



Comprehensive Staffing Analysis

Menahga Public Schools

August 7, 2026

Rethink Possible.

Executive Summary

Menahga Public School District is a small school district educating around 1,250 students in rural north-central Minnesota. The district is seeking to address budget challenges and reached out to the Center for Effective School Operations (CESO) to conduct a comprehensive staffing analysis. The primary goal of this analysis is to evaluate the district's current staffing levels in comparison to similar districts as the district works to align its staffing to meet its operational needs. In particular, the district is seeking to determine whether the district is over- or under-staffed compared to comparable districts.

CESO obtained staffing details from five comparable districts and used these details to complete its analysis, identifying where Menahga has a higher or lower number of staff across all employee groups compared to these peer districts when adjusted to account for differences in student enrollment.

Key Findings: The central finding is that Menahga is overall staffed very efficiently for a district of this size. In most employee categories, Menahga is staffing at lower FTE levels than comparable districts. The notable exceptions are in the Paraprofessional and Transportation areas, as detailed in the report. In prior years, Menahga has invested in transportation to bring in students from rural areas and also in additional paraprofessional interventionists to reduce students needing special education services. Both of these strategies have been successful. These two employee groups may be areas to reexamine staffing levels for future budget years. Other areas of consideration would be in use of strategic partnerships with external sources for areas, such as, transportation, food service, special education, business and human resources to see if it is more cost effective to deliver these services internally or externally. Finally, in the future, the district may have an opportunity to reduce one overall custodial FTE through natural attrition as vacancies arise.

CESO is available and remains committed to supporting the district in the strategic consideration of these comparisons to ensure effective and efficiently structured operations.

The following report details CESO's key findings and recommendations for Menahga to consider related to their current staffing.

Methodology

To gather the data needed for the staffing analysis, CESO collected student enrollment and staff full-time equivalents (FTE) for the following employee categories:

- Administration
- Teachers
- Support Staff
- Paraprofessional
- Special Education Instructional Staff
- Custodial
- Food Service
- Transportation

To analyze the data collected from Menahga against other school districts, CESO identified 27 districts for comparison based on size and/or proximity to Menahga. Similarly sized districts were identified using enrollment data available from the Minnesota Department of Education's Average Daily Membership (ADM) report. Comparable districts for this study were selected based on district characteristics (i.e., similar size and/or demographics). The comparable districts used for this study are:

Cannon Falls Public School District • Cass Lake-Bena Public Schools • Crookston Public School District • Dover-Eoyta Public School District • Esko Public School District • Glencoe-Silver Lake School District • Hawley Public School District • Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead Public Schools • Jackson County Central School District • Lake City Public School District • Luvern Public School District • Melrose Public School District • Minnewaska Area School District • Montevideo Public Schools • Morris Area Public Schools • Pillager Public School District • Pierz Public School District • Pipestone Area School District • Plainview-Elgin-Millville Community School • Redwood Area School District • Roseau Community School District • Sauk Centre Public School District • Sibley East School District • Wadean-Deer Creek School District • Windom Area Public Schools • Zumbrota-Mazeppa School District

Six of the 27 districts provided responses to CESO's request and have been included in this report. Comparable district names are abbreviated in the report to the city or first city listed in the school district name.

Limitations

CESO identified limitations with the available data in this study. These limitations are included for transparency in analysis.

Student Enrollment Variance

A primary limitation of this analysis is the difference in student enrollment across comparable districts. Student enrollment is highly variable among districts and directly impacts the number of staff employed by an individual district. The student populations among responsive comparable districts to Menahga range from 1,050 to 1,360. The average absolute percent difference in total students compared to Menahga is 11.58%. To account for different student enrollments, CESO has applied a scaling factor to normalize the data received for analysis.

District Responses

While most districts provided staff FTE for all categories, not all districts furnished such information. Where districts did not provide FTE, this may be due to structural differences or an indicator that those services are staffed through a third party and should be considered when making staffing decisions.

District Staffing Design

Comparing staffing across districts can be challenging; each district will have its own unique staffing design to meet the needs of its student population and community effectively. For example, a district may have a higher percentage of special education students and require additional teaching and/or paraprofessional staff compared to another district with fewer special education students. A higher or lower FTE than the average could be justified by Menahga's specific local needs, such as varied student demographics or unique programmatic offerings, which should be weighed before making staffing changes.

