



**Newton Public Schools  
Study on Management Structure**

**Fall 2005/Spring 2006**



**GIBSON**  
CONSULTING GROUP

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2005, the City of Newton, in cooperation with the School Committee of Newton Public Schools (NPS) awarded a contract to Gibson Consulting Group, Inc. (Gibson) to conduct a study on management structure for the School Department. The purpose of this study was to assess the district's existing management structure and make recommendations to streamline operations and improve the delivery of instruction and other services to NPS students. A second component of the study involved a targeted review of certain non-instructional functions within the district. These functional areas included Purchasing, Human Resources Management, Facilities Use and Management, and Technology. The evaluation team's findings and recommendations are presented in this report, in two sections: *Management Structure Assessment and Targeted Non-Instructional Functional Area Assessments*.

The work commenced in December 2005 and was completed in February 2006. Management and staff were very cooperative with the evaluation team's effort, devoted a significant amount of time to the collection of data and interviews with the evaluation team, and responded to consultant requests for information under a very short timetable. The evaluation team is appreciative of this effort, and wishes to thank Dr. Jeffrey Young, Superintendent and the School Committee for their leadership and support throughout this project.

Overall, central office staff levels at NPS are not unreasonable given the current technology in place. However, realignment at high levels is needed to create a management infrastructure that is more logically aligned with reasonable spans of control, reflects duties and responsibilities, and provides district leadership with adequate time for leadership and planning activities.

In some cases the central office does not have sufficient staff to meet the needs of schools. Further improvements in technology are needed to accomplish additional streamlining at the central office, and additional staff will be needed to support the schools until ways to reduce demands for central office support at the school level can be identified.

This report contains recommendations to realign and enhance the organization structure at the central office, improve administrative processes, consolidate or split out certain functions with the City, and meet emerging needs in technology, facilities and long range planning.

## **MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE ASSESSMENT**

During the course of this study, we conducted 35 interviews, including all direct reports to the superintendent, School Committee members, directors, assistant directors, technology staff, and central office support staff. In addition, we met with eight City administrators. Four focus groups were held to gather input on service delivery and organizational issues. Participants included principals and teachers from both elementary and secondary campuses, curriculum coordinators, and special education administrators. We also reviewed relevant documents provided by the district, including department-level organization charts, budgets, and job descriptions. Finally, we conducted best practices and peer research to identify models and practices that could be implemented at NPS to ultimately improve management and district operations.

In reviewing NPS's current management structure and organizational effectiveness, several key findings emerged:

- Under the current management structure, too many functions fall under the Assistant Superintendent for All Schools. Principals are not being provided as much support as they need simply because this position has been spread too thin.
- Three assistant superintendents report directly to the superintendent and oversee the academic programs: All Schools, Pupil Services, and Curriculum. This provides a more fragmented management of academic programs than is ideal, given the size of the district and can often diffuse the decision-making process.
- The span of control and the organizational structure of Pupil Services is too broad and complex. Special programs are academic based and serve special populations, whereas student services, such as attendance, student assessment, and guidance services are more administrative. These two functional areas would be more effectively served if they were separated within the organization.
- Some realignment of senior management is necessary to achieve a desirable span of control as well providing a more functionally aligned structure.
- Technology should be represented on the superintendent's executive team. Every major decision that a school system makes is likely to be affected by, or will affect technology. Therefore, technology needs to be at the table on every major decision.
- Certain lower level management titles are not in line with the duties of the position. In reviewing the organization chart, two areas of concern arose. Many of the titles related to Special Education do not make organizational sense or provide any insight into the duties of the positions. Titles should reflect both the duties of the position and the level of authority. Additionally, many departments have assistant directors on their organization chart and report to an assistant superintendent, with no direct reports.
- Parents and other stakeholders frequently take their issues directly to the central office, which takes administrators away from their leadership roles to address issues that could be better resolved at the campus level. The district needs a central office position to support the current "transaction" volume. Over time, the district needs to analyze why the volume of inquiries is so high relative to the size of the school system and take specific actions to alleviate these demands without adversely affecting parent and stakeholder relations.

Newton Public Schools should begin migrating to a more function-oriented management structure. A structure that is more logically aligned results in more efficient decision-making by reducing the need to reach across the organization to make joint decisions. Additionally, a logical alignment of functions better supports accountability.

The proposed management structure reflects three major objectives:

- Create a management structure that clearly articulates the importance of student learning.
- Logically align functions to improve services to schools, accountability, communication, and coordination.
- Achieve proper spans of control.

The proposed management structure requires that two additional positions be created, while realigning line management in line with duties and responsibilities and function. The

structure replaces the five assistant superintendent positions with a Chief Academic Officer (CAO), a Chief Information Officer (CIO), and a Chief Administrative Services Officer (CASO). Two assistant superintendent positions will be created to oversee school operations: an assistant superintendent of Elementary Education and an assistant superintendent of Secondary Education. Three executive director positions will be created under the new structure: Curriculum, Special Programs, and Student Services. These positions will report directly to the CAO. By creating a CAO position, the district puts accountability for all aspects of academic programs and school support under one individual. Budgets will take on more meaning as they will represent logical programmatic and departmental alignments. Under this structure all academic program and school support budgets will roll up to reflect a consolidated academic spending in line with district-wide goals and objectives.

By raising the director of Information Technology in the organization chart, it ensures that technology becomes an integral component of the district's decision-making process. Finally, the evaluation team has grouped all business, operating, and student auxiliary functions under the CASO.

The evaluation team is recommending that the district create a formal public information function to provide a single point of contact to address stakeholder issues and concerns. Effective public information offices develop key messages to emphasize when dealing with the public, monitor public communications to ensure message consistency, track frequency of key messages in media mentions, and utilize a variety of technologies to facilitate the transfer of consistent messages.

There are two ways to transition into the proposed management structure. One way is through attrition. Many districts are facing retirements of their senior management staff. This provides a good opportunity to implement a new management structure if there are enough retirements and if they occur in positions that are to be realigned. The other way to implement a change in management structure is to eliminate the existing positions and rehire under the new structure. This requires that new job descriptions be created and each new position be posted. This type of implementation often is the best approach when positions are downgraded.

The proposed management structure represents a significant change and does not lead itself to being phased in. All academic realignments should take place at the same time. Therefore, the district should carefully determine which implementation strategy will work best and limit the negative impact on staff morale.

### ***TARGETED REVIEW OF CERTAIN NON-INSTRUCTIONAL FUNCTIONS***

The second component of this study included a targeted review of Purchasing, Human Resources, Facilities Use and Management, and Technology. The major findings and recommendations included:

#### **Purchasing**

The purchasing process takes too long and is not efficient. All purchases must be approved by the City of Newton (City). The evaluation team found redundancies in the existing process and recommends that the function be consolidated and all purchasing functions be assumed by the City. This will eliminate at least two steps from the process.

The length of time it takes for a purchase order to be approved will not be completely resolved by consolidating the functions. The approval levels for purchases, both within the School Department and the City are overly restrictive and create unnecessary delays. The

evaluation team recommends that both parties re-examine the approval process and establish less stringent approval levels that do not compromise adequate internal control.

The evaluation team was given examples of items that took several months to receive orders after a purchase order had been created and approved. The evaluation team recommends that the City provide a listing of all outstanding purchase orders that have been in the system for more than 45 days to the CASO every month, with an explanation for the delay.

### **Human Resources**

When the City upgraded its finance and human resources system in July 2005, it purchased the applicant tracking module to help streamline the application process and to reduce the amount of data entry that is required for a new hire. At report time, this module had not been implemented. The evaluation team recommends that the City and School Department implement this module as soon as possible.

### **Facilities Use & Management**

Building maintenance is another area that overlaps with the City. All school buildings belong to and are maintained by the City. The School Department has a small maintenance staff that provides minor repair and light maintenance support. The evaluation team heard from several sources that the buildings are not being adequately maintained. The City work schedule and the school operating hours do not allow for proper maintenance to be performed during normal business hours. Therefore, a great deal of the school maintenance must be performed as overtime, raising the cost to the district. The evaluation team suggests two options to resolve this issue:

- Request that the City implement a swing shift; and/or
- Meet with the City to determine the feasibility of allowing the district to fund and perform more if not all maintenance on all school buildings.

Another concern raised by teachers and principals was related to the state of cleanliness of the schools. There does not seem to be consistent cleaning standards being applied in all schools. Therefore, the evaluation team recommends that the district institute formal cleaning standards and hold custodians accountable for maintaining them.

### **Technology**

The City and School Department upgraded its financial and human resources software prior to the beginning of this school year. However, staff has not been able to fully take advantage of the efficiencies in the system. Stand-alone databases and spreadsheets are still being used to analyze and report district data. Although the software does not allow for completely "paperless" processes, there are areas where existing processes can be improved. The evaluation team recommends that the City and School Department create a Finance Plus user group as a forum to share information about the system. This will provide additional training and user support to use the system more effectively. In addition, the district should consider re-engineering existing processes in coordination with the new software to identify where additional efficiencies can be found.

**Summary of Potential Savings and Investments**

This report contains recommendations to improve the management structure and operating efficiency of Newton Public Schools. The salary assumptions were based on 2005-06 salaries. Actual costs may be impacted by the results of the compensation study being conducted concurrently with this study.

The major savings opportunities and investments are presented in the following table.

**Summary Savings & Investments**

Functional Area	Recommendation	Annual Savings	Annual Investment	One-Time Investment
<b>Management Structure</b>	Restructure senior management positions to better deliver instructional programs, technology, and administrative services		(\$301,862)	
	Create a Public Information function to help bridge communication between the School Department and stakeholders		(\$94,200)	
	Conduct a strategic planning session.			(\$75,000)*
<b>Purchasing</b>	Consolidate the School Department purchasing functions with the City.	\$50,055		
<b>Facilities Use &amp; Management</b>	Meet with City to integrate the results of the facility assessment into a long-range Facilities Master Plan			(\$25,000)
	Meet with the City to investigate the feasibility of assuming full responsibility for maintaining school buildings.			(\$15,000)
<b>Technology</b>	Conduct a process re-engineering study to take full advantage of Finance Plus			(\$75,000)
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$50,055</b>	<b>(\$396,062)</b>	<b>(\$190,000)</b>

Source: Gibson Consulting Group.

\*Average cost

Implementing all of the recommendations contained in this report will require a net investment of \$346,007 annually or 0.03 percent of the district's annual operating budget. The net annual investment does not include the one-time investments of \$190,000.

## **SECTION ONE: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE ASSESSMENT**

This section of the report includes an assessment of NPS' current management structure and a presentation of the evaluation team's recommended structure. In addition, this section includes specific recommendations for improving communication between the superintendent's office and key stakeholder groups.

