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United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Accounting and Information
Management Division

B-283669

September 21, 1999

The Honorable Robert F. Bennett
Chairman
The Honorable Christopher J. Dodd
Vice Chairman
Special Committee on the
  Year 2000 Technology Problem
United States Senate

Subject: <u>Reported Year 2000 (Y2K) Readiness Status of 25 Large School Districts</u>

At your request, we identified the Y2K readiness status, as reported to us by 25 of the nation's largest public school districts,[1] for systems supporting those districts' key business functions. On September 17, 1999, we briefed your staff on the results of our work. This letter provides a high-level summary of the information presented at that briefing, including background information and the reported readiness of those school districts. The briefing slides are enclosed.

Background

School districts rely on a number of key business functions. These include *administrative systems* such as personnel/payroll and financial management, *student records, student transportation* (including fuel for buses), *food service, facilities/embedded systems* (such as fire/security, telephones, and lighting), and *instructional labs*—hardware, networks, and application software.

During the 1997-98 school year, almost 47 million public school students were taught by close to 3 million teachers in 91,000 schools comprising 16,411 public school districts. The top 3 states in terms of student population were California (6 million), Texas (4 million), and New York (3 million). While the number of schools in the average school district was 6, the 100 largest districts had an average of 152.

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[1] The school districts selected were the top 25 in terms of student population for the 1997-98 school year according to the Department of Education, except in cases in which such selection would result in a state being represented more than once.

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Reported Y2K Readiness of Key Business Functions

In most instances, surveyed public school districts designated administrative systems, student records, facilities/embedded systems, student transportation, and food service as mission critical functions. All school districts surveyed considered their administrative systems mission critical, and the other functions were considered mission critical by most. While instructional labs were generally not considered mission critical, three districts did report their respective instructional lab systems as such.

Of the 25 school districts surveyed, 7 (28 percent) reported that all of their systems which support their mission critical business functions were Year 2000 compliant. Two districts (8%) reported that their mission critical systems would be Year 2000 compliant by the end of this month. The remaining 16 districts (64%) reported that their systems would be ready by the last quarter of 1999 or later, including 9 (36%) reporting that compliance would be achieved after November 30, 1999.

School districts vary in the number of business functions each plans to have independently verified; however, the majority of school districts (18 of 25) report that they do plan to have at least one of their business functions independently verified. Seven districts report that with the exception of instructional labs, they plan to have all of their business functions independently verified, while the same number (seven) report that they do not plan to have independent verification for any of their business functions.

The majority (22 of 25) of school districts report having compliant data exchanges. Fifteen districts report having contingency plans in development; 10 report completing them, including 5 reporting that testing of these plans has also been completed.

Finally, most schools have been designated by their local communities to serve as emergency shelters, and may require additional coordination with other city and county offices in the event of Y2K induced problems. Twenty districts reported such designations, while five reported not being so designated.

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to identify the reported Y2K status of key functions for large public school districts nationwide. From the Department of Education's list of the 100 largest school districts, according to student population, for the 1997-98 school year, we selected the top 25, except in cases in which such selection would result in a state being represented more than once. We developed a structured set of questions and interviewed school district officials by telephone, obtaining information on the Y2K status of key business functions for elementary and secondary school operations. In conducting the telephone survey, we asked to speak with someone having sufficient knowledge of the district's Y2K status to speak for the district. The information was self-reported, and we obtained a response rate of 100 percent. We also requested supporting documentation and reviewed Internet web sites. After conducting the

survey by telephone, we forwarded the survey results to the responding officials and asked that they confirm the accuracy of their responses and to make any changes if needed. Our work was conducted in Washington, D.C., between August 30 and September 17, 1999.

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We will send copies of this correspondence to the Honorable John Koskinen, Chairman of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion; the Honorable Jacob J. Lew, Director, Office of Management and Budget; and other interested parties. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

If you have any questions on matters discussed in this letter, please call me at (202) 512-6408 or David B. Alston, Assistant Director, at (202) 512-6369. We can also be reached by e-mail at willemssenj.aimd@gao.gov and alstond.aimd@gao.gov, respectively. Key contributors to this assignment were Michael Fruitman, Gregory Micco, and M. Yvonne Sanchez.

