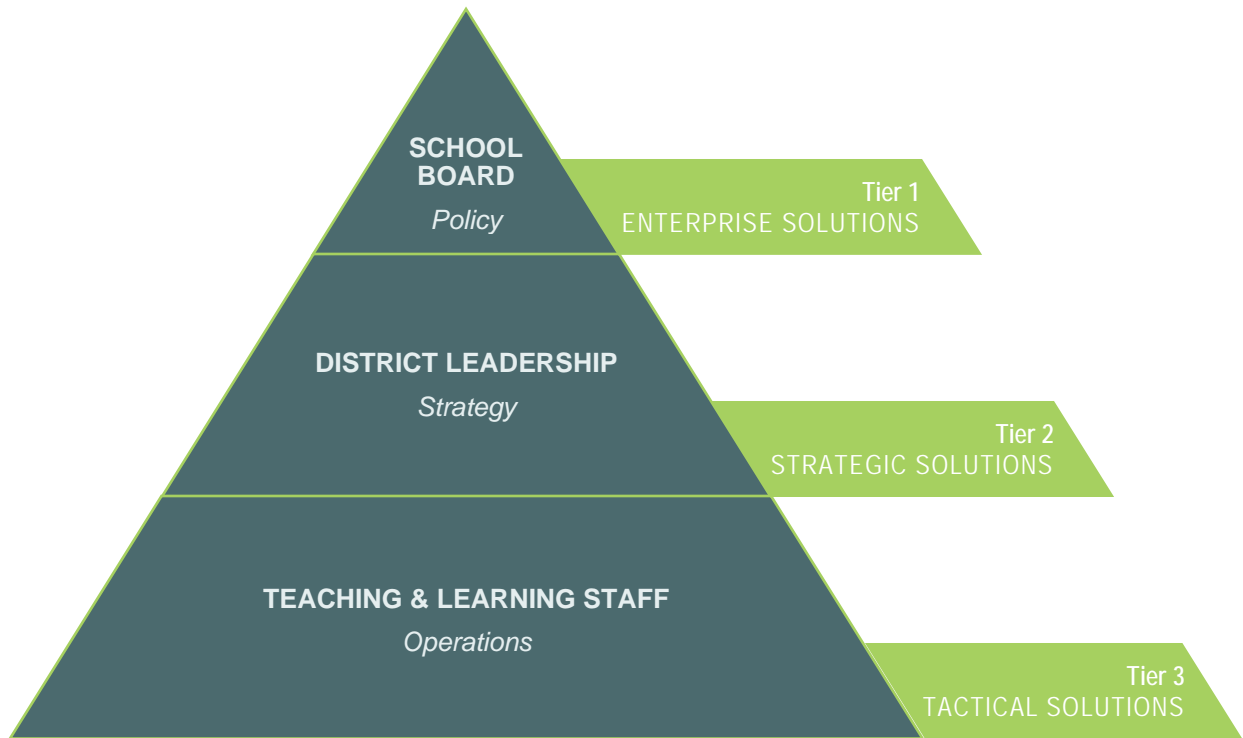
- *Employees:* We noted that T&L staff are service-oriented, dedicated, and motivated by the District's mission and student achievement. In the 2017 central office employee engagement survey, over 90 percent of staff responded that they feel their work is important to the District's mission and goals.
- *Use of SMART goals:* The District's efforts to utilize SMART goals to measure key activities are driving change and fostering increased collaboration among staff, particularly at the leadership level. Cabinet members have SMART goals tied to District goals, and report progress toward their goals on a quarterly basis, which is a best practice.
- *Curriculum adoption framework:* The recently passed curriculum budget has provided the District with an opportunity to replace outdated curriculum. The Curriculum and Instruction (C&I) division initiated a planning process to map out planned curriculum implementation based on state requirements and the age of currently utilized curricula.
- *Start of school improvements:* The T&L Operations group led a multi-year effort to improve start of school planning and provisioning across more than 30 different processes. A cross-functional team now meets year-round to continuously improve start of school service.
- *T&L initiatives:* In recent years, T&L has implemented a number of new initiatives, including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the Creative Advantage, and RULER social-emotional curriculum.
- *Budget development process improvement:* District management reported a significantly more predictable and effective budget development process in recent years.
- *Recruiting process improvement:* The District's Human Resources (HR) Department has largely redesigned teacher hiring policies and procedures to automate, simplify, and expedite the process.
- *Compensation studies:* The HR Department has conducted multiple compensation studies in the last 2 years, including a full analysis on internal alignment of all managers and directors in the District. In addition, the District hired consultants to conduct a *Non-Represented Classification & Compensation Study* in 2016, which resulted in 285 updated job descriptions, a new workforce architecture, and a new pay range structure incorporating market data.
- *Created a non-represented compensation manual:* The District drafted and maintains a manual for non-represented position compensation policies and procedures, including the District's compensation philosophy, the various roles and responsibilities, and administrative guidelines for compensation processes.
- *Growing positional stability:* Some positions, such as the five Executive Directors of Schools, are experiencing greater stability in their roles and approach to serving schools.
- *Special Education program improvements:* In recent years, Special Education has been a major improvement area, implementing changes including organization structure, professional development, and job descriptions.
- *Partnerships:* The District, and T&L in particular, maintains partnerships with many non-profits and community-based organizations to support a wide range of programs and services in schools. Community partnerships are regularly used to implement innovative solutions.

We would like to thank District staff and leadership for their participation in this study.



# IV. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the input gathered from interviews, document review, benchmarking, and comparisons to best practices, we prepared a comprehensive set of observations and recommendations, which are presented in the three tiers described in the Executive Summary. The observations and recommendations for each tier are detailed below.



## A. TIER 1: ENTERPRISE

Enterprise observations and recommendations are policy and structural improvement areas that impact all departments and are the responsibility of the School Board (Board) and District leadership.

### GOVERNANCE

1	OBSERVATION	The District’s governing environment impacts T&L efficiency.
	RECOMMENDATION	Adopt a policy governance model, focusing the Board on policy and strategy with delegation of operations and monitoring to staff, and reassess communications protocols.

According to Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.150.230, school district Boards of Directors have responsibility for setting policies ensuring quality in the content and extent of its education programs. In



most districts, the Board sets policy direction and delegates the authority to operate the policies to the Superintendent. However, this approach is not currently utilized by Seattle's School Board. Instead, the Board operates at more of a tactical level than a strategic level. Many decisions go through Board processes, no matter their size. This culture is typical of organizations with high elected official and staff turnover, and creates a perception of mistrust between the staff and Board.

Additionally, the Board participates in discussions that typically occur at the staff level. The level of detail in these requests for information about programs, policies, and overall operations result in significant additional work for District staff. This practice ultimately takes time away from staff who would otherwise be advancing the work of the District. Of particular importance is the burden of Board requests on T&L, particularly the Associate Superintendent and Chiefs of Schools, contributing to a highly reactive, defensive environment with limited capacity to effectively plan or lead initiatives. In recent years, a communications protocol was established with the goal of better managing Board requests to staff, but the protocol is not followed, as it did not meet the Board's needs.

According to the Washington State School Directors' Association's (WSSDA) School Board Standards, boards should focus on student achievement as their primary responsibility. The standards comprise of five core principles and benchmarks for success:

1. Responsible school district governance
2. Communication of and commitment to high expectations for student learning
3. Creating conditions district-wide for student and staff success
4. Holding the district accountable for student learning
5. Engagement of the community in education

Key points within these standards that should be applied by the Seattle District include:

- Respecting and advocating mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of Board members and the Superintendent
- Adopting policies based on well-researched practices that emphasize a belief that all students can achieve at high levels and support continuous improvement of student achievement
- Promoting healthy relationships by communicating supportively; inspiring, motivating and empowering others; and exercising influence in a positive manner
- Working as an effective and collaborative team
- Adopting a collaboratively developed District plan focused on learning and achievement outcomes for all students
- Ensuring non-negotiable goals for student achievement are established and aligned to the District's plan
- Employing and supporting quality teachers, administrators, and other staff and providing for their professional development
- Adopting and monitoring an annual budget that allocates resources based on the District's vision, goals, and priorities for student learning

Evolution to a true policy governance model with clearly defined roles and responsibilities will help improve T&L efficiency by allowing staff to focus their efforts on strategies and plans that align with Board-established direction. A facilitated series of staff and Board work sessions should be held to define



the District's governance model and clear roles and responsibilities, including the Board, committees and task forces, the superintendent, cabinet, and staff. Sample board and superintendent roles and responsibilities are provided in Appendix A. A key element of policy governance is Board self-assessment, which helps the Board to improve governance. The Board should utilize the WSSDA's online self-assessment tool on an annual basis to evaluate and improve performance.

## DISTRICT PLANS AND GOALS ALIGNMENT

2	OBSERVATION	Challenges exist with balancing priorities, since the District lacks a comprehensive strategic plan that clearly defines priority activities and an implementation plan for accomplishing them.
	RECOMMENDATION	Develop a long-range, high-level, outcome-based District-wide strategic plan and supporting department plans to focus District efforts and provide the basis for decision-making.

Seattle Public Schools has a defined mission, vision, and set of core beliefs. In 2013, the District developed a 5-year strategic plan that identified three major goals:

1. Ensure educational excellence and equity for every student
2. Improve system District-wide to support academic outcomes and meet students' needs
3. Strengthen school, family, and community engagement

Within each of these goals are defined strategies, initiatives, and metrics intended to evaluate progress. Overall, the strategic plan consists of three goals, nine strategies, 32 initiatives, and 91 metrics. The plan has not been consistently adhered to since its adoption, including a plan reset in 2015. In addition, the District establishes annual SMART goals, which are each supported by multiple performance measures, many of which align with measures recommended by the Council of Great City Schools.

Currently, the District does not leverage its multi-year strategic plan to define priorities, drive budgets and annual work plans, and guide ongoing strategic decisions and initiatives. While the District has defined some strategic planning elements, most departments have not developed plans to guide their operations in order to achieve the District's strategic priorities. The existing strategic planning framework lacks sufficient specificity needed to make decisions and does not clearly define or assign tasks and priorities within each goal, strategy, and initiative. As a result, District leadership and staff report a reactive approach to addressing community needs, whereby multiple projects are considered a top priority and priorities often change. T&L maintains an annual work program in Microsoft Project that is managed by the Associate Superintendent and regularly reprioritized as the year progresses.

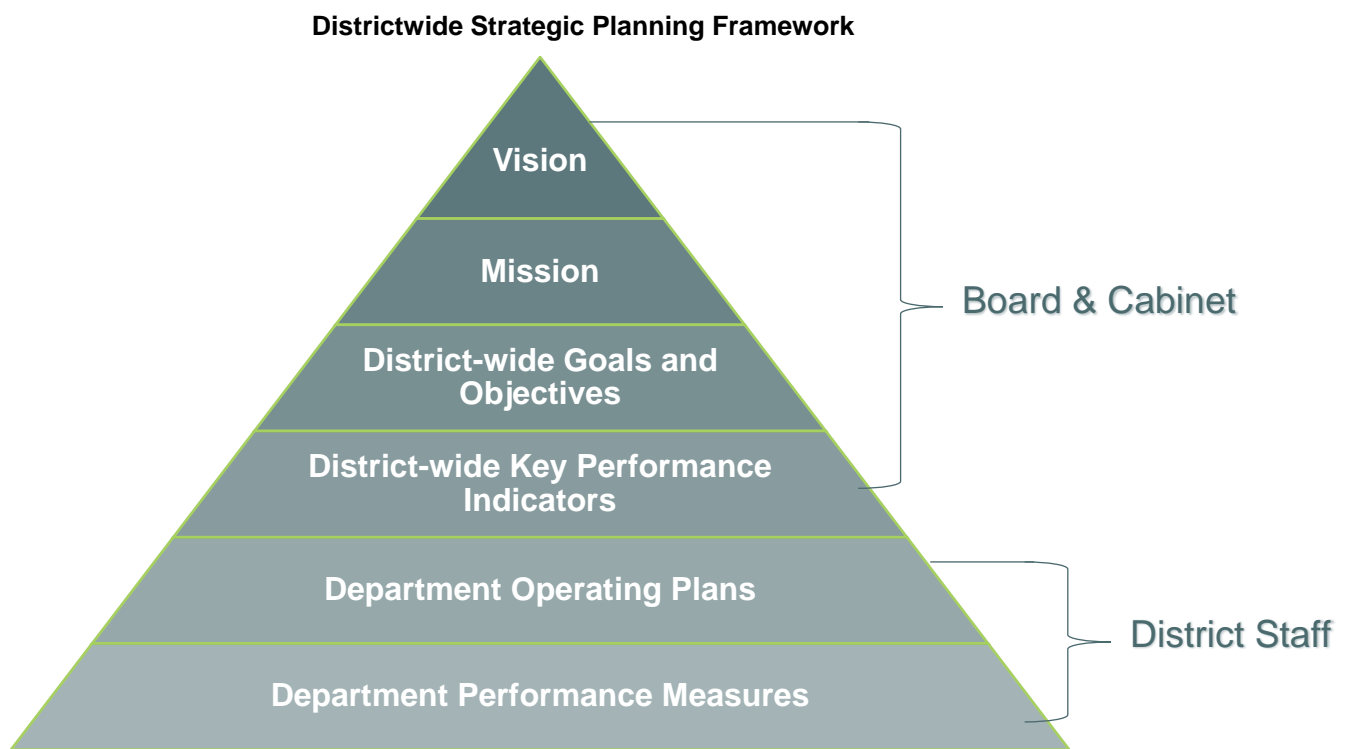
The District embraces innovation by exploring opportunities and saying yes to new ideas. Under current practice, Board requests and special projects can be generated at the request of one member, rather than requests approved by a majority of the Board. Individual issues may become resolutions or amendments without an assessment of resource impacts. This approach results in resource and efficiency impacts, as Board initiatives that inevitably arise over the course of a year create additional resource requirements without requisite reprioritization and can become unfunded mandates to departments. Additionally, this can result in redundancies, frustration, and tension among central office staff.