### ***CURRENT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE***

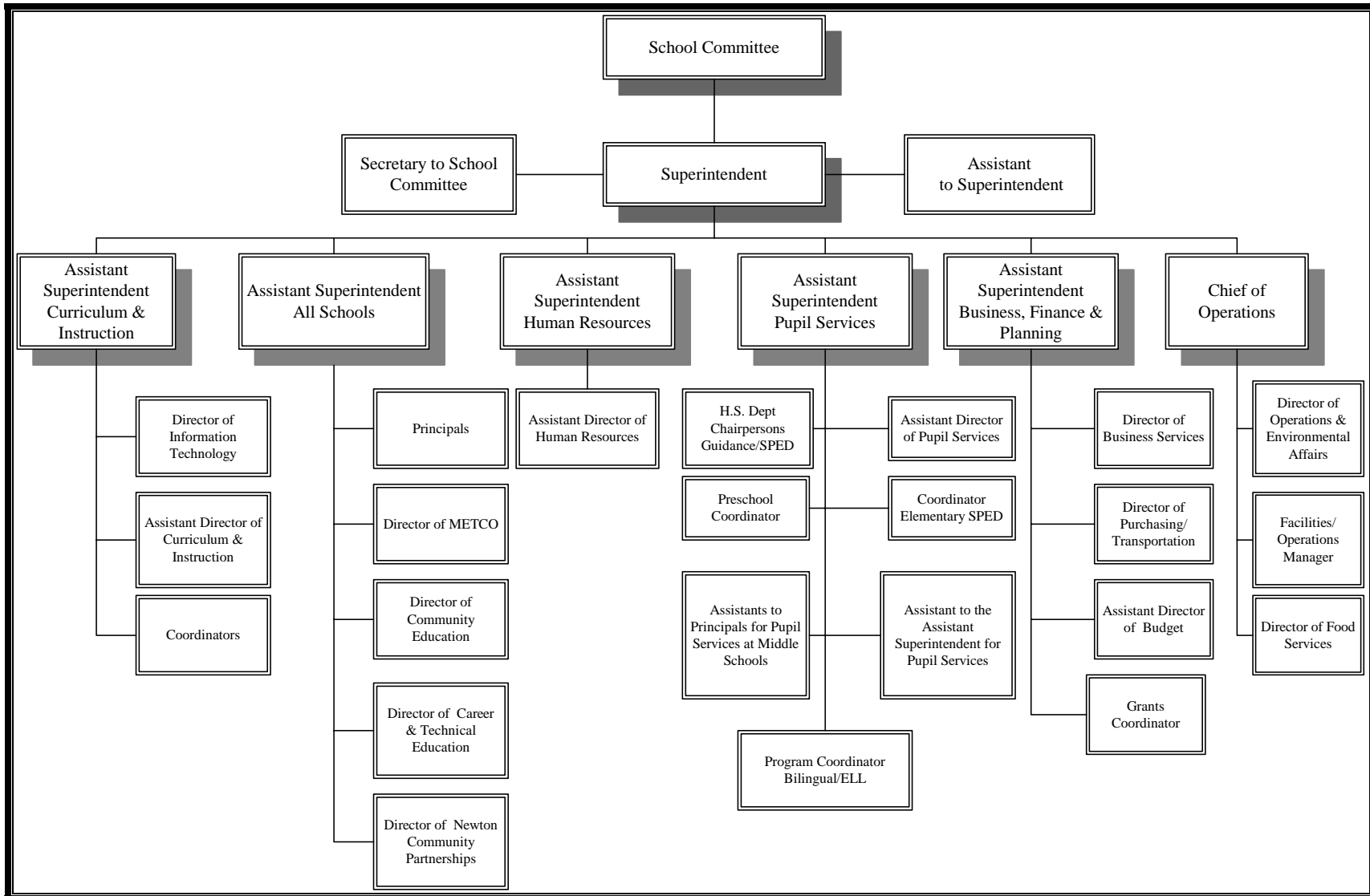
The district is the ninth largest in the state, serving 11,425 students. Although this is not a large school district by national standards, its proximity to Boston and the socio-economic make-up of its stakeholders provide the district with large district issues and concerns. The community actively follows district operations and holds the administration accountable for its fiscal stewardship and the quality of education being provided its students.

In May 2003, the district reorganized its existing management structure with the goal of building a robust infrastructure that would effectively support schools without increasing administrative overhead. As a result of that reorganization, 15.4 full-time equivalent positions were eliminated saving the district over \$767,000 annually. As the uncertainty of future state funding continues to grow, school districts must continually evaluate themselves to ensure they are using available resources, financial and staffing, as efficiently and effectively as possible. It is also critical that the district can demonstrate to its stakeholders that it is doing so. The School Committee and the superintendent commissioned this study for this purpose. It should be noted that another firm is also conducting a compensation study.

In order to understand the current management structure, the evaluation team reviewed a number of documents provided by the district. This data included enrollment and expenditure trends over the past five years, the current adopted budget, current Ed Center organization charts, salary and benefit schedules, and staffing ratios used in the budgeting process. In addition, the evaluation team interviewed central administrators, technical and support staff, and City administrators. Four focus groups were conducted for teachers, principals, curriculum coordinators, and special education administrators.

Dr. Jeffrey Young has been superintendent for the past eight years. Dr. Young is responsible for establishing staffing levels necessary to operate and accomplish the School Committee's goals and objectives. In addition, he and his administrative staff must assist the School Committee in prioritizing expenditures to ensure that all available resources are directed into the classroom. Currently, five assistant superintendents and a Chief of Operations are responsible for managing the daily operations of the district. A high-level organization chart depicting the existing management structure is presented on the following page.

**Newton Public Schools  
Management Structure  
2005-06**



Source: Newton Public Schools, Superintendent's Office, December 2005.

The current management structure does not provide sufficient support to campus administrators. When the district combined the elementary and secondary school assistant superintendents in the prior reorganization, it lost the direct support that had been provided to each school level. As a result, principals are not being provided adequate access to central office.

The School Department's academic programs could be more logically aligned. Currently, they are organized under three assistant superintendents, each reporting to the superintendent. This structure can diffuse accountability and the decision-making processes related to academic programs. By grouping academic functions under one individual, the district can provide a more structured focus, strengthen accountability, and budget more effectively to reach district-wide academic achievement goals.

Given the existing technology, which often leads to duplicative efforts in order to access and report data, the district's central office is not overstaffed. However, realignment at high levels is needed to create a management infrastructure that is more logically aligned with reasonable spans of control, reflects duties and responsibilities, and provides district leadership with adequate time for leadership and planning activities. The following discussion highlights the district's existing high-level management structure.

### **Superintendent's Office**

The superintendent currently has eight direct reports, including administrative support staff. Peer districts were examined to provide insight into the average span of control of superintendents in similar sized districts in the state. Five peer districts were selected based on student enrollment: Fall River, Framingham, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, and Plymouth. Although NPS is a much more affluent school district than any of these peer districts, student enrollment ranged from over 8,000 to 14,500 students and provided a reasonable comparison in terms of management structure. Superintendent span of control ranged from four to eight direct reports, with NPS having the highest number of direct reports.

NPS is often compared to Brookline, Cambridge, and Framingham. Although, these districts are smaller than NPS, their demographics are much more similar than the five larger districts examined. The superintendent's span of control in these three districts ranges from four to six direct reports. Brookline has two deputy superintendents, an assistant superintendent for Student Services and a director of Human Resources reporting to the superintendent, as well as two administrative support positions. Cambridge's management structure includes a deputy superintendent, a chief operations officer, and a chief technology officer reporting to the superintendent. Secondary line managers are at the executive director level. Framingham has one assistant superintendent with the remaining line management being at the director level.

Under the current structure, the superintendent has direct oversight over too many functional areas. This puts him in the middle of too many daily details that should be managed by his administrative staff. Streamlining the first level of management will assist him in devoting his efforts to more global issues facing the district and insulate him from the transactional decisions that should be made at a lower level.

### **School Support – All Schools**

All principals report to one assistant superintendent. In addition to supervising school principals, this position is responsible for overseeing all instructional programs for the district including career and technical education, summer school, the METCO program, community education, and special educational initiatives such as the Newton Community

Partnerships and Understanding our Differences. The span of control for this position, with 28 direct reports is too broad making it difficult to provide the necessary support to schools. In addition, the assistant superintendent – All Schools has too many transactional type demands. A great deal of time is spent dealing with issues that should never have reached the central office. As a result, there is little time available to provide the leadership and planning activities that are needed at this level of management. This position is the link between the campuses and the central office and must be available.

### **Curriculum & Instruction**

The assistant superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction currently oversees curriculum development and instructional and administrative technology. It is unusual to see technology reporting to curriculum. Technology has become an integral part of every function in a school district. The consolidation of technology under this assistant superintendent does not make good operational sense.

In terms of span of control, although it is fairly broad with 15 direct reports, the scope of the supervisory role in line with an assistant superintendent position does not exist. The only director level position reporting to the assistant superintendent is the director of Information Technology. An assistant director of Curriculum & Instruction reports to the assistant superintendent but has no additional reports. The district's 9.5 full-time equivalent curriculum coordinators also report to the assistant superintendent.

### **Pupil Services**

The organization structure of the division of Pupil Services is complex, with too many functional areas to be operationally efficient. The assistant superintendent for Pupil Services oversees the special education programs and student services programs including attendance, guidance, bilingual/ELL, the Springboard Program, and specialized programs, for a total of 23 direct reports. This structure is too broad and does not provide adequate support of either special programs or student services to schools. Many of the job titles are cumbersome and are not reflective of the duties being performed.

Special education and student services each have a different focus and require different management expertise. NPS has a large special education population and therefore requires careful attention. It is difficult for the assistant superintendent to provide support to student service functions such as attendance and guidance.

### **Human Resources**

The assistant superintendent for Human Resources oversees the human resource functions and plays a key role in collective bargaining for the school district. However, the span of control for this position is not in line with that of an assistant superintendent level position. There is an assistant director that is responsible for many of the traditional human resource management functions. No staff report directly to the assistant director. A staff and benefits manager is responsible for position control for the district and monitors the workload of the three clerical support staff. All performance evaluations for the division are conducted by the assistant superintendent.

### **Finance, Business & Planning**

There is an adequate span of control for the assistant superintendent for Finance, Business & Planning with six direct reports. This division oversees the financial operations of the district and is relatively well aligned in terms of functional areas and responsibility.

However, there is some overlap between the school and City of Newton purchasing function which has led to inefficiencies.

### **Facilities & Maintenance**

The City of Newton is responsible for maintaining all school buildings. Custodial and minor maintenance is the responsibility of the School Department. A Chief of Operations oversees this division. This is another area where overlap exists between the schools and the City. This was identified as an area of concern by both administrators and teachers.

## **RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

This section of the report presents the evaluation team's recommendations for reorganizing NPS' management structure that will streamline operations and improve service delivery to stakeholders. It is based on a combination of analysis of the current structure, best practices research, and an assessment of the practices of peer districts.