Joel C. Willemssen
Director, Civil Agencies Information Systems

Enclosure

(511779)

GAO Accounting and Information
Management Division

**Reported Y2K Readiness of 25 Large
School Districts**

Briefing for the Special Committee on
the Year 2000 Technology Problem,
United States Senate

September 17, 1999

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1

GAO **Briefing Overview**

- Objective, Scope, and Methodology

- Background

- Key Business Functions

- School Districts' Reported Y2K Status

  - Time Estimates for Completing Y2K Activities
  - Readiness Status
  - Independent Verification
  - Data Exchanges, Contingency Plans, and Emergency Shelter Designations

2

GAO Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Objective

- Identify reported Y2K readiness of key functions for large public school districts nationwide

Scope

- School districts selected from the Department of Education's list of 100 largest school districts for the 1997-98 school year

- Selected the top 25, except in cases in which such selection would result in a state being represented more than once

3

GAO Objective, Scope, and Methodology
(continued)

Methodology

- Developed a structured set of questions

- Interviewed school district officials by telephone September 2-17, 1999, and obtained information on the Y2K readiness of each district's key business functions for elementary and secondary school operations

  - 100 percent response rate

- Information was self-reported and was not independently verified

- Requested school district officials to confirm survey responses

- Requested supporting documentation and reviewed available Internet web sites

4

GAO **Background**

- During the 1997-98 school year, there were 16,411 public school districts consisting of approximately

  - 47 million students
  - 3 million teachers
  - 91,000 schools

- California had the most public elementary and secondary school students (6 million), followed by Texas (4 million) and New York (3 million).

- The average school district had 6 schools; the 100 largest averaged 152 schools.
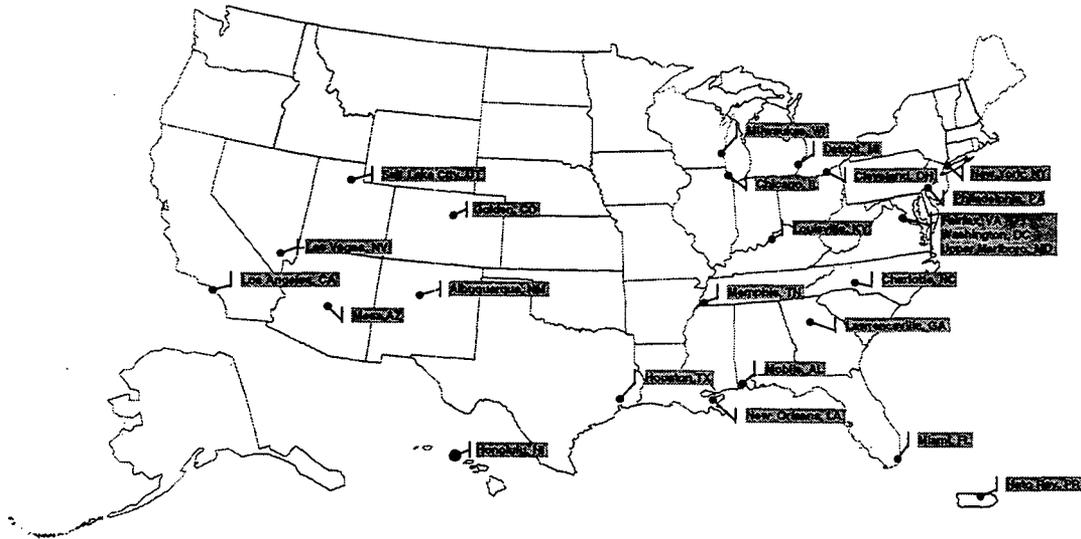
5

