

“The District has a broken information system that cannot—and should not—be continued.”

Chuck Beyer
Chair,
Information Technology
Task Force and Chief
Information Officer, NW
Natural

The Information Technology Task Force and the AISC recognize and are mindful of the significant dollars that are involved in discussing the replacement of the District’s information systems. The Task Force approached their charge with a clear recognition for the limitations on tax dollars to support the District and its operations. It is within this context that the Task Force reported to the AISC its strong belief that the District has a broken information system that cannot—and should not—be continued. The situation is critical:

- Past information and data has been filled with errors, is inefficient, and difficult to reconcile. In a few years none of it will be reconcilable. The District cannot balance its check-book.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers’ recent financial statement audit showed twenty-one serious problems directly connected to bad financial information.
- The District is in constant danger of facing costly fines and penalties through IRS, EEOC, and PERS reporting violations.
- Teachers are wasting many hours each week on repeated data entry required for attendance and report card reports under the current system.
- The District risks losing state dollars with questionable or inaccurate enrollment figures now produced by the information system.
- The District is dangerously close to not being able to produce payroll.

The current system requires a relatively large data processing and programming staff simply to operate at its current level, and the support costs will get increasingly expensive—a lose-lose prospect for the District.

In order to correct the above problems, the Task Force draws the following conclusions:

- The District must replace its inadequate computer systems. Those recommendations dealing with system replacement have the highest priority and should be implemented immediately. The Task Force strongly thinks these recommendations have a direct tie to educational benefits for all aspects of teacher/student/parent communication and instructional technology. They will also reduce noninstructional work for teachers and the administrative load at the building level.
- The staffing recommendations are probably under-funded by at least \$600,000. The Task Force believes it is essential to have a Chief Technology Officer with adequate support staff to make the new system investment work.
- Other Task Force recommendations could affect other Information Technology recommendation implementation costs. The most notable is that these recommendations assume a centralized administration at BESC. The Information Technology Task Force has a strong concern that network change costs would increase substantially if the centralized computer center is moved from BESC.

“The student information system should be part of the core package.”

Bill Willard
Vice Chair,
Information Technology Task
Force and Vice President of
Information Systems, Standard
Insurance Company

Essential Package for Information System Replacement

Recommendations 50 V-3.1, 53 V-5.1, 54 V-6.1, 55 V-7.1, 56 V-8.1, 57 V-9.1.

These recommendations are the heart of any business information system and cover Human Resources, Payroll, and Finance. The Task Force and AISC strongly agree that these systems need to be replaced. The Task Force disagreed with KPMG in its silence on replacing the Student Information System. The Task Force believes this has the highest priority for implementation and should be supported by the technology coordinators. The Task Force and AISC proposed an alternative recommendation that adds the Student Information System to the core package. The Task Force cautioned that the funding estimates included in the attached reports assume that BESC will remain in the District’s Administration Building. The Task Force is aware that the Facilities Task Force is evaluating whether the District should vacate BESC. That option should consider the Information Technology infrastructure costs that would be associated with such a move.

Important Package for Information System Replacement

Recommendations 60 V-12.1, 61 V-13.1, 62 V-14.1, 63 V-15.1, 64 V-16.1

These recommendations concern important components of a fully inte-

grated and efficient information system that supports an effective and efficient public school district, and includes warehouse management, facilities management, risk management, nutrition services, and transportation systems. The Task Force believes each of these elements will benefit the children, teachers, and community. Nutrition Services systems will ensure that students eligible for federally funded meal assistance will be identified, helping improve student performance in the classroom, and capturing all available federal dollars. A Facilities Management System will improve the District’s ability to adequately maintain schools, which impacts student comfort, safety, and performance in the classroom. The integration of the Transportation system with other District systems, such as Student Information, will help identify the transportation needs of students, including special needs populations, and improving transportation to and from schools. Administrators will also be able to access information quickly in order to plan and execute programs.

Also important, system upgrades will help provide assurance through reduced staff and more reliable data that District resources are used effectively, increasing the confidence of parents and other community stakeholders.

Continue Plans to Replace Aging Systems

Recommendations 44 V-1.1, 45 V-1.2, 46 V1.3

These recommendations address the critical status of the District’s computer systems. Because of this,

“System upgrades will help reduce staff and will result in more efficient use of District resources.”

Manny Ovena
Information Technology Task
Force and Chief Technology
Officer, Portland Public
Schools

“Opportunity exists to expand partnerships with local business and communities to support technology initiatives.”

Arlen Sheldrake
Information Technology Task
Force and Director, Network
& Information Services,
Multnomah Education Service
District

Recommendations 44 (Continue with plans to replace aging systems) and 45 (In implementing new systems the District should design its practices and processes around the capabilities of the system, rather than excessively customizing off-the-shelf software) received prior approval from the Superintendent and therefore are already completed.

Recommendation 46 addresses the quality of data to be converted from existing systems to new applications. This will help prevent any productivity reductions that could be caused through the loss of historical information.

Improving Strategic Planning Processes

Recommendations 12 II-6.1, 13 II-6.2

These recommendations ensure that information technology planning efforts involve appropriate stakeholder participation and are developed in the context of the overall District strategic direction. The success of the system replacement project recommendations made by the Task Force depend upon appropriate coordination and linkage to the overall Information Technology strategic plan that is also linked to the District-wide strategic plan.

Organizational Structure and Practices

Recommendations 39 IV-1.3, 47 V-2.1, 48 V-2.2; 49 V-2.3

The Information Technology Task Force and AISC urge the creation of a position with the title Chief Technology Officer, which better reflects the breadth and complexity of the position and responsibilities.

The Task Force further believes KPMG underestimated the cost of this recommendation by \$300,000 because the office will require staff support. These recommendations also address the requirements to improve reliable results, to lower computer system development costs and to lower operational unit costs. These practices should help control the budget and schedule of implementation efforts and manage risk.

Improve Professional and Community Networking

Recommendations 51 V-4.1, 52 V-4.2

These recommendations encourage expanding efforts to partner with local businesses and communities to support technology initiatives. The adoption of these recommendations provides opportunities to lower costs by local companies donating services and equipment.