



RFP 24-594: Operations & IT Division Assessment

DeKalb County School District

July 18, 2024

Rethink Possible.

July 18, 2024

Fred Christopher
Procurement Manager
DeKalb County School District
1701 Mountain Industrial Boulevard
Stone Mountain, GA 30083

Dear Mr. Christopher,

The Center for Effective School Operations (CESO) is pleased to present this proposal to DeKalb County School District (DCSD) in response to RFP 24-594. Our teams have extensive experience partnering with school districts to implement a variety of operational assessments. We support school districts nationwide in various ways to rethink possible through collaboration.

CESO believes in the power of a successful, equitable learning journey for each student. Our expertise in K-12 operations keeps districts running smoothly so leaders can focus on what matters most. What began as a transportation organization more than 20 years ago has transformed into a full-service consulting, management, and staffing partner across key operational areas including Transportation, Human Resources, Communications, Technology, Facilities, Finance, Nutrition, and Organizational Health. We have provided services to over 230 clients across 35 states. Together, our proactive team solves complex challenges while helping clients Rethink Possible.

We are confident that we can effectively provide DCSD with recommendations for immediate and long-term improvements in support of the DCSD strategic plan. CESO would commence work as soon as September 3, 2024 and as late as September 6, 2024.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob McDowell", written in a cursive style.

Dr. Robert McDowell
Senior Vice President

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Meet CESO



CESO - the Center for Effective School Operations - believes in the power of an equitable learning journey for each student. Our expertise in K-12 operations keeps districts running smoothly so leaders can focus on what matters most.

What began as a school transportation organization more than 20 years ago has transformed into a full-service consulting, management, and staffing partner across key operational areas including Transportation, Human Resources, Communications, Technology, Facilities, Finance, and Organizational Health. Today, we help foster exceptional environments where leaders can optimize daily operations and implement long-term success for their communities.

Our proactive team solves complex challenges using client input, our analytical frameworks, and the space to rethink what's possible. From this, we provide clients with the best options to address the unique opportunities within their schools. More than 230 districts in 35 states have utilized this effective, customized approach.



Consulting

We begin with our client's story and then incorporate multiple perspectives, our client's goals, our own core values of inclusivity, curiosity, and sincerity, and the team's expertise to create tailored solutions with achievable plans.

Management

We partner alongside our clients to do the implementation work with their teams, delivering results through prioritization, collaboration, and accountability.

Staffing

We do the implementation work for our clients, providing interim or long-term staffing support from executive or director-level roles to specialists. Our team of experts brings decades of operational experience combined with a passion for education.



K-12 Operations Experts

Transportation • Communications • Human Resources
Finance • Facilities • Technology • Organizational Health



Compliance Information •

1.1 | Business License Compliance

The Center For Effective School Operations (CESO) is a Limited Liability Company incorporated in the State of Minnesota.

While our team will be physically present in DeKalb County to perform several aspects on this assessment, we will be able to provide much of our service remotely.

CESO is in compliance with the stated requirements with the exceptions of Georgia business license and special licenses.

If it is determined that CESO cannot perform the scope of work without obtaining authority to do business in the State of Georgia, it shall complete filings as a foreign LLC prior to the start of service.

No CESO staff presently hold any special licenses that may be required to complete the scope work. If awarded, all relevant staff will obtain the necessary licenses before the start of service.

1.2 | Litigation Information

1.2.1 | Contract Terminations

CESO has not ever failed to complete a contract or contracts or have defaulted or have been declared in default on any contract.

1.2.1 | Contract Terminations

CESO has not had any legal actions filed against them for services rendered in the past (5) years.

DeKalb County School District (“DCSD”) extends this offer to submit a proposal for the possible purchase or lease of goods and/or services conforming to the following designated specifications, terms, and conditions. This solicitation will require DCSD Board of Education approval.

Format and Submission of Proposals

Submittal responses to this solicitation will be received electronically on the DeKalb County School District website at <https://dekalbschoolsga.ionwave.net>.

The format requirements for RFP responses are designed to ensure uniformity in the responses, provide the information necessary to understand each offeror’s proposal, and facilitate an efficient and comprehensive evaluation of all responses. Proposals must comply with the specifications and detailed instructions stated in this RFP document, be signed by the certifying company official, and be presented to the DCSD Purchasing Department according to the detailed instructions stated in this document.

