

## **Buchanan Community Schools Study**

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### **Purpose and Process**

The purpose of the study was to interview stakeholders and review documents to shed some light on the issues facing the Buchanan Community Schools, and, therefore, the Buchanan community.

The Board of Education, supported financially by the Gateway Foundation, employed Dr. Michael Lindley of lindleyandlindleyllc to conduct the study. In addition to reviewing policy, budgets, websites, legal documents and documents provided to me there were forty-nine people interviewed.

- Parents- 12
- Employees- 14
- Community- 10
- Board/central office- 8
- Students- 5
- \*Total: 49

\*some interviewees were parents and employees but were only counted once

The board did not and should not abdicate their responsibilities to be bound by any aspect of this report and/or recommendations. It is the intent that the report should be accepted in good faith as it represents a true and accurate report from the consultant. In addition the examples and comments herein are from your stakeholders not the consultant.

Before I begin the report I would like to share three comments with the board:

1. Citizens expect board members to act as their watchdogs. (MASB)
2. Faculty expects board members to serve as their advocates. (MASB)
3. There is a great deal of community pride in being a BUCK. This is a source of strength for the board. (Consultant)

The responses are categorized into five groups:

1. General
2. Visibility
3. Community
4. Communication
5. Transparency

## General

1. Job descriptions need to be updated annually, signed and filed. For example, the superintendent job description was last revised in 1996. It is a supervisory and management focused-not leadership. Furthermore there is no reference to collaboration or being the instructional leader for the district.
2. Policies should be reviewed in their entirety over a three year period. This will keep all of your policies up to date, communicated more effectively with stakeholders, and this increased awareness should reduce some conflict.
3. The Professional Learning Community model is a very effective process for continuous improvement. Unfortunately this initiative was considered top down and was met with some degree of resistance (mainly at the high school). Had the rollout been more collaborative and a clear understanding of the benefits it would be more firmly implemented, teachers would feel more empowered, and students would be the better for it.
4. There is a perception of lack of follow through by district leadership. The words “we are working on it” was quoted several times, but either no action was taken (possibly accepted), or there is a failure to tell your story.
5. The district website is hard to navigate which hinders clear communication.
6. The superintendent is to be commended for improving the hiring process.
7. The superintendent is trying to change the status quo and raise expectations. His communications with the board are positive and board members report he is doing the work of the board. It is the “how” that causes issues.
8. The superintendent has great vision; however, stakeholders do not understand why change is being made.
9. While concerns were expressed frequently about the board, there was a lot of agreement that the board members are good people, dedicated public servants, and wanting to do their best. As an experienced school administrator and board member, I can attest that this is a very involved board. y;
10. The superintendent believes he has an open door policy however he sends a mixed message by insisting on making an appointment. While the superintendents time must be protected an impromptu meeting shows concern, access, and a quick response is sometimes all that is needed.
11. Several people indicated that there is a vision to move the Buchanan Community Schools to a higher level of achievement. High level of performance should be measured by test scores for students, job satisfaction for teachers, administrators and staff. The ability to develop whole child (social/emotional), community satisfaction, financial success, parent satisfaction, and developing new leaders from within (succession planning) (Marzano and Kirtman).
12. If we applied Marzano and Kirtman's model to the current state of where the Buchanan Community Schools are, one word comes to mind: dysfunctional. As used in this model, “The Five Dysfunctions of a Team” (Lincioni) this consultant will take the liberty to define TEAM as all stakeholders. (see attached next page)
13. A lack of trust is one of the prevailing themes. In an article in “Live Your True Story” they list thirteen simple strategies for building trust.
  - a. Keep to your word and follow through with your actions.