District Comparison

The following table provides general information about Menahga in comparison to the overall student and staffing numbers gathered from responsive comparable districts. To account for differences in student population when comparing staff numbers, CESO has calculated and applied a scaling factor to normalize staffing across the dataset and create a true comparison in staffing numbers if each responsive district had the same size student population. CESO has additionally calculated the average student enrollment and average actual staff to provide further detail for comparison; the average is calculated using responsive district data only and does not include Menahga. Staff and student numbers are reflective of the point in time when each district responded to CESO's data request.

District	Number of Buildings	Student Enrollment	Special Education Enrollment	Scaling Factor	Total Staff - Actual	Total Staff - Adjusted
<i>Menahga</i>	2	1,141	172	1.0	181.02	181.02
Cannon Falls	4	1,050	225	1.09	206	224.54
Esko	1	1,267	241	.90	190.75	171.68
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	3	1,337	247	.85	183.625	156.08
Montevideo	4	1,360	302	.84	274	230.16
Wadena-Deer Creek	2	1,100	na	1.04	233	242.32
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	3	1,261	458	.90	218	196.20
<i>Average</i>	3	1,229	295	n/a	217.56	203.50

It is important to note that the average calculated above is high due to the wide range of total staff reported by responsive districts.

Special Education Enrollment

District staffing requirements can be impacted by multiple factors, including special education enrollment. CESO requested additional details from each comparison district regarding special education enrollment and programming. These numbers are outlined in the table below. Where districts did not provide special education numbers, the table will display "n/a".

District	Student Enrollment	Special Education Enrollment	Percent Special Education	SPED Setting III/IV Students
<i>Menahga</i>	1,141	172	15.07%	11
Cannon Falls	1,050	225	22.95%	3
Esko	1,267	241	19.02%	13
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	1,337	247	18.47%	10
Montevideo	1,360	302	22.21%	n/a
Wadena-Deer Creek	1,100	n/a	n/a	n/a
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	1,261	458	36.32%	18
<i>Average</i>	1,229	295	23.79%	11

Overall Staffing

The table below provides further details on the number of staff reported by responsive comparable districts and broken out by employee type. It is important to note these are the actual numbers as reported and have not been adjusted using the scaling factor outlined above. Where districts did not provide staff numbers for an employee group, the table will display “n/a”.

District	Administration	Teachers	Support Staff	SpecEd	Paras	Food Service	Custodial	Transportation
<i>Menahga</i>	6	66.92	12.1	11	43	10	10	22
Cannon Falls	9	85	27	12	30	10	8	25
Esko	5	71.51	4.25	13	32	6.25	8	5.25
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	10	76.5	16	21.5	42.25	7.25	10.125	n/a
Montevideo	12	93	81	19	55	n/a	16	n/a
Wadena-Deer Creek	3	98	7	n/a	74	13	18	20
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	6	92	27	18	36	24	15	n/a
<i>Average</i>	7.5	86	27.04	16.7	44.88	12.1	12.5	16.75

These groups are compared in further detail in the following section, to provide a detailed, district-by-district breakdown of the staffing within each employee type for all responsive districts in the analysis.

District Staffing Comparison by Employee Type

This section provides further detail on staffing within each of the employee types included in this study. The following tables outline the positions included within each category of employee (Administration, Teachers, Support Staff, Paraprofessionals, Food Service, Custodial, and Transportation) to illustrate the composition of specific roles and positions reported within these groups. The tables further outline the reported Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) from each responsive district and the adjusted FTE using the identified scaling factor. Positions staffed through external, third-party relationships are not reflected in these tables.

It is important to note that all responsive districts reported the same or highly similar position titles for the Custodial group. Titles have been omitted from this table for the employee group.

Administration

The administration group includes all leadership and core support functions for the district and various secretarial and directorial roles (i.e., superintendents, principals, business managers, secretaries, directors, etc.). Positions that a district has staffed through an external third-party relationship are not included in the table.

