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Management Structures

Summary

The Bradford County School District is using 12 of 14 of the best practices in management structures. The district has a clearly defined organizational structure, with the board and superintendent exercising effective oversight of the district's staffing and financial resources and giving principals the authority to effectively manage their schools. The district also has procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective; routinely seeks legal counsel to advise it about policy; has a system to accurately project enrollment; and actively seeks community involvement in its decision-making process. To use the remaining best practice standards, the district should address three issues. First, the district should update board policies to reflect major statutory changes to the school code that occurred in 2002. Second, the district should develop written procedures for certain operational or educational areas. Third, the district should have a strategic plan to guide its decision making.

Background

The Bradford County School District's management structure is a standard hierarchical structure, with both the executive and policy-setting entities elected by the general population. The district has five board members and an elected superintendent. The district's board members are elected at-large, although they do represent specific districts within the county. Each member is elected for a four-year term. Two members are elected at the time of the presidential general election, and three are elected at the time of the gubernatorial general election.

The district has an experienced board, with all but two members serving in at least their second term. The newest members were elected for their first term in 2002, and two members were reelected during the 2000 general elections. Exhibit 2-1 shows the length of time board members have served and their previous experience.

**Exhibit 2-1
Most Board Members Are Serving in Their Second or Third Term**

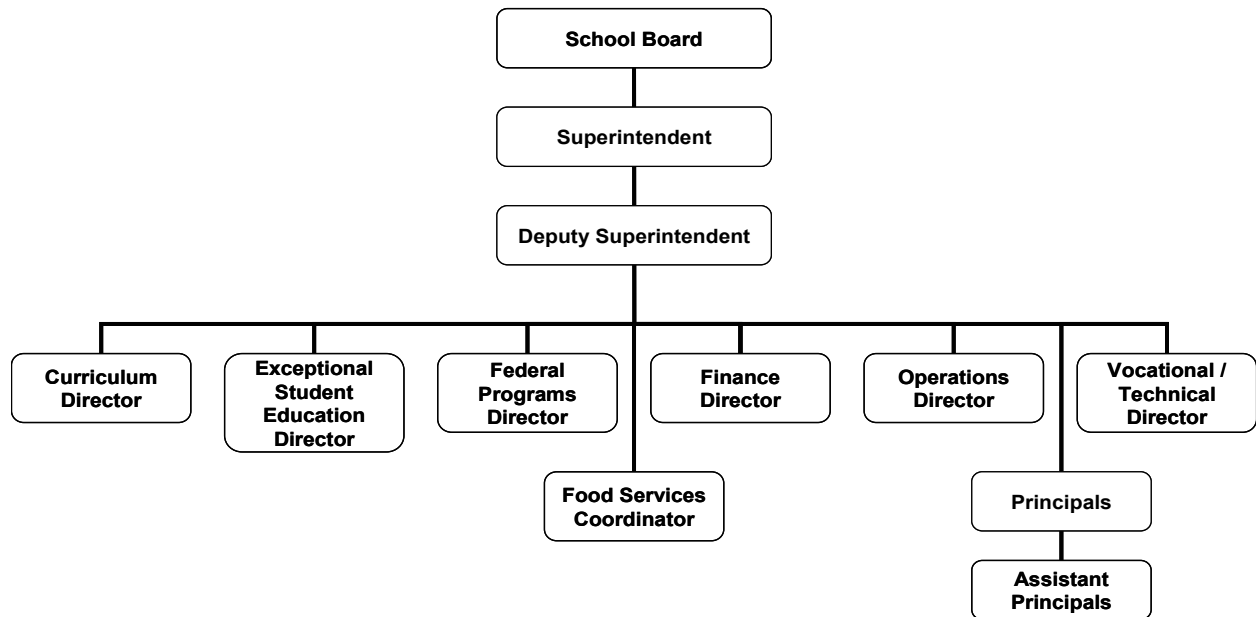
Board Member	Tenure	Background
Randy Jones (chair)	Elected for first term in 1996, reelected in 2000, up for reelection in 2004.	GIS Specialist
Bobby Carter	Elected for first term in 2002.	Truck Driver
Vivian Chappell	Elected for first term in 1992, reelected in 1996 and 2000, up for reelection in 2004.	Group Home Administrator
Jesse Moore	Elected for first term in 1998, reelected in 2002, up for reelection in 2006.	Retired School Administrator
James Watson	Elected for first term in 2002.	Correctional Officer

Source: Bradford County School District.

The current superintendent, Robert Paterson, was elected in 2000. He is a native of Bradford County and started teaching in the district in 1975. He became an administrator in 1978 and has served as the principal of every school in the district.

