

Managing Your Custodial Closet

Designing custodial systems that prevent burnout and drive results!



Illinois Association of School Business Officials | Friday, March 6, 2026 | Drury Lane Events, Oakbrook Terrace



Introductions



Name: Cheryl Roy, Speaker
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Lemont High School

Name: Giovanni Catalano
- *Director of Buildings and Grounds*
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Name: Carolyn Quinn
- *President*
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Name: Marta McCullough, Moderator
- *Director of Facilities and Transportation Manager*
Glenbard Township High School District 87



**Lincolnshire-Prairie View
School District 103**
Leaders in Learning



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Custodial Success Doesn't Happen by Accident

Today we'll discuss how to design systems that:

- Hire the right people
- Train with purpose
- Equip strategically
- Build reasonable workloads
- Sustain morale and retention



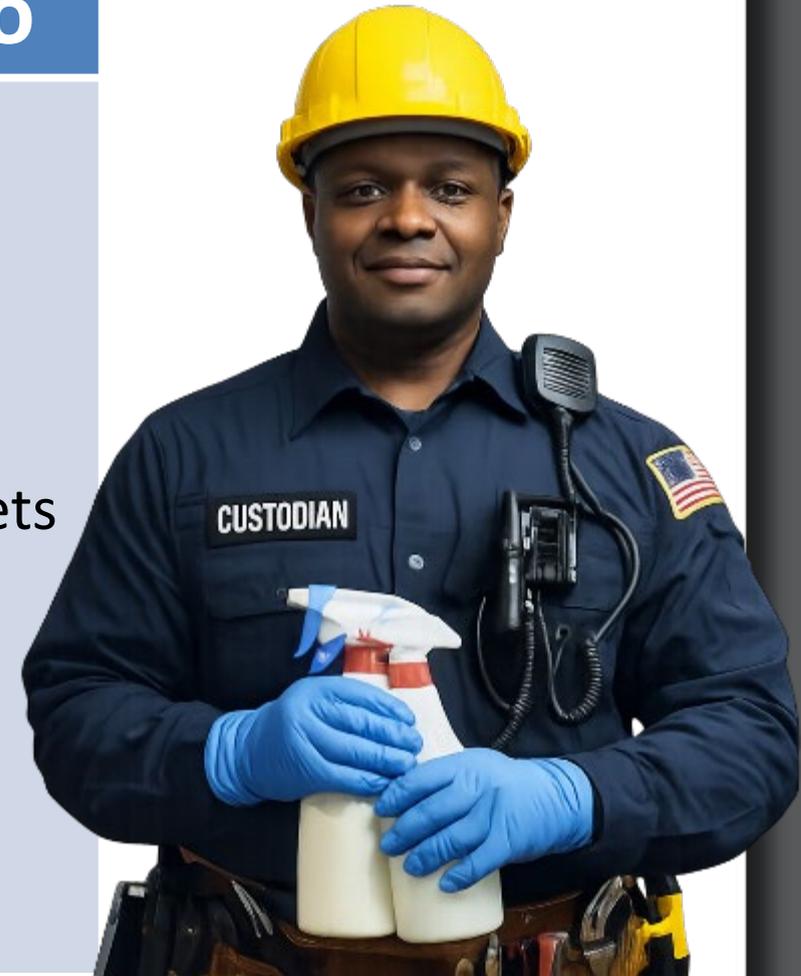
What People Think

- Mop Floors
- Empty Trash
- Clean Restrooms
- Wipe Desks
- Vacuum Carpet



What They Actually Do

- **Protect** student health
- **Monitor** building safety
- **Respond** to emergencies
- **Secure** facilities
- **Support** events and athletics
- **Preserve** millions in building assets
- **Manage** supply inventory
- **Prevent** liability exposure
- **Serve** as a visible adult presence
- **Report** facility failures