- RFP responses must be submitted electronically via <https://dekalbschoolsga.ionwave.net>.
- Proposals must be presented in a PDF format. All attachments must be identified properly for easy recognition and association.
- Each page of the response must be numbered.
- Each proposal must contain a detailed Table of Contents and must be organized in the same order as the requirements are outlined in this RFP document. Each separate bullet point must be addressed individually. A response that does not adhere to a “point-by-point” format may be disqualified.
- Responses shall be organized simply and economically. Emphasis must be placed on completeness and clarity. Proposals that do not include all the required information may be disqualified.

All potential respondents must register as a vendor at <https://dekalbschoolsga.ionwave.net>.

Time is of the essence. Specify your earliest 9/3/2024 and latest 9/6/2024 service commencement dates after receipt of award letter.

Approval by the DeKalb County Board of Education

Official approval by the DeKalb County Board of Education is required for this procurement. No contract shall be construed to be formed without the advance official approval of the DeKalb County Board of Education. **The successful offeror will be notified after DeKalb County Board of Education approval.**

Funding Provisions

No award or contract will be made if funding is not approved by the DeKalb County Board of Education.

Compliance with Requirements

Offeror must indicate below whether or not their proposal is in complete compliance with the stated requirements. If there are any deviations from these requirements, offeror must indicate in writing what the exact deviations are and what actual services will be provided. Attach and label additional sheets if necessary.

Proposal is in complete compliance with proposal requirements.

Proposal deviates from stated requirements as follows:

Firm Overview •

The Center For Effective School Operations, LCC (CESO) is located at 615 1st Ave NE, Suite 115 Minneapolis, MN 55413. CESO's primary contact for this proposal is Dr. Bob McDowell, Senior Vice President. Dr. McDowell can be reached at bob.mcdowell@theceso.com or 612-221-8869.

CESO is a Limited Liability Company that was incorporated in the State of Minnesota on February 3, 2016 and operated under the name The Center For Efficient School Operations until April 24, 2020 when the company's name was legally changed to The Center For Effective School Operations.

CESO currently has 81 employees.

Dr. Bob McDowell will be assigned to lead the overall assessment phases for this project.

2.1 | Organizational Structure

CESO is led by co-CEOs Ron Meyer and Ryan Stromberg along with our leadership team, providing daily oversight of services.

- co-CEOs: Ron Meyer & Ryan Stromberg
 - Senior Vice President: Dr. Bob McDowell
 - Senior Facilities, Health & Safety Consultant: Doug Stahl
 - Senior Strategy Consultant: DeeDee Kahring
 - Facilities Team
 - Vice President of Employee Experience: Laura Eiden
 - Human Resources Team
 - Employee Experience Team
 - Director of Technology: Dustin Lang
 - Senior Technology Consultant: John Perry
 - Technology Team
 - Vice President of Finance: Lauren Syrup
 - Finance Consulting Team
 - Senior Vice President of Transportation: Tom Platt
 - Director of Transportation: Nikki Pangerl

- Senior Transportation Consultant: Mike Archer
 - Transportation Consulting Team

At CESO, we utilize a team approach to rethinking possibilities for school districts. Our assessment services are no exception. The lead team members below have extensive experience in operational assessments across the areas of this RFP.

Dr. Bob McDowell, Senior Vice President - With a career spanning 28 years in public education, Bob has held various pivotal roles, including superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal, assistant principal, technology coordinator, teacher, and coach. Dr. McDowell has honed his expertise in operations and systems development, Human-Centered Design, leadership development, continuous improvement, equity work, adaptive strategic planning, coaching, and navigating the superintendent-school board relationship. He holds a bachelor's degree in Technology Education from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from The University of St. Thomas, a specialist degree in Educational Administration from Minnesota State-Mankato, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Saint Mary's University. Bob will serve as the lead contact and project manager for this proposal.

Tom Platt, Senior Vice President for Transportation - Tom has more than 30 years of professional experience, over 20 of which have been providing consulting services. His work has focused on operations, logistics, and complex problem solving for hundreds of public and private sector clients. Tom has been at the forefront of change management and operational improvement within the student transportation and government services sector. He has developed a unique and nuanced understanding of how logistics impacts successful education and government service delivery. Awareness of cross-functional connections, the importance of data-supported analyses, and the critical manner in which complex subjects are communicated to diverse groups of stakeholders have each been developed and refined over Tom's career as a trusted advisor to his clients.