GAO Background
Largest School District by State

School District	City	State	County	Number of Students	Number of Teachers	Number of Schools
New York City Public Schools	New York	NY	Kings	1,071,853	60,648	1,153
Los Angeles Unified	Los Angeles	CA	Los Angeles	680,430	30,905	645
Puerto Rico Dept of Education	Hato Rey	PR	San Juan	616,470	38,976	1,543
City of Chicago School District 29	Chicago	IL	Cook	477,610	23,372	585
Dade County School District	Miami	FL	Dade	345,958	17,493	321
Philadelphia City School District	Philadelphia	PA	Philadelphia	212,865	10,999	259
Houston Independent School District	Houston	TX	Harris	210,988	11,606	299
Clark County School District	Las Vegas	NV	Clark	190,822	9,862	221
Hawaii Department of Education	Honolulu	HI	Honolulu	189,887	10,653	251
Detroit City School District	Detroit	MI	Wayne	174,730	8,666	271
Fairfax County Public Schools	Fairfax	VA	Fairfax	145,722	N/A	212
Prince Georges County Public Schools	Upper Marlboro	MD	Prince George's	128,347	7,216	182
Memphis City School District	Memphis	TN	Shelby	111,227	6,225	163
Jefferson (KY) County	Louisville	KY	Jefferson	104,338	5,408	165
Milwaukee School District	Milwaukee	WI	Milwaukee	101,253	5,846	206
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	Charlotte	NC	Mecklenburg	95,795	6,007	130
Gwinnett County School District	Lawrenceville	GA	Gwinnett	93,509	5,609	78
Jefferson (CO) County R-1	Golden	CO	Jefferson	88,006	4,178	156
Albuquerque Public Schools	Albuquerque	NM	Bernalillo	87,274	5,314	124
Orleans Parish School Board	New Orleans	LA	Orleans	83,175	4,485	122
District of Columbia Public Schools	Washington	DC	District of Columbia	77,111	N/A	171
Cleveland City School District	Cleveland	OH	Cuyahoga	76,504	4,621	125
Granite School District	Salt Lake City	UT	Salt Lake	74,956	3,264	97
Mesa Unified School District	Mesa	AZ	Maricopa	69,764	3,424	80
Mobile County School District	Mobile	AL	Mobile	65,230	3,683	89
				5,573,824	288,460	7,648

6

Source: Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; 1997-98 school year
N/A = Not Available

GAO Background
School District Location

GAO Key Business Functions

- **Administrative Systems** -- personnel/payroll, financial management
- **Student Records** -- attendance, grades/test scores, transcripts
- **Student Transportation** -- fuel for buses, maintenance systems
- **Food Service** -- suppliers, point-of-sale terminals
- **Facilities/Embedded Systems** -- elevators, energy management systems, fire/security systems, heating, ventilation, air conditioning, access systems, lighting, generators, telephone systems, refrigeration systems
- **Instructional Labs** -- hardware/networks, application software

8

GAO **Key Business Functions**
Operations School Districts Consider Mission-Critical

25   ■ Mission-Critical   □ Not Mission-Critical   □ Not Applicable

22

18   17

15

10

7   7

22

3   1   3

Administrative Systems   Student Records   Facilities/ Embedded Systems   Student Transportation   Food Service   Instructional Labs
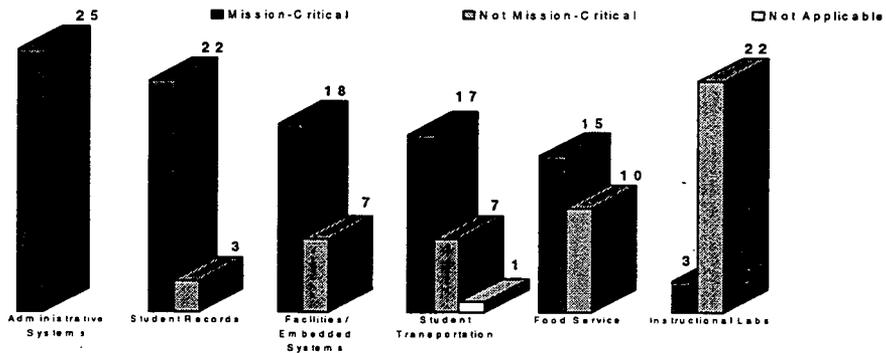
Facilities/embedded systems, student transportation, and food service--while not always considered mission-critical--were considered mission-important or high priority functions by some schools. The three school districts that categorized instructional labs as mission-critical did so because certain components in their labs were mission-critical. Several school districts reported that instructional software will be used until 1/1/2000. At that time, if it becomes dysfunctional, it will be discarded. They also noted that instructional software is not considered to be date-sensitive.