The Swiss Army Knife of Operations

Operational Support	Safety & Risk Monitoring	Emergency Response	Health Protection	Minor Maintenance	Inventory & Supply Mgmt.	Compliance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlocking and securing buildings (first in / last out) Opening and closing facilities Event setup and teardown (chairs, tables, stages, gyms) Athletic event preparation Auditorium resets Graduation and large event logistics Snow/ice monitoring at entrances Room reconfigurations for testing or special programs Moving furniture and equipment Receiving deliveries Managing custodial closets and supply inventory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying slip/trip hazards Monitoring wet floors during weather events Reporting broken locks, doors, or windows Noticing structural issues (ceiling tiles, leaks, cracks) Monitoring fire extinguisher placement Ensuring emergency exits are clear Spotting vandalism or suspicious behavior Checking playground and exterior safety conditions Lockdown support during emergencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spill containment (biohazard, vomit, blood) Flood response and water extraction Immediate cleanup after incidents Supporting fire alarm evacuations Assisting with storm damage Responding to broken pipes Securing areas after accidents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring restrooms throughout the day Refilling soap and paper supplies Ensuring sanitizer stations are operational Reporting mold concerns Identifying air quality issues Spotting pest activity Supporting infection control during outbreaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacing light bulbs Fixing minor hardware issues Adjusting door closers Replacing ceiling tiles Clearing small plumbing blockages Reporting HVAC concerns Resetting breakers (when permitted) Changing filters (in some districts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring chemical dilution systems Tracking supply usage Managing inventory counts Receiving and organizing deliveries Preventing stockouts Budget awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Logging inspections Recording chemical usage Tracking safety checks Completing incident documentation Supporting OSHA compliance Maintaining SDS binders



Burnout is a System Issue



Hiring Right

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Hiring: Set the Tone Before Day One

What We Hire For



Reliability

Shows up, follows through.



Pride

Ownership, Community



Adaptability

Handles Shifting priorities

What We Fail to Communicate



The Physical Load

Constant movement, repetition, stamina.



The Interruptions

Spills, Events, Emergencies



The Standards

Consistency every day – even when short staffed.



Choose Well -Custodial Candidate Scoring Rubric

Category	1	3	5
Reliability & Work Ethic	Inconsistent attendance history	Stable work history	Proven dependable; strong references
Situational Awareness	Reactive; limited awareness	Notices basic issues	Proactively identifies risks & improvements
Physical Readiness	Hesitant about physical demands	Comfortable with job requirements	Demonstrates stamina & resilience
Process & Standards Orientation	Prefers informal approach	Follows procedures when directed	Values structure & consistency
Service Mindset	Sees job as task-based	Understands role supports school	Speaks about pride, ownership & impact
Calm Under Pressure	Easily flustered	Handles routine stress	Demonstrates composure in emergencies
Communication Skills	Minimal communication	Clear & appropriate	Professional, respectful, solution-focused



Hiring Best Practices

In Today's Labor Market

1 Shorten The Process

- Time kills good candidates
- Schedule interviews within 48 hours
- Make offers quickly
- Get HR onboard

2 Compete Beyond Pay

- Health insurance % paid/quality
- Pension Plans – tell a story
- Consistent schedule
- School calendar alignment
- Paid time off

Benefits package is worth \$X more

3 Understand the Competition

- Warehouses
- Retail
- Delivery Services
- Private contractors

4 Sell the Right Things

- Stability – recession proof
- Predictability
- Long-term employment
- Meaningful work



Onboarding & Training

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What We Expect in the First 30 Days

A New Building Layout



- Entrances/Exits
- Hidden rooms
- High Traffic Zones
- Safety protocols

Chemical Safety



- Proper handling/mixing
- SDS/Label Knowledge
- Infection Control Procedures

Supply Management



- Dispenser Refills
- Inventory Flow
- Closet Organization

Cleaning Standards



- What does “Clean” mean
- Frequency of expectations
- Inspection criteria

Equipment Operation



- Autoscrubbers
- Vacuums
- Burnishers
- More....

