Review of the
Student Transportation Program
of the
Seattle Public Schools

January 2019

Stephen Nielsen, Deputy Superintendent of the Seattle Public Schools (SPS), requested that the Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) provide a high-level management review of the school district's student transportation program. Specifically, he requested that the Council[1] --

- Review and comment on the existing organizational structure, business processes, planning and forecasting, and internal controls of the transportation operation.

- Identify opportunities for improvement and develop recommendations to increase operational efficiencies, effectiveness, and positive student transportation outcomes.

The Council used two approaches to meet these requests. The first approach involved a written survey, completed by the Transportation Manager, asking the department to rate its use of a series of industry "best practices and indicators" and to provide documentation and detailed explanations to support each rating. The completed survey was returned to the Council and reviewed prior to a site visit described below. A full copy of the completed survey, which includes survey components, analysis, and scoring can be found in Attachment E of this management letter.

The second approach involved an onsite visit to the Seattle Public Schools. The Council assembled a Strategic Support Team (the team) of senior managers with extensive experience in transportation operations from other major urban city school systems across the country. The team was composed of the following individuals. (Attachment A provides brief biographical sketches of team members.)

> Robert Carlson, Project Director
> Director, Management Services
> Council of the Great City Schools
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> David Palmer, Principal Investigator
> Deputy Director of Transportation (Retired)
> Los Angeles Unified School District

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[1] The Council has conducted over 300 organizational, instructional, management, and operational reviews in over 60 big city school districts over the last 20 years. The reports generated by these reviews are often critical, but they also have been the foundation for improving the operations, organization, instruction, and management of many urban school systems nationally. In other cases, the reports are complimentary and form the basis for identifying "best practices" for other urban school systems to replicate. (Attachment G lists the reviews that the Council has conducted.)

James Beekman
General Manager, Transportation
Hillsborough County Public Schools

Nathan Graf
Senior Executive Director, Transportation and Vehicle Maintenance
San Antonio Independent School District

Kourosh (Kris) Hafezizadeh
Executive Director, Transportation
Austin Independent School District

Nicole Portee
Executive Director, Transportation Services
Denver Public Schools

William Wen
Senior Director, Transportation Services
Orange County Public Schools

The team reviewed the survey and the district's rating on it, other key documents, and data provided by the district prior to a four-day site visit to Seattle on January 27-30, 2019. The general schedule for the site visit is described below, and the complete working agenda for the site visit is presented in Attachment B.

The team met during the evening of the first day of the site visit to make final adjustments to the work schedule. The team used the second and third days of the site visit to observe operations, conduct interviews with staff members and contractors (a list of individuals interviewed is included in Attachment C), and examine additional documents and data (a complete list of documents reviewed, and sites visited are ppresented in Attachment D).[2]

The final day of the visit was devoted to synthesizing and refining the team's findings and recommendations and providing the Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Chief Operations Officer, and Special Assistant to the Superintendent with a briefing on the team's preliminary findings.

The Council sent the draft of this document to team members for their review to affirm the accuracy of the report and to obtain their concurrence with final recommendations. This management letter contains the findings and recommendations that have been designed by the team to help improve the operational efficiencies and effectiveness of the Seattle Public Schools student transportation program.

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[2] The Council's reports are based on interviews with district staff and others, a review of documents, observations of operations, and professional judgment. The team conducting the interviews must rely on the willingness of those interviewed to be truthful and forthcoming, but it cannot always judge the accuracy of statements made by interviewees.

Seattle Public Schools

Seattle Public Schools, the largest school system in the State of Washington,[3] serves the City of Seattle, which covers some 85 square miles.[4] The district, supported by over 6,940 employees, operates 102 schools that serve a diverse but declining enrollment of over 52,930 kindergarten through grade 12 students.[5] Exhibit 1 below shows six years of enrollment history and a projected downward enrollment trend through 2023-2024.[6]

Exhibit 1. SPS Enrollment History and Projections
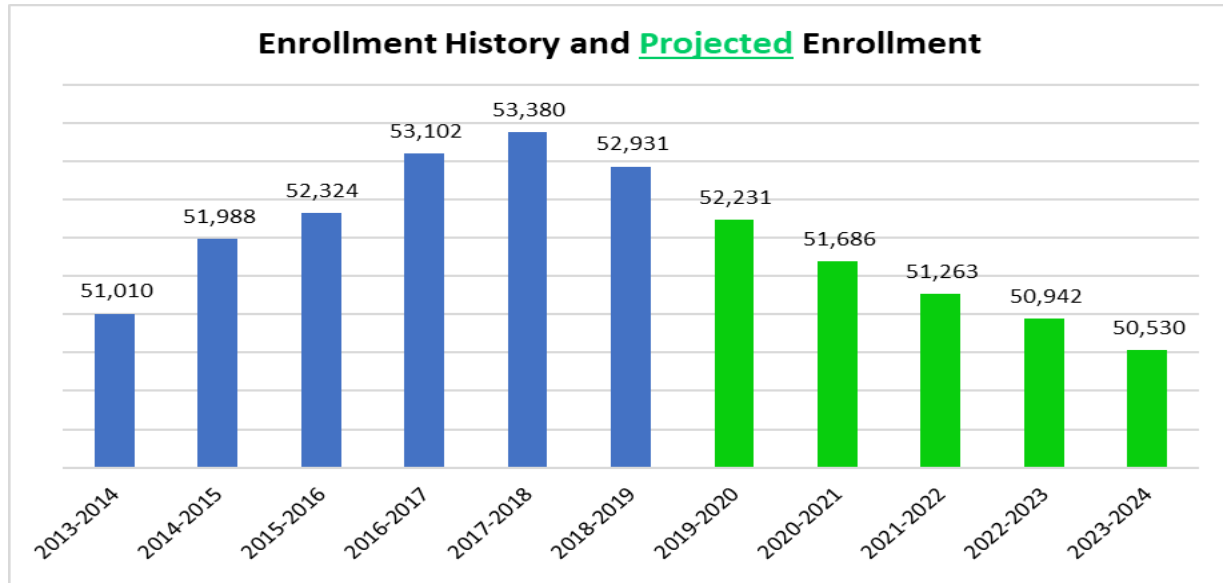
Source: Seattle Public Schools

The Board of Directors, which is responsible for governance, policymaking, and oversight of the Seattle Public Schools, is an elected body of seven citizens representing geographical regions, known as districts, within the City of Seattle. The Board also appoints the Superintendent of Schools, who is responsible to the board for the efficient and effective management and operation of the school system and its resources.

Exhibit 2 below displays the organization structure of the Office of the Superintendent and its nine direct reports, seven of which are line functions that manage the primary functions of the district, and two that are staff functions, which assist the Superintendent in meeting her primary responsibilities.

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[3] Source: State of Washington – Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction at:
http://www.k12.wa.us/transportation/STARS/default.aspx
[4] Source: SPS Fast Facts at:
https://www.seattleschools.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_543/File/District/Departments/Communications/seattle-public-schools-quick_facts.pdf.
[5] Source: SPS Budget Office (updated amount).
[6] District staff advised the projected downward enrollment trend, if it occurs, may be linked to the cost of living in the area.

Exhibit 2. Office of the Superintendent Organizational Chart – SY 2018-2019
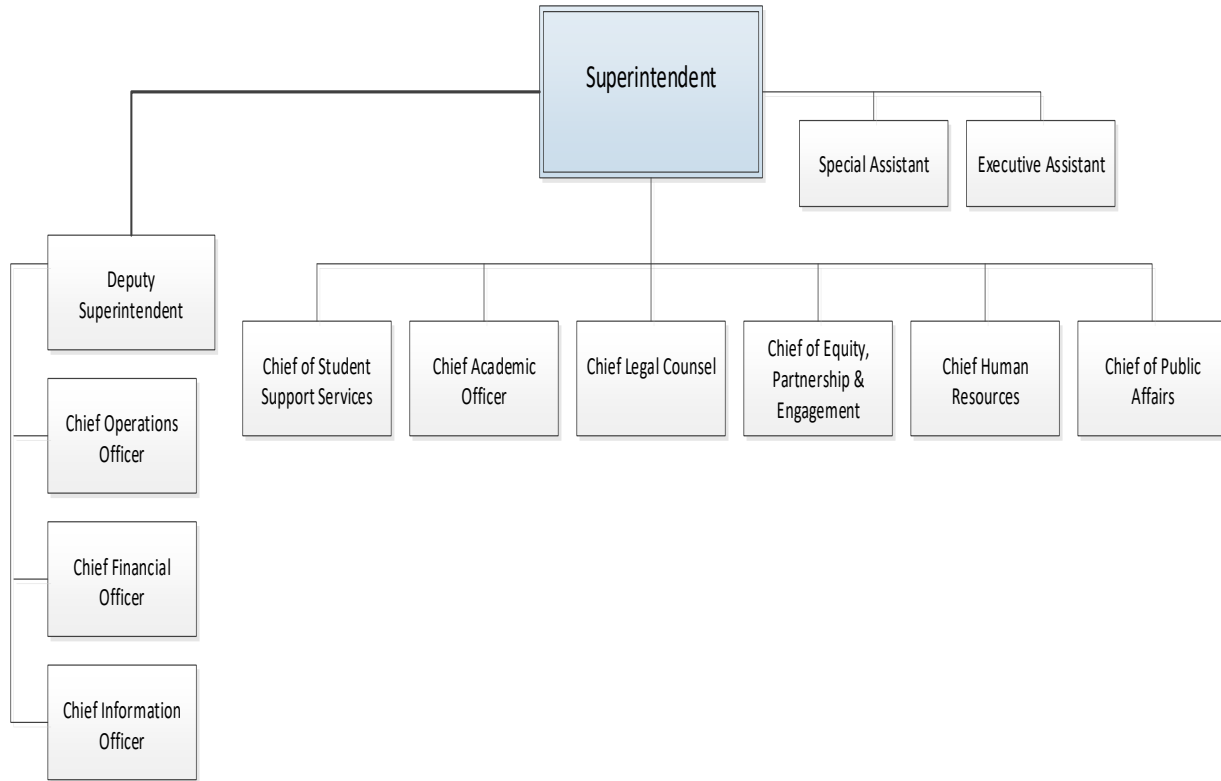
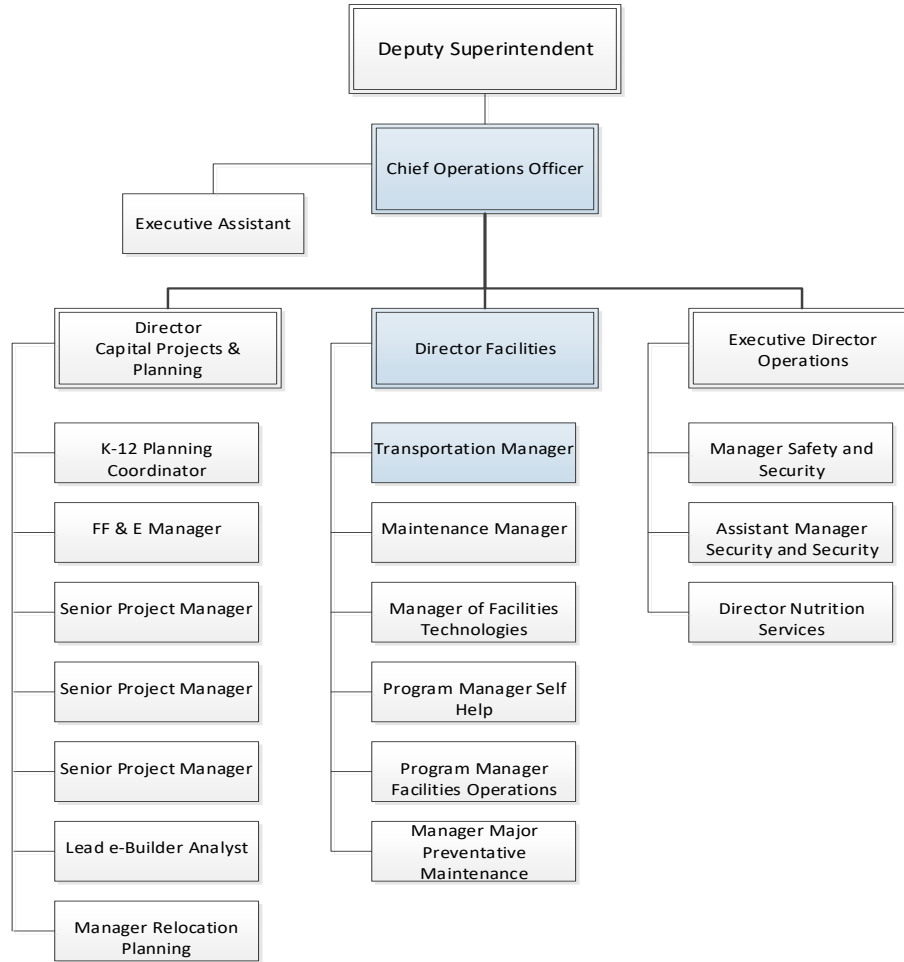Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by Seattle Public Schools

The general fund operating budget for SPS in 2018-19 was $955,448,694.[7] The district is funded through a combination of state funding (64.6 percent of budgeted resources), local levy funding (17.9 percent of budgeted resources), federal funding (5.1 percent of budgeted resources), and a combined 12.4 percent of budgeted resources from other revenues and funds.[8]

The Chief Operations Officer, who is a direct report to the Deputy Superintendent, has responsibility for Capital Projects and Planning, Facilities, and Operations. Until very recently, the district's transportation function reported directly to the COO. However, as a result of a staffing change at the COO level and the elimination of a Director of Logistics position, the Transportation Department currently reports, for a temporary period, to the Director of Facilities. The Chief Operations Officer's organization is shown below in Exhibit 3.

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[7] Source: SPS Fiscal Year 2019 Approved Budget, dated July 11, 2018
[8] Source: *Ibid.*

**Exhibit 3. Chief Operations Officer's Organizational Chart**

Source: CGCS, Using Data and Information Provided by Seattle Public Schools

Department of Transportation

The Transportation Manager with a staff of 145 district employees leads the Transportation Department (DoT). An Assistant Transportation Manager (Business Operations), a Field Lead Supervisor, a General Education (GenEd) Supervisor (Intervention/Coordinator), a Special Education (SPED) Supervisor (Intervention/Coordinator), and a Project Manager (ORCA/City of Seattle) report directly to the Transportation Manager.[9] Exhibit 4 below presents the department's organizational structure.

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[9] The Project Manager is an employee of the City of Seattle who coordinates and facilitates the distribution of Seattle's ORCA (One Regional Card for All) public transportation card for SPS students.