### **Overview**

There are several organizational models used in large public education systems. They can generally be grouped into four categories:

- **Assistant / Associate Superintendent Model** – This model has numerous assistant superintendents, associate superintendents and/or executive directors reporting directly to the superintendent. These are generally flatter organizations, and the superintendent is involved in the day-to-day operations of the district. These models are generally found in smaller school systems. This model is used in Plymouth and Fall River Public Schools and is the current model in place at NPS.
- **Deputy Model** – As districts grow, the ability of the superintendent to be involved in day-to-day operations declines and more responsibility is delegated to deputy superintendents who run the day-to-day operations. The organizations are not as flat as the assistant / associate superintendent models, but allow the superintendent to focus more on School Committee and public responsibilities. In the strict application of the deputy model, two deputies (one for instruction and one for operations) report to the superintendent. However, in practice some districts also include assistant superintendents as direct reports. This model is used by Lowell, Lynn, and New Bedford Public Schools.
- **Chief of Staff Model** – This model is used in a few very large school systems around the country. Under this model, the chief of staff reports to the superintendent, and many assistant superintendents, associate superintendents, executive directors and possibly director positions report directly to the chief of staff. This model essentially confers all day-to-day district operations responsibilities from the superintendent to the chief of staff.
- **Chief Academic Officer Model** – This model is similar to the deputy model, but places the Chief Academic Officer slightly higher in the organization than a traditional deputy. The Chief Academic Officer is responsible for all activities and programs relating to the education of students. In this model, the positions responsible for managing the district's, finances, technology, and operations are part of a different arm of the organization, and have slightly less power and influence than a traditional deputy.

In developing a proposed management structure for NPS, several objectives were defined based on fundamental principals of organizational analysis and fulfilling the mission of the school district. The objectives of the reorganization are to:

- Create a management structure that clearly articulates the importance of student learning.
- Logically align functions to improve services to schools, accountability, communication, and coordination.
- Achieve proper spans of control.

Based on these factors and current best practices, the evaluation team recommends that NPS adopt a Chief Academic Officer model for its management structure. By adopting this structure, the district places accountability for all aspects of academic programs and school support under one individual. Budgets will take on more meaning as they represent logical program and departmental alignments and will roll up into consolidated academic spending based on district-wide educational goals and objectives.

Under this model, the superintendent's role does not change. Rather the span of control becomes more manageable and allows him to spend less time dealing with the day-to-day demands of the schools. This will allow him to focus attention on identifying appropriate strategies that will enable the School Department to meet its educational goals and objectives.

This management structure communicates to all stakeholders that successful student learning is the most important function of the district. Many elements were considered in developing the proposed management structure. Each function was positioned to address a specific alignment problem or meet a specific organizational need.

There are two ways to transition into the proposed management structure. One way is through attrition. Many districts are facing retirements of their senior management staff. This provides a good opportunity to implement a new management structure if there are enough retirements and if they occur in positions that are to be realigned. The other way to implement a change in management structure is to eliminate the existing positions and rehire under the new structure. This requires that new job descriptions be created and each new position be posted. This type of implementation often is the best approach when positions are downgraded.

The proposed management structure represents a significant change and does not lead itself to being phased in. All academic realignments should take place at the same time. Therefore, the district should carefully determine which implementation strategy will work best and limit the negative impact on staff morale.

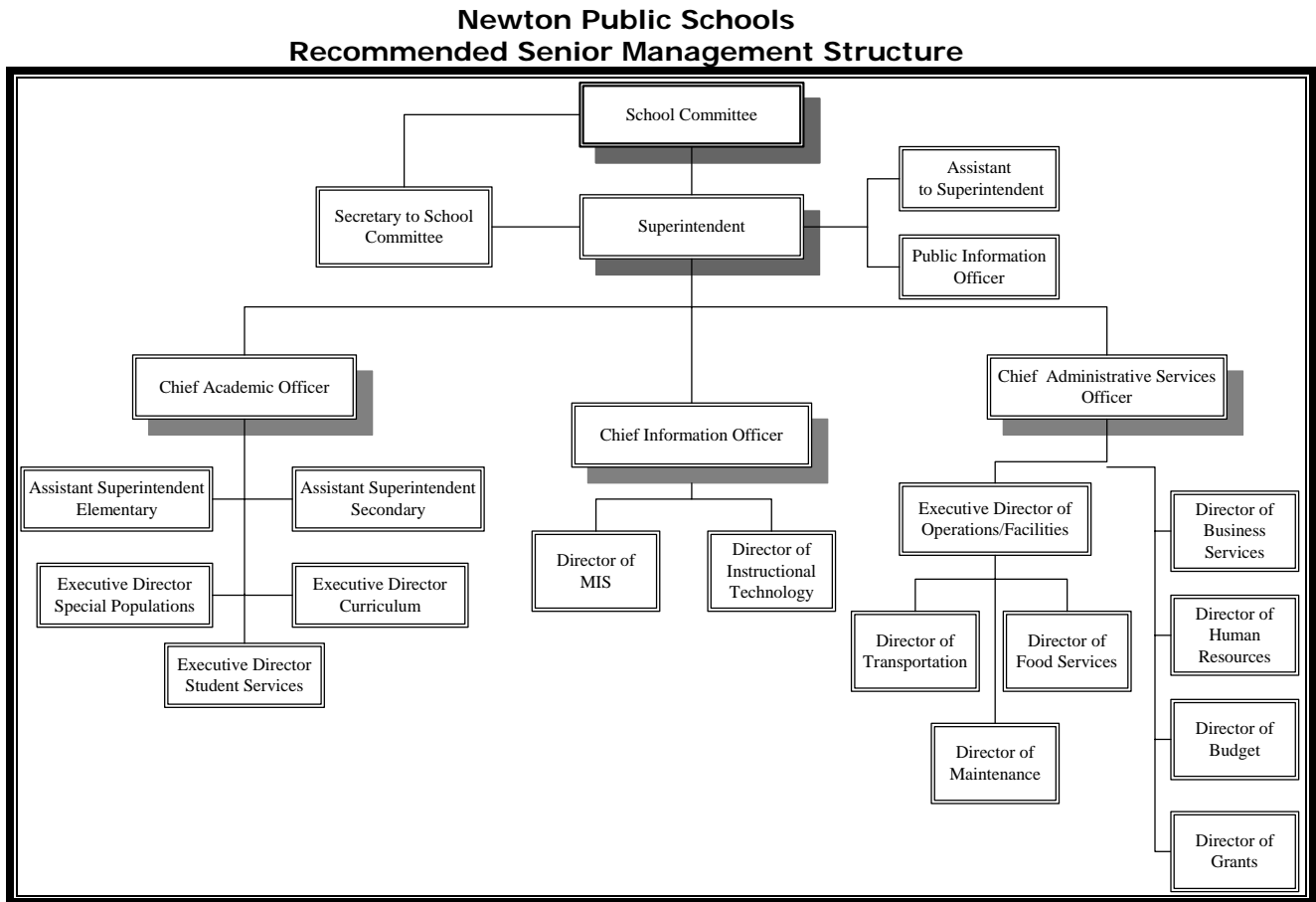
### **Management Structure**

Under the proposed structure, the superintendent will no longer have direct oversight of curriculum, special education, student services, school support, human resources, and facilities management. This will enable the superintendent to better balance the oversight of major internal functions (Academic, Technology, and Administrative Services) with external demands.

**Recommendation 1: Restructure senior management positions to better deliver instructional programs, technology, and administrative services.**

The recommended model reconfigures and redefines senior management positions to represent a more logical alignment of functions and more consistent spans of control. Under this structure, five assistant superintendents are no longer necessary. Instead the chief academic officer will direct the academic programs, with the support of two assistant superintendents and three executive directors; the chief information officer will ensure technology plays a key role in district decision-making, with the support of two directors; and the Chief Administrative Services Officer will oversee the district’s facility and maintenance, student auxiliary services, and financial operations, with the support of one executive director and seven directors. The CIO position is at a level just below the CAO and CASO.

The proposed high-level management structure is presented in the following organization chart.



Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., February 2006.

The composition of the superintendent’s executive team will remain the same with the exception of adding the Chief Information Officer. The role of the executive team will continue to act as the superintendent’s cabinet and provide him with information that will allow him to more effectively manage the district.

### ***Instruction***

The proposed management structure transitions the district from an assistant/associate superintendent model to the chief academic officer model. Under this model, the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) is responsible for all functions related to the instruction and educational support of NPS students, while addressing the span of control concerns under the existing structure. Aligning educational programs provides the district with the following benefits:

- Facilitates better planning, prioritization, and coordination of all instructional initiatives;
- Filters communication and directives on instructional issues through one senior management position, thus reducing the number of school communications, better controlling the content and tone of communications with campuses, and providing a better understanding of the workload of principals and other campus staff;
- Better supports a common vision, goals, and leadership for all staff involved in educating students;
- Places primary responsibility for all instructional and student support programs with a position having a requirement of an experienced educator; and
- Puts more focus on the primary objective of the district: educating students.

The recommended qualifications for the individual selected as the CAO and primary job duties and responsibilities include:

#### *Qualifications*

- Master's degree in education or related field with certification in educational leadership/administration (doctorate preferred).
- Successful experience as a Principal, preferably serving at two or more school center levels.
- Demonstrated skill in K-12 curriculum design.
- Successful experience in the selection, supervision, and evaluation of school-based administrators, for the effective and efficient operation of all elementary, middle, high, and alternative schools.
- Ability to collaborate with appropriate District, area and school-based administrators in developing quality instructional programs for the successful teaching and learning of all students.
- Demonstrated experience in the determination of the types of academic programs needed by schools and in making appropriate recommendations to assure success for all students.
- Demonstrated knowledge of public school laws and policies as they relate to the delivery of instructional services.
- Evidence of strong conceptual, analytical, organizational, and management skills as well as demonstrated leadership ability.
- Demonstrated ability to work with diverse groups, and effectively communicate, both orally and in writing.
- Knowledge of current computing technologies and software applications appropriate to the position's job responsibilities.