Shift Rhythm



- Event resets
- Interruptions
- After-hour adjustments

**Immediate
Productivity**



Onboarding Best Practices

1 Structured 1st Week

- Clear Schedule
- Defined training blocks
- Introductions to leadership
- Provide keys, badge access, supplies

2 Shadow Before Solo

- Pair with experienced custodian
- Demonstrate standards visually
- Model pace and priorities

3 Define what “GOOD” looks like

- Show inspection standards
- Walk expectations in real spaces
- Provide checklists

4 Early Feedback Loop

- 2 Week Check-in
- 30 Day Review
- Route Adjustment if needed



Custodial Tools & Equipment

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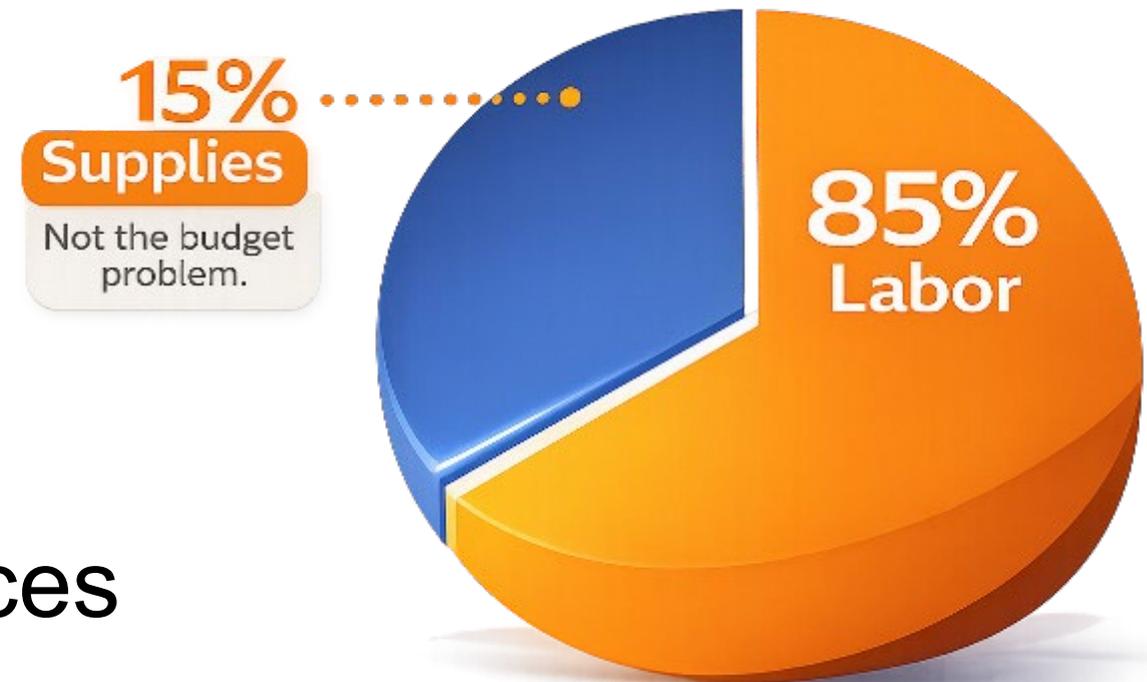


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The Productivity Conversation

- ✓ Decrease Expenses
- ✓ Cut Benefits
- ✓ Cut Salaries
- ✓ Cut Staff
- ✓ Decrease Quality of Services
- ✓ Increase Productivity



What We're Solving For

What directors actually need

- ✓ Reduce overtime
- ✓ Absorb absences
- ✓ Maintain standards
- ✓ Avoid adding head count