The superintendent is the chief executive and administrative officer of the board and, as such, is responsible for organizing the district’s administration. Exhibit 2-2 illustrates the district-level administrative structure for Fiscal Year 2002-03. The district’s school-level administration is limited to the principals and assistant principals of the district’s four elementary schools (K-5 grade), one middle school (6-8 grade), one community school (K-8 grade), and one high school (9-12 grade). The district’s two small elementary schools do not have assistant principals, while the high school has three. The district operates a vocational-technical school for secondary and post-secondary students with a director/principal and a coordinator of community education. In addition, the district operates an alternative school, the Renaissance Center, and provides teachers for a Department of Juvenile Justice residential facility.

**Exhibit 2-2
The Bradford County School District’s Organizational Structure Is Hierarchical**



Source: Bradford County School District.

In addition to the activities conducted by the offices in Exhibit 2-2, the Bradford County School District uses many of the services offered by the Northeast Florida Educational Consortium (NEFEC) to supplement or replace some administrative activities. NEFEC is an educational consortium of 14 members and 12 participating school districts located across northeast Florida. The consortium's board of directors is composed of the superintendent from each member district and an executive director manages day-to-day administration. The board, in consultation with NEFEC administrators, selects which services the consortium will provide. The consortium attempts to provide certain administrative services in a way that maximizes economies of scale, which reduces the cost of these services compared to the expense that would occur if each individual district conducted the activity using internal staff. NEFEC provides more than 20 administrative services including cooperative purchasing; risk management; data processing and Management Information Systems (MIS); professional development; employee benefits program, and energy management. Each school district has the option of participating in any or all of the services or programs.

As Exhibit 2-3 illustrates, the district's revenue has fluctuated over the last few years. One significant change has been in the capital projects fund. The significant increase between Fiscal Years 2001-02 and 2002-03 relate to increased revenue to build a new media center at Southside Elementary School, classroom additions to Southside and the Vocational-Technical School, and an addition to the cafeteria at Bradford High School. The budget decrease in Fiscal Year 2001-02 resulted from statewide general revenue shortfalls. The district has no outstanding debt and is able to maintain an annual unrestricted fund balance.

**Exhibit 2-3
The Bradford County School District's Revenue
Has Fluctuated Over the Past Three Years**

	Fiscal Year		
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Revenue			
General Fund	\$22,230,660	\$21,840,525	\$22,544,838
Special Revenue – Food Services	1,261,287	1,284,841	1,362,176
Special Revenue - Other	2,946,042	2,245,232	3,318,968
Debt Service Funds	115,820	117,586	114,732
Capital Projects Funds	1,959,743	1,249,177	2,250,099
Enterprise Funds	0	0	0
Internal Service Funds	116,594	125,535	0
Trust Funds	1,000	1,000	1,000
Less Transfers			
From General Fund	0	0	0
From Special Revenue – Food Services	0	0	0
From Special Revenue - Other	0	15,500	0
From Debt Service Funds	155,000	10,052	0
From Capital Projects Funds	143,567	74,912	0
From Enterprise Funds	0	0	0
From Internal Service Funds	0	0	0
From Trust Funds	0	0	0
Total Revenue	\$28,332,579	\$26,763,432	\$29,591,813

Note: Revenues for Fiscal Years 2000-01 and 2001-02 are actual audited revenues. Revenues for Fiscal Year 2002-03 are budgeted revenue.

Source: Bradford County School District, April 2003.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Conclusions for Management Structures Best Practices

Practice Area	Best Practice	Using the Best Practice?	Page No.
Board and Superintendent Roles and Responsibilities	1. The roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent have been clearly delineated, and board members and the superintendent have policies to ensure that they have effective working relationships.	Yes	2-5
	2. The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.	Yes	2-5
	3. The board and superintendent have established written policies and procedures that are routinely updated to ensure that they are relevant and complete.	No	2-7
	4. The district routinely obtains legal services to advise it about policy and reduce the risk of lawsuits. It also takes steps to ensure that its legal costs are reasonable.	Yes	2-8
Organization, Staffing and Resource Allocation	5. The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.	Yes	2-9
	6. The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.	Yes	2-10
	7. The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district's financial resources.	Yes	2-11
	8. The district has clearly assigned school principals the authority they need to effectively manage their schools while adhering to district wide policies and procedures.	Yes	2-12
Planning and Budgeting	9. The district has a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.	No	2-12
	10. The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.	Yes	2-13
	11. The district links its financial plans and budgets to its annual priorities in the strategic plan and its goals and objectives; and district resources are focused towards achieving those goals and objectives.	Yes	2-14
	12. When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.	Yes	2-14
Community Involvement	13. The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district's decision-making and activities.	Yes	2-15
	14. The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district's decision-making and activities.	Yes	2-15

BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Best Practice 1: Using

The roles and responsibilities of the board and superintendent have been clearly delineated, and board members and the superintendent have policies to ensure that they have effective working relationships.