- b. Learn how to communicate effectively with others.
- c. It takes time to build and earn trust.
- d. Take time when making decisions and think before acting too quickly.
- e. Value those relationships you have, and do not take them for granted.
- f. Treat your customers well and thank them for their business.
- g. Develop your team skills and participate openly.
- h. Always be honest.
- i. Help people whenever you can.
- j. Don't hide your feelings.
- k. Don't always self promote.
- l. Always do what you believe to be right.
- m. Admit your mistakes.

Details of the above list can be found at: [liveyourhistory.com](http://liveyourhistory.com) and [www.coachingpositiveperformance.com](http://www.coachingpositiveperformance.com)

### **Visibility**

1. The superintendent has been described as an introvert and experiences some degree of difficulty in initiating engagement with employees and students. As the leader Mr. Donahue needs to find ways to be more engaging, to help foster a common understanding of the district's vision and mission. In addition employees and other stakeholders are encouraged to invite Mr. Donahue to events, book readings, etc..
2. Mr. Donahue must find ways to become more involved in district and community activities.

### **Community**

1. Some members of the community have expressed concern the superintendent evaluation wasn't completed in a timely manner. The law specifies it must be completed annually but not a specific date. The board is in compliance.
2. The community needs to understand that if the board allowed public comment on specific individuals at public board meetings the board would be violating that individual's due process. The issue could then become a legal matter and the issue could very well get lost and not addressed in a timely manner until the legal issues are resolved. The board will be reviewing processes and procedures to ensure transparency and timeliness. Community members and employees should follow chain of command, however, they should be allowed access to move one step ahead of the chain of command if the issue has already been discussed with the (skipped) individual, or involves the individual, up to board access without negative consequences. The only time a complaint should be presented in public against the individual is when the person involved asks for a public hearing. In addition it is always recommended to attempt to solve issues most directly with the individual.
3. The community needs to recognize that the board and superintendent have initiated changes and they are attempting to make additional changes. This is evidenced by creating the Staff Advisory Committee, Parent Advisory Committee, some increased visibility by Mr. Donahue, and other initiatives. Please recognize that changes take time, and purposeful action over time will demonstrate good faith. It was expressed by many

that Buchanan residents have long memories and frequent old issues. There must be a degree of forgiveness and a willingness to move forward to make meaningful growth. Be a part of the solution!

4. Community members and employees need to approach the board with respect. In addition everyone should be treated with respect. Board members are public servants and the message will be better received if presented in a respectful manner. This may be difficult but necessary to focus on the issue and not get lost in the delivery. In addition it is of paramount importance that the adults model a culture of caring and appropriate problem solving for the students.

## COMMUNICATION

1. The board in consultation with the superintendent should consider utilizing professional assistance to develop a communication plan with a focus internally and externally.
2. The superintendent needs to develop a highly effective leadership team. The group dynamics are in need of adopting and utilizing group behavior strategies, and then modeling them throughout the district.
  - a. How effective is your leadership team? The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, (Lencioni).
    - i. Do they trust one another?
    - ii. Do they disagree and discuss any issue with passion?
    - iii. Do they leave the meeting all on the same page?
    - iv. Do they hold each other accountable with the meetings agreements?
    - v. Do they place the team's collective success ahead of department and ego?
3. While the superintendent is highly praised for his verbal and written skills, some self-reflection on the "how" and some degree of trying to anticipate the result of his actions would be of paramount importance. The quote of Maya Angelo is most appropriate here: "People will forget what you do and say, but they will never forget how you made them feel." The individuals and groups that have perceptions of distrust may have perceived it differently than the intent; however, it is a must to strongly consider their perceptions.
4. Chain of command issues were a frequent source of good intent; however, as used currently in the Buchanan Community Schools it is perceived as not allowing people to be heard. Your process needs to allow for some flexibility, so the message becomes more important than the practice currently in place.
5. The board has reacted to concerns raised, and is making strides to address more. The board and superintendent need to be more proactive in communication efforts to date and future intent to tell their story.
6. The administrative team is reading *Crucial Conversations*. There are many key messages and strategies for team building (all stakeholders) of note in this book.
  - a. Work on me first, us second.
  - b. What do I want for me?
  - c. What do I want for others?
  - d. What do I want for the district?