Tom's work is grounded in the understanding that informed and thoughtful decision making coupled with empowered leadership can drive lasting and meaningful improvement within any organization. Tom holds a degree in Maritime Transportation from the Maine Maritime Academy, and a Master of Business Administration from the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University.

Ron Meyer, co-Chief Executive Officer – Ron has worked in finance and operations for over 15 years. His school career began in transportation operations, where he held leadership positions in multiple school districts, including as the Director of Transportation at South Washington County Schools, one of the largest in Minnesota. He transitioned to school finance, where he has held both controller-level and executive CFO/COO-level roles in several districts. Ron has also owned and operated small businesses in the insurance and school operations space and served on the school board for the Eastern Carver County School District in Minnesota. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communications and a Master of Business Administration from Bethel University.

Lauren Syrup, CPA, Vice President of Finance Consulting – Lauren Syrup, CPA, joined the CESO team in 2022 as a Finance Consultant after spending over a decade in finance and accounting roles, most recently as the Director of Finance in Orono Public Schools (MN). Her combination of big-picture strategic thinking and in-depth knowledge of K-12 finance operations has made her a powerful resource for school district teams. Before her five-year run in Orono, Lauren spent four years in the private sector, serving as Accounting Manager and Senior Financial Accountant for a Minneapolis-based Fortune 100. Before that she spent three years as a Governmental Auditor for several Minnesota School Districts. Lauren graduated from the University of Minnesota-Duluth in 2008 with a B.S. in Accounting and earned her MBA in 2019 from Hamline University (St. Paul). Lauren has been a licensed Certified Public Accountant since 2012.

Margo Bauck, Finance Strategist - Margo worked in school finance and operations in four school districts during her over thirty-five-year career, retiring in 2019. Her experience includes public communication in all areas of school finance and operations and the implementation of processes that contribute towards the long-term fiscal health of the district. Margo’s passion for her work was and continues to be the belief that we positively impact students, staff, families, and communities through sound fiscal and operational management. She advocates for equitable allocation of limited resources to ensure the successful education of all students.

Margo is the 2019 Minnesota Association of School Business Officials (MASBO) Outstanding Lifetime Contribution Award recipient and Past President of MASBO. She was a member of MASBO, the International Association of School Business Officials (IASBO), and Schoolfinances.com. Margo served in various leadership roles in MASBO, Schools for Equity in Education, Schoolfinances.com, and the MN Department of Education. She was a MASBO mentor. She presented for the Minnesota School Boards

Association, MASBO, Schoolfinances.com, Ehler's school finance workshops, and MN State University.

Kris Kratz, Finance Consultant - With over 15 years of experience in finance - with the past eight in district or school-adjacent roles - Kris Kratz brings a compelling mix of public and private sector knowledge to our CESO team. In her role, she provides leadership and guidance to district clients by advocating for accounting best practices, assisting with MDE reporting and project management, and more. Kris holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting with an emphasis on Information Systems from St. Cloud State University and is a member of the Minnesota Association for School Business Officials (MASBO).

Ryan Stromberg, co-Chief Executive Officer - Ryan brings over 22 years of HR and executive leadership experience to CESO. Over his career, Ryan has overseen all aspects of the human resources function in two public education systems in Minnesota. While working in schools, Ryan completed his graduate degree in leadership and organizational development at the University of St. Thomas. At CESO, Ryan consults with school districts of all sizes on the best structures and protocols to help them care for their employees.

Christa Zirbes, Vice President of Human Resources - With more than ten years of experience as a human resources professional, Christa is passionate about putting care for people at the heart of HR functions and supporting organizational decisions using data analytics to shed light on key questions. Prior to joining CESO, she was the backbone for all human resources in Spring Lake Park Schools (MN). As Vice President of Consulting Practice, she now focuses on developing processes, systems, and analytics to ensure we are delivering the biggest impact and results for our clients.

Kate Howard, Senior Employee Experience Consultant - Kate Howard believes that Human Resources teams should be approachable, nurturing, and empowering to build authentic, positive relationships with employees. In her role as an Employee Experience Consultant at CESO, she finds energy by building sustainable cultures, processes, and systems for our clients.