Outside of the strategic plan, most District planning processes and documents delve heavily into tactical matters, which often leads to disconnects between established strategic goals and central office execution. Furthermore, Board and community requests are not evaluated based on their relevance and importance to the District's strategic plan, resulting in fragmented, ad hoc efforts to address specific issues.

As the final year of the current strategic plan closes, the District should develop a comprehensive planning and performance reporting framework consisting of a clearly defined District-wide strategic plan that is high-level and outcome-focused. Department operating plans, performance metrics, and regular reporting of actual to planned performance should support the strategic plan. The District should strive to develop a cohesive culture, which requires strong executive-level collaboration guided by a comprehensive strategic plan that defines outcome-based goals and objectives that are clearly linked to department operating plans.

Building on the success of the SMART goal approach, the District should establish achievable goals and measure what matters. The relationships between District-wide and department plans are depicted below. The diagram below shows a recommended strategic framework, including a District-wide vision, mission, goals and objectives, and key performance indicators and supporting department operating plans and performance measures.



A strategic plan and supporting department operating plans should serve as a decision-making framework that provides a foundation for evaluating new initiatives. For example, will an initiative support the long-term vision for the community? Will it help to achieve the District's mission? Will it achieve District-wide goals and objectives? Will it align with the values of the organization? A comprehensive planning framework will help the District to evaluate and prioritize issues in an evolving political environment. As such, each department should also develop an operating plan to support achievement of the District-wide



strategic plan. Operating plans should define key activities, priorities, and levels; clarify goals, objectives, and desired outcomes; and develop efficiency and effectiveness-based performance measures.

In addition, The Board should set clear guidelines that require initiatives to be approved by a majority vote. In a limited public resource environment, not every idea can be pursued. Under this mode, an initiative can only be approved by a majority vote, and the vote can occur only after there has been an exploration into the full costs and benefits.

## PERFORMANCE REPORTING

3	OBSERVATION	Although the District has established many SMART goals for individual departments and functions, these goals do not unify departments or measure outcomes. Board reporting could be strengthened to provide more visibility and guide decisions.
	RECOMMENDATION	Establish a consistent outcome-based performance reporting framework to keep the Board and community informed on progress toward goals.

Over the past several years, the District has adopted an approach to establishing District-wide performance measures. To date, the District has completed critical work to assess system capabilities and functions, data availability, and metric definition. Many District departments have established performance measures in addition to the 91 metrics established in the District's current strategic plan and measures supporting annual SMART goals. This large volume of individual fragmented performance measures is excessive and consumes significant staff resources. Additionally, the approach does not result in a coherent picture of District performance.

Initially, the District placed emphasis on developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to include in a digital performance dashboard through a newly acquired data visualization platform. The platform provides an opportunity to analyze and present the data in useful ways. To maintain momentum on the use of data within the organization, the District should expand its efforts to monitor program, school, and student performance through aligned assessments and redirect management decisions using a data-driven approach.

For the District's performance dashboard to be most effective, the District should establish measures that provide meaningful information regarding student achievement and District operations to guide management decisions and the future direction of the District. Measures should be established using a collaborative, facilitated process to ensure that measures are meaningful and appropriate. Typically, organizations establish between two and five performance measures for each critical area. As noted in Recommendation 2, the District should establish two layers of performance indicators:

1. District-wide performance indicators tied to strategic goals and focused on student outcomes, reported regularly to the Board.
2. Department performance measures that cascade from district-wide goals and reflect key milestones identified in operational plans, reported regularly to Board committees and District leadership.





## PRIORITIZATION

4	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	The District's operating environment is reactive with inadequate prioritization practices.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Develop an organization-wide prioritization and decision-making framework centered around the District's strategic goals.

Like many mission-driven organizations, staff report difficulty prioritizing tasks and effectively communicating trade-offs. This challenge exists, in part, due to the District's culture of "yes" and corresponding reactive operating practices, as noted previously. Many staff report that they prioritize their efforts based on immediate need or who is the most persistent in requesting a task. However, this prioritization method does not put District goals or student achievement at the forefront of administrators' efforts. As staff struggle to balance an expanding list of new and pending projects, the District should develop and utilize a prioritization framework to provide guidance and enable consistent decisions that align with the District's strategic goals. A decision matrix or other objective tool can be particularly useful to balance needs because the task of setting priorities can be influenced by, and result in, emotional responses in any organization. Using a decision framework improves efficiency by moving decision-making out of a culture of consensus.

When established, a prioritization framework will provide a tool to rank projects and tasks based on objective criteria that the organization deems appropriate; it should clearly tie to the District's high-level outcome goals. A prioritization framework typically includes 6-10 criteria that can be used to assess the comparative importance of each potential task. The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends districts use a "structured judgement" approach with transparent criteria. The first and foremost criterion should be the impact on District goals and consistency with instructional priorities.<sup>1</sup> Example criteria include impact to workflow, resources, scalability, customer service, regulatory requirements, reversibility, and certainty of outcomes. Criteria may be weighted based on relative importance and a clearly defined ranking scale, and can be different for each department. Evidence to support scoring should be highlighted. A sample prioritization framework is provided in Appendix B.

Scoring tasks and determining staff priorities using this tool provides a simple and consistent method for evaluating options, removes emotions, is adaptable across departments and time, and facilitates agreement on resource allocation. When applied consistently, a prioritization framework will help maintain departmental focus and alignment on the District's unifying goals. In contrast, without defining priorities and criteria to make decisions, it's difficult to effectively distribute staff resources to maximize their value to the District.

For new initiatives that rise to the Board level, the Board should adopt a policy and procedure for evaluating the costs and benefits of proposed initiatives that are not included in the District's budget. Whether mandated or discretionary and proposed by the Board or a department, new initiatives should be evaluated in a consistent, methodical manner. Each proposal should define implementation and lifecycle costs, including staffing requirements, and identify whether existing resources will need to be reallocated or current programs or services will need to be deprioritized in favor of the new initiative. Furthermore,

<sup>1</sup> GFOA, "Best Practices in School Budgeting," [http://gfoa.org/sites/default/files/PK12\\_BPdocPCR\\_3B\\_EvalPrioritizeResources.pdf](http://gfoa.org/sites/default/files/PK12_BPdocPCR_3B_EvalPrioritizeResources.pdf)



these requests should be prioritized based on considerations of feasibility, costs and potential benefits, impact on District operations, sustainability, interdependencies with other initiatives, needs, and gaps. The impacted or proposing department should be responsible for performing initial analysis with input from other relevant departments.

## CULTURE

<b>5</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	The District’s siloed, reactive operating environment impedes efficient operations.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Take measures to break down operating silos by leveraging cross-departmental collaboration, establishing clear and aligned collaboration strategies, and cascading messaging.

The District has a siloed operational environment, with limited centralization that could identify redundancies and opportunities to improve efficiency. The central office culture is reflective of the community in which the District operates: progressive, eager, polite, and relationship-oriented. An especially influential element affecting District culture has been high levels of turnover in the Board, Superintendent position, and the reorganized executive leadership team. Turnover has required the organization and management to continually adapt to a changing and dynamic leadership team with differing priorities and communication styles.

The District’s culture is further characterized by high workloads, limited communication and collaboration, and a reactive environment. District staff report that their work is highly reactive to requests for information, making it difficult to prioritize tasks and focus efforts to pursue the District’s strategic plan. In a reactive, high stress environment, communication can be challenging to keep open due to capacity constraints, which impedes collaboration and gives the perception of a lack of accountability. The District’s existing culture has affected working relationships and, therefore, has negatively impacted central office efficiency and delivery outcomes.

As a result of this culture, the District exhibits strained and sometimes inadequate communication between leadership and siloed departments. In a siloed organization, most interdepartmental communication occurs at managerial levels, with information going up a chain of command in one department before moving across to another department and back down a chain of command. This process is inefficient, leads to misunderstandings, and limits the opportunity for collaboration and alignment. The siloed nature of District operations and the associated lack of communication results in departments pursuing their own priorities, with limited regard for the needs or ongoing projects of other departments. Program staff reported being unaware of who made decisions regarding their programs. In addition, principals reported that alignment among central office staff is critical to delivering programs and services to buildings.

Within the central office culture, practices vary based on the level of management and responsiveness to Board and community member requests. Culture among T&L leadership is deliberate but lacks capacity to sufficiently set the vision and tone over many aspects of operations. Middle management employees tend to be very engaged in day-to-day delivery and passionate about getting the job of teaching and learning accomplished. There are some disconnects between these two layers in terms of work styles, communications, tactical thinking, and driving outcomes. While upper management is planning for the



future of the District, middle management has been tasked with operational delivery of the District's affairs. However, middle management has limited visibility to the work, actions, and activities of other central office staff and sometimes their own leadership. As noted previously, management is spread thin due to competing priorities and last minute requests. As a result, leaders spend a significant amount of time being inundated with logistical and tactical details, and do not have sufficient capacity to identify and lead collaborative efforts consistently across the District. Without this collaboration, employees are not able to efficiently and effectively leverage District resources to further student achievement. Furthermore, managers may not have a complete understanding of the connection between their individual work.

To improve collaboration at the District, and within T&L, District leadership should first align to establish a cohesive, unified tone at the top. The Board's policy and strategy should be clear and aligned with the Superintendent, deputies, and chiefs. These parties should work to recognize their collective impact on the workforce, operations, and student learning. Positive and connected leadership directly impacts culture by creating a shared vision for success, a path of achievement, establishing clear expectations, and working as a united team.

Effective collaboration requires a clear, mutually understood sense of ownership and accountability. District staff noted that these traits are often lacking in initiatives due to fluctuating leadership, expectations, and priorities. Increasing the effectiveness of District leadership is reliant upon defined plans, coordinated efforts, frequent and transparent communication, and accountability. Employees reported that Superintendent leadership around SMART goals led to collaborating more regularly and operating in tandem toward shared objectives. These efforts reflect the importance of setting a clear and compatible tone at the top, which filters down into the District's hierarchy, setting the pace of change. Based on this premise, more work should be done in building strong relationships among District leadership to shape the future working central office culture and, ultimately, organizational productivity.

Frequent, transparent communications about costs, staffing, priorities, and operational changes will help build trust between departments. Transparency begets accountability, and employees are more likely to be flexible and collaborative if they understand the context for decisions. Trust on both sides of the employees' relationship will improve the utilization, efficiency, and effectiveness of District operations.

Furthermore, District leadership should establish formal cascading messaging practices to ensure that staff across T&L receive consistent, frequent, and transparent communication and remain informed. Whenever decisions that impact T&L employees are made, leadership should ensure they have a consistent understanding and message to share with employees. Leadership should relay messages in a timely manner and provide employees an opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, and provide suggestions. When communication successfully cascades through the organization, from leadership down to teachers, it drives clarity and alignment around the District's direction and goals.



## CHANGE MANAGEMENT

6	OBSERVATION	The District struggles to sustain changes effectively and inspire staff to adopt new systems, processes, and programs.
	RECOMMENDATION	Dedicate adequate resources to implement and maintain new programs and initiatives to help ensure changes are fully adopted.

As in many resource-constrained public organizations, the District struggles to fully implement changes, ranging from organizational restructuring to technology systems training and rollout. Business processes are not consistently updated and resources are not assigned to implement changes over a realistic timeline. Like similar organizations with high workloads and a reactive culture, change causes staff to retreat into silos and be wary of the ability to sustain change, which renders many initiatives unsustainable.

To improve rollout of new systems and processes, the District should establish a change management planning template and process for organizational changes. The District is currently experiencing multiple major changes, including Board turnover, collective bargaining, Superintendent transition, levy expiration, and strategic plan sunset. There is a risk that progress made in recent years will be lost, considering the amount of change occurring. A robust change management approach should emphasize the human side of change to promote user adoption and quell cultural resistance. It can also be modified to support effective organizational change management, process change management, and technical management.

The following are key elements for implementing successful change management:

- *Communicate the need for change:* Excellent communication is critical to change management. Affected employees should be aware of the business need for change and buy into potential solutions. District leadership should build awareness around the organization's needs and the risk in remaining with the status quo. Where appropriate, end users should be involved in defining requirements and the design process. Project sponsors should ensure that clear and open lines of communication are maintained throughout the change management process and advocate for two-way dialogue to provide answers and reassure end users.
- *Plan for and understand the ramifications of the change:* Clearly identify what is changing, how it is changing, who will be affected, how users will be affected, and when the change will occur. Change should occur in a multi-step, well-communicated process that includes ample training and no surprises to staff. Key communication messages should be developed and disseminated to ensure staff are aware of progress towards implementation and are reminded of personal benefits they can expect to derive from the new system or process.
- *Consider and design a method for staff education:* Throughout implementation, build staff knowledge and abilities through training opportunities. Following implementation, provide reinforcement and allow employees to provide feedback on the change and change process. Ensure consolidation by providing policies, procedures, and performance measures that reflect the change and can serve as staff resources.

Change at the District is continuous and inevitable; therefore, change management is critical to smooth transitions, ultimately saving the organization time and resources. Effective, two-way communication regarding changes will help support trust and facilitate good decision-making.