7. What you should do when you step out- Apologize, Contrast (fix misunderstandings), Create a Mutual Purpose.
8. The internal management team at present is somewhat dysfunctional and could benefit from some team building training. Mr. Donahue is encouraged to look for more inclusionary practices for team members to foster the benefits of collective problem solving and ownership of team solutions.
9. The business office needs to be aware of their role in providing timely and clear communication. Changes in procurement processes, budgets, forms, etc... needs some collaboration and communication BEFORE changes are made.
10. Accountability for yourself and others must include a supportive culture. As the leader of the district Mr. Donahue needs to be part of the solution by holding people accountable, providing timely feedback and the support required to assist personnel under his direction to be successful.
11. The superintendent needs to review specific procedures for evaluation that are conducive to growth. Even when some conflict might arise in the supervision of subordinates, face to face and timely feedback will reduce conflict. Other choices will increase anxiety, defensiveness, and a lack of trust.

### **My Group Behavior: Questions to Ask**

"Masterful Coaching", Robert Hargrove

- 1. Am I willing to be influenced? Am I open to learning?**
- 2. When advocating a position:**
  - a. Do I reveal my thinking/my mental models?
  - b. Do I explain my assumptions?
  - c. Do I share the observable data from which I drew my conclusions?
  - d. Do I encourage others to explore my model/my assumptions/the data?
  - e. Do I listen to really hear?
  - f. Do I stay open?
- 3. When faced with another's view with which I disagree:**
  - a. Do I ask, "What leads you to that view?"
  - b. Do I seek to truly understand the view?
  - c. Do I explore, listen and offer my own views in an open way?
  - d. Do I listen for the larger meaning that may emerge out of honest, open sharing of alternative models?

### **Ground Rules for Effective Groups**

"Masterful Coaching" Robert Hargrove

1. Test all assumptions, opinions and inferences
2. Share all relevant information
3. Use specific examples and agree on what key words/concepts mean
4. Explain your reasoning and intent
5. Focus on best interest and NOT on your position

