

Presentation to Anchorage School Board and Staff
June 25, 2012

By
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Thank you for the opportunity to present tonight. It is great to be back in Anchorage.

finance, and management information services. I think it was the single best team we have ever pulled together over the last 12 to 15 years. Their names are listed in the report.

While we were here, we interviewed about 170 individuals either individually or in groups.

People interviewed included school board members, senior administrative leadership, central office staff, principals, and community members.

We also reviewed over 210 documents and reports

And we analyzed a considerable amount of data on which to ground our findings and recommendations.

Our charge from you was five-fold

- (1) Review and evaluate the organizational structure of the school district
- (2) Examine the overall staffing levels of the school district and its major departments
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- (4) Identify major management and operational issues, and
- (5) Make recommendations that would help the district ass it moved forward under its new leadership.

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I am cognizant that we may not have answered all your questions in our report, so we are happy to address them here.

I must say that you gave us a very difficult task that frankly too few districts request, so the data with which we had to work was not always as good as everyone would have liked.

In general, we can draw some broad conclusions, but to be honest some of the answers depend on who we are comparing you to because there is no real objective standard which to measure you on some of the questions.

Still, I hope this exploratory study will be helpful to you as you move forward.

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But, we discovered that the data your state submitted to NCES was incorrect, which meant that your staff had to reconstruct the results from scratch

- (4) And we compared you to a smaller number of cities using department staffing rosters. These cities included Portland, Seattle, Boston, St. Paul and San Francisco.

We also primarily looked at total staff numbers, numbers and percentages of teachers, numbers of district-level administrators and support staff, school-based administrators and support staff, and central-office department staff counts.

We found the following

- (1) Anchorage has about the same numbers of total staff that you would expect of a district with this number of students, compared with the Great City School districts and the selected comparison districts. But you had slightly more total staff than was the norm among

Overall, we found relatively generous staffing levels in your curriculum and instruction department, your budget staff, and your purchasing staff.

We gave credit to your HR operations, its tracking systems, and customer satisfaction — something that we don't often see.

We also cited the quality of your CAFR and your track record in getting bonds passed.

This is a generally well-run school system and the public should know that.

Still, we raised issues and concerns that the incoming administration might attend to —

We would encourage the board and the superintendent to work hard at getting on the same page and staying there.

We also noted that the district does not use metrics and benchmarking uniformly across the district.

We saw little use of cross-functional teaming to solve problems — something that can lead to the siloing of staff.

We also concluded that the budget development process was not as strategic as it ought to be.

Personnel evaluation and performance appraisal systems are weak at all levels of the organization. In no case are they tied to progress on districtwide goals or priorities.

Staff development is not driven extensively by performance data and little of it is evaluated for its implementation or results.

The district also lacks a process by which it evaluates the work of your outside legal counsel.

The district has antiquated technology in too many instances.

The district also needs to strengthen its time and attendance system, which is something that we know is in progress.

The district has little way to determine if its instructional reforms are being put into place as intended. We found the same thing when we did the math review.

In addition, not much attention is paid to evaluating the effectiveness of instructional programs.

We found little evidence that the data the district has is being used effectively to modify, expand or terminate programs.

Your Help Desk system is out-of-date and not very efficient.

Your night-shift custodians are unevenly deployed.

Your purchasing department does not use standardized procurement solicitation documents.

And the like.

There are more than enough things to keep the new administration occupied despite the progress of the outgoing one.

Per your request, we also have a number of recommendations and proposals.

However, we did not make many suggestions in the areas of staffing and spending.

These levels, as I indicated previously, are really in line with national and city norms. They also depend to a great degree on strategic changes you make or don't make to your theory of action moving forward.

Nonetheless, we do suggest making a number of organizational changes to refresh its structure, make it more consistent, improve accountability, strengthen efficiencies, and reduce some spans of control.

Reporting to the superintendent, we would suggest having

- (1) Five line reports - CAO, CHRO, CFO, CIO, and COO
- (2) And 4 staff reports - communications, general counsel, project management, and research and assessments. We have done this to improve coordination and strengthen the use of data.

Under the CAO, we would propose having

- (1) An executive director for elementary schools
- (2) An executive director for middle and secondary schools
- (3) An executive director for SPED
- (4) An executive director of curriculum and instruction
- (5) An executive director for professional development
- (6) An executive director for Alaska Native, Native American and specially funded programs.
- (7) And an executive director for ELL.

These last two positions are elevations from their current positions in recognition of the size of the populations they serve \hat{o} similar to SPED \hat{o} and

Revamping the district's personnel evaluation procedures and tie them more convincingly to progress on district goals

Restructuring professional development to align to your strategic plan, your organizational priorities, and your data.

Accelerating Medicaid claiming

Attempting long-term budget forecasting despite your constraints as a financially dependent district

Streamlining your Help Desk operations

Returning to a three-way match in your procurement process (i.e., purchase orders, vendor invoices, and receiving documentation)

And many other detailed proposals

Thank you and I would be happy to take your questions and comments.