



CENTER FOR POLICY RESEARCH

Setting the Pulse for Policy Research

School Procurement Practices Survey

**Conducted by
Center for Policy Research
Maxwell School
Syracuse University
2004**

*Funded by Education Finance Research Consortium
University at Albany*

Supported by
*New York State Association of School Business Officials &
New York State Council of School Superintendents*



School Procurement Practices Survey

Purpose

Procurement of supplies, materials, equipment and services is one of several important functions of school business offices. While non-personnel spending represent a relatively small part of the operating budget, procurement of commodities and services is essential to the daily delivery of educational services. Managing procurement, however, is frequently a complex and time-consuming process due to laws and rules that govern public purchasing. As local governments nationally have tried to cope with fiscal stress, changing of procurement practices has been one approach governments have used to reduce costs. The purposes of this survey are:

- To document procurement practices used by school districts in New York, and in particular identify innovative practices.
- To document the major constraints school business officials identify as limiting their ability to improve their procurement practices.
- To collect information on the types of training and resources school business officials would find valuable in managing procurement in their districts.

Distribution of Results

The survey results will be presented in a final report to the Education Finance Research Consortium at the University at Albany. The final report will be provided to any district which would like a copy. Summary results of the survey will also be provided to officials at the New York State Association of School Business Officials, and the New York State Council of School Superintendents. The report will present only summary information, and the survey results will be kept **confidential**. Only researchers involved in the project at Syracuse University will have individual survey results.

- Please indicate if you would like a copy of the summary report of survey results.

Contact Information:

Name: _____ **Title:** _____

Telephone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Questions about the purpose and content of this survey should be directed to Bill Duncombe,
Professor of Public Administration, Center for Policy Research.
Please call (315) 443-9040 or e-mail duncombe@maxwell.syr.edu.

I. General Information: Please tell us about your district.

- 1. How many students are enrolled in your school district?** _____
- 2. How many schools does your district operate?** _____
- 3. What was your district's budget for the 2002-03 school year?** _____
- 4. Approximately, how many purchase orders for goods and services were issued for your district in the 2002-03 school year?** _____
- 5. Approximately, what was the total dollar value of purchase orders for goods and services issued in the 2002-03 school year?** _____

II. Procurement Staffing & Support

- 6. How many full-time equivalent (FTE) positions does your district employ for procurement operations?**
(Include staff involved in purchasing, maintaining purchasing/inventory records, and managing inventory/warehouse.) _____
- 7. Compared to five years ago, has your district's number of full-time equivalent staff (FTE) for procurement increased, decreased, or stayed the same?**
 - Increased
 - Decreased
 - Stayed the same
- 8. Do you feel you have enough staff to procure goods and services efficiently in your district?**
 - Yes
 - No
- 9. Would you be interested in training and support about procurement practices for you or your staff provided by an outside organization?**
 - Yes —————> Go to question 9a on the next page.
 - No —————> Go to question 10 on the next page.

9a. What type of training and/or support would you like? (Check all that apply.)

- Training and materials for new procurement personnel
- Training and materials on innovative procurement practices
- A website dedicated to purchasing practices for school districts
- Support organizing cooperative purchasing groups
- Support selecting electronic procurement management software
- Organized conferences for training and sharing practices
- Other _____

9b. If you are interested in training opportunities for your staff, please indicate which procurement topics would be of the most interest to you.

10. How do you get assistance from the New York State Education Department (SED) with procurement issues? (Check all that apply.)

- I contact a SED staff member directly.
- I use SED's website.
- I use training materials supplied by SED.
- I do not presently use SED when I need help with procurement issues.

11. What suggestions do you have about how SED could improve or expand the services it provides to districts in the area of procurement? (If you need additional space, please use the comment box in the back of the survey.)

III. Vendor Relations

12. Does your district maintain a prospective bidders list for various types of goods and services?

- Yes
- No

→ **Go to question 13.**

12a. How is your prospective bidders list created? (Check all that apply.)

- I use vendors who respond to Invitations for Bid (IFB) and Request for Proposals (RFP).
- Vendors ask to be placed on bidders lists.
- I use bidders lists from neighboring school districts/localities.
- I use bidders lists from trade associations.
- Other _____

13. Does your district have a manual for vendors that explains the policies and practices used to procure goods and services?

- Yes
- No

14. How many contracts has your district cancelled due to a vendor's poor performance in the last five years?

- None
- 1 – 2
- 3 – 4
- 5 or more

15. How many bid protests did your district have in the 2002-03 school year?

- 0
- 1 – 5
- 6 – 10
- 11 or more

IV. Inventory and Warehousing

16. Does your district maintain a central warehouse or storehouse?

Yes

No → Go to question 17 on the next page.

16a. What kinds of commodities does your district buy in bulk and store centrally? (Check all that apply.)

- Athletic equipment
- Building and grounds maintenance supplies
- Custodial supplies
- Food and dairy products
- Food service supplies & equipment
- Instructional materials
- Office supplies, equipment & furniture
- Other _____

16b. Why is a warehouse or storehouse used in your district? (Check all that apply.)