*Essential Job Functions*

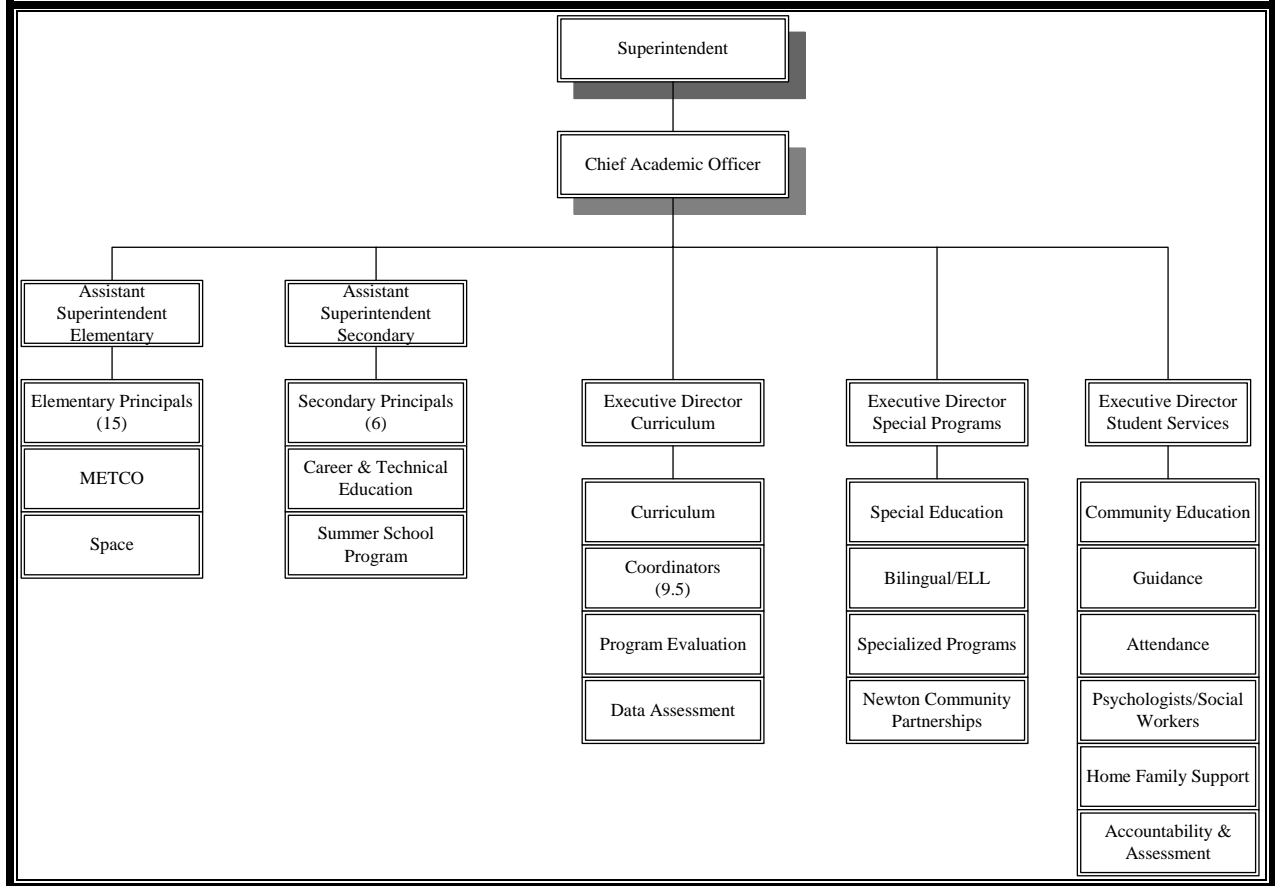
- Providing leadership, oversight, and direction for the overall activities of planning, developing, coordinating, implementing, and evaluating all school curriculum functions;
- Providing direction in school compliance issues;
- Providing support for the improvement of instructional services;
- Utilizing appropriate strategies and problem-solving tools to make decisions concerning planning, utilization of funds, and delivering and evaluating services to schools;
- Directing the implementation of the school district's goals and strategic commitments;
- Using appropriate styles and methods to motivate, gain commitment, and facilitate academic accomplishments;
- Collaborating with divisions and departments in district-wide comprehensive planning and policy deployment;
- Advising the superintendent and appropriate personnel on school operational and academic matters;
- Developing recommendations for long-range educational direction;
- Overseeing the development, planning, and implementation of educational alternative programs;
- Acting for the superintendent in his absence and at various meetings, conferences, and functions as required; and
- Building working relationships with community leaders and organizations.

Many school districts across the country have adopted a Chief Academic Officer model. Although the majority of these districts are larger than NPS, the evaluation team feels that this model best fits the district given the needs and concerns of its stakeholders and the level of involvement of the community and parents. NPS has many of the same big city issues of larger school districts.

No Child Left Behind (NLCB) solidified the need for greater accountability. This trend is not going away, if anything it will continue to grow. School districts that have adopted this model have found it provides a greater level of accountability since all academic activities fall under one umbrella. The CAO model eliminates the "silo" mentality that can often arise when different departments are competing for the same budget dollars. Instead, budgets can be allocated based on program and strategic needs rather than departmental initiatives. In addition, the CAO model works well because it places departments at the appropriate level in the organization in terms of the reporting structure in line with their duties and responsibilities.

The following organization chart illustrates the recommended alignment of functions under the CAO.

**Newton Public Schools  
Recommended Structure – Instruction  
Chief Academic Officer Model**



Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., February, 2006.

Two assistant superintendents will be responsible for providing support to campus administrators, one for elementary principals and the other for secondary principals. This structure establishes a horizontal alignment of schools, and particularly school principals, under senior district administrators. Horizontal alignment groups campuses together by grade level. Operational and educational benefits can be derived through logical groupings of schools and programs by type. These benefits include:

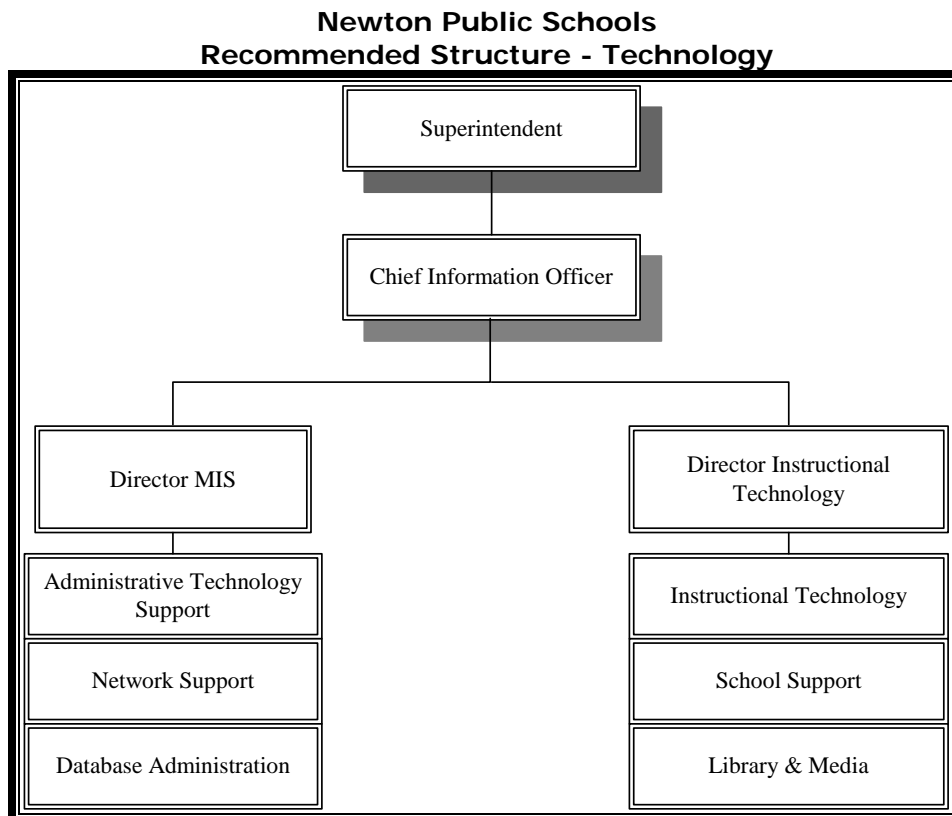
- Sharing best practices across all schools at each level. For example, high schools are more likely to have similar academic and operational issues, and addressing these similar issues under one unit of the organization is more efficient. Further, coordination of academic programs across all high schools serves to ensure a consistent high school education program.
- Providing equitable education support across the district. All elementary, middle, and high schools have access to same information and leadership.
- Providing enhanced support for schools, as horizontal leaders are essentially educational and operational experts for their school type.
- Improving efficiency from an operational standpoint, by grouping grade levels with similar operating issues together.

In addition to establishing a horizontal alignment of schools, this structure separates the special populations and student services. These two functions have very different needs. The current Pupil Services Department is unwieldy and is not providing the necessary support to student services because so much emphasis must be placed on special education. There is a large special education population in NPS that warrants an executive director dedicated to the full-time oversight of the area. An executive director of Student Services has been created under the proposed management structure. This position will be responsible for the following functions: attendance, community education, aggregating and reporting student performance data, testing, guidance, and psychology/social work. The evaluation team feels that this new position is necessary to effectively separate academic and special programs from student service functions.

Curriculum is organized under an executive director. Placing this function under the Chief Academic Officer provides more global control over the district's curriculum development. The Chief Academic Officer can ensure that the curriculum needs of every grade level are being addressed and coordinated through direct feedback from the two assistant superintendents to ensure that principal and teacher input is being included in the development of the district's curriculum.

**Technology**

As the need for integrating technology into district decision-making and instructional programs grows, it has become essential that a technology officer be included on the executive team tasked with making administrative and programmatic decisions. The following organization chart illustrates the recommended alignment of functions under the CIO.



Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., January 2006.

The proposed management structure creates a Chief Information Officer (CIO) position. A CIO reporting directly to the superintendent is consistent with best practices, and is becoming a more commonly adopted practice in both the public and private sectors. In most cases, the curriculum and instruction experts in charge of educational strategy will drive the types of technologies the district chooses to implement and maintain. When new ideas are introduced, the CIO can give advice on how the technologies fit into the current infrastructure, what investments would be needed to implement the new technologies, and other issues that need to be addressed very early in the decision-making process. In other cases, the CIO will be able to provide information on emerging technologies that might drive decisions and plans around educational strategy. In either case, it is critical for the CIO to be plugged into the process and to have a voice on the executive team as technology becomes an increasingly integral part of educating students and supporting district operations.

This placement in the organization also makes sense from the standpoint that technology supports both instructional and non-instructional needs, and positioning this area independent of either function allows technology to support both areas more effectively and equitably. The job description of the CIO will be the same as the current director of Information Technology, only the title will be changed and the position will report directly to the superintendent. Under the district's current salary structure, this change in classification would not require an increase in pay.

