

## Report on Custodian Outsourcing Study Group – January 2010

**Membership of Committee:** Lloyd Crocker (Principal), Skip Cushman (School Board), Dave Durkee (Adult Ed Director), Mike Flaherty (Principal), Mike Garrity (Maintenance Director), Peter Harrison (Principal), Beth Johnston (School Board), Dave Lageux (Custodian), Sue Morrell (Foodservice Director), John Nye (Teacher), Diane Pepin (Head Custodian), and Mike Pulsifer (Director of Operations)

**Local Needs/Costs:** Currently we have 26.5 custodians working in RSU 23. Their primary responsibilities are for cleaning approximately 500,000 square feet of school/office space. We have an approximate budget of \$1,165,000 for custodial salaries/benefits/substitutes, with an added amount of approximately \$44,000 for cleaning supplies. Additionally, we outsource to clean the Saco Central Office, OOB Central Office, Saco Transition Program, and the Saco and OOB Alternative Education programs. When all costs are combined, we spend approximately \$2.66 per square foot to clean our RSU 23 buildings.

**Outsourcing Data Gathering:** Our committee contacted the following schools/staff to gather information on their outsourcing experiences: Bath Schools Maintenance Department, Morse High School, Falmouth Schools Maintenance Department, Falmouth High School, Gorham Schools Maintenance Department, and the Biddeford Superintendent of Schools. In addition, the RSU 23 Superintendent of Schools, Director of Maintenance and the Director of Operations met with an outsourcing company (Benchmark) to get first hand feedback from the owner.

**Findings:** Outsourcing companies charge approximately \$1.90 to \$2.00 per square foot to clean, with that charge being for the lower level of service rendered. For RSU 23, that could amount to about \$300,000 in savings (not including maintenance jobs that our current custodians currently do). Maintenance directors tend to like outsourcing, it can eliminate them having to get substitutes, deal with employee issues, negotiate work conditions, order supplies, or do evaluations. Principals tend to not like outsourcing, as there is a high turnover of workers, little ownership for school cleanliness, little loyalty to the school/district, and there is a lack of trust in the workers. The outsourced workers get minimum wage, no sick days, little or no insurance, and that is how outsourcing companies can charge the amounts that they do. RSU 23 has a "lean" program now, and efforts are being studied to save more money and continue to keep us efficient in our cleaning methods.

**Recommendations:** (1) Look at doing a study of "team-cleaning" as done by outsourced workers, to see if it can help us reduce sick day substitute costs for custodians and give us more time on task. A report on this study will be ready for the Superintendent's review in May. (2) The School Board should look at offering retirement incentives for custodians, to entice more senior, higher paid custodians to retire, and replacing them with lesser-paid custodians. (3) Trust means a lot when working in a school and with children, and we trust our current custodians. They go "beyond" what is expected of them, and they don't just do the job to get it done. (4) The study committee recommends we continue to use our current custodians, and to not outsource them. The study committee was unanimous in its recommendations.