To be effective, school districts must have a constructive, trusting relationship between their school boards and superintendents. This relationship is jeopardized most often when the parties do not understand or fail to adhere to their distinct roles in the educational process. In Florida, unlike most other states, many superintendents are elected rather than appointed by the school boards. This has the potential to further undermine effective working relationships particularly when the school board and superintendent have substantially different philosophies and opinions on key issues. Thus, districts should have mechanisms in place to maintain a distinct separation of roles and responsibilities between the school board and superintendent. In the most simple of terms, the school board should be the policymaking entity in the district, and the superintendent should have the primary responsibility for implementing these policies during the course of his/her daily administration of the district. School board members should not be directing daily operations and should address operational concerns through the superintendent. The superintendent should not make broad, districtwide policies without the approval of the board. A district may use both formal and informal mechanisms to ensure that each entity adheres to its proper roles and responsibilities. At a minimum, the district (regardless of size) should have policies in place that comply with state statutes regarding these roles and responsibilities.

The Bradford County School District policies clearly delineate the roles and responsibilities of the board and the superintendent. Training provided to the board and the superintendent by the Florida School Board Association and the Florida Association of District School Superintendents reinforced the separation of the policy-making role of the board from the management and administrative responsibilities of the superintendent. The district received additional training from the Florida School Board Association to further strengthen the board's policy-making role. The board was certified as a master board in 1993, 1997, and 2002 and participated in reinstatement training in March 2003 because of its two new members. In an effort to enhance the working relationship between the superintendent and the board, the superintendent discusses agenda items, especially those that might be controversial, with the chairman and each board member before board meetings.

The district policies establish the relationship between the board and district personnel. The superintendent has procedures, transmitted by memorandum and orally, requiring communication between board members and school-level personnel to go through either the superintendent or deputy superintendent. Board members interact with district level administrators on issues relating to board meeting agenda items requiring clarification or additional information. Some board members contact school-based administrators on operational issues, although this practice is not affecting district management nor creating confusion on lines of authority.

Best Practice 2: Using

The board and superintendent have procedures to ensure that board meetings are efficient and effective.

The primary goal of all school board meetings should be to come to a decision in a timely manner on the majority of policy issues presented during a particular meeting. To use this best practice goal the school board and superintendent should have formal and informal mechanisms in place to ensure that board

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meetings run efficiently and effectively, and to ensure all policy discussions and decisions are open and accessible to the public. Board meetings that consistently last longer than the time allotted are usually a telling sign that appropriate mechanisms are not in place, or are ineffective. Board members should not have to ask staff frequently for more information on agenda items, or ask for clarifications of the materials provided. More importantly, regardless of how well board meetings are run, board members and the superintendent should ensure that meetings are accessible and open to the public at large. For example, meetings should be located in large population concentrations at times that are not in conflict with the work hours of the majority of the public (e.g., board meetings should usually begin after 6 p.m.). If possible, board meeting should be broadcast live, or taped for later broadcast, on local public access television channels.

The Bradford County School District board meetings are generally efficient and effective. Board meetings usually last one and one-half hours and end on time. However, some meetings run long because of questions or concerns about agenda items. The district recently developed a master calendar of major events and required board actions to ensure that the board handles these matters in a timely manner. The district holds its board meetings at a location and time that is convenient to the public. Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in the boardroom at the district administrative offices in downtown Starke. The location is convenient to the public since the county is small geographically and driving distances are relatively short. Meetings are scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. Board meetings are advertised in the local weekly paper. Meeting agendas and material are available to the members and the public seven days before the meeting.

Although the district is using this best practice, it could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of board meetings in two ways. First, board members or the superintendent routinely pull items from the consent agenda. Items removed from the consent agenda are transferred to the regular agenda so these can be considered and voted on separately, although this can extend the time of the meeting, or handled during a subsequent workshop that requires a second meeting during the month. Altering the consent agenda may indicate that controversial items or items needing action, a decision, or significant further discussion are placed on the consent agenda. The consent agenda should be used for items that are information only and do not require a decision or any board action. Because of the number of items pulled from the agenda, the district often holds at least one workshop each month in addition to the monthly board meeting. For a district the size of Bradford County, holding two meetings each month may not be efficient because of the time required of district personnel to prepare material for these meetings.

Second, board members receive large packets of material for each board meeting; however, members are not provided with summary information to assist in their review or decision-making. Board members must seek additional information on agenda items from district administrators before or during the meeting, indicating that there is not sufficient information on agenda items upon which to base a decision. Not only is this method inefficient for obtaining information, but it may also mean that not all board members receive the same level of information on agenda items.