- Commodities are purchased in bulk to get a better price.
- Schools in my district do not have the facilities to accept delivery of some commodities.
- Schools in my district do not have the personnel to accept delivery of some commodities.
- Schools in my district have limited space to store supplies they need throughout the year.
- Other _____

V. General Procurement Practices

17. Does your district use a purchasing calendar?

Yes

No

18. Please indicate which procurement method you use most frequently for the following goods and services. (Check **one** method per category. Leave blank if you don't procure certain items.)

	<i>State OGS Contracts*</i>	<i>BOCES (CoSer)</i>	<i>County/City Contracts</i>	<i>Cooperatively Bid Contracts</i>	<i>Competitive Bidding/RFP</i>	<i>No Bidding/ Negotiation</i>
Athletic equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Automotive commodities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building maintenance supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Building & security services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer hardware	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer software	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer technical support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dairy products	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food (not dairy products)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fuel (gas, heating oil, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture (classroom)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furniture (office/computer)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Grounds maintenance supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Human resource services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instructional materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Library books	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Office equipment (e.g. copiers)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Office supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
On-line library databases	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telecommunications equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Telecommunications services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Travel services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waste removal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*Includes preferred source commodities and services from CORCRAFT, Industries for the Blind, etc.

19. To what extent is your district's use of OGS contracts influenced by each of the following?

	(Circle one for each line.)			
OGS contracts typically. . .	Not at all	Slight Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
a. provide lower prices/better value.	1	2	3	4
b. save time and administrative costs of bidding.	1	2	3	4
c. provide better quality of goods/services.	1	2	3	4
d. other-- <i>Please describe:</i>	1	2	3	4

20. To what extent is your district's use of OGS contracts limited by each of the following?

	(Circle one for each line.)			
OGS contracts typically. . .	Not at all	Slight Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
a. do not provide lower prices/better value.	1	2	3	4
b. do not provide product/service specifications I need.	1	2	3	4
c. are too expensive to deliver to my area.	1	2	3	4
d. are too complicated/difficult to understand.	1	2	3	4
e. I sometimes don't know that certain goods/services are available through OGS contracts.	1	2	3	4
d. other-- <i>Please describe:</i>	1	2	3	4

21. One option available with OGS contracts is to use best and final offer (BAFO) and mini-bid processes, which allow a district to develop specifications for a product or service and then solicits bids from OGS qualified contractors to determine the best value solution for the product or service. **How frequently do you use the best and final offer (BAFO) and mini-bid processes for procuring goods and services through OGS contracts? (Circle one.)**

Never 2 3 4 Always
 1 2 3 4 5

22. Would your procurement staff attend training sessions about how to use OGS contracts if such sessions were available for school districts?

- Yes
- No

VI. Cooperative Purchasing

23. Is your district a member of a formal cooperative purchasing group? We are defining a cooperative purchasing group as multiple school districts or localities that jointly purchase goods and services by cooperatively preparing specifications, advertising for bids, and awarding contracts.

- Yes
- No

Go to question 24.

23a. Please list the name(s) of the group(s).

23b. To what extent is your district's decision to purchase cooperatively influenced by each of the following?

Cooperative purchasing typically. . .	(Circle one for each line.)			
	Not at all	Slight Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
1. provides lower prices/better value.	1	2	3	4
2. saves time and administrative costs of bidding.	1	2	3	4
3. provides better quality of goods/services.	1	2	3	4
4. provides access to more vendors.	1	2	3	4
5. other-- <i>Please describe:</i>	1	2	3	4

23c. How satisfied are you with your cooperative purchasing group(s)? (Circle one.)

Not at all satisfied
1

2

3

4

Very satisfied
5

24. To what extent is your district's decision to purchase cooperatively limited by each of the following?

Cooperative purchasing typically. . .	(Circle one for each line.)			
	Not at all	Slight Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
a. does not provide lower prices/better value.	1	2	3	4
b. does not save time and administrative costs of bidding.	1	2	3	4
c. is difficult to organize due to disagreements about specifications.	1	2	3	4
d. There are no purchasing cooperatives in my district's area.	1	2	3	4
e. other-- <i>Please describe:</i>	1	2	3	4

VII. Procurement Cards

We are defining procurement cards as an alternative purchasing and payment method (typically administered by credit card companies) that can be used for low-value purchases.

25. Does your district issue procurement cards to schools or other district staff (including procurement staff)?

Yes

No

Go to question 26.

25a. Who is authorized to use procurement cards in your district? (Check all that apply.)

Superintendent

Associate/Assistant Superintendent

School business official

Principals

Other administrators

Others _____

25b. What limitations exist for use of these cards? (Check all that apply.)

Only for use with specific vendors (e.g. Staples, Wegman's, etc.)

Only for use for travel expenses

Only for use with a receipt from a store/vendor

Only for use when school is in session

Other _____

25c. Are card holders given an itemized report of their purchases each month?