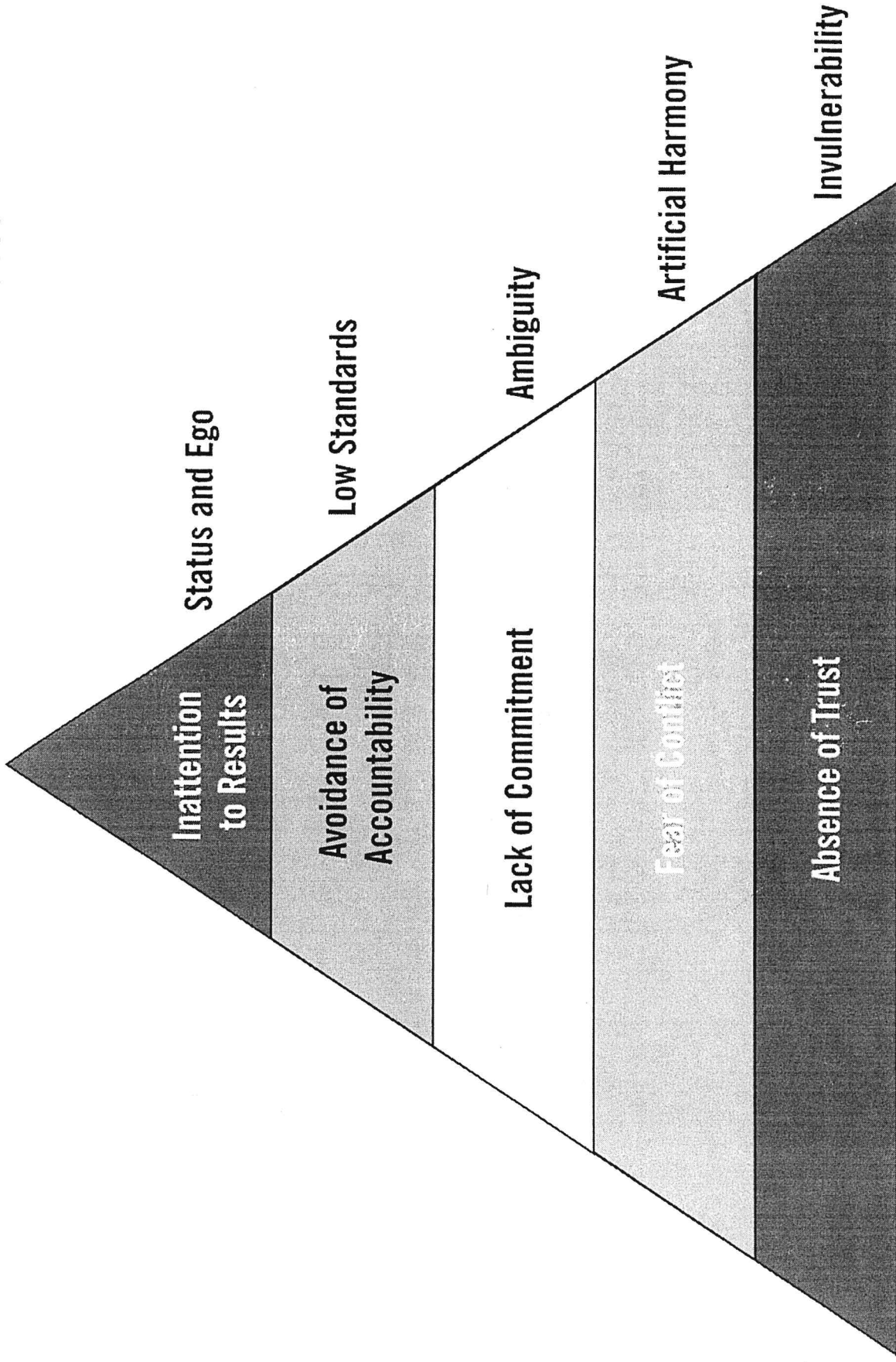
6. Combine advocacy and inquiry
7. Jointly design next steps and ways to test disagreements
8. Discuss "undiscussable" issues
9. Use a decision-making rule that generates the level of commitment needed (May be leader's decision.)

## Transparency

1. Be careful of having more than three board members present after adjournment. While there is no evidence of any business being discussed, it gives the wrong message.
2. You have listened to your constituents and changed your time limits to present to the board. This is a good first step.
3. The board and superintendent need to expect (board) and implement (superintendent) increased oversight and expectations of the business office to increase transparency. One example is to look at changing your budget format to a site based format to increase understanding. An example has been provided for your perusal and comparison to your current format. Online transparency reports need to be more timely and meet state guidelines. The business office exists to support the mission of the district and the employees who work daily to educate students academically and emotionally.
4. Several people reported the business manager either wouldn't or couldn't answer questions at the budget hearing. The very essence of a budget hearing is transparency.
5. The board and superintendent should review the open meetings act carefully for compliance. There is a perception of a lot of closed sessions which is leading to a perception of a lack of transparency.
6. Some issues were raised regarding mandatory FMLA leave. While no reference was found regarding a specific number of days the FMLA does allow an employer to mandate FMLA leave if it determines the leave may be based on an ongoing health issue.

In conclusion you now have the framework for your strategic plan and this reports recommendations. You can't start everywhere at once however you must take some decisive actions to reinstate the BUCK pride in the district. You have multi-generational support that you can tap into to address these issues. You cannot do it alone. The board and district leadership need to step up and acknowledge change is necessary and desired to most effectively serve the needs of students and employees.

