Central Office Review

Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional
Division No. 20

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A·S·B·A
Alberta School Boards
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the school board elections in October 2007, the newly elected board of trustees determined that it required a complete understanding of the staffing levels, effectiveness and efficiency of the central office of the Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional Division (division). The board contracted the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) to conduct a review and provide an assessment of the central office in order to determine the extent to which it is meeting the educational, organizational and legislated requirements of the board and the provincial government.

The board also requested that comparisons be made with similar type jurisdictions, as well as the Medicine Hat School District, in terms of staffing, central office growth and administrative expenditures over a 5 year period. It must be noted that such comparisons are extremely difficult to achieve with a high level of confidence. School jurisdictions code expenditures and allocate staff to various functions in accordance with provincial guidance and local needs and priorities. As a result of the latitude provided to school jurisdictions, significant variances do occur. In addition, the *Freedom of Information and Privacy Legislation (FOIP)*, limits the amount and kind of information a board can provide in regard to its staff members. This is particularly true in smaller jurisdictions where one or two individuals perform certain tasks in that individuals can be easily identified. However there are areas, such as total trustee costs, that are separately identified, audited and reported upon and can provide valid comparisons between jurisdictions. Recognizing the limitations of the data, some useful information can be gathered and used to compare specific features of one school jurisdiction with another.

Although there is a desire to compare expenditure and staffing levels between the central offices of various school jurisdictions, it must be reiterated that such comparisons are extremely difficult and may not provide any useful information upon which to base staffing decisions. The true test of the amount and quality of resources provided to the central office must be weighed against the expectations and demands the jurisdiction has for the office and the manner in which these are being met. Provincial legislation requires that each board employ a superintendent to serve as the chief executive officer of the board and the chief education officer of the jurisdiction. In addition a board must appoint a secretary and a treasurer, or an individual to serve as secretary-treasurer. All other positions are determined by the board based upon its assessment of the perceived requirements of the system.

The jurisdictions used for comparative purposes in the review were:
- Clearview Regional School Division
- St. Thomas Aquinas RCSSD
- East Central Alberta CSSRD

- Aspen View Regional Division
- Evergreen CSSD
- Holy Family CSRD
- Prairie Rose Regional Division
- Grande Prairie RCSSD and
- Medicine Hat School District

The central office review found that:

1. Board and system administration costs for the division have never exceeded the provincial administration cap over the past six years. As illustrated in Table 2 on page 28, each of the past six years ended with a surplus of funds which were available for other expenditure areas of the division.

2. The total expenditures (remuneration, benefits and expenses) of the board of trustees was the 2nd lowest of all of the boards used for comparative purposes for each of the previous four years. Of the jurisdictions noted above, only East Central Alberta CSSRD had lower expenditures for this area in every year over the period being compared.

3. The division has been fiscally responsible and is currently in a positive cash position. As noted in Table 2 on page 28, the division's expenditures exceeded revenues in the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years. This resulted in a deficit and consequently in a reduction of its operating reserves and accumulated surplus. However, the past three years have seen budget surpluses and a resulting increase in the total accumulated surplus to approximately 2.36% of the total 2006-07 school year revenues. This amount is just slightly less than what is currently regarded as the desired level.

4. The division has been able to continue to grow its student population at a greater rate than that of the public district. As illustrated in Table 1 on page 27, the student enrollment has increased by 290 students over the six year period or just less than an average growth rate of 2% per year. During the same period, the public district experienced a decrease in its total student population of 43 students.

   As indicated on the Accountability Pillar Results for Zone 6, October 2007, the annual dropout rate is 4.1 and is fifth lowest among the 11 jurisdictions being reported upon or approximately mid-way. However, the 2006 - 2007 rate was an increase from the previous three year average.

5. The number of full time positions added to the central office over the six year period, 2001-2002 to 2007-2008, has been four. These are:

    ♦ Administrative assistant in facilities and operations;

    ♦ Human resources & benefits officer;

    ♦ AISI coordinator; and

    ♦ Special education teacher (combination of part-time staff)

    As noted in Table 4 on page 37, the AISI coordinator is a specific circumstance and while located in the central office at this time it does not represent an increase in positions on a division basis. The special education teacher provides services directly to students and staff and would not usually be considered as a central office position.

    Also noted in Table 4 on page 37, certain functions and responsibilities have been taken from the schools and centralized in order to provide a range of efficiencies. An example would be the Automated Dispatch System (ADS). However, in doing so, it must be remembered that additional human resources are essential. In the case of the ADS, this is in excess of .25% of an FTE.

6. The central office is fully occupied and there is little space for additional staff members to be added. While staff do not have areas common in many other jurisdictions such as a staff room, the staff did not express dissatisfaction with the facility. They recognize the limitations of the facility and have adapted their activities to make the best use of what is there. The office presents a positive impression to the visitor upon entering. The receptionist is located near the entrance and available to assist those that require it. Staff is courteous and portrays a sense of purpose and competence. Catholic symbols are displayed in the front entrance area and remind those that enter of the mission and mandate of the division.

7. In reviewing the data provided in Table 3 on page 35, it appears as if the central office of the division does not vary significantly from those of the other jurisdiction to which it is being compared. If comparisons were done on the combined number of staff members in the offices of the superintendent and secretary-treasurer in each of the jurisdictions, there would be little difference between them. The range is from a low of 8 staff members to a high of 14. The division at 9.3 staff positions is at about the mid way point of the jurisdictions being surveyed.

    In comparing student services, the range of staff members varies significantly among the selected jurisdictions from a low of zero to a high of four. But in

order to determine the comparability of the number of staff members, the nature and scope of the programs being provided needs to be examined as well as does the coding practices of the jurisdiction. The information provided in Table 5 on page 41, illustrates very clearly the range and scope of programs being provided to students in the division. Students with special needs have access to a great many supports in the schools of the division.

In comparing the number of staff located in the central offices of any jurisdiction being compared, such comparisons must be done carefully and with a clear understanding of the limitations of the data.

8. Telephone interviews held with individuals not directly employed by the division, such as school council chairs, indicated that rarely were the services of the central office requested or received. The role of the central office in the division was not always clearly understood or expressed. This is of course understandable as the major contact for such individuals would be the school principal, school staff and other parents.

    The individuals interviewed appeared to be familiar with the board members and the role of the board. The "open houses" which are scheduled for later this year was viewed as being a positive initiative.

    School council chairs, as a group, expressed general satisfaction with the faith dimension of the schools their children attend. A number stated that they were very pleased with the Catholic environment of the schools and the many opportunities provided to their children to "live the faith".

9. Staff morale in the central office appears to be very high. There is a definite sense of team, propose and commitment to service. Staff members are supportive of each other and appreciative of the work accomplished both in the office and the rest of division. There is a sense of "service".

10. There appears to be a misunderstanding among a number of individuals within the division regarding the roles and responsibilities of the central office staff. Part of the reason for the confusion may be the fact that there has been a, *Support Staff Handbook: Non-Teaching Staff Handbook School-Based,* prepared which provides a wide range of information regarding school-based staff. However, there has not been a comparable handbook prepared for central office-based staff. This seems to have fostered a perception among some that special treatment is being accorded central office staff and being denied to school-based staff. Some questions that surfaced during the conduct of review are as follows:

    a. Why are central office secretaries paid more than school secretaries?

    b. Why do central office secretaries all have titles and school secretaries are just called "secretaries" or "school secretaries?

    c. Why are the salaries of central office secretaries secret while those that are employed in schools are placed on a grid that is public?

    d. Is the work of a school secretary not as important as that of a central office secretary and yet no extra assistance is provided in the smaller schools?

This is an area that needs to be addressed in order to close the "we-they" gap. Increased transparency in the manner in which appointments are made and salaries paid, would assist.

11. A number of staff members did not have written job descriptions or regular performance evaluations. Job descriptions should be prepared by the supervisor and be based upon outcomes (deliverables) and not on processes or activities. Job descriptions must be aligned with superintendent's job description and designed to assist the division in reaching its goals.

12. Although there was no formal attempt to ascertain the exact number of individuals employed in the division that have had a long history with the community and the school system, it would appear as if the number is reasonably high. While this does have a number of advantages, there are also some cautions that must be exercised to ensure that unproductive behaviours do not become part of the system culture.

13. The total salary costs of the staff based in the central office over the 2001-2002 to 2007-2008 period increased by a total of $373,680 or approximately 6% per year.

14. The division offers a full-day kindergarten even though Alberta Education provides funding for a half-day program. The decision to provide a full-day program was in part based upon a reaction to the decision of the public board which began to offer a full-day program. It was also felt that full-day programs were better for children and that the decision was educationally sound. Funds to support the program are taken from the "instructional envelope" provided to the division.

15. As noted in Table 5 on page 41, the division provides a wide range of educational programs to meet the needs and interests of the student which attend its schools. Significant programming opportunities are provided in the fine arts, sports, special education programs and academics.

16. The breadth of special education programming is a particular strength of the division. As noted in Table 5 on page 41, a comprehensive program is provided to children from pre-school to high school. Programs are provided to students that require significant intervention and support to those that are gifted and talented and require enhanced programming. As noted in the review, the emphasis on special education has placed a significant strain on the resources of the division. However, students are being served and that is the mandate of the educational system.

CONDUCT OF THE REVIEW

BACKGROUND

The Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 20 (division) came into existence on January 1, 1995 with the joining together of the Medicine Hat Catholic School District and the Bow Island Catholic School District. Under the terms of provincial legislation and the regionalization agreement entered into by the two boards, each of the districts became a ward for the purposes of electing trustees to the board of the newly created regional division. As electors in the Redcliff and Dunmore School Districts exercised their right to provide access to a Catholic education to the children of the districts through the formation of a Roman Catholic Separate School District, these lands were then added to the division. As of this date, the division continues to consist of two wards, the Bow Island Ward which elects one trustee and the Medicine Hat Ward which elects four trustees to the Board of Trustees (board). The Medicine Hat Ward does not have electoral sub-divisions and the trustees are elected at large.

The school board elections held in October of 2007 brought about a major change in the trustee representation from the Medicine Hat Ward. All four of the trustees that were elected are new to the board not having served in that capacity previously. The trustee from the Bow Island Ward was re-elected by acclamation after having served for some prior 12 years on the board. As a result of the election, 80% of the trustees on the board are new to their positions. Both the board chairperson and the vice-chairperson are among those that were newly elected from the Medicine Hat Ward of the division.

The division had undergone a serious labour relations dispute between the board and members of its teaching staff during the 2004 – 2005 school year. It is believed by some that this dispute contributed significantly to the outcome of the 2007 trustee election. Three of the previous board members that had been acclaimed in 2004 trustee election ran for re-election in 2007 but were defeated. As a result of the motivation among the electors to seek a change in the elected leadership, the board will be expected to bring about changes in operation of the division. The majority of those interviewed stated that they believed that the change was positive and things are expected to be different as a result.

The newly elected board wanted to ensure that it had a good understanding of the staffing levels and effectiveness and efficiency of the central office as it began its term of office. As a result the board passed a motion at its November meeting requesting that a consultant be hired to do a central office review as soon as possible.

The board contracted the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) to conduct the review and provide an assessment of the division's central office in order to determine the extent to which it is meeting the educational, organizational and legislated requirements and expectations of the board, the community and of the province of Alberta. In this, it must be remembered that the superintendent of schools and board mutually agreed to a separation and an acting superintendent of schools was selected to serve until the end of June 2008. The acting superintendent was employed in the central office as the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) Coordinator. Therefore the central office is very much an organization in transition, making it difficult to establish current organizational practices, structure and morale with a high level of certainty. The departure of the previous superintendent that had served the board for a period of six years and the appointment of the AISI Coordinator as the acting superintendent has placed a new dynamic both within the central office and the division. The AISI Coordinator position was vacant at the beginning of the review but a replacement has now been obtained.