District	Titles Included	Scaling Factor	Administration FTE - Actual	Administration FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	- Superintendent - Principal - Assistant Principal - Secretaries - AP/Athletic Director - Teaching/Learning Coordinator - Student Success Coordinator	1.0	6	6
Cannon Falls	- Superintendent - Principal - HR Director - Business Manager - Community ED/AD - Head of Maintenance & Grounds - Community ED/Bomber Care & Activities Coordinator	1.09	9	9.81
Esko	- Superintendent - Principal - Special Education Director - Special Education Coordinator	.90	5	4.5
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	- Superintendent - Principal - Directors	.85	10	8.5
Montevideo	- Office Manager - Director of Building & Grounds - MTSS Coordinator - Principal - Superintendent	.84	12	10.08

District	Titles Included	Scaling Factor	Administration FTE - Actual	Administration FTE - Adjusted
	• Chief School Business Official • Payroll & Accounting Specialist • Director of Professional Development • Activities Director • Chief Tech Director			
Wadena-Deer Creek	• Superintendent • Principal	1.04	3	3.12
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	• Superintendent • Principal • AD • Community Ed Coordinator	.90	6	5.4
Average Administration FTE			7.5	6.9

Teachers

Teaching positions have been further separated into two categories: *Preschool & K-6* and *High School (7-12)*. This separation accounts for differences in staffing between elementary and secondary levels, where secondary staffing is most often based on subject rather than individual grade levels.

Student to Teacher Ratio

The chart below shows the student to teacher ratio for each district. This ratio provides a general indication of how many students are assigned to or supported by one teacher within a district based on reported FTEs. The number of students has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

District	Student Enrollment	Teachers	Student to Teacher Ratio
<i>Menahga</i>	<i>1,141</i>	<i>66.92</i>	<i>19:1</i>
Cannon Falls	1,050	85	12:1
Esko	1,267	85	15:1
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	1,337	76.5	17:1
Montevideo	1,360	91	15:1
Wadena-Deer Creek	1,100	98	11:1
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	1,261	92	14:1
<i>Average Student to Teacher Ratio</i>			<i>14:1</i>

Student to Teacher Ratio Preschool and K-6

The chart below shows the student to teacher ratio for each district for PreK-6. This ratio provides a general indication of how many students are assigned to or supported by one teacher within a district based on reported FTEs. The number of students has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

District	PreK-6 Student Enrollment	Teachers	Student to Teacher Ratio
<i>Menahga</i>	667	41.92	16:1
Cannon Falls	582	50	11:1
Esko	671	93	7:1
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	727	59.5	12:2
Montevideo	748	93	8:1
Wadena-Deer Creek	620	69	9:1
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	683	51	13:1
Average Student to Teacher Ratio			10:1

Preschool and K-6

Positions listed in the table below include elementary grade-level classroom teaching positions and do not include specialists (i.e. art, music, physical education, etc.) or student services positions that support all grades (preK-12).

District	Preschool & K-6 Positions	Scaling Factor	Preschool & K-6 FTE - Actual	Preschool & K-6 FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	- PreK-6 - Elementary Specialist	1.0	41.92	41.92
Cannon Falls	PreK-6	1.09	50	54.5
Esko	PreK-8	.90	42.91	38.62
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	- Preschool - Elementary Social Worker - Elementary Dean of Students - K-6	.85	59.5	50.58
Montevideo	PreK-6	.84	42	35.28
Wadena-Deer Creek	PreK-6	1.04	69	71.76
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	PreK-6	.90	51	45.9
Average Preschool and K-8 Teacher FTE			52.4	49.44

Highschool Student to Teacher Ratio

The chart below shows the student to teacher ratio for each district for grades 7-12. This ratio provides a general indication of how many students are assigned to or supported by one teacher within a district based on reported FTEs. The number of students has been rounded to the nearest whole number.

District	7-12 Student Enrollment	Teachers	Student to Teacher Ratio
<i>Menahga</i>	474	25	19:1
Cannon Falls	468	35	13:1
Esko	596	28.6	21:1
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	610	39.5	15:1
Montevideo	612	51	12:1
Wadena-Deer Creek	480	29	17:1
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	578	41	14:1
<i>Average Student to Teacher Ratio</i>			<i>15:1</i>

High School

Positions listed in the table below include secondary classroom teaching positions along with specialists (i.e. art, music, physical education, etc.) and student services positions that support all grades (preK-12).