Exhibit 4. Department of Transportation Organizational Chart
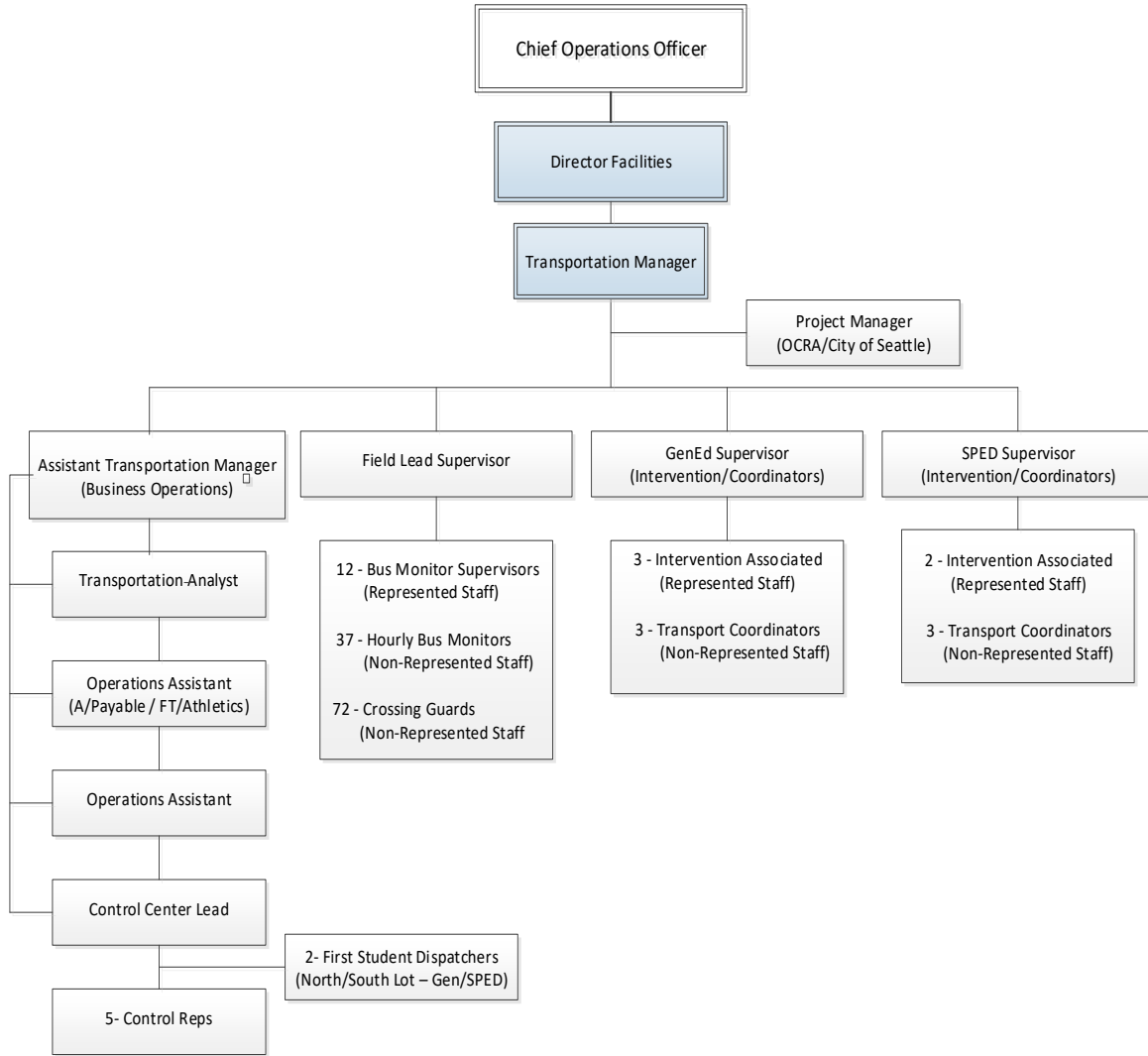
Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by Seattle Public Schools

The Transportation Manager is responsible for the department's budget, which in FY2019 was $40,368,129 or 4.23 percent of the district's overall general fund budget. Exhibit 5 below shows the FY 2019 budget along with the budgets and actual expense totals for the previous three fiscal years. The significant 17.68 percent increase in the department budget over this period is attributed to increases in contracted bus services, the use of cabs, and changes from a three-tier plan to a two-tier plan in the transportation routing schema.[10]

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[10] Generally, tiering represents assigning schools by level, to separate "tiers." For example, all middle schools could be assigned to the first tier, all elementary schools to the second tier, and high schools to the third tier. The instructional day for tier-one could start at 7:30 am; tier-two could start at 8:25 am; and tier-three could start at 9:15 am. Buses would pick up and drop off middle school children first (Tier-1) in the morning, then pick up and drop off elementary school students (Tier-2), and then pick up and drop off high school students (Tier-3). A similar approach would be designed for returning students to their home areas after school.

Exhibit 5. Department of Transportation Comparative Budget Data

Year	DoT Budget	DoT Actual Exp	DoT Balance	Dist General Fund Budget	% of Dist Budget
FY2016	$ 34,302,355	$ 33,341,375	$ 960,980	$ 753,086,395	4.55%
FY2017	$ 34,613,069	$ 35,240,830	$ (627,761)	$ 789,715,129	4.38%
FY2018	$ 38,175,053	$ 39,712,188	$ (1,537,135)	$ 857,737,940	4.45%
FY2019	$ 40,368,129			$ 955,448,694	4.23%

Source: CGCS, Using Data Provided by Seattle Public Schools

On average, some 24,435 students make daily use of some form of district or city-provided transportation to and from school. Approximately 8,800 students are transported in 353 contract-operated school buses; an estimated 665 students are transported in approximately 400 cabs; and slightly under 15,000 students use public transit ORCA cards that offer unlimited 12-month use.[11] The district's contracted buses traveled more than 3.65 million miles in FY18, picking-up and dropping off students at approximately 5,223 separate locations. Exhibit 6 below compares the number of eligible students provided transportation by mode along with district enrollment since FY2016.

Exhibit 6. Transportation Summary Information

	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Students Routed on School Buses	16,041	16,347	16,127	16,228
Students Routed on Cabs	383	691	745	665
Students Provided District-Paid ORCA Cards	8,611	8,715	8,961	8,654
Total Students Eligible for Transportation	25,035	25,753	25,833	25,547
District Enrollment	52,324	53,102	53,380	52,931

Source: Seattle Public Schools - Department of Transportation

Based on current statutes, SPS is required to provide transportation for Students with Disabilities (SWD) when it is identified as a related service, and for students in transition (McKinney-Vento)[12] or foster care, and others in specialized programs or those identified as having hazardous walk-paths to school. In FY2018, the department also provided over 4,000 athletic and curricular trips and summer transportation services for nearly 2,300 students to 42 sites using 89 buses and 46 cabs. Exhibit 7 below illustrates the number of students currently transported by program.[13]

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[11] Currently, 14,956 SPS students are provided ORCA cards, of which 7,166 of the ORCA cards are provided to SPS high school students by the City of Seattle at no cost to the district, the students, or their families. The remainder of the ORCA cards (7,790) are provided to SPS high school and selected middle school students by the district at no cost to students or their families.

[12] The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was reauthorized by the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which was signed into law in December 2015.

[13] Data regarding students riding on school buses in Exhibit 7 differs from the number of students routed on school buses as identified in Exhibit 6. Exhibit 6 references the number of <u>eligible</u> students routed and (continued next page) Exhibit 7 indicates the number of students that <u>currently ride</u> the school bus. Not all eligible students ride as some may carpool, drive themselves, ride with a parent, or use other means.

Exhibit 7. Average Daily Ridership, by Program

Average Daily Ridership, by Program	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
Basic Riders	6,396	6,872	6,223	5,583
Walk Area Riders	42	84	107	129
Special Ed	1,213	1,350	1,360	1,409
Bilingual	184	173	124	79
Gifted	1,135	1,205	1,158	1,138
Homeless/MKV/Foster Care	190	349	366	236
Pre-School	260	314	280	244
Total Students Above Transported in Yellow School Buses	9,421	10,347	9,618	8,817
Total Students Above Transported by Cab	383	691	745	665

Source: Seattle Public Schools - Department of Transportation

For the past several years, the district has benefitted from a high transportation funding allocation from the State of Washington. The allocation is based on a district's *previous year (F-196 Program 99)*[14] adjusted direct expenses,[15] OR the *last year's* district transportation allocation, whichever is less. Exhibit 8 below displays SPS transportation allocations for the past four years.

Exhibit 8. State Allocations Received by Seattle Public Schools

	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018
STARS Adjustied Prior Year Expenditures	$ 32,868,950	$ 29,248,014	$ 32,082,985	$ 33,058,899
Actual Allocation Amount from the State	$ 32,379,640	$ 29,248,014	$ 30,554,824	$ 31,857,954
Percent of Allocation to Prior Year Expenditures	98.50%	100%	95.20%	96.40%

Source: Seattle Public Schools Budget Department.

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[14] See: http://www.k12.wa.us/Transportation/STARS/pubdocs/DetailedGuidance18-19.pdf .

[15] Prior year expenditures are calculated from the district's prior year F–196 Report by subtracting any other revenue (besides the transportation operations allocation) or any in lieu of depreciation for contracting districts from the district's direct expenditures. Indirect funds, at the district's federal restricted rate, are added to the district's prior year expenditures. The lesser of adjusted allocation or adjusted prior year expenditures becomes the tentative district's allocation prior to any legislative enhancements for salaries and benefits. A legislative salary adjustment is then calculated by multiplying the total wages reported by the district for the school year by the percentage increase provided in the state omnibus appropriations act. For contracting districts, the total expenditures in Program 99 are multiplied by the average percentage reported for wages compared to total expenditures by non-contracting districts. The final result after the inclusion of legislative salary and benefit adjustments is shown on the chart as STARS (Student Transportation Allocation Report System) Adjusted Prior Year Expenditures and the district's Actual Allocation Amount.

Findings

The findings of the Council's Strategic Support Team are organized into five general areas: Commendations, Leadership and Management, Organization, Operations, and Survey of Best Practices. A set of recommendations follows these findings.

Commendations

- The district's partnership with the City of Seattle's ORCA card program, which began at the start of the current school year, has significantly increased the use of public transit transportation by SPS students. The city has provided over 7,165 (of nearly 15,000 currently issued) ORCA cards to SPS high school students at no cost to the students, their families, or the district. Exhibit 9 below illustrates the SPS use of public transit since FY2016, and the significant increase in FY2019 since the city's ORCA card program started.

Exhibit 9. Public Transit SPS Student Riders

Students Provided ORCA Transit Cards	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019
	8,611	8,715	8,961	14,956

Source: Seattle Public Schools - Department of Transportation

- The Superintendent convened a Task Force in the spring of 2018 to recommend Transportation Service Standards for the 2019-2020 school year. Exhibit 10 on the next page shows the broad and diverse task force committee that represented both staff and community members.

- Principals view the DoT Coordinators who oversee transportation operations as "rock stars" who provide excellent service to students, parents, and schools.

- The DoT and the contract school-bus provider now have weekly meetings that have improved communications and service outcomes.

- A common observation of those interviewed indicated that recent leadership changes in the department had improved morale and working conditions.

- Many DoT staff members are tenured, hardworking, and dedicated to the district.

- The district requires all contracted buses to be equipped with GPS technology and video cameras.

- DoT has scored in the "best quartile" on several 2016-2017 CGCS Transportation Operations Key Performance Indicators (KPI)[16] that displayed in Exhibit 11.

Exhibit 10. Transportation Task Force

Representative from Seattle Schools Safe Routes to Schools, City of Seattle
King County Metro Transit Representative
Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction Representative, District 2
Elementary parent representative
Secondary school parent representative
Elementary PTSA representative
McKinney Vento parent representative
Elementary Special Education parent representative
Non-profit out of school provider, Seattle Parks & Recreation
North end after school provider, Boys & Girls Club
South end after school provider, Team Read Tutor Program
Assistant Superintendent for Operations and Task Force Chair
Elementary PASS representative, Cedar Park
Secondary PASS representative, Madison Middle School
Elementary SEA representative, Sacajawea Special Education
Secondary SEA representative, District Truancy Office
Logistics Director
Transportation Manager
Transportation Call Center Supervisor
Transportation Routing Supervisor
Student Support Department representative
Enrollment Planning representative

Source: Seattle Public Schools

Exhibit 11. Best Quartile Ranking of Transportation Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator **Transportation**	Seattle Public Schools	CGCS National Median	Note
Daily Ride Time - General Education	17 min	34 min	**Best Quartile**
Daily Ride Time - SWD Students	20.56 min	39.21 min	**Best Quartile**
Fuel Cost as Percent of Retail - Diesel	63.72%	75.95%	**Best Quartile**

Source: CGCS KPI Project

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[16] The Transportation Operations Key Performance Indicators, which are reported in the Council's *Managing for Results* report, identifies performance measures, key indicators, and best practices that can guide the improvement of non-instructional operations in urban school districts across the nation.

Leadership and Management

- The department's failure to establish a strategic direction, setting long-range goals and the under or non-utilization of data to drive decisions has contributed to many of the issues identified in this report. To illustrate --

  o The department has no documented vision, goals, or objectives that align with the district's mission and vision;

  o Business analytical tools and techniques, such as key performance indicators, estimated total costs of ownership (TCOs), returns on investments (ROIs), cost-benefits, risk assessments, and business case justifications are not used to drive decision making that could increase effectiveness and achieve greater efficiencies if they were used;

  o The department appears to lack a sense of urgency to change what seems to be embedded inertia, suggesting that "we are doing the same thing in the same way with the same results;"

  o Yearly department initiatives do not appear to exist;

  o Annual department forecasting, planning, and timeline development does not take place;

  o The Department tends to be transactional, not strategic or proactive, with little attention given to promoting industry best practices or providing training and professional development;

  o Formal surveys are not used to identify areas of concern or gauge customer satisfaction with services provided;

  o There is no deliberative or proactive succession plan or capacity building in critical functions to ensure continuity in the event of leaves, retirements, promotions, or resignations of key department staff; and

  o Financial and performance objectives measured against established targets or benchmarks are not used at any level.

- There is a general sense from employees who were interviewed, many of whom had a long tenure in the district, that they feel unappreciated and under-valued. This finding is supported by --

  o Department staff sharing --

    ▪ Annual performance evaluations are regularly issued; however, comments on the evaluations are generally negative and often punitive;

    ▪ Comments, such as --

- · "No one listens to us." Staff members do not always feel supported by management and their suggestions for improvements go nowhere;

- · "There is no one advocating for us or our department;"

- · "There are unacceptable delays in providing needed equipment;"

- ▪ There are multiple internal "relationships" and "buddy-buddy" systems in effect within the department that makes supervision inconsistent;

o The team observed that--

- ▪ Department office conditions reflected a tone implying that there was no "value-add" attributed to employees or their functions. For example --

- · The department's overall office space was disorganized, cluttered, and did not appear to be well maintained; work stations or cubicles appeared to be cells or isolation boxes, and the illumination offers a test case for the "Hawthorne effect;" and

- · There was an apparent lack of energy and enthusiasm among staff who seemed to be "flying under the radar screen" or "hunkered-down" at their work stations.

- • There were few communication channels up-and-down and side-to-side within and between departments. The team was told that --

o Departments work in silos with little communications between and among staff teams;

o DoT is not at the table with district leadership when discussing new or changing programs that impact transportation. As a result, there is no way to forecast if the programs or changes can be successfully implemented or sustained;

o There was weak intra-and interdepartmental collaboration since regular staff meetings do not exist at all levels;

o Communications within DOT has been in only one direction, top-down in recent years;

o "Huddles" with department staff standing outside the manager's office are considered "weekly staff meetings;"

o DoT management does not solicit agenda items before meetings, and no written agenda is distributed at huddle meetings;

o Until recently, conflicting and contradictory directives were sometimes received by department staff; and

o There was no formal department communication vehicle, i.e., department newsletter or regularly scheduled (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) departmental email updates.

- The district may be vulnerable and exposed to unnecessary risk and liability in the following areas --

  o There was apparent resistance to transporting non-disabled students on the same bus with their disabled peers. Virtually, one-hundred percent of transported students with disabilities (SWD) receive curb-to-curb service, pursuant to their Individual Educational Program (IEP)[17] to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;[18]

  o There were no established minimum age requirements or conditions allowing students to ride cabs without a parent or other authorized adult accompanying them;

  o Although contractor issued badges are contractually required, there is no requirement that drivers of contract buses, cabs, or vans display district or DOT issued picture identification badges verifying that their backgrounds and driving records have been checked[19] and that they have received training from appropriate district staff on at least the following--

    ▪ district policies,

    ▪ accident procedures,

    ▪ incident procedures,

    ▪ breakdown procedures,

    ▪ student behavior issues,

    ▪ transporting students with special needs, when applicable,

  o Not all crossing-guard positions are filled;[20] and

  o State and district policy may not be consistently followed regarding bid thresholds for services provided. For example, the district spent more than $7.245 million for cab and van service without any apparent bid solicitation or award in FY2018.