In addition to the changes noted above, the central office staff experienced the unexpected loss last fall of one of the members of the administration team, the assistant secretary-treasurer. This position has not been filled and the responsibilities have been assumed by other staff members. However, the position is currently being advertised as a full time position and it is anticipated that a selection will be made early in February 2008.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The board met with the ASBA consultant on December 11, 2008 and participated in identifying the tasks and establishing the following terms of reference.

Task

To provide an independent assessment of the central office of the Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional Division as to its efficiency and effectiveness in serving the needs of the division. The assessment would include comparisons with similar jurisdictions and including the Medicine Hat School District.

To provide recommendations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of any areas identified in the review as requiring remediation.

Terms of Reference

a. Provide a detailed description of the organizational structure of the central office as it currently exists.

b. Provide a detailed description of the services provided through the central office to board, staff, students and community.

c. Provide an analysis of the tasks performed by each of the staff members located in the central office.

d. Provide a comparison with other Alberta school jurisdictions of comparable circumstances, but must also include the Medicine Hat School District, that would describe:
   i. Total number of staff
   ii. Central office expenditures
   iii. Longitudinal data for some comparable jurisdictions – 5 year span – what has happened over the past 5 years

e. Assess and report upon the perceptions of some of the recipients of central office services such as principals and school council chairs as to the value and quality of the services received.

f. Provide recommendations regarding possible central office reorganization that might result in increased efficiencies.

g. Attempt to assess culture and morale in the central office and report on findings.

h. Review and report on communication networks within the division.

i. Review and report on the levels of student achievement on provincial examinations.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA GATHERING

In order to collect the information necessary to respond to the requested analysis of the central office, compare it to other Alberta school jurisdictions, and provide recommendations for any identified improvements, the following actions were undertaken:

a. Review of written records and documentation regarding the operation of the central office such as: financial records, minutes, policies, administrative procedures, job descriptions, evaluation procedures, annual education results reports, three year education plans, results of parent surveys, student achievement test results, division newsletters, and other related materials;

b. Interview every staff member based in the central office. Interviews to be based on a combination of structured and open-ended questions;

c. Interview all principals, school council chairs and others that may be deemed to have relevant information of services provided through the central office. Interviews to be based on a combination of structured and open-end questions.

    d. Collect and analyze financial and organizational information on other school jurisdictions, including Medicine Hat School District, and compare that to the Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional Division.

    e. Observe the day to day activities of the staff of the central office.

AREAS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE REVIEW

The central office is the administrative centre of the division. Its function is to provide unity to the division and a sense of direction and purpose. Some of the key functions on a jurisdiction wide basis are as follows:

    a. Board governance support,

    b. Planning,

    c. Monitoring and accountability,

    d. Communication,

    e. Faith leadership

    f. Financial management,

    g. Decision-making involvement and procedure,

    h. Personnel management, and

    i. Student welfare

Some of the significant areas that must be examined, and responded to, in attempting to judge effectiveness and efficiency of the central office are:

    a. Is the purpose and focus of the central office clearly defined and effectively communicated;

    b. Are the roles and responsibilities of the staff of the central office clear and appropriate;

    c. Is there overlap, or duplication, of responsibilities:

    d. Are workloads and expectations fair and manageable;

    e. Is the right work being done in the right place and at the right time;

    f. Are working relationships positive and mutually supportive;

    g. Is there a sense of team;

    h. Are there methods of communicating and sharing information with staff in a timely and effective manner;

i. Is feedback being provided to staff in order to assist in identifying performance and providing opportunities to assist staff in fulfilling their roles;

j. Does succession planning occur in order to assist in case of illness, retirements, shortages, and replacements; and

k. Is the physical location and surroundings adequate and conducive to creating a positive and productive work environment?

REVIEW FINDINGS

CENTRAL OFFICE FACILITY

The central office is located at 1251 – 1st Ave, Medicine Hat. The facility was acquired in October, 1979 and provides approximately 1037 square metres of space. Housed in the facility at the current time are:

a. Maintenance and operations staff – 2 positions and a shop area (the maintenance and operations area has an additional 3 positions that are responsible to the supervisor – but they are not viewed as being central office staff as they are field staff, do not have office space and are engaged in activities outside of the central office, however they would use the shop area).

b. Information and technology – 2 positions and a storage and work area (although these are primarily field staff, they have been considered as being central office staff for the purpose of the review).

c. St. Gabriel Cyber School – 2 teachers

d. Student services – 4 positions:
   - Associate superintendent
   - 2 special education assistants
   - PUF teacher

e. Curriculum and religious studies – 1 position

f. Financial and business – 5 positions:
   - Secretary-treasurer
   - Assistant secretary-treasurer (vacant) .5 position
   - Executive secretary to the secretary-treasurer - .8 position
   - Payroll officer
   - Accounts payable

g. Administration – 5 positions:
   - Acting superintendent
   - Deputy superintendent

- ♦ Executive assistant to the superintendent
- ♦ Human resources and benefits officer
- ♦ Receptionist

h. AISI – 1 position:
- ♦ Assessment coordinator

As noted in Table 3 on page 35, the placement of staff positions into various groupings may be quite different among school jurisdictions in the province. For example, the division codes the receptionist and the human resources & benefits officer to the instructional administration function. In the majority of the other jurisdictions surveyed, these positions were coded to financial and business. While a direct reporting line may not exist or be evident, these positions are generally viewed as providing business services. They are responsible to provide services for the daily operation of the central office. However, in terms of overall expenditures and efficiencies this may not be an issue.

With the number of staff located in the central office, the facility is more than fully occupied. Every space is utilized and in the case of St. Gabriel Cyber School, student services, and information and technology, offices are shared by two staff members. There is no staff room or common area for staff and the work room is used for that purpose. While this arrangement may not be conducive to providing staff with an environment that is suitable for lunches, relaxing and socializing, it does provide a large open area for staff to gather and this has some positive features. The facility is currently unable to accommodate additional staff members in a manner that would be viewed as being adequate. The possibility of reconfiguring some of the larger offices to gain additional space was considered but in terms of providing a suitable working environment was not pursued.

In addition to offices for staff, the facility also contains a board room and a conference room. Both are used for small group meetings and gatherings. The conference room is equipped for video conferencing and has been used for that purpose on a number of occasions. The front office is a reasonably small space and houses the receptionist and the executive secretary to the secretary-treasurer. In addition, it serves to house a row of filing cabinets for division documents and records as well as an area for holding mailings to schools. A vault is available to house records and materials that require security and safe keeping and is deemed to be adequate for a jurisdiction of this size. It was noted that off-site storage of back-up jurisdiction material was not being utilized. This is something that the administration may wish to assess.

There are staff members being accommodated in the central office that need not be located there should other space and resources be available elsewhere in the division. Examples would be:

a. St. Gabriel Cyber School – two teachers sharing a single office. These are staff members providing direct instructional services to students and would not usually be considered as a component of the central office. In addition to occupying an office, the staff members also make use of the conference room from time to time and the services of the receptionist. The receptionist takes calls and books meetings and appointments. The teachers were pleased with their location in the office and expressed appreciation for the assistance they received from other staff members. It was noted that other alternatives had been considered else where in the division but nothing suitable or acceptable had been identified. The division appears to be short of space at a number of its locations and unused space is at a premium. It is noted that the division has submitted various capital plans and requests for facilities over the past number of years, however the province has not identified projects for funding.

b. Special education – two positions dealing with Program Unit Funding (PUF) and Individual Program Plans (IPP) – these are providing service directly to schools, students and pre-school operators. Their location in the central office is desirable because of the proximity to associate superintendent who in charge of student services. In addition, they provide service to a number of instructional centres and being centrally located is an advantage. However, these are not fully central office positions within the generally accepted definition.

In summary, the central office is in a good location and presents a suitable office image to individuals entering the facility. Catholic symbols and materials displayed in the entry area are well done and remind those who enter of the vision and mission of the division. However, the facility is barely able to accommodate the number of staff that is located there currently in as suitable an environment as may be wished. The staff is coping with the space issues in a productive and innovative manner and is making do. At no time during the conduct of the review, did the staff located in the central office express any dissatisfaction with the facility.

CENTRAL OFFICE ORGANIZATION

Organizational Chart
(click on position to read the areas of responsibility)

- Board of Trustees
- Superintendent
  - Associate Superintendent
    - Division Special Education Teacher
  - Deputy Superintendent
    - Human Resources & Benefits Officer
    - AISI Coordinator
    - Coordinator of Curriculum & Religious Studies
    - Information Technology Manager
  - Secretary Treasurer
    - Assistant Secretary Treasurer
    - Payroll Officer
    - Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor
    - Finance & Purchasing Officer

The organizational chart that appears above has been taken from the jurisdiction webpage and reflects the current configuration of the central office. The superintendent is the chief executive officer of the board and the chief education officer of the division in accordance with provincial legislation and board policy. Board Policy 12 includes the following:

> *The Superintendent reports directly to the Corporate Board and is accountable to the Board for the conduct and operation of the Division. All Board authority delegated to staff is delegated through the Superintendent.*

The division has recently undergone a significant governance shift through the adoption of the Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) policy model which is designed to ensure that the board's will becomes a reality. The new model is based upon role clarity and accountability. The board policy handbook identifies the role and responsibilities of the board and is often referred to as the "board's rule book". The administrative procedures manual identifies those things that the superintendent is responsible for and the extent of the power that has been delegated to that position. The administrative procedures manual is often referred to as "the superintendent's rule book". The board has granted the superintendent the authority to enter into contracts of employment with staff based upon an approved template

for administrative positions. The board would approve the template for use within the division and this would govern all future contracts in the administrative area.

Table 4, page 37, identifies all of the positions based in the central office by responsibility area and notes the changes that have occurred over the past six years. It can be seen that the staffing levels at the central office have remained reasonably constant over the period with the following four new positions having been added:

- ♦ 1 full time position in facilities and operations – administrative assistant
- ♦ 1 full time position in instructional administration – human resources & benefits
- ♦ 1 full time position in AISI – coordinator
- ♦ 1 full time position in student services

As noted in Table 4, two of the positions are not truly central office positions although they may be located there. For example, the AISI coordinator position is totally funded by the provincial government through AISI project funding. AISI projects are approved and funded on three year cycles. Prior to the current cycle there were individuals that performed the responsibilities of the AISI coordinator but were not located in the central office as a specific position. The current project which began in the 2006 – 2007 school year was revised from the previous project in order to meet new division priorities and directions. As a consequence of the move to a new project and space considerations within the division, the coordinator was based in the central office. The current project is focused on assisting teachers in becoming more effective in student assessment and the coordinator's task is ensuring that the mandate of the project is met. The coordinator reports directly to and is responsible to the deputy superintendent. The coordinator does not have any support services provided through AISI funding and relies upon the office staff to provide any services that are deemed necessary.

The positions in student services report directly to the associate superintendent and are primarily responsible for the preparation of Individual Student Program Plans (IPP's), Program Unit Funding (PUF), review of claim forms and staffing. Of the two positions in the central office, one might be viewed as a central office position in that there are aspects of personnel evaluation, interviewing of learning assistants for hiring and contracting. Preparation of IPP's and PUF requests and programs is more correctly attributed to instructional activities.

The location of the above-noted positions within the central office are in fact very positive and may provide a level of efficiency and effectiveness that might otherwise not be available from another location. The proximity of the special education teachers to the associate superintendent's office is an advantage. The AISI

coordinator does receive support in the office, such as the receptionist, and is viewed as a member of the central office team.