District	High School Positions		Scaling Factor	High School FTE - Actual	High School FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	9-12 - Elective Teachers	Specialist Teachers	1.0	25	25
Cannon Falls	9-12 - Math - Language - Science	- Social Studies - English - Elective Teachers	1.09	35	38.15
Esko	9-12 - MS Counselor - Spanish - Vocal Music - English - Band - PE/Health	- Social Studies - Math - Family & Consumer Science - Business Education - HS Counselor	.90	28.6	25.74
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	9-12 - Art - Band and Choir - Math - English - Geography - Business	- ALP - Behavior Interventionalist - Counselor - Social Studies - Science - PE - Spanish	.85	39.5	33.58
Montevideo	9-12 - English - Math - Science - Phy. Ed - Band - ELL - Business Ed	- Title Teachers - Music - Social Studies/ Geography - Language Arts - Spanish - Industrial Technology	.84	51	42.84
Wadena-Deer Creek	9-12 - PE/Health	- Art - Ag/Industrial	1.04	29	30.16

District	High School Positions	Scaling Factor	High School FTE - Actual	High School FTE - Adjusted
	- Social Studies - English - Science - Spanish - Technology Education - Vocal Music - Math - Band			
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	9-12 - Art - Band - Business/Computers - Language Arts - Music - Phy Ed/Health - SPED Teachers - Spanish - Math - Social Studies	.90	41	36.9
Average High School Teacher FTE			37.35	34.56

Support Staff

The support staff group includes specialized, non-instructional roles that include administrative and operational support positions along with student support and technical staff (i.e., secretaries, nurses, library and media staff, technology staff, facilities staff, coaches, etc.). Positions that a district has staffed through an external third-party relationship are not included in the table.

District	Support Staff Titles	Scaling Factor	Support Staff FTE - Actual	Support Staff FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	- Nurse - Technology - Office Staff	1.0	12.1	12.1
Cannon Falls	- Cannon Kids/Bomber Care - Facility Engineer - ECFC - IT Manager - LPN - Office Support	1.09	27	29.43
Esko	- Nurse - Media Staff - Tech Staff	.90	4.25	3.83
Howard	LPN	.85	16	13.6

Lake-Waverly-Winstead	- Secretaries - HR/Payroll Coordinator - Tech Specialist - Nurse			
Montevideo	- School Nurse Assistant - Library Staff - Clerical - Behavior Interventionalist - A&I Staff	.84	26	21.84
Wadena-Deer Creek	- Tech - Nurse - Health Aide - Media Center	1.04	7	7.28
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	- Tech Staff - Health Nurse - Secretaries - Community Ed - Seasonal Workers - Coaches	.90	33	29.7
Average Support Staff FTE			27.04	17.61

Special Education Instructional Staff

Positions listed in the table below include special education instructional positions along with intervention and specialized instructional support staff (i.e., special education teachers, interventionists, speech-language pathologists, etc.). Positions that a district has staffed through an external third-party relationship are not included in the table.

District	Special Education Instructional Staff Titles	Scaling Factor	Special Education Staff FTE - Actual	Special Education Staff FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	- Special Education Teachers - Speech/Language Pathologist	1.0	11	11
Cannon Falls	- Special Education Teachers - Interventionalists	1.09	12	13.08
Esko	Special Education Teachers	.90	13	11.7
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	- Elementary & Secondary Special Education Teachers - Reading Interventionalist - Title Teachers - Speech Language Pathologist - SEAT	.85	21.5	18.28
Montevideo	Special Education Teachers	.84	19	15.96
Wadena-Deer Creek	No positions provided	1.04	n/a	n/a
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	Special Education Teachers	.90	18	16.2
Average Special Education Instructional Staff FTE			16.7	15.04

Paraprofessional

The paraprofessional group includes all paraprofessional positions in the district including Title 1 (if applicable) and special education. Positions in this group that a district has staffed through an external third-party relationship are not included in the table.