To further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of board meetings, we recommend that the superintendent and board chairman, in consultation with the board attorney, determine before each board meeting which items are appropriate for the consent agenda and which should be action items on the regular agenda. Examples of items that should be on the regular agenda rather than the consent agenda are purchasing decisions (sole source versus competitive bid), major purchases by the district, large dollar contracts or agreements (e.g., construction), creation of new positions, new or revised job descriptions, and special pay supplements for district personnel. We also recommend that the district provide board members with clearly written summaries for agenda items that describe how the item supports the district’s goals and objectives, the resources that will be needed, the implication for the district’s budget, what alternatives have been considered, and the superintendent’s recommendation to the board.

Best Practice 3: Not Using

The district does not have up-to-date policies, and many operational and educational programs do not have written procedures.

Up-to-date district-wide procedures, when coupled with appropriate policies, ensure that activities are carried out in an efficient and effective manner. In addition, relevant and complete policies help ensure that districts are in compliance with federal and state laws and staff and students are treated equally and consistently when applying board policies. The larger the district or the more decentralized its administration, the more important the overarching set of extensive policies and procedures become. All districts should have, at minimum, written board policies that are consistent with the *Florida Statutes*. Most districts should also have detailed written policies pertaining to specific areas like pupil progression, transportation, and services for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) populations. Districts also should have procedures to ensure that these policies are implemented consistently within administrative units, grade levels, and among schools. Finally, district-wide policies and procedures should be readily accessible by staff, students and their guardians, and the public.

The Bradford County School District has written board policies and limited procedures that are known and followed by district personnel. However, the policies were written in 1997 and last revised in 1998. The district recognizes that its policies need to be revised and has a plan to do so. The district obtained Northeast Florida Education Consortium prototype policies developed for its members because of the school code revisions. The district plans to have district administrators tailor the policies to meet the needs of the Bradford County School District. District administrators each have their own copy of the current policy notebook. School-based personnel have access to board policies at their schools. Written procedures do not exist for most board policies and may not be needed in a district the size of Bradford County. The district has limited written procedures in the form of the student progression plan and code of conduct. In general, district procedures are unwritten and transmitted verbally to district-level and school-based personnel in staff meetings or through memoranda from the superintendent.

The district can improve its operations and meet this best practice by addressing two issues. First, the district’s policies are out-of-date and need to be revised to reflect revisions in the school code in 2002. Specifically, the 2002 Florida Legislature revised all statutes related to schools in Florida to conform to the constitutional reorganization of the public education system in the state. As a result, many school districts, including Bradford, do not comply with this best practice. Without this update, district personnel may not be aware of or follow current state law. For example, the student code of conduct references statutes that no longer exist.

Action Plan 2-1

We recommend that the district revise its board policies to reflect current state statutes.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Assign sections of the NEFEC prototype policies to appropriate district administrators.
	Step 2.	Tailor prototype policies to district practices, as needed.
	Step 3.	School board attorney reviews and approves the revised prototype policies.
	Step 4.	Distribute revised policies to board members for review.
	Step 5.	Schedule and hold a public workshop to discuss the revised policies.
	Step 6.	Board approves the revised policies at the next board meeting after the workshop.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendent, district-level administrators, school board attorney, school board.	
Time Frame	July 2003	

Second, the district does not have written procedures for most of its educational and operational areas. The district does have written procedures for student progression and student code of conduct, as required by state law, as well as procedures for food service workers to follow. While a small school district may not need to develop procedures for every thing it does, the district should develop procedures for those areas where they face significant risk of not meeting state or federal compliance requirements, or that could cause a disruption in student services. The lack of written procedures is important because the district will experience the retirement of seven district and school-based administrators at the end of the 2002-03 school year. It is likely that there will be significant loss of district history and knowledge through this attrition. Written procedures, rather than the current verbal transmission of procedures, will assist the transition of new administrators into their positions and serve as a training aid for new personnel. Examples of areas needing written procedures are the hiring and firing of personnel, student discipline, federal programs, admission to the alternative school, and financial management.

Action Plan 2-2

We recommend that the district develop written procedures for key operational areas.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	District-level administrators determine the district's highest risk areas in consultation with the school board attorney,
	Step 2.	District-level administrators develop written procedures for the identified risk areas within the purview of their department.
	Step 3.	The school board attorney reviews and approves the procedures.
	Step 4.	The district holds a public workshop to discuss the proposed procedures.
	Step 5.	Board members approve the procedures at the next board meeting.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendent, district administrators, school board attorney, school board.	
Time Frame	August 2003	

Best Practice 4: Using

The district routinely obtains legal services to advise it about policy and reduce the risk of lawsuits. It also takes steps to ensure that its legal costs are reasonable.