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[17] An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written education plan designed to meet a child's learning needs.

[18] Pursuant to the U.S. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the least restrictive environment [LRE] is a principle that governs the education of students with disabilities and other special needs. LRE means that a student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with non-disabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate. These students should have access to the general education curriculum, extracurricular activities, or any other program that non-disabled peers would be able to access, including transportation.

[19] District staff reported that they did not verify background checks; the vendor was required to keep them on file at the vendors' office.

[20] The crossing guard program was "transferred" from the city to the district when the City of Seattle determined it would no longer manage the crossing guard program. Crossing guards are typically a municipal responsibility in that sidewalks and city streets are the responsibility of the local municipality.

- The team was unable to determine if the right people with the right skills were in the right positions to improve operational efficiencies and effectiveness.

- The district no longer enjoys the benefits of a three-tier bell schedule system to maximize routing efficiencies and decrease cost. The team was told, for example, that since the change from three tiers to two tiers system--

  o Transportation costs have significantly increased because additional buses were required to accommodate the change;

  o The change exacerbated a pre-existing bus driver shortage, which continues to be a problem in the current school year;

  o There has been an increase in student behavioral issues on buses due to the lack of consistent drivers on routes; and

  o Buses are not arriving at school in a timely fashion, resulting in the loss of breakfast opportunities and instructional time for students.

- The team found no uniform methodology for identifying or establishing opportunities for continuous improvement, cost savings, or cost recovery. For example --

  o The district's Department of Special Education utilizes a Medicaid reimbursement process for qualifying services. However, DoT is not part of that cost recovery process and does not track or submit Medicaid reimbursement claims for qualifying transportation services provided;

  o There was no process in place to ensure annual SPS costs are recovered through inter-district agreements for the transportation of McKinney-Vento[21] students. SPS recovered $535,761 in costs in FY2017 from nearby school districts, but only $1,585 was recovered in FY2018, although service levels were like what it had been provided in the previous year; and

  o There was no process in place to monitor actual ridership to identify opportunities to reduce costs by consolidating or eliminating buses throughout the school year.

- The team identified the following areas of concern regarding contracted school bus, cab, and special van services --
  o There is significant overreliance on the use of cabs[22] as evidenced by department expenditures for this service. See cab expenditures over the past four years in Exhibit 12;[23]

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[21] The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was reauthorized by the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), which was signed into law in December 2015.

[22] Cabs should be used as a last resort as the United States Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has determined that students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a school bus instead of traveling by car. Source: https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety .

[23] The team recognizes that some cabs were used as a stop-gap measure during contractor bus driver shortages.

Exhibit 12. SPS Cab Expenditures 2015-2018

Service Type	2015 Expenditure	2016 Expenditure	2017 Expenditure	2018 Expenditure
General Ed	$ 233,290	$ 291,727	$ 414,059	$ 484,433
McKinney-Vento	$ 1,713,402	$ 2,211,387	$ 2,877,305	$ 3,666,539
Special Education	$ 1,231,080	$ 1,868,989	$ 2,653,466	$ 3,094,045
Total	$ 3,177,772	$ 4,372,103	$ 5,944,830	$ 7,245,017
Students Transported	N/A	383	691	745
Cost per Student/year	N/A	$ 11,415.41	$ 8,603.23	$ 9,724.86
Cabs Used	N/A	227	352	425
Cost per Cab/year	N/A	$ 19,260.37	$ 16,888.72	$ 17,047.10

Source: SPS Budget and Transportation Departments

- o Issues related to contractor liquidated damages are in the purview of the SPS Office of the General Counsel with no apparent involvement of DOT in their resolution.[24]

- o The department lacks an unambiguous process with vendors for the training of new hires. The team heard, for example, "We are not aware of new hires and provide training only when asked."

- o The current school bus service contract contains broad liquidated damage language, but it does not offer performance incentives that would allow the vendor to recover a portion of the liquidated damages;

- o The district pays for cab and van services without controls in place to ensure assigned students were actually transported on the specific days invoiced;

- o The current school bus services contract lacks a definition of what constitutes a bus accident or incident;

- o The solicitation of school bus service providers invited to respond to the last RFP[25] appeared to be very limited;[26]

- o There is a lack of department oversite in monitoring school bus vendors in such areas as --

  - ▪ Private use of district fuel,

  - ▪ Vehicle inspections,

  - ▪ Training practices,

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[24] See: https://www.kuow.org/stories/school-bus-contractor-owes-seattle-public-schools-millions-for-late-buses.

[25] Request for Proposal (RFP) is a solicitation that is generally part of a bidding process.

[26] The use of trade publications to identify potential vendors and attendance at trade shows, which are available ways to increase vendor interest, was not used by the district to increase the pool of respondents.

- ▪ Driving experience compliance,

- ▪ Driver background and record-check compliance, and

- ▪ Preventable accident follow-up and accountability.

- There was a lack of established internal controls for processing transportation service-related payments and weakness in assessing additional costs. Specifically --

  o The district pays cab invoices submitted directly to accounts payable without controls to ensure the department has received, reviewed, and approved the invoice before payment; and

  o The district has been negligent in assessing additional costs incurred by the district when alternative service providers were procured as specified in the contract (RFP09614, 2017-2020 Bus).[27]

- The team found no evidence of a contingency plan for providing alternative services in the event the current vendor defaults or experiences significantly high interruptions of service.

- The team found little progress made in implementing the DoT recommendations produced by the Council of the Great City Schools in a June 2008 Department of Transportation review. Exhibit 13 below provides "abbreviated" descriptions of recommendations and their implementation status.[28] The full text of the background, findings, observations, and the thirteen recommendations from the 2008 Review (with status remarks provided by the current Transportation Manager and Assistant Transportation Manager) can be found in Attachment F.

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[27] See: https://www.kuow.org/stories/school-bus-contractor-owes-seattle-public-schools-millions-for-late-buses .

[28] A "status" document provided by the district appeared not to have been updated in nine or ten years. The department has experienced considerable leadership changes since 2008 that could account for the lack of follow-up. The current Transportation Manager and Assistant Manager provided input into the implementation status noted above.

Exhibit 13. 2008 CGCS Transportation Department Review Recommendations

Recommendation (abbreviated)	Status	Recommendation (abbreviated)	Status
1. Create a strategic vision and business plan for the Transportation Department that is linked to the district's Strategic Plan and incorporates a data driven management approach	One of two components appear implemented, but not sustained.	2. Involve the department as a strategic partner in the district's instructional and facility management processes by including it in decisions	Two of five components appear implemented.
3. Establish departmental financial management accountability measures	Two of four components appear implemented.	4. Create a comprehensive training program for all contract and district personnel involved in transporting students	All components appear to have some level of implementation.
5. Retain the backup management position of the Assistant Manager and develop succession planning within the department to ensure knowledge transfer and the orderly transition of responsibilities.	Appears implemented.	6. Reorganize and/or restructure the department	One of three components appear implemented.
7. Restructure the Control Center to more effectively manage resources and better meet peak demand	Both components appear implemented.	8. Improve transportation bus routing and service delivery efficiencies	Two of four components appear implemented, but not sustained.
9. Test-drive all new routes and bus stops to ensure safety and appropriateness.	Implemented.	10. Make efforts to reduce or eliminate the use of taxis.	Not implemented.
11. Improve the management of pupil transportation contracts	Four of eight components implemented or partially implemented.	12. Integrate the student and transportation computer systems to improve operational efficiencies and more effectively use the capabilities of the current routing and GPS systems	Four of five components appear implemented.
13. Establish and disseminate policies that assign responsibilities and identify procedures	Some processes but not policies are in place.		

Source: 2008 CGCS Transportation Review of the Seattle Public Schools and Documentation Provided by SPS

Organization

- The department is not currently positioned at a high enough level within the SPS organizational structure to ensure they can be effective and perform a strong strategic role in attaining district goals.

- The team identified the following anomalies in the DoT organization --

  o Many position titles displayed on the organization chart do not align with position titles on the class specifications (job descriptions);

  o Multiple positions displayed on the chart designate more than one supervisor; and

  o Many staff indicated their annual performance evaluations were issued by someone other than the immediate supervisor that was shown on the organizational chart.

- The district lacks a *centralized* contract compliance office to ensure internal controls are in place to monitor the management of contracted services.

- The team noted that SPS class specifications --

  o Fail to include managing the transportation services contracts as an essential function of the Transportation Manager's position;

  o Do not indicate the position title from which supervision is received, or what position(s) supervision is exercised over, so it is unclear who reports to whom; and

  o Do not specify when positions were established or when class specifications were last reviewed since they are not dated.

- The team saw no evidence that the DoT organizational structure and workflows have been examined, or if staff could be repurposed to achieve greater operational efficiencies and effectiveness.

Operations

- There are operational weaknesses and other vulnerabilities that could create long-term negative impact or place the district at risk. Specifically--

  o The team was told that students were waiting exceptionally long periods after the scheduled pickup for transportation services--

    ▪ In the mornings at bus stops and home pickups,

    ▪ In the afternoon at school sites,

    ▪ For cabs and buses that "never show up."

  o Students lose critical instructional time and other compensatory education services due to unreliable transportation service;

  o Students with disabilities receive reduced or no service on some inclement weather (snow) days;[29]

  o Parents are telling school site administrators they are at risk of losing their jobs because they must transport their child to or from school when buses run late;

  o Cab drivers are transporting parents to unauthorized locations;

  o Drivers are requesting that students be dismissed early so drivers can complete other assignments on-time; and

  o District personnel are not required to be present at accident or incident locations to ensure protocols are followed when SPS students are aboard the vehicles.[30]

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[29] See: https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/transportation/inclement_weather_transportation_plan .

[30] The team was told if personnel are nearby, they will proceed to the scene. If not, no district personnel will be at the scene;

- Although the department reported that the district relies on a mass communication program to provide notifications *via* text message, email, voice, social media, or any combination thereof, principals indicated school officials and parents do not receive notifications when buses are late.

- DoT ridership and budget detail lack granularity by program, mode (bus, cab, van, or ORCA) and program cost. As a result --

  o The department has difficulty determining--

    ▪ The number of students eligible for transportation vs. actual daily ridership by program;

    ▪ Summary information on the number of students transported by bus, cab, van, or ORCA by program; and

    ▪ Per student cost variances by mode of transportation (bus, cab, van, or ORCA).

- Email notifications sent to parents are not always written in the language that was spoken in the home of the child(ren).

- Critical student IEP transportation information is not electronically transferred to the district's routing software system.[31] As a result --

  o School site or program office personnel must manually enter this information, *each year*, into a special database that is then transferred to the district's routing software; and

  o This manual paper process incurs a high risk of error that negatively impacts students who are not provided required services, particularly at the beginning of a school year.

- Best practices are not evident in the use of the district's student routing process. For example--

  o There is no formal interdepartmental routing plan with agreed upon timelines specifying when critical student data must be sent from key offices, e.g., Special Education, Student Assignment, Technology Services, McKinney-Vento, Foster Care Services, DoT, Enrollment Planning, and others, to DoT so that it has time to finalize routes and determine projected bus, driver and bus monitor needs to begin summer and fall routing*;*

  o Key personnel from various program offices are not assigned to work during the summer when most fall routing is being developed and finalized. As a result --

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[31] The team heard that the software database that hosts SPS student IEP information cannot electronically exchange IEP data with the district's routing software.

- ▪ Parents are unable to enroll students in specific programs for which transportation is provided (such as McKinney-Vento and foster care) due to closed offices;

- ▪ DoT staff are unable to communicate with key program personnel to resolve in a timely fashion timely routing issues before the start of school;

    o The DoT lacks ongoing processes to leverage daily ridership data to contain or reduce transportation costs;

    o Although ridership data are captured daily, the department does not use or leverage the data to contain or reduce transportation by consolidating routes, eliminating stops, eliminating buses, or equalizing loads;

    o Routes are built on eligibility rather than actual average ridership, which results in additional and unnecessary costs. For example, the department holds seats for 100 percent of transportation-eligible students, even though historically large numbers of students have never ridden or no longer ride the bus; and

    o There appear to be an extraordinarily large number of transportation policy "exceptions" to School Board-approved service standards that are granted each year, resulting in additional costs.

- • The team heard in interviews that --

    o Transportation problems increased when the district went to a single provider for services;

    o DoT requests for data or other information are often erratic, confusing, and frustrating to staff in the program offices and schools who attempt to respond to them; and

    o School-site overtime expenditures are increasing rapidly because staff are paid to supervise students who are waiting for late arriving buses and cabs.

- • There are no bus-driver ride checks conducted by DoT staff to verify driver proficiency for contracted transportation services.

- • There are operational weaknesses that could hinder service delivery. For example --

    o The bus contractor does not have electronic "read-only" access to the district's routing software at all parking locations; and

    o The *Frequently Asked Questions* DoT webpage was last updated in 2016.[32]

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[32] Source: https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/transportation .

- Exhibit 14 below compares SPS self-reported transportation operations data with CGCS national median scores for its member districts.[33]

Exhibit 14. SPS Transportation KPI's

Key Performance Indicator	Seattle Public Schools	CGCS National Median	Note
Accidents - Miles Between Accidents (Contractor-Operated)	39,510	42,232	
Accidents - Miles Between Preventable Accidents (Cont.-Opr.)	69,613	72,224	
Bus Equipment - GPS Tracking	100.00%	94.24%	
Bus Equipment - Rider Harnesses, Lap-and-Shoulder	7.67%	11.72%	
Bus Equipment Video Cameras	100.00%	79.05%	
Bus Fleet - Alternatively-Fueled Buses	30.69%	16.06%	
Bus Fleet - Percent Contractor-Operated	100%	64%	
Bus Fleet- Daily Buses as Percent of Total Buses	89.51%	83.11%	
Bus Usage - Daily Runs Per Bus	4.21	4.11	
Bus Usage - Daily Seat Utilization (Contractor-Operated)	1.39	1.10	
Bus Usage - Mile Per Bus (Contractor-Operated)	11,216.00	12,657.90	
Contract Buses - Percent of Ridership	100%	59.80%	
Cost Per Bus	$62,492	$60,272	
Cost per Mile Operated	$5.57	$5.07	
Cost per Rider	$889	$1,075	
Cost per Rider (Yellow Bus Only)	$1,005.36	$1,094.40	**$2,435.90**
Daily Ride Time - General Education	17 min	34 min	**Best Quartile**
Daily Ride Time - SWD Students	20.56 min	39.21 min	**Best Quartile**
Daily Ride Time, Maximum Allowed - General Education	60 min	60 min	
Daily Ride Time, Maximum Allowed - SWD Students	60 min	62.5 min	
Fuel Cost as Percent of Retail - Diesel	63.72%	75.95%	**Best Quartile**
Fuel Cost as Percent of Retail - Propane	34.25%	67.4%	
On-Time Performance (updated by vendor)	94.70%	99.8%	**Worst Quartile**
Public Transit - Pass/Token Cost as Percent of Retail	57.44%	50.56%	
Public Transit - Percent of Ridership	28.19%	8.23%	
Student With Disabilities - Percent of Ridership	7.95%	6.69%	
Student With Disabilities - Students on Dedicated SWD Buses	104.62%	91.87%	
Student With Disabilities - Student with Neighborhood Pickup	4.07%	9.67%	
Turn Time to Place New Students - General Education	6 Days	4.5 Days	
Turn Time to Place New Students - SWD Students	4 Days	5 Days	

Source: CGCS KPI Project

Survey of Best Practices

As part of its peer review process, the Council periodically uses a survey instrument that enables a department to identify and rate itself on a series of "best practices." The instrument was adapted from one developed by the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and Florida's Auditor General as a model instrument to assess school system operations.

