



CERTIFICATION CASE STUDY



COMPANY:

Floyd County Schools

HEADQUARTERS:

Rome, GA, USA

EMPLOYEES:

750



CIMS-GB Certification Helps School District Demonstrate Leadership in Sustainability

When school districts take the lead in driving sustainability, they are setting an example for the children and communities they serve. This is why Floyd County Schools, a 21-school district based in Rome, GA, uses its sustainability initiatives to not only operate more efficiently and sustainably, but also to educate students about the impact building operations have on the environment.

This education has proven immensely valuable: For years, the district’s landscaping and recycling programs as well as other sustainability projects have been successful both in reducing the district’s environmental impact and in teaching children how to be environmental stewards in school and at home.

With these successes to fall back on, the district turned its attention to “greening” its cleaning operations. Yet, such a move involved much more than a simple switch to environmentally preferable products. Instead, the organization chose to take a holistic, comprehensive approach to green cleaning by pursuing certification to ISSA’s Cleaning Industry Management Standard (CIMS) Green Building (GB). The district appreciated the fact that CIMS-GB does not focus exclusively on green building criteria, but rather, includes a foundation of effective management. (The Standard is built around five principles of management best practices— quality systems; service delivery; human resources; health, safety and environmental stewardship; and management commitment.) Floyd County Schools recognized that CIMS and CIMS-GB provided the perfect framework for quality, customer-centered service.

“CIMS is a progressive standard,” says Dr. Bob Puckett, Floyd County Schools’ deputy superintendent. “[Pursuing CIMS-GB] showed that we were willing to look at better ways to do things—for the school, for the cleaning operation, and for the students.”

Recognizing the need for consistency and improvement across the entire cleaning operation, district officials relied on the principles embedded in CIMS-GB to increase safety, reduce operations costs, and provide consistently superior results. Ultimately, Floyd County Schools proved to be a true leader in the sustainability movement by becoming the first K-12 public school system in the United States to earn CIMS-GB certification.

Gearing Up for CIMS-GB

Floyd County Schools started the process to become CIMS-GB certified by working with its longtime product supplier, Roman Chemical Corp., to analyze the cleaning chemicals that were traditionally being used in the schools. Ultimately, the district was able to settle on just three environmentally preferable cleaning products, making sure that the selected products could be dispensed using systems that deliver the precise amount of solution for a specific cleaning task, thereby helping to eliminate improper mixing and product overuse. Reducing the total number of products in the schools’ inventory decreased safety risks, increased cleaning consistency and efficiency and reduced overall supply costs.

The reduction in supply costs, in turn, allowed the district to consolidate product, helping the district deal with the ongoing challenge of limited budgets. In fact, even with the purchase of new products and dispensing systems, Floyd County points to a total savings of 10 percent to 12 percent on its annual product supply budget.

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The simplified product portfolio also allowed for the organization to refine and standardize its training process for cleaning workers. Custodians in all 21 schools now follow the same standardized task procedures, working off job cards that describe each cleaning task and outline a schedule for each worker. The task card system was developed with the help of Jim Chittom of Roman Chemical and fits perfectly with the district's workloading software that defines tasks based on building schematics, square footage, and the number of full-time custodial workers. Chittom, who is a CIMS certified ISSA Certification Expert—or I.C.E.— was also instrumental in helping Floyd County Schools develop its CIMS-GB manual and training programs.

To meet CIMS-GB's training requirements, the district implemented health and safety training programs for all employees. The training programs focus on hazardous material spill containment and response as well as other worker safety programs. The district also updated all its material safety data sheets (MSDS) posting updated MSDS in janitor's closets, principal's offices, and clinics.

Compliance with CIMS' five management principles was achieved by taking a collaborative approach within the district – involving all departments, from maintenance and human resources to administration and top management.


"Everyone was involved in data gathering; CIMS affects everything in the school system," Puckett says. "But everyone, including all the principals, embraced CIMS-GB from the very start."

Just the Beginning

Since achieving CIMS-GB certification, Puckett says he can definitely see positive results.

"Prior to CIMS-GB, some schools were cleaner than others," he says. "I've definitely noticed an improvement in cleanliness. Also, morale among our 75 custodial employees has improved. They take a little more pride in their schools."

Other school district superintendents are noticing, too. In fact, already there are other districts in the area hoping to follow in Floyd County Schools' footsteps by pursuing CIMS-GB certification. But living up to the standard set by Floyd County will not be easy. Those who have been involved in the transformation believe the district is just getting started, and see CIMS-GB as driving improvement in other areas of the school.

"The achievement of CIMS-GB is just a starting point," Chittom says. "Once organizations get certified, they're not done. But under the Standard, everything is in order and in place to make a difference . . . to focus on continuous improvement. It's like the beginning of the rest of your life, and it's only going to get better." 

About CIMS and CIMS-GB:

CIMS is the first comprehensive management and operations standard for cleaning organizations. Administered by ISSA and the American Institute for Cleaning Sciences, CIMS is a standard of excellence designed to help building service contractors and in-house service providers develop quality, customer-focused organizations.

The core CIMS framework is built around five quality principles that have proven to be the hallmarks of well-managed, successful cleaning organizations: Quality Systems; Service Delivery; Human Resources; Health, Safety and Environmental Stewardship; and Management Commitment.

The optional sixth dimension of the Standard, CIMS-GB, enables cleaning organizations to help their customers achieve points with the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance (LEED-EBOM) Green Building Rating System, while greening their operations overall.

Why should a company certify to CIMS and CIMS-GB? ISSA Director of CIMS Dan Wagner explains: "Implementation of the Standard's elements affords an organization a tremendous opportunity to validate its management systems and processes. Professional, customer-focused cleaning organizations finally have a touchstone resource, a common rallying point around which all members of the industry can gather and work toward achieving an unprecedented level of professionalism and excellence."



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