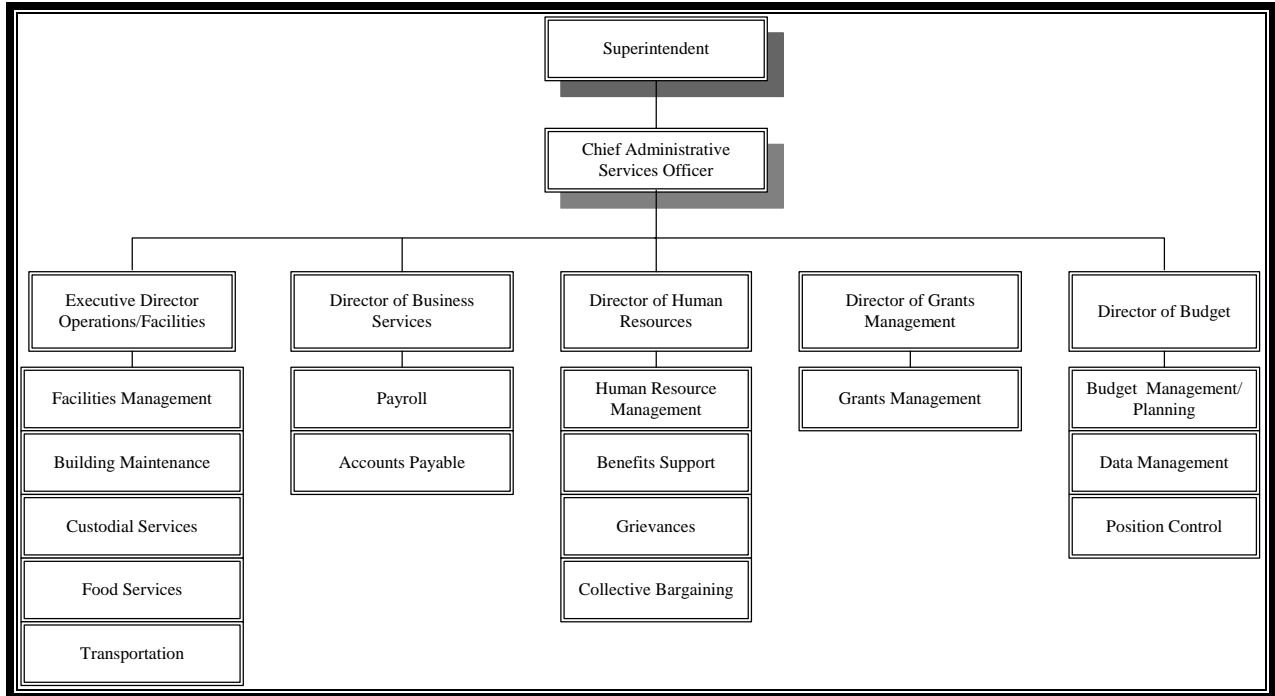
### ***Administrative Services***

The evaluation team recommends that the district create a Chief Administrative Services Officer (CASO) that will oversee the financial, facilities management, and student auxiliary services (Transportation and Food Services) for the district and report directly to the superintendent. This position combines the traditional duties of a Chief Financial Officer and a Chief Administrative Services Officer. The primary duties of this position include:

- Planning, organizing, coordinating, and overseeing the technical accounting tasks concerned with the financial operations of the district;
- Broadening the district's ability to identify trends that should be integrated into budget and facilities management planning;
- Monitoring transportation and food services to ensure that student's needs are being adequately addressed;
- Overseeing the human resources management for the district; and
- Ensuring that the district takes full advantage of all grant opportunities, remains compliant with all grant requirements, and is spending grant funds in an effective and timely manner.

The organization chart on the following page presents the recommended alignment of functions under the CASO.

**Newton Public Schools  
Recommended Structure – Administrative Services**



Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

Under the existing structure, Human Resources is organized under an assistant superintendent and reports directly to the superintendent. In reviewing the district’s human resources function, this seemed inappropriate. Although a school district has very specialized human resource needs in terms of recruitment of staff that meet the federal “highly qualified” mandates, the current staffing levels of the division do not justify an assistant superintendent level. Therefore, the evaluation team is recommending that the assistant superintendent for Human Resources position be eliminated and the human resources functions be brought under the CASO’s direction.

The Chief of Operations currently reports to the superintendent. The recommended management structure downgrades this position to an executive director reporting to the CASO. Functionally, the evaluation team recommends that this position be responsible for directing the daily operations of maintaining school facilities, overseeing custodial services, food services, and the outsourced student transportation. Additional operating recommendations related to facilities management are presented in Section Two of this report.

**Summary of Organizational Changes**

The following table summarizes the changes, by position, that are being recommended under the proposed management structure. In some cases, the change is simply a reclassification, with no salary impact, to more fully define the duties and responsibilities of a position. These organizational changes impact central administration positions from the assistant superintendent level to the assistant director level.

**Newton Public Schools  
Recommended Changes to Management Structure – By Position**

Current Title	Recommended Action	Proposed Title
Asst Supt – All Schools	Eliminate position	N/A
Asst Supt – Pupil Services	Eliminate position	N/A
Asst Supt – Curriculum	Eliminate position	N/A
Asst Supt – Human Resources	Eliminate position	N/A
Asst Supt – Finance, Business & Planning	Eliminate position	N/A
Chief of Operations	Eliminate position	N/A
N/A	Create	Chief Academic Officer
N/A	Create	Chief Administrative Services Officer
Director of Information Technology	Reclassify	Chief Information Officer
N/A	Create	Assistant Superintendent – Elementary Ed
N/A	Create	Assistant Superintendent – Secondary Ed
N/A	Create	Executive Director - Curriculum
N/A	Create	Executive Director – Special Populations
N/A	Create	Executive Director – Student Services
N/A	Create	Executive Director - Operations & Facilities
Superintendent	No Change	Superintendent
Executive Director of Community Ed	No Change	Executive Director of Community Ed
Director of Career & Technical Education	No Change	Director of Career & Technical Education
Director of Bilingual/ELL	No Change	Director of Bilingual/ELL
Director – Pre-School	No Change	Director – Pre-School
Director of Business Services	No Change	Director of Business Services
Director of METCO	No Change	Director of METCO
Director of Maintenance	No Change	Director of Maintenance
Director of Operations	No Change	Director of Operations
Director of Food Services	No Change	Director of Food Services
Assistant Director of Food Services	No Change	Assistant Director of Food Services
Assistant Director – C&I	Reclassify	Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Asst to Asst Superintendent – Pupil Services	Reclassify	Director of Pupil Services
Asst Director – Pupil Services	Reclassify	Director of Special Education
Grants coordinator	Reclassify	Director of Grants
Manager of Information Systems	Reclassify	Director of Management Information Services
Purchasing & Transportation Director	Reduce Responsibility	Director of Transportation
Assistant Director of Budget	Upgrade	Director of Budget
Assistant Director of Human Resources	Upgrade	Director of Human Resources
Admin Asst/Budget Analyst	Upgrade	Assistant Director - Budget
Manager Staffing & Benefits	Upgrade	Assistant Director of Human Resources

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc., January 2006.

**Financial Impact of Recommendation**

As a result of fully implementing the recommended management structure, the district will realize the costs presented in the tables on the following page. The evaluation team did not conduct a salary survey in estimating the salary implications of implementing the recommendations. NPS is currently undergoing a salary study and any necessary adjustments to the salary costs will be made by the district in accordance with the results of that study. The salary assumptions used in determining the financial impact of the recommendations were based on the following assumptions:

- The district will adopt the structure by eliminating the existing positions and rehiring the positions recommended under the new management structure.

- No changes in salaries were considered for existing executive director and director positions that were not changed under the new structure.
- The benefit rate assumes a variable benefit rate of 9 percent and a fixed benefit rate of \$7,000.
- The salary structure assumes a fixed level for the following positions:
  - Chief Academic Officer: \$130,000 plus benefits
  - Chief Administrative Services Officer: \$120,000 plus benefits
  - Assistant Superintendent: \$110,000 plus benefits
  - Executive Directors: \$95,000 plus benefits
  - Executive Director (Special Programs and Operations/Facilities): \$105,000 plus benefits
  - Directors: \$80,000 plus benefits (only those reclassified)
  - Assistant Directors: \$65,000 plus benefits (only those reclassified)

**Newton Public Schools  
Changes to Management Structure – By Position  
Salary Impact**

Current Title	New Title	Salary Impact
Chief of Operations	Eliminate position	(\$104,777)
Asst Supt – Pupil Services	Eliminate position	(\$118,350)
Asst Supt – Finance, Business & Planning	Eliminate position	(\$119,145)
Asst Supt – All Students	Eliminate position	(\$133,636)
Asst Supt – Human Resources	Eliminate position	(\$125,980)
Asst Supt – Curriculum	Eliminate position	(\$119,145)
N/A	Chief Academic Officer	\$ 148,700
N/A	Chief Administrative Services Officer	\$ 137,800
Director of Information Technology	Chief Information Officer	\$ 0
N/A	Asst Supt - Elementary	\$ 126,900
N/A	Asst Supt - Secondary	\$ 126,900
N/A	Exec Dir – Curriculum	\$ 110,550
N/A	Exec Dir – Special Programs	\$ 121,450
N/A	Exec Dir – Student Services	\$ 110,550
N/A	Exec Dir – Operations & Facilities	\$ 121,450
Purchasing & Transportation Director	Dir - Transportation	(\$3,651)
Assistant Director of Budget	Dir - Budget	\$ 7,150
Assistant Director of Human Resources	Dir – Human Resources	\$ 7,150
Admin Asst/Budget Analyst	Asst Dir - Budget	\$ 3,586
Manager Staffing & Benefits	Asst Dir – Human Resources	\$ 4,360

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

**Summary - Financial Impact of Recommended Restructuring**

Recommended Action	Number of Positions	Savings/(Costs)
Eliminate positions	(6)	\$721,033
Create positions	8	(\$1,004,300)
Reclassify positions	6	\$0
Reduce job responsibilities	1	\$3,651
Upgrade positions	4	(\$22,246)
<b>Net Costs – Salaries</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>(\$301,862)</b>

Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

**IMPROVING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

District stakeholders are a vocal group that includes both supporters and critics of how the district manages financial, educational, and staffing resources. A great deal of time is spent by both central and campus administrators in addressing stakeholder and parental concerns. No formal mechanism exists to communicate a consistent message. The following recommendations are intended to create new and improve existing communication channels between the district and key stakeholders.

**Recommendation 2: Create a Public Information function to help bridge communication between the School Department and stakeholders.**

NPS does not currently have a Public Information function. As a result, district administrators spend an excessive amount of time dealing with parents and other stakeholder inquiries that never should reach the central office. Parents and other stakeholders frequently take their issues directly to the central office, when there are policies in place that dictate a campus-based response. The district needs a central office position to support the current “transaction” volume. Over time, the district needs to analyze why the volume of inquiries is so high relative to the size of the school system and take specific actions to alleviate these demands without adversely affecting parent and stakeholder relations. Cambridge Public Schools has established a public information function to address stakeholder concerns and to deal with media.

The evaluation team recommends that the district establish a formal public information function and create a new position, Public Information Officer (PIO) that reports directly to the superintendent. The position should be established at a director level. One of the most important roles this position will play is to begin changing the existing culture and begin managing parental and other stakeholder expectations as to how communication is to flow. This will require consistent enforcement of district policies and procedures. Stakeholders must receive the same message and understand that there will be no exceptions.

The district has a formal mechanism for addressing parental concerns. However, it is not being followed. If the communication channel is to be successful, all district administrators and staff must be held accountable for its enforcement. The following diagram presents the district’s formal communication hierarchy that parents should follow.



The primary duties of this position include:

- Establishing community outreach programs;
- Preparing electronic summaries of School Committee meetings and forwarding them via e-mail to district staff;
- Establishing a formal hierarchy for stakeholder input and ensuring the process is followed;
- Preparing draft press releases for the superintendent;
- Playing an active role with the media ensuring all inquiries go through the Public Information Office and are routed to the necessary district personnel;
- Completing all public information requests for the district; and
- Maintaining and ensuring the accuracy of district web-site content related to internal and external stakeholders.