She received her Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in HR Development from the University of Minnesota and her Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) from Hamline University. In addition to teaching high school language arts, she also has over 15 years of experience with human resources and organizational development work in nonprofit, private, and educational settings including building departments from the ground up.

Sara Riegel, Employee Experience Consultant - Sara has 7+ years of experience as a human resources professional, specializing in employee benefits administration, employee compensation, and HRIS analytics. Before joining CESO, she worked as a Compensation and Benefits Specialist with Edina Public Schools and as an Assistant Manager of Benefits and HRIS with Lakeville Area Schools. Sara is passionate about helping educational institutions by guiding process improvement and increasing efficiency, leading to a greater experience for the staff and students they serve.

DeeDee Kahring, Senior Strategy Consultant - DeeDee Kahring maximizes clients' operations across the board, focusing on Finance, Thought & Strategy Coaching, and Superintendent Aftercare Solutions. Previously the Executive Director of Finance & Operations for Wayzata Public Schools (Minnesota), DeeDee is well-known in K-12 education and brings a wealth of knowledge to her clients from her highly successful career. She has also led finance and business operations for other Minnesota school districts including Eastern Carver County Schools and Cambridge-Istanti Schools as well as public companies like Springsted Incorporated and Emerson Automation Solutions.

Her comprehensive experience managing complex projects - like long-range planning, capital project funding, special project planning, referenda, negotiations costing models, property purchases, and construction budgeting - combined with her passion for coaching fellow leaders make her an ideal partner to drive financial stability and leadership retention for our clients. DeeDee earned her Bachelor's in Finance from Minnesota State University-Mankato and her Master's of Business administration from the University of Iowa.

Doug Stahl, Senior Facilities, Health & Safety, and Security Consultant - Doug has 40+ years of school facilities experience. After graduating from the University of St. Thomas with a degree in business, he began his career at Spring Lake Park Schools where he held several buildings and grounds positions and led planning committees and bond projects. His expertise in long-term facility maintenance plans as well as building safety and security planning, building automation, and strategic planning makes him a valuable resource for clients. Doug also holds a Minnesota Chief C Boiler Operator's License and Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Certification.

Mike Archer, Director of Transportation Consulting Services - Mike has advised over 100 school districts throughout his 13+ years of experience in school transportation operations. He has served as a GIS specialist, routing and planning manager, operations manager, and consultant. Mike brings expertise in the areas of GIS mapping, technology

implementation, analytics, and change management. He consistently leverages data analysis to support recommendations for his clients and to manage daily operations effectively. In addition to his work with pupil transportation, he also has experience with trucking and public transit. Mike holds a bachelor's degree from Penn State University.

Shannon Connolly, Project Consultant - Shannon joined CESO to lead the routing, customer service and operations management functions for school districts contracted school transportation services in the Twin Cities Region. This industry and customer experience provides an excellent foundation for Shannon's role in assessing school district customer needs and evaluating contracted service operations. Shannon also provides direct experience with establishing and understanding the value of solid customer relationships with school staff, families and operators. Since beginning her consulting work within CESO, Shannon has participated in multiple projects related to RFP development, routing efficiency and process design.

Rich Enga, Project Consultant - Rich has been a student transportation management practitioner for over 20 years. He joined CESO in its earliest years and has been instrumental to its success and growth ever since. In addition to being one of CESO's most senior in-house Transportation Directors, Rich has focused his energy on all matters related to transportation operations and safety. He is our internal expert on, and leads the implementation of, best practices for internal operating procedures related to fleet and safety training. He has assisted many school districts with initiatives related to these functions throughout his career. Rich holds a Bachelor of Science (BS) from St. Cloud State University with a concentration in management.

Dustin Lang, Director of Technology—Dustin has over 15 years of technology experience. He oversees the company's internal IT department and collaborates with school districts to fix IT needs. Dustin is responsible for CESO's technology transformation initiatives, which will take CESO into the next decade. He is passionate about all things technology. Before joining CESO, Dustin held positions at Apple, USA Security, Code42, Veritas, and Matrix/NDI.

John Perry, Senior Technology Consultant - John has worked in Educational Technology for over 20 years, specializing in the recovery of struggling systems. His early work was with the Financial Crisis and Asset Management Team (FCMAT) where he consulted for the State of California to support school districts in trouble. He then worked for multiple districts directly, focusing on building sustainable systems and practices through planning, documentation, and workflow automation. Mr. Perry continues his work in a

metro district where he has streamlined over 40 learning systems. He has a background in networking, system administration, student information system management, technology leadership, and human-centered design.