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[33] Source: 2016-2017 CGCS *Managing for Results - KPI Report*, published by the Council of the Great City Schools, October 2018. The exhibit notes whether SPS scored in the best or worst quartile among all CGCS reporting districts. It should also be noted that the district reported the cost per rider (yellow bus) for this report was $1,094.40. However, the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction - Student Transportation *Key Performance Indicators Report* lists SPS average cost per rider at $2,435.90[33] (the highest in the state) for the same reporting year.

The instrument was developed to help districts 1) use performance and cost-efficient measures to evaluate programs; 2) use appropriate benchmarks based on comparable school districts, government agencies, and industry standards; 3) identify potential cost savings; and 4) focus budget and resources on district priorities and goals, including student performance. The surveys are grounded in a set of "best practices and indicators" that were identified from extensive literature reviews, interviews of education personnel experts, representatives from professional organizations, and educators in other states.

- The survey used in the Seattle Public Schools Transportation Department measures a total of 20 Standards and 90 indicators in three areas --

  o Transportation, Planning, Organization and Staffing (7 Standards and 30 Practices)

  o Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance (5 Standards and 31 Practices),[34] and

  o Operations, Management and Accountability (8 Standards and 29 Practices).

- Below is a high-level summary of how the SPS Transportation Department leadership scored on their use of best practices within the department. A full copy of the completed survey, which includes survey components, analysis, and scoring, can be found in Attachment E of this management letter --

  o The Transportation Manager reported that the Transportation Department complies with --

    ▪ 9 of 30 (30 percent) indicators of best practices in Transportation, Planning, Organization, and Staffing, and

    ▪ 13 (45 percent) of 29 best practices in Operations, Management and Accountability.

Recommendations

The Council's Strategic Support Team has developed the following recommendations[35] to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Seattle Public Schools Department of Transportation. The recommendations below are based on this (2019) review. To provide context, many of the current findings and recommendations parallel those identified in the 2008 review. The team considers the 2008 recommendations as imperative now as they were then.

1. Convene, with a sense of urgency, ongoing meetings with the Chief Operations Officer, Transportation Manager, and others as appropriate, to review the recommendations identified in the 2008 review—and in this review. Based on findings and recommendations described in the current review, incorporate and merge, as necessary, all recommendations from the two

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[34] The indicators of best practices in Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance were not applicable since the practices within this standard are the responsibility of the contracted services. The Team noted, however, it would have been useful to learn how compliant the contractor is with what are considered the best practices in this standard.

[35] Recommendations are not listed in any specific order or priority.

reviews. Use these "combined" recommendations as a "road map" to develop, prioritize, and implement business plans, cost/benefit analysis, timelines, and the assignment of project owners to move the recommendations forward.

2. Establish a compelling Transportation Department vision and identify and articulate department priorities that support the District's *Vision, Mission, and Goals*.[36] These priorities should include --

   a. The collaborative development of department objectives that articulate and embrace a clear direction aligned with the school board and the Superintendent's new strategic plan (when released) and goals;

   b. Setting appropriate benchmarks, performance plans, targets, and expectations that ensure empowerment and accountability across the department;

   c. Yearly departmental initiatives with the names of district offices that need to be at the table to support the initiatives;

   d. The development of a realistic five-year department strategic plan that is focused on *customer needs*. The plan—to be developed with the participation of staff and other stakeholders—should include annual quantifiable goals, performance measures, accountabilities, targets, metrics, and timelines to achieve longer-term objectives. The plan should be refreshed annually;

   e. Budget development priorities;

   f. Training and professional development opportunities;

   g. Departmental process-improvement programs that encourage innovation;

   h. The transition to a data-driven organization and culture that relies on fact-based and analysis-centric justifications for decisions, including the use of modern automated systems, tools, and techniques, such as --

      i. Defined performance measures, including KPIs and industry best practices and standards for all primary functions of the department, including manager and supervisor accountability for achieving these measures;

      ii. Cost-benefit analysis, risk assessment, and business-case justifications for proposed initiatives, organizational changes, and significant procurements to continually move the department forward;

      iii. An ongoing departmental process improvement program that incorporates and encourages innovation and solicits and values input from all team members; and

      iv. Root-cause analyses and corrective action plans to address operational issues.

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[36] See: https://www.seattleschools.org/departments/dots/vision__mission_and_goals .

3. Develop business cases that incorporate accurate costs, benchmarks, goals, cost-benefit analysis, return on investment (ROI) analysis, risk assessments, total cost of ownership (TCO) analyses, reasonable implementation timelines, and other appropriate analytical tools for all department activities.

4. Ensure that rigorous Superintendent Procedure 6500SP oversight is in place for all Transportation Department operations and activities. This oversight should include reviewing and ensuring that the district's enterprise risk management program has established responsibility for systematic and regular risk identification analysis, planning for risk mitigation, risk management, and risk oversight for all Transportation Department activities.

5. Strengthen internal fiscal and management controls to separately track per pupil costs, by program, for services provided to --

   a. Basic riders,

   b. Walk-area riders,

   c. Public transit riders,

   d. Bilingual riders,

   e. Gifted riders,

   f. Early education riders,

   g. Students with Disabilities, separated by --

      i. Students transported on a school bus curb-to-DoT-curb,

      ii. Students transported on a school bus corner to corner (or school to school),

      iii. Students transported by cab,

      iv. Students transported by special van,

   h. Special school sessions, including summer school and capital relocation,

   i. Homeless students, separated by --

      i. Name of the pickup location in the Local Education Agency (LEA),[37]
      ii. Name of the receiving school LEA,

      iii. Students transported on a school bus,

      iv. Students provided cabs,

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[37] Local Education Agency (LEA) is a commonly used synonym for a school district.

  v. Students transported on ORCA, and

  vi. Students transported by other means.

6. Examine all department practices and procedures with a *customer service* focus. Evaluate and revise services as necessary with the goal of streamlining and simplifying operations and incorporating best practices. Disseminate to all department staff or post on the district's intranet the documented administrative processes and procedures for all functions.

7. Partner with the Office of Human Resources, and together --

 a. Review and update job titles and class specifications to provide a realistic portrayal of current duties, responsibilities (i.e., Transportation Manager managing transportation service contracts), expectations, and reporting lines. Redistribute revised class specifications to affected employees to strengthen accountability;

 b. Establish or enforce a standardized methodology for the design and execution of organizational charts. Require consistency of data provided, how data are presented – especially position titles and position levels – and ensure that all positions clearly show reporting relationships for supervision and performance assessment;

 c. Assess whether class specifications should include the position title from which supervision is received, and what position(s) supervision is exercised over;

 d. Assess whether class specifications should include when the position was established and when the class specification was last revised; and

 e. Initiate a comprehensive staffing study of all DoT units to ensure all functions are staffed appropriately to mirror industry norms described in this review. Evaluate current organizational structures and workflows to determine if staff could be repurposed to achieve greater operational efficiency and effectiveness.

8. Expand the use of *School Messenger* to ensure timely notiffification of parents and school site administrators of route delays, and other critical transportation-related information *via* email, text message, and when necessary, telephone call.

9. Commence a comprehensive review of all routing processes to identify opportunities to improve routing outcomes and reduce dependency on cabs. To move forward, SPS should --

 a. Establish an annual interdepartmental routing timeline committee that will develop appropriate and acceptable deadlines for the submission of data and completion of tasks. This committee shall be comprised of key staff from Special Education, Student Assignment, Technology Services, McKinney-Vento, Foster Care Services, Enrollment Planning, DoT, and others as appropriate. The committee should ensure that --

  i. Routing staff have enough time to prepare summer and fall routes that are efficient and cost-effective;

ii. The timeline includes contractor meetings, and that contractors have adequate time for recruiting/hiring/training of drivers and monitors, reviewing contractor backgrounds and driving records, dry run(s), and vehicle maintenance in preparation for the start of the school year;

iii. Opportunities are leveraged to partner with service providers in the recruitment and retention of drivers that provide service to SPS students. Engage the SPS Department of Communications and Public Relations to participate in recruitment opportunities and fairs by leveraging mass communication and social media approaches. Consider using *School Messenger* to invite parents and family members to join the "team;"

iv. The DoT is engaged early in the process regarding service and fiscal impact of proposed changes to bell schedules, program placements, and new academic initiatives;

v. An agreed upon cutoff date for finalizing routes is enforced before the opening of school;

vi. Contractors receive routes on-time and can review routing, suggest tier-pairing efficiencies, and provide route integrity feedback before the opening of school;

vii. Student routing information provided to school sites before the opening of school is received in a timely fashion and presented in a clear and logical format;

b. Use--to the greatest extent possible--the previous school year's ending routing configuration as the starting point for next year's routing. Build routes based on historical knowledge and experience, not total eligibility. During this transition in routing schema, allow for up to 15 percent contingency in seating/space and conduct adjustments, if necessary;

c. Review routing policies and practices to collectively make efficient use of ride times, earliest pickup times, number of students on each bus (load counts and seat utilization), walk to stop distances, and the number of stops on each run[38] to reduce the number of runs, buses, and cabs used;

d. Require transportation policy "exceptions" be reviewed and renewed annually, and approved by the Superintendent or her designee;

e. Provide current and possible future routing staff refresher and optimization training of the district's routing software;

f. Develop routing simulations and optimizations utilizing a test database to identify potential efficiencies in advance of, and throughout, the routing process;

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[38] A bus run (also known as a tier) is one component of a bus route. A bus route is comprised of multiple bus runs, such as one, two, or three runs in the morning transporting students to school, and one, two, or three runs in the afternoon returning students to their home or home areas.

g. Integrate, to the greatest extent possible, students from all transportation programs on the same buses, including, as appropriate, Students with Disabilities; and

h. Create a quality-control review process that will ensure, before implementation, all runs, and routes are evaluated as viable, efficient, and within guidelines. Adjust routes as necessary before employing.

10. Design a strategy to monitor actual ridership each day throughout the school year to aggressively identify stops, runs, and ultimately buses that can be consolidated or eliminated.

11. Strengthen internal controls to ensure that service providers are paid only for verified time worked or performed. For example --

a. Require all invoices be verified and approved by the department before payment;

b. Obligate the department to design a process to validate both bus and cab service was provided in a timely way and on schedule; and

c. Instruct the department to ensure that the district recovers appropriate (additional) costs when current vendors are unable to meet contracted obligations and alternative service providers and options must be procured.

12. Develop succession planning and cross-training within the DoT to ensure knowledge transfer and the orderly transition of responsibilities when staff changes.

13. Enhance contract administration by creating an SPS *central office* function whose primary responsibility is to monitor district contract management, deliverables, compliance, and best practices. This office should be responsible for --

a. Making contract oversight and enforcement a district-wide priority;

b. Developing training for key staff in contract administration best practices;

c. Designing and monitoring performance indicators to ensure vendor compliance to all terms, conditions, and damage clauses agreed to by the parties; and

d. Ensuring *Vendor Performance Evaluations* are written and issued regularly, maintained in a centralized location, and used as a factor in allowing vendors to bid on future contracts.

14. Create a committee comprised of leaders from transportation and the Special Education Department to regularly confer on issues of mutual concern. At a minimum, these discussions should include --

a. Establishing when a transportation representative should be present at an IEP meeting to discuss specialized equipment or services a student requires;

b. The pros, cons, and costs associated with changing or adding Students with Disabilities programs at schools while meeting FAPE[39] as required under IDEA;

c. Identifying opportunities to incorporate *least restrictive environment* whenever possible by --

  i. Identifying students that can be integrated on buses with their non-disabled peers;

  ii. Designing runs that will safely accommodate both corner and curb-to-curb stops; and

d. Assembling a team of stakeholders, including critical DoT staff, Special Education Department staff, Technology Services staff, school site staff, current routing software vendor, other vendors as appropriate, and a consultant that specializes in software interface solutions. The team should evaluate options and design a plan that will eliminate, within two years, the current inability to electronically transfer all relevant student IEP transportation information from the district's IEP database to the district's routing software database.

15. Develop or hire leaders who will lead by example in championing knowledge sharing and collaboration. Ensure regular staff meetings take place with specific agendas, documented minutes of discussions, decisions, and follow-up activities, so employees know --

a. The district's and department's goals and objectives and how they will be achieved;

b. That interdepartmental collaboration is taking place with all appropriate departments and stakeholders at the table;

c. How personnel will be held accountable and evaluated using performance-monitoring metrics;

d. Why changes are being made that may impact the team along with expected outcomes;

e. That managers and supervisors are held responsible for ensuring that information and feedback is disseminated up-and-down and side-to-side within and between departments;

f. That employee feedback and suggestions are welcomed and considered, so team members know there is an ongoing departmental process-improvement program to encourage innovation; and

g. That communication channels are in place to regularly distribute department news and information. A sample Communications Matrix is illustrated in Exhibit 15 below.

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[39] Free and Appropriate Public Education.

Exhibit 15. Sample Department Communications Matrix

Annually	Quarterly	Twice Monthly	Weekly
Department All-Employee Meeting	Department Central Office Staff Meeting	Department Leadership Team Meeting	Direct Report Meetings
Purpose			
Provide team building, employee recognition, mandatory training, common vision, and points of emphasis for the year.	Provide central staff with team building, interdepartmental updates, the introduction of new staff, and review safety, telephone, and emergency procedures.	Provide department leadership staff an opportunity to share information on department projects, status reports, priority issues and challenges, and personnel updates.	Identify concerns and issues that affect unit and department that require support or action plans.
Required Attendees			
All Department of Transportation staff.	All central office staff.	Directors, managers, and others as appropriate.	Managers/supervisors and direct reports.

Source: Council of the Great City Schools

16. Conduct, with appropriate SPS legal, procurement, and DoT staff at the table, an in-depth review and analysis of the existing bus service contract. This process should involve --

    a. Reviewing a variety of transportation-related contracts utilized in similar sized or larger school districts throughout the country for "best practice" contract language to be incorporated in future SPS contracts;

    b. Identifying and strengthening existing contract language that is ambiguous or difficult to enforce. For example --

        i. Adding the state or district's definition of a school bus accident or incident;

        ii. Clarifying the process of timely notifications to the district when new hires are ready for orientation so they can be placed into service in a timely way;

    c. Reviewing liquidated damage charges and evaluating whether to add performance-incentive language into the contract; and

    d. Identifying opportunities and strategies to attract additional school bus service vendors to the area.

17. Conduct a comprehensive review of vulnerabilities, operational weaknesses, lack of internal controls, lack of due diligence, or lack of best practices being followed, and confirm that action on the following concerns identified in this management letter is taking place by --

a. Ensuring that --

    i. Students are picked up and delivered on schedule and that parents and schools are promptly notified of interruptions of service;

    ii. Students with Disabilities receive appropriate levels of transportation service on inclement weather days;

    iii. School budgets are reimbursed for the cost of holding staff to supervise students when buses or cabs are late;

    iv. Compensatory education services are provided in a timely way when required;

b. Requiring that transportation continuity and redundancy plans are in place in the event current service providers are unable to sustain required service levels;

c. Examining the appropriateness of requiring minimal amounts of insurance and sexual molestation coverage for cab and van companies that transport SPS students;

d. Establishing minimum-age requirements or conditions allowing students to ride cabs without parental (or other authorized adult) presence in the cab;

e. Requiring the department to follow an industry best practice of conducting bus driver check rides to verify driver proficiency, and reviewing backgrounds, driving records, and drug test results of those transporting SPS students;

f. Providing bus contractor(s) "read-only" access to the district's routing software at all parking locations;

g. Requiring district or DoT issued *picture* identification badges (in place of contractor issued badges) verifying that the driver of the contract bus, cab, or van, has been background checked, driving record reviewed, and has received training from appropriate district staff on, at a minimum --

    i. District policies,

    ii. Accident procedures,

    iii. Incident procedures,

    iv. Breakdown procedures,

    v. Transportation-related student-behavior issues,

    vi. Transporting Students with Disabilities, when applicable,

h. Engaging the SPS Department of Communications and Public Relations in leveraging mass communication and social media approaches in filling crossing guard positions. Consider

using *School Messenger* to invite parents and family members of children that attend schools that need crossing guards to join the "team;"

i. Verifying that state or district policies regarding procurement thresholds are followed;

j. Ensuring that cost recovery opportunities are fully leveraged with --

- Medicaid reimbursement for qualifying transportation services, and

- McKinney-Vento past, present, and future inter-district agreements are accurately invoiced and that SPS is financially made whole for any monies due.

