

DeSoto County Schools: Operational Efficiency Study

Overview

DeSoto County School District in Mississippi is a top-ranked school district with over 33,000 students and over 1,900 teachers. The district has a cohesive school board, 41 schools and a budget over \$256 million. At the time of this engagement, the district had their first new superintendent in twelve years. SEC was initially asked to examine the following:

- Pattern of Turning to Fund Balance Rather than Belt-tightening
- Ranking of 90th in MS Per Student Local Property Tax
- Determination to Seek Efficiencies
- Critical Look at Operations

The leadership, along with SEC, reached agreement on the following key Issues:

1. Maintain High Academics
2. Must Continue to Be Prepared to Do More with Less
3. Study Every Position for Effectiveness and Efficiency
4. Continue to Be Transparent to Stakeholders
5. Discontinue Layering Programs
6. Prepare for Growth
7. Seek Innovation in Moving Forward

Services

DCS and SEC agreed on three multi-day, on-site, visits to DCS by SEC Team. During this time, the team conducted fifty Interviews with Board, Central Staff, and Principals. Throughout the engagement, there were many follow-ups via email, phone, etc. In addition, SEC conducted extensive reviews of policies, procedures, budgets, and additional information pertaining to the needs of the requested study. There was excellent cooperation by DCS with a willingness to offer Ideas and listen to suggestions.



For the purposes of this engagement, SEC reviewed the following areas:

- Administration
- Finance
- Human Resources/Personnel
- Operations: Child Nutrition, Plant Operations, Transportation
- Academic Services
- Special Education
- Federal Programs
- Technology Services
- Risk Management, Insurance, and Safety

SEC completed a full report for the superintendent as well as a video and power point to easily review the information with stakeholder groups as needed.

The SEC Report provided extensive information and recommendations in the following areas:

- Consistent Themes
- District Efforts
- Efficiency Recommendations
- Key Personnel Efficiencies: Central Office
- Central Services Climate
- Efficiency Process Recommendations
- Key New Efficiency Process Recommendations
- Key Funding Efficiency Recommendations
- Key Efficiency Recommendations: Academic Services
- Most Urgent Needs: Facility Needs
- Most Urgent Needs: Technology Restructuring
- Most Urgent Needs: Teacher Compensation
- Recommendations for the future

Conclusion

SEC Team Members are former district and state administrators. That said, a key priority for SEC is to maintain the integrity of the districts served. Therefore, it is important to note that Board Members and District Leaders know the district best, SEC offers recommendations for changes based on experiences at State/District Level, ultimate decisions rest with Board/Superintendent based on their knowledge, interests, and concerns. This study resulted in a savings of over \$2 Million with a service fee of only \$300 Thousand. SEC offers additional services to help with the implementation of recommendations if needed. SEC also offers additional services and more information may be found at <http://www.schoolefficiencyconsultants.com/default.aspx>. If there is a need that is not listed, please ask about that need as SEC has many associates that may be able to produce a solution for the need.

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