In considering the circumstances surrounding the AISI coordinator and the student services position, the central office has in reality grown by two full-time positions over the past six years. The administrative assistant in facilities and operations and the human resources and benefits officer are new positions and have assumed duties and responsibilities previously assigned to other staff members as well as undertaking new initiatives such as the Facility Asset Management Edge (FAME) and the Automated Dispatch System (ADS). The majority of those interviewed expressed support for these initiatives and would not advocate for their elimination even as a result of some issues that have arisen as a result of implementation. However, there is a failure to recognize that as responsibilities and initiatives are located in the central office from other areas of the division, additional human resources must be provided or other existing services must be discarded. Throughout the course of the interviews held with the staff of the division, there was no consensus on which services currently being provided could, or should, be discontinued.

The growth that has perceived to have occurred within the central office is not supported by the data that has been gathered. Over the past six years, four additional positions have been located within the office, two of which are a result of specific circumstances. In consideration of the expanded activities and responsibilities that have occurred, the growth has not been excessive.

It should be noted that while support was expressed for the ADS it does appear as if some principals and teachers would like to be able to intervene if they felt there was a need, or a wish, to do so. When a division-wide system is implemented, staff must be prepared to accept both the advantages and disadvantages that result. Should the disadvantages outweigh the advantages, or staff feels that they can not be accommodated appropriately, then the system should be discontinued and the responsibility returned to the individual schools and program areas to secure their own substitute staff members.

<u>SERVICES PROVIDED AND TASKS UNDERTAKEN THROUGH THE CENTRAL OFFICE</u>

As noted in the introduction to the review, the central office is the administrative centre of the division. Its function is to ensure accountability, provide unity to the division and a sense of purpose and direction. In addition to those functions such as: board governance support, planning, monitoring and accountability, communication, faith leadership, student welfare and decision-making, there are numerous activities that are essential to ensure the smooth and effective operation of the division that must be undertaken. During interviews with staff members, when asked what services were provided by the central office, very rarely were mentioned services such as:

- My salary was calculated correctly and paid on time;

- The necessary forms such as T4 were prepared and provided;

- Benefit payments were submitted and agreed to coverage was made available;

- Purchases made at the school level were paid and accounted for;

- Requests for maintenance and information and technology are received and dealt with;

- Calls made to the office are answered directly and efficiently;

- Employment contracts completed and required information maintained on file;

- Student transportation is provided safely and within acceptable limits;

- Financial records are maintained; and

- Advertisements for staff vacancies were prepared, circulated and recruitment activities undertaken.

The above listing is just a small portion of the numerous, what might be referred to as routine, services provided by the staff of the central office. However, should these not be completed in an efficient and acceptable manner, severe repercussions would occur. However, these activities consume a significant portion of the staff time and the complexity and volume are not clearly understood by the majority of those not directly involved. For example:

- In the human resources and benefits area:

  - 429 staffing notices from the beginning of the current school year to mid January 08 (new hires, terminations, assignment changes, position changes and salary changes);

  - 1168 absences recorded and tracked for professional development activities in the 2006 – 2007 school year. With 465 recorded by the end of January in the 2007 – 2008 school year;

  - 187 transactions sent to the Alberta School Employees Benefit Plan (ASEBP). These would be new enrolments, terminations, salary changes and address changes;

  - 1162 absences logged on the ADS system;

  - The ADS system provides a direct service to schools in the securing of substitute teachers and the recording of the reasons for the absences. Should this service not be provided through the central office, then each school would be responsible for securing substitutes for staff that were absent. It is estimated that approximately .25 of a FTE staff member is consumed to operate and maintain the system;

- Employment contracts and supporting documents are maintained and pertinent information for salary determination submitted to payroll;

- Staff recruitment undertaken in accordance with division procedures and practices;

- 188 teachers are employed as well as in excess of 100 learning assistants; and

- Table 7 on page 49 identifies the total number of staff members employed within in the division as of January 31, 2008. With a total of 357 positions of which 214 are full-time, a great deal of clerical work must be undertaken just to maintain required employment practices.

♦ In the student services area:

- As noted in Table 5 on page 41, the numbers of children served in special education programs has increased dramatically over the past five years. From the 2003 – 2004 school year to the 2007 – 2008 school year, the number of children participating in special needs programs has increased from 370 to 529 or 43%. The greatest increase has occurred in the areas of greatest need, students in the coded 40 area and children qualifying for PUF. From 2003 – 2004 to the present school year, the numbers increased from 102 to 166 or 63%;

- As noted in Table 5 the number of learning assistants working with these children has increased over the same period by 28 or 40%; and

- A partnership has been entered with Alberta Mental Health, Palliser Health Region, Medicine Hat Police Service, Child and Family Services, YM/YWCA, AADAC, Parish Community, Medicine Hat Youth Action Society and Community Health entitled Mental Health Capacity Building for Children and Families. Beginning in 2008, $300,000 per year for 3 years has been allocated to introduce school-based mental health promotion/ prevention and early intervention. The establishments of such partnerships are time consuming and difficult. However, they have the potential to assist many of the difficulties faced by some of the students attending divisional schools and their families.

The purpose of selecting these two areas for the purpose of highlighting just some of the volume and complexity of the tasks undertaken is done for illustrative purposes only. It is beyond the scope of this review to provide a complete listing and explanation of all of the tasks performed in each area of the central office. Although job descriptions are not yet available for each staff member, some of these are being undertaken and should be completed in the near future. It needs to be understood that it is the responsibility of the senior management to provide job descriptions to staff which are based upon results to be achieved and not activities and processes. The must be alignment with the superintendent's job description and the goals of the

division. Written job descriptions and periodic performance evaluations of staff are essential components of an efficient and effective central office and care must be taken to ensure that these are undertaken. Staff members require feedback in order to strengthen good behaviours and for identifying areas where some changes may be necessary and providing opportunities for assistance and support.

COMPARISONS WITH OTHER ALBERTA SCHOOL JURISDICTIONS

As noted previously, it is difficult to compare jurisdictions with each other with high levels of confidence. Each jurisdiction attempts to serve the needs of its particular communities with the resources provided to it. Therefore there is great variance between what one jurisdiction deems important and what another might select. For example, all of the Catholic systems identified for comparative purposes in this review have staff within the central office devoted to religious studies. The division allocates a .5 position to this function whereas the remainder have full time positions with the exception of the Holy Family CSRD which has two.

In the case of Holy Family CSRD, the two staff members are not certificated teachers and are paid by the schools that utilize their services through the school based budgets. Holy Family CSRD is highly decentralized and instructional funds are allocated to schools to use as they deem necessary. As a matter of interest and for comparative purposes, the two positions and a brief description of their responsibilities are as follows:

Youth Ministry Coordinator

- ♦ Responsible for the development and implementation of comprehensive youth ministry
- ♦ Supports schools with celebrations to support the liturgical year
- ♦ Develop partnerships between parishes and schools

Youth Ministry Retreat Coordinator

- ♦ Plan faith development activities at the school level
- ♦ Provides retreat activities for students
- ♦ Assist with youth liturgies and support the spiritual formation of the youth in the region

In the case of Grande Prairie RCSSD, the religious education consultant is a full time central office position and reports to the assistant superintendent. The individual is a certificated teacher and is responsible to assume a leadership role in the organization, development and coordination of religious education and Christian Family Living programs within the jurisdiction. Examples of specific responsibilities are as follows:

- ♦ To provide assistance and direction to school personnel in the development of appropriate techniques and processes for instruction in the religion and Christian Family Living programs

- ♦ To provide opportunities for enhancement and development of faith community among the faculty within jurisdiction schools

- ♦ To assist in the development of an appropriate staff development program for jurisdiction personnel

- ♦ To develop strategies for ongoing program evaluation and development in religion and Christian Family Living programs

In the case of the division, the coordinator of religious studies is a half-time position and reports to the deputy superintendent. The incumbent is a certificated teacher and has had extensive teaching and administrative experience. At the time of the review, there was not a written job description. The incumbent had advised that a work plan had been prepared and had been reviewed by the superintendent at the beginning of the year. At the time of the review, the staff member had a very short time in the position and there was a very limited history upon which to assess success of the new initiatives. Some of the responsibilities of the position are as follows:

- ♦ Youth ministry – establish, develop and maintain

- ♦ Faith confirmation – 31 teachers new to the division this year

- ♦ Establish and maintain a Catholic ambiance within the schools and the division – Catholic symbols

- ♦ Identify and provide professional development activities for staff

As can be seen from the brief descriptions provided, jurisdictions provide for religious education needs in a variety of ways in order to meet local priorities. There is also a difference in the manner in which funds are allocated and used.

The public systems do not have religious education positions and are able to allocate those resources to other areas that they deem essential. In addition, jurisdictions vary significantly in terms of student numbers, geographic area served, number of trustees on the board, number of schools, transportation systems, proximity to large urban centres, range of programs, costs and so on. Therefore comparisons of jurisdictions based on numbers of staff are extremely difficult.

Based upon the information provided in Table 3 on page 35, the total number of staff designated as central office, the division is approximately mid way between the smallest and largest central office in terms of staffing. Among the five Catholic systems being compared, the division is the 2nd highest. However, there is a difference in which positions are coded to the central office and which are not. In the case of student services, both Evergreen and East Central have indicated that there

are no central office personnel assigned responsibility for this area and the division has three positions. Yet all of the systems provide special education programs and services. In fact with the exception of ECS PUF, the numbers of staff employed would reasonably approximate student numbers. The division has significantly higher numbers in the ECS PUF than the student population might indicate but these are consistent with the information provided in Table 5 on page 41.

Number of Staff Allocated to Special Education Programs 2005 – 2006*

	MHCBE FTE Cert – Un**		East Central FTE Cert – Un**		Evergreen FTE Cert –Un**	
M&M Disabilities/Gifted	10.9	1.6	8.9	2.9	13.5	3.5
ECS Program Unit PUF	1.3	19.2	0.0	1.4	1.2	5.4
Severe Disabilities	3.0	28.2	3.7	15.6	6.0	24.7

* Information from Schedule C of 2005 – 2006 AFS
**Full Time Equivalent Certificated and Uncertificated Staff

School jurisdictions also staff in order to meet the needs and priorities of the programs they are providing to students and their communities. In the case of East Central Catholic, a great deal of emphasis is placed on home schooling and distance education. This may well account for the reduced numbers of staff in the central office as the needs are in fact different. The student enrollment is just slightly greater than that of the division, but the student composition is different due to the emphasis on home schooling. East Central Catholic has the following two schools dedicated to that form of educational delivery: School of Hope and Vermilion Home Schooling.

PERCEPTIONS AS TO THE QUALITY OF SERVICES PROVIDED FROM CENTRAL OFFICE

Based upon the interviews that were held, there does not appear to be significant issues with the quality of the services provided from the central office. As noted previously in this review, individuals that are not employed by the division such as school council chairs, reported that they seldom required services from the central office. However, when requests were made these were responded to in an acceptable manner.

The responses from those individuals that were employed in the schools reported that overall the services provided are very good. Some areas noted were:

♦ Information/Technology services were rated as being very good. Response times to critical need were acceptable. Staff is available and provides appropriate guidance and support.

- ♦ Maintenance services were rated as being very good. Personnel in the maintenance department are competent and cooperative. The introduction of the FAME system has improved services and maintains adequate records.

- ♦ Special education services were also rated as being very good. The associate superintendent is available to respond to requests for information and support. For those schools that have special education programs, it was reported that for the majority of staff this was the most frequent contact with the central office.