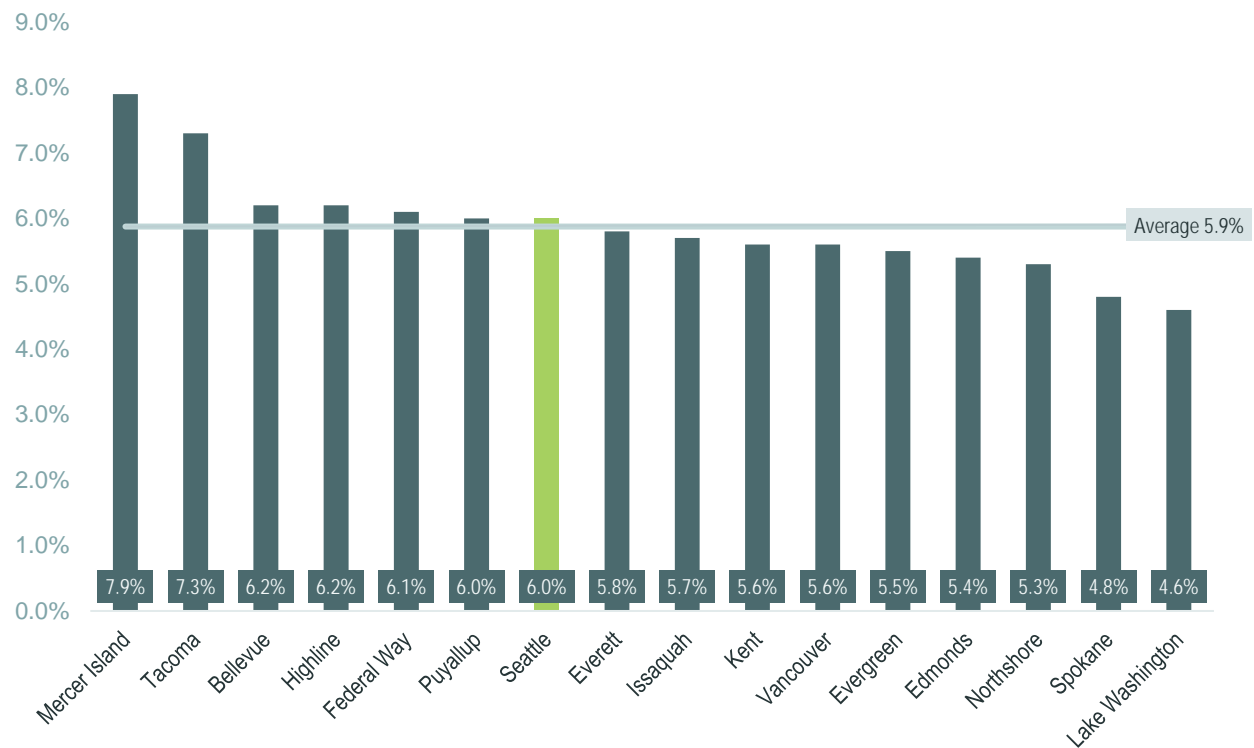


## BUDGET POLICY

<b>7</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	No overall formal budget policy exists to guide spending at the central office related to overhead and administration, including sub-functions such as T&L. Many T&L positions are partially or wholly funded by grants, levies, and non-baseline funding sources.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Establish a budget policy related to central office spending levels and baseline funding.

In the 2017 budget, the District allocated approximately 77 percent of the budget to instruction and 6 percent to the central office. As noted in the graph below, this figure appears to be consistent with peer central office allocations. However, it is important to note that Seattle Public Schools is by far the largest district in the state, with greater enrollment and program diversity than peer districts.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION BUDGET AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES



Although the budgeted amount may be average compared to other districts, staff report challenges adequately planning programs due to the lack of a formal budget policy providing baseline funding and last-minute changes. This is particularly challenging under the current state funding environment. In recent years, the state education budget has been set as late as July, giving districts only a few weeks before the start of the school year to plan and deliver a budget. In some cases, delayed funding impacts the timing and completion of program and service delivery. Budget development begins in September for the following school year, and as needs and priorities shift at the District, budgets are often modified and reallocated throughout the year. While budget modifications are common and often appropriate, ad hoc



adjustments without a clear process, including analysis and approval, presents ongoing challenges to central office staff.

Many positions in T&L, especially with the Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction division, are funded partially or wholly from external sources, including grant and levies. The lack of consistent funding for these positions contributes to the Division's inability to develop long-term plans and retain staff. Many managers reported that planning was by nature reactive, as they felt they needed to wait to plan for the next school year until they knew funding for positions and program delivery was secured, which could be after the school year had begun.

School district budgets translate districts' goals and programs into resource plans. Therefore, goals for student achievement should drive the budget process and programs and services that directly impact student achievement should be afforded annual baseline funding. According to the GFOA, districts should develop and adopt a set of budget principles to help frame and guide budget deliberations.<sup>2</sup> At a minimum, these policies should address the following:

- General fund reserve
- Financial emergencies
- Long-term forecasting
- Asset maintenance and replacement
- Budgeting and management of categorical funds
- Staff compensation
- Program review and sunset determinations
- Definition of a balanced budget
- Year-end savings
- Funding new programs

In addition to these policies, the District should consider other areas where budget policy may be beneficial, such as budget modifications and central office spending. Mid-year budget changes should support strategic goals and outcomes. Use of policies helps provide both consistency and transparency for staff and community stakeholders.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.gfoa.org/sites/default/files/PK-12\\_1A.pdf](http://www.gfoa.org/sites/default/files/PK-12_1A.pdf)



## B. TIER 2: STRATEGIC

Strategic observations and recommendations are common improvement areas across all or most functions. These recommendations pertain to District leadership.

### ORGANIZATION

#### ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

8	OBSERVATION	T&L’s organization structure does not enable effective management reporting relationships.
	RECOMMENDATION	Assess T&L’s organization structure for alignment with goals and objectives. Establish guidelines for supervisory positions including reporting ranges for functions and people. Establish appropriate organizational hierarchies to enable effective management.

The T&L Division is comprised of numerous complex functions, including curriculum and instruction, professional development, student support, and school support. Given the large scope of the Division, strong management and reporting relationships are critical to ensuring that staff receive sufficient guidance, work progresses as planned, and programs are able to effectively coordinate with one another. An organization chart for T&L is provided in Appendix C.

Due to the large scope of T&L functions and responsibilities, the Division faces unique challenges to operating efficiently and effectively. These challenges include leadership stability, managerial experience, District stakeholder responsiveness and integration, geographic spread, and decentralized school operations. The Division should undertake facilitated organizational modeling, ideally tied to strategic outcomes. Like many resource-constrained public organizations, reporting relationships and functional responsibilities are often determined per position, based on individual skills and interests. Likewise, the District eliminates or restructures positions based on vacancies, rather than continually assessing organizational needs.

The T&L Division employs 18 executive positions (including five Executive Directors of Schools) and 22 managers to oversee 89 employees (not including nurses), 105 schools, and 52,000 students. The Division has five layers of management: Associate Superintendent, chiefs, executive directors, directors, and managers. Several functions also employ supervisors, which are critical to the day-to-day management of program operations.

Within T&L’s current organization structure, there are several positions that oversee and manage an excessive amount of functions and positions, making it difficult to understand District roles and positional overlap. For example:

- Executive Director of C&I: 12 direct reports (10 managers)
- Executive Directors of Schools: 25 direct reports for K-8 or 15 direct reports for middle and high school
- Executive Director of Coordinated Health: 10 direct reports (six managers)



- Director of ELL & International Programs: 17 direct reports (0 managers)
- Director of Special Education: 16 direct reports (0 managers)

Best practice is for a manager's span of control to be 7-10 employees, depending on the complexity of functions overseen. The structure of T&L should be reevaluated to either a) decrease some positions' scope and responsibilities and/or b) establish a hierarchy of managers and staff below the position to reduce the number of functions directly overseen and managed by the position.

In addition, a number of functions are overseen by one or two staff members. These include:

- Assessment
- Continuous Improvement
- Health Education
- Behavioral/SEL Case Management
- Visual and Performing Arts

Minimal staffing, which is typically the result of budget cuts, presents a risk of higher turnover and lost institutional knowledge. Without cross-training or backup staffing, it is challenging to deliver a consistent level of service throughout the year.

The District should specifically consider making changes to the C&I, Schools, and Student Support divisions, as described below.

### Curriculum and Instruction

The C&I division has experienced significant turnover and historically been under-resourced. Most of the District's instructional materials are old and outdated; therefore, C&I staff are working to develop and implement new curriculum while continuing to provide school support with dated core materials. Both the Chief of C&I and the Executive Director of C&I have made significant strides to fill leadership gaps, establish new vision, and press continual momentum throughout the group.

The Executive Director reports directly to the Chief of C&I and directly manages 15 different functions including 12 positions. The position's scope is significant, covering assessment, early learning, curriculum development across multiple subjects, kindergarten transition, and numerous initiatives such as race to the top. Few managers report to the Executive Director, requiring the position to be significantly hands-on. Most of the positions that report to the Executive Director of C&I are at the supervisory level, although many of the staff who fill these roles have significant experience and therefore operate autonomously. The current structure underneath the Executive Director of C&I results in the position being spread thin, impeding operational efficiency and effectiveness and likely contributing to staff burnout. At the time the Executive Director of C&I position was established, a Director position was defined but unbudgeted. In order to alleviate the Executive Director of C&I's workload and span of control, the District should consider funding the Director position, and/or having some functions report directly to the C&I Chief and group functions under managers over core services such as curriculum development.

### Schools

The Chief of Schools provides oversight to the five Executive Director of Schools and leadership coaches. As the positions are currently structured, Schools division staff must spend significant time collaborating one-on-one with other staff in T&L and individual schools. For example, the five Executive Directors of





Schools monitor, support, supervise, and evaluate 105 school principals. Currently, two Executive Directors of Schools oversee middle and high schools, while the other three oversee elementary schools and K-8 schools. Each Executive Director of Schools oversees 15-25 schools, resulting in a wide span of control and significant workload for District staff. Best practices suggest the most beneficial number of schools per Executive Director of Schools is 8-12.<sup>3</sup>

In general, each Executive Director of Schools meets one-on-one with principals once per month. The Executive Director of Schools tend to spend more time with new principals who need more support, as well as schools that are more challenging. In their efforts to assist schools, the Executive Director of Schools interface with numerous other stakeholders including managers from C&I and Student Support. Principals reported that their Executive Director's attention was adequate for more experienced building leaders, but each principal noted their Executive Directors was spread too thin to provide consistent funneling of information from myriad central office functions.

According to a Wallace Foundation study<sup>4</sup> on high-improving schools, the central office should facilitate strong communication and collaboration between departments that deal with academics to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies and coordinate coherent responses to school needs. Districts that allow different departments to operate and make decisions independent of other departments in a traditional silo fashion not only cause inefficiency due to overlapping responsibilities and uncertainty about how schools should seek support, but also may stifle creative solutions to school-level problems.<sup>5</sup>

The District has several opportunities available to increase capacity and effectiveness of the Schools division organization structure. The current District practice assumes a central approach attempting to cover schools in a uniform manner. In order to best serve schools, the District should consider the following options:

- Scaling back the number of assignments based upon prioritized school and principal needs
- Adding Executive Director of Schools positions to ensure schools are adequately supported
- Restructure to emphasize support and facilitation versus oversight
- Establish a central location for District resources available to Executive Directors of Schools and school leaders
- Prioritize the number of schools assigned to Executive Directors with new principals and schools with poor performance
- Establish a performance monitoring system that provides an early warning system to identify schools with negative trends, thus redirecting time as necessary before they become significant problems
- Continue to strengthen principal and vice principal training and leadership programs

## Student Support

T&L's Student Support division handles a wide scope of student support services including health, mental health, special education, advanced learning, MTSS, and numerous social-emotional support programs. The division interacts significantly with schools, teachers, families, and students as a component of its daily work. Most of the work in the division is managed by individual supervisors, who often have

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<sup>3</sup> Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors, The Wallace Foundation; Best Practices for School Improvement Planning, Hanover Research

<sup>4</sup> Rethinking Leadership: The Changing Role of Principal Supervisors

<sup>5</sup> Best Practices in Central Office Restructuring, Hanover Research



expansive spans of control both in the central office and among building support staff. Similar to other T&L divisions, employees' spans of control should be evaluated and, where applicable, reduced to best manage and guide employees and ultimately serve students.

As the District embarks on implementing an MTSS model, the structure of this division should shift to realign under the new service delivery approach. The MTSS function should be elevated to help guide supporting functions and facilitate coordination and collaboration to support schools and students. (See Recommendation 11 for more information.)