Benchmark findings underscore the importance of a positive reputation for a school district to be successful. Benchmark partners known for their reputation-management success point to consistency as a fundamental factor in building credibility and maximizing communication efforts. Effective public information offices develop key messages to emphasize when dealing with the public, monitor public communications to ensure message consistency, track frequency of key messages in media mentions, and utilize a variety of technologies to facilitate the transfer of consistent messages.

The newly created Public Information Officer should strive to meet the following goals:

- Raise public awareness to promote parent and community involvement;
- Communicate the positive aspects of Newton Public Schools and promote district-wide achievements;
- Expand methods of internal and external communication;
- Communicate with the diverse populations and cultures in the community;
- Promote the philosophy of “customer service/satisfaction” with all staff that interfaces with the public; and
- Develop a written plan of communication policies and guidelines which will be available to employees and the public.

### ***Financial Impact of Recommendation***

The district will have to create a new position in order to implement this recommendation. The evaluation team recommends that this position be filled at a director level, with a starting salary of \$94,200 including benefits.

### **Recommendation 3: Expand the budget process to be more performance and goal based and communicate budget based performance measures and goals to stakeholders.**

The budget process in NPS begins with the School Committee’s budget guidelines. The mayor then provides the School Department with the dollar amount that will be appropriated based on those guidelines. The School Department can then make its own decisions on how to allocate the funds. The superintendent and district administrators determine budget priorities based on district-wide goals and objectives.

The assistant superintendent of Finance, Business and Planning prepares the budget with the assistance of the assistant Budget Director and the Budget analyst. A budget worksheet

is sent to the schools and divisions based on the prior year budget. Budget managers have line item control over their budgets.

The district has begun to incorporate performance measures into the budget process. For example, staffing formulas can assist budget managers in determining whether their staffing levels are appropriate. There are national standards and benchmarks that can help the district set budgetary goals. Although the district uses a number of performance measures to drive its budgetary process, there are additional measures it could consider to improve the process. The following table presents examples of performance measures that can be used to drive the budgeting process.

Functional Area	Performance Measure
General District Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ratio of total students to FTE employees, by fund</li> <li>▪ Pupil-teacher ratio</li> <li>▪ Pupil-non-teacher ratio</li> <li>▪ Percentage of school based teacher FTE's to total FTE employees</li> </ul>
Regular Education Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pupil-teacher ratio</li> <li>▪ Pupil-instructional aide ratio</li> <li>▪ Average class size</li> <li>▪ Number of secondary schools on block scheduling</li> <li>▪ Number schools on regular schedule with &gt;1 planning period</li> <li>▪ Number of secondary classes with &lt; 10 students</li> <li>▪ Number of secondary classes with &lt; 5 students</li> <li>▪ Number of secondary core subject classes with &gt; 35 students</li> </ul>
Special Education and other Special Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Program expenditures per pupil (headcount)</li> <li>▪ Program expenditures per pupil (Full-Time-Student-Equivalent)</li> <li>▪ Non-teacher program expenditures per pupil (headcount)</li> <li>▪ Pupil-teacher ratio</li> <li>▪ Pupil-instructional aide ratio</li> <li>▪ Average class size</li> <li>▪ Program enrollment (unduplicated headcount) as a % of total enrollment</li> <li>▪ Program enrollment (FTSE) as a % of total enrollment</li> </ul>
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number FTE human resources staff per 100 employees</li> <li>▪ Annual staff turnover, by function</li> <li>▪ Benefits cost as a percentage of salaries and wages</li> <li>▪ Number of vacant positions, including duration of vacancy</li> <li>▪ Total overtime cost as a percentage of salaries and wages</li> <li>▪ Health insurance cost per covered employee</li> <li>▪ Health insurance \$ claims per covered employee</li> <li>▪ Workers compensation cost per covered employee</li> <li>▪ Workers compensation \$ claims per covered employee</li> </ul>
Financial Services / Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of FTE financial services staff per 100 employees</li> <li>▪ Telecommunications cost per non-teacher employee</li> <li>▪ Printing and copying cost per non-teacher employee</li> <li>▪ Travel costs per employee</li> <li>▪ Contracted services cost per student</li> </ul>

Functional Area	Performance Measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-school-based expenditures as a % of total expenditures</li> </ul>
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintenance Cost per Gross Square Foot (including trailers)</li> <li>▪ Custodial Cost per Gross Square Foot (including trailers)</li> <li>▪ Gross Square Feet (including trailers) per Full-Time-Equivalent Custodian, by location</li> <li>▪ Ratio of FTE maintenance staff to Gross Square Feet , by trade</li> <li>▪ Number of acres maintained per FTE groundskeeper, by location</li> <li>▪ Utilities Cost per Square Foot, by location</li> </ul>
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students (enrollment) per instructional computer (in classrooms and labs, plus laptops)</li> <li>▪ Administrator per administrative computer (in central and school offices, plus laptops)</li> <li>▪ Average age of PC</li> <li>▪ Number of PCs per FTE technical support staff</li> <li>▪ Number of PCs per FTE help desk staff</li> <li>▪ Ratio of total students to technology staff</li> <li>▪ Ratio of total employees to technology staff</li> <li>▪ Ratio of total PCs to technology staff</li> <li>▪ Technology expenditures per student</li> <li>▪ Technology expenditures per PC</li> </ul>
Food Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meals Per Labor Hour (MPLH), by school</li> <li>▪ Participation Rates (Breakfast and Lunch), by school:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free</li> <li>Reduced Price</li> <li>Paid</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Net Profit (Loss) by school</li> <li>▪ Food cost % of total cost, by school</li> <li>▪ Labor cost % of total cost, by school</li> </ul>
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student riders per bus route</li> <li>▪ Cost per mile</li> <li>▪ Cost per route</li> <li>▪ Cost per student rider</li> </ul>

Source: Gibson Consulting Group

The district should also communicate its use of performance based measures in developing its budget to district stakeholders. This would demonstrate to stakeholders that the district's budget links funding to efficiency and effectiveness.

In terms of aligning the budget with system-wide goals, it is important that the budget be an integral part of the district's strategic planning process. This ensures that the district prioritizes expenditures to reap the greatest benefit.

**Recommendation 4: Track time curriculum coordinators spend on campuses and conduct a professional development needs assessment to solicit teacher input into the development of professional development.**

A critical benefit curriculum coordinators provide is in-school support to teachers. A large portion of the curriculum coordinator duties are related to developing curriculum and providing professional development for teachers. These duties limit the time that the coordinators can participate in one-on-one support in the schools.

Professional development was criticized in both teacher and principal focus groups as not being effective in that it is not focused on the individual needs of teachers. It is important that professional development coordinate the individual needs of teachers with district-wide goals and objectives. The evaluation team recommends that curriculum coordinators track the time they spend in the schools, both providing professional development and individual teacher support. In addition, they should conduct a needs assessment to identify how the professional development needs are being met.

**Recommendation 5: Conduct a formal strategic planning process.**

The district does not have a strategic planning process in place that allows it to evaluate the effectiveness of its academic programs and its non-instructional functional areas. Without a strategic planning process it is difficult to effectively allocate financial and staffing resources to those activities that drive the district's mission. In addition, there is no mechanism in place to ensure district administrators and staff are being held accountable for achieving that mission. Strategic planning, when paired with an effective measurement system, can provide the district with the tools it needs to measure its success, as well as monitor when changes need to occur.

NPS' *Systemwide Goals 2004-06* published June 13, 2004, identified four key areas of primary importance for Newton Public Schools. These key areas include:

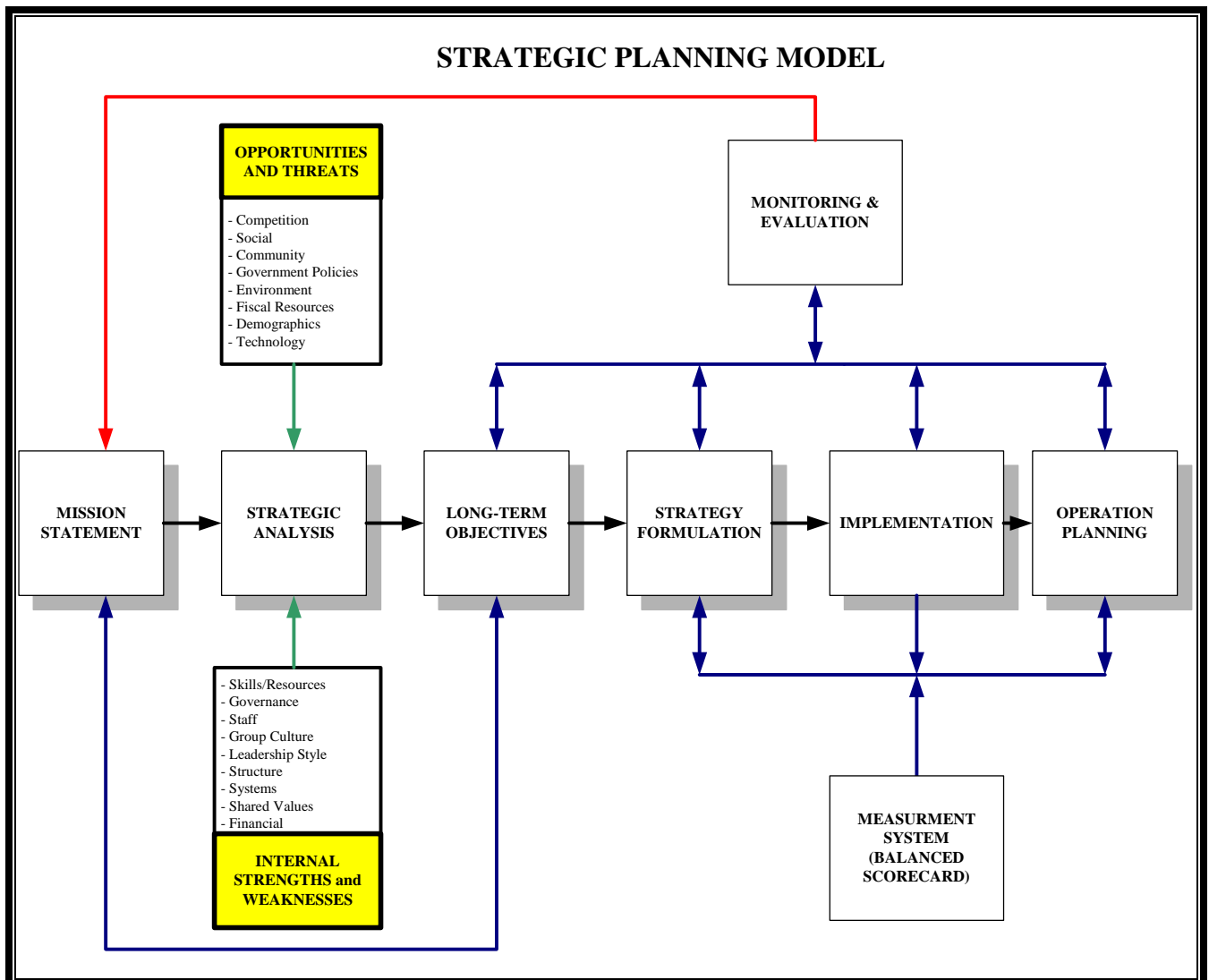
1. **Improvement in Teaching and Learning** – to prepare all students for successful lives and constructive citizenship.
2. **Workforce/Organizational Development** – to recruit, retain, and nurture highly qualified teachers and exceptional educators to take on leadership challenges that exist in many areas of the system.
3. **Physical Assets** – to provide systematic attention to the school system's capital stock, including its building, equipment, and technology.
4. **Public Engagement** – to develop strong, informed public support for the Newton Public Schools among parents, elected officials, and citizens at large.