- ♦ The division employs a receptionist to answer and direct telephone calls and greet visitors to the office. A number of individuals noted that this was a significantly better arrangement that the automated systems employed by other agencies.

- ♦ Staffing, payroll, accounts are all dealt with in a satisfactory manner and no issues were raised.

On balance, those respondents that were interviewed spoke very well of the central office and the services that were available. It was recognized that resources are scarce and that more needed to be done in areas of maintenance and technology. However, critical needs are met and the essentials are being addressed.

CULTURE AND MORALE IN THE CENTRAL OFFICE

From on-site observations, staff member interviews, and repeated requests for information for the review, it is evident that the staff of the central office is committed to service, enjoy and support each other. Morale is viewed as being very high.

On the survey form that was used to guide the interviews of central office staff members, one of the items posed the following question:

> 15. *What is the best part of working here?*

A number of the responses dealt with the relationships in the office and the sense of team as the best part of working in the central office. Some of the responses were:

> *Recognition – feel appreciated – supported – happy place – people here talk to each other – positive environment and interaction.*

It was reported that staff members do get together and participate in various activities such as:

- ♦ Shopping trips and girl's night out
- ♦ Sharing and preparation of food – pancakes (Shrove Tuesday)

- ♦ Christmas – sharing a variety of "goodies"
- ♦ Donations for family in community at Christmas

The daily prayer at the front of the office at around 9:00 am appears to be a unifying activity. All staff members participate if able, whether Catholic or not, and view it in a very positive perspective. Faith plays an important role in the central office and among the staff. It acts as a bond between and among staff members. The fact that the daily prayer is done in a very public way serves to visually portray the sense of group and community and strengthens the ties between the membership.

An effort was made to determine the extent of the "we – they" dichotomy that was reported to exist within the division regarding the relationships between the central office and the schools within the division. All those that were interviewed were asked if they were aware of the view held by some individuals that the central office was over staffed and not very productive or efficient. The vast majority stated that they were indeed aware of the accusations and perceptions concerning the central office. However, not all those interviewed stated they agreed with the negative views being expressed by some members of the community and in some cases strongly disagreed. But there were a number that did and were willing to provide some examples of actions, events and perceptions that caused them to feel the way they did. In some cases, examples and "stories" were repeated by more than one individual which indicates that they are either part of, or becoming part of, the culture. While the substance of the incidents or events may not be substantive and in many cases are not, the impact that these have on the organization is not positive. While the staff of the central office are not pleased with the negative perceptions that are being expressed by some individuals about what is happening in the office, they have continued to take pride in the work they do, support each other and have distanced themselves from the negativism that appears to exist in a number of areas.

The *McCoy High School Review* that was undertaken in the spring of 2006 made some references to tensions between the staff of the school and the board and senior administrative staff. Some of the comments contained in the review report referring to this area are as follows:

> *"Relations between school staff and senior administration must be improved"*
>
> *"…that the administration team is away from the building too frequently"*
>
> *"Distrust and animosity between teachers, senior administration and the board"*
>
> *"…relationships between the school and the school district officials – deteriorated because of "past events"*

It would appear as if some of these concerns are still negatively impacting on the environment of the division at this time. Issues such as those noted above take time and significant commitment to overcome.

Some of the issues surrounding the reported antagonism between the division support staff and those in the central office appears to emanate in part from the fact that there is a Support Staff Handbook: Non-Teaching Staff Handbook School-Based and there is not a similar document for the staff in the central office. The Support Staff Handbook is an excellent document and contains items such as:

    a. General Statement of Faith

    b. Employee Commencement & Payroll

    c. Salary

    d. Vacation and Leaves

    e. Professional Development

    f. Job Descriptions

Therefore a great deal is known about the school-based support staff from salaries, to job descriptions, to hours of work. The same can not be said for those that work in the central office. In the absence of such public information, there is fertile ground for the germination of rumors and hearsay allegations for those that wish to cultivate it. Greater transparency is necessary in terms of how appointments are made and salaries determined.

From observing the central office staff, examining some of the documents and reports, and the interviews that were held, it appears as if many of the staff are finding the work loads very burdensome. There is a lot to do and demands on time and resources continue to increase. An area that was noted as being under stress was the whole human resources area. With a small office, there are limited opportunities for staff to fill in for each other, in cases of illness or vacation periods. The expectations and demands on the office are not the same as they were five or six years ago. For example:

- The introduction of the ADS has consumed a great of time. Not only must the software be mastered, the amount of time to utilize it is significant. The current staff member is essentially "on call" from early in the morning to late in the evening. This issue needs to be dealt with and addressed;

- The coordinator of curriculum/religious studies does not have any designated clerical support and must be self reliant in this area. The position was newly created at the beginning of the current school year and other than the incumbent, no additional resources were committed to support the position;

- The information and technology area does not have any designated clerical support and the two managers must deal with those demands directly. The growth in the need for services due to the increased use of technology has not

seen a corresponding increase in resources. Staff members in this area have been unable to access the vacation time they are entitled to;

♦ The FAME system has been introduced into the facilities and operations area and requires staff to become familiar with its use;

♦ Staffing has become more complex and the need to have school-based administrators involved necessitates a lengthy and complex process. The division has provided a "Sequence of Hiring" which outlines the many steps necessary to select a new employee. This document is attached as Appendix 4 on page 53 to this review for information purposes only; and

♦ Changes in the community and nature of many of the students and families served by the division have made it necessary for staff to deal with a number of crisis situation. Staff needs to be prepared and have access to training and support. The division has provided a Crisis Response Process and an excellent Threat Assessment Handbook.

In addition to the increasing demands and needs from the division itself, there have been increased requirements from Alberta Education and other branches of the provincial government for information and reporting. For example:

♦ A the beginning of the current school year the division was required to provide verification of special education coding for the purpose of establishing the jurisdiction profile. A great deal of work was required to ensure that the division submitted correct information in order secure the necessary funds to provide a high level of service to students in need.

♦ Privacy issues are becoming a major concern for all levels of government. In today's technological environment where information is constantly being shared through a multitude of devices such as cell phones, blackberries, memory sticks and other off site uses of information, security is becoming a significant issue. The division must be prepared to deal appropriately with confidential information, external controls, cyber security and managing threats.

♦ Demands are being placed on boards to improvement financial management. The 2005-2006 Auditor General's report provided specific advice on how to improve the financial management of school boards. One strongly recommended suggestion was the creation and use of "board audit committees". A number of boards have already established such audit committees and it is anticipated that these will become common through out the province.

♦ Freedom of Information and Privacy Act (FOIP), although not new having been passed in 1994, has placed significant limitations on schools and boards in terms of what can be shared. Each board must by bylaw designate a "head" and other staff to ensure the legislation is adhered to.

♦ Changes in provincial funding requirements have increased the complexity of grant applications. A good example would be introduction of Credit Enrollment Units (CEU) to determine the amount of funding provided at the high school level. Another would be the class size initiative which was introduced in 2004 and is targeted funding requiring increased levels of reporting and reporting.

♦ The introduction of the notion of Public Private Partnerships (P3) has added a new dimension to the acquisition of capital facilities.

♦ The level of reporting has increased placing additional pressure on division staff. Examples would be:

  – Accountability Pillar Reports – designed to assess school jurisdiction performance on a common set of measures

  – Education Results Reports

  – Three-Year Plans

  – Increase in number of budget submissions

  – Reporting of school generated funds

♦ Staff needs to become increasingly familiar with a number of provincial and federal requirements that determine what can and can not be done in the work place. Examples would be:

  – Employment Standards Code – the rights and obligations of employers and employees

  – Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Act

  – Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) – although the legislation was enacted in 1988, changes to materials used in the schools and workplaces continue to place a burden on staff to continually be aware of the consequences

COMMUNICATION NETWORKS WITHIN THE DIVISION

An excellent communication network has been established throughout the division through which staff, parents and community members are informed and made aware of the mission, goals and mandate as well information on events, programs and directions the division is taking. Examples are:

  a. The division web site;

    The division web site is very well done and provides a single access point to all of the pertinent information about the division. It is extremely well organized and user friendly. The fact that the website is kept up to date

and current is extremely important and increases its value as a communication tool.

b. Central office staff meetings;

The central office holds weekly staff meetings. The meetings are short, begin with a recognition of positive actions undertaken by staff, and a discussion and sharing of information about priorities and activities being undertaken in the office. Everyone in the central office participates and is kept current. Minutes of the meetings are maintained and kept on file in the central office.

c. Division leadership team meetings;

The division leadership team meets twice a month. One meeting is dedicated to professional development activities and the other to what might be deemed as the "business meeting". Meetings are held at the central office and involve the school and central office administration. Minutes are kept, copies are circulated and a copy kept on file at the central office.

d. Beginning of the year publication;

The brochure, Zooming in on Our School Community, which is prepared at the beginning of the school year and distributed to everyone in the mailing area, is an excellent communication tool. The document is prepared from the central office and contains a wide range of information from the mission of the division to transportation of students. The document is colourful, user friendly and very well done. It contains all of the information a parent, or other community member, would require. It is printed commercially and circulated by means of the postal system.

e. Town-Hall Meetings

The board has arranged two town-hall meetings for this year with the first to be held in February. This is a new initiative undertaken by the board and appears to be well received.

f. Professional development activities are supported and encouraged in order that staff are kept current, supported and provided with the competencies necessary to provide an excellent education to the students being served in the division. As noted on page 11 of this review, 1168 absences were recorded and tracked for professional development activities in the 2006-2007 school year. Considering the size of the staff, this is a significant commitment.

g. There is significant face to face contact. The division is a small compact jurisdiction and staff is not separated by distance. A call to the office brings about a response within a short time.

LEVEL OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT ON PROVINCIAL EXAMINATIONS

Student achievement must be a consideration in the assessment of the central office of a school jurisdiction. The one and only purpose for the existence of any school jurisdiction is to ensure that students learn. Unfortunately within the mandate of this review, this area can not be given the attention necessary to adequately assess levels of student achievement within the division. However, there are some observations that can be drawn from the data that is available from both the provincial achievement and diploma examinations.

Table 6 on page 44 provides a through analysis of the student results on provincial achievement and diploma tests. The data provided shows that overall the division is doing quite well on the provincial examinations on a number of the measures. However, there are some areas that require attention:

a. The grade nine students have consistently not met expectations on the Provincial Achievement Examinations (PAT's). In some cases have been quite a bit below and a review should be undertaken to determine why this should be the case. It may be that certain portions of the programs may be missed, however that needs to be determined.

b. Results on the provincial diploma examinations over a five-year trend line illustrated in Table 6 on page 44 are a reason for concern. A number of subject areas are not at the levels that would be expected particularly at the Standard of Excellence level.

The Accountability Pillar Results for Zone 6 as of October 2007 showed that division diploma examination results were amongst the lowest in the zone. Of the 11 jurisdictions being compared, the division was the 2nd lowest on the Acceptable Standard for diploma exams. On the standard of excellence the division was last and last by a significant margin. The results for the division on the achievement examinations were significantly higher than results on diploma exams.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The division has a great many accomplishments and can be justifiably proud of its record in providing a quality education to the students that have chosen to attend its schools.