9

GAO Key Business Functions
Detail by School District

School District	Admin Systems	Student Records	Facilities/ Embedded Systems	Student Transportation	Food Service	Instructional Labs
New York City Board of Education	●	●	●	●	●	O
Los Angeles Unified School District	●	●	●	●	●	O
Puerto Rico Department of Education	●	O	O	O	O	O
Chicago Public Schools	●	●	●	●	●	O
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	●	●	O	●	●	●
Philadelphia City School District	●	●	●	●	●	O
Houston Independent School District	●	●	●	●	●	O
Clark County School District	●	●	●	●	●	O
Hawaii Department of Education	●	●	●	N/A*	●	O
Detroit City School District	●	●	●	●	O	O
Fairfax County Public Schools	●	●	●	●	O	O
Prince George's County Public Schools	●	O	O	O	O	O
Memphis City School District	●	●	O	O	O	O
Jefferson County Public Schools, KY	●	●	●	O	●	O
Milwaukee Public Schools	●	●	●	●	●	O
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	●	O	O	O	O	O
Gwinnett County Public Schools	●	●	●	●	●	●
Jefferson County Public Schools, CO	●	●	●	O	O	O
Albuquerque Public Schools	●	●	●	●	●	O
Orleans Parish School Board	●	●	O	O	O	O
District of Columbia Public Schools	●	●	●	●	●	●
Cleveland City School District	●	●	●	●	●	O
Granite School District	●	●	●	●	O	O
Mesa Unified School District	●	●	●	●	O	O
Mobile County School District	●	●	O	●	●	O

● = Mission-Critical   O = Not Mission-Critical   N/A = Not Applicable

10

*Hawaii reported no extensive busing of students; selected busing in rural areas is handled by a subcontractor, managed by another state agency.

GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Time Estimates for Achieving Y2K Compliance

School District	Y2K Ready Now	Y2K Ready by Sept 30	Y2K Ready by Oct 31	Y2K Ready by Nov 30	Y2K Ready After Nov 30
New York City Board of Education	●				
Los Angeles Unified School District	●				
Puerto Rico Department of Education			●		
Chicago Public Schools				●	
Miami-Dade County Public Schools		●			
Philadelphia City School District					●
Houston Independent School District					●
Clark County School District					●
Hawaii Department of Education		●			
Detroit City School District				●	
Fairfax County Public Schools			●		
Prince George's County Public Schools					●
Memphis City School District					●
Jefferson County Public Schools, KY	●				
Milwaukee Public Schools					●
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	●				
Gwinnett County Public Schools			●		
Jefferson County Public Schools, CO				●	
Albuquerque Public Schools	●				
Orleans Parish School Board					●
District of Columbia Public Schools			●		
Cleveland City School District					●
Granite School District					●
Mesa Unified School District	●				
Mobile County School District	●				
	7 (28%)	2 (8%)	4 (16%)	3 (12%)	9 (36%)

11

Note: Time estimates for completing Y2K activities exclude completion of instructional labs because most school districts do not consider this function as mission-critical.