District	Paraprofessional Titles	Scaling Factor	Paraprofessional FTE - Actual	Paraprofessional FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	Paraprofessionals	1.0	43	43
Cannon Falls	Special Ed Paraprofessionals	1.09	30	32.7
Esko	Paraprofessionals	.90	32	28.8
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	- Special Ed Paraprofessionals - Health Office Paraprofessionals	.85	42.25	35.91
Montevideo	- Special Ed Paraprofessionals - Classroom Paraprofessionals	.84	55	46.2
Wadena-Deer Creek	Paraprofessionals	1.04	74	76.96
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	- Special Ed Paraprofessionals - Title Paraprofessionals	.90	36	32.4
Average Paraprofessional FTE			44.88	42.16

1:1 Paraprofessional Staffing

Paraprofessional staffing can vary significantly depending on the number of special education students served in a district, particularly where a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) requires an individual paraprofessional to support the student throughout the day (1:1 paraprofessional services). To provide further comparison and insights into paraprofessional staffing, CESO requested the number of 1:1 paraprofessionals from each district. These numbers are included in the table below, displayed as the number of individuals and the percentage of a district's paraprofessional staffing that is 1:1 paraprofessionals.

District	Total Special Education Students	Paraprofessional FTE - Actual	Number of 1:1 Paraprofessionals	Percent of Paraprofessional Staffing
<i>Menahga</i>	172	43	13	30.23%
Cannon Falls	225	30	3	10%
Esko	241	32	17	53.13%
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	247	42.25	35	82.84%
Montevideo	302	55	32	63.64%
Wadena-Deer Creek	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	458	36	27	75%

Food Service

The food service group includes roles responsible for the preparation and serving of meals (i.e., food service directors, head cooks, cooks, cook assistants, etc.). Positions that a district has staffed through an external third-party relationship are not included in the table.

District	Food Service Titles	Scaling Factor	Food Service FTE - Actual	Food Service FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	- Cooks - Kitchen Staff - Food Service Coordinator/Director	1.0	10	10
Cannon Falls	- Cooks - Dishroom	1.09	10	10.9
Esko	Food Service	.90	6.25	5.63
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	- Food Service Workers - Satellite Cooks - Head Cook	.85	7.25	6.16
Montevideo	No positions provided	.84	n/a	n/a
Wadena-Deer Creek	- Food Service Staff - Food Service Director	1.04	13	13.52
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	- Food Service Director - Subs - Kitchen Staff - Cooks - Dishwashers	.90	24	21.6
Average Food Service FTE			12.1	11.56

Custodial Staff

The custodial staff group includes roles responsible for the cleaning, maintenance, and upkeep of the district's buildings and grounds (i.e., custodial staff, maintenance workers, etc.). Positions in this group that a district has staffed through an external third-party relationship are not included in the table. One benchmark for custodial staffing is the number of square feet per custodian. Based on an industry benchmark, on average, the district could staff approximately one custodial FTE per twenty thousand square feet of facility space. This varies based on surface types, age of the building, other assigned responsibilities, etc.

District	Scaling Factor	Custodial FTE - Actual	Custodial FTE - Adjusted	Number of Buildings	Square Footage	Square Feet Per Custodian
Menahga	1.0	10	10	2	224,427	22,443
Cannon Falls	1.09	8	8.72	4	427,100	53,388
Esko	.90	8	7.2	1	265,073	33,134
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	.85	10.125	8.61	3	311,380	30,754
Montevideo	.84	16	13.44	4	n/a	n/a
Wadena-Deer Creek	1.04	18	18.72	2	187,939	10,441
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	.90	15	13.5	3	75,034	5,002
Average Custodial Staff FTE		12.52	11.7	3	253,305	26,544

Transportation

The transportation group includes roles responsible for moving students (i.e., supervisors, mechanics, bus drivers, and van drivers, etc.). Transportation staffing is determined by the number of routes managed by a district; when comparing transportation positions, it is important to factor in this number accordingly. CESO requested route information from comparable districts in addition to transportation FTE and this information is displayed in the tables below.