School boards should have appropriate, responsive legal counsel to address legal issues as they arise. Legal services should be comprehensive, providing input on district policies, personnel issues, and advice to ensure that the district complies with federal and state legal requirements. Legal services should support the board, its individual members, the superintendent and district staff. In smaller districts, legal services are more likely to be contracted out, while the largest districts may have several in-house

attorneys as well as contracted attorneys. As small districts grow in size, they should periodically evaluate whether hiring a full-time in-house attorney would be more cost-effective for the districts. Regardless of the district's size, legal expenses (including hourly rates, retainer fees, and total annual expenditures) should be evaluated for accuracy and appropriateness.

The Bradford County School District has an attorney under contract to advise, counsel, and represent the board, the members of the board, the superintendent, and district personnel. The district also seeks external counsel for specialized legal services as needed. In addition to the board, the attorney provides counsel to district administrators where no conflict of interest exists. The board has retained the same attorney since 1995, and she has not raised her rate in five years. The attorney is required to log her hours spent on school district issues. She attends all board meetings and workshops and provides consultation and services in the areas of contracting, personnel issues, student discipline, public record requests, and child custody issues. The attorney's contract with the district is for a minimum of ten hours per month at \$90 per hour. Billing records for Fiscal Years 1999-00 through 2002-03 show annual payments ranging from a high of \$27,344 in 1999-00 because of a lawsuit to a low of \$14,132 in 2001-02. The attorney does not charge the district for routine telephone calls from board members or district personnel nor does she charge for attending board meetings. Before the attorney's contract was renewed for Fiscal Year 2002-03, the district compared contracted legal costs with neighboring Baker and Union counties. The comparison showed that the district is obtaining legal services at a reasonable cost: \$90 per hour charge compared with \$200, a monthly retainer of \$900 compared with \$1,000, and no charge for board meetings compared with \$200.

Although the district does not have written procedures addressing the board or district personnel conferring with the attorney, they access her services appropriately. District leadership and administrators, principals, and board members may call the attorney at any time for assistance; she does not accept calls from teachers. Since the attorney does not bill for routine telephone calls, the lack of written procedures for accessing her services has not affected the cost of legal services for the district.

ORGANIZATION, STAFFING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Best Practice 5: Using

The district's organizational structure has clearly defined units and lines of authority that minimize administrative costs.

A school district's organizational structure should enable the effective and efficient delivery of support services to the schools, teachers, and students. In general, school districts should organize their administration so that similar support services are grouped together and lines of authority are clear to staff and the general public. In addition, school districts should minimize administrative staff, especially at the district level. There is no one-size-fits-all district organizational structure, although there are several common administrative structures employed by school districts statewide. Smaller districts are more likely to have a simple hierarchical structure with all administrative units reporting directly to the superintendent and ultimately to the board. Larger districts may group their administrative units by distinct functions [i.e., school operations; instructional support services (curriculum, evaluation); business support services (finance, budgeting, MIS); operational support (food services, transportation, safety and security)]. Irrespective of organizational structure, staff and the general public should be able to clearly understand who is responsible for what in the district.

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The Bradford County School District has clearly defined organizational units whose functions are known to district personnel. School board policies clearly define the administrative organization and the responsibilities, duties, and qualifications of administrative personnel. In recent years, the district has eliminated administrative positions and flattened its organizational structure. Administrative positions eliminated include one assistant superintendent position, the director of MIS, and the director of operations. Funds from the eliminated administrative positions were redirected to salary increases for teachers.

The approved organizational chart for Fiscal Year 2003-04 reflects the elimination of the director of operations position, the creation of supervisory positions for transportation and maintenance, and the re-establishment of the director of MIS position. Most of the district top administrators have reasonable spans of control, with the exception of the deputy superintendent. The deputy supervises all district-level administrators and principals as well as serving as the personnel director. Before the elimination of an assistant superintendent position and the consolidation of functions under the deputy superintendent, the district had two assistant superintendents, one over educational services and one over operational functions.

Best Practice 6: Using

The district periodically reviews its administrative staffing and makes changes to eliminate unnecessary positions and improve operating efficiency.

Well-run school districts are lean administratively and maximize funds available to support their primary mission, educating students. To accomplish this, school district staffing should promote efficiency and effectiveness while minimizing administration, especially at the district level. Low administrative to instructional staff ratios generally indicate that resources are being concentrated in the classroom, the main objective of most school boards and the state. However, districts must balance the goal of minimizing administration with the fact that some support services provided at the district level are more cost-effective than multiple site-based staff.