The purpose of the review was to examine the central office of the division and provide recommendations that would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of any areas requiring remediation. In keeping with the purpose of the review, it is recommended that:

a. Written job descriptions be prepared for all central office staff, kept on file, and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure currency.

b. Regular performance reviews be undertaken, documented and records maintained in the appropriate personnel files. In a small office, such as that of the division, this is an area that is often not given the attention it requires.

c. A Non-Teaching Handbook be prepared for those staff members employed in the central office. There is significant misunderstanding within the division regarding the role and responsibilities of those staff members in the central office and this needs to be dealt with. The absence of written job descriptions fosters a lack of understanding and incorrect perceptions.

d. Before new positions or tasks are assigned to the central office, a careful review of the implications be thoroughly undertaken. For example:

   i. The position of coordinator of curriculum & religious studies was created and placed in the central office without consideration of the necessary supports required.

   ii. The adoption of the ADS system without a full understanding of the time requirements and staffing needs.

e. A study of the staff workloads be undertaken. During the course of the review the human resources, payroll and benefits were often noted as areas under pressure. The demands of the ADS on the staff member involved have already been noted as an area of concern.

f. Some additional attention be given to explaining the depth and breadth of the special education programs being provided within the division and the impact that these have on the system. As noted in Table 5, there is significant range of programs and staff involved across the division. The implications need to be understood and the level of support determined.

g. An effort be made to communicate the role and function of the central office across the division.

h. A review be undertaken to determine if there are functions that could be reduced or eliminated without affecting the quality of service significantly.

SUMMARY

The number of staff to be employed within the division is a direct responsibility of the board acting in compliance with provincial requirements and the need to manage the affairs of the division in an efficient and effective manner. In addition to those staff members that require a teaching certificate to fulfill their responsibilities in the classroom, provincial legislation requires that a board employ a number of non-teaching staff members to conduct the operations of the division. A board must employ a superintendent of schools who is to be the chief executive officer of the board and the chief education officer of the division. In addition the board must appoint a secretary and a treasurer, or one individual to hold both positions and be the secretary-treasurer of the division. All other positions are determined by the superintendent within the delegation authority provided by the board and the boundaries of the approved budget.

As noted in a number of areas throughout the review, staffing levels and assignments are the responsibility of the board and its chief executive officer. These decisions determine the number of staff, the expenditure levels and the manner in which the business of the division is conducted. In reviewing the manner in which various jurisdictions provide for the delivery of religious education are described on pages 13 and 14 of this review, the impact of local decision-making is very evident. For example, the Holy Family CSRD has chosen to use the services of non-certificated personnel to provide the necessary leadership in the religious education area. In addition the costs are borne directly by the schools through their school based budgets. In this way, the schools are aware of the costs of the services they are receiving and have committed to paying for them. By using non-certificated staff, the per unit costs are reduced. However, it needs to be understood that non-certificated staff can not provide the same range of interactions as certificated staff can and do. The division has chosen to utilize the services of a certificated staff member with significant experience and training on a half-time basis and placed in the central office. This decision impacts significantly on the quality and quantity of the service, its cost and transparency to the schools.

In reviewing the structure of the central office of the division, the range of services provided, comparisons with other similar jurisdictions and growth over the past six years, it would appear as if the staffing has been well managed. The number of staff employed in the office is not significantly different from other similar sized jurisdictions in the province. An examination of the number of positions in the central office shows that it is small office and the functions being fulfilled are what would be normally expected and required. For example:

Instructional Administration

    a. Superintendent of schools – required by provincial legislation and is the chief executive officer of the board and chief educational officer of the division. In addition to the duties assigned to the position by the board there are also duties and responsibilities defined in legislation.

    b. Deputy superintendent – support for the superintendent. Responsible for staffing, AISI, division achievement, technology and evaluation.

    c. Executive assistant to the superintendent – acts as board and superintendent secretary, supervisory-office manager, communications, projects, FOIPP Coordinator and records management.

    d. Receptionist – in addition to telephone and visitor enquires – other duties include: mail distribution, print room maintenance, postage machine, filing, staff lists, and receivables and deposits.

    e. Human resources and benefits – ADS, Benefits – Alberta Health Care, ASEBP, ATRF, LAPP, Health Spending, recruitment and activities related to contracts.

Business Administration

    a. Secretary-treasurer – required by provincial legislation. In addition to duties assigned by the superintendent there are legislated responsibilities. Major areas of responsibility are financial, facilities and transportation management

    b. Executive secretary to the secretary-treasurer (.8 position) – student transportation takes up about 1/3 of the position, back up to receptionist, support to secretary-treasurer

    c. Assistant secretary-treasurer – vacant at the time of the review

    d. Finance and purchasing officer – job description is self evident – VISA, accounts payable, purchasing – will do tendering, 3rd party billing, journal entries

    e. Payroll officer – job description self evident, does payroll, budget assistance

Student Services

    a. Associate superintendent – in charge of programming and student services, attendance officer

    b. Special education assistant – began the position in September of 07 and just becoming familiar with the role – acts as support to associate superintendent – PUF applications, budgets

    c.   Special education teacher – develop IPPs for preschool children, oversee private occupational therapy contracts, pre school screening, evaluate learning assistants

The purpose of listing the administrative positions and providing a very brief description of the job responsibilities is to point out that the number of staff is very small and assigned to complete generally accepted tasks. In an organization which has a budget of in excess of $27,000,000 and a staff of 357, of which 214 are full-time, one would expect to have staff assigned to payroll, purchasing, paying accounts, human resources, evaluation, receptionist and communications. Excluding student services which provide services to students, the business affairs of the division are conducted by less than 10 positions.

The student services area in the division places significant demands on the system. As noted in Table 5 on page 41, the number of special education programs has grown substantially over the past nine years. For example, the number of PUF children has grown from 11 in 1999-2000 to 82 in 2007-2008. The number of Code 40 students has grown from 11 to 84 over the same period. The number of learning assistants has grown from 67 in 2002-2003 to 99 in 2007-2008. The majority of learning assistants are part-time and uncertificated. Placing all of these individuals into the human resources and payroll areas has added significantly to work load of those individuals responsible. The recruitment of qualified individuals to fill the positions has also contributed to the work of both the central office and school based staff. Mention has also been made on page 12 of the partnership entered into a variety of community agencies known as *Mental Health Capacity Building for Children and Families*. While the partnership is bringing into the division $300,000 a year for three years, there is a great deal of work to be done by those in the central office to accommodate the project. The student services area has been referred to by some as a "Cadillac System". While this may in fact be so, it may be preferable to having one that is not. However, the implications need to be understood and supported if this is the direction the division wishes to travel.

TABLE 1 – STUDENT ENROLMENT OVER TIME

From 2001-02 to 2007-08, the division's enrolment increased by 290 students but has held very steady over the last three years even though there has been considerable population growth in Medicine Hat. This growth has not resulted in significant increased student populations in either the public or Catholic systems. However, the Catholic system has experienced greater student growth and holding power than the public system for the period for which data has been gathered. The student population growth in the division has been at an average of 2% per year. In drawing conclusions from the data comparing the two jurisdictions in Medicine Hat, it must be kept in mind that the geographic boundaries of each are not identical. The division includes the communities of Bow Island, Redcliff and Dunmore as well as some of the rural area surrounding each community whereas the public district does not.

City of Medicine Hat

Total Population	2001 = 51,249*
	2006 = 56, 997*
Percentage Growth	11.2%*
Provincial % Growth	10.6%*
% of Population Catholic	2001 = 27.8%*

Statistics Canada Census Data

Student Population

School Year	Medicine Hat Catholic*	Medicine Hat Public**
2001-02	2,521	6,443
2002-03	2,545	6,446
2003-04	2,610	6,133
2004-05	2,769	6,152
2005-06	2,818	6,349
2006-07	2,811	6,400

Provided by the jurisdiction
*** Annual Education Results Report MHSD*

TABLE 2 – BOARD AND SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION FINANCIAL DATA

1. Board & System Administration Costs Over Time:

Year	Division Budget	Board and System Allowable**	Board Share of Costs	Surplus/ (Deficit)	Allowed % *
2001-02	$18,086,344	$924,693	$80,708	$80,940	4.67%
2002-03	$19,728,124	$1,010,181	$87,656	$124,868	4.45%
2003-04	$20,410,578	$1,027,425	$88,354	$43,011	4.82%
2004-05	$21,822,533	$1,237,338	$96,543	$79,305	5.27%
2005-06	$23,882,575	$1,189,713	$93,906	$147,711	4.98%
2006- 07	$26,414,171	$1,359,203	$105,500	$128,347	5.66%

*   *Administration Cap Set by Alberta Education as a percentage of total provincial revenue*
** *The total allowable administration cap of the administration expenditures of the division including the board*
Financial data was obtained from jurisdiction audited financial statements

Surplus funds from the board and system administration allocation are transferred to other areas of the budget.

It is difficult to compare the cost of board and system administration from school jurisdiction to jurisdiction with absolute certainty. Although Alberta Education attempts to provide jurisdictions with guidance and direction in coding expenditures to this area through the *Program Accounting and Reporting Manual (PAR)*, some considerable latitude is available to board personnel in order to meet jurisdictional requirements. The PAR Manual provides the following information;

Definition – Board Governance/System Administration

The provision of system-wide activities for the purpose of general regulation and direction of the affairs of the school jurisdiction. Costs included are those relating directly to the administration of jurisdiction, its Board, Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers and their respective staffs, including supplies and capital for administrative equipment and facilities.

BOARD GOVERNANCE

Activities related to the work of the elected body responsible for all activities within the jurisdiction. All payments to trustees and for expenses incurred by the elected body for such things as travel, membership fees and school board elections.

EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION (OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT)

Activities related to overall jurisdiction educational leadership and administration that include those performed by the Superintendent of schools and such assistants as Deputy, Associate and Assistant Superintendents.

Activities associated with educational administration include:
♦ *System level planning;*
♦ *Instructional staffing allocations (human resource planning, and implementation;*
♦ *New programming;*
♦ *Monitoring and evaluation of programs;*
♦ *Monitoring and evaluation of schools;*
♦ *Monitoring and evaluation of the system; and*
♦ *Supervision and evaluation of principals and staff.*

Activities performed by assistants such as Deputy, Associate and Assistant Superintendents that are not an extension of the duties and functions of the Chief Superintendent may be allocated to System Instructional Support.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER)

Activities related to the business and financial operations of the school system at the jurisdictional level, performed by the Secretary-Treasurer and related business/finance support staff including:
♦ *Budgeting;*
♦ *Financial accounting including accounts payable and receivable, payroll and internal and external audits(may exclude School Generated Funds audits);*
♦ *Legal services;*
♦ *Liability insurance related to the proportion of central office personnel;*
♦ *Property insurance for the administration facility; and*
♦ *Activities related to the Corporate Secretary and Corporate Treasurer.*

GENERAL SERVICES MANAGEMENT

Activities related to central support services including:
♦ *Human Resources – Personnel planning, employment and development on behalf of the school system as a whole;*
♦ *Central Purchasing – Purchasing of services, contracts and supplies on behalf of the school system and with the approval of department managers;*
♦ *Facilities Planning and Development – the entire planning, development and construction cycle for capital building projects carried out by central office; and*

♦ *Communications, Public Relations and Marketing – Costs associated with system-wide communications and marketing activities.*

2. Dischool Jurisdictions Used For Comparison Purposes

Clearview School Division –	closest in enrolment, rural setting – 7 trustees
St. Thomas Aquinas RCSSD –	similar enrolment, urban/rural mix – 9 trustees
East Central Alta CSSRD –	similar enrolment, urban/rural mix – 8 trustees
Aspen View Regional Division –	similar enrolment, rural setting – 9 trustees
Evergreen CSSD –	larger enrolment, comparable in urban and rural – 8 trustees
Holy Family CSRD –	smaller enrolment, mixture of urban and rural – large geographic area – 10 trustees
Prairie Rose Regional Division –	close geographically, larger enrolment and area – 7 trustees
Grande Prairie RCSSD –	most similar – large urban centre and rural, larger enrolment – 7 trustees
Medicine Hat SD –	share student population, share major urban setting, larger enrolment – 5 trustees

3. Cost of Board of Trustees Operations (Remuneration/Expenses)

Board	MHCBE	Clearview	St Thomas Aquinas	East Central	Aspen View
Enrol.	2811	2648	2487	3000	3312
2003-04	$88,354	$103,609	$93,528	$63,877	$206,206
2004-05	$96,543	$145,802	$107,510	$84,409	$198,324
2005-06	$93,906	$147,951	$105,690	$81,343	$213,640
2006-07	$105,500	$148,785	$134,887	$77,790	$220,523

Board	Evergreen	Holy Family	Prairie Rose	G.P. Catholic	MHSD
Enrol.	3309	2195	3275	3800	6342
2003-04	$96,455	$105,303	$167,649	$164,871	$111,317
2004-05	$126,920	$115,876	$161,307	$150,150	$134,860
2005-06	$121,844	$113,094	$172,365	$138,342	$129,283
2006-07	$123,056	$114,205	$183,029	$141,988	$130,046

The amounts shown above reflect the total cost of the elected trustees of the board and do not include costs associated with any other staff members.