Scope of Services •

3.1 | Methodology and Strategy

CESO understands that DCSD is requesting an assessment of its Operations and Information and Instructional Technology Divisions. All of our assessments begin with a baseline understanding of the system's structure and responsiveness to the district's policy requirements and strategic objectives. To do this, we will look at the district's organizational structure and governance as well as leadership and management processes across district departments. This will be a critical precursor to achieving the other requirements identified in the RFP.

The consulting staff assigned to the work plan have conducted over thirty similar assessments for school districts large and small in more than thirty states and 3 Canadian provinces. This wealth of knowledge and experience will enable an efficient approach to the work and a minimally disruptive process to DCSD operations. It will consist of seven core components:

1. **Project Kickoff**—We begin our projects with an event, in person or virtually, to introduce and establish strong working relationships between our teams and DCSD-selected teams. This is also the time we clarify expectations, timelines, and personnel involvement. We believe this assists with the project's flow and allows DCSD team members to put names on the faces they will be interacting with.
2. **Information Gathering and Analysis** – We will gather and review items not limited to policies, regulations, procedures, organization charts and reporting structures, contracts, decision-making processes, budgets, strategic plans, operational plans, facility plans, financial documentation, training and professional development, and similar documentary information that assists in establishing a first layer of understanding regarding the organization and operations of the leadership team and district departments. This analysis will provide a robust preliminary understanding of the system and its performance.

3. **Observations and Interviews** - Experienced and knowledgeable consultants and practicing K-12 professionals who support CESO management contracts, will be assigned to conduct onsite observations, plus in-person and online interviews of DCSD department staff and other key stakeholders and focus groups. The purpose is to expand and contextualize the initial understanding garnered from the data and information review and ensure we have a complete, accurate, and thorough understanding from which to conduct its assessment.
4. **Survey** - Our team, in collaboration with identified leaders, will determine the scope of utilization surveys of identified employee stakeholders. These perception surveys will allow stakeholders a different avenue for providing insights and feedback with an additional goal of determining if potential cost savings outweigh potential adverse effects on the system. Once completed, CESO consultants will analyze the results and develop a theme-based report. The results will also be used as qualitative data points for the final report summary and recommendations.
5. **Assessment and Comparison** – Across the divisions, we will evaluate personnel management practices, operational practices, and the technical capabilities of each. Our team will coalesce and combine all of the data, information, observations, and interview results to assess and analyze for effectiveness and efficiency first and foremost against the unique requirements of the DCSD strategic direction and operational realities. It will also incorporate a comparison with best practices we have garnered across years of work with hundreds of other school districts and education agencies throughout North America.
6. **Summary Report and Recommendations** - The final component of the process will be the creation of a customized, comprehensive report that will include:
 - a. Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities
 - b. Summary of the overall assessment and comparison
 - c. Recommended next steps (Roadmap) prioritized by:
 - i. Do now
 - ii. Do soon
 - iii. Do later

7. **Consultation on Next Actions** - The team will meet with designated district leaders and stakeholders to review the Summary Report and Recommendations, and the actions outlined in the Summary Report.

3.2 | Draft Schedule

Month	Milestone	Deliverable
September 2024	Introductory meetings/Begin Data Collection/Determine Survey needs	Finalize timeline processes and people
September -October 2024	Data Collection, Interviews, Observations, Focus Groups, and Surveys	Initial data collected, Focus Groups, Interviews, and Observations
October-November 2024	Completion of Data collection, Data Analysis	Data collection completed
November-December 2024	Complete Data Analysis and necessary follow-up	Data analysis complete
December 2024	Report Delivery	Comprehensive Summary and Recommendations

3.3 | Capability

We have built a team of industry experts in all things related to school district operations, to include communications, facilities, finance, human resources, nutrition services, organizational health and leadership, technology, and transportation. Our specialty is rethinking possible with districts to allow leaders to focus on what matters most, while serving all students. The depth of our teams can be seen on our website, and are filled with professionals who have served as superintendents, directors, coordinators, specialists, and many other critical roles. To effectively service the needs of DeKalb County School District, we have planned for the necessary staff to ensure that the assessments move forward smoothly without interruption. There is no challenge facing a district that our team hasn't taken on.

3.4 | Why CESO?