## PROGRAM AND ANALYTICAL SUPPORT

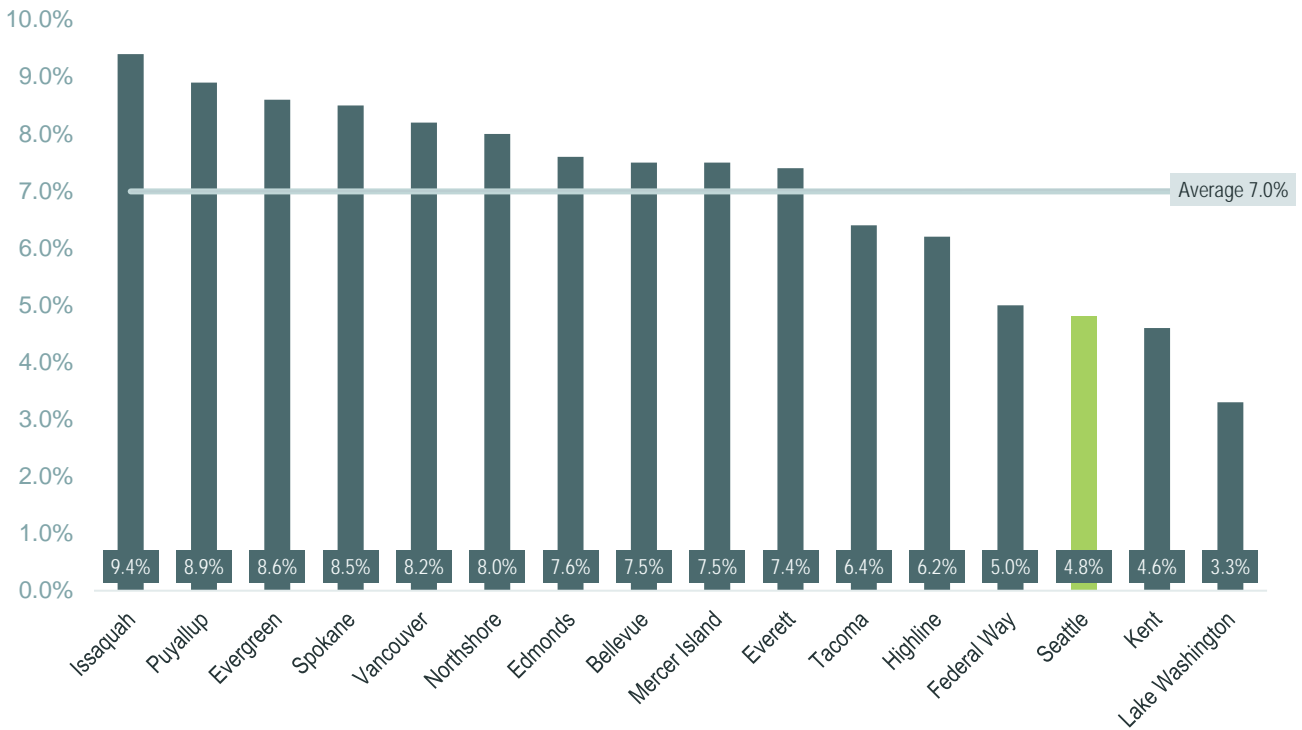
9	OBSERVATION	The T&L Division has a limited number of program support and analytical staff.
	RECOMMENDATION	Establish a shared services team to support T&L management positions and enable productive use of manager resources.

The T&L Division employs several positions that support executive level management. The few existing positions include separate executive administrative positions supporting the Associate Superintendent, the Chief of C&I, and the Chief of Student Support Services. Some directors and managers also have executive assistants, but for the most part executive directors, directors, and managers are self-directed and perform both their managerial duties and their own analytical, support, and coordination tasks. Nearly every T&L manager spends significant time performing meeting coordination, routine correspondence and stakeholder communications, scheduling, information processing, and completing the large body of associated paperwork (e.g., compliance reporting). While there is some level of delegation of these duties from the top through the managerial hierarchy to lower level positions including supervisors, most managers take on these duties individually, leaving limited time for critical planning, strategy, and leadership activities.

The following graph compares District administrative support in Seattle Public Schools and other local school districts. Seattle's administrative support comprise approximately 5 percent of staff, below the 7 percent peer average.



## District Administrative Support (FTE) Divided by Total Other Staff (FTE)



The lack of administrative resources requires a portion of manager time to be spent on routine and clerical functions. While some of this time is required, much of it is not the highest and best use of manager resources.

T&L Division efficiency would benefit from a shared services unit that handles analytical, program support, and customer service duties. A small unit could initially be created with two to three positions that report to Operations or one of the executive administrative positions. This work includes a certain amount of the paperwork including word processing, data tracking, and report production. The delegation of such tasks would reduce the overall cost of information and paperwork handling and free up managers to perform higher level duties interfacing with stakeholders and making related managerial decisions.

## SPECIAL EDUCATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL)

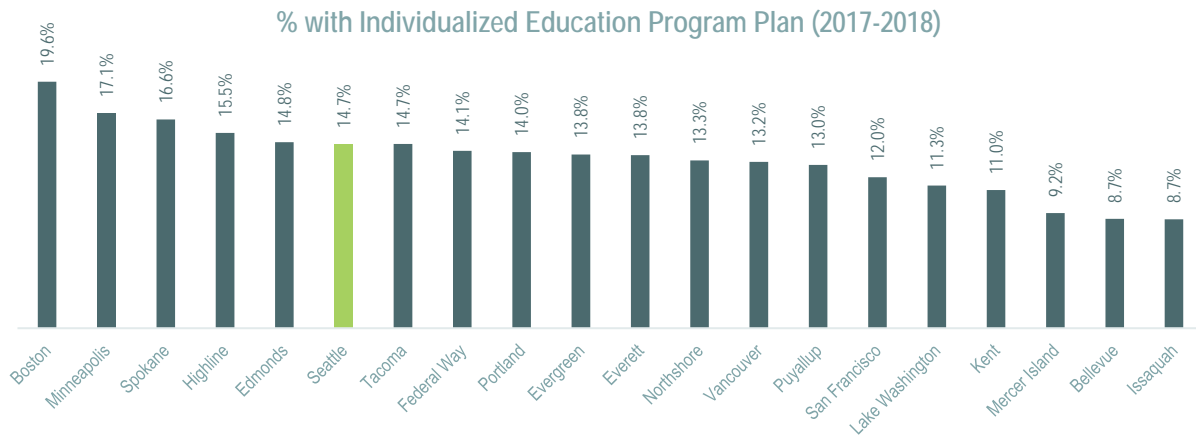
<b>10</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	Special Education and ELL programs are primarily supported by local levy funding, which will not be allowable under the new state education funding law in 2019-2020. This presents a significant risk to the District's progress in meeting critical student needs.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Conduct program reviews, including scenario analysis, to plan for future service delivery and funding options.

The current local levy, which expires in 2019, primarily supports T&L's Special Education (\$60 million) and ELL (\$20 million) programs. Both programs have grown in recent years to meet increasing demand for services. Linguistically, 21.7 percent of District students have a non-English speaking background,



with 154 languages/dialects spoken and representing 150 countries of origin.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 6,000 (12.7 percent) of District students are identified as transitional bilingual and eligible for ELL services.

By the 2021-22 school year, the District estimates a \$69.5 million deficit in Special Education funding, a \$2,500 per-pupil gap. Compared to peers, the District has one of the highest percentage of students with individualized education program (IEP) plans.



Under the new state law, local levy funds will not be allowable for expenditure on these programs. The current funding model is unsustainable for these programs, which presents a significant risk to the District in delivering these critical services. The District should undertake program reviews of ELL and Special Education to proactively plan for long-term program sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness. Scenario planning should be conducted with cross-functional stakeholders to assess funding and service delivery options.

## MTSS

<b>11</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	The District has made progress in implementing the MTSS framework, but further progress toward meeting student needs is contingent upon comprehensive support collaboration.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	To further advance MTSS, elevate MTSS leadership and consolidate supporting functions together under a comprehensive support program.

The District's MTSS framework is a comprehensive program that integrates academics and social-emotional support critical to student achievement. The MTSS model uses data and problem solving to integrate academic, behavior, and social-emotional instruction and intervention to promote student success. Resources such as time, staff, and evidence-based strategies, are deployed to students based on data, with the goal of increased student achievement. The initiative's implementation began in earnest in 2016. During the first year, T&L staff developed a group of three employees led by an MTSS Manager to provide centralized resources to 24 schools, formed MTSS teams in each school, began testing a student data portal, and implemented a professional development plan.

<sup>6</sup> Source: SPS 2018 Budget Book



Many central office programs are directly and indirectly involved in providing MTSS services, including coordinated health services, Special Education, advanced learning, and the Executive Directors of Schools. These functions currently reside throughout the Student Support division and largely operate separately from one another. Furthermore, the initiative is currently being led by a manager-level position, requiring the employee to manage laterally as well as at school sites.

As MTSS matures, the District should assess the Student Support organization structure and reorganize as needed to most effectively meet student needs. To operate successfully, the program must be afforded adequate authority, and collaboration between these supporting functions should be seamless and student-oriented. District leadership should fully commit to implementing MTSS and dedicate sufficient staff, authority, and financial resources to the program. Because collaboration is essential for the program’s success, the MTSS programs should logically fall within an MTSS organization structure. The MTSS Director will then have an enhanced ability to foster collaboration among programs, as well as the Executive Directors of Schools.

## STAFFING

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

12	OBSERVATION	The District is characterized by high turnover, resulting in a systematic loss of talent and organization investment.
	RECOMMENDATION	Develop a long-term workforce plan for T&L, including an ongoing emphasis on streamlining the hiring process and staff development opportunities.

The District consistently experiences high levels of turnover among central office staff. Between 2014 and 2017, central office staff turnover averaged 10 percent. High turnover has negatively impacted employee morale, resulted in inconsistency, and generally contributed to higher workloads due to the resources dedicated to hiring and onboarding new employees. T&L staff reported turnover impacting the ability to establish consistent systems and processes, communicate effectively with the central office and schools, and deliver programs and services on time. Turnover also has a real cost to the District; the Society for Human Resources Management estimates that it costs six to nine months’ salary to recruit and train a replacement.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the high workloads and reactive operating environment limits T&L managers’ ability to plan for staff transitions or succession, setting up new employees with significant learning curves and slowing program delivery. Principals reported central office turnover as a major impact to their ability to move initiatives forward.

To maximize current staff resources and plan for hiring to address staffing needs, the District should embark on a workforce planning effort. In collaboration with the HR Department, T&L leadership should develop a strategy and timeline for the development of a workforce development plan. The plan should focus on retaining institutional knowledge, identifying key areas of knowledge to include in job descriptions, and ways for employees to develop a career ladder.

<sup>7</sup> SHRM, “Turnover Costs,” <https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/Documents/Turnover%20Costs.xls>



An effective workforce planning process should contain the following information:

- Active executive involvement
- Integration with the District's strategic plan
- Processes to identify essential positions and their critical competencies
- Procedures to identify, promote, and select high potential staff, along with plans for individual career development
- Procedures to monitor individual development through coaching, mentoring, and performance management
- Methods to identify and fill gaps (e.g., strengthen internal capabilities and/or recruit externally)
- Regular plan review to ensure effectiveness

Without workforce planning efforts, the District is at risk of losing institutional knowledge of employees and interrupting operations. Despite the negative impacts of turnover, the District has an opportunity to develop effective, long-term leaders. The Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) Central Office Leadership Framework provides a rubric with four criteria for effective central office staff that can be used to frame a workforce development plan:<sup>8</sup>

1. Effective leadership
  - 1.1 Focus on student learning
  - 1.2 Dynamic and distributive leadership
  - 1.3 Sustained improvement efforts
2. Quality teaching and learning
  - 2.1 Quality classroom instruction
  - 2.2 Coordinated and aligned curriculum and assessment
  - 2.3 Coordinated and job-embedded professional development
3. System-wide improvement
  - 3.1 Effective use of data
  - 3.2 Strategic allocation of resources
  - 3.3 Policy and program coherence
4. Clear and collaborative relationships
  - 4.1 Professional culture and collaborative relationships
  - 4.2 Clear understanding of school and district roles and responsibilities
  - 4.3 Engaging the community and managing the external environment

The workforce plan should include a multi-year hiring plan for senior and executive leadership, based on projected promotions, resource needs analysis, and budget availability. Management training and development should become a focus as part of career development and workforce planning.

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<sup>8</sup> WASA, Central Office Leadership Framework, [https://wasa-oly.org/wasa/images/WASA/6.0%20Resources/6.3%20Leadership%20Framework/Download\\_Files/CentralOfficeLdrShpFrmwk.pdf.pdf](https://wasa-oly.org/wasa/images/WASA/6.0%20Resources/6.3%20Leadership%20Framework/Download_Files/CentralOfficeLdrShpFrmwk.pdf.pdf)



## CENTRAL OFFICE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

13	OBSERVATION	The District has made limited investments in central office professional development.
	RECOMMENDATION	Invest in adequate professional development to ensure staff are equipped, help reduce turnover, and increase morale.

The District does not currently provide formal and consistent professional development opportunities to staff in the central office. Staff report that professional development opportunities are often offered to managers and above and are largely self-selected. Without professional development opportunities, T&L staff have a limited ability to grow and develop their career. This negatively impacts the District by limiting exposure to new, innovative practices and ideas, as well as contributing to turnover and poor morale. Furthermore, as noted in Recommendation 18, many T&L staff have transitioned from teachers and principals to project and program managers, which requires a different set of skills and training. At a minimum, all T&L staff should have the opportunity to receive process training and some level of organizational training, including aspects of project management. Job descriptions should be updated to include project management, program delivery, and supervisory skills relevant to each position.

Central office staff should be provided with training opportunities, as identified in an annual review and goal setting process. Professional development should align with each employee’s career goals and District goals. Investment in staffing generally results in higher retention rates networking opportunities, and opportunities for staff to learn about creative ideas and innovative approaches.

## EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

14	OBSERVATION	The District utilizes an industry standard process for executive compensation setting, but has not yet published the procedures.
	RECOMMENDATION	Formalize the processes related to senior and executive-level position hiring and compensation setting as a Superintendent procedure, and acquire education-sector specific compensation data to support data-driven decisions.