Routes Managed

The table below outlines the reported number of routes managed by responsive districts and the adjusted routes, using the identified scaling factor and rounding to the nearest whole number. Where provided by a district, the number of routes includes both bus and van routes.

District	Scaling Factor	Number of Routes - Actual	Number of Routes - Adjusted
<i>Menahga</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>28 (15 bus, 13 van)</i>	<i>28</i>
Cannon Falls	1.09	16 (9 bus, 7 van)	17
Esko	.90	12 (10 bus, 2 van)	11
Howard Lake-Waverly- Winstead	.85	31 (15 bus, 16 van)	26
Montevideo	.84	14 (10 bus, 4 van)	12
Wadena-Deer Creek	1.04	12 (10 bus, 2 van)	12
Zumbrota- Mazeppa	.90	19 (15 bus, 4 van)	17
Average Number of Routes		17	16

Transportation Staff

The table below outlines the reported Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) from each responsive district and the adjusted FTE using the identified scaling factor. Positions in this group that a district has staffed through an external third-party relationship are not included in the table.

District	Transportation Titles	Scaling Factor	Transportation FTE - Actual	Transportation FTE - Adjusted
Menahga	- Transportation Supervisor - Mechanics - Bus Drivers - Van Drivers	1.0	22	22
Cannon Falls	- Bus Drivers - Van Drivers - Dispatch/Coordinator - Mechanics	1.09	25	27.25
Esko	Transportation Staff	.90	5.25	4.73
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	No positions provided	.85	n/a	n/a
Montevideo	No positions provided	.84	n/a	n/a
Wadena-Deer Creek	- Bus Drivers - Van Drivers	1.04	20	20.8
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	No positions provided	.90	n/a	n/a
Average Transportation FTE			16.75	17.59

Positions Staffed by External Contract

Depending on a district's needs, a district may choose to staff one or more positions through an external, third-party relationship rather than hiring internally. This approach offers a range of benefits, including the ability to provide key services while responsibility for salary, benefits, performance management and compliance is held by the third party. CESO requested information from each responsive comparable district on the positions that they staff through third-party contracts to provide additional context for Menahga on comparable district staffing and where contracted services are utilized.

Five of the six responsive districts provided information about contracted positions. The table below outlines the positions that responsive districts have staffed through external relationships to highlight the range of roles that may be outsourced. Where available from responsive districts, the table will display the FTE or estimated equivalent for the contracted position.

District	Contracted Position(s)	FTE or Estimated Equivalent
Menahga	- OT/Speech - Menahga Online - Other Special Education Services	8.66
Cannon Falls	- Transportation - OT - PT - ESCE - Psych - Assistant Director	25
Esko	Special Education Services	3
Howard Lake-Waverly-Winstead	- Bus Drivers - Van Drives - Transportation Supervisor - Special Education Coordinator - School Psychologist	18
Montevideo	OT	1
Wadena-Deer Creek	No positions provided	n/a
Zumbrota-Mazeppa	Special Education Staff through GCeD	20

Key Findings & Considerations

Based on the staffing levels reported by responsive districts, Menahga's staffing varies in comparison to the average FTE of responsive districts. The following table outlines the FTE in Menahga compared to the outline how Menahga Public Schools' Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staffing compares to the average district FTE, adjusted average accounting for the variance in student enrollment, and identifies whether Menahga's staffing in each employee type is higher or lower than the adjusted average.

It is important to note that these numbers do not include any positions that are staffed through third-party relationships as the data provided for these positions is a flat dollar amount that was not correlated to a full-time equivalent. Where a district additionally staffs positions externally for an employee group, the average FTE will be higher than the number provided below.

Employee Type	Menahga FTE	Comparable District Average FTE	Adjusted Comparable Average FTE	Comparison
Administration	6	7.5	6.9	Lower
Teachers	66.92	86	84	Lower
Support Staff	12.1	27.04	17.61	Lower
Paraprofessionals	43	44.88	42.16	Higher
Special Education	11	16.7	15.04	Lower
Food Service	10	12.1	11.56	Lower
Custodial	10	12.5	11.7	Lower
Transportation	22	16.75	17.59	Higher

Additional insights into these comparisons are outlined below.