The total expenditures include both the total remuneration and expenses for all trustees on the board. As noted in 2 above, the number of trustees on the board of each of the jurisdictions being used for comparison purposes varies significantly as does the geographic area they are required to serve in order to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Therefore exact comparisons are difficult to

make. It is apparent that the Medicine Hat Catholic board is certainly not amongst the highest in terms of total cost. A good comparator for Medicine Hat Catholic would be Medicine Hat School District as both occupy essentially the same geographic area and have the same number of trustees. Although the student population served by the Medicine Hat School District is greater than that served by the Medicine Hat Catholic Regional Division, it is apparent from the information provided in table above, that student population is not an indicator of trustee expenditures.

From the information provided in the table above, it is noted that total trustee costs of the division have been lower over each of the past 4 school years than any of the other jurisdictions being used for comparison purposes with the exception of East Central Alberta CSSRD. In discussions with the administration of East Central Alberta CSSRD, it was indicated that the board is very careful about expenditures of the board and that they tend not to have many meetings which may explain the level of expenditures incurred.

4. Divisional Financial History and Position

	2002 - 03	2003 - 04	2004 - 05	2005 - 06	2006 -07
Revenue	19,511,277	19,880,515	22,258,739	24,213,650	26,414,171
Surplus/Deficit	(216,847)	(530,061)	436,206	331,075	132,372
Operating Reserves	279,043	47,650	407,082	513,679	451,584
Accumulated Surplus	587,851	61,781	505,925	620,534	622,300

Information obtained from the audited financial statements of the division.

The division incurred deficits in each of the 2002 – 03 and 2003 – 04 school years. Although the deficits were not sufficient to immediately jeopardize the financial health of the division, they would have done so had they continued for another year. The division was able to utilize reserves and accumulated surplus that it had accumulated to cope with the deficits. However, it can be seen that at the end of the 2003 – 04 school year, the operating reserve and accumulated surplus had been significantly reduced.

The current total accumulated surplus represents approximately 2.36% of the total 2006 – 2007 school year revenue which is just slightly less than Alberta Education's unofficial guideline. School boards are encouraged to have 2.5% of their expenses set aside to deal with unforeseen expenses or sufficient to fund approximately 5 school days of operation. Any balance less than 2.5% will begin to trigger the department's financial health monitoring.

The division has not established capital reserves and has maintained its surplus dollars as operating reserves.

5. Comparison of Central Office Costs

An effort was made to attempt to compare the costs of operating the central offices of the boards selected for comparison purposes over a five-year period. However, it was not possible to make any valid comparisons because boards changed personnel, changed titles, eliminated and then added positions. Often, certain positions were charged to other budget areas so that they would not appear in administration. From the comparisons that were attempted there is little in the evidence to suggest that the division central office costs and compensation rates are out of line with the rest of the province and with boards of similar size. These reflect the same growth pattern as evidenced by similar sized boards and the growth patterns closely reflect what was happening in the other parts of the province at the same time.

However it was possible to obtain sufficient information to compare the total salaries of the individuals in certain components of the central office over a seven year period. This type of comparison would provide some evidence of the changes in the cost and would also reflect the changes that occurred in the number of staff.

TOTAL SALARIES PAID IN VARIOUS RESPONSIBILITY AREAS*

Responsibility Centre	01 - 02	02 - 03	03 - 04	04 - 05	05 -06	06 - 07	07 – 08***
Instructional Admin	263,176	281,518	310,036	310,573	355,584	369,064	382,211
Business Admin	227,787	240,606	234,049	240,035	247,835	253,863	268,494
TOTAL ADMIN	**490,963**	**522,124**	**544,085**	**550,608**	**603,419**	**622,927**	**650,705**
Student Services	143,596	188,262	184,865	153,803	162,894	216,702	222,052
Other Central Office**	395,592	415,598	427,759	437,042	446,278	465,114	531,074
TOTAL OTHER	**539,188**	**603,860**	**612,624**	**590,845**	**609,172**	**681,816**	**753,126**
GRAND TOTAL	**1,030,151**	**1,125,984**	**1,156,709**	**1,141,453**	**1,212,591**	**1,304,743**	**1,403,831**

*   *Information supplied by jurisdiction*
** Does *not include AISI or St. Gabriel Cyber School but does include Curriculum/Religious Studies, Maintenance and Technology.*
***Estimated as of beginning of school year

For 2007-2008, the following positions in each of the responsibility centres were included in the above calculations:

Instructional Admin.
    Superintendent
    Executive Assistant
    Receptionist
    Deputy Superintendent
    Human Resources & Benefits Officer

Business Admin.
    Secretary – Treasurer
    Executive Secretary .8 FTE
    Assistant Secretary – Treasurer .5 FTE
    Payroll Officer
    Finance & Purchasing Officer

Student Services
    Associate Superintendent
    Administrative Assistant
    Special Education Teacher

Central Office Other
    Coordinator of Curriculum/Religious Studies
    Maintenance Supervisor
    Administrative Assistant
    Maintenance Journeyman
    Maintenance Journeyman
    General Maintenance
    Custodian .6 FTE
    Information Technology Manager
    Technology Support Analyst

It can be seen from the information provided above that the total salaries paid to individuals in all of the noted responsibility areas increased by $373,680, or about 36%, over the seven year period. Using a simply calculated straight yearly average, this would be approximately 6% per year. However, while the simple calculated average is sufficient to give a rough analysis of the increase, it does not reflect exactly the annual percentage increases. Using a year by year calculation, one can see that the increases were not equal. For example:

Fiscal Year	Actual $ Change	Percentage Change
01/02 – 02/03	95,833	9.3%
02/03 – 03/04	30,725	2.7%
03/04 – 04/05	(15,256)	(1.3%)
04/05 – 05/06	71,138	6.2%
05/06 – 06/07	92,152	7.6%
06/07 – 07/08	99,088	7.5%

Using the information included in heading .4 above, during the period 2002-2003 to 2006-2007, the total revenue of the division increased as follows:

Fiscal Year	Total Revenue	$ Change	% Change
02/03	19,511,277		
03/04	19,880,515	369,238	1.89
04/05	22,258,739	2,378,224	11.96
05/06	24,213,650	1,954,911	8.78
06/07	26,414,171	2,200,521	9.08

Information is not available on the total revenue for the division in the 2007-2008 fiscal period as that is the current school year and the figures noted above are year end and were obtained from the audited financial statements. However, for the years for which information is available, it can be seen that increases to the total salaries in the central office were less than the total growth in revenue for the division. Based upon the data provided, care must be taken in reaching any other types of conclusion.

TABLE 3 – CENTRAL OFFICE STAFFING LEVELS COMPARISON 2007/08

Board	MHCBE	Clearview	St.Thomas Aquinas	East Central	Aspen View
Enrolment	2811	2648	2487	3000	3312
Office of the Superintendent	5	3	4	3	4
Business Administration	4.3	6	5	5	6
Student Services	3	2	1		1
Technology	2	4	4	1	3
AISI	1	1	1	1	1
Religious * Education	.5		1	1	
FNMI					
Curriculum * Development	.5				
Total Positions	16.3	16	16	11	15

* *position is ½ religious education and ½ curriculum development and duties are performed by the same staff member*

Board	Evergreen	Holy Family	Prairie Rose	G. P. Catholic	MHSD
Enrolment	3309	2195	3275	3800	6342
Office of the Superintendent	4	5	6	5	7
Business Administration	4	7	7	8	7
Student Services		1	3	2	4
Technology	4	1	4	3	7
AISI	1	1	2	2	1
Religious Education	1	2*		1	
FNMI		1			1
Curriculum Development					
Total Positions	14	18	22	21	27

* *the staff members noted above are not certificated teachers*

It should be noted that each of the Catholic jurisdictions has a staff member assigned to religious education responsibilities. The Medicine Hat Catholic Separate Regional Division has assigned responsibilities in this area to a .5 position whereas the remainder has one full time position with the exception of Holy Family which has two full time positions. However in the case of Holy Family these staff members are not certificated teachers and therefore comparison with other jurisdictions that have certificated staff is difficult.

Maintenance personnel have not been included as central office personnel in any of the jurisdictions used for comparison purposes.

It is difficult to compare the number of positions in each of the central offices without a detailed and careful analysis of each individual job description and an examination of services which are purchased or contracted. An example of the difficulty in comparisons is in the technology area which illustrates a significant range in the number of staff members located in the central office for this function. The number of staff assigned to this function ranges from a high of seven to a low of one.

It is also difficult to compare the number of staff positions in each functional area as each jurisdiction codes positions differently. For example, in the majority of jurisdictions, the receptionist and staff involved in human resources functions would be coded to business services and not instructional services. In the case of the division, the receptionist and human resources & benefits is charged to instructional administration.

TABLE 4 – CHANGES IN CENTRAL OFFICE POSITIONS OVER PAST SIX YEARS

1. Office of the Superintendent

   2001-02 – 4 positions:
   - Superintendent
   - Deputy superintendent
   - Executive assistant
   - Receptionist

   2005-06 – increased to 5 positions:
   - Human resources & benefits officer added. This was a support position with commensurate salary and reporting to the superintendent and then later transferred to the deputy superintendent

   2007-08 – no change
   - The same 5 positions in place at this time the net increase in 6 years was 1.0 FTE in the position of human resources & benefits officer

2. Business Administration

   2001-02 – 4.5 positions:
   - Secretary-treasurer
   - Assistant secretary-treasurer
   - Executive secretary position
   - .5 accounts payable officer
   - Payroll/benefits coordinator

   2003-04 – 4.3 positions:
   - Assistant secretary- treasurer reduced to .5 position
   - Executive secretary increased to .8 position

   2005-06 – 4.3 positions:
   - Payroll/benefits coordinator was changed to payroll officer designation– normal annual salary increase followed.

   2007-08- There are still 4.3 positions in place. The net difference over time was a reduction of .2 FTE which resulted from the assistant secretary treasurer being reduced to .5 FTE, the executive secretary increasing by .3 FTE. Recruitment is currently underway for a full time assistant secretary-treasurer.

3. <u>Student Services</u>

   2001-02 – 2 positions:
   – Special education coordinator
   – Speech pathologist

   2002-03 – 2.5 positions:
   – Special ed. admin. assistant added .5

   2003-04 – 2.8 positions:
   – Special ed. admin. assistant increased to .8

   2004-05 – 2.4 positions:
   – Speech pathologist was replaced by .6 special ed. teacher.