18. Implement programs to measure customer satisfaction, including the use of customer surveys and focus groups, to identify service concerns and establish future priorities. At a minimum, input from parents, school administrators, teachers on field trips, athletic directors, and coaches should be solicited.

Robert Carlson

Robert Carlson is Director of Management Services for the Council of the Great City Schools. In that capacity, he provides Strategic Support Teams and manages operational reviews for superintendents and senior managers; convenes annual meetings of Chief Financial Officers, Chief Operating Officers, Transportation Directors, and Chief Information Officers and Technology Directors; fields hundreds of requests for management information; and has developed and maintains a Web-based management library. Prior to joining the Council, Dr. Carlson was an executive assistant in the Office of the Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools. He holds doctoral and master's degrees in management from The Catholic University of America; a B.A. degree in political science from Ohio Wesleyan University; and has done advanced graduate work in political science at Syracuse University and the State Universities of New York.

David M. Palmer

David Palmer, Deputy Director of Transportation (retired), Los Angeles Unified School District, is a forty-year veteran of the school bus industry. Mr. Palmer's executive responsibilities included the management and oversight of bus operations (transportation of over 75,000 students on 2,500 school buses into over 850 schools and centers), fleet maintenance (3,300+ vehicles), strategic planning and execution, budget development and oversight, and contract administration. Mr. Palmer oversaw the design and implementation of performance standards, benchmarks and accountabilities for department staff and advised the Council of Great City Schools on the *Key Performance Indicator* project. Mr. Palmer has also instructed the transportation component in the School Business Management Certificate Program at the University of Southern California. Mr. Palmer currently provides consulting services for school districts and other governmental agencies and is a very active member of the Council's Strategic Support Teams.

James Beekman

James Beekman is the General Manager of Transportation for Hillsborough County (Florida) Public Schools (HCPS). HCPS is currently the 8th largest school district in the nation servicing over 205,000 students. Mr. Beekman began his career in student transportation in 1983 and has been in a leadership role since 1989. He has been active in the Florida Association of Pupil Transportation where he served as a Regional Director, as President and has chaired numerous committees in both operations, fleet and school bus specifications. He was recognized by School Bus Fleet Magazine as the national 2014 Administrator of the Year. In his role at HCPS, he directs the daily operation of Transportation Services which transports over 90,000 students daily on 996 routes that cover an annual total of 17 million miles. In addition to yellow bus, Transportation Services also maintains over 600 vehicles in its white fleet used by a variety of departments in the District. He is a graduate of Florida Southern College in Lakeland with a B.S. in Business**.**

Nathan Graf

Nathan Graf is Senior Executive Director of Transportation and Fleet Maintenance for The San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD). SAISD is in the seventh largest city in the nation and serves over 50,000 students daily. Mr. Graf earned a master's degree in business administration from The University of Texas at Austin in 1994, graduating in the top ten percent of his class and earning the distinction of a Sord Honors Graduate. Under Mr. Graf's leadership, the transportation department for SAISD has earned several industry awards such as being recognized for exemplary performance in 2017's "100 Best Fleets" list; the SAISD Transportation Department was one of two districts in the nation to receive this award. In addition, the department received a Telly Award for its training video on school bus safety expectations; out of 12,000 entries about 25% are selected for this prestigious award. Mr. Graf oversees a department with more than 350 employees and a budget of over $10 million.

Kris Hafezizadeh

Kris Hafezizadeh is the Executive Director of Transportation and Vehicle Services for Austin Independent School District. (AISD). AISD provides services to over 83,000 students. Mr. Hafezizadeh began his career in student transportation in 1989 and has been in a leadership role since 1991. He has been active in the National Association for Pupil Transportation and Texas Association for Pupil Transportation and has chaired numerous committees in both associations. He was recognized by the Council of Great City Schools in 2014. In his role at AISD, he directs the daily operation of Transportation Services which transports over 23,000 students daily on 355 routes that cover an annual total of 7 million miles. In addition to yellow bus, Transportation Services also maintains over 400 vehicles in its white fleet used by a variety of departments in the District. He is a graduate of Texas State University in San Marcos with a B.S. in Business Administration**.**

Nicole Portee

Nicole Portee currently serves at the Executive Director of the Denver Public Schools (DPS) Transportation Department, overseeing a fleet of more than 400 school buses, 500 personnel, $24M budget, and transportation for over 39,000 students throughout Denver. Mrs. Portee earned a B.A. from American InterContinental University. She is a distinguished leader within the field of school bus transportation. Her passion for Transportation came while working for the Air Force & Accounting on Lowry AFB and United Parcel Service (UPS) where she served in various capacities with emphasis on Workforce Planning. In 2003 Nicole joined Denver Public Schools Transportation team and served in various capacities before accepting the role of Executive Director in 2010. In 2013 Nicole was honored by the DPS Superintendent and awarded "Persons of the Year" for exemplifying DPS Shared Core Values. In 2014 she was also named one of the 14 Phenomenal Women in School Transportation by the School Bus Fleet magazine and again in 2014 one of the 14 Fascinating Personalities in Pupil Transportation School Bus Fleet magazine. Nicole has continued to be recognized by various organizations for her leadership and outstanding out of the box thinking. Nicole served as the President of the Colorado State Pupil Transportation Association (CSPTA) from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. She has presented as several National Conferences such as Transporting Students with Disabilities and Preschoolers National Conference.

William Wen

William Wen currently serves as the Senior Director of Transportation Services for Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) in Orlando, Florida. OCPS is the 10th largest school district in the nation (4th largest in Florida) transporting approximately 70,000 students. OCPS operates just under 900 buses daily traveling over 18 million miles per year. Mr. Wen has been involved in passenger transportation for over 35 years, including fixed route service, transit contracting, charter/sightseeing, para-transit, and pupil transportation with OCPS for the last 13 years. During his transportation career, he has served as a Bus Operator, Radio Dispatcher, Road Supervisor, Safety and Training Manager, Security Officer, ESF-1 representative at the Orange County Emergency Operations Center, and Area Operations Manager. He was also a member of the Traffic Safety Department of the AAA National Office where he worked on driver safety education and child passenger safety programs. He is a graduate of the University of Maryland, University College with a MS in Applied Management.

ATTACHMENT B. WORKING AGENDA

**CGCS Strategic Support/Technical Assistance Team
Transportation Review**

**Seattle Public Schools
January 27-30, 2019**

Stephen Nielsen
Deputy Superintendent
sjnielsen@seattleschools.org
Office: 206-252-0168

Subject to Change as Required

Sunday, January 27	**Group Team Arrival** Kimpton Palladian Hotel 2000 2nd Avenue 206.448.1111	
6:15	**Team to Meet in Hotel Lobby**	
6:30	**Dinner Meeting**	**Denise Juneau** Superintendent **Stephen Nielsen** Deputy Superintendent **Carri Campbell** Chief of Public Affairs **Fred Podesta** Chief of Operations
Monday, January 28		
7:00 - 7:45	Team Continental Breakfast SPS Conference Room	
8:00 - 8:45	**Team Interview**	**Stephen Jones** Transportation Manager

9:00 - 9:45	**Team Interview**	**Steven Richard** GenEd Supervisor
10:00 - 10:45	**Team Interview**	**Ellen Reyes** Assist. Transportation Manager
11:00 - 11:45	**Team Interview**	**Yvonne Carpenter** Field Lead Supervisor

.

12:00 - 1:00	Working Luncheon	**Diane Navarro** Contracting Services Manager
1:00 - 2:00	**Team Interview**	**Julie Repie, Cherie Stafford, Diane Cagot** Operations Assistants (3), Athletics/Trips
2:15 - 3:00	**Team Interview**	**Rosa Gonzalez** Project Manager (ORCA/City of Seattle)
3:15 - 4:00	**Team Interview**	**Paula Mori** Transportation Analyst
4:15 - 5:00	**Team Interview**	**Richard Anzai** SPED Supervisor

5:30 p.m.	Group Team Discussion of Work Plan

Tuesday, January 29

7:00 - 7:45	Team Continental Breakfast SPS Conference Room	
8:00 - 8:45 (*suggested time*)	**Team Interviews**	**First Student** **Gail Heaton, Robert Cook,** **Greg Garlisch**
9:00 - 9:45	**Team Interviews**	**Kimberly Riggins/C. Center Team/Office review**
10:00 - 10:45	**Team Interviews**	**Pete Tsuchikawa, Katie Hairston,** **Miguel Contreras, Shawn Weaver,** **Tony Hartzell, Teresa Mori** (SPS Coordinators)
11:00 - 11:45	**Team Interviews**	**Annette Noriega, John Jackson,** **Evelyn Green, Peter Harris,** **Gwendolyn Jimerson** Intervention Associates

12:00 - 1:00 p.m.	Working Luncheon	

1:00 - 1:45	**Team Interviews**	**Trish Campbell** Director of Special Education **Beth Mills** Director of Special Education Operations
2:15 - 2:45	**Team Interviews**	**Tyra Williams/Alesia Jessie** MKV/Foster Care Liaisons/Mgrs.
3:00 - 3:45	**Team Interviews**	**Denise McElhinney** Budget Department Analyst
4:00 - 4:30	**Team Interviews**	Dan Golosman – Skills Center Pam Goldfine – Head Start Chris Matsumoto – EEU Sherry Studley - Bridges Beth Carter – Preschool/SPP Bruno Cross – Seattle World School Justin Hendrickson – South Shore

Group Team Discussion of Work Plan for Balance of Site Visit

Wednesday, January 30

7:00 - 7:30	**Team Continental Breakfast** Conference Room	
7:30 – 12:00	**Team Working Meeting**	**Synthesis of Findings & Recommendations**
12:00 - 1:00	**Team Working Luncheon**	**Denise Juneau** Superintendent **Stephen Nielsen** Deputy Superintendent **Fred Podesta** (Chief of Operations)

Adjournment & Departures

ATTACHMENT C. DISTRICT PERSONNEL INTERVIEWED

- Denise Juneau, Superintendent
- Stephen Nielsen, Deputy Superintendent
- Fred Podesta, Chief Operations Officer
- Sherri Kokx, Special Assistant
- Stephen Jones, Transportation Manager
- Steven Richard, GenEd Supervisor
- Ellen Reyes, Assistant Transportation Manager
- Yvonne Carpenter, Field Lead Supervisor
- Diane Navarro, Contracting Services Manager
- Julie Repie, Operations Assistant
- Cherie Stafford, Operations Assistant
- Diane Cagot, Operations Assistant
- Rosa Gonzalez, Project Manager (ORCA/City of Seattle)
- Paula Mori, Transportation Analyst
- Richard Anzai, SPED Supervisor (Team Lead Intervention and Transportation)
- Gail Heaton – First Student (South Lot)
- Robert Cook – First Student (South Lot)
- Pete Tsuchikawa, SPS Coordinator (Transportation Specialist)
- Miguel Contreras, SPS Coordinator (Transportation Specialist)
- Shawn Weaver, SPS Coordinator (Transportation Specialist)
- Tony Hartzell, SPS Coordinator (Transportation Specialist)
- Annette Noriega, Intervention Associate
- John Jackson, Intervention Associate
- Evelyn Green, Intervention Associate
- Peter Harris, Intervention Associate
- Tyra Williams, MKV/Foster Care Liaison/Manager
- Alesia Jessie, MKV/Foster Care Liaison/Manager
- Denise McElhinney, Budget Department Analyst
- Kimberly Riggins, Lead Control Center Representative
- Elizabeth Boyd-Joynson, Control Center Representative
- Chris Thomas, Control Center Representative
- Sametra Buford, Control Center Representative
- L'Rodney (Josh) Carter, Control Center Representative
- Dan Golosman – Skill Center
- Pam Goldfine – Head Start
- Chris Matsumoto – EEU
- Sherry Studley – Bridges
- Beth Carter – Preschool/SPP
- Justin Hendrickson – South Shore

- Seattle Public Schools Budget:
  - 2018-2019 Adopted Budget
- Financial Reporting Summary, 2016-2017, March 2018
- Operations Allocation Detail Report 2016A:
  - Transportation, School Year 2017-2018
  - Transportation, School Year 2016-2017
- SPS Budget Information:
  - Budget Year 2017
  - Budget Year 2018
- Key Performance Indicators, Technical Assistance Paper, Customized for Seattle Public Schools, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction Seattle, April 2018
- October 1, 2018, District Enrollment, School Year 2018
- Approval of the 2018-2019 Transportation Service Standards, School Board Action Report, January 27, 2018
- Bus Arrival and Departure Times, Modified 2 Tier, 2018-2019 Transportation Service Standards – Appendix B
- Job Descriptions:
  - Transportation Manager, revision date December 29, 2016
  - Assistant Transportation Manager Business Operations, revision date December 5, 2016
  - Transportation System Analyst, revision date December 27, 2016
  - Team Lead Intervention & Transportation, revision date December 27, 2016
  - Field Staff Lead, revision date December 20, 2016
  - Transportation Specialist, 260 days, revision date December 27, 2016
  - Transportation Specialist, 223 days, revision date December 28, 2016
  - Intervention Associate, revision date January 19, 2017
  - Lead Transportation Control Center Representative, revision date January 23, 2012
  - Transportation Control Center Representative, revision date January 19, 2017
  - Operation Specialist Transportation, revision date January 18, 2017
  - Office Specialist III, revision date January 18, 2017
  - Sr. Strategic Advisor ORCA, Term of Agreement: August 1, 2018 – September 1, 2019
- School Bus Inspection Result, 2017-2018
- Organization Charts:
  - Superintendent
  - Transportation
- National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE:
  - McKinney-Vento Law into Practice Brief Series, Transporting Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness
  - What You Need to Know to Help Your Child in School, A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers
  - Information for Parents
- SPS Homeless Student Services
- McKinney-Vento (MKV) Program, Student Housing Questionnaire 2018-19

- SchoolHouse Connection, Overcoming Homelessness Through Education, Homeless Children and Youth in the *Every Student Succeeds Act* of 2015
- Foster Care Request for Student Transportation, 2018-2019
- Transportation Policy:
  - Student Transportation, Policy No. 6600, April 23, 2014
  - Special Transportation, Policy No. 6620, February 15, 2012
  - Private Vehicle Transportation, Policy No. 6625, February 15, 2012
  - Adults/Non-Students on Buses, Policy No. 6650, February 15, 2012
  - Vandalism to Transportation Facilities, Policy No. 6660, February 15, 2012
  - Emergency Transportation, Policy No. 6670, February 15, 2012
- Superintendent Procedure:
  - District-Owned Vehicles, 6640SP, March 15, 2016
  - Transportation, 6600SP, June 13, 2017
- Keep for Reference, Memo to Parents/Guardians of Students Receiving Bus Services:
  - 2017-2018 Ice and Snow Emergency Notification Information, Regular Service, November 15, 2017
  - 2017-2018 Ice and Snow Emergency Notification Information, Special Services, November 15, 2017
  - 2016-2017 Ice and Snow Emergency Notification Information, November 16, 2018
  - Transportation Ice & Snow Update for School Year 2017-2018, Special Services
- Snow Route Mailer, Special Services, Update for School Year 2017-2018
- Memo Student First Student, Driver Instructions:
  - Regular Service Drivers: Ice and Snow Route Procedures, 2018-2019, November 30, 2018
  - Special Service Drivers: Ice and Snow Route Procedures, 2018-2019, November 30, 2018
- Ice and Snow Staff Response Plan, 2018-2019
- School Hour Procedures, Procedures for Snowfall Occurring During School Hours
- Ice and Snow Frequently Asked Questions, 2018-2019
- Adverse Weather Conditions – Ice and Snow Instruction, 2018-2019
- Ice and Snow Operational Check Off List
- Adverse Weather – Communications Protocol, Updated November 13, 2018
- Ice and Snow Dry Run, 2018-2019, November 14, 2018
- Memo to First Student Lot Manager:
  - Carrier Agreement for Regular Service Drivers During Ice and Snow, Ice and Snow Procedures, 2018-2019, November 15, 2018
  - Carrier Agreement for Special Service Driver During Ice and Snow, Ice and Snow Procedures, 2018-2019, November 14, 2018
- Transportation Task Force Report, October 26, 2018, Draft Final Report
- Transportation Playbook – Excellence For All, 2014-2015
- Survey of Transportation Management Practices, Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS), 2018-2019
- CGCS Transportation Review Status Log, January 29, 2019
- Durham Contract, Approved August 2008, Updated November 2016
- First Student Contract, Approved August 2018, Updated November 2016

- Executed First Student Contract, 2017-2020 Bus Transportation Services, RFP09614, Board Action Approval date February 15, 2017
- First Student Staff Directory, 2018-2019
- SDOT Additional Contacts for Winter Safety Assessment, 2018-2019
- SDOT SPD List and Map of Potential Street Closure Locations, 2018-2019
- Winter Weather – For Assistance and Information, 2018-2019
- Innovation Group Sessions, Transportation Operations, January 9, 2019
- SPS All District Schools Map, 2018-2019, June 20, 2018
- STARS (Student Transportation Allocation Report System) Report 1026A Description, dated February 22, 2016
- Student Transportation Allocation Report System (STARS), effective September 1, 2018

ATTACHMENT E. SURVEY OF BEST PRACTICES

As part of its peer review process, the Council periodically uses a survey instrument that enables a department to rate itself on a series of "best practices." The instrument was adapted from one developed by the Florida Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) and Florida's Auditor General as a model instrument to assess school system operations.