Every equipment decision
either gives hours back – or
takes them away

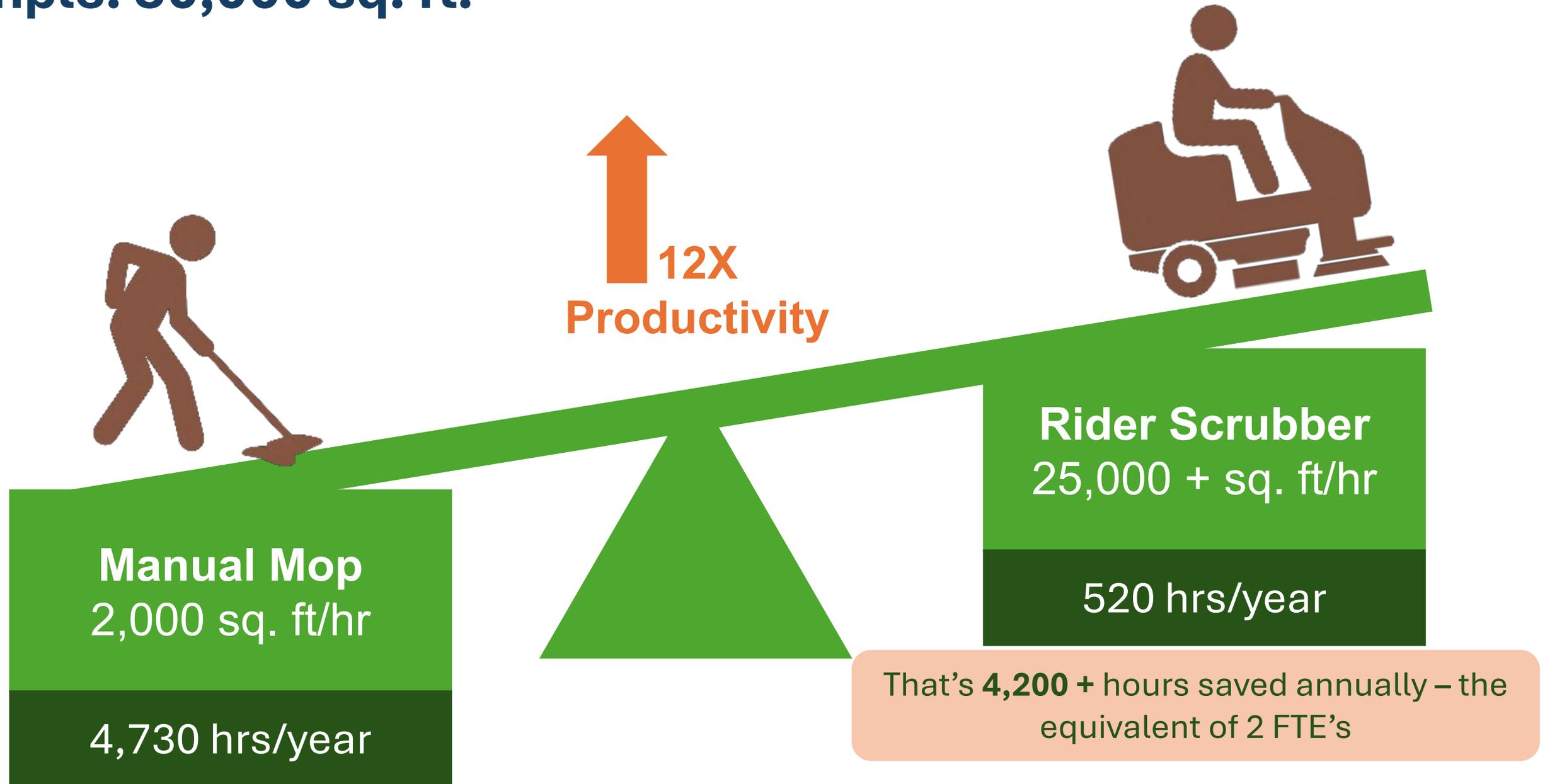


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FPC
FACILITIES PROFESSIONALS
CONFERENCE

Rider Scrubbers Multiply Floor Productivity

Example: 50,000 sq. ft.



The Vacuum You Pick Matters

Example: 20 Carpeted Classrooms (800 sq. ft. each)

Higher Productivity

✓

Cleaner Carpet

✓

Lower Total Cost



Sq. Ft./Hour	3,500 – 5,500	10,000
Time Per Day	4.57 Hours	1.6 Hours
Time Annually	914 Hours	320 Hours