   2005-06 – 2.4 positions:
   – Special ed. coordinator was replaced by director of special
     education - designation change

   2006-07 – 2.8 positions:
   – Special ed. teacher increased to 1.0
   – Director of special education position changed to associate
     superintendent of student services – designation change and
     commensurate increase in salary

   2007-08 – 3.0 positions:
   – Special ed. admin. assistant was increased to 1.0

The net change for student services was an increase of 1.0 FTE over this time
period. The psychologist position was eliminated, an admin. assistant position was
created and gradually evolved from .5 to .8 and finally to 1.0 FTE. The position of
special education coordinator became the special education director and then the
associate superintendent of student services. The change in the position
designated special education coordinator, to special education director, and then
to associate superintendent of student services brought about more than a change
in titles. The position was given a commensurate increase in salary.

4. <u>Religious Education</u>

   2001-02 – 1 position:
   - Director of religious education

   2005-06 - .5 position:
   - Director of religious education reduced to .5 with the remainder to be assigned to a school

   2007-08 – 1.0 position:
   - Title changed to coordinator of curriculum/religious studies and increased to 1.0. However in reality there was no increase in total staff as the previous incumbent was in essence full time.

   The net change is 0.0 as there is still 1 position although the position now has responsibilities outside of the religious education area as well.

5. <u>Information/Technology</u>

   2001-02 – 2 positions:
   - Information technology manager
   - Technology support analyst

   2007-08 – 2 positions

   The net change is 0.0 which does not represent an increase even though the technical demands of the system are far greater than they were in 2001-02. While there are some contracts given out for specific tasks, this area is under a great deal of pressure due to increasing demand.

6. <u>Facilities and Operations</u>

   2001-02 – 1 position
   - Facilities & operations supervisor – there were 3 staff members reporting to the supervisor:
     - Carpenter
     - Electrician
     - Maintenance – general

   2005-06 – 2 positions
   - Facilities & operations supervisor
   - Facilities & operations administrative assistant – newly created position

2007-08 – 2 positions

The net change is 1.0 – the creation of the facilities & operations administrative assistant is an increase of 1 full time position. The other 3 staff members continue to be employed:
- Carpenter
- Electrician
- Maintenance – general

7. AISI Coordinator

2005–06– 1 position

Prior to this AISI cycle there was an AISI Coordinator, but the incumbent was not located in the central office as the role and project was different. While this is not a new position in the division, it is a new position in the office. The position is fully supported by the provincial government through AISI funding.

Over the period 2001 – 2002 to 2007 – 2008, the number of positions added to the central office was 4. These were:

- 1 full time new position in facilities and operations - administrative assistant
- 1 full time new position in instructional administration – human resources & benefits officer
- 1 full time new position in AISI – new position to the office within the current AISI cycle and fully funded through the AISI Project
- 1 full time position in student services – however, this is in total as some of the staff are not full time

However as noted above, the AISI Coordinator presents a special case and while located in the central office the position is totally funded through AISI project funding. The position was included in central office of the division as all of the jurisdictions used as comparators included the AISI Coordinator as a component of the central office. However, in the case of the division, this position had been located elsewhere and given different responsibilities in the previous AISI cycle.

TABLE 5 – STUDENT PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS/ BREADTH OF PROGRAM

1. Full-Time Kindergarten was introduced two years ago in a reaction to Medicine Hat Public SD 76 having the program. There had been an exodus of kindergarten students to the public system the previous year. The province has not changed the funding formula as recommended by the Alberta Commission on Learning so funding remains at half-time. Similar to what other boards offering this program do, the division uses funds from the Instruction envelope to cover the additional costs. Any discussions of going back to a half-time program are tempered by the fact that Medicine Hat Public No. 76 also offers a full-time program and, with both systems in competition for students, they are reluctant to change due to the real possibility that an exodus of students would again be the result.

2. French Immersion

    A French Immersion program was initiated in the 2003-04 term with a K-1 class cohort and the grade level increases each year. The provincial achievement scores for the first cohort were above provincial average and the program has sufficient numbers to continue the cohort.

3. Assessment for Learning – AISI

    The division is training lead teachers in every school to be the leaders in teaching teachers more effective ways of assessing students. One component of note is that teachers will have collaborative time to work on their assessments. The division collaborated with Solution Tree and Southern Alberta Professional Development Consortium (SAPDC) for a two-day institute featuring noted speaker Wayne Hulley.

4. Notre Dame Academy

    This unique school has a twin focus of technology and sports. The Sports Academy has maintained a consistent enrolment since it opened in 2004-05. This is a new school which also opened with a middle school orientation. The grade 6 results did show a drop in PAT scores.

	Golf	Hockey	Baseball	Hockey/Golf	Soccer	Total
2004-05	58	53	52	51		214
2005-06	51	81	46		49	227
2006-07	53	78	45		51	227
2007-08	55	68	41		48	212

These numbers represent slightly more than half of the school's population. Students are exposed to qualified, certified coaches in each of the sports.

5. Fine Arts Academy and Fine Arts Focus Schools

    St. Mary's Middle School operates the Fine Arts Academy with programs in Art, Drama, Band, Choral Music and Dance. The former stage has been converted to a dance studio with walls and mirrors. St. Michael's is a Fine Arts Focus school which serves as a feeder school for the program at St. Mary's. It has an enhanced Fine Arts curriculum.

6. Special Education Programs

    a. St. Louis School operates as a magnet school for severe behaviour students and runs a program called Turning Points for these students. The Turning Points Program is designed to meet the needs of students in grades one to eleven, with severe emotional/behavioural disorders. The aim of the program is to assist in fulfilling the potential of the students and to create growth within the academic, physical, social emotional, cognitive, behavioural, creative, physical and spiritual areas of development. Therapeutic and academic programming is provided based on pre and post assessments. There are three classrooms in the Turning Points Program, with seven students in each classroom.

    b. The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) focuses on providing students in grades 1 - 9, with academic instruction and life skill experiences. Grades 1-5 LAP I classes are located at St. Francis Xavier and St. Louis Schools, LAP classes for grades 6-8 are located at St. Mary's School and the grade 9 LAP is accessing facilities at McCoy High School. Lower teacher/student ratios allows for individual student needs to be met to the fullest extent possible. Each student's educational programs are based upon an Individualized Program Plan.

    c. The Life and Occupations Transitions Skills Program (LOTS) for grade 10 - 12 students at McCoy High School, promotes the development of life and occupational skills. The goal of the program is for students to acquire skills that will enable them to live as independently as possible. Students in the LOTS Program are integrated into the community in a work experience/skills program. Classes in the morning are spent on campus learning life skills. Afternoons are spent in the community on job sites acquiring employability skills. Students are monitored and supported by the LOTS Teacher, Job Site Supervisor and/or in specific cases a Job Coach/Teacher Assistant. An Individual Program Plan is developed for each student that reflects the student's individual needs and goals and objectives.

    d. The Learning Assistance Program II (LAP), located at St. Michael's School in Medicine Hat is designed for children who have a moderate to severe

intellectual disability, physical disability and a language/communication disability. By the nature of the students' needs, intensive support in physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language therapy and other areas is needed. The LAP is a language and communication focus program with a balanced emphasis on academic skills (where appropriate), life skills and community living. The children are encouraged to use all available means of communication (oral language, sign language, communication boards, and augmentative communication devices). Staff are trained and monitored by therapists to provide therapy based programming. Where integration is the most appropriate placement, students are integrated into regular classrooms with support from a teacher assistant. The students participate in school activities and are an important part of the school community.

The classroom also has a Snoezelen space. The multi-sensory activities during this time serve to stimulate the senses and relax the body enabling many of the children to relax tight muscles due to spasticity.

e. The Success Program for students in grades 7-8 is located at St. Mary' School and for grade 9 students is provided at McCoy High School. It provides students who have learning difficulties with intensive support by smaller class sizes and a modified curriculum. An Individual Program Plan is developed and implemented for students in the grade 7 and 8 Success Program by the Teachers of the core subjects. Students in grade 9 follow the Alberta Education Integrated Occupational Program curriculum.

It is evident that the division provides a full range of services to the special education population within the system. Following is a chart identifying student numbers by "code", year of program and indicating the number of learning assistants employed.

	99-00	00-01	01-02	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Code 40 (Gr. 1-12)	11	31	49	61	66	67	69	77	84
PUF (ECS Severe)	11	18	32	41	36	48	61	59	82
Code 80 (G&T)					6	7	47	61	78
Code 50 (Gr.1-12)					234	264	217	232	254
Code 30 (ECS M/M)					28	28	46	18	31
Learning Assistants #Personnel*				67	71	69	79	84	99

Does not include school based learning assistants

TABLE 6 – ACADEMIC RESULTS/ACCOUNTABILITY PILLAR TRENDS

The division has no red cells in their accountability pillar results which would indicate problems. In many areas, they maintained an already good standing; comparing favorably to provincial results in most categories. The exceptions would be the dropout rate which increased above previous yearly rates and the Standard of Excellence on Provincial Diploma Exams (PDE's); which has been below provincial levels for several years and is rated as an issue because it remains low. Two areas to be noted in the division's favor are the high school completion rate, which has remained considerably above provincial average for several years and school improvement measures which increased significantly.

The Accountability Pillar collects data over time on student achievement, perceived quality of education using survey data from students, parents and teachers and other student outcome data such as dropout rates, high school completion rates, and Rutherford Scholarship Eligibility Rate.

Assistant Deputy Minister Jim Dueck indicated that the Department of Education analysis showed that the division was focused on student learning in an appropriate fashion. In addition to solid achievement and diploma exam results, other measures also showed the division maintaining acceptable levels of satisfaction overall. There are concerns over the differential between teacher and parent responses but the results are not dissimilar to those found around the province. Most measures on the Accountability Pillar remain above provincial averages. The Standard of Excellence measures while having been at or around provincial levels for several years have seen a declining trend in recent years.

Dr.Dueck reviewed the Prior Levels of Achievement results for the division and indicated there were trends that should probably be addressed in the divisions Three Year Plan. The division grade 9's have consistently not met expectations on Provincial Achievement Tests (PAT's) and in fact have been quite a bit below on occasions. That warrants a review of what is being missed at the junior high level and making sure it gets covered in the future. It is also noted that the grade 6 results have declined since 2004.

Alberta Education is really focused on achievement over time but it was worthy of review to find out why the participation rates for upper stream courses had declined so dramatically at the high school last year. This decline was accompanied by a similar decline in PDE's results which was predictable as low participation rates and lower results tend to go hand in hand. The 5 Year Trends document shows a gradual decline in PAT results which mirrors the provinces results according to Dr.Dueck.

ACADEMIC RESULTS AND TRENDS

2006-07 Provincial Achievement Tests

Grade 3:

Gr. 3 Language Arts:
- Exceeded the province significantly, at Acceptable Standard in Reading, Writing and Total Test.
- The only area to consider is the Standard of Excellence, in the writing portion which is below provincial expectations and results.

Gr. 3 Mathematics:
- Exceeded the province at the Acceptable Standard in Skills, Knowledge and Total Test, and was at or near provincial results in all Standard of Excellence measures.

Gr. 3 Math (written in French):
- Exceeded the province at all areas off the Acceptable Standard and significantly exceeded the province in all areas of the Standard of Excellence.

These results were achieved while significantly exceeding the participation rate at the provincial level.

Grade 6:

Again, the division exceeded the participation rate at the provincial level in all tests.