Yes

No

25d. Does a business services staff member review itemized reports of procurement card purchases each month?

Yes

No

Go to question 27 on the next page.

26. Please indicate the reason(s) why your district does not use procurement cards.

(Check all that apply.)

My district has never considered using them.

It is too difficult to administer and control the use of procurement cards.

My district does not buy enough low price items on a regular basis to need procurement cards.

Procurement card use could reduce the use of competitive bids, and raise unit costs.

Other _____

VIII. E-procurement

27. Does your district have a website that includes information about how it procures goods and services?

Yes

No

→ **Go to question 28.**

→ **27a. What type of information and functions are available for vendors on your district's website?**
(Check all that apply.)

General information about your district's procurement policies

Contact information for questions about your district's procurement policies

On-line registration for bidders lists

Solicitation notices

Bid and proposal documents available for download

Awards notifications

Information about invoicing and payment for vendors

Electronic payment for vendors (e.g. electronic funds transfer)

Other _____

28. Does your district use a regional purchasing group or BOCES to post solicitations on the Internet?

Yes

No

→ **Go to question 29.**

→ **28a. How satisfied are you with the electronic services offered by your regional purchasing group or BOCES?**

Not at all satisfied

1

2

3

4

Very satisfied

5

29. Please indicate the tasks procurement staff perform using the Internet or an internal network in procuring goods and services for your district. (Check all that apply.)

Research for price estimates

Make small purchases that do not require competitive bidding

Research contracts established by the OGS or other locality

Communicate with vendors via e-mail

Accept bids and proposals from vendors

Communicate with staff in the district, other localities, or professional organizations regarding procurement matters via e-mail

Other _____

30. What is the principal means that schools use to requisition goods and services in your district? (Check one.)

- Paper requisition
- Electronic requisition with electronic signature
- Electronic requisition with paper signature
- Phone call to central purchasing department
- Fax
- Other _____

31. Does each procurement staff member in your district have access to the Internet at his/her workstation?

- Yes
- No

32. Is your district's purchase order or contract system integrated electronically with its financial management system?

- Yes
- No

Go to question 33.

32a. What software program(s) do you use?

IX. Information Technology

33. Who makes a majority of the decisions about the make(s) and model(s) of computers that your district purchases. (Check one.)

- Superintendent
- Purchasing staff
- IT department/staff
- School principals
- Other _____

34. Has your district developed a common standard or specification for computers that it purchases?

- Yes → Go to question 34a on the next page.
- No → Go to question 35 on the next page.
- No, but planning to in the near future → Go to question 35 on the next page.

34a. Are these standards a part of a comprehensive IT strategy that your district has adopted?

- Yes
- No

35. Does your district use a cooperative service agreement (CoSer) to procure IT services through BOCES?

- Yes
- No

Go to question 36 on the next page.

35a. Which IT services does BOCES provide for your district? (Check all that apply.)

- Hardware support
- Software licenses and support
- Software technical training
- Internet service and networking (LANS, WANS, etc.)
- Administrative computer services—student data
- Administrative computer services—financial services
- Computer and network security
- IT strategic planning
- Other _____

35b. To what extent is your district’s use of BOCES’ IT services influenced by each of the following?

BOCES' IT services typically. . .	(Circle one for each line.)			
	Not at all	Slight Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent
1. provide lower prices/better value than my district could on its own.	1	2	3	4
2. save time and administrative costs of bidding/issuing an RFP.	1	2	3	4
3. are eligible for state aid.	1	2	3	4
4. provide access to more grants/federal funding for IT infrastructure and services.	1	2	3	4
5. other-- <i>Please describe:</i>	1	2	3	4

35c. How satisfied are you with the IT services you receive through BOCES?

(Circle one.)

Not at all satisfied

Very satisfied

1

2

3

4

5

X. *Opinions and Comments*

36. Do you feel the bidding requirements established in General Municipal Law for purchase contracts over \$10,000 are too low, just right, or too high for your district to procure goods and services efficiently?

- Too low
- Just right
- Too high
- No opinion

37. Please list 3 major constraints, starting with the most critical, faced by your district in improving its procurement practices.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

38. If the budget spent on management of procurement in your district is increased by 20 percent (assuming no restraints on how the money is spent), how would you use the additional funds?

39. Please tell us about any noteworthy or innovative procurement practices used by your district that may be helpful to other districts.



Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your assistance in providing this information will help us present an accurate picture of school district procurement practices in New York. If you have additional comments, please do so in the space provided below.

Please fold the completed survey and place in the postage-paid envelope that was in your survey packet.

Thank you.

If you have questions or comments, please contact:

Bill Duncombe, Professor of Public Administration
Center for Policy Research, Syracuse University
(315) 443-9040



A Survey Conducted by the Maxwell School of Syracuse University
Bill Duncombe, Professor of Public Administration
Center for Policy Research, Syracuse University

426 Eggers Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244-1020