CESO is uniquely positioned for the work outlined in this RFP. Our core values of curiosity, sincerity, and inclusivity cause us to regularly Rethink Possible focusing on support for every student, every partner and every community. Choosing CESO and CST brings to you

the power of our firms as a genuinely full-service advisory and management firm that provides expertise and supplemental support for all operational areas in the public sector entities across North America.

CESO has supported hundreds of organizations in three countries on a broad range of topics focused on improving efficiency and effectiveness. Our other clients have included universities, colleges, and community colleges; rural, suburban, and urban school districts and cities; private investment firms; private sector service providers; and professional associations. CESO helps maximize the value of money spent on public services. Our focus is on addressing complex challenges through a structured and disciplined analytical process that allows our clients to select the best options for addressing issues and concerns within all aspects of organizational management. We have expertise in the complexities of organizational structure and design, change management, leadership, and decision-making.

Our consulting services are focused on addressing various operational concerns for organizations. Our projects help optimize the balance between the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations. We have focused extensively on designing decision-making processes that allow school districts, municipal governments, colleges and universities, and quasi-governmental entities to balance best the use of their financial, technical, human resource, and capital assets.

Our team is a potent combination of education veterans and cross-disciplinary experts who understand the gray areas of leadership, operations, and consultation. We have successfully completed over thirty assessments at various scales, and understand that every district is unique. We'll come to the table ready to listen, advocate for your community, and look at every challenge through a lens of inclusivity and curiosity.

At CESO, we create conditions where leaders become free to focus on what matters most: leading your district toward greater effectiveness so that learners get more of what they need to thrive. Every step of the way, we'll help you Rethink Possible to put every possible education dollar where it belongs – in the classroom. We believe this will be true for DCSD!

3.5 | Emergency Service

For any emergency situations, district staff may contact Dr. Bob McDowell, CESO's SVP, at 612-221-8869.

Relevant Experience & Expertise •

City of Austin Fleet Mobility Services

P.O. Box 1088
Austin, TX 78767
Angela Vogel, Director of Human Resources
angela.vogel@austintexas.gov
512-974-1540
Classification Study 5/23/2023 - present

Austin Public Schools

401 3rd Ave NW
Austin, MN 55912
Dr. Joey Page, Superintendent
joey.page@austin.k12.mn.us
507-460-1900
Business Review, Communications, Human Resources, Transportation 9/20/2023 - present

Centennial School District

4707 North Road
Circle Pines, MN 55014
Patrick Chaffey - Executive Director of Business Services
pchaffey@isd12.org
763-792-6031
Communications, Finance, Human Resources, Transportation 7/1/2021- present

Diné College

Tsaile, AZ 86556
Ms. Bo Lewis - Vice President of Finance and Administration
928-724-6677
bolewis@dinecollege.edu
Facilities Maintenance and Operations Assessment 10/1/2023
Facility Operations Review 2/23/2023

Hastings Public Schools

1000 West 11th St.

Hastings, MN 55033

Cathy Moen, Director of Human Resources

cmoen@isd200.org

651-480-7002

Human Resources Support, Operations Study, Transportation Support 10/17/2017 - present

Minneapolis Public Schools

1250 W. Broadway Ave.

Minneapolis, MN 55411

Alicia Miller - Senior Human Resources Officer

alicia.miller@mpls.k12.mn.us

612-668-5428

Business Process Review, Operations Support, Transportation Support 11/6/2020 - present

Montgomery County Schools

15 W. Gude, Suite 400

Rockville, MA, 20850

Dana Davison - Chief of District Operations

Dana_E_Davison@mcpsmd.org

240-740-6245

Operations Review 6/1/2023 - present

Salt Lake City Schools

465 South 400 East, Suite 300

Salt Lake City, UT, 84111

Logan Hall - Executive Director of Human Resources

logan.hall@slcschools.org

801-578-8340

Classification Study 11/4/22 - 1/5/2023

St. Anthony-New Brighton Schools

3303 33rd Ave. NE

St. Anthony, MN 55418

Dr. Renee Corneille - Superintendent

rcorneille@isd282.org

612-298-1979

Communications, Finance, Technology, Transportation 5/14/2021 - present

St. Francis Area Schools

4115 Ambassador Boulevard NW

St. Francis, MN 55070

Karsten Anderson - Superintendent

763-753-7040

Karsten.Anderson@isd15.org

Finance Support, Operations Assessment, Technology Assessment, Technology Support