However, in the planning documents reviewed by the evaluation team, these goals were not linked directly to budget planning nor staffing allocations. The district needs to identify key objectives that need to be reached in order to meet the goals. In addition, specific strategies and their budgetary impact need to be better defined.

Strategic planning in various guises has long been a feature of school districts' efforts to improve operations and results. In the current context characterized by No Child Left Behind (NCLB), increased state involvement in low-performing schools, fiscal constraints, and community scrutiny, districts need to use their strategic plans to drive meaningful and sustained action for markedly different results. According to the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, a "Smart District" ensures their strategic plan lays the foundation for them to be able to:

- provide schools, students, and teachers with needed support and timely interventions;
- ensure that schools have the power and resources to make good decisions; and
- make decisions and hold people throughout the system accountable by using indicators of school and district performance.

It is necessary to periodically revisit the mission statement, goals, and objectives to ensure that they continue to guide and articulate the ultimate purpose of any school district, providing a quality education to all students enrolled in its schools. The evaluation team recommends that the district update its strategic plan and invite community supporters and critics to be involved in the process. An independent facilitator would bring objectivity to the process. The following diagram illustrates the elements to consider during the planning process.



Source: Gibson Consulting Group, Inc.

This planning model incorporates the Balanced Scorecard as its measurement and management tool. The Balanced Scorecard has gained recent popularity among educational organizations in assisting school districts define key performance measures that enable them to monitor the successful implementation of their strategic plan. The Balanced Scorecard integrates financial measures with customer needs measures, internal process

efficiency and effectiveness measures, and measures that address staff development, staffing levels, and staffing skill sets.

Regardless of whether NPS makes the decision to invest in the development of a Balanced Scorecard as a component of its strategic planning process, it should be noted that without a mechanism to track performance and monitor the value of the plan, strategic planning becomes a time consuming process that provides very little benefit.

### ***Financial Impact of Recommendation***

A strategic planning process can range from \$25,000 to \$100,000 depending on the level of detail and the extent to which a Balanced Scorecard is developed. The School Committee must make the determination as to the level of investment it can afford.

## **SECTION TWO: TARGETED REVIEW OF CERTAIN NON-INSTRUCTIONAL FUNCTIONS**

This section of the report presents findings and recommendations found during a targeted review of certain non-instructional functions in the district to identify potential administrative savings and/or operational improvements in the areas of Purchasing, Human Resources, Facilities Use and Management, and Technology. It should be noted that the evaluation team did not conduct a comprehensive review of any of these functional areas, as this was outside the scope of this study. Although this report contains a number of recommendations intended to further improve district operations, overall, the evaluation team found an efficiently run and fiscally responsible school district.

### ***PURCHASING***

The goal of the purchasing function is to coordinate procurement and contractual transactions for the school district to ensure that supplies, equipment, and services needed to support the district's mission comply with state purchasing statutes and are purchased from the right source, in the right quantity, and at the lowest price without sacrificing quality.

#### **Recommendation 6: Consolidate the School Department purchasing functions with the City.**

Statutorily, all NPS purchases must be processed through the City of Newton Purchasing Department. As a result, there is an overlap between the duties performed by both the City and school purchasing functions.

#### ***Purchase Orders***

The City processes approximately 10,000 purchase orders annually. Of this number, 6,500 to 7,500 are from the School Department.

The School Department purchasing process consists of the following steps:

- The originator enters a requisition in Finance Plus.
- Requisition goes through approval process;
  - Purchases over \$3,000 must have the appropriate backup (quotes, bid number, etc)
  - Purchases over \$30,000 must go through the bidding process

- Division director or Campus principal approves requisition
- Purchasing and Transportation Director is the final level of approval before releasing the requisition to the City.
- Mass approval of requisitions submitted to the City.
- The City's Assistant Procurement Officer converts all requisitions into purchase orders.
- The City's Chief Procurement Officer approves each purchase order.
- Mayor reviews and approves purchase orders over \$1,000.
- Once approved, School Department purchase orders are separated and sent back to the Ed Center to be mailed to vendors.
- All purchases are delivered directly to the originating site.

The length of time from when a requisition has been created to when a purchase order is generated varies greatly. Several factors play a role in the delay, including:

- Failure to attach appropriate documentation with the requisition;
- Incorrect account coding errors that must be corrected;
- Insufficient funds in the budget line to cover the purchase; and
- Backlog in the schools' approval process.

### ***Bids***

The Chief Procurement Officer is responsible for generating all requests for proposals and bids for the City of Newton, including the School Department's. Department heads work with the Chief Procurement Officer in developing the bid specifications and the scope of work for individual proposals. All bids and proposals are opened and processed by the City.

### ***Summary***

The evaluation team recommends that the City conduct all purchasing functions. By consolidating the purchasing functions, two steps in the process can be eliminated. The Purchasing and Transportation director will no longer have to approve and submit requisitions to the City. Additionally, there will no need for the City to separate out School Department purchase orders and send them back to the Ed Center. The City can mail or fax these purchase orders directly to the vendors.

However, in order for this consolidation to work effectively, the district must be assured that the City will timely and economically process its purchase orders and bids. The economics is not a critical concern as the City's procurement function must follow Massachusetts purchasing laws. However, there have been problems with the processing time of purchase orders. If the district elects to consolidate the purchasing function with the City, it gives up a great deal of control. Therefore, the evaluation team recommends that the district and the City create a task force composed of teachers, clerical staff, principals, and City purchasing staff to help with the transition.

The duties of the task force will be to:

- Develop a process for writing specifications to be included in School Department Request for Proposals;

- Establish an allowable processing time for purchase requisitions;
- Establish a process for addressing issues that will impact either the ability to receive products or the processing time; and
- Develop a purchasing procedure manual.

***Financial Impact of Recommendation***

In discussions with City procurement staff, they did not feel that consolidating these functions would require additional staff. As discussed in Recommendation 1, the School Department could realize a salary savings through this consolidation by eliminating the purchasing duties of the director when the current incumbent retires. Additionally, the purchasing secretary position can be eliminated for an annual salary savings of \$50,055 including benefits.

**Recommendation 7: Review and revise the required approvals for purchase orders.**

The purchasing process, from initiating a requisition to receiving the goods, is often very long. The evaluation team was provided with several examples of the process taking several months. In reviewing the process, it appears that some of the delay may be a result of a too stringent approval process. The evaluation team recommends that the district and the City review the approval requirements and identify any areas where they can be streamlined. Many school districts allow budget managers to approve purchases under \$10,000. Purchases greater than \$10,000 are approved by the superintendent. The evaluation team recommends that the City establish higher approval thresholds. Purchases under \$10,000 should be approved at the School Department level and not require formal approval from the mayor.

**Recommendation 8: Request that the City submit a monthly aging report for outstanding purchase orders over 45 days.**

As a means of tracking outstanding purchase orders, it would be beneficial if the Chief Procurement Officer submit to the CASO an aging report detailing all purchase orders older than 45 days. Included in this report should be a comments section that provides an explanation for the delays.

**Recommendation 9: Conduct additional training on purchasing processes using City purchasing staff.**

In July 2005, the City upgraded its finance and human resource system to Finance Plus from Pentamation, changing from a DOS to a Windows-based interface. School Department purchasing staff trained school clerical staff on the new system. Unfortunately, there continue to be a significant number of purchase change orders being generated by the schools. The City Purchasing Department processes approximately 10 to 13 change orders per day. The majority of these change orders come from the School Department and are orders that have been cancelled. The evaluation team recommends that additional training be conducted to reduce the number of change orders. The logical choice to conduct this training is the City purchasing staff. As a component of the training, they can walk staff through the process, discuss how important it is to enter the appropriate information on the requisition, and educate staff on Massachusetts purchasing statutes.

## ***HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT***

Personnel costs are typically the single largest expenditure of any school district, accounting for the majority of a district's operating expenditures. As a result, efficient and effective management of human resources functions is critical to the overall effectiveness of a district. Effective human resources management requires compliance with Equal Employment Opportunity statutes, the Fair Labor Standards Act and other federal and state laws, and the establishment of fair and workable policies, procedures, and training programs. Human resources management includes staffing analysis, recruiting, hiring, salary and benefit administration, and performance evaluation. Collective bargaining is a critical role of school district human resources management. It involves negotiations between the school district and collective bargaining units representing a group of employees so as to determine the conditions of employment. Human resource managers must be well versed in effective negotiation techniques to ensure that both district goals and objectives can be achieved and that employee rights are protected.

All School Department employees are employees of the City of Newton. This has called into question the existence of two separate Human Resource (HR) functions. The rationale is as follows: a school has very unique needs that requires specialized HR staff in addition to HR generalists, thereby eliminating any cost benefit from consolidating these functions. Under the federal guidelines of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) schools must ensure that they have "highly qualified" teachers in the classroom. This requires specialized recruiting efforts, knowledge of certification requirements, an understanding of how to track "paid versus earned" fulfillments for numerous pay calendars and contracts, and collective bargaining expertise geared toward an educational setting.

The district has consolidated its benefits functions with the City. Although an executive secretary in the School Department supports the benefit function, no true duplication of effort exists. In addition to supporting NPS staff to understand their benefits, this position processes the Massachusetts Teacher Retirement System submissions.

The only possible opportunity for consolidation is in new employee processing and orientation. However, no salary savings would be realized since the same number of support staff would be required to perform this function. Therefore, the evaluation team is not making recommendations to consolidate any of the School Department and City Human Resource functions.

### **Recommendation 10: Implement the applicant tracking module of Finance Plus.**

The application tracking process would be greatly enhanced by implementing the applicant tracking module. The City purchased this module when it upgraded from Pentamation to Finance Plus in July, 2005. Currently, potential applicants cannot apply online for vacancies. Instead, paper resumes and applications must be directed to principals and hiring managers. Once a candidate has been hired, all information must be keyed into Finance Plus.

Applicant tracking software saves time and improves a recruiter's productivity by converting text resumes into a searchable database. This allows resumes that fit any profile to be easily extracted from the database and electronically forwarded to the school or division needing to fill the position. Research indicates that online recruiting can reduce the overall Cost-Per-Hire by as much as 80 percent when compared to traditional recruiting solutions.

One crucial benefit of applicant tracking is the ability to transfer new hire information from the applicant tracking database. No additional data entry is necessary to set up a personnel record in the system.