# The Five Dysfunctions of a Team



# The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lencioni, 2005

#1 Absence of Trust: Members of great teams trust one another on a fundamental, emotional level, and they are comfortable being **vulnerable with each other about their weaknesses, mistakes, fears** and behaviors. They get to a point where they can be completely open with one another without filters. This is because...



# The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lencioni, 2005

#2 Fear of Conflict...teams that trust one another are not afraid to engage in passionate dialogue around issues and decisions that are key to the organization's success. They do not hesitate to disagree with, challenge, and question one another, **all in the spirit of finding the best answers**, discovering truth, and making great decisions. This is important because...

# The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lencioni, 2005

#3 Lack of Commitment...teams that engage in unfiltered conflict are able to **achieve genuine buy-in** around important decisions even when various members of the team initially disagree. That's because they ensure that **all opinions and ideas are put on the table and considered**, giving confidence to team members that no stone has been left unturned. This is critical because...

# The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lencioni, 2005

#4 Avoidance of Accountability...teams that commit to decisions and standards of performance do not hesitate to **hold one another accountable** for adhering to those decisions and standards. What is more, they don't rely on the team leader as the primary source of accountability, they go directly to their peers. This matters because...

# The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

Lencioni, 2005

#5 Inattention to Results...teams that trust one another, engage in conflict, commit to decisions, and hold on another accountable are very likely to set aside their individual needs and agendas and focus almost exclusively on what is the best for the team. **They do not give in to the temptation to place their departments, career aspirations, or ego-driven status ahead of collective results that define team success.**