GAO **School Districts' Reported Y2K Status**
Readiness Status

Number of school districts reported being Y2K ready
now by business function:

- administrative systems 16
- student records 19
- facilities/embedded systems 11
- student transportation 15
- food service 18
- instructional labs 3

12

GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Summary of Readiness Status by Business Function
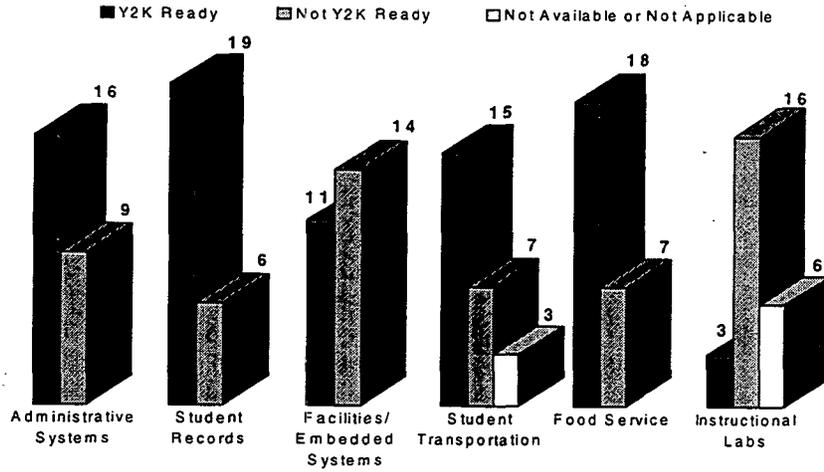
■ Y2K Ready   ▨ Not Y2K Ready   ☐ Not Available or Not Applicable

13

GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Readiness Status By Business Function

School District	Admin Systems	Student Records	Facilities/ Embedded Systems	Student Transportation	Food Service	Instructional Labs
New York City Board of Education	•	•	•	•	•	N/A
Los Angeles Unified School District	•	•	•	•	•	60%
Puerto Rico Department of Education	•	•	80%	N/A	•	60%
Chicago Public Schools	95%	75%	90%	75%	•	N/A
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	•	•	95%	•	•	•
Philadelphia City School District	•	•	95%	•	•	85%
Houston Independent School District	80%	•	65%	•	•	N/A
Clark County School District	98%	98%	95%	99%	95%	85%
Hawaii Department of Education	90%	80%	•	N/A	•	80%
Detroit City School District	•	•	60%	50%	•	60%
Fairfax County Public Schools	•	99%	99%	•	•	50%
Prince George's County Public Schools	95%	80%	•	•	90%	N/A
Memphis City School District	99%	•	75%	•	•	50%
Jefferson County Public Schools, KY	•	•	•	•	•	•
Milwaukee Public Schools	95%	•	90%	N/A	75%	60%
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	•	•	•	•	•	96%
Gwinnett County Public Schools	•	•	•	75%	•	90%
Jefferson County Public Schools, CO	•	•	•	90%	70%	N/A
Albuquerque Public Schools	•	•	•	•	•	75%
Orleans Parish School Board	99%	•	80%	77%	40%	•
District of Columbia Public Schools	99%	•	99%	•	•	N/A
Cleveland City School District	•	•	85%	•	40%	10%
Granite School District	•	85%	90%	75%	15%	40%
Mesa Unified School District	•	•	•	•	•	70%
Mobile County School District	•	•	•	•	•	90%

• = Y2K Ready   X% = Not Y2K Ready, Percentage Complete   N/A = Not Applicable or Not Available

14

GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Completion Dates By Business Function