The Bradford County School District reviews its administrative staffing levels, especially as administrators resign or retire. Examples include the elimination of one assistant superintendent position, the elimination of the operations director and MIS director, with funds redirected towards increasing teacher salaries. Additional staffing changes made recently to improve operating efficiency include the creation of the ESE director position, re-establishing the MIS director position, and creating supervisors for the transportation and maintenance functions. The district's last staffing plan was completed by FADSS in Fiscal Year 1996-97.

Based upon the most recently available Department of Education (DOE) data for Fiscal Year 2001-02, the district has higher ratios of administrators to teachers, instructors, and staff than statewide ratios and is higher than its peer districts. However, since 2001-02, the district has eliminated several administrative positions, which is likely to affect the ratios shown in the exhibit below.

**Exhibit 2-4
Staffing Ratios are Higher Than for Peer Districts**

School District	Staff Ratios					
	Administrators to Classroom Teachers	Administrators to Total Instructional Staff	Administrators to Total Staff	Classroom Teachers to Students	Teacher Aids to Classroom Teachers	Guidance to Students
Columbia	1: 13.47	1: 14.64	1: 29.33	1: 16.92	1: 3.21	1: 478.90
Jackson	1: 12.10	1: 14.20	1: 27.05	1: 15.51	1: 2.93	1: 305.16
Lafayette	1: 11.33	1: 12.50	1: 24.33	1: 15.14	1: 3.77	1: 515.00
Suwannee	1: 11.28	1: 12.67	1: 23.39	1: 18.35	1: 5.44	1: 414.28
Walton	1: 11.18	1: 12.15	1: 25.37	1: 16.67	1: 3.25	1: 497.33
Bradford	1: 10.29	1: 11.29	1: 21.79	1: 16.58	1: 3.08	1: 512.12
State	1: 14.45	1: 16.20	1: 29.64	1: 18.26	1: 4.28	1: 455.37

Source: Florida Department of Education, Profiles of Florida School Districts, 2001-02.

Best Practice 7: Using

The superintendent and school board exercise effective oversight of the district’s financial resources.

The school board and superintendent must have a clear and up-to-date understanding of the financial condition of their district in order to exercise effective oversight. To accomplish this, the superintendent and board members must understand the fiscal implications of their decisions, both short and long-term. In addition, if and when financial problems arise, the superintendent and school board must be able to react quickly and responsibly, and in a manner that prevents significant disruption of school district operations. In general, financial reports and budget information should be clear and useful to board members and the general public. These documents should not require extensive explanation by district staff or the superintendent. Financial information should be updated and presented to the board on a regular basis, and all agenda items that have an impact on the budget should include detailed explanations of these effects.

Bradford County School Board members receive training in school district budgets and finance through master board training. The board has established expenditure thresholds by department and funding source. All purchase requests are reviewed and approved by the finance director. The finance director provides district and school-based administrators with monthly expenditure reports to help them manage their budgets. Budget amendments by department and by school are also presented to the board for approval. The district is free of debt and maintains a reserve fund that meets the best practice standard of between three and five percent of total budget. Financial information presented to the board does not provide information on the short and long-term implications of budget decisions on the district’s goals and programs.

Although the district is using this best practice, it could improve financial and budget information provided to the board. The district could provide the board with summary information on how budget items under consideration might affect the district’s ability to meet board priorities, goals, and objectives. This summary information would assist board members with their decision-making by linking financial decisions to the district’s programs as well as short and long-term goals.

To further facilitate board actions at meetings, we recommend that the district provide the board with summary information on the implications of proposed budgets or budget amendments on the district’s ability to meet board priorities, goals, and objectives.

Best Practice 8: Using

The district clearly has assigned school principals the authority they need to effectively manage their schools while adhering to district-wide policies and procedures.

Principals should have the authority and ability to manage the day-to-day operations of their schools with minimal interference from the district office. At the same time, it is important that principals adhere to districtwide policies and procedures so that students are treated equally from school to school. Principals, as the top administrators in the schools, should have the ability to respond to most situations in their schools without first having to receive approval or acknowledgment from the district. Principals should be held accountable for the performance of their faculty and students, but should also have the authority to modify programs to improve this performance. To this end, principals should have discretion in the way they allocate their school funds that is consistent with the level of accountability required by the district. Principals must be aware of and adhere to districtwide policies and procedures, regardless of the level of “site-based management” used in the district. Districtwide policies and procedures ensure legal compliance and promote the equal treatment of students from school to school, and among grade levels.

The Bradford County School District has policies on the roles and responsibilities of principals and assistant principals. The district also has policies on school-based management. These policies provide school-based administrators with the authority to manage the operations of their schools. The job goals, duties, and responsibilities contained in the job descriptions of principals and assistant principals support district policies. These documents clearly provide principals and assistant principals with decision-making authority for their schools. Interviews indicated that principals felt they had authority over personnel, budget, and school operations.