Restroom Cleaning Machines

Example: 100 Restroom Fixtures



Manual Cleaning
300 minutes
5 hours/day



SAVES:
150 Minutes/Day
500 + Hours/Year

**50% Faster
Cleaning**



Restroom Machine
150 minutes
2.5 hours/day

That's **1,000** hours saved annually – the equivalent of 1/2 an FTE

Robotic Scrubbers Return Time

100% of cleaning time is given back when automation takes over



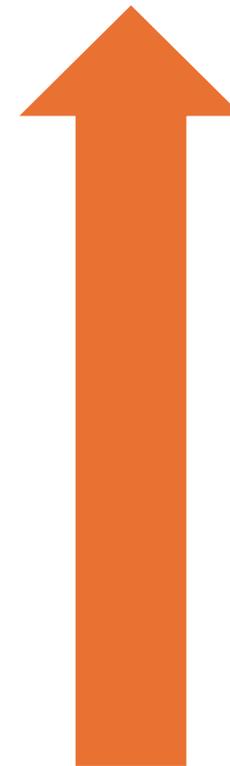
Manual Mop
4,730 Hours



Walk-Behind
1,180 Hours



Rider
520 Hours



Robotic Scrubber
0 Hours

All time return to the team

The Impact of Mechanization on a High School

Minimum

- Mechanization Hours: 11,528
- Annual Labor Cost: \$253,625

Adequate

- Mechanization Hours: 7,373
- Annual Labor Cost: \$162,212

Maximum

- Mechanization Hours: 5,185
- Annual Labor Cost: \$114,087



Building Reasonable Routes

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Route Design Drives Morale



Uneven Routes Create:

- Resentment
- Speed Cleaning
- Quality Decline
- High Turnover
- Burnout



Small Wins, HUGE Impact



Standardize the Simple Things

- Limit trash/recycle bins
- Design routes to reduce steps
- Keep equipment and tools consistent from route to route



Reclaim Cleaning Time

- Separate cleaning vs. non-cleaning duties
- Adjust benchmarks for true cleaning hours
- Align shift times with cleaning windows



Maximize Productivity

- Use your most productive equipment nightly
- Review staffing levels in buildings/routes with complaints first
- Influence construction and design decisions

Minutes saved per room = hours saved per building – **FTE Impact** district-wide



Triggers for Custodial Staffing Modifications



New Construction

- How did you determine staffing levels for additions or new buildings?
- Did you evaluate the impact of various surfaces/finishes?



Renovations

- Planning for construction clean-up process
- Surface and fixture changes could change cleaning hours needed for area



New Equipment Purchases

- Equipment directly impacts labor needed to clean
- Were schedules changed and labor reallocated as a result of the purchase?



Building Utilization Changes

- Increases/decreases effect cleaning and supply needs
- Non-cleaning time may be impacted



Non-Student Attendance Days Done Right!

Reactive Use of Time

- Random deep cleaning
- “Catch-up” on whatever
- Unstructured projects
- No defined outcomes
- No documentation of work completed



Feels productive but impact is unclear.

Strategic Use of Time

- Preplanned task list by building
- High-impact work identified ahead of time
- Preventative maintenance blocks
- Route adjustments & retraining



Measurable improvement for visible value



Measuring, Communicating, & Valuing the Work

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Make the Work Visible

Inspections

Make performance observable and consistent



Benchmarks

Define what “good” looks like – and measure it



Feedback Loops

Close the gap between performance and expectation



Data Tracking

Turn activity into measurable outcomes



Quantifying the Value of Clean

Health Impact

- ✓ Reduced Absenteeism
- ✓ Lower Illness Transmission
- ✓ Fewer substitute teacher costs

Risk & Safety Reduction

- ✓ Slip & Fall Prevention
- ✓ Reduced Liability exposure
- ✓ Compliance confidence

Asset Protection

- ✓ Extend floor & carpet life
- ✓ Deferred capital replacement
- ✓ Daily cleaning is less expensive than restorative

Student Outcomes (Attendance and Focus)



Conclusions and Key Takeaways

- **Understand your District's Unique Needs**
Every district is different. Use benchmarking data as a guide but ensure your custodial staffing aligns with your district's specific requirements.
- **Leverage Industry Benchmarks**
Utilize standards from APPA, ISSA, and NCS to set realistic cleaning expectations, but remember to account for variables like space type, usage intensity, and equipment.
- **Analyze Data to Optimize Staffing**
Continuous evaluation of staffing levels through FTE calculations, square footage metrics, and tasks frequencies helps ensure resources are being used efficiently.
- **Advocate with Data**
Armed with solid benchmarking data and productivity insights, use this information to make informed decisions and advocate for additional resources when necessary.
- **Small Adjustments, Big Impacts**
Implement small productivity changes, such as optimizing equipment use and task allocation, to see significant improvements in cleanliness and efficiency.
- **You're not Alone**
Benchmarking and staffing optimization are ongoing processes. Seek support from industry experts and peer networks to continuously improve your custodial operations.



Questions and Answers

We thank you for your time!



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