The hesitancy in implementing the applicant tracking module on the part of the School Department is related to the fact that it does not allow for two separate databases. Applicants logging into the tracking system see only the City of Newton logo and not that of the School Department. Despite this, the evaluation team recommends that the School Department immediately implement this module. The City's Information Technology programmers should work with School Department programmers to devise a solution that will make the School Department icon visible to potential applicants. However, even if this is not possible, the potential improvement in the overall process does not justify further delay.

## ***FACILITIES USE & MANAGEMENT***

All of the school buildings are owned and maintained by the City. The School Department has a facilities function that operates in coordination with the City in terms of facility planning and management of construction and renovation projects. Planning for facilities based on student enrollment growth, programmatic needs, aging facilities, and legislative requirements are essential to provide for student needs without overcrowding, use of substandard facilities, or use of costly portable alternatives. Facilities must also be maintained and cleaned on a routine basis to provide for a safe and healthy environment for students, teachers, and staff.

### **Building Maintenance**

**Recommendation 11: Request the City Public Building Department implement a swing shift to provide better maintenance support to school buildings.**

Building maintenance is an area where City and School Department duties overlap. The City has the primary responsibility for maintaining the school buildings. However, NPS staffs four maintenance positions to provide additional support and perform minor repairs. The School Department has not been satisfied with the level of service it has received from the City. In focus groups, principals, teachers, and central administrators complained about the timeliness of the City's response to repair requests and the overall condition of the district's aging buildings.

It is difficult to perform maintenance on schools during school operating hours. The City's Maintenance shifts end at 3:00 in the afternoon. This is before most schools end their operating day. As a result, much of the maintenance on and repairs to school buildings is done after the normal shift ends. This requires the School Department to pay the City overtime for these repairs. Preventative maintenance is not being performed on school buildings.

The evaluation team recommends that the School Department meet with City officials to request that a swing shift be established. This will allow maintenance to be done at schools without incurring overtime fees. It will also allow the City to establish a preventative maintenance program that can be carried out when schools are not in operation.

### ***Financial Impact of Recommendation***

The district should see a significant savings from this recommendation. However, the evaluation team cannot quantify the savings without a detailed review of overtime costs.

**Recommendation 12: Work with the City to integrate the results of the district-wide facility assessment into a long-range Facilities Master Plan.**

The district does not have a comprehensive facilities assessment. The School Committee has requested that the City approve a facilities assessment of its school buildings at a cost of approximately \$150,000. The evaluation team fully supports this assessment.

A comprehensive assessment would include:

- a listing of all immediate and near-term facility needs;
- an estimate of the remaining life of all building systems;
- a listing of school needs to address educational adequacy and functional equity among schools, including core-space overcrowding;
- a comprehensive analysis of capacity, utilization, student population, and new construction requirements; and
- a prioritized listing of items and a capital plan so that annual budgetary appropriations from current revenue are of a similar size or in a similar trend and bonded improvements are appropriate for available resources.

While the City's Capital Improvement Plan addresses longer-term issues and the annual facilities budget itemizes near-term requirements, Facility Condition Assessments (FCA) result in a list of prioritized deficiencies that are estimated and include soft costs and are used in the capital planning process. Each building system is typically assessed and its projected life span noted. After an FCA is completed, the district has a powerful set of data to effectively project facility needs over time and feed into the City's Capital Improvement Plan. The evaluation team recommends that NPS work with the City to incorporate the results of the FCA into the City's long-term facilities plan. This will ensure maintenance and capital renewal items are funded at an annual level that will continue to provide sustainable and viable facilities. In addition, the district should consider creating a comprehensive facilities inventory by space type and use. This inventory should then be mapped onto CAD (Computer-Aided Drafting), in line drawing format.

***Financial Impact of Recommendation***

The evaluation team estimates that there will be an additional cost of approximately \$25,000 to hire a facilitator to help develop a long-range facilities master plan that incorporates the results of the Facility Condition Assessment.

**Recommendation 13: Meet with the City to investigate the feasibility of assuming full responsibility for maintaining school buildings.**

As discussed previously, there have been numerous complaints lodged about the condition of the school buildings in Newton. If the City determines that a swing shift cannot be effectively and economically implemented, the School Department will have to consider other options for improving the maintenance standards. One possibility is to request that the School Department assume responsibility for maintaining all school buildings from the City. The district would have to determine whether the existing staff could adequately perform these functions or if additional staffing would be required. The new work order software School Dude recently implemented by the district provides a strong tracking tool that would provide district management with information that could effectively drive scheduling. The evaluation team recommends that should the district adopt this option, that it carefully consider the cost-benefit and cost effectiveness of hiring specialized tradesmen versus outsourcing these functions.

### ***Financial Impact of Recommendation***

Although there will be a cost to hiring tradesmen if the district takes over maintaining the City's school buildings, the evaluation team is not including these costs. Rather, this recommendation suggests that the School Department work with the City to evaluate the cost-benefits of this option. If the district decides to use a consultant to assist with the analysis, the estimated cost will be \$15,000 for a facilities review.

### **Custodial Services**

The custodial staff is at the high end of the productivity range, averaging 29,400 feet per custodian. However, there appears to be a wide discrepancy in the quality of the cleaning from school to school. During focus groups, principals and teachers reported mixed results when asked about the quality of cleaning in their schools.

### **Recommendation 14: Refine and implement standard cleaning procedures and frequencies to be applied at all schools.**

The United States Department of Education has adopted the following five-tier system for cleaning standards for schools based on "Planning Guide for Maintaining School Facilities", compiled by the School Facilities Maintenance Task Force, the National Forum on Education Statistics, and the Association of School Business Officials International (Sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics and the National Cooperative Education Statistics System):

- Level 1 cleaning results in a "spotless" building, as might normally be found in a hospital environment or corporate suite. At this level, a custodian with the proper supplies and tools can clean approximately 10,000 to 11,000 square feet in an eight-hour period.
- Level 2 cleaning is the uppermost standard for most school cleaning, and is generally reserved for restroom, special education areas, kindergarten areas, or food service areas. A custodian can clean approximately 18,000 to 20,000 square feet in an eight-hour shift.
- Level 3 cleaning is the norm for most school facilities. It is acceptable to most stakeholders and does not pose any health issues. A custodian can clean approximately 28,000 to 31,000 square feet in eight hours.
- Level 4 cleaning is not normally acceptable in a school environment. Classrooms would be cleaned every other day, carpets would be vacuumed every third day, and dusting would occur once a month. At this level, a custodian can clean 45,000 to 50,000 square feet in eight hours.
- Level 5 cleaning can very rapidly lead to an unhealthy situation. Trash cans might be emptied and carpets vacuumed on a weekly basis. One custodian can clean 85,000 to 90,000 square feet in an eight-hour period.

The figures above are estimates. The actual number of square feet per shift a custodian can clean will depend on additional variables, including the type of flooring, wall covers and number of windows, all of which must be taken into account when determining workload expectations.

Research shows there is a direct correlation between facility condition and student achievement, facility condition and occupant health, facility condition and student behavior, facility condition and student safety, just to name a few. In addition, the condition of our

educational facilities affects the perception students, staff, and the community have of their schools, and ultimately their support for those schools.

The evaluation team recommends that the district refine its existing cleaning standards based on the level of cleanliness it desires. These cleaning standards should be posted and made available to each custodian. This will support consistent training practices, consistent quality of work among schools, and efficient work procedures. It is also important that the district make custodians accountable for maintaining adequate cleaning standards.

## ***TECHNOLOGY***

The development of an effective, integrated network of software, hardware, and telecommunications is a significant and technically complex endeavor. A successful information technology network requires visionary leadership, clear organizational goals, effective assignment of responsibilities, and the commitment of sufficient financial and human resources. If any one of these key ingredients is missing, substantial resources can be expended without achieving the desired improvement in student skills and knowledge, staff skills, or administrative efficiency.

Some districts divide technology responsibilities between administrative and instructional departments, while other districts manage the technology functions under one organizational structure. Regardless of their size and organizational structure, most districts include the following technology functions: management and oversight of the instructional and administrative applications; hardware and software maintenance of these applications; planning, implementation and oversight of local area networks and a wide area network; and training and technical support for computer applications.

Currently, the district's technology functions fall under the supervision of the assistant superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. However, under the recommended management structure discussed in Recommendation 1, technology has been elevated in the organization structure.

The Technology Plan lays out specific goals and objectives to support the technology function in the district. The over-reaching goal of the Technology Plan is "the seamless integration of technology into teaching and learning." The plan is aligned with the district-wide school improvement plan.

The district upgraded its financial and human resource system when the City upgraded from Pentamotion to Finance Plus in July 2005. NPS runs its student accounting on the Student Information Management System (SIMS). The same system is used by the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Technology is an area that is constantly changing and requires significant investment to maintain. The return on investment for technology can be significant but is not usually immediately achieved. Once a district has made a decision on implementing software, it must understand what processes can become more efficient and perhaps eliminated as a result of the new technology. Work flows change and may result in lower staffing needs. There is often an immediate decrease in duplicative processes which allows staff to be freed up to perform more analytic duties. Technology can move the district toward using information to drive decisions.

**Recommendation 15: Create a City/School Department Finance Plus user group to identify and share process improvements.**

A “train the trainer” training model was employed during the upgrade to Finance Plus. Both City and School Department staff attended training sessions. However, during interviews with school staff it became clear that they are not using the software to its full advantage. It is not unusual for users to try to manipulate new software to fit old processes. The City's director of Information Technology spends a great of time addressing Finance Plus questions from school staff.

The evaluation team recommends that the City create a Finance Plus user group for all user departments. This will provide a mechanism for further training as users discover more effective ways to use the system. Additionally, users can share improved processes with the group.

**Recommendation 16: Conduct a process reengineering study to take full advantage of Finance Plus.**

Existing application systems are limited in their ability to generate required information and reports. Further, the current technology does not go far enough in streamlining procedures and processes to the maximum level possible. Process re-engineering can add tremendous value to a system upgrade. District staff is continuing to use non-integrated, independent databases or spreadsheet applications files to report information in the desired format. Some of the problems that have arisen as a result of using these databases and files include:

- duplicative data entry;
- lack of sufficient security;
- lack of control over data integrity;
- lack of centralized back-up; and
- lack of documentation.

During the re-engineering effort, each major step in a process is reviewed and modeled in order to document how that process is currently being performed. The goal is to eliminate obsolete and inefficient activities and implement changes that will improve the overall process.

***Financial Impact of Recommendation***

Although the initial costs associated with process re-engineering can be high, the potential savings that can be realized over time make the investment worthwhile. Staff can be redirected more effectively and often less staff is needed. This will allow the district to reduce staff through attrition and develop staffing formulas that meet their changing needs.

The evaluation team estimates that it will cost the district \$75,000 to conduct a targeted process re-engineering study in order to fully recognize future savings and streamline existing processes. This estimate is based on similar process re-engineering studies for similar sized school systems.