10/14/2022 - present

Professional References •

The following pages contain letters of recommendation from current and previous clients.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Expanding Opportunity and Unleashing Potential

OFFICE OF DISTRICT OPERATIONS

July 11, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

During the 2023-2024 school year, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) solicited a Request for Proposal to engage an external consultant to conduct a comprehensive analysis of operational functionality for the Department of Transportation (DOT). The Center for Effective School Operations (CESO), a consulting firm specializing in school system business operational functions, including transportation, was selected to evaluate DOT's efficiency and effectiveness, provide initial observations and findings, and help chart a sustainable path forward.

From September 2023 to January 2024, CESO examined five functional areas in their initial assessment of DOT. In order to conduct the assessment, CESO team members conducted comprehensive onsite interviews with staff and observed DOT operations. CESO's team members consisted of the expertise of the assigned consultants to each of the five functional areas. CESO then provided baseline assessments in the form of written and visual reports and deliverables followed by results and recommendations.

During the time CESO has completed work for MCPS, Mr. Tom Platt, Senior Vice President of Transportation, has been incredibly responsive and helpful. Each step of the way, reports were delivered on time and represented in ways that were both understandable and logical. The consultants on Mr. Platt's team were cognizant of DOT's daily operations, and conducted their interviews and observations with limited disruptions.

CESO has provided valuable insights into the strengths and challenges facing MCPS DOT, which is one of the largest publicly owned school bus fleets in the country. Their work continues to help us foster a more efficient, responsive, and inclusive transportation system to meet the evolving needs of our students, families, and staff. We recommend their expertise and support in future consultations.

Respectfully,



Dana E. Edwards
Chief of District Operations



Michael K. Lewis
Acting Director, Department of Transportation



Division of Human Resources

1250 W Broadway
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55411-2533
Phone: 612.668.5428 / Fax: 612.668.0505

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend the Center for Effective School Operations (CESO) based on their exemplary service and invaluable contributions to Minneapolis Public Schools over the past year. CESO has been an essential partner during a uniquely challenging time in our district, demonstrating genuine care, outstanding professionalism, and expertise in human resources, change management, and organizational leadership and development throughout our collaboration.

CESO has provided comprehensive support within the Division of Human Resources (HR). They conducted thorough assessments of four distinct departments within HR, as well as the Division of HR as a whole, delivering insightful analyses that have informed our strategic decisions and operational improvements. Additionally, their expertise in executive coaching and interim HR director support has been instrumental in maintaining continuity and leadership stability during transitional phases.

In addition to their evaluative roles, CESO has excelled in project planning and execution. They have facilitated critical focus groups and surveys, gathering crucial feedback from stakeholders, and recommended initiatives based on the results of the assessment that are aligned with the needs of our department, district, and greater community. Their ability to manage multiple projects simultaneously, while navigating the intricate dynamics of a large organization, is commendable.

CESO has consistently demonstrated initiative and proactivity in their approach. They have taken on responsibilities beyond the scope of their contractual obligations, willingly tackling additional tasks and alleviating workload pressures for our staff. Their commitment to excellence is evident in their meticulous attention to detail and their proactive management of complexities inherent in our organizational structure.

Throughout our partnership, CESO has not only met but consistently exceeded our expectations. Their professionalism, reliability, and collaborative spirit have made them an indispensable asset to our team. I have no hesitation in recommending CESO for any organization seeking a partner who can deliver exceptional results and navigate challenges with skill and dedication.

Should you require any further information or clarification regarding CESO's performance, please do not hesitate to contact me at 612-986-5369 or Alicia.miller@mpls.k12.mn.us. Thank you for considering this recommendation.

Respectfully,

Alicia Miller
Senior Human Resources Officer

Office of the Superintendent

District Office
4115 Ambassador Boulevard NW | St. Francis MN 55070
763-753-7040 | www.isd15.org



St. Francis Area Schools

July 9, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

The purpose of this letter is to highly recommend the Center for Efficient School Operations (CESO) to complete a comprehensive assessment of operations in your school district. My association with CESO spans about 20 years with three public school districts in Minnesota. With each experience, CESO has fulfilled its promises with a high-quality work product and recommendations focused on ensuring efficient and effective school operations.