School District	Admin Systems	Student Records	Facilities/ Embedded Systems	Student Transportation	Food Service	Instructional Labs
New York City Board of Education	Jun-99	Jun-99	Jun-99	Jan-99	Jun-99	Dec-99
Los Angeles Unified School District	Jun-99	Jun-99	Aug-99	Jun-99	Jun-99	N/A
Puerto Rico Department of Education	Sep-99	Aug-99	Oct-99	N/A	N/A	Jun-00
Chicago Public Schools	Oct-99	Nov-99	Oct-99	Oct-99	Sep-99	2000
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	Oct-98	Oct-98	Sep-99	Oct-98	Sep-99	Aug-99
Philadelphia City School District	Sep-99	Mar-97	Dec-99	Jul-99	Jul-99	Dec-99
Houston Independent School District	Dec-99	Aug-99	Dec-99	Aug-99	Aug-99	2000
Clark County School District	Nov-99	Nov-99	Nov-99	Nov-99	Dec-99	Mar-00
Hawaii Department of Education	Sep-99	Sep-99	Jun-99	N/A	Jul-99	Sep-99
Detroit City School District	Jul-99	Nov-98	Nov-99	Oct-99	Sep-99	Oct-99
Fairfax County Public Schools	Aug-99	Sep-99	Oct-99	Jul-99	Aug-99	Oct-99
Prince George's County Public Schools	Sep-99	Dec-99	Jul-99	N/A	Sep-99	2000
Memphis City School District	Sep-99	Jul-99	Dec-99	Jul-99	Jul-99	Dec-99
Jefferson County Public Schools, KY	Jul-98	Jul-98	Jul-99	Jul-98	Jul-99	Feb-99
Milwaukee Public Schools	Nov-99	Sep-99	Nov-99	Nov-99	Dec-99	Aug-00
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	Jun-99	Jun-99	Jul-99	Sep-99	Jun-99	Oct-99
Gwinnett County Public Schools	Jul-99	Jul-99	May-99	Oct-99	Jun-99	Oct-99
Jefferson County Public Schools, CO	Jul-99	Aug-99	Aug-99	Oct-99	Nov-99	Dec-99
Albuquerque Public Schools	Jul-99	Aug-99	Aug-99	Sep-99	Jun-99	Dec-99
Orleans Parish School Board	Sep-99	Aug-99	Nov-99	Oct-99	Dec-99	Aug-99
District of Columbia Public Schools	Sep-99	May-99	Oct-99	Aug-99	Jun-99	Nov-99
Cleveland City School District	Sep-99	Feb-99	Dec-99	Jul-99	Nov-99	Nov-99
Granite School District	Mar-99	Oct-99	Oct-99	Nov-99	Jan-01	Jun-00
Mesa Unified School District	Mar-99	Apr-99	Jul-99	Jul-99	Jul-99	2000
Mobile County School District	Sep-99	Sep-99	Sep-99	Sep-99	Sep-99	2000

N/A = Not Applicable or Not Available

15

GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Independent Verification by Business Function

Number of school districts reporting independent verification of:

|	Completed	Planned or Ongoing	Not Planned or Not Available
• administrative systems	5	12	8
• student records	7	7	11
• facilities/embedded systems	2	9	14
• student transportation	3	8	14
• food service	5	4	16
• instructional labs	1	4	20

16

GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Independent Verification by Business Function

School District	Admin Systems	Student Records	Facilities/ Embedded Systems	Student Transportation	Food Service	Instructional Labs
New York City Board of Education	◑	O	O	O	O	O
Los Angeles Unified School District	O	O	O	O	O	O
Puerto Rico Department of Education	●	◑	◑	N/A	N/A	◑
Chicago Public Schools	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	●	●	◑	●	●	●
Philadelphia City School District	◑	●	◑	●	●	◑
Houston Independent School District	◑	●	◑	◑	●	O
Clark County School District	◑	◑	O	O	O	O
Hawaii Department of Education	●	●	●	N/A	●	O
Detroit City School District	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑
Fairfax County Public Schools	O	O	O	O	O	O
Prince George's County Public Schools	◑	◑	O	O	O	O
Memphis City School District	◑	◑	◑	◑	◑	O
Jefferson County Public Schools, KY	●	●	O	●	O	O
Milwaukee Public Schools	◑	O	◑	◑	◑	O
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	O	O	O	O	O	O
Gwinnett County Public Schools	◑	●	●	◑	●	O
Jefferson County Public Schools, CO	●	O	O	O	O	O
Albuquerque Public Schools	◑	◑	O	O	O	O
Orleans Parish School Board	O	O	O	◑	O	O
District of Columbia Public Schools	◑	●	◑	◑	O	O
Cleveland City School District	O	O	O	O	O	O
Granite School District	O	O	O	O	O	O
Mesa Unified School District	O	O	O	O	O	O
Mobile County School District	O	O	O	O	O	O