The instrument was developed to help districts 1) use performance and cost-efficient measures to evaluate programs; 2) use appropriate benchmarks based on comparable school districts, government agencies, and industry standards; 3) identify potential cost savings; and 4) focus budget and resources on district priorities and goals, including student performance. The surveys are grounded in a set of "best practices and indicators" that were identified from extensive literature reviews, interviews of education personnel experts, representatives from professional organizations, and educators in other states.

- The survey used in the Seattle Public Schools Transportation Department measures a total of 20 Standards and 90 indicators in three areas --

    o Transportation, Planning, Organization and Staffing (7 Standards and 30 Practices)

    o Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance (5 Standards and 31 Practices),[40] and

    o Operations, Management and Accountability (8 Standards and 29 Practices)

Transportation, Planning, Organization and Staffing

- Standard 1: The district coordinates long-term planning and budgeting for student transportation within the context of district and community planning.

    It was reported that the Transportation Department does not comply with any of the four indicators of best practices, including --

    o Transportation staff conduct a systematic assessment of transportation needs to identify priorities and basic needs. The process includes consideration of all current and anticipated budget categories and potential areas of transportation cost savings such as reducing the number of courtesy-riders services, reducing the number of spare buses, realigning routes, purchasing larger buses, etc. As part of the budget process, transportation administrators present cost-savings options to the school board and public.

    The department's explanation is that "(Management) have not been able to present ideas to the board, yet information has been provided to SLT to express our ideas."

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[40] The indicators of best practices in Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance were not applicable since the practices within this standard are the responsibility of the contracted services. The Team noted, however, it would have been useful to learn how compliant the contractor is with what are considered the best practices in this standard.

o Transportation planning staff consult regularly with district planning staff to ensure that transportation needs, concerns, and costs are considered when planning for future schools or physical plant needs.

o Transportation planning staff consults regularly with community planners to identify areas in the district where community growth and development will have an impact on the need for student transportation services in the future.

The department indicated it visits some locations for discussions of changes at new sites/locations.

o Transportation planning staff consult regularly with district planning and budgeting staff to develop and present information for the school board and public on the student transportation cost implications of district educational program decisions.

The department indicated this is a function primarily handled with enrollment planning.

- Standard 2: The district provides regular, accurate, and timely counts to the State Department of Education of the number of students transported as part of the State Education Finance Program.

It was reported that the Transportation Department complies with two of the following indicators of best practices, including--

o The district was found to be following the requirements of the State program...

o The district takes identifiable steps to address recommendations in a timely manner when it is found not to be incompliance.

It was reported the Transportation Department does not comply with the following indicator of best practices--

o Transportation administrators regularly review the student count information to identify trends and issues that may require managerial or budgetary responses and that may result in cost savings within the present time frame or in the future

- Standard 3: The transportation office plans, reviews, and establishes bus routes and stops to provide cost-efficient student transportation services for all students who qualify for transportation.

It was reported that the Transportation Department complies with three of the following indicators of best practices, including –

o Route planning staff responds promptly to complaints or suggestions received from school site staff, parents, or the general public about current or proposed bus routes or a driver's performance on an official assignment.

o Route planning staff (or their designees) regularly reviews areas within two miles of the school with the responsible local or state agency having road jurisdiction to identify and document where hazardous walking conditions exist. The district works cooperatively with the local or state agency whenever possible to eliminate hazardous walking conditions. Walking conditions that cannot be made safe are reported to the Department of Education and students are claimed for transportation funding under the provisions of law.

o The school board has adopted staggered school start times to help ensure that the district's buses can serve as many students as possible (i.e., maximize the district's average bus occupancy). Alternatively, the district can demonstrate through a financial analysis that staggered school start times would not make student transportation more cost-efficient.

It was reported that the Transportation Department does not comply with three of the following indicators of best practices, including --

o Route planning staff annually uses a systematic approach to create and update bus routes (including computer routing if appropriate for the size and complexity of the district) and bus stops that are effective and cost-efficient without compromising safety. Existing bus routes and stops are reviewed on an annual basis for effectiveness, cost-efficiency, and safety.

o The district's policy and practice are not to provide service to courtesy students.

The department explains this is not district policy, but it provides space-available service when possible.

It was also reported that the following indicator of best practice is not applicable --

o The district's routing practices result in reasonably high average bus occupancy, and low cost per mile and student, compared to districts with similar demographics and educational programs and exemplar districts.

- Standard 4: The organizational structure and staffing levels of the district's transportation program minimizes administrative layers and processes.

The department indicated it complies with the following indicator of best practice --

o The district reports organizational structure and administrative staffing review findings in writing and distributes these findings to school board members and the public.

But the department indicated it does not comply with the following indicators of best practices–

o The district periodically reviews the transportation program's organizational structure and staffing levels to ensure that administrative layers and processes are minimized. Input for the review includes staff feedback and structure/ staffing levels comparisons with selected peer districts.

The department reported that the district does not have a peer district comparable within the state.

- o The district can demonstrate the program has an appropriate structure (including reasonable lines of authority and spans of control) and staffing levels based on applicable comparisons and/or benchmarks.

The department reported that staffing levels are challenged based on ratios per supervisor/manager.

- Standard 5: The district maintains an effective staffing level in the vehicle maintenance area and provides support for vehicle maintenance staff to develop its skills.

  The department indicated none of the three indicators of best practices are applicable because contracted services has responsibility for vehicle maintenance.

- Standard 6: The district effectively and efficiently recruits and retains the bus drivers and attendants it needs.

  The department indicated it complies with two of the four indicators of best practices, including--

  - o The district notifies the public of job opportunities for bus drivers, substitute bus drivers, and bus attendants. The district uses a variety of approaches and activities to reach individuals likely to be interested in such employment options and takes advantage of effective low-cost venues whenever possible.

  - o The district assesses its turnover rate for drivers and attendants and makes changes to practices as necessary to retain drivers and effectively recruit replacements.

  The department indicated none of the following indicators of best practices are applicable because contracted services has responsibility for staffing needs and benefits.

  - o Transportation staff collects information on wages and benefits offered by adjacent school districts and by local employers that are likely to be competing for the pool of applicants for positions as bus drivers, substitute bus drivers, and bus attendants in the district. Staff regularly use this information to compare the district's relative competitiveness for these positions when recruiting replacement drivers and attendants and setting salaries and benefits.

  - o The district provides bus drivers and attendants with incentives, financial or otherwise, for good performance as demonstrated by their safety records, timeliness, attendance, and ability to maintain discipline on the bus.

- Standard 7: The district trains, supervises, and assists bus drivers to enable them to meet bus-driving standards and maintain acceptable student discipline on the bus.

The department indicated none of the following indicators of best practices are applicable because contracted services has responsibility for staffing needs and benefits.

o Transportation staff provides or contracts for the initial training required for prospective bus drivers to receive a commercial driver's license.

o The transportation office provides periodic in-service training (including the required annual training) for bus drivers, substitute bus drivers, and bus attendants that includes topics needed to keep licenses current along with other district transportation needs and concerns.

o Training meets the concerns and needs expressed by drivers and attendants in periodic meetings with transportation management.

o The transportation office provides regular direct oversight, at least annually, of basic bus handling skills, safe driving practices, and pupil management techniques of all school bus drivers.

o The district ensures that all bus drivers receive annual physical examinations as required by statute and maintains records of these examinations.

o The school board has adopted and enforces a safe driver policy that establishes when or if school bus drivers with traffic violations charged against them are able to continue driving.

o The district has considered implementing a policy for recouping training costs for bus drivers who terminate their employment within one year from being hired.

Vehicle Acquisition and Maintenance

The department reported that none of the five standards and 31 indicators of best practices are applicable because the contracted bus services has responsibility for vehicle acquisition and maintenance.

Operations, Management and Accountability

- Standard 1: The district ensures that all regular school bus routes and activity trips operate in accordance with established routines, and any unexpected contingencies affecting vehicle operations are handled safely and promptly.

  The department reported it complies with the following four indicators of best practices, including--

  o The district effectively responds to bus overcrowding situations. Responses address the immediate situation, and, when appropriate, also provide for longer-term solutions, such as a redesign of affected bus routes.

  o Transportation operations staff maintains records of the number of students who ride longer than the state recommended ride time standard (or the local ride time standard if the school

board has adopted a more stringent standard) and take actions to minimize this number when possible.

o The school board has adopted and implemented a policy on the circumstances under which a bus driver may discharge a student at any stop other than the one the student usually uses.

o The district has written a process for school site staff to request and pay all transportation costs (including operational and administrative costs) for all educational, extracurricular, and athletic activity trips. Implementation of these procedures is demonstrated in activity trip records.

The department reported the following indicators of best practices are not applicable because contracted services has responsibility for these functions—

o The district has an effective process for responding to vehicle breakdowns, and it is clear who should be notified and when. District procedures address the roles and responsibilities of bus drivers, operations staff, vehicle maintenance staff, and school site staff.

o The district has an effective process for bus drivers to report their own intention to miss work as soon as possible and for operations staff to respond to those absences with substitute drivers or other solutions.

- Standard 2: The district provides efficient transportation services for exceptional students in a coordinated fashion that minimizes hardships to students.

The department reported it complies with three of the four indicators of best practices, including--

o Transportation staff and exceptional student education staff communicate and consult regularly about student transportation services for exceptional students.

o The district policy, along with district exceptional student education guidelines, ensures that exceptional students ride a regular school bus whenever possible and appropriate.

o For any exceptional education students who cannot be accommodated on district school buses, suitable alternative arrangements are made such as specialized medical transport or parental transportation.

The department reported it does not comply with the following indicator of best practice because the Special Education Department has responsibility for this function.

- o Exceptional student education staff and transportation staff identify exceptional students who qualify for Medicaid funding for certain approved bus runs. The district makes claims for Medicaid reimbursement for transporting those students.[41]

- Standard 3: The district ensures that staff acts promptly and appropriately in response to any accidents or breakdowns.

  The department reported it complies with the notification process as part of the following indicators of best practice, but the remaining responsibilities are assumed by contracted services.

  - o The district has an effective process for responding to vehicle breakdowns, and it is clear who should be notified and when. District procedures address the roles and responsibilities of district staff including bus drivers, operations staff, vehicle maintenance staff, and school site staff. These procedures are periodically reviewed in training sessions with copies of the procedures carried on each district vehicle.

  The department also reported, however, that the following indicators of best practices are not applicable because contracted services are responsible for --

  - o (Equipping) school buses with two-way communications devices, and staff monitor communications at all times when school buses are in service.

  - o The district maintains complete records of all accidents that occur and promptly reports all qualifying accidents to the school board and the State Department of Education.

- Standard 4: The district ensures that appropriate student behavior is maintained on the bus with students being held accountable for financial consequences of misbehavior related to transportation.

  The department reported it complies with the following indicator of best practice--

  - o Bus drivers report disciplinary infractions directly to school site staff. School staff report to drivers what disciplinary actions were taken.

  And the department reported that the following best indicator of best practice was not applicable because it was not its responsibility for --

  - o Enforcing "(d)istrict policy and procedures require that parents of students damaging buses be assessed repair costs."

- Standard 5: The district provides appropriate technological and computer support for transportation functions and operations.

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[41] The Council team's is aware the Special Education Department makes claims for Medicaid for the services it provides, but it did not see any evidence the Transportation Department is making claims for Medicaid reimbursement for the services it provides.

The department reported it complies with the following indicator of best practice --

o Transportation administrators, with the assistance of district information systems staff, and periodically review their current level of technological and computer support to identify issues, needs for the future, and coordination with other district systems.

However, the department also indicated it did not comply with the following indicator of best practices --

o The transportation office has a computerized management information system that administrators use to produce reliable and timely budgeting and expenditure information on student transportation functions, as well as basic performance data for the office. This system is coordinated with other district systems.

And it further reported that the following indicator of best practice was not applicable because it was the responsibility of contracted services --

o The district maintains computerized data that enables it to record and track information on transportation staff training and certifications, driver's license data, substance abuse testing, and personnel performance.

- Standard 6: The district monitors the fiscal condition of transportation functions by regularly analyzing expenditures and reviewing them against the budget.

  The department reported it complied with the following indicator of best practice --

  o The approved budget for transportation includes appropriate categories by which expenditures may be usefully tracked. Transportation staff systematically reviews expenditures against the budget for these categories. Administrators respond promptly to cost control issues raised during such reviews and identify what actions must be taken, by whom, and when.

  However, the department indicated it did not comply with the following indicator of best practice because it is not aware of any feedback to the recommendations it has made regarding opportunities and efficiencies --

  o The district has taken advantage of significant opportunities to improve transportation management, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and reduce costs.

  And further, the department reported the following was not applicable because it was the responsibility of contracted services --

  o Vehicle maintenance staff in the transportation office maintains current records of all maintenance and repairs conducted on all vehicles, and the costs associated with those repairs. They review those records regularly to identify maintenance cost concerns, such as unexpected patterns of maintenance activity, excessive costs, or high costs associated with types or ages of buses.

- Standard 7: The district has reviewed the prospect for privatizing transportation functions, in whole or in part.

  The department reported it did not comply with the following indicators of best practices—

  o Transportation staff has developed key unit cost information for student transportation functions and tasks to enable them to make comparisons with those of private providers.

  o Transportation staff periodically reviews the costs associated with transportation functions and tasks that could be conducted by private vendors.[42] When the results of such reviews indicate savings to the district, staff arranges for such functions and tasks to be performed by private vendors.

  o Transportation staff conducts quality assurance checks for any transportation function or task performed by private vendors to ensure that work was conducted in accordance with the original agreement.

- Standard 8: The district has established an accountability system for transportation, and it regularly tracks and makes public reports on its performance in comparison with established benchmarks.