Gr. 6 – Language Arts:
- Exceeded the province in Acceptable Standard measures and was at provincial levels on the Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 6 - Mathematics:
- Exceeded the province in Acceptable Standard measures and was at provincial levels on the Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 6- Science:
- Exceeded the province in Acceptable Standard measures and exceeded expected levels and was at provincial levels on the Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 6- Social Studies:
- Exceeded provincial results in all Acceptable Standard measures and was at provincial levels in all Standard of Excellence areas.

Grade 9:

Continued to exceed provincial participation rates in all subjects.

Gr. 9 - Language Arts:
- At or above provincial levels in all Acceptable Standard measures.

- At provincial level in Standard of Excellence except for the Reading component, which is significantly lower.

Gr. 9 – Mathematics:
- At provincial levels on Acceptable Standards.
- Slightly below at the Standard of Excellence measures but still above the expected level.

Gr. 9 – Science:
- At provincial levels in Acceptable Standard but significantly lower on Standard of Excellence and well below expected levels in the Knowledge component and total test.

Gr. 9 – Social Studies:
- At provincial levels on all measures and exceeds the Standard of Excellence in the knowledge component.

Grade 12 Diploma Exams

Applied Math 30:
- Significantly above province on the Acceptable Standard but below in Standard of Excellence.

Biology 30:
- Below provincial levels on both, Acceptable Standard and Standard of Excellence.

Chemistry 30:
- Below provincial levels on both, Acceptable Standard and Standard of Excellence (but well above expected level).

English 30:
- At provincial level on Acceptable Standard, below on Standard of Excellence.

English 30-2:
- Above provincial level on both Acceptable Standard and Standard of Excellence.

Physics 30:
- Significantly below on both measures (Standard of Excellence is still well above the minimally expected level.)

Pure Math 30:
- Significantly below in both measures.

Social Studies 30:
- At provincial level in Acceptable Standard but significantly below on the Standard of Excellence.

Social Studies 33:
- At provincial level on both measures.

5-Year Trends

Gr. 3 – Language Arts:
- Consistently at or above provincial measures in both Acceptable Standard and Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 6 – Language Arts:
- Consistently above province on Acceptable Standard and at or above on Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 6 – Mathematics:
- Consistently, significantly above province in Acceptable Standard and until last year, at or above the province in the Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 6 – Science:
- Consistently, significantly above province in Acceptable Standard and above the province in Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 6 – Social Studies:
- Consistently, significantly above the province on Acceptable Standard.
- The Standard of Excellence trend has been moving down from significantly above to being at the provincial level the last two years.

Gr. 9 – Language Arts:
- Consistently above the province in Acceptable Standard.
- Has been at or below the province on Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 9 – Mathematics:
- Has been above the province on Acceptable Standard and has been, generally, at provincial levels on Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 9 – Science:
- Has been at provincial level on Acceptable Standard but consistently, significantly below the province in the Standard of Excellence.

Gr. 9 – Social Studies:
- Consistently at provincial levels on both measures.

Grade 12
Applied Math 30:
- Inconsistent results on the Acceptable Standard as it has ranged 14 percent below the province to 14 percent above the last two years.
- The Standard of Excellence has consistently been significantly below the province.

Biology 30:
- Significantly below the province the last 3 years on both measures.

Chemistry 30:
- At or below on the Acceptable level but consistently, significantly below the province on the Standard of Excellence.

English 30-1:
- At provincial level on Acceptable Standard but consistently below on the Standard of Excellence.

English 30-2:
- Both above and below on both measures depending on the year.

Physics 30:
- Was significantly above the province but the trend over the last 3 years has been to be significantly below on both measures.

Pure Math 30:
- At or above the province on both measures until last year, which was significantly lower.

Science 30:
- Significantly below the province on Standard of Excellence.

Social Studies 30:
- Consistently below the province on Acceptable Standard and significantly below the Standard of Excellence.

Social Studies 33:
- Consistently below the province on Acceptable Standard and significantly below the province on Standard of Excellence until last year.

TABLE 7 – TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF EMPLOYED WITHIN THE DIVISION

As of January 31, 2008

#	School Based Position
1	Full-time Acting Principal
3	Full-time Behaviour Management Associates
1	Full-time Behaviour Management Coordinator
1	Full-time Business Manager
13	Full-time Custodians
1	Full-time Learning Assistant
9	Full-time Principals
13	Full-time Secretaries
1	Full-time Speech Language Pathologist
140	Full-time Teachers
7	Full-time Vice Principals
2	Part-time Baseball Academy Instructor
2	Part-time Cosmetology Assistants
11	Part-time Custodians
1	Part-time Equipment Storage Supervisor
93	Part-time Learning Assistants
4	Part-time Library Technicians
4	Part-time Library Technicians
2	Part-time Preschool Educators
2	Part-time Secretaries
1	Part-time Speech Language Assistant
21	Part-time Teachers
333	**Total School Based Positions**
143	**Total School Based Part-time Positions**
190	**Total School Based Full-time Positions**

#	Central Office Based
1	Full-time Acting Superintendent
3	Full-time Administrative Assistants
1	Full-time Assoc. Supt Of Student Service
1	Full-time Cord Of Rel Ed & Curriculum
1	Full-time Deputy Superintendent
1	Full-time Executive Assistant
1	Full-time Facilities & Operations Super
1	Full-time Finance & Purchasing Officer
1	Full-time Hr & Benefits Officer
1	Full-time Information Technology Manager
3	Full-time Maintenance Staff
1	Full-time Payroll Officer
1	Full-time Receptionist
1	Full-time Secretary Treasurer
1	Full-time Technology Support Analyst
5	Trustees
24	Total Central Office Based Positions

357	**Total Positions**
143	**Total Part-time Positions**
214	**Total Full-time Positions**

Data supplied by the division.

APPENDIX 1 – STAFF INTERVIEWS

1. Ask staff members to bring a copy of their job description? Review it with them and determine if it accurately reflects what they are doing and assigned to do.

2. How long have your worked here? Prior to coming here what were you doing?

3. If no job description is available – discuss role and responsibilities.

4. Who is your immediate supervisor – to whom do you report? What is that individuals role and responsibilities in the office?

5. Evaluation – have you ever had a performance evaluation? If so by whom? Is there a policy governing evaluations? What has been past practice?

6. Have you ever been asked to do other tasks – in cases where things have been really busy? Absence of another staff member?

7. How would you rated your satisfaction level with the tasks you have been assigned? Very high, high, so-so, low, very low

8. How would you rated the overall morale of the central office? Very high, high, so-so, low very low

9. Are there central office staff meetings – if so how often and what kinds of items are discussed?

10. It has been communicated that people outside of this office do not feel that it is very productive or that the staff do not really work very hard. Have you heard this or are aware of it? If so, what do you believe the reason for this would be?

11. If you could make one change in the manner in which this office operates – to make it more efficient and productive - what would that be?

12. How are staff issues dealt with – i.e. 2 staff members are not getting along – a staff member is not pulling their full load – how do these get resolved? What is the process to follow?

13. What is your satisfaction with the salary you are getting paid? With the recognition you receive?

14. Are there opportunities for advancement?

15. What is the best part of working here?

16. Comment of the quality of the facility and workspace.

APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS

1. Are you familiar with the board's request for a central office review? What is your assessment as to why such a request would be made? Your reaction to it?

2. Ask to see a job description – if unavailable – find out how the position is described and where.

3. Get some background information:
   - How long as principal
   - Prior experience
   - Evaluation practices – have there been job appraisals
   - Where completed high school

4. What services do you receive from the central office?

5. Which of these is the most valued by yourself? Why?

6. Which of these is the least valued? Why?

7. Staffing – are you able to hire your own staff? What is the procedure? Is the work done by Central Office helpful in the screening process?

8. There is a perception that the central office is overstaffed? Is this a perception that you would share? Explain.

9. Have there been regularly scheduled administrator's meetings? What is your assessment of the value of these?

10. If you could make one change to the central office to make it more efficient and effective – what would that be?

11. Are you supportive of the Automated Dispatch System? Could, should, this service be continued?

12. What do you see the role of the Board to be?

13. Are there services that should be added to those provided from central office that are not being provided now?

14. Are you knowledgeable about how the funds of the division are allocated? The budget process?

15. Experiences with the maintenance area – caretakers? etc. FAME –

16. Experiences with information and technology services – adequate – how would you rate?

APPENDIX 3 – SCHOOL COUNCIL CHAIRS – INTERVIEWS

Do telephone interviews – start by explaining the purpose of the interview and the study.

1. How long have you served as chair of the school council?

2. How long have you served on the school council?

3. Is your school council active? What activities have been undertaken? What is the purpose of the school council?

4. What would you rate as your council's most significant achievements?

5. As a school council what services have you received from the central office? For example, has anyone spoken to your group? Is there encouragement?

6. As a parent have you received any service from the central office?

7. What do believe the role of the central office should be?

8. What do you believe the role of the board should be?

9. What is your satisfaction with the faith dimension of the schools your children are in?

APPENDIX 4 – SEQUENCE OF HIRING – DIVISION PROCESS

Steps followed in securing a new employee

1. Senior administration forwards advertising request to HR.
2. HR prepares advertisement and returns to senior administration and principal for approval.
3. Reception prepares competition file.
4. HR posts approved advertisement in public folders for internal positions and on the website, Education Canada, and newspaper if necessary for external postings.
5. HR collects applications, resumes, and places in appropriate competition file.
6. When competition closes, HR prepares packages and sends to principals.
7. School shortlists, interviews and offers employment as per hiring process set out for 2007-08.
8. HR prepares personnel file for successful candidate.
9. HR reviews file to ensure that all necessary documentation is present. If not, HR contacts candidate and communicates missing documents.
10. HR prepares two copies of contract or offer of employment (one for the candidate and one for the personnel file).
11. HR inputs all employer data into management system.
12. Management system generates notification to:
    i. School administrator
    ii. IT Manager
    iii. Payroll Officer
13. HR meets with successful candidate to:
    i. Review and sign Conditions of Employment
    ii. Offer contract for signature (note-candidate has up to 10 days to sign in order to seek legal assistance)
14. Upon signature:
    i. Contract is placed in personnel file and forwarded to payroll
    ii. HR meets with new employee and reviews employee e-mail, ID, ESS and benefits
    iii. Payroll enters all necessary information to be paid properly (e.g. TD1, direct deposit, grid placement, etc.)
    iv. IT Manager generates e-mail account and creates a profile for the appropriate location
15. Competition folder is closed and filed for one year before being shredded.

SUPERINTENDENT SALARY AND BENEFITS

JURISDICTION	2002 - 03	2003 - 04	2004 - 05	2005 - 06	2006 - 2007
MED. HAT CATHOLIC	126,715	142,009	148,408	150,362	156,703
CLEARVIEW REG. DIV.	118,576	116,916	130,040	128,998*	132,524
ST. THOMAS AQUINAS	133,200	132,831	153,403	124,912	153,504
EAST CENT. CATHOLIC	125,951	127,680*	121,763	125,566	132,063
ASPEN VIEW REG. DIV.	122,718	132,826	130,704	149,268	129,709
EVERGREEN CATHOLIC	116,026	124,152	134,267	138,760	145,429
HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC	120,569	126,425	130,939	136,096	139,943
PRAIRIE ROSE REG. D.	117,848	118,915	136,433	131,710*	140,616
GRANDE PRAIRIE CATHOLIC	151,437	174,529**	131,119	149,663	147,695
MED. HAT PUBLIC	140,650	141,593	141,974	152,883	156,828

* more than one individual occupied the position over the course of the year – total salary paid to that position
** contains an additional allowance – one time only

The information in the chart above contains the total value of salary, allowances and benefits identified on the audited financial statements of the identified boards. The amounts paid for travel and expenses are not included.