In St. Francis Area Schools, CESO provided assessments of operations in the business, technology, and transportation departments. Their proposals were no-nonsense, comprehensive and cost effective. In addition, their proposals:

- included feedback from key individuals in each department;
- relied on expertise from multiple CESO employees who have strong experience in high performing districts;
- provided options (often listed as do now, do soon, do later) that were understandable and actionable; and
- included cost estimates based on industry standards from comparable districts.

Just as important, CESO will help guide implementation processes with whatever options, if any, are selected. For example, this summer CESO will continue to work with St. Francis Area Schools on implementing routing changes with a new software program; overall changes will provide better service for a cheaper cost. Within the technology department, organizational structural changes will reflect feedback from technicians as well as leaders; these changes will incorporate recommendations about wages and responsibilities.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse CESO for any school district seeking a reliable and effective partner to assess and enhance their operations. If you would like further information, please contact me at 651-347-2965 (phone or text) or Karsten.Anderson@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Karsten Anderson

Karsten Anderson
Superintendent



Carissa Anderson
Watershed High School
6541 16th Ave. S.
Richfield, MN 55423

July 8, 2024

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend CESO, our charter school support partner, for their exemplary services and unwavering support of our school from the Board to the administration, teachers and students. Over the course of our partnership, Bob McDowell has consistently demonstrated a commitment to collaboration, attention to detail, and a deep understanding of our unique needs. Our school community is special and requires awareness, listening, and thoughtful approaches. Bob has shown us all of these traits in spades. His contributions have significantly impacted various facets of our school's operations.

We started with CESO to conduct an independent investigation, which was conducted quickly, professionally and practically. Their assistance during a difficult time was so important to the entire board and staff. We then continued the engagement with Bob coming on to support our interim executive director for a year. During that year, he has supported our school in many ways and has introduced us to other folks at CESO. We now entrust CESO with several important aspects of our school and I am pleased to share specific examples of their outstanding support.

Leadership Support:

Bob's leadership support has been equally impressive. He has worked closely with our staff, Executive Director, and school board on strategic planning initiatives. His pre-work and facilitation of our strategic planning session were invaluable and moved us into an updated mission and plan that everyone supports and feels truly represents our school. Bob, the Executive Director and I meet regularly over the last year to support the development of our Executive Director who was in a stretch promotion to their current role. He has also been invaluable to me as a new Board Chair as I have learned new ways to conduct business in a more effective and efficient manner. His strategic thinking and practical approach have been crucial to us both. Bob has been instrumental in keeping us on track with our goals, timelines, and overall organizational development.

HR Support:

The HR support provided by CESO has been indispensable. They have conducted thorough investigations, offered hiring support, drafted and managed contracts, and provided essential training for our staff. We have had several HR challenges over the past year and CESO has helped us make tough decisions, find new staff and ensure that our school's culture and integrity remain fully intact. Their professionalism and attention to detail in handling sensitive HR matters have fostered a positive and compliant workplace environment.



Operational/Facility Support:

CESO has also played an important role in our operational and facility management. They have assisted with realtor engagements and explored various options for relocating our school. Their insights and logistical support have been invaluable as we navigate a potential facility change.

Finance Support:

Lauren Syrup started working with us more recently as we have transferred our finance support from another provider to CESO. She has worked seamlessly with our prior provider to ensure that nothing is lost during the transition. Her expertise and dedication have ensured a smooth transition, sound financial operations, and consistent communication with the board, which have been crucial for our school's growth and stability.

Technology Support:

In the realm of technology, CESO is now providing support to us for our technology needs. As our needs evolved, CESO stepped up to become our primary technology support team. We are looking forward to their partnership here as they will be training our people to manage certain tasks and they will support us in other aspects going forward. This is the newest aspect of CESO support for us and we are looking forward to the same teamwork and support that we have come to expect from CESO.

In conclusion, CESO has been and continues to be a trusted partner to Watershed and to me individually as the Board Chair. Bob's collaborative spirit, specialized expertise, and unwavering dedication have greatly contributed to our school's success through some truly challenging times. All of the folks we have interacted with at CESO have brought value to our school community and each new person we meet is equally as helpful, professional and each brings us value. I have no hesitation in recommending Bob and his colleagues at CESO to any organization seeking a reliable and proficient partner.

Sincerely,

Carissa Anderson
Chair, Board of Directors
Watershed High School