  The department reported it complied with the following indicator of best practice--

  o Transportation administrators have established appropriate performance and cost-efficiency measures and benchmarks (i.e., measurable targets for future performance) for key indicators of student transportation performance.

  The department reported, however, that it did not comply with the following indicators of best practices--

  o The district has clearly stated goals and measurable outcome-oriented objectives for the student transportation program that reflect the intent (purpose) of the program and address the major aspects of the program's purpose and expenditures.

  o The district has identified other school districts it considers to be peers and exemplars against which it can compare its performance, and it can identify reasons for selecting those districts. The district makes regular comparisons of its own performance with those of the peers and exemplars.

    The department's explanation is there are no other similar school districts locally for comparison and hasn't been compared recently.

o Transportation administrators provide district administrators and the school board an annual "report card" that shows actual performance for all selected performance and cost-efficiency measures in comparison with the selected benchmark for that indicator, the performance of peer districts, and actual performance during the previous year. The district uses this information to assess performance and make management decisions.

The department's explanation is that the reporting of performance has changed to every three years to the School Board. Comparison to other districts was not provided.

o In addition to "big picture" performance reporting, transportation administrators have established a system of regular management reports throughout the transportation office to track daily and weekly performance for key functions.

The department's explanation is that the information has not been consistently provided by First Student.

**Review of the Department of Transportation
of the Seattle Public Schools[1]**

June 2008

In the spring of 2008, Dr. Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson, Superintendent, and Donald Kennedy, Chief Financial and Operating Officer (CFOO), of the Seattle Public Schools requested that the Council of the Great City Schools provide high-level management reviews of the district's transportation operations.[2] Specifically, they requested that the Council[3] --

- Review and evaluate the leadership and management, organization, and operational procedures of the department.

- Develop recommendations, as appropriate, that would help the department achieve operational efficiencies and effectiveness.

In response to this request, the Council assembled a Strategic Support Teams of senior managers with extensive experience in transportation from other major city school systems across the country. The team was composed of the following individuals. (Attachment A contains brief resumes of the Team members.)

- ***Project Staff***

  Bob Carlson, Project Director
  Director, Management Services Council of
  the Great City Schools

  David Koch, Principal Investigator
  Chief Administrative Officer (Retired)
  Los Angeles Unified School District

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[1] The format of the report appears as represented when submitted in 2008.

[2] The Council has previously conducted reviews of the district's Human Resources, Finance, and Information Technology Operations.

[3] The Council has conducted nearly 150 instructional, management, and operational reviews in about 45 big-city school districts over the last several years. The organization conducts these reviews using Strategic Support Teams of current and former senior managers with strong reputations for developing and promoting effective operations and best practices in major urban school systems across the country. The reports generated by these reviews are often critical, but they also have been the foundation for improving the operations, organization, instruction, and management of many urban school systems nationally. In other cases, the reports are complimentary and form the basis for identifying "best practices" for other urban school systems to replicate. (Attachment X lists the reviews that the Council has conducted.)

John Fahey, Assistant Superintendent,
Service Center Operations
Buffalo City School District

Richard Jacobs, Director of Transportation
Boston Public Schools

David Palmer, Deputy Director, Transportation
Los Angeles Unified School District

Dan Roberts, Executive Director, Long Range Planning & Business Support
Round Rock Independent School District

Alexandra Robinson, Director, Transportation Services
San Diego Unified School District

To conduct its work, the Strategic Support Team reviewed documents provided by district staff before visiting the Seattle Public Schools. The teams also examined additional documents, reports and data during its visit. (A list of documents reviewed by the team is presented in Appendix B.)

The team conducted fieldwork for the project during a four-day site visit to Seattle on May 20-23, 2008. The general schedules for the site visit is outlined below.

The team met with the Chief Financial and Operating Officer on the first night of the visit to understand his expectations and objectives for the review, and to make any last-minute adjustments to the working agenda for the visit. The team used the first two full days of the site visit to conduct interviews with key staff members. (A complete list of individuals interviewed are included in Appendix C.)[4] The final day for the visit was devoted to synthesizing and refining the team findings and recommendations, and to a debriefing with senior management.

The Council sent a draft of this document to the team members for their review in order to ensure the accuracy of the report and obtain their concurrence with the recommendations. This management letter contains the findings and   recommendations that have been designed by team to help improve the operational efficiencies and effectiveness of the Transportation Department.

Background

- The Department of Transportation reports to the Director of School Services who, in turn, reports to the Chief Operations and Financial Officer. The department comprises a staff of approximately 36 full time equivalents, including the Manager, an Assistant Manager[5], four Supervisors, and analytical, office, and Control Center staff. The department's budget

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[4] The Council's peer reviews are based on interviews of staff and others, a review of documents provided by the district, observations of operations, and professional judgment. The teams conducting the interviews rely on the willingness of those interviewed to be truthful and forthcoming, and make every effort to provide an objective assessment of district functions but cannot always judge the accuracy of statements made by all interviewees.
[5] The Assistant Manager position is currently vacant.

for the fiscal year 2008 (ended 8/31/08) was $29.4 million, compared to a total budget of fiscal year 2007 of $27.2 million. Approximately $16 million of district transportation costs are reimbursed by the state of Washington.

- The actual operation and maintenance of school buses is contracted to an outside vendor.[6] For fiscal year 2008, $22.2 million was budgeted for contracted school buses, $1.1 million for taxis, and $0.9 million for transit passes.

- The major operating units in the Transportation Department include --

  o An Intervention Unit with a Supervisor, eight Intervention Associates, 11 Special Education Bus Supervisors, an Intervention School Bus Driver, and 24 hourly Head Start Bus Monitors. The unit provides intervention services for students with behavioral problems on school busses, student supervision on selected Special Education routes, and substitutes for absent contract drivers.

  o The Special Services Transportation Unit with a Supervisor and two Transportation Specialists who route and schedule services for Special Education students.

  o An Elementary Transportation Unit with a Supervisor and five Transportation Specialists who route and schedule services for elementary students.

  o A Secondary Transportation Unit with a Supervisor and one Transportation Specialist who route and schedule services for secondary students.

  o The Control Center which includes three Work Control Operators and hourly support personnel. The Control Center is in direct contact with the contractor' bus dispatch personnel and handles inquiries from students, parents, and schools relating to transportation activities.

Findings and Observations

The Council's Strategic Support Team findings and observations are organized into four general areas: Commendations, Leadership and Management, Organization, and Operations and Technical.

⊕ Commendations

- A new Transportation Manager who appears competent and motivated is replacing the retiring manager.

- The customers, including school principals and program administrators, gave the department good marks despite difficulties that occurred at the beginning of the 2007-2008 school year.

- Morale is generally high in the department except for some routing staff.
- The Control Center staff seemed to be well informed and took pride in their role of

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[6] The district, however, provides the fuel.

supporting students and parents.

- The department is attempting to update its technology resources including a new GPS routing system and an on-line field trip request system that is under development.

- The district is moving aggressively to expand the use of public transportation (Metro) passes to meet the needs of secondary students.

- Student routing is accomplished consistently faster than the 3-5 days promised to new enrollees.

- The department's culture of accommodation results in excellent customer service to students, parents and school personnel.

- Most staff appeared interested and willing to implement changes to improve departmental operations.

✚ Leadership and Management

- The Transportation Department does not have a business plan with goals and objectives that are linked to the district's Strategic Plan or benchmarks and performance indicators to measure the performance of department units or the school bus contractors.

- The department is not data driven. For example --

  o Consistent basic data on student ridership by program and by mode of transport, bus counts, and numbers of routes is not readily available.

  o Regular management reports are generally lacking.

  o The Control Center's logs are not summarized, analyzed or used to make decisions or to allocate resources.

  o Contractors are not required to provide basic service-level information.

  o There is no routine system for principals to report pupil transportation problems to the department.

  o It is difficult to reconcile the number of personnel with the budget, the organization chart, and staff rosters.

- There is a general lack of communication and coordination between the Transportation Department and the district's Learning and Teaching and Improvement and Compliance Departments. For example --

  o New instructional programs are established, existing programs are moved, and school site grade levels are reconfigured without coordinating with the Transportation Department or considering the logistical implications of the decisions.
  o The department is not at the table when long range school facilities' planning is

considered.

- o The department is not represented at Individual Education Program (IEP) meetings so that students end up being transported on a portal-to-portal basis.

- There appears to be an overall lack of financial accountability for the pupil transportation program.[7] For example --

  - o There are no apparent incentives to control program costs and no consequences for failing to do so.

  - o Enrollment policies are established, and pupil and program placement decisions are made without considering their associated transportation costs.

  - o Many taxis are used for several programs, even though taxis services are ineligible for state transportation reimbursements.

- There is little emphasis on training for district or contracted transportation personnel. For example --

  - o Bus drivers are not required to attend workshops provided by the Intervention Unit.

  - o Taxi and shuttle drivers are not screened or trained to district standards.

  - o There was no information readily available regarding the content or frequency of training provided by the contractor or how it compares to state requirements.

- There is no succession plan to deal with a number of impending retirements in key transportation positions.[8]

Organization

- A proposed reorganization and restructuring of the Transportation Department contains the following shortcomings --

  - o It eliminates the Assistant Manager position which the Team believes is essential in providing a backup for the Manager.

  - o It does not address the functional silos which have inhibited communications and effective coordination within the department. For example, there is no emphasis on using cross-functional teams as a means of doing so.

  - o It does not address the appropriateness of having the Intervention Unit whose primary responsibilities are as student disciplinarians and arbiters for dispute resolution in the Transportation Department. And the proposal does not address why the Intervention

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[7] The district's budget practices which do not provide for a rigorous review of proposed expenditures and the limited use of fiscal projections and interim financial reporting accounts, in part, for this overall lack of financial accountability.

[8] There was, however, a few days to transition from the retiring to the new Transportation Managers.

Associates should continue to serve as substitute bus drivers and part-time Control Center operators if the unit is appropriately placed and its responsibilities are critical department functions.

- The Control Center's staffing model appears to be stretched to meet peak period demands, but it does not provide productive activities for staff during slow periods.

⬥ Operations

- The current student assignment policies result in higher pupil transportation costs, underutilized bus capacity, and inefficient bus routes.

- The district's school bus routing and scheduling systems result in --

  o Inefficient use of available resources because bell times (start and end times) are not coordinated with the Transportation Department.

  o Individual schools and programs deviating from established bell times without considering how the changes impact transportation operations.

  o Inefficient, costly, and potentially hazardous drop off locations because the department has a flexible policy regarding requests to change after- school locations.

  o Routing inefficiencies due to short walk distances to bus stops.[9]

  o Head Start and Special Education buses that are rarely used to transport general education students and special program students that do not regularly ride on general education buses.

  o Special programs operating on different bell times.[10]

  o Bus routes that are established based on eligible students and not on actual anticipated ridership.

  o Actual ridership that is significantly lower than assigned students.[11]

  o Inactive route stops because the department does not remove stops that are unused for extended periods of time.

  o Special Education therapy and school field trips that are scheduled during peak transportation periods and impact the contractor's ability to provide other transportation services.

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[9] The Team's query of the VersaTrans database indicated that 1,930 first graders currently scheduled for transportation have an average walk to stop distance of one tenth of a mile (528 feet).
[10] The Team found at least two examples where students with disabilities had instruction bell times that were different that the bell times for non-disabled students
[11] The Team found that the actual ridership of 13 buses arriving at two schools was only 53% of the assigned students

- o Excessive numbers of courtesy riders, i.e., students who live within the established walking distance from their school and are not otherwise qualified to ride the bus.[12]

  o New bus stops that are not checked for safety compliance prior to activation.

- The district's use of taxis to transport students in several programs which homeless students, non-public schools, and Special Education is costly, less safe, and not reimbursable under the state's transportation program.

- There is a lack of supervision in loading zones and security appeared to be non-existent at the school sites that the Team visited.

- There are a number of administrative issues that include --

  o Little oversight and no field supervision of the contractors by the department.

  o Contractors who are not held to performance standards. They are not, for example, required to report performance data such as on-time, late, and missed routes.

  o Inadequate and inconsistent processes for data collection and assessing of liquidated damages for failure.

  o Insufficient amounts of liquidated damage penalties to motivate contractual compliance. The total amount of liquidated damages assessed during the past year, for example, was small based on the size of the contract and reported level of service failures.

  o Failure to enforced contractual requirements regarding bus driver uniforms.

  o Failure of the contract bus drivers to validate school bus riders.

  o No articulated strategy for the primary contractor to deal with the current driver shortage so that the district's Intervention Associates serve as substitute bus drivers to fill the void.

  o No computerized fuel management system and lack of adequate internal control over the fuel the district provides to the contractor.

  o Daily changes which contractors make to routes that result in parental and school notification concerns.

  o Questionable ridership data because drivers are unable to accurately report the number of students they transport into school.
- There are significant deficiencies related to the department's technology and systems.

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[12] Sixteen percent (16%) of all middle school students, for example, are courtesy riders.

For example--

o The deployment of the VersaTrans system one month before the start of the 2007-08 school year was poorly conceived and executed.

o The Control Center does not have an automated call management system to record response times or the number of calls that are processed, missed, placed on-hold, or abandoned.

o There is a duplication of efforts and the potential for inconsistencies because the key data bases impacting pupil transportation, notably the enrollment system on the VAX, the eSIS student data system, and the VersaTrans bus routing system, are not integrated.

o The capabilities of its GPS system are not fully leveraged. For example, the GPS is used to check on the location of a bus after a complaint, but it is not used to proactively track buses or monitor the contractor's performance.

o Computer hardware or software installation issues may account for slow network response times on the department's routing system.

o The nightly upload of information between VAX, eSIS, and Versatrans is overly time consuming and reduces the availability of the systems to transportation staff.[13]

- The Transportation Department generally lacks standard procedures (SOPs) for its operations. For example --

o Students end up waiting for parental pick up in the Intervention Assistant's vehicles or at police stations because alternative sites have not been identified for undeliverable students.

o Procedures have not been established for either safeguarding a school's inventory of transit passes or preventing the sale of passes by students.

o School and departmental staff are unclear as to who is responsible for dealing with student disciplinary problems arising on a school bus.

Recommendations

Note: Updated (February 2019) recommendation implementation status, written by the current Transportation Manager and Assistant Transportation Manager, is **highlighted in yellow.**

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[13] The custom program developed by VersaTrans at the districts' request (which requires lengthy night tine processing) is based on a misunderstanding of the capabilities of the VersaTrans system and an expectation of detail that is unrealistic and has no relation with the current level of service provided by the department. The custom program assigns sub definitions of corner stops so that in theory the parents would know exactly which of the four corners to wait on when in reality the process to formally notify parents of bus stop assignments is almost non-existent.

1. Create a strategic vision and business plan for the Transportation Department that is linked to the district's Strategic Plan and incorporates a data driven management approach that includes --

    a. Goals, objectives, benchmarks and measurable performance indicators for the school bus contractors and each unit within the department. - *We are currently working with First Student to review their contract, present a performance based contractual agreement holding them accountable to their services*.

    b. Standards for service with formalized processes for evaluating contractors and for determining customer satisfaction with the services provided. - *With the implementation of a performance-based contract, we will be looking at cab/charter services holding them accountable due to their services as well (currently, neither service has an existing contract)*.

2. Involve the department as a strategic partner in the district's instructional and facility management processes by including it in decisions related to--

    a. Student assignment policies (e.g., school choice, walking distances, attendance boundaries) *We are involved with some decisions based on student assignment policies, however, some policies need additional support from other departments to make better decisions (i.e., Service Standards)*.

    b. Program placement – *We are not utilized as a partner in decision making for program placements*.

    c. Pupil placement (e.g., IEPs) – *We are not allowed to have access to IEP's for pre-transportation planning*.

    d. School building utilization (e.g., grade level configuration) – *We are not utilized as a partner in this type of decision*.

    e. Establishing and coordinating school bell times. – *We discuss school bell times in the past, but recently have not been as engaged. This would help better plan our transportation assignments*.