● = Complete   ◑ = Planned or Ongoing   O = Not Planned   N/A = Not Applicable or Not Available

17

GAO School Districts Reported Y2K Status
Data Exchanges and Contingency Plans

- 22 school districts reported having compliant data exchanges

- 15 school districts reported having business continuity and contingency plans (BCCP) in development

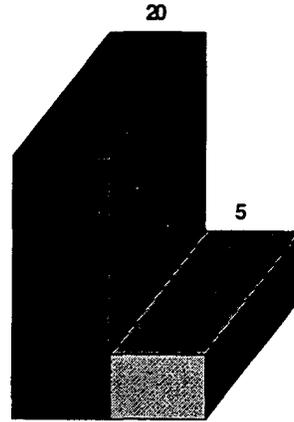- 10 school districts reported having completed BCCPs, 5 reported also testing them

22

15

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2 1

Compliant Data Exchanges?   Completed Contingency Plans?

■ Yes   ▨ No   ☐ Not Applicable

18
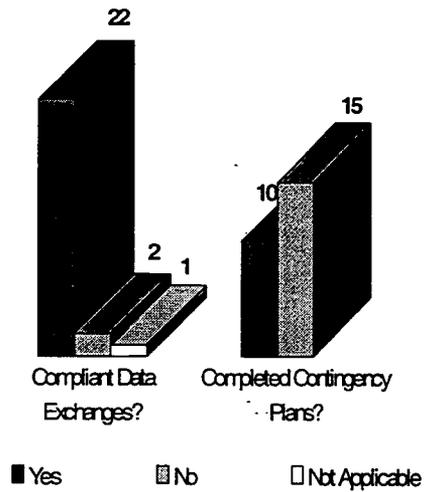
GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Schools Used As Emergency Shelters

Schools may be designated by their local communities to serve as emergency shelters. This designation may require additional coordination on the part of a school district and completion of Y2K facility readiness.

As shown by the data, 20 of the 25 schools in the survey report they are designated emergency shelters for their communities.

20

5

■ Yes   ⊞ No

19

(511779)

GAO School Districts' Reported Y2K Status
Data Exchanges, Contingency Plans, and
Emergency Shelters

School District	Data Exchanges Compliant?	Contingency Plans Complete?	Contingency Plans Tested?	Schools Used as Emergency Shelters?
New York City Board of Education	●	Oct-99	O	●
Los Angeles Unified School District	●	●	O	●
Puerto Rico Department of Education	N/A*	●	●	●
Chicago Public Schools	●	Dec-99	O	O
Miami-Dade County Public Schools	●	●	O	●
Philadelphia City School District	●	●	●	●
Houston Independent School District	●	Dec-99	O	●
Clark County School District	Nov-99	Nov-99	O	●
Hawaii Department of Education	●	●	O	●
Detroit City School District	●	Nov-99	O	●
Fairfax County Public Schools	●	Nov-99	O	●
Prince George's County Public Schools	●	O	O	●
Memphis City School District	●	Oct-99	O	●
Jefferson County Public Schools, KY	●	●	●	●
Milwaukee Public Schools	Nov-99	Nov-99	O	●
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	●	●	O	O
Gwinnett County Public Schools	●	Nov-99	O	●
Jefferson County Public Schools, CO	●	●	O	●
Albuquerque Public Schools	●	Oct-99	O	●
Orleans Parish School Board	●	Oct-99	O	●
District of Columbia Public Schools	●	Oct-99	O	●
Cleveland City School District	●	Dec-99	O	O
Granite School District	●	Nov-99	O	O
Mesa Unified School District	●	●	●	O
Mobile County School District	●	●	●	●

20

● = Yes   O = No   N/A = Not Applicable

*Puerto Rico uses a manual process for exchanging data