Historically, non-represented employee placement decisions and subsequent compensation setting in the District was based on individual rather than market variables. In 2016 the District hired third-party compensation consultants (team of New Era and Compensation Connections) to do an in-depth study of non-represented compensation. The consultants conducted a market analysis following standardized methodologies, using seven published salary surveys to produce market comparisons. Salary data was also gathered from other school districts considered comparable in budget or headcount including Portland, OR; Minneapolis, MN; Austin, TX; Long Beach, CA; Boston, MA; and Spokane, WA.

As recommended and supported by the work of the compensation consultants, the District created a new workforce architecture and a new pay range structure that incorporated the study’s market data results and aligned the salary grades. The new structure has 20 grades and 13 steps. The District’s salary schedules for non-represented employees are typically updated annually with cost of living adjustments recommended by the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and approved by the Compensation



Committee and, subsequently, the Board. The District participates in salary surveys and adjusts salary ranges as appropriate with market wages.

During the planning for the next school year, the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance, Director of HR Strategy and Operations, and the Classification and Compensation Manager develop an annual compensation plan that includes a schedule for calculating the salary budget for non-represented employees. The plan specifies the criteria that define how individual employees qualify for salary increases and the total proposed pool of funds to be used. To determine the state pass-through or cost-of-living adjustment, HR updates the salary schedules with the determined percentage, calculates the impact of the adjustments, and adds in the projected costs of the step increases for eligible employees. The plan must be approved by the Deputy Superintendent and Superintendent and is then included in the budget projections for the next fiscal year.

The Superintendent has the authority to hire and set the pay for cabinet-level positions, grade 74 and above. The Classification and Compensation Manager creates a job description if needed, and provides supporting data for compensation setting. Where there is no external competitive data available (non-benchmark positions), the Classification and Compensation Manager proposes a grade placement after discussions with the hiring manager and recommends the grade to the Compensation Committee.

The dynamics of senior and executive leadership compensation (grade 70 and above) are different from the other elements of the District’s compensation program due to the differences and the challenges associated with attracting and retaining qualified employees in these positions. The District’s policy requires that candidates who come in above salary step 9 must be approved by District senior leadership. Exceptions are sometimes granted when leadership lobbies for hiring and specific compensation to meet critical current needs. The District’s Compensation Committee reviews all actions and recommendations outside of the normal pay setting processes requiring special consideration and approval, such as structure design and plan changes. The Compensation Committee also reviews, and either approves or denies, all new hire placement requests by department management above a step 9 on the salary range, as well as new or revised classification of grade 70 or higher. Steps have been recently taken by the District to streamline the approach to executive-level hiring; however, there is currently no documented process in place.

The District should budget to acquire more robust, education-sector specific salary data as well as the resources needed to conduct wages annually for the market, particularly for positions that result in low counts of qualified applicants. The District needs to formalize, as a Superintendent procedure, the process for cabinet-level employment hires made by the Superintendent, including documenting the process from the recruiting stage through the analysis and presentation of the compensation level supporting data.

## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

15	OBSERVATION	Performance evaluations are inconsistent, cumbersome, and could be better leveraged to develop District employees.
	RECOMMENDATION	Implement processes to ensure performance evaluations are beneficial for the District and employees, including integrating the review process with a growth and development plan and continuing efforts to streamline the evaluation process.





The District’s employee performance review process utilizes one system and set of templates for all employees, from nurses to chiefs. This results in a complex system of options and materials that staff must review and identify. The HR Department has recently made improvements to the performance evaluation system and process, which should have a positive impact on its overall efficiency. However, the process is not yet consistently followed, and managers have received limited training. In addition, as noted in Recommendation 8, many managers supervise more than 10 employees, which limits their ability to provide effective feedback. Because staff review processes are tied to a supervising manager and managers often have wide spans of control, overall staff feedback loops could be more beneficial to employees.

Without providing constructive feedback to employees, the performance evaluation process results in significant time that does not advance the District’s mission and could allow performance to lag. Additionally, performance evaluations are not tied to a staff growth and development plan that would direct beneficial trainings and other leadership opportunities. In the 2017 central office employee engagement survey, 67 percent of staff reported that they have helpful conversations with their supervisor about their progress and goals.

To increase the effectiveness of the performance evaluation process, the District should consider the following:

- Evaluate supervisor spans of control to enable better functioning managerial and mentorship opportunities, as well as reduce workload for key District employees during the annual review process.
- Integrate performance review processes with employee growth and development plans.
- Continue efforts to streamline the performance evaluation process.

## WORKFLOW

### COMMUNICATIONS

<b>16</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	The District relies on in-person meetings to communicate throughout the organization, which impacts productivity.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Revise meeting practices to ensure meetings are productive, meaningful, and relevant.

The District’s communication culture is highly dependent on in-person meetings. District leadership and staff rely on meetings to disseminate information, provide status updates, discuss ideas and obstacles, and sometimes handle routine items. A component of the District’s operating culture is driven by the desire to reach consensus, which is heavily accomplished in a meeting format. Staff report that meetings often run long and result in no resolution apart from deferring the matter to a later time. The culture is consensus-based, with most decision meetings focused on hearing all opinions rather than implementation. Staff also report that managers, directors, and chiefs often use routine status meetings to disseminate information.

While it is vital that staff, managers, directors, and chiefs have open lines of communication, regular meetings could be better utilized by discussing specific key programmatic issues, focusing on implementing decisions, and spending only a portion of meeting times on cascading messaging, as noted



previously. The District should use exception reporting as an approach for regular meetings by focusing on activities requiring coordination, issue resolution, and decisions. Once the District has an established performance reporting framework (see Recommendation 3), it should incorporate the review of this information into a monthly, quarterly, and annual meeting rhythm. Specifically, key performance metrics should be reviewed by District leadership increasingly comprehensively from monthly to quarterly to annually.

To facilitate productive and meaningful meetings, the District should implement meeting best practices, including:

- *Planning an agenda:* Define why the meeting is being held and identify agenda items, including an expected duration and the discussion leader(s). Ensure that the agenda is meaningful and relates to the objectives and participants.
- *Establish meeting guidelines:* Guidelines should include starting and ending meetings on time, defining how decisions will be made, and ensuring all participants have an opportunity to express their opinion and ideas. Strive to limit weekly meetings to 30 minutes. If run efficiently, then these meetings should not require 60 minutes. Topics requiring additional discussion should be taken “off line.”
- *Following up:* Establish a protocol to review the key decisions that were made and review action items, including the owner, deliverable, and due date. To reduce confusion and ensure accountability, summarize and document these items into meeting minutes sent out to all meeting participants.

Given the geographic distribution of the District, it would increase efficiency to perform some meetings via video. However, it is important to note that both principals and central office staff cite visiting schools as key to understanding the unique operating environments and needs of each building.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

17	OBSERVATION	Customer service requests flow continuously into the District via multiple channels.
	RECOMMENDATION	Establish a central office intake capability to record, track, and manage customer service requests and corresponding information, and consider leveraging a shared services team within T&L to manage customer communications.

The District’s mission of educating students involves the work and collaboration of various stakeholder groups, both internally and externally. The T&L Division is the central location for the interaction of these parties, particularly those conducting day-to-day educational and support activities. Throughout these processes, T&L receives requests for information, program offerings, and assistance from numerous groups including principals, teachers, nurses, counselors, librarians, para-educators, social workers, families, board members, and donors. There is currently no communications protocol or guidelines in place to ensure those who contact the central office receive a response by the appropriate contact in a timely fashion.

The different communication channels used to convey requests are understandably varied including standard phone calls, email, mailbox, and in person messaging attained through face-to-face meetings. To handle a portion of these daily service requests, a customer service team operates out of the Enrollment



Department. This team receives messages that are managed by the group, primarily to address student placement. In addition, the Ombudsperson receives and triages a significant amount of customer contacts and keeps their own records. Otherwise, the many daily requests for assistance flow directly to individuals scattered throughout the District and records are kept on an individual basis.

In the District’s 2018 family survey, 29 percent of respondents reported that the District’s central office is responsive to the input and concerns of families. Similarly, 34 percent felt that they receive effective service and support when calling or visiting the District administration or central office. These numbers are nearly identical to the 2016 family survey. Low customer service ratings are partially the result of fragmented, decentralized requests and responses at the central office.

In order to improve customer service, the District should centrally record and track communications among the various stakeholder groups. As noted previously, T&L staff spend a significant portion of their time responding to requests from multiple channels. Managing the content and flow of information helps support improved customer service by increasing timely responses and reducing the number of items that are not fully addressed. A shared services team, as discussed in Recommendation 9, could manage this function.

To effectively implement a central intake capability, the District should consider process design, software investments, infrastructure, and change management. The District should invest in new technology that can efficiently and effectively capture, track, and manage incoming messages. Families, teachers, and principals should be able to easily navigate the system selected to capture and track messages, requests for assistance, and complaints.

## PROJECT MANAGEMENT

<b>18</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	While T&L staff are dedicated and hardworking, most employees have not been provided project management training or tools.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Reestablish a streamlined PMO to strengthen and support assigned project managers across the District.

Most T&L personnel assigned to run projects are bright, forward thinking, and dedicated employees. Nearly all T&L managers came to the central office as high performing educators and principals; however, few have been formally trained in project management methodology and most have limited experience running complex projects and have not been properly trained to efficiently and effectively run programs.

In the past, the District has explored implementing a central Project Management Office (PMO) with minimal sustainability and success. The project management positions were eliminated during budget cuts, which had the side effect of reduced operating efficiencies. However, the District continues to require training and application of project management principles in many of its functional areas. For example, T&L is managing nearly 100 projects, some of which are multi-year, complex efforts. These projects are often at the crux of delivering the District’s core mission and goals. However, staff report that there is a disconnect between the vision or outcome of a program and the steps required to achieve that goal. Given the ongoing scope of the District’s programs, initiatives, and projects, the need for strengthened project management continues to exist.



To improve project management, the District should reestablish a streamlined PMO consisting of at least three FTEs. The role of this office should include training, planning, collaborating, monitoring project scopes, reporting, and ensuring accountability among project participants and stakeholders. A PMO should develop and assist staff in implementing project management tools, including Gantt charts, workflows, responsibility matrices, time tracking, and collaboration spaces. Implementation of this office will help improve project control, progression, and overall efficiency while also freeing up time to allow managers, directors, and chiefs to focus on other strategic matters. In addition, project management should be a key element of workforce planning and individual development plans for T&L supervisors and managers.

To aid in project management, the District should develop a project implementation template that encompasses the following elements:

- Defining project requirements
- Determining methodology
- Sequential presentation of tasks and grouping into phases
- Budget for each project phase
- Assignment of staff lead and contributors for each task with clear roles and responsibilities
- Designated timeline for each task
- Deliverable or determination of completion for each task
- Detailed description of each task to ensure completion and quality
- Any noted dependencies with other tasks, including how one task exerts influence on other tasks
- Change management plan, if applicable

T&L should assign a project manager to implement each work plan and serve as the point person, support accountability for staff leads, and coordinate across the District's staff. Based on the assigned staff and stakeholders, the project manager should develop a communication plan that will ensure all parties are aware of completion and potential delays in project tasks. Work plans should be centrally stored and easily accessible.

Use of a work plan helps establish clear accountability and expectations for project rollout, as well as communicates necessary timelines and other details to the full project team. T&L will be able to implement projects more efficiently and effectively by providing a clear plan and assigning staff resources to tasks. This approach may help alleviate problems in field operations as well as ensure projects are implemented as intended to achieve T&L's mission and community expectations.



## DATA UTILIZATION

19	OBSERVATION	While the District has made progress implementing technology in recent years, there are opportunities for the District to better leverage data to promote school success.
	RECOMMENDATION	Better utilize data to more efficiently and effectively deliver T&L's core mission.

The District utilizes large amounts of data to administer and monitor its programs, typically to demonstrate compliance with government regulations. The T&L Division uses several core systems to collect, store, and report data, including PowerSchool, Homeroom, and Atlas. In addition to these centralized systems, there are multiple other data repositories maintained on individuals' hard drives. Regardless of where data is located, most information is underutilized to monitor District progress towards meeting goals and proactively addressing programmatic challenges.

When a program has difficulty integrating core data needs with the District's existing systems, program managers often take it upon themselves to develop unique databases to serve their specific purposes. Like many mission-driven organizations, program staff focus on moving quickly rather than waiting for the perfect software solution. Many program teams, such as Assessments, McKinney Vento, Attendance, Prevention and Intervention, and Family Support, process, report, and analyze data to manage and administer school operations and programs. Managers over these programs noted that the data can easily be analyzed on a school-by-school basis, but is difficult to utilize for District-wide assessments.

The District has recently embarked on initiatives to better utilize its data to improve operations and student outcomes as part of the 2016 Buildings, Technology, and Academics (BTA) levy. A number of system investments are underway. In order to continue its efforts to better utilize data, the District should consider the following:

- Institutionalize the expectation that student outcomes are measured through specific data
- Availability of talent among District IT architects, analysts, administrators, and users
- Capabilities and integration among existing data systems and tools
- Establish a robust data governance framework
- Development of a data plan that encompasses requirements, systems development, implementation, maintenance and operations, and customer support
- Reports that can be leveraged to support T&L managers and front-line staff

With strengthened data utilization and monitoring, the District can better address challenges in schools to improve student outcomes. Cross-departmental data can be better utilized to address T&L initiatives in support of curriculum alignment, MTSS, and the impact of strategies for improvement. Likewise, T&L data can be leveraged for other District programs, including improving equity and community engagement.



## DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

20	OBSERVATION	Document storage, tracking, and retrieval systems and processes are disconnected and not fully up-to-date.
	RECOMMENDATION	Further expand the District’s document management program to implement available system capabilities.

Document management processes include document storage, tracking, retrieval, and archiving. The District’s document storage footprint entails multiple systems, which are operated by distinct functions. Efforts to modernize document management have embraced a bottom-up approach to date. This has resulted in a document management program that is still immature relative to peer organizations. The District procured a document management platform called “Open Text” to help manage content and associated workflow. Open Text provides a number of valuable features, including document capture, organized storage, tracking, and content management, but HR is the only department currently fully using Open Text. Aside from using basic features in Open Text, the District has yet to fully integrate technology with T&L workflow processes.

The District should develop a centralized, robust, and comprehensive electronic records management solution to ensure institutional knowledge is recorded, accessible, and in compliance with legal and public disclosure requirements. The unified adoption of a centralized electronic records management platform will significantly improve the District’s record management capabilities in terms of efficiency, coordination, and transparency. A practical go-forward plan should be developed, along with an adequate level of governance and sponsorship to ensure success. Elements of this plan include:

- Assessing alternate platforms that can cost-effectively augment District document management capabilities the current market for cost-effective records management alternatives (e.g., SharePoint, Office 365, etc.)
- Appointing a process owner within each department to ensure an adequate level of participation
- Defining standards for adoption that each department must follow (e.g., intake procedures, naming conventions, definition and maintenance of metadata, retention policy management, etc.)
- Leveraging existing high-speed scanners to support document intake during idle times
- Expanding the scope of document management to include email retention
- Defining a long-term plan and corresponding resource needs for migrating paper record archives into a digital format

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE DOCUMENTATION

21	OBSERVATION	Many T&L Division practices are not documented or maintained as current, resulting in challenges for consistent and efficient service delivery, especially for incoming staff.
	RECOMMENDATION	Document practices and procedures for key roles and functions throughout the T&L Division.

Like many resource-constrained public entities, procedure documentation has not been a priority in T&L due to high workloads and staffing shortages. As noted previously, the District experiences high turnover.



The loss of institutional knowledge associated with these departures combined with a lack of documented procedures results in reduced efficiency and effectiveness. In addition, a lack of documentation to guide operations can cause communication challenges due to a lack of defined service standards. Program managers reported little to no onboarding, minimal training, and limited documentation that would support their success in new roles. Without updated procedures, groups may not perform processes consistently over time.

The District’s policy manual is comprehensive and generally aligns with WSSDA standards. However, additions to Board policy are not regularly assessed for alignment with existing policies and may conflict. Policy conflicts or gaps require staff and Board interpretation, which can lead to disconnects.

Well-developed and properly maintained policies and procedures will help increase employee accountability and smooth employee transitions. The District should create a cross-functional policy and procedure development team to inventory District policies and procedures, determine what additional policies and procedures need to be created, and develop a prioritized schedule for development and update. Given the District’s limited resources, policy and procedure documentation should be prioritized using the following considerations:

- Highly specialized subject areas
- Regulatory or compliance-related area
- Areas funded by external sources
- Areas impacted by high turnover

### C. TIER 3: TACTICAL

Tactical observations and recommendations apply to specific, day-to-day issues within one or more service area.

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

22	OBSERVATION	District professional development is fragmented, manually tracked, and spread across multiple functions, including T&L and HR.
	RECOMMENDATION	Relocate the professional development program management function to the District’s HR Department and ensure it is aligned, sustainable, and adequately supported with authority, staff, and systems.

The District’s professional development program includes tracking and monitoring of required training hours, a formal program to train educators and school administrators, and some leadership training. The program is primarily administered by a Program Manager within T&L’s C&I division. This position is solely responsible for tracking and monitoring training for all certificated staff, including teachers, counselors, nurses, para-educators, and others. The current Program Manager lacks supporting resources, including additional staff and functional systems to effectively conduct this work. Records are maintained in Excel and the District’s training platform, with data entered manually into these systems.



The success of this role is highly dependent on interpersonal relationships throughout the District, and the Program Manager should be a champion for consistent, coordinated, aligned professional development. Although a central professional development committee was formed at the District, it has struggled to engage members and effectively navigate challenges to centralizing this function.

The structure of providing training offerings is highly decentralized, with many school staff identifying, developing, and/or attending various training sessions within and outside of the District. While flexibility in training offerings yields benefits, opportunities to attend these sessions may not be consistent across schools and reliance on one-off trainings increases the work involved in tracking the overall program. Further, principals reported a perception among experienced teachers and administrators that District-provided professional development did not meet their needs. They also noted that allowing teachers to determine their own professional development worked for more experienced teachers, but the District lacks a consistent core of professional development to better support and retain new teachers. Program managers noted that they often develop training that meets state requirements for school staff.

In addition to these efforts, the District’s HR Department is developing a training program for teachers with requirements and annual professional development aligned with best practices. However, the HR Department has not collaborated with the Professional Development Program Manager as part of this effort. Without collaboration among these two functions, overall professional development at the District is heavily fragmented, difficult to control, and inefficient.

In recent years, the District has identified training as a key strategy to advance student achievement as well as build talent for succession planning purposes. To help streamline District-wide professional development, the Professional Development Program Manager position should be relocated to the HR Department to facilitate collaboration with ongoing HR efforts to redesign training. Additionally, the District should ensure this position is adequately supported, particularly in regards to affording sufficient authority commensurate with the responsibility, including staff support and a robust tracking system.

## OPERATIONS DIVISION

<b>23</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	The Operations group is not optimized to adequately support the Associate Superintendent.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Review and optimize the scope of the T&L Operations group, with a focus on continuous improvement.

The T&L Operations group manages school operations and the continuous improvement function. The Operations group was originally designed to handle an array of T&L matters directly tied into school operations affecting teachers and students. The group is involved in many T&L matters, mostly in an effort to advance the Associate Superintendent’s goals of relating to teachers and students, such as building tools for teachers, improving student learning, conducting investigations, tracking data, T&L group facilitation, helping manage the school calendar, and developing guidelines regarding where teacher time is allocated. The Operations group provides cultural and tactical administrative conduits between T&L groups and schools. This is a valuable function because it strengthens communications, provides information, builds relationships, and helps resolves ongoing operational issues and problems.





There is some overlap between Operations and other District resources. For example, Operations works directly with C&I, Internal Audit, and Human Resources. Theoretically, these groups could be performing the same kind of tasks as Operations but are too busy to handle a continuous stream of administrative matters. In this sense, the Operations group is also an extension of the other groups by handling operations matters and duties that overlap accordingly.

Operations staffing is limited, comprised of one full-time director and two half-time managers. The existing continuous improvement function within T&L consists of one internal consultant reporting to the T&L Director of Operations. The original continuous improvement function was organized under the former Deputy Superintendent and part of a better resourced function operating under a Manager of Continuous Improvement. While productive, the current position is half-time. Due to the District's limited functional visibility in positions and siloed culture, this position requires a significant amount of time to align interdepartmental processes and systems.

Similar to the District's PMO function, continuous improvement could potentially have a significant impact on the District's operating efficiency. If this function is expanded and resourced more formally, continuous improvement could produce quantifiable payback to the District through streamlined workflow. Many T&L processes can be redesigned to consume fewer steps and therefore less time. The same processes can also be better integrated within the District's many departments, reducing overlap and eliminating some processes altogether. This team should contribute to the District in the following ways:

- Continuing to improve the "start of school" team that streamlines and places importance on vital calendar year functions including enrollment, capital facilities, and T&L. This role is part of a cross-functional team and operates in support of this group.
- On special projects, primarily for the Associate Superintendent of T&L or the T&L Operations Director, promoting a cultural mindset through planning and training across the organization (a current example project is addressing Special Education transportation matters). This effort is assisting management with methodologies and tools.
- Assisting staff in documenting policies and procedures in their functions, including identifying opportunities for improvement, efficiency gains, and interdepartmental collaboration.

Similar to the PMO, continuous improvement should comprise of a minimum three-person team led by a manager or director. For this function to be successful, the District leadership team must be supportive of the team's efforts and commit to spending resources on reevaluating existing practices.

## OMBUDSPERSON

24	OBSERVATION	The District employs a central Ombudsperson position reporting directly to the Deputy Superintendent who operates with minimal support.
	RECOMMENDATION	Increase the level of support provided to the Ombudsperson function, including systems and processes, and consider moving the function under the District's Legal Department.



The purpose of the Ombudsperson position is to solve problems and resolve conflict, working between parties to find an acceptable resolution to specific issues. At the District, the Ombudsperson gets involved with a wide variety of issues. While it's not uncommon to operate to resolve issues between District personnel, more often than not, the Ombudsperson is positioned between external parties (such as families and students) and internal personnel (such as principals and teachers). It is common for the Ombudsperson to receive external requests for help from families seeking assistance to a student problem and serve as a facilitator between parties until a matter is resolved. The function also helps prevent issues from escalating and prevents further conflict (probably reducing the likelihood of litigation in some circumstances).

The Ombudsperson position is largely self-managed, takes on new issues daily, and appears to resolve many to the benefit of both sides. While there is an abundance of continuing issues to resolve, support for this position is lacking. Support challenges include a lack of resources and systems to manage the function effectively, as well as lack of process and corresponding reporting. These resource issues interfere with the Ombudsperson's ability to operate as efficiently as possible.

Until recently, there was a second Ombudsperson position operating within T&L specifically to handle Special Education matters. However, this position is now in the process of being converted to a different position within Student Support Services. To strengthen the productivity of the Ombudsperson, the District should consider centralizing all Ombudsperson roles across the District to operate out of one office and establishing an improved intake capability where requests for assistance can be captured, stored, managed, and retrieved. The work of the Special Education Ombudsperson should shift to the central Ombudsperson role to ensure that capability is not lost.

The District should consider relocating the Ombudsperson to the Legal Department or directly reporting to the Superintendent. It is best practice for Ombudsperson roles to function independently, confidentially, and impartially from operations, so the staff can operate without influence, ensuring confidentiality and better positioning the function from an ethical standpoint.

## COMPLIANCE

25	OBSERVATION	The District manages regulatory compliance on a program-by-program basis, increasing the risk of non-compliance and potential loss of funding.
	RECOMMENDATION	Establish a centralized regulatory compliance function for the District.

The District has many layers of regulatory compliance, including federal, state, local, and donor requirements. For example, the Early Learning Program has state, local, and grant regulations that must be monitored and regularly reported on to demonstrate compliance in order to receive continued funding. District staff report that program managers are largely responsible for maintaining compliance within their subject matter area. As some directors, executive directors, and chiefs operate over a significant number of functional areas, there are concerns regarding their ability to fully understand and enact regulatory requirements over all programs. This was a particular concern within the Coordinated Health function, in large part due to the wide scope of functions and heavy reliance on grant funding.



The District should establish a centralized compliance function within Finance, Legal, or Internal Audit departments to ensure all necessary regulations are followed. This office should serve as the District’s liaison to federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as other relevant organizations and respond to inquiries, audits, and concerns related to regulatory compliance. Additionally, the office should establish and support systems and processes that enable staff to efficiently demonstrate compliance with applicable regulations using District data.

## GRANT ADMINISTRATION

<b>26</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	Grant administration largely operates in a decentralized environment and is primarily oriented towards compliance and reporting functions, with limited strategic ability.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Move the T&L Grants group to the Finance Department and broaden its role to include more oversight responsibilities.

The T&L grant function is comprised of an eight-person team led by the Director of Grants. The Grants group is responsible for all grants in the District and includes activities such as budgeting, costing, Title I-Lap, and private school coordination. While many of the District’s grants are tied to T&L functions, the Grants group also supports other groups and heavily works with the District’s Finance Department to administer and manage funds. Currently, T&L Grants staff are primarily compliance and reporting oriented.

Like many other District business functions, grants management is decentralized. Beyond compliance, there is limited time spent at the top of the District from a management perspective looking at the overall grants function. Grant administration is largely managed bottom-up, in a fragmented fashion. Many program managers and directors apply for, manage, administer, and report on grants specific to their functional areas, with little to no oversight from T&L Grants or their supervisor. Without additional centralization and consistent program manager support and resources, the District’s overall grants strategy, pursuits, control, and follow up are not optimally effective. Grants are likely not producing as much revenue or operating as efficiently as possible.

Because the District’s current Grants group functions heavily focus on compliance and reporting, the group has more commonality with Finance than T&L. Therefore, this group should reside within the Finance Department to increase in managerial oversight and supervision over grants. This relocation would likely result in the following benefits:

- Increasing District oversight and management
- Knowledge transfer between personnel working with grants
- Staff resource sharing and increased shared support for one another
- Standardized compliance capabilities
- Increased technology access
- Improved tracking and reporting

Moving the grants function will allow an increased level of oversight in concert with compliance. The function will naturally operate at a higher managerial level rather than tactically at an operational level.



As such, this move will provide the opportunity to increase and strengthen management and tracking over grants District-wide.

This reorganization would likely result in increased external grant funding provided to the District in the long-term. The Director’s role should shift to be more involved in grants strategy and planning, pursuits, and tracking overall District performance. The new Grant Management and Pursuit function and Manager, whether hired as a new position or as an existing position reconfigured and elevated, would work in tandem with the Director, as well as with others outside the group. The ultimate goal of increasing grants revenues would provide financial payback for this newly focused revenue generating function, and possibly achieve payback in the near term.

## CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

<b>27</b>	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	The District has historically under-resourced instructional materials investment, resulting in a backlog of curricula that require updating.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Develop an instructional materials management plan to provide structure and ensure quality control of designed, selected, and implemented curriculum including internal consistency and required resources.

The District has historically under-resourced investment in instructional materials, resulting in a backlog of required curricular updates. In 2016-17, the District adopted English and Language Arts instructional materials at a cost of \$5.6 million. This adoption was led by two C&I employees and impacts six grade levels, 72 schools, 1,300 teachers, and approximately 25,000 students. The District also approved \$7 million in 2018-19 for additional instructional materials updates, with a plan to update instructional materials based on a rolling schedule. To direct future investment in instructional materials, the C&I Chief developed a five-year, high level curricular implementation plan that prioritizes materials requiring updates to comply with new graduation requirements. This new investment represents a significant expansion of C&I’s workload. Additionally, the budgeted amounts only pertain to the purchase of instructional materials and are not inclusive of implementation costs, including personnel and training.

The C&I division currently lacks capacity to research, approve, and effectively implement new instructional materials. Staff primarily act as resources to teachers and principals in delivering instructional materials, which can vary from the District’s standard, outdated materials to building- and classroom-specific. Principals reported that the lack of common and current instructional materials is viewed as an opportunity by experienced, strong teachers to customize instructional materials to their students, while teachers in need of development often feel lost. As a result, the ability to assess student progress and ensure learning objectives are met within individual schools and across the District is nearly impossible. To ensure the District consistently maximizes the full benefits of instructional materials across schools and classrooms, C&I managers should further expand curriculum planning and fully develop implementation plans. Leading school districts tend to follow an implementation model resembling the following:

1. *Plan program design:* Central office staff plan and schedule instructional materials adoption with schools, teachers, and coaches.



2. *Training:* C&I staff provide an orientation and training on new materials. These content trainings typically include strategies and approaches to student learning and motivation.
3. *Implementation:* Once teachers and administrators have been trained on the new materials, frequent and regular collaboration time should continue to occur. These check-ins help the central office and teachers build consensus around what students are expected to know, understand, and achieve in each grade level.
4. *Evaluation:* One vital component of instructional materials implementation is measuring impact on student achievement, as measured by changes in test scores, student work products, and overall classroom observation. According to best practices, schools should conduct quarterly evaluations for the first 1-2 years following new materials adoption. These evaluations provide teachers and central office staff the opportunity to discuss progress and identify additional areas of need.
5. *Continual updates:* Throughout the instructional materials’ lifecycle, the central office should support schools and teachers to make adjustments to best serve students’ needs.

To further optimize curricular implementation, the District should consider investing in school-level instructional coaches and leveraging the Executive Directors of Schools to lead curriculum change. Instructional coaches provide a resource for educators improve teaching and instructional practices, as well as serving as a liaison between the central office and teachers. Coaches also often provide top-down professional development, with the added benefit of providing ongoing evaluation and resources to continually support instructional practice. Other districts often use “Curriculum Coordinators” or instructional coaches to oversee school curricula and teaching standards. Job responsibilities typically include:

- Coordinate the implementation of curriculum
- Plan, organize, and conduct teacher training conferences or workshops
- Observe and evaluate teachers’ instruction and analyze student test data
- Assess and discuss implementation of standards with school staff
- Review and recommend teaching techniques and the use of technology
- Develop procedures to implement the curriculum
- Train teachers and other staff in new content

## ADVANCED LEARNING

28	<b>OBSERVATION</b>	The Advanced Learning group has historically focused on assessment with minimal central guidance on curriculum, program management, or school support.
	<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Continue expanding the focus of the Advanced Learning Program from assessment to program delivery by providing professional development and corresponding materials to support learning opportunities for highly capable students.

According to School Board Policy 2190, the District’s Advanced Learning Program is intended to identify and provide instructional services for students who demonstrate high academic achievement, but do not qualify as highly capable. State law defines highly capable students as students scoring above the 98<sup>th</sup>



percentile on a qualifying exam. However, the District defines advanced learners as students above the 87<sup>th</sup> percentile on a qualifying exam. Based on a review of other districts' advanced learning programs, this criteria may be too low to accurately identify students who would benefit from unique advanced learning programs. For example, in Colorado, gifted education is defined as students in the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile and above. "Talent pools" are formed for students scoring below the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile who demonstrate advanced ability in a particular area, but do not meet the criteria for gifted education.

While the intent of the program is to provide differentiation, content acceleration, and deeper learning opportunities for advanced learning students, the District has historically focused its efforts on student identification. According to the National Association for Gifted Children, the key components of a gifted education program are:

- Identification and assessment
- Curriculum and program services for identified students
- Professional staff that interact with students
- Management and evaluation of gifted programs

Currently, central District staff only provide student identification and assessment services. Principals reported receiving no guidance or support for advanced or highly capable learners and have a strong desire for curriculum and professional development support. Recently, the District has initiated a transformation in the program's focus to begin addressing school support for instructional services. A 2017 program review of Advanced Learning provided three recommendations to help promote future student success:

1. Make equity-focused changes to testing policies
2. Provide better in-school access to advanced learning opportunities
3. Encourage more advanced learning referrals

These recommendations are based on feedback from principals and families, and should be incorporated into the District's advanced learning plan. As these changes take effect, the Advanced Learning Program Manager should develop a program plan to identify how the program will change. The plan should identify short and long-term vision and goals, clearly articulate planned service offerings, and include reporting and communication standards.



# APPENDIX A: SAMPLE BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND OPERATING PROTOCOLS

## CENTRALIA SCHOOL DISTRICT (WA)<sup>9</sup>

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful organizations are the results of strong and effective leadership. In order for members of our team to be active players, they must know their roles.

#### Roles of the Board and Superintendent

SCHOOL BOARD – GOVERNS (GUIDES/DIRECTS)	SUPERINTENDENT – MANAGES (ADMINISTERS/OPERATES)
Decides What	Decides How
Requests Information	Seeks and Provides Information
Considers Issues	Provides Recommendations
Creates, Reviews, Adopts Policy	Recommends, Implements Policy
Approves & Reviews Plans	Implements Plans
Monitors Progress	Reports Progress
Contracts with Personnel	Supervises & Evaluates Personnel
Approves & Reviews Budget	Formulates Budget
Represents Public Interests	Acts in Public Interest

#### What Our Roles Do Not Encompass

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD IS NOT TO:	THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IS NOT TO:
Carry out policies or micro-manage or develop budgets	Make policies
Direct any staff other than the superintendent	Direct the board
Create surprises	Create surprises

<sup>9</sup>

[https://www.centralia.k12.wa.us/cms/lib/WA01001473/Centricity/Domain/61/CSD\\_OPERATION\\_PROT COLS\\_FEB\\_2014.pdf](https://www.centralia.k12.wa.us/cms/lib/WA01001473/Centricity/Domain/61/CSD_OPERATION_PROT COLS_FEB_2014.pdf)



THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD IS NOT TO:	THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT IS NOT TO:
Abdicate Board responsibility	Assume Board responsibilities
Press narrow personal agenda	Press narrow personal agenda
As individuals, make promises that would appear binding upon the Board and/or District	Discourage open discussion and feedback

## BOARD OPERATING PROTOCOLS

We, the members of the Board of Directors of the Centralia School District, are committed to serving the children and citizens of this community. We will strive to provide a high quality public education, which meets the needs of all the children in our district.

To achieve that goal, we have established this operating protocol, which will serve as a code of conduct and ethics to help govern our actions at meetings and in our role as directors.

We believe that the success of the Centralia School District depends on a shared vision among the school board, staff, parents and community, and we will try to the best of our ability to uphold these aspirations.

### **Board Meetings**

Board meetings provide the forum for where decisions are made. We will:

- Strive to hold efficient, succinct, and equitable meetings.
- Review agenda items prior to board meetings.
- Request any additional information from the board president or superintendent.
- Ask the board president or superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting.
- Ensure that surprises to the board or superintendent are the exception and not the rule.
- Expect the board president to be cautious of time and observe the board's protocol.
- Refer additional facts and information needed by the board to the superintendent for follow-up.

Executive Sessions will be held when specific needs arise as allowed by law. These needs include:

- Acquiring or selling real estate
- Qualifications of an application for employment by the board
- Qualifications of a candidate for appointment to elective office such as a school director.
- Discussion with legal counsel of enforcement actions, litigation or potential litigation

Regarding Executive Sessions, we will:

- Be extremely sensitive to the legal ramifications of executive session meetings and comments.
- Respect the confidentiality of all privileged information, including that discussed in executive session.
- Discuss a permissible topic in executive session, but take final actions in public, as is required by the Open Public Meetings Act.





## **Communications Between the Board and Staff**

The following communications procedures are established:

1. Staff Communications to the Board
  - a. All reports to the board or individual board members from principals, supervisors, teachers, or other staff members shall be submitted through the superintendent.
  - b. Personal complaints and criticism received by board members will be referred to the appropriate supervisor or superintendent.
  - c. This will not deny any staff member's right to appeal to the board regarding administrative decisions, provided that the superintendent will have been notified of the forthcoming appeal and that it is processed according to the applicable procedures on complaints and grievances.
2. Board Communications to Staff
  - a. All official communications, policies, and directives of staff interest and concern will be communicated to staff members through the superintendent.
  - b. The superintendent will employ all such media as are appropriate to keep staff fully informed of the board's priorities, concerns and actions.
  - c. Requests for information from staff by board members will be taken to the superintendent. The superintendent will provide the information in a timely manner.
3. Visits to the School
  - a. The typical process is for individual board members to inform the principal of their visit to the school or classrooms.
  - b. Such visits will be regarded as expressions of interest in school affairs and not as "inspections" or visits for supervisory or administrative purposes.
  - c. Official visits by board members will be carried on only under board authorization and with the full knowledge of staff, including the superintendent and principal
4. Social Interaction
  - a. Staff and board members share a keen interest in the schools and in education. When they meet at social affairs and other functions, informal discussion on such matters as educational trends, issues, and innovations can be anticipated.
  - b. Discussions of personalities or staff grievances are not appropriate.

## **Working with district staff about our own children**

In order to work effectively with district staff about our own children we agree to:

- Remember we are parents (grandparents) first.
- Follow the same process that we expect all parents to follow: meet with the teacher first, then follow the chain of command.
- Be clear that we are speaking to the teacher as a parent. (i.e., "My child is having this problem \_\_\_\_\_. How can I help them?")
- Understand that sometimes our spouse or significant other may be the right person to handle situation.
- Inform the superintendent of the situation regardless of the resolution.



## Board and Community Interaction

Communication between board members and community (complaints or concerns) The board encourages public input through a variety of print and electronic media. In order to respond effectively to community members who share a concern or complaint with us, we agree to:

- Remember that receiving information from an individual or a group is not the same as having total knowledge of the topic or issue. There are usually two sides to every concern.
- Utilize the 6 R's to ensure the person speaking feels valued and heard:
  - Receive by listening openly to what the other person is saying.
  - Repeat by paraphrasing back or asking questions for clarification.
  - Request what the person sees as a solution to the problem and/or what they want you to do with the information.
  - Review the real options the person has available to them within the district policies or processes.
  - Redirect the person into the appropriate place in the system:
    - Encourage patrons to present their own issue to the person who can properly and expeditiously address their issues
    - If appropriate, explain the district complaint policy and how to access it. Report to the superintendent - Call the superintendent to give him a heads-up about the constituent issue so that the superintendent is able to understand the total picture.
    - Describe our response to the constituent so that the superintendent hears directly from us, and does not get caught in the middle. The superintendent will deal with the issue as necessary and when appropriate determine how best to inform the total board.

## Board Conduct

We will:

- Lead by example. We use words and actions that create a positive impression on an individual, the board, or the district.
- Base our decisions on the available facts and not independent judgment.
- Not yield to individuals or special interest groups.
- Represent the needs and interests of all the children in the district as outlined in the district's mission statement
- Not abuse our official position.
- Not use district facilities, resources, or position for the purpose of advancing the interest of ourselves or any other individual or individuals.
- Make every attempt to attend all board functions, including committee meetings.
- Serve on committees as a silent observer or active participant, as defined by the board.
- Accept responsibility for all board decisions, regardless of how we voted and not offer a different opinion outside the boardroom.
- Take no private actions that will compromise the board or administration.
- Endeavor to hear all members' opinions and listen objectively.
- Encourage debate and differing points of view.
- Conduct discussions with care and respect.



## **The Board's Authority**

We recognize:

- That only the board as a whole has authority.
- That individual board members do not have authority.
- That the board president is the spokesman for the board.
- That the board emphasizes planning, policy-making and public relations rather than being involved in the management of school operation.
- That an individual board member will not take unilateral action.
- The individual directors do not give direction. Direction is given by the board as a whole.

We will:

- Exercise oversight responsibilities through policy, planning, advocacy and public relations.
- Avoid attempts to micro-manage the schools.
- Delegate the management of the schools to the superintendent.
- Set clear goals for the superintendent.

## **Board- Superintendent Relationship**

- Surprises to the board or the superintendent will be the exception, not the rule.
- The board recognizes the superintendent as the chief executive officer and expects recommendations, proposals and suggestion on most matters before the board.
- The board president meets with the superintendent and keeps all board members informed of board matters/information.
- Prior to a board meeting, each board director meets individually or in pairs with the superintendent to share concerns, ask questions, or to bring forth a future agenda item for consideration of the board.