3. Establish departmental financial management accountability measures to--

    a. Maximize state reimbursement revenues – *Our current review process is being handled by our Assistant Manager and Operations Analyst. However, they are the only team members that control the procedure*.

    b. Project expenses based on anticipated ridership, pupil placement policies, and instructional program configurations – *This is not occurring as we are impacted by other departments information and/or support when needing to project data information*.

    c. Require interim financial reporting with year-end projections of potential variances – *This is currently in progress with our Budget department who provides the information for review*.

    d. Provide year-end review and explanation of revenue and expenditure variances. – *We do not provide year-end explanations of our variances (no formal meetings or discussions)*.

4. Create a comprehensive training program for all contract and district personnel involved in transporting students that includes--

    a. District policies – *We do review district policies with some of our staff team (i.e., Monitors/Crossing Guards/Drivers/etc.*

    b. Safety procedures – *This is reviewed with Drivers/Monitors, Crossing guards, etc*.

    c. Emergency Procedures- *This is reviewed with Drivers/Monitors, Crossing guards, etc*.

    d. Pupil management – *This is reviewed with drivers and intervention associates*.

    e. Special student needs. *This is reviewed with drivers, intervention, monitors, etc*.

5. Retain the backup management position of the Assistant Manager and develop succession planning within the department to ensure knowledge transfer and the orderly transition of responsibilities. – *The Assistant Manager position has been filled but is in the role of a Business Manager/Senior Analyst, not necessarily Operations. Also, the Assistant Manager has been in a role specializing in numerous projects that impacts her ability to hold team accountable or engaged with direct reports. In the last 5 years, there has been a Manager/Assistant manager team, but before this, there was a two-team Assistant manager group or just one manager. Current Manager has taken over the role of evaluations/team accountability for the entire office group and allowed Assistant to be able to handle business operational projects*.

6. Reorganize and/or restructure the department to ensure that--

    a. The contractors are field managed and supervised. – *Contractors are managed by their own staff and work in a partnership with SPS. SPS staffing doesn't provide field management other than the Intervention associates within their own duties*.

    b. That the skill sets of the Associates are appropriate to serve and are, in fact, utilized as student disciplinarians and arbiters for dispute resolution if the Intervention Unit remains within the Transportation Department.[14] – *This was not implemented (see footnote #1). Intervention team (5) does remain as a group that works with drivers, student behavioral management, works in a Monitor function and also assists in transporting students in a limited role*.

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[14] As part of the reorganization and restructuring of the department, the district should consider reassigning the Associates to the district's Improvement and Compliance Department and backing filling the vacancies with hourly employees who can serve as substitute bus drivers and part-time Control Center operators.

c. The Transportation Specialists are organized around geographic school assignment areas, rather than programs. – *Coordinators are assigned school and program assignments.*

7. Restructure the Control Center to more effectively manage resources and better meet peak demand by— (**note**: *The Control Center does not function as a Call Center as the staffing, tools, resources and training of the team doesn't provide the services in that manner).*

   a. Acquiring a modern call management system – *We have received new phone equipment; however, the system does not maintain numerous calls in queue. Back door phone lines are available, and we also use a cell phone system also to help alleviate phone calling traffic.*

   b. Using more part-time hourly employees for peak demand staffing. – *We do use part time employees during the beginning of the school year from September till November.*

8. Improve transportation bus routing and service delivery efficiencies by --

   a. Revising routing processes based on projected actual ridership, rather than eligible ridership. – *Current routing plans are based on eligible since we receive delayed data for our planning every year. Routes have been structured to fit bell times in a two-tier system.*

   b. Limiting deviations from established bell times, changes in drop off locations, and the scheduling of therapy and field trips during peak periods. – *Bell times have changed due to the change in tiering (from three tiers to two). Therapy and Field Trips are scheduled during the mid-day or during off-peak times.*

   c. Mixing the use of buses serving general, Head Start, and Special Education students. – *We currently minimize a mix due to a variety of issues (i.e. Behavioral students mixed with GenEd students could cause a negative engagement).*

   d. Using circle routes rather than line routes to ensure only one bus covers a geographic area. – *We do not use this method all of the time when we plan assignments.*

9. Test-drive all new routes and bus stops to ensure safety and appropriateness. – *Dry Runs (practice runs) are scheduled, however, follow-up/feedback from drivers regarding stop exceptions are delayed getting back to the District for review. Most runs are completed no earlier than one-week before the start of school.*

10. Make efforts to reduce or eliminate the use of taxis. – *Due to driver shortages and the minimal support from a second bus vendor, the need for taxis could be minimized, but not eliminated.*

11. Improve the management of pupil transportation contracts by –

    a. Establishing field monitoring and supervision – *Budget cuts only allow for a total of 5 Intervention staff. They do have equipment such as radios to review what drivers are engaged with via the road or on-bus exceptions. No other position monitors the*

field operations.

b. Requiring reporting of performance data – (No response provided)

c. Creating a uniform system for reporting late and no-show buses – *This has been implemented due to our DSS staff reporting/Control Log delay reporting. All routes that are called in are recorded, however, this process could be revisited via ZONAR. All assignments need to be updated in the system for proper tracking of performance.*

d. Requiring contractors to provide their own substitute bus drivers. – *First Student has had driver staffing challenges for the last few years and has not had a stand-by/substitute staff.*

e. Increasing the rates of liquidated damages for performance failures - *Liquidated Damages were increased in the new contract for 2017-2020, however, this has been an ongoing issue with First Student as they have not paid LDs due to an issue with the strike/disruption back in Feb 2018. No LDs have been collected for the '17-18 or '18-19 school year. Over $4M are outstanding. In legal discussion at this time and may be modified in a new contract. No LD's have been collected from Durham (none assessed).*

f. Installing a computerized fuel pump monitoring system with appropriate internal controls over district fuel – *The department currently does not have an audit process to review the controls for district fuel.*

g. Requiring reports on fuel usage and miles per gallon per vehicle to be provided to the district on a regular basis. – *The department does not receive reports on a miles/per gallon usage.*

h. Establishing a contractor invoice audit function within the department. - *SPS receives some invoice reporting for review, however, lack of staffing has limited the ability to provide a more detailed audit.*

12. Integrate the student and transportation computer systems to improve operational efficiencies and more effectively use the capabilities of the current routing and GPS systems.

a. Assign a full-time IT person to service the technology requirements of the department. – *Due to budget cuts, the department does not have an IT person committed. Our operations analyst does handle VersaTrans needs when necessary.*

b. Clean up and refine the VersaTrans data-base (for example, one-way streets, dead ends, un-travelable streets) and eliminate unused stops and routes. – *Our analyst handles VersaTrans updates when necessary.*

c. Create a separate file for snow routes so that the base file is more manageable. – *This has been implemented, but upcoming expectations of snow routes will need to be require additional staffing.*

d. Use the archived file concept to establish regular "effective dates" for transportation

changes and establish automated processes to disseminate the information to busses, schools and parents. – *This concept has been implemented.*

e. Use the corner descriptions already present in the base-level VersaTrans program to expedite nightly processing. - *This concept has been implemented.*

13. Establish and disseminate policies that assign responsibilities and identify procedures for dealing with --

a. Student disciplinary problems arising on school buses. – *School board policies and Service standard address these issues.*

b. Supervising students at school pick-up and drop-off locations - *Policies are more reflected at the school sites regarding student supervision.*

c. Undeliverable students – *We have a process in dealing with undeliverable students, no particular policy.*

d. Safeguarding of transit passes at school sites. – *No policies reflect this currently.*

ATTACHMENT G. COUNCIL REVIEWS

The following is a history of the Strategic Support Teams provided by the Council of the Great City Schools to urban school districts over the last 20 years.

City	Area	Year
Albuquerque		
	Facilities and Roofing	2003
	Human Resources	2003
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2005
	Legal Services	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Research	2013
	Human Resources	2016
	Special Education	2018
Anchorage		
	Finance	2004
	Communications	2008
	Math Instruction	2010
	Food Services	2011
	Organizational Structure	2012
	Facilities Operations	2015
	Special Education	2015
	Human Resources	2016
Atlanta		
	Facilities	2009
	Transportation	2010
Austin		
	Special Education	2010
Baltimore		
	Information Technology	2011
Birmingham		
	Organizational Structure	2007
	Operations	2008
	Facilities	2010
	Human Resources	2014
	Financial Operations	2015
Boston		
	Special Education	2009
	Curriculum & Instruction	2014
	Food Service	2014
	Facilities	2016
Bridgeport		
	Transportation	2012

Broward County (FL)		
	Information Technology	2000
	Food Services	2009
	Transportation	2009
	Information Technology	2012
	Information Technology	2018
Buffalo		
	Superintendent Support	2000
	Organizational Structure	2000
	Curriculum and Instruction	2000
	Personnel	2000
	Facilities and Operations	2000
	Communications	2000
	Finance	2000
	Finance II	2003
	Bilingual Education	2009
	Special Education	2014
Caddo Parish (LA)		
	Facilities	2004
Charleston		
	Special Education	2005
	Transportation	2014
	Budget and Finance	2018
Charlotte-Mecklenburg		
	Human Resources	2007
	Organizational Structure	2012
	Transportation	2013
Cincinnati		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2009
	Special Education	2013
Chicago		
	Warehouse Operations	2010
	Special Education I	2011
	Special Education II	2012
	Bilingual Education	2014
Christina (DE)		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
Cleveland		
	Student Assignments	1999, 2000
	Transportation	2000
	Safety and Security	2000
	Facilities Financing	2000
	Facilities Operations	2000

	Transportation	2004
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Safety and Security	2007
	Safety and Security	2008
	Theme Schools	2009
	Special Education	2017
Columbus		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Human Resources	2001
	Facilities Financing	2002
	Finance and Treasury	2003
	Budget	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Information Technology	2007
	Food Services	2007
	Transportation	2009
Dallas		
	Procurement	2007
	Staffing Levels	2009
	Staffing Levels	2016
Dayton		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2001
	Finance	2001
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Budget	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Organizational Structure	2017
Denver		
	Superintendent Support	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Bilingual Education	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Common Core Implementation	2014
Des Moines		
	Budget and Finance	2003
	Staffing Levels	2012
	Human Resources	2012
	Special Education	2015
	Bilingual Education	2015
Detroit		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2002

	Assessment	2002
	Communications	2002
	Curriculum and Assessment	2003
	Communications	2003
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Food Services	2007
	Curriculum and Instruction	2008
	Facilities	2008
	Finance and Budget	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Stimulus planning	2009
	Human Resources	2009
	Special Education	2018
Fresno		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2012
	Special Education	2018
Guilford County		
	Bilingual Education	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Facilities	2004
	Human Resources	2007
	Transportation	2017
Hillsborough County		
	Transportation	2005
	Procurement	2005
	Special Education	2012
	Transportation	2015
Houston		
	Facilities Operations	2010
	Capitol Program	2010
	Information Technology	2011
	Procurement	2011
Indianapolis		
	Transportation	2007
	Information Technology	2010
	Finance and Budget	2013
	Finance	2018
Jackson (MS)		
	Bond Referendum	2006
	Communications	2009
	Curriculum and Instruction	2017
Jacksonville		
	Organization and Management	2002

	Operations	2002
	Human Resources	2002
	Finance	2002
	Information Technology	2002
	Finance	2006
	Facilities operations	2015
	Budget and finance	2015
Kansas City		
	Human Resources	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Finance	2005
	Operations	2005
	Purchasing	2006
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Program Implementation	2007
	Stimulus Planning	2009
	Human Resources	2016
	Transportation	2016
	Finance	2016
	Facilities	2016
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
Little Rock		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2010
Los Angeles		
	Budget and Finance	2002
	Organizational Structure	2005
	Finance	2005
	Information Technology	2005
	Human Resources	2005
	Business Services	2005
Louisville		
	Management Information	2005
	Staffing Levels	2009
	Organizational Structure	2018
Memphis		
	Information Technology	2007
	Special Education	2015
	Food Services	2016
	Procurement	2016
Miami-Dade County		
	Construction Management	2003
	Food Services	2009
	Transportation	2009
	Maintenance & Operations	2009

	Capital Projects	2009
	Information Technology	2013
Milwaukee		
	Research and Testing	1999
	Safety and Security	2000
	School Board Support	1999
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
	Alternative Education	2007
	Human Resources	2009
	Human Resources	2013
	Information Technology	2013
Minneapolis		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Finance	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Transportation	2016
	Organizational Structure	2016
Nashville		
	Food Service	2010
	Bilingual Education	2014
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
Newark		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Food Service	2008
New Orleans		
	Personnel	2001
	Transportation	2002
	Information Technology	2003
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2006
New York City		
	Special Education	2008
Norfolk		
	Testing and Assessment	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2012
	Transportation	2018
	Finance	2018
	Facilities Operations	2018
Omaha		
	Buildings and Grounds Operations	2015
	Transportation	2016
Orange County		
	Information Technology	2010
Palm Beach County		

	Transportation	2015
	Safety & Security	2018
Philadelphia		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Food Service	2003
	Facilities	2003
	Transportation	2003
	Human Resources	2004
	Budget	2008
	Human Resource	2009
	Special Education	2009
	Transportation	2014
Pittsburgh		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
	Technology	2006
	Finance	2006
	Special Education	2009
	Organizational Structure	2016
	Business Services and Finance	2016
	Curriculum and Instruction	2016
	Research	2016
	Human Resources	2018
	Information Technology	2018
	Facilities Operations	2018
Portland		
	Finance and Budget	2010
	Procurement	2010
	Operations	2010
Prince George's County		
	Transportation	2012
Providence		
	Business Operations	2001
	MIS and Technology	2001
	Personnel	2001
	Human Resources	2007
	Special Education	2011
	Bilingual Education	2011
Puerto Rico		
	Hurricane Damage Assessment	2017
	Facilities Training	2018
	Dual Language Programming	2019
Reno		
	Facilities Management	2013

	Food Services	2013
	Purchasing	2013
	School Police	2013
	Transportation	2013
	Information Technology	2013
Richmond		
	Transportation	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Federal Programs	2003
	Special Education	2003
	Human Resources	2014
	Budget and Finance Operations	2018
Rochester		
	Finance and Technology	2003
	Transportation	2004
	Food Services	2004
	Special Education	2008
Sacramento		
	Special Education	2016
San Antonio		
	Facilities Operations	2017
	IT Operations	2017
	Transportation	2017
	Food Services	2017
	Human Resource	2018
San Diego		
	Finance	2006
	Food Service	2006
	Transportation	2007
	Procurement	2007
San Francisco		
	Technology	2001
St. Louis		
	Special Education	2003
	Curriculum and Instruction	2004
	Federal Programs	2004
	Textbook Procurement	2004
	Human Resources	2005
St. Paul		
	Special Education	2011
	Transportation	2011
	Organizational Structure	2017
Seattle		
	Human Resources	2008

	Budget and Finance	2008
	Information Technology	2008
	Bilingual Education	2008
	Transportation	2008
	Capital Projects	2008
	Maintenance and Operations	2008
	Procurement	2008
	Food Services	2008
	Capital Projects	2013
	Transportation	2019
Toledo		
	Curriculum and Instruction	2005
Washington, D.C.		
	Finance and Procurement	1998
	Personnel	1998
	Communications	1998
	Transportation	1998
	Facilities Management	1998
	Special Education	1998
	Legal and General Counsel	1998
	MIS and Technology	1998
	Curriculum and Instruction	2003
	Budget and Finance	2005
	Transportation	2005
	Curriculum and Instruction	2007
	Common Core Implementation	2011
Wichita		
	Transportation	2009
	Information Technology	2017