Employee Types Above Adjusted Average

Compared to staffing numbers reported by responsive districts, Menahga has a higher reported number of FTE within its Paraprofessional and Transportation groups. Menahga's total paraprofessional and transportation FTE numbers are substantially higher than the comparable districts' adjusted average, indicating an overall difference in staffing levels compared to reported levels in peer districts. This difference does not account for or factor in positions that may be contracted out in other districts.

One factor influencing Menahga's transportation FTE is the district's large geographic service area. The district serves students from the northern part of Wadena County, southeastern Becker County, and portions of Hubbard and Otter Tail counties. Transportation staffing is influenced by

the number of routes; generally, a district will staff one driver per route, plus an additional 10% to account for substitute needs, and additional staff to maintain vehicles and coordinate routing/dispatch functions. Transporting students across this expansive area requires additional transportation resources and staffing compared to districts with more compact attendance boundaries. Any adjustments to staffing will also influence the number of routes operated.

One factor influencing Menahga's paraprofessional FTE is that the district has heavily invested in interventionists across grade levels to address special education needs, which successfully reduced the special education population from 23% to 15.07%.

Employee Types Below Adjusted Average

Menahga has a lower reported number of FTE across all other groups included in this study compared to responsive districts' reported FTE, suggesting the district operates with fewer staff in these areas than its peers.

One factor influencing Menahga's food service FTE is that all students in the district are located in two buildings, which allows Menahga to operate with a lower number of Food Service employees. Districts with more than two buildings will need additional staff to manage multiple lunch schedules. This is also true for the custodial staff, as it is easier to clean and maintain fewer buildings for custodial staff and maximize cleaning time.

The lower Special Education Instructional Staff FTE for Menahga, which is 11 compared to the adjusted comparable average of 15.04, may be partly attributed to the district staffing certain core functions through external, third-party contracts. Specifically, Menahga contracts out several special education support roles, including OT, Speech, and other special education services positions. Since the FTE figures reported in the Special Education comparison tables do not account for these contracted positions, Menahga's internal staff count appears lower than its peers who may staff these roles internally.

Staffing Considerations

The staffing levels reported by Menahga and responsive comparable districts indicate a lower level of staffing in most categories; however, it is important to note that FTE provides only a portion of the picture when making staffing decisions and should not be used in isolation. Rather, the numbers outlined here serve as indicators where further study may be needed to identify the root cause of staffing discrepancies. CESO recommends further analysis prior to either increasing or decreasing staff to ensure that the district is able to operate with a high level of fiscal responsibility while also meeting the educational needs of its community. The district may also look at the use of external contracted sources for transportation, special education, business, HR or other services to see if those would be more cost effective to provide internally or externally through partner organizations.

Conclusion

This detailed assessment offers Menahga Public Schools a strategic, evidence-based review of current personnel levels relative to a peer group of comparable districts. The primary conclusion is that Menahga maintains highly efficient staffing for its size, with most employee categories functioning at lower FTE levels than peer districts. Exceptions are found in the Paraprofessional and Transportation departments, as previously noted. Historical investments in rural transportation access—to bring in more enrolled students and paraprofessional interventionists—designed to decrease special education reliance—have proven successful, yet these areas represent opportunities for reevaluation in upcoming budget cycles. Potential savings in transportation could be realized through optimized routing and route consolidation, reducing the demand for drivers. Furthermore, with nearly 250,000 square feet of facility space maintained by 10 custodial FTE, the district may find an opportunity to reduce this count by one through natural attrition as vacancies arise.

To uphold instructional and operational standards amid forecasted state funding constraints and underfunded mandates, CESO suggests that Menahga utilize this benchmarking data to launch a targeted internal assessment. Strategic priority should be given to the Transportation and Paraprofessional sectors to balance these results against the district's specific demographic needs and programmatic goals. CESO remains ready and committed to assisting the district in evaluating these comparisons to foster effectively structured operations.

Finally, the district could explore the strategic outsourcing of functions such as transportation, food service, special education, business operations, HR, specialized therapies (OT/PT/Speech), or nursing. Analyzing whether these services are more cost-effectively delivered internally or through external partnerships may yield further operational efficiencies.