## **Board Professional Development**

We will:

- Conduct an annual self-evaluation.
- Address any individual problems, such as poor meeting attendance or leaks of confidential information.
- Model life-long learning.
- Participate in opportunities that provide professional growth.
- Encourage members to take advantage of opportunities to inform themselves about current educational issues through individual study and participation in programs providing needed information.
- Encourage members to disseminate information to other members.

## **Board and Superintendent Roles in Negotiations**

We will:

- Define the philosophical and financial parameters for negotiations.



- Trust our negotiating team to do the best job that they can.
- Remind staff that there is a process in place, that the staff and district each have an identified negotiating team, and that any questions or issues need to go through the defined negotiation process.
- Change to adopt and stand behind the final contracts.

## SANTA BARBARA UNIFIED (CA)<sup>10</sup>

### **Purpose**

The Board of Education is the educational policy-making body for the District. To effectively meet the District's challenges, the Board and Superintendent must function together as a leadership team. To ensure unity among team members, effective operating procedures, or protocols, must be in place. There are general protocols and those that are specific for the Board and for the Superintendent.

### **General**

The Board and Superintendent will:

1. Keep learning and achievement for all students as the primary focus.
2. Value, support, and advocate for public education.
3. Operate openly with trust and integrity.
4. Govern in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility, dignity, and respect, while honoring the right to disagree with each other.
5. Define and respect the difference between administration and policy-making and respect the roles of each.
6. Keep confidential matters confidential. Uphold the legal requirement for confidentiality on all matters arising from Board Meeting Executive Sessions; keep all conversations taking place in Closed Session absolutely confidential.

### **Areas of Responsibilities**

Board Members will:

1. Govern within Board-adopted policies and procedures.
2. Ensure opportunities for the diverse range of views in the community to inform Board deliberations.
3. Attend regularly scheduled Board meetings unless a situation occurs that makes attendance impossible; cooperate in scheduling special meetings and/or work sessions for planning and training purposes.
4. Understand and respect the distinctions between Board and staff roles, and refrain from performing management functions that are the responsibility of the Superintendent and staff.
5. Acknowledge that individual request for reports and projects will be directed only to the Superintendent.
6. Understand the Superintendent's role to make personnel recommendations and changes in consultation with the Board.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sbunified.org/board/board-and-superintendent-protocols/>



7. Understand the Board as a collective body must provide clear signals to its professional staff through its Superintendent.
8. Take collective responsibility for the Board's performance.
9. Cast a vote on all matters except when a conflict of interest arises.
10. School site visits should be coordinated with the Principal directly with notification to the Superintendent.
11. Represent the District, when possible, by attending community functions.

The Superintendent will:

1. Understand the distinction between Board and staff roles and respect the role of the Board as the representative of the community.
2. Make personnel recommendations and changes in consultation with the Board.
3. Inform the Board prior to critical information becoming public; apprise all Board members in a timely manner of any major incident or when they may be called on to answer or explain.
4. Provide information requested by one Board member to every Board member.
5. Distribute the Board agenda in a timely fashion and with enough time for Board study, and clarify information prior to a scheduled meeting.
6. Never bring a matter to a public meeting that is a surprise to a Board member or cabinet member.
7. Treat all Board members professionally.
8. Visit school campuses regularly.
9. Represent the school district by being visible in the community.

## **Communication**

Board Members will:

1. Communicate a common vision.
2. Communicate directly with the Superintendent whenever a question or concern is raised by a staff member, student, parent, or community member.
3. Contact the Superintendent whenever contacted by the media regarding an incident, event, or agenda item.
4. Communicate proactively with the Superintendent to address questions and/or concerns about agenda items and policy issues.
5. Communicate one-on-one with the Superintendent when an individual concern arises; will not allow a matter to fester.

The Superintendent will:

1. Communicate with Board members promptly and effectively.
2. Inform the Board prior to critical information becoming public; apprise all Board members in a timely manner of any major incident or when they may be called on to answer or explain.
3. Distribute information fully and equally to all Board members.
4. Provide requests for additional information through a Board update, special report, Board agenda items, or as a Board workshop.



5. Communicate with individual Board members to determine if concerns exist prior to a possible problem developing, and respect the right to disagree with each other.

### **Constructive Discussion with Respect for One's Differing Position**

Board Members and Superintendent will:

1. Act with dignity, and understand the implication of demeanor and behavior.
2. Recognize and respect difference of perspective and style on the Board and among staff, students, parents, and the community.
3. Respect the decisions of the majority vote after honoring the right of individual members to express opposing viewpoints and vote their convictions.

### **Decision-Making**

Board Members will:

1. Understand authority rests with the Board as a whole and not with individuals.
2. Recognize decisions are made only at properly scheduled board meetings.
3. As an individual Board member, not make or appear to make a decision that appropriately should be made by the entire Board.
4. Recognize the individual role of constituents and special interest groups, while understanding the importance of using one's best judgment to represent all members of the community.

The Superintendent will:

1. Provide data to the Board members so data-driven decisions can be made.
2. Present major decisions initially as a discussion item, then place it on the next Board agenda for action.

### **Leadership**

Board Members will:

1. Work with all members of the Board and the Superintendent to become a team devoted to students; be dedicated to making all members of the team successful.
2. Participate in professional development and commit the time and energy necessary to be an informed and effective leader.

The Superintendent will:

1. Work toward creating a team with the Board dedicated to students.
2. Communicate the common vision.
3. Recognize that the Board/Superintendent governance relationship requires support by the District's management team.
4. Accept leadership responsibility and be accountable for implementing the vision, goals, and policies of the District.
5. Bring to the attention of the Board matters that affect relationships.
6. Model the value of life-long learning.



## **Periodic Evaluation**

Board Members will:

1. Objectively evaluate the Superintendent's performance and provide appropriate feedback on an annual basis.
2. Periodically evaluate its own effectiveness; review its protocols at least every two years.

The Superintendent will:

1. Respect and acknowledge the Board's role in setting policy and overseeing the performance of the Superintendent.
2. Conduct a self-assessment prior to the Board's evaluation of the Superintendent's job performance.

## **Planning**

Board Members will:

1. Focus on policymaking, planning, and evaluation for student success.
2. Participate in establishing annual expectations and goals for the Superintendent.

The Superintendent will:

1. Work with the Board to establish a clear vision for the District.
2. Prepare preliminary goals annually for the Board's consideration.

## **KENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (WA)<sup>11</sup>**

The Kent School Board will emphasize policymaking, planning and advocacy for the benefit of children. To support a partnership in responsibility and teamwork the board and the administration agreed to the following protocol guidelines.

1. The board will consider research, best practices and public input in its decision making process.
2. The superintendent is the chief executive officer and should recommend/propose/suggest on most matters before the board.
3. Individual board members do not have authority. Only the board as a whole has authority. We agree that a board member will not take individual action.
4. Conduct of a board member is very important. We encourage debate and differing points of view, and we will do it with care and respect.
5. While the board is eager to listen to its constituents and staff, each inquiry is to be referred to the person who can properly and expeditiously address the issue. We agree to follow the chain of command in accordance with established board policy and procedure.
6. The board will encourage others to present their own issues, problems, or proposals.
7. The board will promptly address individual issues that hinder the board's effectiveness.

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<sup>11</sup>

<https://www.kent.k12.wa.us/cms/lib/WA01001454/Centricity/Domain/45/BOARDPROTOCOLRevisedJanuary2012.pdf>



8. The board president or designee will be the official spokesperson for the board.
9. Communications between the central office administrators and the school board are encouraged. Board requests are to be directed to the superintendent.
10. The board or its individual members agree to direct all personnel complaints and criticisms directly to the superintendent.
11. Board meetings are where the board does its work in public. We agree to speak to the issues on the agenda and attend to our fellow board members. Facts and the information needed from the administration will be referred through the superintendent.
12. Board meetings are for decision-making, action, and votes. Board discussions should be concise and pertinent to the issue. If a board member needs more information or has questions, either the superintendent or the board president is to be called before the meeting.
13. Executive sessions will be held only when specific needs arise. The board must be sensitive to the legal ramifications of these meetings.
14. We agree to ask the board chair or the superintendent to place an item on the agenda instead of bringing it up unexpectedly at the meeting;
15. Reports to the board will focus primarily on accountability to the Board and District Goals.





# APPENDIX B: SAMPLE PRIORITIZATION FRAMEWORKS

## SPRINGFIELD DISTRICT 186 (IL)<sup>12</sup>

The first step of this process is designed to be as systematic as possible. Difficult decisions must still be made with regard to prioritization. All programs, positions, and ideas are valuable and can contribute much to the educational experience. There may be valid rationale for sustaining and supporting programs that are more costly and yet serve a limited number of students. Different perspectives will have a strong bearing on the evaluation process that may not create significant opportunities for many students but can have a long-term impact on a few students toward the achievement of a particular strategic goal of the district, school, or department.

The opportunity is to begin to shift the dialog in another direction by utilizing an analytical and more objective approach in order to bring some relief to the arduous process administrators must face when making decisions about budget cuts, trade-offs, and where to reallocate resources. Such a framework and strategy is designed to influence the decision-making process beyond the current level of thinking.

<b>Total: 10</b>	<b>Question 1 - Opportunity</b>
< 7	This item has not been considered in the budget before; however budget funding of this item will be a good use of resources
< 7 - 7.9	This item is already part of the budget however there is some question about whether we are making good use of resources and should consider reducing or eliminating funding
8 - 8.9	This item is already part of the budget, the current budget level is adequate, and is a good use of resources to continue or sustain the current level of services or program offerings
9 - 10	This item is already part of the budget however the current budget level is inadequate and should be increased in order to improve or sustain the current level of service or offerings

<b>Total: 15</b>	<b>Question 2 - Support</b>
< 10.5	There are a few key stakeholders that would be involved or impacted by the decision to continue or change the level of resources being allocated to this item
< 12	There are a number of key stakeholders that would be involved or impacted by the decision to continue or change the level of resources being allocated to this item
12-13.4	The decision to continue or change the level of resources allocated to this item involves one or two key stakeholders
13.5 - 15	The decision to continue or change the level of resources being allocated to this item involves several key stakeholders

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.sps186.org/downloads/table/12755/Rubric\\_for\\_Prioritization.pdf](https://www.sps186.org/downloads/table/12755/Rubric_for_Prioritization.pdf)



<b>Total: 15</b>	<b>Question 3 – Student Impact</b>
< 10.5	There is no direct impact on student achievement or the educational experience but it does contribute to the educational process or support our operations in other ways
10.5-11	There is somewhat a direct impact on student achievement or the educational experience however it will not impact students beyond the current year
12 – 13.4	There is a very significant impact on student achievement and the educational experience; the impact of the change can have an effect on future performance levels beyond the current year
13.5-15	There is a critical impact on student achievement and the educational experience and the impact of this change can have a significant effect on future student performance levels and is contrary to our mission

<b>Total: 6</b>	<b>Question 4 – Implementation</b>
<4	This initiative can be immediately implemented after the appropriation of the budget
4-4.5	This initiative will require just a few meetings among key decision makers and can be immediately implemented after the appropriation of the budget
4.5-5	Effective planning will need to be conducted however the value to the outcome will be significant and worth the effort and can be implemented in a matter of months after the appropriation of the budget
6	This initiative will require a significant change in the way we do business or to our educational model or services; effective planning can put this into place in the next fiscal year

<b>Total: 20</b>	<b>Question 5 – Decision-Making Process</b>
<14	There are no more than three stakeholder groups involved in the decision-making process to create the desired outcome
14-16	There are between four – six stakeholders that need to be involved in the process to effect the desired outcome
16-17	There are a key group of stakeholders (employee group representatives and/or community members) among the decision-makers to create the desired outcome
18-20	This decision-making process requires a high level of support among Board members, cabinet administration and principals to create the desired outcome

<b>Total: 20</b>	<b>Question 6 – Purpose</b>
<14	This program/position/expenditure is in response to a problem that has been occurring for many years and may escalate if not addressed soon; it will go a long way toward improving conditions in my school, department or the district
14-16	This program/position/expenditure provides a solution that addresses an ongoing problem or has not been addressed before
16-17	This program/position/expenditure can significantly impact student achievement and supports many of the district’s goals and objectives
18-20	This program/position/expenditure has several significant benefits to the district



## SCHOOL SERVICES OF CALIFORNIA, INC.<sup>13</sup>

**Prioritization Considerations -- Use these questions to guide discussion regarding how priority factors rate.**

Importance	Will implementing this activity/item directly address the needs around student achievement?
	Will implementing this activity impact most of our students or only a small group of students?
	Will implementing this activity impact the entire staff or just the actions of a few individuals?
	Is there evidence that this activity has improved student achievement?
	Is this activity part of a districtwide initiative or one that we will be required to implement imminently?
	Will implementing this activity impact the classroom directly or is it a more peripheral activity such as an afterschool or parent activity?
Urgency	Does this activity address one of our most critical needs?
	Is there evidence that this activity will directly and quickly address the needs of students like ours?
	Is this activity time bound? That is, is training or funding available now that won't be later?
	Is this activity part of a districtwide initiative or one that we will be required to implement imminently?
Ease of Doing	Does this activity align with our existing instructional program?
	Will this activity require a great deal of professional development or require new staff in order to implement it effectively?
	Will we need to invest in significant amounts of new materials in order to implement this activity effectively?
	Is this activity easily sustainable once we have the basics in place?

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.sscal.com/tools\\_resources.cfm](https://www.sscal.com/tools_resources.cfm)





# APPENDIX C: TEACHING & LEARNING ORGANIZATION CHART