GENERAL OPERATING BUDGET ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES

| Ref. No. | 111  | Elementary Instruction K-5                | Actual<br>2015-2016 | Actual<br>2016-2017 | Actual<br>2017-2018 | Adopted<br>2018-2019 | Amended<br>2018-2019 | Final<br>2018-2019 | Actual<br>2018-2019 | Adopted<br>2019-2020 |
|----------|------|---|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| 10001    | 1240 | Teacher Salary                            | 994,008             | 948,298             | 953,152             | 1,015,749            | 1,015,748            | 1,023,148          | 1,022,651           | 1,036,858            |
| 10783    | 1240 | Teacher - After School                    | 3,579               | 4,303               | 6,766               | 7,500                | 7,500                | 10,400             | 9,870               | 9,400                |
| 10821    | 1590 | Extra Curricular Positions (non Athletic) | 17,306              | 12,994              | 21,400              | 22,640               | 22,640               | 26,400             | 26,103              | 26,400               |
| 10880    | 1290 | Mentors                                   | 1,600               | 2,400               | 1,600               | 3,940                | 3,940                | 2,430              | 2,430               | 3,940                |
| 10883    | 1290 | Summer Professional Development           | 1,950               | 1,550               | 1,800               | 3,000                | 5,000                | 5,000              | 3,400               | 5,000                |
| 10406    | 1630 | Teacher Assistants                        | 18,102              | 31,031              | 60,511              | 39,400               | 50,500               | 64,600             | 66,353              | 64,600               |
| 10002    | 1870 | Substitute Teachers                       | 416                 | 880                 | 193                 | 1,500                | 1,500                | 1,500              | 473                 | 1,500                |
| 10003    | 2130 | Health Insurance                          | 307,381             | 295,519             | 335,215             | 366,200              | 324,000              | 328,900            | 324,833             | 359,300              |
| 10516    | 2310 | Graduate Tuition Allowance                | 1,157               |                     |                     | 1,200                | 2,400                | 2,400              | 430                 | 2,400                |
| 10004    | 2820 | Retirement                                | 301,075             | 299,154             | 440,902             | 427,648              | 450,831              | 459,737            | 448,339             | 465,445              |
| 10794    | 2820 | Retirement - After School                 | 1,334               | 1,622               | 2,621               | 2,953                | 2,813                | 3,900              | 3,830               | 3,525                |
| 11167    | 2820 | Retirement - offset                       | 85,462              | 86,693              |                     |                      |                      |                    |                     |                      |
| 10639    | 2210 | Retirement- ERI                           |                     |                     |                     |                      |                      |                    |                     |                      |
| 10438    | 2830 | FICA                                      | 72,881              | 68,712              | 71,334              | 76,977               | 77,979               | 79,336             | 77,275              | 80,501               |
| 10795    | 2830 | FICA - After School                       | 247                 | 333                 | 426                 | 575                  | 575                  | 719                | 708                 | 719                  |
| 10803    | 2830 | FICA - Title 1                            |                     |                     |                     |                      |                      |                    |                     |                      |
| 10523    | 3160 | Testing Services                          | 995                 | 1,934               | 2,840               | 2,500                | 5,000                | 6,000              | 5,624               | 6,000                |
| 10006    | 3210 | Travel and Expense                        |                     | 451                 |                     | 600                  | 600                  | 600                |                     | 600                  |
| 10007    | 3220 | Conferences                               | 130                 | 480                 | 30                  | 600                  | 600                  | 600                |                     | 600                  |
| 10584    | 4910 | Purchased Services                        | 1,418               |                     | 265                 | 500                  | 500                  | 500                |                     | 500                  |
| 10872    | 4910 | Purchased Services; Substitute            | 62,150              | 17,593              | 19,907              | 49,000               | 49,000               | 40,000             | 35,195              | 40,000               |
| 11128    | 4910 | Elem Field Trips-Admissions               | 5,331               | 5,877               | 5,919               | 6,000                | 6,000                | 6,000              | 4,685               | 6,000                |
| 10008    | 5110 | Teaching Supplies                         | 15,482              | 13,087              | 18,175              | 27,000               | 27,000               | 25,000             | 22,880              | 27,000               |
| 10009    | 5210 | Textbooks & Workbooks                     | 12,469              | 17,140              | 12,497              | 7,000                | 15,000               | 13,000             | 9,890               | 15,000               |
| 10010    | 5990 | Misc. Supplies                            | 525                 | 305                 |                     | 1,000                | 1,000                | 1,000              | 407                 | 1,000                |
| 10640    | 5990 | Technology/Software                       | 11,102              | 18,876              | 27,812              | 30,000               | 40,000               | 38,000             | 49,666              | 50,000               |
| 11211    | 5990 | Technology - At risk                      |                     |                     | 1,651               | 8,200                | 8,200                | 2,375              | 2,375               | 2,375                |
| 11203    | 6410 | New Equip/Additions - Deprec              |                     |                     | 19,072              | 10,000               | 10,000               | 10,000             | 8,830               | 10,000               |
| 11237    | 6410 | New Equipment Grant - Deprec              |                     |                     |                     |                      |                      |                    |                     |                      |
| 10287    | 6420 | New Equip./Additions - Non Deprec         | 3,375               | 2,853               | 8,255               | 7,000                | 7,000                | 7,000              | 4,321               | 7,000                |
| 11207    | 6420 | New Equip./Grant - Non Deprec             |                     | 18,298              |                     |                      |                      |                    |                     |                      |
| 10641    | 6420 | New Tech Equip./Additions-Non Deprec      |                     | 3,571               | 6,041               | 5,000                | 5,000                | 5,000              |                     | 5,000                |
| 10288    | 6460 | Replacement of Equip. & Furn.-Non Deprec. | 33                  | 2,344               | 180                 | 2,500                | 2,500                | 2,500              | 763                 | 2,500                |
| 10011    | 7910 | Misc. Expenses                            | 238                 | 427                 | 254                 | 500                  | 500                  | 500                | 462                 | 500                  |
| Totals   |      |   | 1,919,746           | 1,856,725           | 2,018,818           | 2,126,682            | 2,143,326            | 2,164,545          | 2,131,790           | 2,233,663            |