The district provides each principal with the student progression plan and code of conduct and monitors adherence to these policies by school administrators. School principals are held accountable for their performance in achieving educational goals. School-based administrators, who were not able to achieve the district’s goals, have been moved or demoted by the superintendent. The superintendent holds monthly meetings with district and school-based administrators to discuss policies and procedures, financial matters, and upcoming district events.

PLANNING AND BUDGETING

Best Practice 9: Not Using

The district does not have a multi-year strategic plan with annual goals and measurable objectives based on identified needs, projected enrollment, and revenues.

Strategic planning enables a district to identify its critical needs and establish strategies and reallocate resources to address these needs. To ensure that all critical needs are identified, the strategic planning process should include broad stakeholder input. The decisions made during the strategic planning process should be in writing and the resulting plan should guide both policymaking and program development. The strategic plan also should address both instructional and non-instructional programs and have reasonable goals and objectives that can be accomplished, in most cases, within available resources. The complexity and breadth of the strategic plan will vary based on the size of the district. All strategic plans should include an accountability and evaluation component or else the plan becomes ineffectual.

The Bradford County School District currently does not have a strategic plan. The board and district leadership recognize the need for a strategic plan to guide the development of strategic goals and objectives, action plans, and as the means to measure progress. While the district does not have a strategic plan, it has established goals that are reflected in school improvement plans and are known by district and school-based personnel. These goals include improving school grades, improving Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores, reducing disciplinary problems, and increasing teacher salaries. In its recent audit, the Auditor General recommended the district develop a strategic plan that establishes long and short-term goals and priorities to assist the district in decision-making and resource allocation. The district anticipates having a strategic plan in place in the summer of 2003.¹

Action Plan 2-3

We recommend that the district develop a strategic plan.		
Action Needed	Step 1.	Determine whether a consultant will be used to facilitate the development of the strategic plan and who this consultant will be.
	Step 2.	Identify funds to pay for the consultant.
	Step 3.	Identify which district personnel will be involved in plan development.
	Step 4.	Identify and involve district stakeholders in plan development.
	Step 5.	Identify key tasks and deadlines.
	Step 6.	Present draft plan to district stakeholders in a public workshop.
	Step 7.	Prepare and disseminate final plan.
Who Is Responsible	Superintendent, deputy superintendents, board members.	
Time Frame	August 2003.	

Best Practice 10: Using

The district has a system to accurately project enrollment.

Full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment projections are used for many things in districts including budgeting and funding, zoning, estimates of facility requirements and staffing ratios. Because of the critical nature of FTE projections, school districts must have a system to make the most accurate student enrollment projections possible. Thus, districts must have trained staff and formal procedures for applying both the state projection methodologies and local corrective methodologies, which can be very complex and often require considerable technical expertise. At a minimum, the district must use the cohort survival methodology provided by the Florida Department of Education to establish its FTEs for the coming year. However, medium to large districts or districts with above average student growth rates should supplement the DOE models with additional projection methodologies. These additional methodologies should include in-depth demographic information, not used in the DOE models. The information from each methodology should be reconciled to produce the actual FTE projection. Districts may choose to supplement the DOE model with information from local planning departments, state universities, or private demographers.

The MIS supervisor has responsibility for FTE projections in the district. The Bradford County School District forecasting of student enrollment is accurate. Standards for FTE projection error rates are within +/- two percent, which the district has met consistently. The district uses the DOE cohort survival statistical procedure to calculate enrollment. Additional factors are considered when making enrollment forecasts. For the current school year, the district factored in the proposed closing of a Department of Juvenile Justice facility in its calculations. The superintendent attends local and regional chamber of

¹ Florida Auditor General, Bradford County District School Board Financial, Operational, and Federal Single Audit Report for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 2002, Report No. 03-136

commerce meetings as well as city council meetings to stay apprised of business and economic developments in the county that could affect student enrollment.

Best Practice 11: Using

The district links its financial plans and budgets to its annual priorities in the strategic plan and its goals and objectives; and district resources are focused towards achieving these goals and objectives.

Like most other organizations, because school districts generally have seemingly unlimited demands for available funds, they must set budget priorities. Thus, a school district's financial decisions should reflect its priority goals and objectives. These goals and objectives (which should be part of a strategic plan) either may be explicitly stated in the budget or may be reflected in changes in allocations that are concurrent with the district's shifting priorities. For example, if improving reading scores is a priority goal, then the district's budget should include resources that assist schools in pursuing this goal (e.g., hiring additional resource teachers or purchasing a new reading curriculum).

The Bradford County School District does not have a strategic plan to guide the use of its resources. However, the district does have stated and widely known goals that form the basis for directing the use of resources. For example, the district hired reading coaches to raise reading scores, one of its major goals, and redirected funds from the elimination of administrative positions to raising teacher salaries, another district goal.

Although the district is using this best practice, it is important that the district link budget development, budget amendments, and spending decisions to its goals and strategies once the strategic plan is completed. The Auditor General in the district's Fiscal Year 2001-02 audit has also made this recommendation.²

To improve its planning and budgeting processes, we recommend that the district link its resources and expenditures to the goals and strategies presented in its strategic plan when this plan is complete.

Best Practice 12: Using

When necessary, the district considers options to increase revenue.

A school district may find it necessary to consider raising additional revenue if it has done everything in its power to streamline processes and minimize costs and it still cannot meet critical student and/or staff needs without additional funds. In general, districts usually need to increase revenue in times of rapid growth or when demographics within the district change significantly. However, the ability to raise funds varies considerably among districts and is dependent on a district's ability to levy additional taxes (if not already at the maximum allowed by law) and their current debt load. There are several options available to school districts to increase revenues. These additional revenue sources may include property taxes, sales taxes, bond issues, impact fees, or grants in aid. Some revenue sources can be used only for operational expenses, while others can be used only for capital expenditures, and still others can be used for both.

The Bradford County School District approved a small increase (.094) in the millage rate for the 2002-03 school year. Other local options to increase revenue are not under consideration. The district receives grant awards for Title I, Carl Perkins, and Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. The district also

² Florida Auditor General, Bradford County District School Board Financial, Operational, and Federal Single Audit Report for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 2002, Report No. 03-136.

applied for and receives Title III funding for translators as part of the English for Speakers of Other Languages program. Additional grant funds include \$297,000 for reading coaches as part of the Florida Reading Initiative (FRI).

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Best Practice 13: Using

The district actively involves parents and guardians in the district’s decision-making and activities.

To be successful in educating students, school districts must actively engage parents and guardians in the activities of the district and the individual schools. The greater the parental involvement, the better most schools perform. However, in order to be actively involved in the educational process, parents must be aware of and encouraged to participate in school activities and decision making processes that affect their children.

The Bradford County School District uses a variety of communication mechanisms to provide information to parents including information sent home or mailed to parents and information on the district’s website. Parents and other community members are included in SAC membership. SAC members are responsible for developing and approving the SIPs as well as tracking goal attainment. The district does not provide training to SAC members on their roles and responsibilities, SIP development, data analysis or tracking goal attainment. Training of SAC members is left up to each school principal.

Although the district is using this best practice, it could improve its efforts with parents and community members by providing SAC members with relevant training on their roles and responsibilities, SIP development, data analysis, and tracking goal attainment.

To improve the knowledge and skills of parents, and others serving on the SACs, we recommend that the district develop and provide training to SAC members.

Best Practice 14: Using

The district actively involves business partners and community organizations in the district’s decision-making and activities.

Business and community groups are able to provide financial assistance, but also in-kind services, mentoring, and other support services that benefit students and their schools. Thus, school districts and individual schools should actively engage local and regional businesses and community groups so that these entities will participate in educational activities. Some of the major ways to involve businesses and community groups include direct contact and solicitation for services, participation in educational committees of service and business associations, and encouraging business and community group leaders to participate in the School Advisory Councils (SACs). Districts should also coordinate with these groups to create a fundraising foundation. These non-profit foundations can better leverage contributions and can often receive matching funds from the state or federal government for certain projects (i.e., the Take Stock in Children scholarship program). Regardless of how business partners and community groups are approached, the district and schools should work to ensure that business and community leaders have an impact on school performance. This requires more than accepting money or services from these entities.

The Bradford County School District has active business partners for each of its schools. It is the responsibility of the principal or his or her designee to recruit and maintain business partners. There is a

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district-wide coordinator for business partners as well who ensures that partnership lists are up-to-date and arranges for partnership appreciation events. A limited number of business partners serve on the SACs. Business partners provide schools with services, discounts, and funds. Examples of contributions made by business partners include cash donations for technology upgrades, contributions of office supplies, and hosting a reception for eighth graders. The district holds an appreciation luncheon each year for its business partners that is hosted by the vocational-technical school. The vocational-technical school has craft advisory committees for each of its programs. Members of the advisory committees are recruited by the program directors to provide advice in such areas as curriculum, desired length for each program, and pay expectations for graduates.

Community organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce provide funding for district initiatives. The Chamber hosted a regional training for the FRI in the summer of 2002. The district also has an education foundation that offers student scholarships and grants to teachers for classroom activities. Students and district personnel participate in a variety of community service projects including Jail and Bail, March of Dimes, Relay for Life, Habitat for Humanity, the local food pantry, and reading to nursing home residents.